

**The Best Value Performance Plan can also be made available in large print, on audio cassette or Braille.**

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# Foreword

**By Councillor Royce Longton, Leader of West Berkshire Council**

Over the past year the Council has continued to build upon the earlier progress in supporting its vision:

*“To facilitate a thriving local community and good quality of life in West Berkshire, now and for the future.”*

Improving performance and providing better services to the communities of West Berkshire remains an important challenge for the Council and we are confident that our approach to continuous improvement is working well. We have based this view on feedback from a range of government auditors, the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) Peer Review exercise and the public of West Berkshire.

The council works with local communities, individuals and a range of other partners to achieve its targets and invests some £144 million in providing local services as diverse as schools, social services and the environment. This investment will be supplemented with nearly £52 million in capital projects over the next three years to improve the local infrastructure and maintain and enhance the environment.

This Best Value Performance Plan looks back over last year's achievements and forward to the improvements planned for the coming year. It outlines the Council's approach to providing better services and our commitment to continuous improvement in all that we do.

**There have been some notable highlights this year, including:**

- Provision of placements on Countryside projects for young offenders to carry out community payback
- Over 80 people with disabilities now participating in supported work activities through local initiatives.
- Over £1m additional benefits income achieved for those on the lowest income levels through Community Care welfare benefits advice.
- 70+ people with learning disabilities moved into their own tenancies
- Additional 50 older people helped to live at home with intensive home care support.
- Education performance is strong, with 67% in the top quartile and 60% showing improvement since last year.
- The establishment of a new Children and Young People's strategic partnership.
- Pilot partnership underway with Thames Valley Police for the more efficient removal of abandoned vehicles in the district.

- The sponsorship of the building of 114 affordable homes for rent and 35 shared ownership homes
- Latest phase of 5 year highway improvement programme successfully completed (42 roads resurfaced in 2003/04)
- In Children's Social Services, a 7% reduction in numbers of children in care.
- Percentage of household waste recycled and composted has increased from 11% to 17%
- Publication of a new 25 year Vision and Action Plan for Newbury (Newbury 2025).
- Facilitation and support for the development of a Town Centre Cinema by 2005
- Second most improved Planning Service in England
- 55% of indicators across all services, where comparisons can be made with the previous year, show improved performance.
- 40% of key Best Value Performance Indicators are in the upper quartile of all authorities.
- The support for our voluntary sector organisation, Community Action West Berkshire (CAWB).
- A highly successful strategic partnership with Amey which is transforming the way the Council does business, including bringing £16m of investment in better infrastructure to support high quality services to the public.
- 3 new weekend drop-in services opened for people with disabilities in response to requests from users and carers.

In December 2002, the Council underwent a Comprehensive Performance Assessment that provided the starting point for a radical review of how the Council manages and improves performance. As part of this process we developed and adopted a new Corporate Plan for the period 2003-2008 that forms the centrepiece of our approach. It is a practical "can do" document that sets out our **ten strategic priorities**:

- *Providing stronger community leadership*
- *Tackling all forms of social exclusion across the district*
- *Promoting independence for older people and people with disabilities*
- *Maintaining high standards of educational achievement across our schools*
- *Ensuring the street environment is clean, well maintained and safe*
- *Increasing the provision of houses that are affordable to those on low incomes*
- *Improving the quality of life for looked after children and other young people at risk*
- *Improving transportation*
- *Improving environment resource management*
- *Creating attractive and vibrant town centres*

These priorities provide a challenging agenda but also a clear focus for all the Council's improvement activity.

The Corporate Plan also highlights **four development themes** for the Council:

- *Performance Improvement*
- *Building Capacity*
- *Customer Focus*
- *Stronger Governance*

These themes set out the agenda for internal change that will be needed if we are to succeed in our strategic priorities and I believe that the focus of these priorities shows that we mean business and that we will work to improve services.

We are currently in the process of refreshing the Corporate Plan in its first annual update, 'Corporate Plan 2003-2008 ~ Update 2004: Building on Success'. Within this document we have taken the opportunity to build upon the original Plan, developing the framework to further progress our service improvement planning. We have done this by summarising the achievements and capturing the lessons of the past, in a complementary supplement to the original Plan. Whilst the ten strategic priorities and four development themes remain central to our approach we are considering refining our focus to provide increased clarity in the future.

This year we have also developed a Medium Term Financial Strategy in parallel with the Corporate Plan and together the two provide a longer term, more stable planning framework for the Council's financial affairs.

We recognise that determination and our own efforts are not enough on their own and that working with the community and with partners is critical to success. Here too, there has been significant progress in the last year. Since its launch in 2003, the Council has been delighted to continue to work with the Local Strategic Partnership (West Berkshire Partnership) to produce the first ever Community Plan for West Berkshire. The Community Plan has set out five leading priorities for West Berkshire as described later in this Plan (see 1.1 – Our Vision for West Berkshire).

Over the last year, the Local Strategic Partnership has developed to include the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership; the Community Safety Partnership and is currently exploring Sustainability and Economic Forums.

Our Corporate Plan reflects our approach to supporting these community priorities.

The Council has also embarked on a strategic partnership for improved services and modernisation with Amey plc.

The past year has continued to see some key changes in the way services are run within the Council and the expertise and investment that Amey has brought complements the skills and enthusiasm of the Council's own staff.

The most public example of the benefits of the Partnership was the opening of a new Customer Contact Centre for the Council, in June 2003, transforming the level of service for those that visit the Council or telephone with enquiries.

I hope you find this Best Value Performance Plan informative and useful; I believe it demonstrates our significant past achievements and shows that we mean business for the future.

Royce Longton  
Leader

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For full details of the Council's services, visit

[www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Our Vision for West Berkshire

The Authority exists to reflect the needs and aspirations of the West Berkshire community and this local context plays a vital role in shaping what we do. However, national initiatives and targets play an increasingly important part in shaping the future direction and role of the Council.

The Local Government Act 2000 emphasised the role of local authorities in providing strong community leadership, as well as providing services and regulatory functions to their local community. This shift in focus was accompanied by the provision of a new power to promote the economic, social and environmental well being of the local community.

### 1.1.1 The Community Plan

The Council has played a leading role in taking forward this work through the establishment of the West Berkshire Partnership coupled with the development of the first West Berkshire Community Plan.

The IDeA Peer review recognised that the Council was, “good at partnership” and, through innovative links with other sectors, we have sought to demonstrate leadership and enthusiasm for the communities we serve. The Audit and Inspection letter 2003 commended the Council on “developing a culture whereby partnership becomes the first option when responding to issues”.

The West Berkshire Partnership is made up of representatives of the public, private and voluntary sectors of West Berkshire who have come together to work in partnership to share ideas, resources and energy and has been recognised by the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) as one of the most advanced in the South East.

The Partnership is still developing and its membership and priorities will change over time. Initially the Partnership started with four Action Groups - Housing, Transport, Learning (The West Berkshire Lifelong Learning Partnership) and Rural issues.

In 2004 the Partnership will expand to include:

- The West Berkshire Safer Communities Partnership – an existing and well-established partnership involving the Police, the Council and many other agencies to reduce crime, substance and youth offending.
- The Children and Young People’s Partnership – a new partnership that brings together all the agencies across education and social care that are involved in supporting young people.

During 2004 the Partnership will also develop two further areas for action :

- An Economic Forum – developing existing links and business forums.

- A Sustainability Forum – this will replace the current West Berkshire Sustainable Development Forum and develop a wider membership to support the whole partnership on promoting economic, social and environmental sustainability issues.

The West Berkshire Partnership is also promoting Healthy Communities and the key recommendations from the first, 'Public Health Report: West Berkshire 2003', relevant to the Partnership have been adopted in the Community Plan.

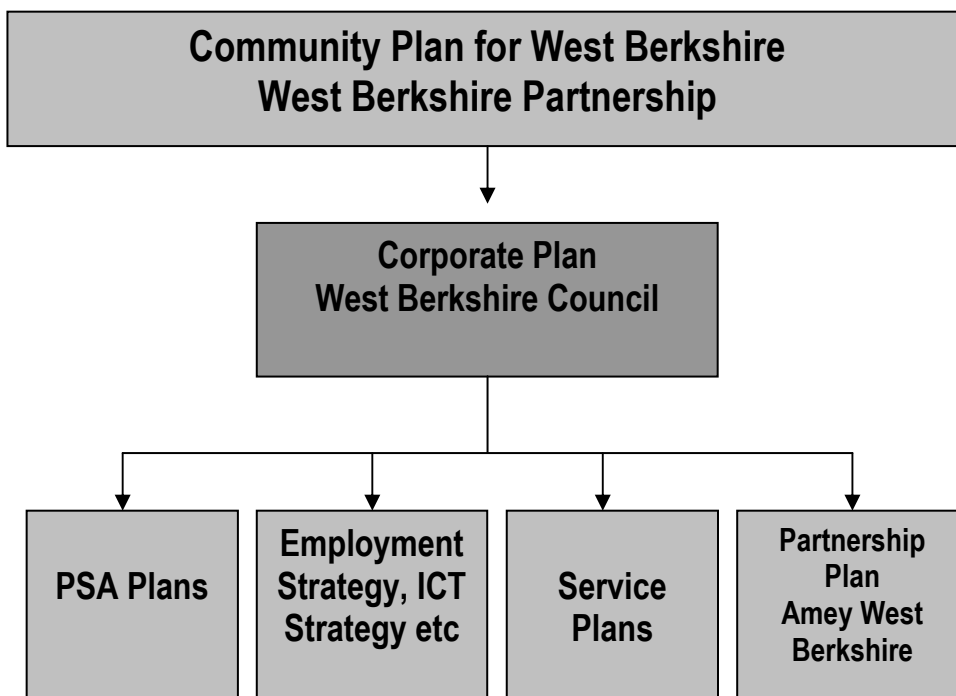
The commitment and determination of the West Berkshire Partnership is demonstrated by the fact that we are one of the first ten in the South East to prepare and publish a Community Plan. Over a hundred participants supported the launch event for the Plan, in February 2003.

This Community Plan sets out the community's vision for West Berkshire and will provide direction for the public, private, voluntary and community based agencies working to improve the quality of life for those living or working in West Berkshire and is the key overarching plan for the Council.

The first annual update of the Plan was completed in February 2004, ensuring that pressures, problems and issues facing West Berkshire continue to be identified and, where appropriate, included in future projects and actions.

**Figure 1** demonstrates how the Community Plan relates to other key strategies and plans within the Authority.

**Figure 1**





**Table 1** demonstrates the five-year vision, priorities and aims outlined in the Community Plan.

<b>Table 1: The West Berkshire Community Plan 2003-2008 – Vision and Priorities</b>		
<b>VISION – “To ensure that people in West Berkshire are able to enjoy a high quality of life by having equal access to services, a safe and healthy environment to live in and prosperity through a range of meaningful work opportunities”</b>		
<b>Priority</b>	<b>Vision</b>	<b>Aim</b>
<b>Housing</b>	<i>Through strategic partnership working to extend the range of housing options for all people living and working in West Berkshire</i>	Extending the range of housing options for all to ensure that everyone has access to adequate affordable housing whether owned or rented.
<b>Transport</b>	<i>To develop sustainable transport solutions for all.</i>	Developing transport solutions matched to people’s needs across the district that provides realistic useful alternatives and information to anyone who needs it
<b>Rural Issues. (Rural inclusion and the environment)</b>	<i>For West Berkshire to have sustainable and inclusive rural communities. To conserve and enhance the environment and landscape of West Berkshire.</i>	Reducing social exclusion in rural areas by providing equal access to services and facilities. To develop solutions to conserve and enhance the rural environment.
<b>Learning</b>	<i>Creating a partnership that seeks to engage the community in lifelong learning.</i>	Developing learning opportunities for people of all ages to support social and economic well-being.
<b>Sustainable Development</b>	<i>Developing a future that is sustainable.</i>	Providing advice on sustainable development and monitoring progress on improvements to quality of life. Measuring whether the targets in the Community Plan are being met and quality of life is actually being improved.

## **1.2 Our Vision for West Berkshire Council**

### **1.2.1 The Corporate Plan**

Following the publication of the West Berkshire Community Plan, the Council published its new five-year Corporate Plan in April 2003. The Corporate Plan supports the Community Plan, to set a clear vision for the Council over a five-year period, 2003-2008.

The Corporate Plan is the key document for setting the agenda for the Council and for improvement planning. The Corporate Plan was widely consulted upon with the public, Members, partners, staff and other stakeholders and its final agreed version was circulated inside and outside the Council.

The Corporate Plan sets out the ten strategic priorities for the Council, which provide the starting point and context for all the Council's performance management, service planning and improvement.

The strategic objectives are cascaded through the Council's service and individual planning frameworks to ensure that all the activity of the Council is integrated and is focussed on delivering improvement linked to our objectives. The IDeA Peer Review recognised that, "the Council's corporate priorities have been identified and cascaded down the organisation, from the Corporate Plan down to individual employees through the appraisal process". More detail of this approach is found in Section 2.

Four performance development themes were also identified to focus internal improvement within the Authority. These are closely linked to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) report and the Corporate Plan Action Plan, which encompasses our proposed improvement targets for the five-year period. In addition, this year the Council has developed a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) covering the period of the next three financial years.

The Corporate Plan envisages taking forward the implementation of the Council's priorities through a network of Programme Groups, which are overseen by the Council's Corporate Directors and the Amey Partnership Director. More detail of this approach is found in Section 2 together with a summary of our approach to improvement planning.

**Table 2** demonstrates the vision, values and priorities for the 5-year period, 2003-2008, set out within the Corporate Plan.

<b>Table 2: The West Berkshire Corporate Plan 2003-2008 – Vision, Values and Strategic Priorities</b>
<b>VISION – “To ensure that people in West Berkshire are able to enjoy a high quality of life by having equal access to services, a safe and healthy environment to live in and prosperity through a range of meaningful work opportunities”</b>
<b>VALUES –</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership</li> <li>• Value for money</li> <li>• Openness</li> <li>• Responsiveness</li> <li>• Equality</li> </ul>
<b>STRATEGIC PRIORITIES –</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tackling all forms of social exclusion across the District</li> <li>2. Promoting independence for older people and people with disabilities</li> <li>3. Maintaining high standards of educational achievement across all our schools</li> <li>4. Ensuring the street environment is clean, well maintained and safe</li> <li>5. Increasing the provision of homes that are affordable to those on low incomes</li> <li>6. Improving the quality of life for looked after children and other young people at risk</li> <li>7. Improving transportation</li> <li>8. Improving environmental resource management</li> <li>9. Providing stronger community leadership</li> <li>10. Creating attractive and vibrant town centres</li> </ol> <p>More details about these priorities, the rationale for selecting them and their key outcomes and outputs can be found in the full Corporate Plan</p>

The first annual update of the Council’s five-year Corporate Plan is subtitled: ‘Building on Success’ and reflects a mood of optimism around the Council that our approach to improving the services that we offer to the public of West Berkshire is working well.

We base this view on what others say about us on a range of government auditors, a major Peer Review exercise by the IDeA, and the public of West Berkshire, all echoing the same theme that West Berkshire is an improving council.

The last year has seen the Council focus ever more closely on the things that really matter. While constrained resources will always be a feature of the Council, our response has been to concentrate our energy on key priorities, and to work with others in a range of partnerships to deliver improvements.

The first year of the Corporate Plan has also seen changes in the way we do business, in the light of lessons we have learnt. Delivering value for money, engaging with partners and making improvements to services to the public, require the whole Council to be clear about what is important. The Corporate Plan itself has been important in providing focus and it has quickly become embedded in the culture of the organisation; but equally as important is that Members, Partners and staff have the confidence to challenge, to contribute and to change the way we work.

This year we have developed a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in parallel with the Corporate Plan and together the two provide a coherent and integrated framework for delivering our goals.

The MTFS has been developed to give a longer and more stable planning horizon for the Council's financial affairs. Though closely linked to the Corporate Plan, the MTFS is a separate document that performs two critical planning functions:

- i. It provides a broad picture of the financial environment of the Council and therefore provides a context for service and improvement planning.
- ii. It supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan by providing a robust financial framework in which resources can be matched to priorities in policy-led budgeting.

The key message from the MTFS is that during the time-span of the current Corporate Plan, the resources available to support corporate objectives are likely to remain, in real terms, static, with the possibility of an overall reduction in resources available. This is a challenging environment for service and improvement planning and places strong emphasis on efficiency, value for money and a close focus on agreed priorities.

More modelling is included in the MTFS and will be published in July 2004 following its planned approval by the Executive.

### **1.2.2 The Comprehensive Performance Assessment**

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is a national initiative to assess the performance of all Councils and was initially undertaken in 2002.

Evidence was drawn from a wide range of inspection reports and documentation and the Council also submitted a "self-assessment" of where it felt its strengths and weaknesses were. An inspection team visited the Council and spent a week with us and the outcome was a judgement based on Service Performance and one based on an assessment of the Council's "Corporate" Performance and Capacity.

The CPA has provided a helpful, independent evaluation of the Council's corporate capacity, processes and achievements. We were judged to be a "**Fair**" Council with "Good" Overall Service Performance (the options were: Poor; Weak; Fair; Good; Excellent). Details of our score can be found in full document, 'The West Berkshire Comprehensive Performance Assessment Report'.

In December 2003, the Council's CPA service scores were updated. The Overall Performance score remained 'Fair' but the Council was judged to have, "made progress in a number of

areas” and that, based on the Council’s current plans, it was, “well placed to improve the way it works and the services it provides to local people”.

Eight areas of service provision were assessed within the CPA; Education, Social Care (adults), Social Care (children), Environment, Housing, Libraries and Leisure, Benefits and Use of Resources, on a scale of 1-4, with 4 being the highest. With the exception of the latter, all areas were judged to be performing at the same level as with the original CPA. Use of Resources was upgraded from 3 to 4.

A full CPA reassessment is expected in 2005 and the Council is optimistic that the methodology is in place to support the Audit Commission’s revised five shared priorities; Sustainable Communities, Transport, Safer and Stronger Communities, Healthier Communities and Children and Young People.

### 1.2.3 IDeA Peer Review

In November 2003, the Council underwent a Peer Review by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). This review was an opportunity to “hold a mirror” up to the Council. The recommendations were grouped under the three main headings of the benchmark.

**Table 3** demonstrates the IDeA recommendations:

<b>IDeA Recommendations</b>
<b>Leadership</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• raise the profile of members</li> <li>• build on the good relationships within the LSP and deliver integrated services</li> <li>• take steps to actively consider non-priorities then shift resources away from them</li> <li>• develop mechanisms to learn from failures and mistakes</li> <li>• celebrate its achievements with staff</li> </ul>
<b>Democratic Accountability and Community Engagement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• take a more strategic approach of the role of scrutiny and align the activities and work programmes of Select Committees more closely to the executive work programme</li> <li>• increase the effectiveness of member challenge around key issues</li> <li>• raise the profile of high ethical standards across the council</li> <li>• continue to improve communication and consultation with local people, businesses and stakeholders</li> <li>• develop a social inclusion strategy and voluntary sector compact</li> </ul>
<b>Managing Performance</b>

- encourage members to visibly drive the performance of the council
- continue to manage recruitment and retention difficulties
- embed process and deliver outcomes which local people will recognise
- take regular reality checks with the Amey contract
- improve communication across the council for the benefit of members and officers
- involve staff in service planning
- identify and use external challenge in service development

The Peer Review was a valuable exercise for the Council as it provided focus, gave opportunities for reflection and reinforced our successes.

#### **1.2.4 The AMEY Partnership Plan**

To modernise and provide better services to the public the Council decided to seek a strategic partnership for the delivery of a wide range of support and customer services. The 10 year partnership, signed in June 2001 with Amey plc has ambitious targets for investment, savings and for service improvement.

Over 400 staff transferred to Amey and, together with new staff and resources that have been brought in to Amey West Berkshire (the name of the partnership), they have set about managing and modernising a range of services on behalf of the Council.

The Partnership Plan is the key document that defines the relationship between the Council and Amey and sets out what the Partnership is seeking to achieve.

The Partnership is an innovative and dynamic way of addressing the challenges facing a modern council and the Partnership Plan captures the essence of what is different about the partnership approach. While a strong and clear contract underpins the relationship and ensures that the delivery of core investment and service improvement is assured the Partnership Plan outlines the “added value” of the partnership approach for the Council and for Amey.

The Council gains, through strategic partnership, a positive and flexible relationship that supports the ten strategic priorities and the four organisational development themes. In areas like performance management, building capacity and customer focus the partnership relationship is critical to developing the skills and capabilities across the whole council that are essential to modernisation.

During the first year of the Partnership all but one of the key performance targets have been met, a £10 million programme of investment has been put in place by Amey and on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2003, a new Customer Contact Centre was opened at the Council’s Market Street offices.

The partnership is one of a handful across the country that operates in this way and demonstrates the Council’s commitment to Best Value, excellent performance and service improvement for the community of West Berkshire.

More details of the Amey West Berkshire Partnership can be found in the Partnership Plan.

## 2. Performance Improvement

Over the last year the Council has continued to develop the processes for managing and improving services. The Corporate Plan now fully embedded within the management framework, the Council has further developed its performance management structure and methods. This section sets out the principles, structures and practical steps the Council is taking to manage and improve performance.

### 2.1 Best Value

**Best Value remains at the heart of the Council's approach to service improvement. Its principles underpin all our improvement work. They are summarised as the 4 C's:**

- Challenge** – Looking at the way we deliver services and challenging the way we do things. Challenge is best achieved when we include partners, customers and other stakeholders in the process.
- Compare** - Efficient and effective services need to constantly compare their performance against others if they are to succeed. Comparisons are not just with other high performing councils but, where possible, with private sector services and other areas of the public sector.
- Compete** - The Council offers a wide range of services many of which can be offered by others, either in competition with the Council or by other organisations on behalf of the Council. Strong focus on facilitating and reviewing alternative competitive approaches is key to success.
- Consult** - The Council serves the people that live and work in West Berkshire. Involving the public in both reviewing and shaping services is the cornerstone of West Berkshire's approach.

Improving services is more than a set of principles and the Council has taken significant steps in the last year to create a focussed and effective approach to deliver improvement.

**The approach has four key elements:**

#### 2.1.1 Focus

The CPA process in 2002 was critical in helping the Council identify the areas where we were doing well and also where we needed more work.

To make best use of available resources, careful prioritisation is essential and, to achieve this focus, the Council responded by developing a new Corporate Plan that set out the ten key strategic priorities together with four organisational development themes. The Corporate Plan was developed with wide consultation with staff, partners, the public and other stakeholders before being adopted by the Council. In December 2003, the CPA assessment of service

scores reported an improvement in 'Use of Resources' from a 3 to a maximum 4 score for the Council that clearly reflects the progress achieved.

The Corporate Plan is the key document for improvement planning and a copy has been circulated to all senior managers. (The Corporate Plan fulfils the role of our CPA Improvement Plan). The strategic priorities are used to set the context for service planning and for individual performance management, to ensure that the focus on delivering improvement is on agreed strategic priorities. In this way the whole Council, Members and officers own the strategic priorities of the Council and use them to focus service, budget and resource decisions. They are cascaded through the organisation.

The first annual Corporate Plan refresh, 'Building on Success', has built upon the original Plan, using the experiences of the past year to progress the improvement planning process. Eight key influences have been identified that have shaped the refreshed document:

- The financial outlook as defined in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- Community Plan for West Berkshire
- The objectives and priorities of the Liberal Democrat administration
- The views of the IDeA Peer Review.
- The analysis of community need and public consultation.
- The comments and challenge of partners.
- National priorities and the views of government regulators.
- The learning that we have gained from the first year's experience of the Corporate Plan.

Whilst the ten strategic priorities and 4 development themes remain fundamental, we will be placing particular emphasis on Promoting Independence for Older People and People with Disabilities, Children's Strategic Partnership and Waste Management in 2004/05.

Figure 2 demonstrates how the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan are disseminated throughout the organisation.



# Cascading Objectives

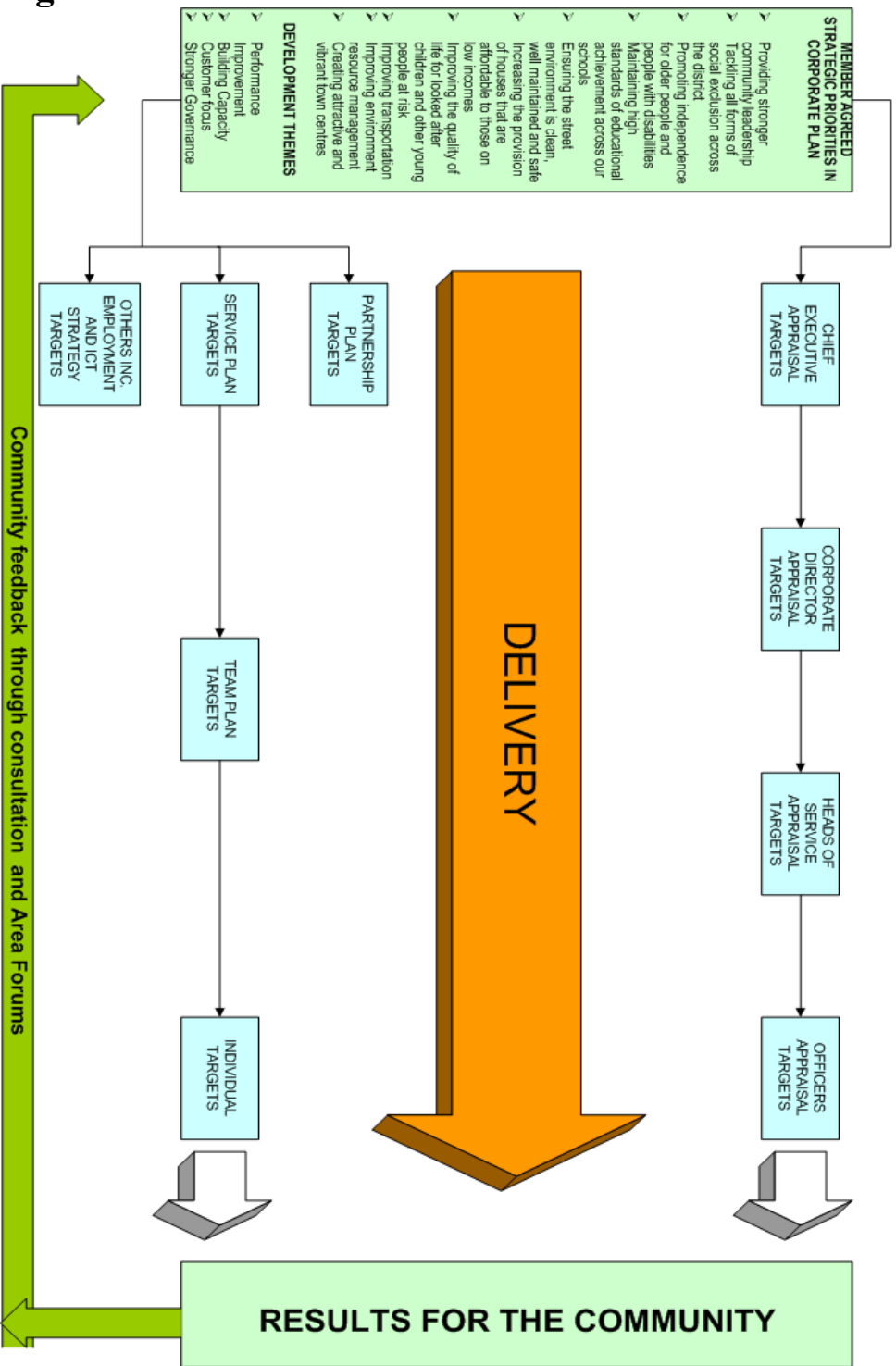


Figure 2

## 2.1.2 Responsibility

The Council is committed to delivering on its objectives and has clearly identified those responsible for driving and managing change. An Improvement Planning Group (IPG) of senior officers of the Council and its strategic partner, Amey, manages improvement planning. The IPG is accountable to Corporate Board and to Members.

Each strategic priority is the responsibility of a Director and they are personally accountable for improvement progress and for developing a work programme. A Senior Manager is also identified as Programme Manager for each headline outcome. The IPG co-ordinates improvement work, oversees progress and resources and takes responsibility for reporting back progress and issues to Corporate Board and to Members.

As indicated above, individual targets to help achieve strategic priorities are embedded in the individual service plans and are allocated down to team and individual appraisal targets. Clear and unambiguous links between high-level strategic objectives and service and individual targets ensure a clear cascade of responsibility and accountability.

The effectiveness of this approach is managed by the IPG and monitored and challenged by Members through Scrutiny.

## 2.1.3 Action

Figure 3 (overleaf) identifies a variety of options for driving and resourcing improvement projects in the “Toolkit” for improvement planning. The Council has adopted this approach because it is a flexible and adaptable way of dealing with a wide range of improvement planning issues. This is a significant change from the previous approach to Best Value that had a single high-level approach of a Best Value review of services. The toolkit includes key elements of the new Council-wide approach to achieve “best practice” with commitment to:

- benchmark service and processes with the best from private and public sector
- apply Best Value principles through a variety of review approaches

This dynamic and practical approach is co-ordinated by the Improvement Planning Group (IPG), which monitors and co-ordinates specific action around improvement projects identified in support of the strategic priorities.

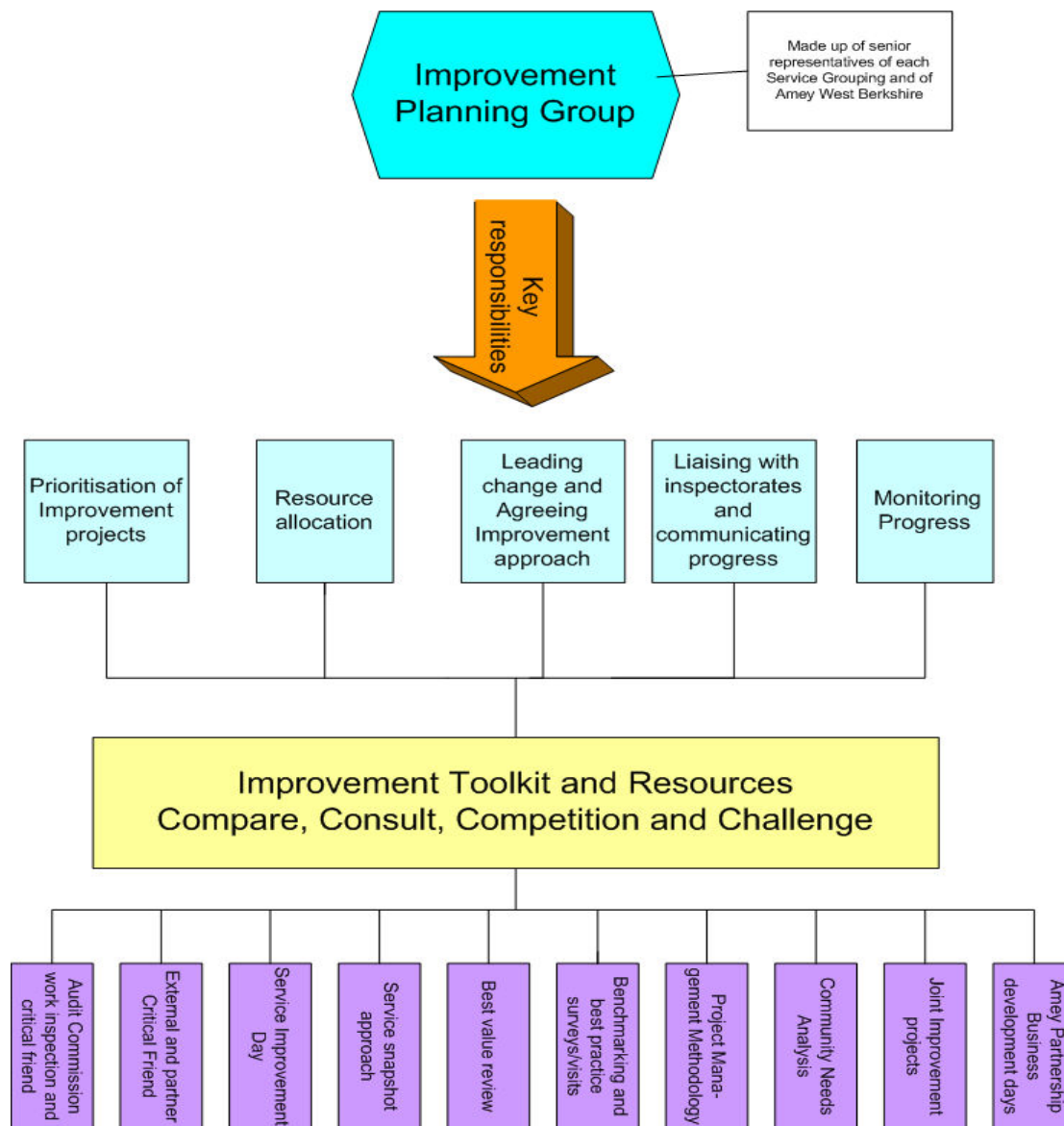
Over the past year the IPG has organised a number of specific Service Improvement Days (SIDs) and Senior Management Seminars. SIDs are full day sessions, which are attended by Corporate Board in the morning, giving the opportunity for discussion and scoping of issues followed by an afternoon session attended by a wider group of stakeholders. Senior Management Seminars sessions, addressing cross-cutting issues, are attended by Senior Managers within the Council. The schedule of SIDs and Senior Management Seminars for the past year can be seen in the table below:

**Table 4** The schedule of SIDs and Senior Management Seminars:

<b>Service Improvement Day</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Transport	17.6.03
Community Leadership	25.7.03
Older Persons	1.10.03
Performance Improvement	9.12.03
<b>Senior Management Seminar</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Corporate Plan	19.5.03
Learning Organisation	17.7.03
Customer Focus/Social Inclusion	10.9.03
Developing Partnerships	11.2.04

A programme of SIDs and Senior Management Seminars is planned for the current financial year, the details of which will be finalised shortly.

It is important to recognise that the Corporate Plan contains a detailed Action Plan for each of the strategic priorities and organisational themes. As illustrated in Figure 2 objectives and actions are cascaded directly into service plans and into individual appraisals to ensure that they are embedded in the performance management framework of the Council. This ensures that while the IPG has an important role in co-ordinating our Best Value approach, the **whole Council** has responsibility for delivering good quality services and continuous improvement within a clear, strong and unambiguous performance management framework. This culture makes clear that managers across the Council monitor the effectiveness of individual performance to ensure that plans turn into action.



**Figure 3** demonstrates how the IPG has implemented the Improvement Toolkit and Resources.

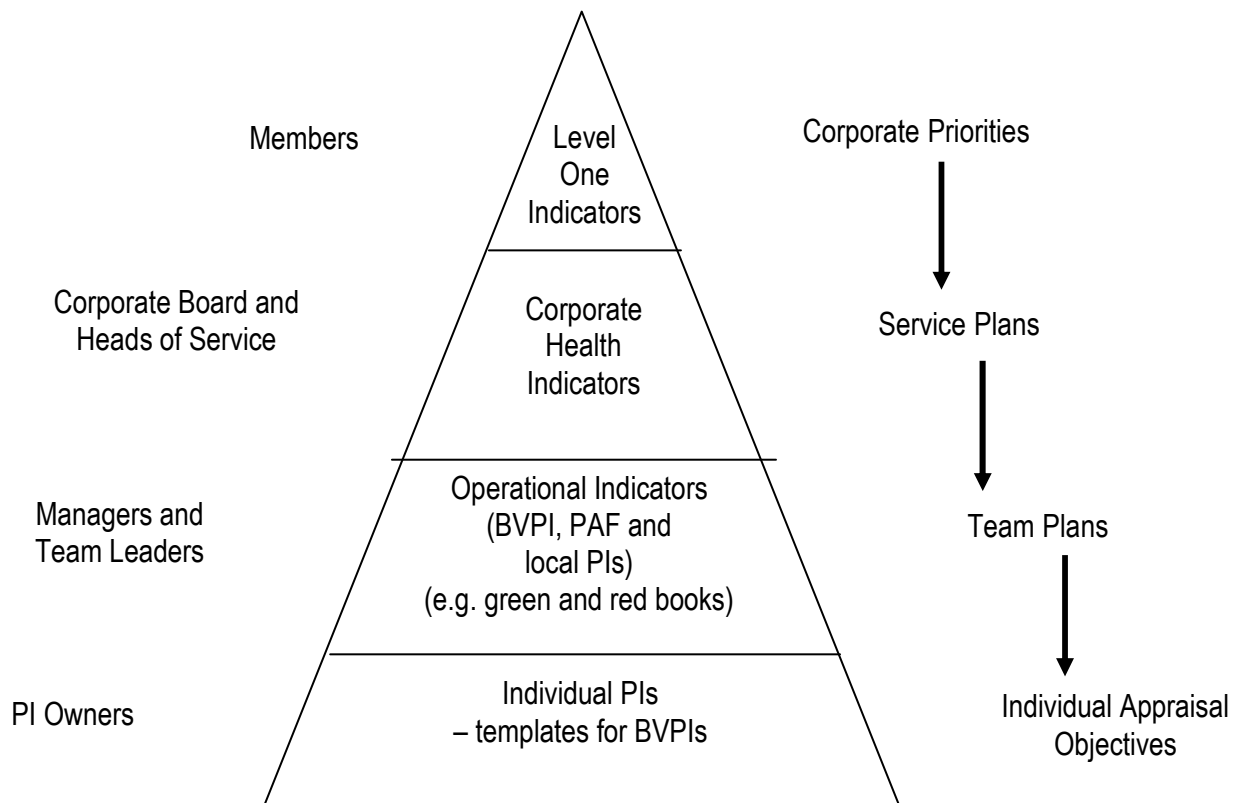
### 2.1.4 Results

Monitoring the performance of service delivery and improvement is critical to success. The Council has an extensive range of performance indicators in place for all service areas including those for the Amey West Berkshire partnership. An improved “traffic light” method is in place (Green – OK; Amber – in danger of missing target; Red – missed target and needing additional focus) for reporting to Corporate Board and to Members.

The indicators are grouped into Level 1 - Strategic, Level 2 - Corporate Health and Level 3 - Operational for reporting purposes. Level 1 are reported to Members every quarter, Level 2 to Corporate Board and Level 3 to Corporate Directors and Heads of Service. The reporting framework also establishes basic benchmarking of services (where data is available) against other local authorities.

Whilst Members are presented with Level 1 indicators only, to allow them to focus on the key issues, a Members' portal is currently being developed within the Intranet to enable them to access more detailed reports through the use of hyperlinks.

**Figure 4: The linkages and hierarchy of performance indicators:**



The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) which took place in 2002 provided an independent snapshot of the Council at that point.

Whilst a full CPA reassessment is not expected until 2005, the Council CPA service scores were reviewed in December 2003. Although the overall performance score remained 'Fair', the review recognised that the Council had, "made progress in a number of areas" and that, based on the Council's current plans, it was, "well placed to improve the way it works and the services it provides to local people". Seven of the eight areas of service provision were judged to be performing at the same level as they were in the original assessment whilst 'Use of Resources' was upgraded from 3 to 4 (on a scale of 1-4 with 4 being the highest). More details can be found in Section 1.2.2. The Annual Audit Management letter also complimented the Council on the progress and improvements it had achieved and confirmed the positive direction of travel that the Council was making.

In November 2003 the Council underwent an IDeA Peer Review. As described in Section 1.2.3, an IDeA Peer review is an intense process where Members and officers from other Councils, under the guidance of the Government-sponsored IDeA, visit the Council, gather evidence and make a judgement on the Council's performance.

The Council believes that voluntarily undergoing an IDeA Peer review was a visible commitment to continuing to improve services for the people of West Berkshire.

## **2.2 Corporate Plan Action and Project Plans in progress and completed in 2003/2004**

The past year has seen the introduction of the Audit Commission's joint audit and inspection programme and this, in turn, has set the agenda for the Council's internal review programme, resulting in a selection of cross-cutting reviews rather than the more traditional service-specific Best Value reviews:

- **Human Resource Management:** Jan-March 2004  
Review of Human Resource systems and policies for workforce planning with particular reference to recruitment and retention.
- **Partnership Working:** Jan-March 2004  
Review of approach to partnership working and how effectiveness is measured including examining the overall approach, performance management, probity in partnerships and the fit between LSP and Community Strategy.
- **Development of Joint Working:**
  - Exercise to help effectiveness of Berkshire Unitary Authorities' joint working. – Ongoing
  - Develop approach to include opportunities for joint working with Oxfordshire and Hampshire authorities. – To be agreed
- **Performance Management:** completed  
Develop and implement performance management framework.
- **Revenues and Benefits:** completed  
Whole service inspection of the Revenue and Benefits service.
- **Customer Access Strategy:** Dec 2003-Feb 2004  
Review policies and procedures for customer access to services.
- **Development Control and Strategic Planning:** March 2004-  
Desktop inspection of the emerging recommendations from review of development control.

### **Other regulatory and inspection work**

- **Balanced Housing Market – Housing Inspectorate**  
Cross Berkshire assessment of councils' approach to the Balanced Housing Market.
- **Benefits Annual Assessment – Benefit Fraud Inspectorate**  
Updated assessment of Benefits service performance.
- **Housing Annual Assessment – Housing Inspectorate/Audit Commission**  
Updated assessment of Housing service performance.

- **Annual Review of Social Care Performance – Social Services Inspectorate**  
Review of current service improvement and prospects for improvement.
- **Environment Annual Assessment – Audit Commission**  
Updated assessment of Environment service performance.
- **Qualitative Assessment – Audit Commission**  
Qualitative assessment of the Council's approach to securing continuous improvement.

## 2.3 Improvement Programme for 2004/2005

West Berkshire's improvement programme reflects the priorities published in the West Berkshire Community and Corporate Plans and in response to the CPA assessment and recommendations.

### **This programme will consist of:**

- Audit Commission's audit and inspection programme which includes the following joint working programme;
  1. Stronger Community Leadership – Community Safety
  2. Improved Environmental Resource Management – Planning Processes
  3. Regular Performance Assessment of Housing
  4. Regular Performance Assessment of Environment
  5. Regular Performance Assessment of Cultural Service Activity
  6. Scrutiny Effectiveness (August-October 2004)
  7. Transport and Land Use (May-June 2004)

### **The Audit Commission's inspection programme will cover:**

1. CSCI inspection of Children's Services (June 2004)
2. Supporting People Inspection (May 2004)
3. Review of Adult Services (to be agreed)

## 2.4 Consultation and Community Needs Analysis

Listening to the views of the public and partners is the cornerstone of the Council's approach to shaping and improving services to deliver what the public want and we are committed to understanding and learning from the views of others. Consultation is the process by which we determine these views of stakeholders and the results of consultation are used to help make decisions about policies, priorities and strategies and to make better use of limited resources.

The Council believes that it should take a strategic approach to consultation (an approach agreed with by central government) and published a Consultation Strategy in early 2002.

The Consultation Strategy is regularly reviewed and aims to provide guidance on all aspects of consultation to be undertaken across the organisation and suggest ways to achieve a co-ordinated, joined-up approach for the authority, embracing the principle of continuous

improvement. A comprehensive Action Plan has been established, a number of the targets of which have been completed or are underway.

By the end of December 2003 a Consultation Database had been established to enable the co-ordination of all consultation throughout the Authority. Details of both proposed and completed consultation can be held centrally on this database, and made available throughout the organisation. This framework will support a more strategic approach, reducing duplication and consultation fatigue, making better use of resources and learning from experience. The Council is currently recruiting to resource the development of the second phase of this exercise: the education and training of staff to ensure that the database is utilised to its full benefit.

A variety of approaches are used to consult in an effort to reach all groups in the community. Many of the standard surveys are carried out by postal or telephone questionnaire, as they are cost-efficient, although more innovative approaches are also utilised when appropriate.

As part of the democratic process, the Council holds quarterly Area Forums addressing specific local issues relevant to the four planning areas; Newbury, Kennet and Pang Valley, Eastern and Downlands. These forums have given local residents the opportunity to discuss, question officers and give their views publicly on issues of particular concern for the area

Alternative approaches are also being explored with a range of our community partners. The West Berkshire Partnership in particular is exploring the opportunity to join forces and to seek the views of residents, residents groups and other organisations, particularly hard to reach groups, through the development Community Needs Analysis.

Members also provide a critical channel for dialogue with the public and for consultation. As elected Community representatives they have a role representing the Community to the Council as well as representing the Council to the Community.

Our four Select Committees provide a forum for consultation, through co-opted membership of non-voting committee members who are not Members of the Council and through the in-depth scrutiny sessions that have taken place.

West Berkshire Council has a Community Panel of approximately 5000 residents who have agreed to be consulted on Council matters. The use of this Panel results in higher response rates but the Authority is aware of the need to improve the representation on the Panel both by number and diversity and to widen its use.

In September 2003, the Authority carried out its triennial statutory Best Value Satisfaction Survey. Although only a requirement of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) every three years, West Berkshire carries out a similar exercise each year to provide up to date data on satisfaction levels within the Authority. Five thousand surveys were sent out to households supplied in a postal address file from the ODPM and 1713 completed responses were received.

The questionnaire focussed more on the community as a whole and not just on services provided by West Berkshire Council, as it had previously and this has made year on year comparisons quite difficult.

Overall satisfaction levels remained relatively high but levels of 'very satisfied' responses had declined slightly from the original survey in 2000/01. Although overall satisfaction had dropped satisfaction levels with specific services, when the respondent had had personal experience of the service, remained high.



Full details on the annual satisfaction survey can be found in the Annual Satisfaction Survey Report for 2003/04.

## 3. Statement of Contracts

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### 3.1 Code of conduct

#### Valuing the Workforce

The Council agreed to a Strategic Partnership with Amey plc to deliver the support services on a ten-year contract from June 2002. The support services consist of finance, IT, procurement, business support, human resources and customer services.

The full protection of TUPE applied to this transfer and full consultation took place with employees, Members and recognised Trade unions. The Code of Practice on workforce matters (Annex D) has been fully adopted by Amey/WB and will support the need for a well-trained and motivated workforce to deliver the support services to the Council. In addition Employment Practices are in place in the Partnership to secure a high quality service will be delivered through the life of the contract.

Pension rights for transferred staff are protected. Amey/WB secured admitted body status to the Local government Pension Scheme (LGPS) therefore ensuring that transferred staff continue to have access to the same pension scheme for their future service in Amey/WB.

New joiners to the Partnership are offered terms and conditions, which are no less favourable than those of the transferred staff thus protecting the one tier workforce status.

**The Performance Management Scheme recognised by the Council has been adopted by the Partnership and will help to support employees in achieving continuous performance during the length of the contract.**

## 4. Some Useful Links

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### **Community Plan -**

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/council.nsf/pages/communityplanintro.html?OpenDocument&Start=1&Count=99&Expand=14.1>

### **A Better Future for All –**

..\..\GLOBAL\Service Plans\Community,Corporate and Partnership Plans\A Better Future for All

### **Corporate Plan -**

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/services.nsf/Public/AllServices/5DD09311CF52FF2980256CB00043EEA8>

### **Corporate Plan Action Plan-**

[http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/services.nsf/642371f24867f0958025661e0030404c/5dd09311cf52ff2980256cb00043eea8/\\$FILE/CPAction.pdf](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/services.nsf/642371f24867f0958025661e0030404c/5dd09311cf52ff2980256cb00043eea8/$FILE/CPAction.pdf)

### **Corporate Plan — ‘Building on Success’ (first annual update)-**

To be agreed

### **Medium Term Financial Strategy –**

To be agreed

### **Strategy and Commissioning Service Plan –**

[\\OFF\\_FILE\\_SERVER\VOL1\GLOBAL\Service Plans\Strategy and Commissioning\Service Plans 2004.05\Service Plan - 04.05.doc](\\OFF_FILE_SERVER\VOL1\GLOBAL\Service Plans\Strategy and Commissioning\Service Plans 2004.05\Service Plan - 04.05.doc)

### **Environment and Public Protection Service Plan -**

<..\..\GLOBAL\Service Plans\Environment and Public Protection\Service plan 2004.05\Service plan - Management Board.doc>

### **Community Care and Housing Service Plan -**

<..\..\GLOBAL\Service Plans\Community Care & Housing\Service Plans 2004.05\Service Plan -CCH base04.05.doc>

### **Children and Young People Service Plan -**

<..\..\GLOBAL\Service Plans\Children & Young People\Service Plans 2004.05\Service Plan - CYP base04.05.doc>

## **The West Berkshire Local Public Service Agreement -**

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/services.nsf/Public/AllServices/19A37E1B69E48F0C80256C2900346A1E?OpenDocument>

<http://www.local-regions.odpm.gov.uk/lpsa>

## **The West Berkshire Comprehensive Performance Assessment Report -**

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/council.nsf/pages/CPA.html?OpenDocument&Start=1&Count=99&Expand=7.1>

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/CPA-CORP-ASSESS-REPORT.asp?CatID=&ProdID=561AE956-A40A-44A1-9CA2-9E6D472393DE>

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa/scorecard.asp?CatID=ENGLISH^LG^LOCAL-VIEW^AUTHORITIES^LG-LV-WESBDC>

## **Service Scores**

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa/stcc/scorecard.asp?CategoryID=ENGLISH^576^LOCAL-VIEW^AUTHORITIES^108983&CPAOnly=True&CPAPhase=CPA-Dec-2003>

## **CPA 2005 – The New Approach –**

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/reports/NATIONAL-REPORT.asp?CategoryID=&ProdID=4E4FE2C4-BA37-4974-AF00-D7758489C896>

## **Partnership Plan, Amey & West Berkshire Council –**

To be agreed

## **The West Berkshire Partnership -**

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/bpart.nsf/leadpages/WestBerkshirePartnership?OpenDocument&Start=1&Count=99&Expand=1>

## **Office of Deputy Prime Minister – Performance Indicators -**

Present:- <http://www.local-regions.odpm.gov.uk/bestvalue/indicators/indicatorsindex.htm>

Past:- <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/performance/index.asp?CatID=PRESS-CENTRE>

Reviews:- <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/authority.asp?CatID=ENGLISH^LG^LOCAL-VIEW^AUTHORITIES^LG-LV-WESBDC>

## **IDeA -**

<http://www.idea-infoage.gov.uk>

## **IDeA West Berkshire Report –**

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/lqip/reviews/?id=westberkshire>

## **The N.U.B. Benchmarking Authorities -**

<http://www.bathnes.gov.uk>

<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/Generic/Info/WebsiteAbout.htm>

<http://www.eastriding.gov.uk>

<http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/nfdefault.asp>

<http://www.iow.gov.uk>

<http://www.northlincs.gov.uk/NorthLincs>

<http://www.northsomerset.gov.uk>

<http://www.southglos.gov.uk>

<http://www.telford.gov.uk/twc/twc.htm>

## **Area Forums -**

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/council.nsf/pages/AreaForums.html?OpenDocument&Start=1&Count=99&Expand=5.1>

## **Community Panel -**

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/council.nsf/pages/C5B4E374A5B9FC2B80256B410040B0CF?opendocument>

## **Consultation Strategy/ Community Needs Analysis –**

<http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/services.nsf/pages/D93FCD322DFEFE0D80256BF4002EFB7B?opendocument>

## **Best Value Satisfaction Survey 2003/2004**

[http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/services.nsf/fde37a836fc2a09d852569340067a959/061e7087b5af6e7e80256e97002a510a/\\$FILE/Annual%20Satisfaction%20Survey%202003-04.pdf](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/WestBerkshire/services.nsf/fde37a836fc2a09d852569340067a959/061e7087b5af6e7e80256e97002a510a/$FILE/Annual%20Satisfaction%20Survey%202003-04.pdf)

## 5. The Council's Performance in Detail

### 5.1 Performance Information for 2004/2005

We are committed to improving the services we provide to the people of West Berkshire. To do this we are developing a performance management framework that makes clear what we want to achieve, monitors how well we are doing and identifies what needs to change if we are to do better.

To help judge our performance we use a set of performance indicators, many of which are set by the Government. They are designed to provide a rounded view of performance including peoples' experience of services, cost and quality. These 'dimensions' of performance are:

- Strategic objectives: why the service exists and what it seeks to achieve.
- Cost/efficiency: the level of resources and how well they are used to deliver a service.
- Service delivery outcomes: whether the service delivers what it says it will.
- Quality: the quality of services delivered including the experience of people using the service.
- Fair access: ease and equality of access to services.

Other indicators include those set by the Audit Commission and by Government departments. Some local indicators have also been developed to reflect local priorities and circumstances.

This section sets out our performance against these national and local indicators. In addition to the most recent performance information, we have included additional information on:

- Previous years performance
- Comparisons against other local authorities
- Our targets for the future
- An assessment of performance.

As some of the performance indicators are new, they have not yet been measured, cannot be compared with past performance or with other councils, and targets cannot yet be set.

## 5.2 Assessment of Performance

### 5.2.1 Comparisons against other local authorities

West Berkshire's performance is compared with the all other local authorities in the country. This information is based on the 2002/03 out-turn and covers all the main Best Value performance indicators showing West Berkshire performance in relation to the other authorities as follows;



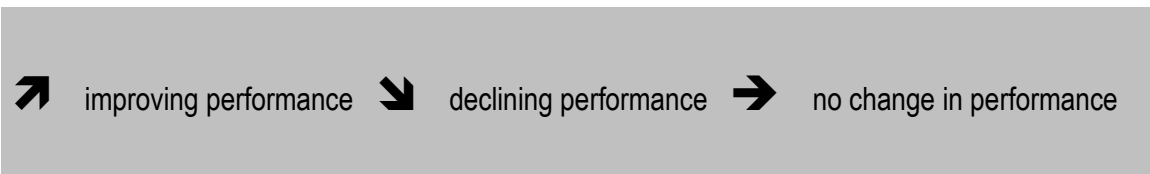
### 5.2.2 Targets achieved

This is based on West Berkshire's achievement of its own targets set for the year 2003/04 and is shown as follows:



### 5.2.3 Performance Trend

Trend information is based on changes achieved in the last financial year (2003/04) compared to the previous financial year (2002/03) and is shown by arrows as follows;



## 5.3 Explanation of the format of the Performance Indicator Table

The following table contains 13 columns

- Indicator Code (column 1)
- Indicator Description (column 2)
- Actual Performance 2001/02 (column 3).  
(Our actual performance as audited by District Audit).
- Actual Performance 2002/03 (column 4).  
(Our actual performance as audited by District Audit).
- Our Targets set for 2003/04 (column 5).  
(This is the target we set last year. Many of these were published in last year 's Best Value Performance Plan).
- Actual Performance 2003/04 (column 6).  
(This year's actual performance, where final data is not yet available best estimates will be listed in italics ).
- Our Targets, 2004/05, 2005/06, 2006/07 (columns 7-9).  
(Our targets for the next three years).
- Assessment of Performance (column 10-12).  
(An assessment of our performance based on:)
  - *how well we compare with the best 25% of authorities with which we are compared and where information is available (column 10);*
  - *whether we have met the targets we set ourselves last year based on our best estimates (column 11);*
  - *whether our performance in 2003/04 is getting better, worse or staying the same (column 12).*
- National targets (column 13).  
(National targets set by Central Government).