

Audit Summary Report

December 2005



Best Value Performance Plan Summary Report

Salisbury District Council

Audit 2005-2006

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Introduction

- 1 The Local Government Act 1999 (the Act) requires best value authorities to publish a best value performance plan (BVPP) each year, setting out an assessment of current performance and targets for improvement. The Act requires the external auditors of best value authorities to audit the BVPP and report whether it has been prepared and published in accordance with the Act and statutory guidance. The most recent guidance is set out in Circular March 2003 and the February 2004 ODPM document '*Guidance on Best Value Performance Plans*'.
- 2 The BVPP requirements are more limited for authorities such as Salisbury which have been rated as 'Good' in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
- 3 The 2005 Audit Code of Practice requires auditors to assess the Council's arrangements for monitoring and reviewing performance, including arrangements to ensure data quality.
- 4 It should be noted that this report is not the auditor's statutory audit report on the BVPP, required under section 7 of the Local Government Act 1999, which will be published separately.

Audit approach

Compliance audit

- 5 For the compliance audit, we assessed the extent to which your BVPP complies with legislation and revised statutory guidance.
- 6 To inform our conclusions, we drew upon a 'compliance checklist' produced by our operations directorate. We also used a best value performance indicator (BVPI) inclusion checklist to consider whether the BVPP includes all specified performance information. Both these guidance documents were shared with the Council.

Data quality arrangements

- 7 This year, the Audit Commission specified 12 PIs for particular attention by auditors. For the first time this includes some non-BVPIs, which do not appear in the BVPP. For the Council this resulted in two additional PIs, 'Private sector homes vacant for more than six months' and 'Re-let times'.
- 8 This new approach has been developed to enable the Commission to obtain positive assurance in relation to this set of PIs and to help ensure consistency in audit approach nationally.

- 9 In addition to the Commission's specified PIs, we tested a small number of other BVPIs which our risk assessment identified as higher risk. Factors contributing to a BVPI being assessed as higher risk are:
 - a significant year-on-year analytical review variance;
 - the BVPI is either new or has a significantly amended definition; and
 - the BVPI was either significantly amended or qualified in the previous year.
- 10 The outcome of this testing will contribute to our overall conclusion on the Council's data quality arrangements in 2006.
- 11 Last year, we highlighted the need to strengthen the co-ordination arrangements for BVPIs and recommended the wider use of the standard proforma for all PIs. A Performance Improvement Manager was appointed earlier this year and we are pleased to report that our recommendation has been implemented.

Conclusions

- 12 The BVPP was published by the statutory deadline.
- 13 The BVPP included all the 2004/05 outturns, with one exception BVPI 106, and all required targets.
- 14 We are not making any statutory recommendations on the Council's BVPP.
- 15 There was one significant amendment to Audit Commission specified indicators, HIP BPSA. Appendix 1, table 1, summarises the PIs tested and our findings.
- 16 There were two significant amendments to other audited PIs, BVPI 76a and BVPI 157. Appendix 1, table 2, summarises the PIs tested and our findings.
- 17 There were no reservations placed on any of the PIs we have tested, this is an improvement on the previous year when reservations were placed on two indicators.

Appendix 1 – Audit findings

Table 1 Audit Commission specified performance indicators

BVPI /other	Description	Value	Finding
66a	Rent collection - proportion of rent collected percentage.	97.49%	The original figure of 98.35 per cent was amended to exclude certain items in line with the definition. Minor amendment.
109a	Major planning applications determined in 13 weeks.	76.39%	PI fairly stated. (NB - note need to record to two decimal places).
109b	Minor planning applications determined in eight weeks.	71.04%	PI fairly stated. (NB - note need to record to two decimal places).
109c	Other planning applications determined in eight weeks.	89.21%	PI fairly stated. (NB - note need to record to two decimal places).
205	Planning checklist.	94.4%	PI fairly stated. (NB - note need to record to one decimal place).
199	Cleanliness of public spaces.	26%	PI fairly stated. Whilst sampling was not in accordance with the definition requirements this was judged to not have a material impact.
82a	Recycling performance	17.44%	PI amended as follows. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 17.34 per cent. • To 17.44 per cent. Park waste incorrectly included within total waste. Minor amendment.
82b	Composting performance	1.22%	PI fairly stated.
183a	Length of stay in bed and breakfast (weeks).	1.57	PI fairly stated. The BVPI was changed from 0.6 weeks following our interim work. This was amended prior to publication of the BVPP.

BVPI /other	Description	Value	Finding
183b	Length of stay in hostel.	0	PI fairly stated.
HIP HSSA	Private sector homes vacant for more than six months.	0.54%	PI fairly stated. (Not required to be reported in the BVPP.)
HIP BPSA	Re-let times (days).	31	PI amended as follows. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 26 days. • To 31 days. Indicator not calculated in line with the definition. Material amendment. (Not required to be reported in the BVPP.)

Table 2 Other BVPIs audited

BVPI	Description	Finding
8	Percentage of invoices paid on time.	Invoice sample should be representative of all invoices received by different departments at different times of the year and should consist of at least 500 invoices.
157	E-government enabled interactions.	PI amended as follows. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 82.49 per cent. • To 73.21 per cent. Documentation to support the BVPI was found to be inconsistent with the indicator. Original indicator was based on information at the 14 April (date proforma completed) rather than 31 March. Material amendment.

BVPI	Description	Finding
76a	No of claimants visited per 1,000 caseload.	<p>PI amended as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 169.2 • To 207.7 <p>Indicator not calculated in accordance with the definition - the original PI was reported using the ACADEMY system report, which was later found to be understated when compared to the manual log maintained by the benefits fraud section. Material amendment.</p> <p>NB - we also amended the 2003/04 indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 37.0 • To 166.73
76c	No of fraud investigations per 1,000 caseload.	<p>PI amended as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 47.03 • To 48.94 <p>Indicator not consistent with supporting documentation. Minor amendment.</p>
203	Percentage change in average number of families in temporary accommodation compared with average from previous year.	<p>PI amended as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From minus 100 per cent. • To 2 per cent. <p>New indicator - misunderstanding re need to calculate for previous year to enable current year PI to be produced.</p>

Appendix 2 – Action plan

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
R1 Issue an addendum to correct the information published in the BVPP in respect of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BVPI 106 omitted; and • BVPI 76a and BVPI 157 - significant amendments. 	3	Performance Improvement Manager	Yes	An addendum to be included on the website.	Now
R2 Consider early review of any new and amended indicators to ensure in line with the guidance.	3	Andrew Reynolds, Anne McConkey, Derek Streek, Eric Teagle, Geoff Silver, Phil Ruddle and Performance Improvement Manager	Yes	Service Units to test for compliance at the end of Quarter 3. Any areas of doubt to be referred to the Performance Improvement Manager for clarity. In instances of serious doubt, Service Unit and Performance Improvement Manager to test together.	18 January 2006 for indicators where it is possible to test prior to the year-end.

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Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
R3 Continue use of standard proforma for all performance indicators.	3	Performance Improvement Manager and SUHs	Yes	Proformas and working calculations for all BVPIs to be forwarded electronically to the Performance Improvement Manager.	19 April 2006
R4 Ensure sampling is carried out in accordance with requirements for BVPI 199 - cleanliness of public spaces.	3	Geoff Silver	Yes	Testing for compliance to guidance of BVPI 199 and its component parts a,b,c, and d to be undertaken and a proforma and working calculations to be forwarded electronically to the Performance Improvement Manager.	15 December 2005
R5 Ensure sample covers all departments, the whole year and consists of at least 500 invoices for BVPI 8 - percentage of invoices paid on time.	2	Alan Osborne	Yes	Follow Audit Commission guidance on sampling in relation to this BVPI. Ensure representative sample of a full 12 months data. Proforma to be completed and linked to working calculations within pbviews, forwarded electronically to the Performance Improvement Manager.	19 April 2006
R6 Ensure indicator is consistent with the supporting documentation - BVPI 157 e-government enabled transactions.	2	Malcolm Lewin	Yes	Ensure that data for this indicator is taken and recorded on the proforma from the correct period as required by the guidance (31 March).	19 April 2006

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
R7 Reconcile the information on fraud visits in the Academy system with the manual log maintained by the benefits fraud section - BVPI 76a number of claimants visited per 1,000 cases.	2	Phil Ruddle	Yes	Ensure definition is understood and followed in the calculation of this indicator.	15 December 2005
R8 Ensure indicators are reported to the correct decimal places, as specified in the guidance.	1	Performance Improvement Manager and SUHs	Yes	Performance Improvement Manager to double-check all data is reported to the specified number of decimal places. SUHs to ensure that data entered onto supporting documentation (eg proformas) are also to the correct number of decimal places, as per the Audit Commission requirements regardless of procedures for central returns.	19 April 2006