

**RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE
COMMITTEE**

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 1 April 2008
 title: The New Performance Framework and National Indicators
 submitted by: Chief Executive
 principal author: Michelle Haworth ó Corporate Policy Officer

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This report informs members of the new performance framework and the introduction of the new National Indicator set (including the Place Survey).

2 RELEVANCE TO THE COUNCIL'S AMBITIONS AND PRIORITIES:

- Council Ambitions: Delivering our ambitions and strengthening the quality of public
- Community Objectives: services requires effective and transparent performance
- Corporate Priorities: management at a local and national level. The empowerment of
- Other Considerations: citizens through engagement in the design and delivery of services and other activities provides impetus to improve service quality and citizen satisfaction.

3 BACKGROUND

3.1 The new National Indicator set

- 3.2 With changes to Best Value legislation, all Best Value Performance Indicators, apart from those for Police Authorities, will be discontinued in England from 31 March 2008. As a result, the Best Value Performance Indicator User Satisfaction Surveys will also cease. A new National Indicator set has been introduced along with a Place survey.

- 3.3 The new performance framework for local government, outlined in the White Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities*, is about improving the quality of life in places and better public services. It brings together national standards and priorities set by Government with local priorities informed by the vision developed by the local authority and its partners. A clear set of national outcomes and a single set of national indicators by which to measure progress against them are a key building block for the new framework. The new single set of national indicators covers the Government's priorities for delivery by local government working on its own or in partnership with other bodies.

- 3.4 **'A focus on improving outcomes for local people, local businesses and local places rather than on processes, institutions and inputs'.**

- 3.5 The national indicators will be the only indicators against which local authorities performance, alone or in partnership, will be reported to Central Government. They will therefore be the only measures against which Government can agree targets with a local authority or partnership, through Local Area Agreements (LAAs), and the only trigger for performance management by Central Government, other than concerns highlighted by the inspectorates in the Comprehensive Area Assessment or other inspection activity.

- 3.6 Regardless of which have been agreed for designated targets in the LAA, all 198 of the national indicators will be reported on at the spatial level and on the frequency determined as part of each indicators technical definition.

- 3.7 In addition to the national indicators, as the 2006 White Paper made clear, there will be a need for local authorities to report limited additional financial, statistical and contextual data to Central Government for Government financial management or to inform policy.

- 3.8 Local information management systems will need to be robust and transparent, so that they can inform:

- the evidence base for developing Sustainable Communities Strategies and negotiating LAAs;
 - the independent external challenge of the inspectorates through the Comprehensive Area Assessment; and
 - engagement, support and intervention by Central Government, co-ordinated through Government Offices, where necessary.
- 3.9 The theory is that by reducing the number of indicators required by Government, more focus can be given to the performance management of the indicators in the national set, with a particular focus on driving the ambition of the priorities identified in the Local Area Agreement. The comparative information provided will allow judgements to be made by central government and regulators as to where performance is better or worse and focus attention accordingly.
- 3.10 Information will be collected against the majority of the new national indicator set from April 2008. There are 3 indicators whose introduction will be delayed until 2009/10, whilst definitions are further developed and refined.
- 3.11 There will be a single system for reporting information on performance against the indicators which will work on a collect once, use numerous times (COUNT) basis and ensure that all those who need it have access to the most up-to-date information available, allowing more systematic use of the information to be made.
- 3.12 It will be for local authorities and their partners to report to their citizens and users on their performance during the year, including against the national indicator set, as they consider appropriate.
- 3.13 Performance against each of the 198 National Indicators will be published annually by the Audit Commission, as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, for every LAA area allowing the public to compare the services they receive.
- 3.14 By far the most challenging of the new indicators is NI 14: Avoidable Contact, which seeks to measure how easy it is for users to access council services. The indicator has been developed in accordance with the vision of the Local Government Delivery Council and principles of the Service Transformation Agreement that expects the customer experience for both citizens and businesses when contacting their council to be one which is responsive, timely and efficient. By identifying customer contact that is 'avoidable', the local authority is better placed to redesign the way services and information are made more accessible for their customers, so they do not have to make unnecessary, valueless contacts which are both frustrating for the customer and inefficient for the provider.
- 3.15 The indicator will be calculated in aggregate across all access channels (telephone, e-mail, website and in person) for all high volume citizen and business transactions in the following service areas:
- Planning services,
 - Building control,
 - General council tax enquiries, billing and recovery process for payment of council tax and national non-domestic rates,
 - Environmental health services (licensing, food safety, pollution and pest control),
 - Street scene - waste collection and street cleaning, including recycling, street furniture and fly-tipping,
 - Housing (benefit claims, council tax benefit, repairs, allocations and lettings process for social housing),
 - Electoral register (including registration and enquiries on electoral services),
 - Parking permits and Parking Control Notices.
- 3.16 The primary way of collecting data for this indicator is expected to be through the use of a contact management or Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Where councils do not currently have this in place for all the designated services (listed above), as is the case at Ribble Valley BC, they will have to undertake surveys - adding up the number of contacts assessed as avoidable within the sample number of contacts, divided by the sample number of contacts. Guidance on the sampling methodology will be issued by the IDeA before the end of June 2008 when a further report will be brought to this Committee

outlining the implications of collecting the necessary data to report this indicator across council departments.

3.17 Technical definitions

3.18 The technical definitions document provides the following guidance for the NIs (available on Covalent against each indicator):

- Rationale
- Definition
- Formula
- Worked example
- Good performance
- Collection interval
- Data source
- Return format and Decimal places
- Reporting organisation
- Spatial level - level at which performance against the national indicators will be reported to Central Government (eg county, district, super output area or sub-regional). This means that, for example, if an indicator is defined for reporting at the district level and there are 6 districts in a county, there will be 6 figures reported for that national indicator. The performance of district councils will therefore only be reported for those 64 indicators which are defined at the district spatial level
- Further guidance

3.19 The new Place Survey

3.20 As part of the new performance framework for local government, the new national indicator set includes 20 indicators that are proposed for collection through a single survey (the Place Survey). In the past, national surveys have focussed on resident satisfaction with their local Council and the services that it directly (and indirectly) provides. This has been exemplified by the national Best Value General Household Satisfaction Survey (BVGHSS) that councils have statutorily undertaken every three years since 2000. However, central government has begun to recognise the limited use and impact that this can have from a residents perspective and have hence changed the approach from 2008 onwards to align with the broader empowerment agenda that is being heavily pushed at Whitehall.

3.21 In order to provide the public with an opportunity to shape the area in which they live, the new Place Survey focuses on quality of life factors that make an area a desirable or undesirable place to live. The upshot of this is that more residents are likely to voice their opinions, as the questions being asked are much more relevant to the issues that affect our local communities.

3.22 At the moment, the final guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is being drafted and will be available at the end of April, therefore the exact questions have yet to be confirmed. However, the methodology is likely to be as follows:

- 1,100 random sample of residents per local authority area using a postal address file
- 12 page surveys to be sent and completed by post
- One reminder after the initial survey has been sent
- Branded with either the LSP (or other area) logo, district logo or a consultants logo
- Fieldwork to take place August . September and will be repeated every two years

3.23 The survey is intended to be

- relevant to anyone living in the area
- not specific to any one agency or service
- not specific to any particular client group

3.24 Government guidance defines a much stronger role than previously for LSPs in the undertaking of the Place Survey. It is envisaged that there will be plenty of space (up to 4 pages within the 12 page questionnaire) for additional questions that partners may wish to ask. These may take the shape of follow up

questions on some of the mandatory questions or they may be totally new and unrelated to what has previously been asked. A recent paper to the LSP Board has asked partners to note the opportunity to contribute and feed into this process, with a view to extracting as much valuable information from the survey as possible.

- 3.25 On the last two occasions the Council has joined with its partner districts in the East Lancashire e-Partnership (EleP) to undertake the BV General Household surveys that preceded the Place Survey. The EleP Consultation Group has the necessary knowledge, expertise and capacity to facilitate the surveys on our behalf on a joint basis at a lesser cost than would be possible if the Council tried to undertake the survey on its own. For this reason we should consider using ELeP again to undertake the new survey, although this will of course be subject to the result of a detailed financial evaluation.
- 3.26 ELeP is drafting a project report, which will look at the viable options that we face, how it will be resourced, identification of risks and the ultimate cost of undertaking the exercise. At this stage the cost to the local authority and other partners is not yet known. However, we would envisage that this would cost no more than £1,000 per partner.

3.27 Existing Best Value Performance Indicators

- 3.28 There are many services and activities undertaken by local government, alone or in partnership, which are not directly reflected in the national indicator set but which will continue to be important to the Council and our citizens. It is more appropriate that these are performance managed locally, determining indicators and monitoring and reviewing performance.
- 3.29 Where appropriate some Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) will continue to be collected as local indicators and they will be given a new local indicator code on Covalent, our performance management system. Some indicators however will be deleted. The table attached at Appendix A lists all current indicators and provides information as to whether they are new National Indicators (NIs), BVPIs which are proposed to be deleted or to be kept as local indicators, or indicators that will continue to be collected by survey. Overall there will be a reduction from 178 to 164 indicators. A report to Corporate Management Team and Overview and Scrutiny (Resources) Committee will seek agreement to these proposals. There are:
- 59 indicators being proposed for deletion
 - 96 indicators proposed to be collected as local indicators to monitor service provision and delivery of corporate objectives (68 of these are existing local indicators and 28 are deleted Best Value indicators)
 - 25 new National Indicators (13 of which replace BVPIs and 12 are new) (10 are reported directly by the Council and 15 are collected from returns made to other organisations such as Defra.)
 - 20 Place survey indicators
 - 23 indicators that will continue to be collected by survey work (mostly through the Citizens Panel) to ensure that Best Value satisfaction information is not lost
 - further indicators which may be developed following the development of SLAs with Vicinity Homes and LCC Curatorial services

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- Resources: None
- Technical, Environmental and Legal: None
- Political: None
- Reputation: None.

Michelle Haworth
Corporate Policy Officer

For further information please ask for Michelle Haworth, extension 4421