

**Environment and Public
Protection
Directorate Plan**

2005 - 2008

DRAFT

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- Customer Focus

The Corporate Priorities

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- S5: Ensuring that the street environment is clean, well maintained and safe
- S8: Improving Transportation
- S9: Enhancing sustainability and improving environmental resource management

Other Corporate Priorities that the Environment and Public Protection Directorate Contributes to;

- S10: Creating Attractive and Vibrant Town Centres

Appendix A - Policy Framework

Appendix B - Service Action Plans (To be attached to final plan)

Appendix C - BVPIs including PSA targets

If you wish to see any of the documents referred to in this Plan, or require any further information, please contact Carole Ruse, Policy Executive, Environment and Public Protection 01635 519972 or email cruse@westberks.gov.uk

Introduction

This is **West Berkshire Council's Environment and Public Protection Directorate Plan 2005 - 2008**. It is intended to provide an overview of the way in which we will deliver and develop our services over the next three years. It sets out our vision and priorities, linked to a strategy for how we propose to deliver them.

The Directorate Plan is a key part of our strategic framework. The Directorate Plan is an integrated part of the **Corporate Plan**¹ that contains a detailed explanation of the Council's vision and priorities for 2003 - 2008. The Council's key priorities underpin delivery of Environment and Public Protection services. These include ensuring that the street environment is clean, well maintained and safe, improving transportation, enhancing the sustainability of the West Berkshire Community and preserving the local environment through improving environmental resource management.

The Corporate Plan supports the **Community Plan** developed by the Local Strategic Partnership, which works towards actions on the key themes of housing, transport, rural issues and learning. The LSP has been formed in conjunction with private and voluntary sector partners as well as other public sector organisations.

We measure our progress in meeting priorities through monitoring of **Service Action Plans**. These are drawn up each year and contain detailed actions and targets for each of our service areas: Highways and Engineering, Public Protection, Countryside and Environment and Planning and Transport Strategy. The action plans inform team and individual work plans, which are monitored through our **Performance Management framework**.

The services that we are responsible for have a direct impact on the quality of life for the people of West Berkshire in their daily lives and also for the people who work in and visit the area. We are committed to ensuring that all of these planning documents, including this Directorate Plan, are real working tools.

John Ashworth
Corporate Director

¹ Corporate Plan Update 2005 "Making a Real Difference"

How this Plan is Set Out

This plan shows how all the services within Environment and Public Protection contribute, not only to the Corporate Priorities that they have direct responsibility for, but also to cross cutting priorities for the Council as a whole. The plan also shows where we feel we are now, in terms of service delivery and where we are aiming to take the service. Plans are set out for how to achieve this delivery and the measures in place to ensure that our targets have been achieved. Priorities are clearly set out and opportunities and constraints are considered in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Section one of this plan concerns national and Governmental drivers for the Directorate, such as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), national indicators and our own Performance Management Framework, which supports such measures as the CPA.

Section two looks at how we deliver our services and support or contribute to the Corporate Plan Priorities, showing what we feel we have achieved to date and what are our priorities for delivery over the next three years.

The Locality

West Berkshire covers more than half the total area of Berkshire and its population of 144,483 is by far the most dispersed of all the unitary authorities in Berkshire. Whilst a proportion of residents live in built up areas to the West of Reading and in the major towns of Newbury, Hungerford and Thatcham, the majority live in the rural parts of the district. 74% of the area is classified as an "Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty" (AONB). This rural aspect of much of the district presents many challenges. For example, public transport is less viable and the cost of supplying services is greater.

West Berkshire shares in the overall affluence of the South East. It is home to a number of well-known national and international companies. A strong commercial base, characterised by new technology industries with a strong service sector and some manufacturing and wholesale organisations, combine to give West Berkshire one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country at less than 1%.

Against this, West Berkshire also has areas of deprivation. Serving these areas is a challenge in terms of targeting "hard to reach" groups within the community.

National Context for Environment and Public Protection

Whilst listening to the community and working in partnership to achieve our goals to deliver quality services to our customers, the Environment and Public Protection (E and PP) Directorate, like all other Local Government Services has nationally set targets and responsibilities. The Government is promoting the key modernisation themes for public sector services of:

- Delivery of prompt and responsive services
- Ensuring equal access to services
- Setting and measuring performance targets
- Securing value
- Achieving better outcomes for service users

These themes guide the work we do and have an impact on how we balance our resources in order to achieve against the standards set.

Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Gershon Review

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) has been developed over the last two years 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:

- it provides a broad picture of the financial environment of the Council and therefore a context for service and improvement planning;
- it supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan by providing a robust financial framework in which resources can be matched to priorities through 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.

This is a challenging environment for service and improvement planning and places a strong emphasis on efficiency, value for money and a close focus on agreed priorities. More detailed modelling is included in the MTFS but it is apparent that the overall expenditure on Council services will need to be

closely controlled if a gap between activity and resources is not to develop over the coming three years.

The MTFs has set out and modelled the financial impact of various levels of Council Tax together with the likely known pressures arising from demographic growth and service improvement initiatives together with inflation. This modelling approach reinforces that budget setting for the next three years will need to be carefully managed and requires clear and robust mechanisms to ensure that levels of service activity can be sustained within the resources available.

"The MTFs is set in the context of the Government's 2004 Spending Review and its resulting implications for local government. This highlights not only the Government's spending priorities for the next three years but also its intention to seek annual efficiency savings as a result of the Gershon Review. In addition, the MTFs also has to take into account significant local financial commitments including the new Waste PFI, the Council's Capital Strategy and the implications of identified strategic risks facing the Authority".²

Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) and e-government

The Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) initiative is about delivering services electronically and supporting local governance generally by improving the quality of services and strengthening community leadership.

IEG seeks to structure services around the needs and convenience of the customer, delivering first point of contact outcomes wherever possible. IEG also seeks to harness the power of e-government to positively tackle social exclusion and services and communities.

The following table shows the priority outcomes for IEG projects applicable to E and PP.

Outcome	Lead Officer
Online receipt and processing of planning and building control applications	Head of Planning and Transport Strategy
Sharing of trading standards data between councils for business planning and enforcement purposes	Trading Standards Manager
Online facilities to be available to allow the public to inspect local public transport	Planning and Transport Policy Manager Transport Services Manager

² "Efficiency, Investment and Stability" A Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2005-2008

timetables and information via available providing organisation including links to "live" systems for interactive journey planning.	
Online public e-consultation facilities for new proposals on traffic management, including publication of consultation survey results.	Traffic Manager
E-forms for parking "contravention mitigation" including email notification of form receipt and appeal procedures.	Traffic Manager
GIS-based presentation of information of form receipt and appeal procedures.	Highways Manager

BVPI 157

BVPI 157 involves around 800 services that the council provides and measures how e-enabled these are against 10 different interaction types. Each service takes ownership for reporting this indicator as they have specialist knowledge of their area and what can reasonably be e-enabled. There is an appointed officer to co-ordinate data collection and to act as a contact for the centralised reporting. The government target is for all Council services to be 100% e-enabled by December 2005.

Freedom of Information

The Council prepared well for the introduction of the new legislative requirements under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and was "ahead of the game" when the Act came into force on the 1st January 2005. The act creates a general right of access to recorded information held by the authority and places a duty on the authority to adopt and maintain an approved "Publication Scheme" relating to the publication of recorded information and to publish information in accordance with the scheme.

For E&PP this also meant being aware of the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004, which have similar implications on access to information in respect of requests for environmental information held by the services. E&PP staff attended the specialist EIR training as preparation for this.

E and PP have already received many requests for information under this new legislation, information has been provided by Highways and Engineering, Planning and Waste Services. All information requests have been provided within the time stipulated. Existing procedures and systems have proved reliable in this respect. The Council website has a dedicated area listing

recent FoI requests, giving ease of access and saving time on duplicate requests for information.

Licensing

There have been major changes in the licensing regime with a shift of emphasis to a unified licensing structure encompassing a single licence for all forms of entertainment and alcohol sales. This brings duties and responsibilities on the Public Protection Service in dealing with a wider client base and new partners, such as Thames Valley Police, with whom both strategic and practical plans are in place for dealing with all aspects of licensing and the impact on the community. In drawing up its local licensing policy, West Berkshire Council recognises that in comparison with larger conurbations there are relatively few problems. The central pillar of the policy is that the Council will ensure, with its partners, such problems are minimised. In dealing with known trouble spots the Council has declared its main objectives to be the prevention of sales of alcohol to persons already under the influence of drink, and the prevention of under age sales.

Equalities

The E and PP Directorate applies the aims and values of the Council Equalities Strategy to all areas of its work. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 has required all public organisations to carry out Equality Impact Assessments on their policies and services to ascertain whether there are any adverse (or positive) impacts on Black and Minority Ethnic groups. The Council has widened the remit to cover the needs of disabled people in assessing these impacts.

The timetable for Equality Impact Assessments within E and PP runs on a three-year rolling programme as follows:

Public Protection	Year³
Food Safety, Animal Health, Trading Standards, Consumer Advice and Education, CCTV, Environmental Health.	2003-04 (1)
Countryside and Environment	Year
Waste, Grounds Maintenance.	2005-06 (3)

³ 2003-04 = Year 1, 2004-05 = Year 2, and 2005-06 = year 3

Countryside Management, Rights of Way, Traveller Liaison.	2004-05 (2)
Planning and Transport Strategy	Year
Building Control, Building Conservation, Enforcement, Local Planning, Transport Policy* (with operations - year 2).	2004-05 (2)
Development Control	2003-04 (1)
Highways and Engineering	Year
Project Management	2005-06 (3)
Highways	2005-06 (3)
Traffic Management	2005-06 (3)
Transport Services* (with Transport Policy year 2)	2004-05 (2)

Corporately, the Council is working with the Commission for Racial Equality in Reading, to refine and improve our work on Impact Assessments and to improve our consultation procedures with the BME and other communities within West Berkshire.

Results of completed Equality Impact Assessments can be viewed on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk

Risk Management

Effective risk management provides West Berkshire Council with a means of improving strategic, operational and financial management. It also assists in minimising financial losses, service disruption, bad publicity, threats to public health or injury to employees or members of the public, which may result in claims for compensation.

As part of the service planning process E and PP review risks associated with service delivery and have embedded actions that are required to mitigate those risks within Service Action Plans.

The Authority faces a challenging time through European and UK legislation primarily aimed at reducing waste to landfill and increasing levels of recycling and composting. Over the next few years the Authority will have to

significantly reduce the amount of waste sent landfill for face large fines for waste disposals and the increasing cost of landfill tax.

West Berkshire's Adopted Municipal Waste Management Strategy and approved finding allocated under the Government's Private Finance Initiative [PFI] will enable the authority to increase levels of recycling to over 50% and significantly reduce the potential financial risk associated with large fines and landfill tax.

Local Public Service Agreements (LPSA 1)

In June 2003 the Council put forward a case to be included in an initiative from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on Local Public Service Agreements⁴. Stretch targets were agreed with Central Government across the Council and pump-priming money of £894,000 was provided to help achieve the agreed targets. Performance Reward Grant of up to £3.2m would be available at the end of the agreements depending on how successful the Council had been in achieving its targets.

The Highways and Engineering Service has a specific target for reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on West Berkshire roads.⁵ We are currently on target to meet this objective by the agreed deadline of December 2005.

The Abandoned Vehicle Public Service Agreement has produced excellent results with the number of abandoned vehicles reported falling by 25% on last year with a complimentary increase in the number of vehicles collected through the 'free of charge' removal scheme increasing to 62% over last year. On average 99% of abandoned vehicles are being removed within seven days, well inside the PSA target of 90%.

The Public Protection Service manages the local PSA in respect of home safety, accidents and fire reduction. These targets are expected to reach a satisfactory out turn.

⁴ See Local Public Service Agreement document

⁵ Details of all PSA targets for E and PP are included in the appendix on Performance Management attached to this Plan.

LPSA 2

The main emphasis of the second-generation agreements is to develop the targets through and with our partners using the West Berkshire Partnership as a "decision making" body. The targets should also be directly linked to the Council's Community Plan and CPA Improvement Plan. There will be no Government prescribed targets for LPSA 2 although if the Council is deemed to be "under-performing" in any area it will be expected to include a target within its agreement or provide a case for not doing so. Government Departments are also looking for Councils to be innovative in their approach to setting targets and the Council may wish to consider including appropriate targets for the voluntary and business sectors.

National Government objectives for Environment and Public Protection

Countryside and Environment

Waste

- Nationally, the Government has set tough targets through the EU Landfill Directive for reducing waste to landfill, increasing levels of recycling and composting aimed at ensuring that waste management follows sustainable practices
- These targets cover the next fifteen years [to 2020] and are primarily set to achieve the reduction in landfill.

- **To recycle or compost at least 25% of household waste by 2005;**
- **To recycle or compost at least 30% of household waste by 2010;**
- **To recycle or compost at least 33% of household waste by 2015.**

In reviewing Waste Strategy 2000, the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit recommended even higher targets should be met - 35% of household waste to be recycled or composted by 2010 and a target of at least 45% by 2015. These higher targets have not yet been implemented. National energy recovery targets were also set:

- **To recover value from 40% of municipal waste by 2005;**
- **To recover value from 45% of municipal waste by 2010;**
- **To recover value from 67% of municipal waste by 2015⁶.**

West Berkshire have secured funding of £28.49 million under the Government's Private Finance Initiative [PFI] to modernise its waste management services and for the implementation of our Waste Management Strategy which aims to increase levels of recycling to over 50% above the Cabinet Offices higher target recommendations.

The CROW Act

This is the most important piece of countryside legislation to affect local government for 60 years. The essential elements of the act are as follows;

⁶ Figures cited in Waste Scrutiny Task Group Report - September 2004

- **Open Access.** New public rights of access to mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land. In West Berkshire some important land has been opened up to the public to supplement that owned and managed by the Council, voluntary sector organisations and landowners. To advise the Council in the management of Access Land a new statutory body has been created in November 2003 known as the Mid and West Berkshire Local Access Forum.
- **Rights of way legislation.** The Act introduces new rights of way legislation, which is complex and wide ranging. The Act also provides that within five years, Highway Authorities must publish a rights-of-way improvement plan to be reviewed every ten years. This Plan should link with other Plans such as the LTP.
- **Nature Conservation.** The legislation places greater responsibility on local authorities and other landowners to protect Sites of Special Scientific Interest in their ownership
- **AONB's.** The CROW Act introduces new powers to manage Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). These include a requirement for local authorities to prepare and publish management plans for their AONB and provide for the establishment of Conservation Boards.

Parks

- In 2002 the government's Urban Green Spaces Task Group delivered the 'Green Spaces, Better Places' report. This recognised that a national decline in the quality of urban parks had occurred over the last 25 years. The report reiterated the social, economic and environmental benefits of this resource and that re-investment was needed. It was recommended that re-investment be achieved through external sources where ever possible and that local authorities develop a strategic approach to ensure delivery of higher standards. In addition to this a new national agency to champion and support urban parks was required. This body, CABE Space, is now in place. It is providing a good practice framework for local authorities at national level.
- CABE Space recommends that all local authorities develop a green space strategy to set out a vision for how green space is to be used and how this

is going to be achieved. The strategy should support national and local policy objectives. The strategy should be based on an assessment of local needs and should compliment the preparation of the local development framework in terms of local provision standards. It is recommended that future quality standards be based on BV199 and the Green Flag standard, the Civic Trust's Award Scheme.

- CABE Space also recommends that local authorities produce management plans for all of its major parks and has produced best practice guidance for this.

Planning and Transport Strategy

- Production of a final **Local Transport Plan 2 (LTP2)** by 31st March 2006 with the complete draft by 31st July 2005
- Adoption of a **Local Development Framework** by 31st March 2007
- To process **major, minor and other planning applications** to nationally set Government targets

Highways and Engineering

- Delivery of highway and transport improvements defined in LTP2
- Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA) -This new legislation places a network management duty on the Council and requires us to "do all that is reasonably practical to manage the network effectively to keep traffic moving".
- Under the TMA there is also a duty to identify current and future causes of congestion and disruption, and to take action accordingly. This will mean putting arrangements in place to gather accurate information about planned works and events and to consider how to organise them to minimise their impact. We have identified in our base budget for 2005/06 some additional resource to ensure that we fully comply with the Act.
- There are clearly defined targets for improvements in local road condition (BVPI 223, 224a and b)
- For 2005/06 there is a new indicator aimed at improving street lighting performance

Public Protection

- To ensure that local authorities have the procedures in place to carry out their enforcement duties effectively (BV 166 a & b)
- Identification of the number of "sites of potential concern" with respect to land contamination. Number of sites for which sufficient detailed information is available to decide whether remediation of land is necessary, as a percentage of all "sites of potential concern". (BV 216 a & b)
- Percentage of pollution control improvements to existing installations (EPA part A2 and B installations) completed on time. (BV217)

The Performance Management Framework within Environment and Public Protection

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

The major external test of our services is an inspection known as Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Inspections are carried out by the Audit Commission. The CPA looks at how well Councils deliver their services. It also considers how well the Council is run, focussing on financial management and use of resources to ensure that budgets are well managed and that they are used to support priorities.

Overall, West Berkshire Council has been assessed by the Audit Commission as a "good" authority and listed by the Audit Commission as one of the top authorities for service improvement in 2004.

The Environment and Public Protection Service Block score of 2 supports this "good" category. The CPA inspection methodology is in the process of change and will, in future years, present an even greater challenge to the Environment and Public Protection Service Grouping.

From 2006, special rules will apply for inspections, where pass or fail criteria will be set. The overall assessment under the new methodology will measure how well the Council serves its local population. "Key lines of enquiry" will assess the Council's effectiveness in terms of efficiency, and effectiveness and value for money. The new methodology⁷ will comprise a "rule driven system" where special rule Best Value Performance Indicators will be used against the service blocks to ascertain a pass or fail rate.

The E and PP service block carries the majority of these indicators, some of which are already used to judge performance, but others will be added with a greater focus on national survey data and measures. E and PP will be focussing resources on supporting performance improvement against these CPA indicators to strive to improve the E and PP 2 rating and to consolidate our support of the Council's overall "good".

⁷ For further information on the CPA visit the Audit Commission website www.audit-commission.gov.uk

Environment and Public Protection's performance management framework is developed and promoted within the broader context of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the Public Service Agreements and the Corporate Plan.

Why have a Policy and Performance Framework?

As outlined in the introduction to this Plan, a comprehensive performance framework is in place across the Council. It comprises the Corporate Plan, Community Plan, Directorate or Service Plans and Service Action Plans.

These plans incorporate challenging targets to develop a culture of continuous improvement and best practice, to ensure that all plans are integrated and linked to achieve the same goals and to enable community and corporate priorities to be delivered and to measure and monitor success.

Level One Indicators comprise top level strategic indicators, which show progress against Strategic Priorities within the Corporate Plan. They are reported to Members via the Executive on a quarterly basis. Corporate Health Indicators are used to address the next level of performance management and reporting. These indicators support priorities and measure the effectiveness of major cross-cutting initiatives within the Council. It is expected that these indicators are managed by the Corporate Directors with their Heads of Service and reported quarterly to Corporate Board where "out of line" measures are reviewed and actioned. The Corporate Health indicators have been selected and grouped into 10 categories where each category has a number of indicators with similar characteristics or common focus:

- Human Resource Management
- Customer Focus
- Social Inclusion and Equalities
- Sustainability
- Risk Management
- Information Management
- Communications
- Procurement
- Community Safety
- Property

BVPIs and Operational Indicators

These are made up of all the remaining measures used within the Council and its Services and consist of a basket of Best Value Performance Indicators, Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicators and Local indicators. These indicators are managed by the Heads of Service with their Senior Management Teams and are reported regularly to the Corporate Director, where out of line measures are reviewed and actioned. They are incorporated into Service Action Plans. As mentioned previously in this Plan, there will be an emphasis on working to improve on the CPA special rule indicators for 2005/06.

Individual Appraisal Objectives

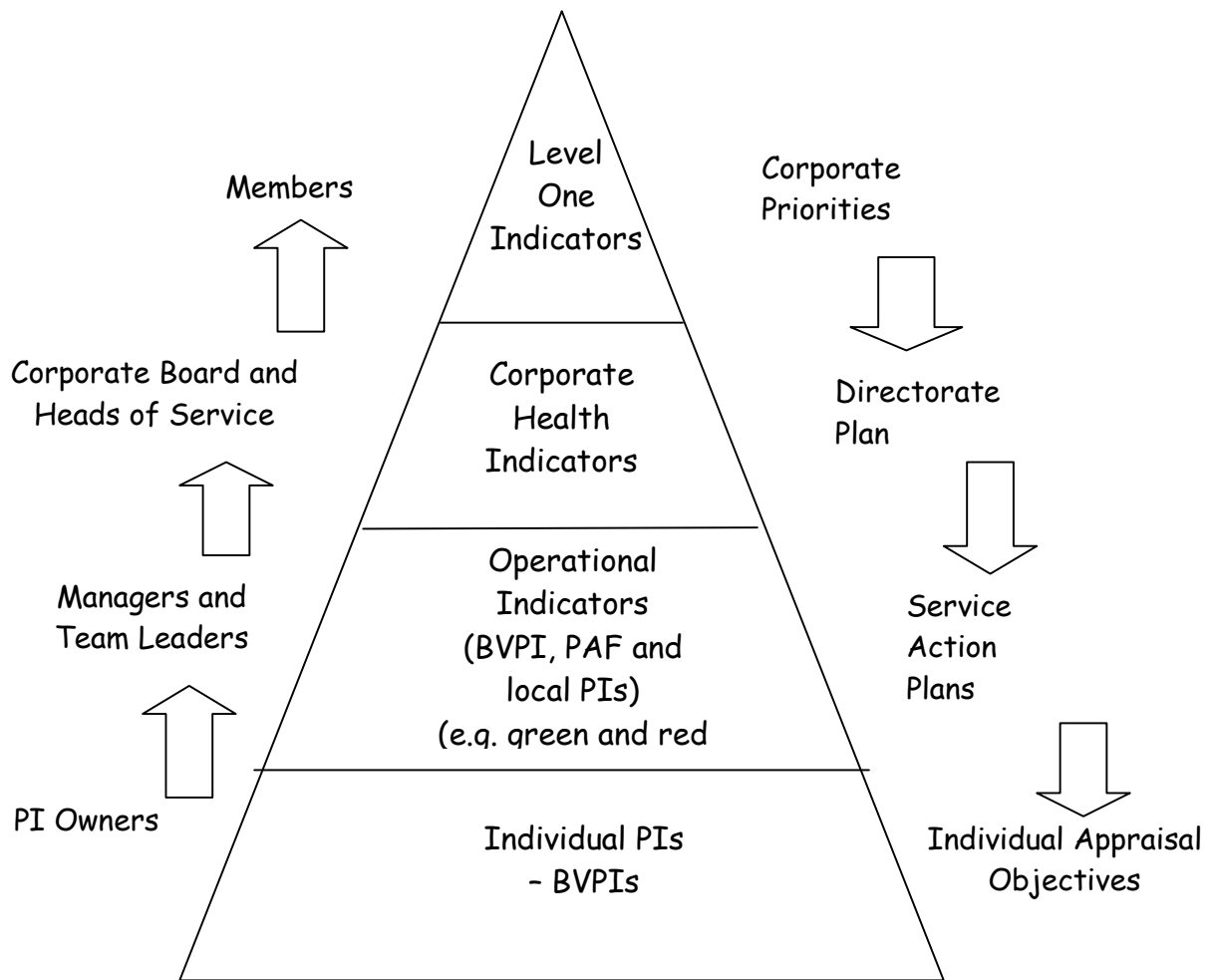
As part of the appraisal process each member of staff is set personal objectives, which are aligned to the Corporate Priorities and also help the service to achieve its goals. The process is designed to help staff identify how well they are doing and to improve performance through development and training.

Appraisals take place on an annual basis and are supported by mid-year reviews at which performance against objectives can be assessed, and training needs reviewed. The process helps to shape the corporate training and management development programme.

The following diagram shows the performance management framework.

The new framework for performance indicators from 2004/05

The diagram below shows the linkages and hierarchy of performance indicators



Review Process

What are we already doing?

We measure the effectiveness and quality of our services through a range of methods, including:

- User consultation. Listening to what people have to say about their experience of us and using this to develop and plan services⁸
- Systematic reporting on targets and performance indicators - as described in our Performance Management Framework
- Scrutiny by elected Members (see separate section on Scrutiny)
- Staff consultation and information - with regular briefing sessions from the Corporate Director and the Chief Executive
- Key messages relayed to staff via Management and Team meetings.

Within our performance management framework, this range of measurements and assessment sit alongside:

- a responsive and accessible complaints process
- performance management which makes an explicit link between Corporate Priorities; service action plans and individual employee targets, as well as financial planning
- focussed and effective training and development for staff and managers which supports and promotes continuous improvement

Scrutiny

Select Committees provide the scrutiny and overview function. They have no decision making powers but help develop policy and can "call in" decisions taken by the Executive where they feel it is necessary. They also undertake a broad scrutiny role for the Council in respect of public service provision within the wider community. Elected Members have set up specific scrutiny task groups to review and make recommendations on service delivery within Environment and Public Protection. Recent examples include

Waste Management
Decriminalisation of Parking Enforcement
S106 agreements

⁸ Details of the Council in the Community and community needs can be found in the Corporate Plan Update 2005 "Making a Real Difference".

Recommendations from the Waste Scrutiny Task Group have been endorsed by Select Committee and ratified by the Executive.

A scrutiny review relating to the decriminalisation of parking has recently been undertaken and recommends that such a route would be appropriate in West Berkshire. Capital funding has been identified for 2007/08 to realise this ambition.

Future scrutiny reviews being planned are a review of fees and charges and access to the countryside.

Environment and Public Protection Services in West Berkshire 2005 -2008

Managing Our Services

The Environment and Public Protection Directorate is striving for continuous improvement. As explained earlier, Councils are subject to rigorous external inspection to ensure services perform well for the customers and we welcome this external challenge. Such challenge is one of the tools we use to help improve the functions in our services. Continuous improvement means setting priorities and having clear goals, identifying those goals and having a clear plan as to how to achieve them. However, the services need to be flexible enough to divert resources and to re-prioritise when necessary.

Matching Resources to Priorities

The Service Group's net revenue budget (excluding support service recharges and capital charges) for 2005/2006 is £21m and is a 6.4% increase from the previous year. The revenue budget is set in accordance with the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, which forms part of the Authority's Policy and Budget framework. This Strategy aims to use efficiency savings as the means of identifying new resources for investment. The Services identified £504k of efficiency savings towards Corporate objectives.

Within the budget setting process Council approved £96k of investment to meet new statutory responsibilities, which directly link to the Council's Priorities and Development Themes. Specific new grants of £218k will be used to meet priorities in Waste and Planning. In addition, resources of £461k from within the Service cash limit have been re-aligned to ensure that key services continue to improve and achieve CPA requirements, whilst meeting Corporate Priorities.

Capital Programme and Strategy⁹

Environment and Public Protection business cases are submitted to the Council's Capital Group for initial consideration and potential inclusion in a long term Capital Programme. This ensures that money is being spent on the

⁹ Capital Strategy and Programme 2005/06 - 2009/10 published January 2005

Council's Strategic priorities and the priorities that are important for our customers, the people of West Berkshire. However, this does present financial challenges and in a climate where finances are tight, tough decisions need to be made about where money is spent. Bids are made against a single capital pot over a three-year strategy. Through sound management practices, we endeavour to ensure money can be moved to support new or changing priorities as they emerge to make best use of new funding streams. Key priorities for E and PP are highways, LTP/Apr delivery and waste management.

The key Corporate Priorities for Environment and Public Protection are -

- **S5 - Ensuring that the Street Environment is clean well maintained and safe**
- **S8 - Improving Transportation**
- **S9 - Enhancing Sustainability and Improving Environmental Resource Management**

Key Targets for delivering improvements against the above key Corporate Priorities are listed in the Service Action Plans.

Customer Focus

This is a cross-cutting theme for the whole authority and a priority for Environment and Public Protection. The Council recognises that we have a diverse population in West Berkshire and endeavours to provide services that support and meet the needs of that diverse population. The Council tests its services by undertaking Equalities Impact Assessments to check that we are not excluding certain groups within society and that we are tailoring our services to their needs (the impact assessments being carried out within E and PP were listed under the "Equalities" section of this Plan. We consult widely with all sections of the community. We welcome customer comment and feedback. We are working to continuously improve in this area and during 2005 the Council will be working with the Commission for Racial Equality to further improve the way in which we engage with the Black and Minority Ethnic community and other sections of the population of West Berkshire. For the E and PP Directorate, this will be progressed by the work of the four Equalities representatives from E and PP that sit on the Corporate Equalities Working Group.

Environment and Public Protection Services also contribute to the other Corporate Priorities held by other Directorates.

The next section of this plan shows our Corporate Priorities in detail and how we intend to achieve targets against these priorities.

S5: Ensuring that the street environment is clean well maintained and safe

What are the issues?

Waste management is a high profile service for residents in the district covering services such as refuse collection, street cleansing and abandoned vehicles. Over the next few years the new Integrated Waste Management Contract which is currently in procurement, and funded under the Private Finance Initiative [PFI], will begin to address many of the service improvement issues outlined in our Waste Strategy [i.e. service integration, continuous improvement, sustainable practices]. This new waste management contract aimed, at integrating waste services will develop improved standards and will aid improvement to the cleanliness of the street environment. An integrated waste management service will be consistent with waste management best practice, and our efforts for continuous improvement.

West Berkshire Council works with a number of external waste contractors to deliver high quality front line operational services, such as refuse collection and street cleansing. Establishing good working relationships with service users and contractors is key to maintaining high standards of service.

Abandoned vehicles continues to be a high profile issue within the district, however the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) has significantly reduced numbers of vehicles being reported, with a large increase in the number of vehicles collected through the 'free of charge' removal scheme offered by the authority. The authority will continue to promote this proactive service, aiming to further reduce numbers of abandoned vehicles in the district.

"Flytipping" in rural areas is an increasing problem witnessed by the large number of reports received by the contact centre and through the Rural Action Group under the WB partnership. We will work to consolidate a zero tolerance to this anti-social practice.

Annual Satisfaction Survey results indicate that the condition of roads and pavements is a high priority for local residents. Whilst the condition of the Principal Road network has improved year on year since 2002 and is now rated

as "above average" by the Audit Commission, the condition of rural, unclassified roads in West Berkshire remains a concern. We are seeking to address this through the current five-year highway improvement programme and the development of an Asset Management Plan.

Traffic Management - local issues include parking, rat running and speed of traffic and associated road safety concerns.

We have targets in place to reduce the number of road accidents in line with our local PSA target and are seeking to achieve this through our road safety education programme, local engineering improvements, and enforcement in Partnership with Thames Valley Police.

The ever increasing incidence of discarded needles by drug users in localised hot spots is not only posing a major public health threat but is presenting particular difficulties for the authority in ensuring that needles are collected without delay. Close working with other agencies is already in place.

The wider changes in the alcohol-licensing regime also include late night vending from street vendors. Street vending is recognised as a national problem in terms of contributing to street disorder.

Following the success of the town centre CCTV systems in monitoring and reducing incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour there is an ever-present demand for this to be extended to cover other areas of the district.

New legislation in respect of a wide range of anti-social behaviour will have significant impact upon the service both within and outside normal office hours and will present operational challenges.

Forthcoming changes to national legislation will transfer all stray dog problems from the police to local authorities. This will have substantial impact on service quantum and quality and may necessitate a 24/7 service to deal with this particular problem.

What are our key objectives?

- Maintaining the highest standards of street cleanliness across the District.
- Continuing to provide high quality customer focused waste management services

- Driving improvements to the way abandoned vehicles are dealt with
- Ensuring that the public have access to good quality information on waste services within the district
- Continuing to develop external relationships with customers and contractors
- Maintaining the success of the Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre, including the close working between staff there with colleagues on Environmental and Recycling initiatives.
- To continue to ensure buildings are erected, extended and altered in a way that provides a safe and accessible environment for building uses and minimises the use of power.
- To maintain our improving performance in relation to the condition of local roads and pavements.
- To review our PSA targets in respect of road safety, maintaining the good progress already achieved.
- To ensure a smooth transition to the new licensing regime for the benefit of licensees, their customers and the community at large.
- To make further use of developer contributions for CCTV coverage in other key locations.

What have we already achieved?

- Contracts for refuse collection, street cleansing, waste disposal and recycling services have been successfully re-tendered and awarded.
- Comprehensive performance management systems are in place to monitor current waste services.
- We have a current Public Service Agreement (PSA) target, which we have exceeded on abandoned vehicles.
- Partnership working with Thames Valley Police has made this successful along with other stakeholders and the introduction of an electronic database to handle the large quantities of information needed.
- Countryside and Rights of Way Rangers, supported by the ROAR Group (Ramblers, WBC and Newbury Day Centre Partnership) are working together to remove large numbers of fly tipping and litter problems reported through the Council's Contact Centre. Over 800 volunteer staff-hours are spent on this issue alone.
- Our grounds maintenance contractor litter picks highway verges before grass cutting commences, strims around all obstacles within 24 hours of the main cut and leaves all hard surface areas clear of grass cuttings. This contractor also co-ordinates activities with the street cleansing contractor

where road central reservations are concerned to minimise disruption and to co-ordinate cleansing operations.

- A survey of highway trees and other woody vegetation in the highway is now underway. Where hazards have been identified, these are being removed.
- Building Control manage in excess 1,500 building regulation applications a year making over 10,000 site visits to ensure building work satisfies the Building Regulations.
- In partnership with our highway contractor we have introduced an emergency response vehicle equipped to deal with all types of highway incident 24 hours a day 7 days a week.
- The latest phase of the Capital Programme has successfully been implemented and schemes delivered included the reconstruction of Skew Bridge, Basildon, a major highway improvement in Bartholomew St, Newbury and a junction redesign at A340 Common Hill, Englefield in response to road safety concerns.
- As part of the five-year highway improvement programme we resurfaced 49 roads in 2004/05. Locations included Aldermaston, Burghfield, Cold Ash, Great Shefford, Hungerford, Lambourn, Thatcham, Tilehurst, Calcot and Theale.
- A Road Safety Newsletter was developed and distributed to more than 600 businesses in February 2005.
- Built 'Safer Routes to School' schemes for Springfield Primary School, Chieveley Primary School, St Bartholomew's Secondary School and Westwood Farm Infants and Junior School.
- A new 'Safer Driving' leaflet was published.
- The Speed Indicator Device (SID) was used at numerous locations across the district in response to concerns of local residents regarding speeding.
- Overseeing the transition from existing to the new licensing regime
- Obtaining developer contributions to CCTV infrastructure

What will we do in the next three years?

- We are currently in the process of tendering for a new 25 year Integrated Waste Management Contract funded under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) which aims to implement our Waste Strategy. This new Waste contract is due to be completed by spring 2006 and will be phased in over 2-3 years.
- Consolidating the work around the CROW Act. To review countryside services to ascertain where we can re-focus on to priority areas and

strengthen partnerships that we have established. To look at synergies with grounds maintenance and the countryside team.

- Maintain the current number of volunteers working on countryside projects.
- Provide guidance and training in order to further the success of the ROAR project.
- Maintain the improving performance in respect of road condition.
- Continue to improve the road safety record in West Berkshire through improved education, engineering and enforcement techniques
- Deliver remaining schemes in the Newbury Vision including Market Place improvement
- Continue to deliver the capital programme to agreed timescales
- Produce a Capital development plan to replace the control rooms for CCTV
- Produce a three-year development plan for deployment of CCTV

S8: Improving Transportation

What are the issues?

We need to raise the profile of countryside and rights of way as a key deliverer of transportation objectives through the Rights of way improvement Plan. It is crucial that the needs of the user and local communities with regard to the Rights of way network are established and that conflicting use between all forms of user on Public rights of Way is managed.

There are issues around rural access to retail, leisure, educational, health and employment opportunities. Also, providing people with opportunities to make informed travel choices. We need to develop a Local Development Framework (LDF) core strategy, which supports the objectives of LTP2.

Parking remains an issue, both on street and public car park provision.

The increasing concern for our environment, including air pollution and air quality. The need to increase the provision of taxi and private hire vehicles to meet a recognised demand. The need to reduce the number of breaches of environmental and structural weight restrictions. Continued protection of the consumer by using our enforcement measures to reduce the sales of unroadworthy vehicles

What are our key objectives?

- To consult with as wide a range of users of the countryside as possible to help drive the rights of way improvement Plan
- Link rights of way improvement plan objectives with LTP objectives
- To improve accessibility and promote transport choice
- To work in partnership with the bus companies and improve local services.
- To continue our work in improving the standards of car parking facilities across the District.
- To make better use of available road space for appropriate parking
- To reduce Air pollution
- To increase the provision of taxi and private hire vehicles over more of the district more of the time

- To minimise the number of breaches of environmental and structural weight restrictions
- To reduce the opportunities for unsafe road vehicles to be sold and used.

What have we already achieved?

- Rights of Way - We already include rights of way in the Local Transport Plan (LTP) ahead of requirement to do so and have capital funding for projects around rights of way included in the Capital Programme.
- Cross service working is demonstrated on issues such as the "quiet lanes initiative" working with Highways and Engineering, and in terms of the LTP working with Planning and Transport Strategy.
- Cycling improvements in Greenham common are being linked with existing and proposed cycle routes in the area and to and from centres of population.
- The Transport Policy team was formed from scratch to allow a greater focus on delivering the S8 Corporate Plan Priority. In particular the team is charged with developing the Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the LTP Annual Progress Report.
- The Local Transport Plan Annual Progress Report 2003/04 secured an improved score of 72%, up from 69% the previous year. In its decision letter, GOSE described West Berkshire as making "further encouraging progress...particularly in the area of targets where performance (WBC) was considered to be excellent."
- Nationally West Berkshire has been recognised by the Department for Transport as the most improved highway authority in England for cycling. This recognition resulted in an award being presented to the authority at the House of Commons in October 2004.
- Introduced "Demand Responsive" service from Lambourn to Hungerford and integrated that service with 'home to school' transport in 2004.
- Secured funding from the 'Post 16' Learning and Education Support grants to avoid cuts to bus services.
- Designed accessible bus timetables for the district. We provide these on our website and ensure ease of use with online ordering.
- Gained recognition by an established independent analyst as one of the top 16 transport local authorities for bus passenger transport information in 2004. The clarity of our series of timetable booklets was highlighted as excellent and the comments encouraged other authorities to learn from this area of best practice.

- Launched "CLIVE" - National Countryside Agency demonstration project in 2004. CLIVE (the Community Learning and Information Vehicle) is the jewel in West Berkshire's crown - taking learning to hard to reach communities and linking closely to the much lauded West Berkshire Library Service. Developing a financially secure future for CLIVE is key to our marketing and sponsorship efforts in the coming six months.

Other Achievements

- We received a score from the Department for Transport of 72% for our Annual Progress Report in 2004 up from 28% in 2001. In numerical terms this makes us the most improved transport local authority in England over this period.
- We achieved 100% of national targets on track and 78% of local targets either achieved or on track in 2003/04.
- We won the National Award for the Most Improved Highway Authority in England for Cycling in 2004. We improved our score by 143% over the previous year, compared with a national average improvement of 16%.
- We had our Cycle Forum singled out as an example of Best Practice for others to follow by the English Regions Cycling Development Team in 2004.
- We identified and prioritised cycling schemes across the District with the direct involvement of the Cycle Forum.
- Cycling levels increased by 26% over the last three years supported by the production of key cycling maps, increased media coverage for cycling and public events such as the Cycling Roadshow in Newbury Town Centre in 2004.
- We won an award at the Historic Bridge and Infrastructure Awards in 2003 in recognition of the "exceptional skill and care, which was applied to The Hungerford Canal Bridge's design and execution".
- We deliver a stable programme of capital investment, which addresses issues of local concern such as road safety, as well as improving the condition of the local highway network.
- All our Best Value Indicators for highway condition have seen year on year improvements with the principal road network being rated as above average in 2004.
- Design and build of the new St John's Roundabout in Newbury in 2004 had the full support of Sustrans and involvement of other members of the Cycle Forum.

- We achieved the national target on reducing child casualties ahead of the target date and we are on track to achieve our stretched target for reducing casualties as part of our Local Public Service Agreement.
- We have key involvement in the Thames Valley Safer Roads Partnership strengthening all areas of our Road Safety work. A new Road Safety Team, created in 2003, has since expanded and developed through funding opportunities realised through the partnership.
- The message of 'safer roads for all' permeates the district through promotional radio campaigns, education, creative seminars and using a full range of methods of communication and the media. All this contributes to keeping the number of casualties on our roads as low as possible.
- Rebuilt Greenham Mill footbridge in partnership with British Waterways.
- Replaced Skew Bridge, Basildon in partnership with Network Rail.
- Final stage of National Cycle Network Route 4 in Lower Way, Thatcham completed.
- A new 'Guide to Passenger Transport in West Berkshire' was published.
- We measure roadside levels of common air pollutants
- We have removed the cap on the number of taxis and private hire vehicles, thereby increasing the effective number available for use by the public
- We have introduced livery standards to make taxis more identifiable and safe to use
- We employ a part time road traffic enforcement officer to monitor offences in areas where restrictions apply
- We give a high priority to investigating reports of unroadworthy vehicles

What will we do in the next three years?

- Complete the consultation exercise on the public rights of way improvement plan
- Improve cycle routes across Greenham Common to provide link between employment locations and centres of population
- Produce the LTP2 by 31 March 2006, which will set the strategic framework within which transport will be delivered in West Berkshire for the next five years.
- Produce the LTP APR for 2004/05 by 28th July 2005. This will identify progress towards achieving the transport goals set out in our previous APR.
- Develop an LDF core strategy which supports the objectives of LTP2
- Continue to develop partnership across all community transport operators, to enable the replacement of all community transport vehicles with new models in 2003.

- Continue to work with other transport authorities to address strategic transport issues and learn from best practice
- We will deliver highway improvement schemes identified in the Capital Programme¹⁰ and the Local Transport Plan.
- We will act on the transport studies that have been commissioned, including the introduction of measures as identified in the Newbury Movement Study
- We will continue with the car park improvement programme with the aim of introducing pay on exit at Northbrook multi-storey car park in 2005/06
- We will increase the number of roadside pollution points and improve the way we keep the public informed
- We will continue to give high priority to reports of unroadworthy vehicles

¹⁰ See Capital Strategy and Programme 2005/06 - 2009/10

S9: Enhancing sustainability and improving environmental resource management

What are the issues?

- The need to reduce the quantities of waste sent to landfill
- The need to improve levels of recycling and composting
- The need to adopt more sustainable waste management practices
- The need to establish new waste management facilities in the district
- The raising of awareness of waste issues within the district
- Furthering the sustainable management of the West Berkshire countryside with increasingly limited financial resources.
- Site management and protection of sensitive ecological interests given the increasing demand for countryside recreational access. One of the positive aspects of the CROW Act is that it has legally recognised the importance of countryside access to the health of the Nation. The Councils' major challenge is managing the expectation that the CROW Act has instilled in the general public.
- Protection and enhancement of the Social, Economic & Environmental well being of West Berkshire by preparing and implementing planning policies accordingly.
- Processing planning applications within the national, regional and local planning policy framework.
- Administering and enforcing the Building Regulations to ensure the use of power is minimised.
- Avoidable resource usage e.g. excessive packaging

What are our key objectives?

- To secure the new Waste Contract. This will meet the targets and demands from Government for a sustainable waste programme for the next twenty years.
- To award the new Integrated Waste Management Contract
- To submit a Planning Application for the development of Padworth Sidings as the preferred site for the location of the new waste management facilities
- To improve the layout of the facilities at the Pinchington Lane Civic Amenity Site

What have we already achieved?

- Introduced 'green' energy for street lighting, signs and bollards.
- Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing Contract commenced September 2003. This was an extension of the waste contracts inherited on becoming a unitary authority. These had varying expiry times so we have re-tendered where possible to lead us in to the new Waste PFI Contract, to ensure continuity of service. The kerbside contract was re-let also, and commences in September 2005.
- The Groundsman at Henwick Worthy Sports Ground (Waterers Landscapes plc) received the Football Association of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire Area, *Groundsman of the Year Award* for 2002/03.
- West Berkshire Council was awarded £28.4 million under the Government's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) (plus £4.75m) to develop and modernise its waste management services and increase levels of recycling and composting in line with sustainability and resource management practices.
- Extension to the green waste separation trial at the Pinchington Lane Civic Amenity Site, which has increased the Authority's recycling and composting rate from 11% to 17%. Two new recycling officers to be dedicated to promoting awareness of waste issues in the community and seeking to increase participation in the kerbside recycling scheme. Improvements to bring centres to widen the range of materials that can be collected and possible new sites.
- Publish a Waste Services Newsletter, which aims to raise the profile of waste management within West Berkshire and inform residents of refuse collection arrangements over Bank Holiday periods.
- A recent survey at the Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre recorded 95% satisfaction levels.
- Agreed to work with Sheepdrove Organic Farm and Biffa Waste Services for another year on the Green Waste Separation Scheme at the Pinchington Lane Civic Amenity site.
- The Omers Gully Project at Hunters Hill, Burghfield Common, held a series of public meetings with local residents, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and Sovereign Housing to develop a management plan for site improvement.
- A practical commitment from the countryside service to promote more sustainable conservation and land management practices. Rare and

threatened traditional breeds (Exmoor ponies, British White and Dexter cattle) are being turned out on Greenham, Crookham and Snelsmore Commons, primarily to support habitat conservation objectives but also to ensure the survival of these special breeds.

- The Countryside service has been successful in securing funding from Vodafone for the refurbishment of the Thatcham Nature Discovery Centre. This funding will help develop the Centres potential as the District's premier environmental education and sustainability facility, promoting sustainable energy methods and habitat management practices. The centre aims to be an example of good practice in environmental education and sustainability.
- The Countryside Agency and English Nature have praised the North Wessex Downs AONB Management Plan. Their comments include "this is by any standards an outstanding AONB management plan" and "an innovative and inspirational plan". The Authority is a member of the council of partners that helped develop the management plan.
- Restoration of the Greenham and Crookham Commons continues to attract interest from national, local and voluntary conservation organisations as an example of good practice in conservation management. The work of the council was recently highlighted in a BBC production fronted by Alan Titchmarsh.
- In 2004 the children's play area at Burbidge Close, Calcot was completely refurbished. In 2005 the children's play area at Pritchard's Close, Greenham was completely refurbished.
- In 2005 the new integrated West Berkshire Council tree maintenance contract was awarded. This contract will cater for all of the Council's tree maintenance needs for all of its sites.
- Air pollution screening and assessment proposals have been accepted by DEFRA
- The Council has an adopted Local Plan and is due to adopt the Berkshire Structure Plan in the very near future. These documents together with National and Regional Planning Guidance provide the policy framework within which planning applications are currently processed.
- 'Minor' and 'Other' planning applications are currently processed within the national targets.
- Building Regulations currently process building regulation applications within the national targets.
- Recycling of paving materials to reduce use of new aggregates
- Use of more sustainable aluminium street lighting columns
- Increased use of energy efficient switch gear in street lighting columns

What will we do in the next three years?

- Develop an Environmental Trust. Work closely with the LSP Sustainability Partnership.
- Deliver the Waste PFI Contract.
- Improve levels of recycling and composting across the district
- Reduce the quantities of waste sent to landfill
- Work with landowners through the local access forum to improve access to open access areas under the CROW act.
- Erect stock fencing at Padworth common local nature reserve and extend the conservation-grazing project to this site.
- Develop the West Berkshire LDF in accordance with the milestones set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS)
- Adopt a Local Development Framework (LDF) by 31 March 2007. The LDF also contributes to delivery under Corporate Priorities S1, S2, S3, S5, S6 S8 S9 and S10.
- Process Planning applications within the national targets by 31 March 2007.
- Continue to process Building Regulations within the national targets
- Work with the other five Berkshire Unitary Authorities in taking forward a joint Berkshire Minerals and Waste LDF
- Input into the development of the South East Plan at regional and sub-regional level
- Introduce recycling targets in new highway maintenance contract from 2006
- Increase the use of aluminium street lighting columns
- Increase the use of sustainable materials in highway construction
- Minimise traffic disruption and congestion levels through improved co ordination of works
- We will join with other authorities in the SE region to enforce the provisions of the legislation banning the use of excess packaging.

S10: Creating Attractive and Vibrant Town Centres

What are the issues?

A long-term "Vision for Newbury" has been developed that will take Newbury forward over the next two decades. This Vision has been developed by West Berkshire Council in partnership with stakeholders. Services in Environment and Public Protection have played a key role in this process; Planning and Transport Strategy producing the Vision for this group and Highways and Engineering delivering the schemes in the action plan¹¹ through various projects such as the environmental enhancements to Bartholomew Street and residents' parking schemes.

"A strong partnership ethos has been established during the preparation of the Vision and our consultation has demonstrated a clear consensus across the local community on how we should move forward. With our future direction now mapped out the emphasis must now turn to delivery. We have produced an Action Plan which seeks to set out what we will do and when. Our Action Plan also highlights who will lead each project and where the resources will come from. The Council will be working jointly with the Town Centre Management Steering Group to help ensure the Action Plan is delivered and regularly reviewed"¹².

What are our key objectives?

- To support the Vision for Newbury and emerging Visions for other areas of the district

What have we already achieved?

- Award of Grounds Maintenance Contract for Parks, Open Spaces and Schools to Waterers Landscapes plc to commence 1 October 2003.
- New investment from the programme of improvements to be delivered from S106 contributions will help to enhance parks in Town Centres.

¹¹ Newbury 2025 - Action Plans

¹² Quotation from the Foreword by Leader of Council, Councillor Royce Longton - "Newbury 2025 - a Vision for Newbury Town Centre"

- Redevelopment of Parkway is a major opportunity to enhance Victoria Park in Newbury.
- We have supported the production of the Newbury Vision.
- We have commissioned the production of the Newbury Study that will inform the production of transport policies.
- We have completed major highway improvements in Bartholomew St, Newbury incorporating new paving, lighting and bus stop facilities.
- The first phase of the Newbury Parking Project was successfully introduced with new residents parking facilities in Zone W1.

What will we do in the next three years?

- Implementation of future phases of Newbury Vision including the refurbishment of the Market Place during 2005.
- Implementation of remaining phases of Newbury Parking Project
- Introduction of other town centre improvements including pay on foot facilities at multi storey car parks as described elsewhere in this plan.
- We will develop the West Berkshire LDF in accordance with the milestones set out in the Local Development Scheme (LDS)
- We will process Planning applications within the national targets by 31 March 2007
- We will adopt Newbury Town Centre Plan by March 2007
- We will submit LTP2 by 31st March 2006, which supports Newbury Vision 2025 and access to other West Berkshire Town Centres
- We will produce and implement planning and transport policies that support the creation of attractive and vibrant town centres.

Appendix 1 - Policy Framework

