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**CORPORATE AND BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2005 - 2008**

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**Responsible Cabinet Members - Councillor John Williams, Leader and Cabinet Collectively**

**Responsible Director – Paul Wildsmith, Acting Chief Executive**

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**Purpose of Report**

1. This report sets out the arrangements for the production of this year's Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) to meet Government guidance and to comply with audit and related planning requirements.

**Summary**

2. Best Value requires that an authority be able to demonstrate how it is achieving continuous improvement. This requirement is heightened under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) regime in which an authority is rated according to the quality of its service provision and ability to improve.
3. Latest guidance confirms that a major part of CPA reassessments will be the quality of an authority's BVPP, since this is required to set out past improvement and future planned improvement.
4. For this year no new guidance has been issued as to format, but a number of revisions have been made to the range of performance indicators to be used. Whilst the Best Value requirements have altered over the years, the duty to prepare and publish a Performance Plan remains in force. Our overall approach to planning: Community Strategy, Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan, plus departmental and service plans will therefore continue to be scrutinised and assessed.

**Information and Analysis**

**Background to Best Value Performance Plans**

5. Best Value was introduced on the 1st April 2000 as a key element of the Government's programme to modernise local government and places local authorities under a duty to seek continuous improvement in the ways in which they exercise their functions. The Local Government Act 1999, supplemented by government circulars and guidance, sets out the legislative framework for local authorities to follow.
6. The statutory requirement to prepare a performance plan provides an opportunity for authorities to articulate: proposals for improvement for the coming year, including how weaknesses will be addressed; opportunities exploited; and better outcomes delivered for local people. It must contain targets for future performance. It is important, therefore, that plans are not prepared in isolation from the authority's business planning. All authorities

should ensure that the improvement planning process that underlies the performance plan is integrated with authorities' corporate planning arrangements.

### **Government Guidance**

7. Following a number of revisions in recent years, the latest guidance was issued in February 2004 – '*Guidance on Best Value Performance Plans* an addendum to *ODPM Circular 03/03 on Best Value and Performance Improvement*.'
8. This guidance reaffirms that performance plans should become the focus of authorities' improvement planning, by articulating priorities for improvement and setting targets for improved future performance. In accordance with the Government's approach to deregulation, it also introduces further streamlined arrangements by:
  - (a) removing the requirement for all authorities to provide information that is available from other sources;
  - (b) introducing differentiated requirements for principal authorities, according to CPA category with greater discretion for authorities categorised as excellent and good; and
  - (c) allowing more flexibility so that the improvement planning process that underpins the plans can be integrated with corporate and business planning arrangements.
9. The guidance reinforces that the primary purpose of the BVPP is to be a technical tool for Officers and Members to support the organisation's improvement, rather than a publicly accessible, in the sense that it is easily understood, document.
10. Specifically, all authorities categorised in CPA as excellent and good, including Darlington must include the following items in their performance plan published by end of June each year:
  - (a) Details of outturn performance over the past year on all Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs);
  - (b) Targets for BVPIs in the current year and subsequent two years; and
  - (c) A brief statement on contracts – confirming that the authority is adopting the Code of Practice in their approach to workforce matters and contracting.

### **Proposed Format and Content for 2005 - 2008**

11. The Corporate and Best Value Performance for 2005 - 2008 will therefore again be structured into two main parts. PART 1 will describe the Councils vision, its corporate objectives and priorities with an assessment of overall performance. In addition it will set out how well services provided by the Council are being delivered for local people and plans for improving performance in future years. The summary of the Council's performance will be presented using the framework of the eight themes of the Darlington Community Strategy.

12. PART TWO will contain supporting information about the Council's performance. At the heart of best value is the statutory performance management framework. This provides for annual reporting by best value authorities of a set of national performance indicators and standards as set by Government. The appendices in this section will meet these requirements and provide the base data for the performance assessment offered in PART 1.
13. Best Value Performance Plans remain subject to external audit. The Council's last Performance Plan published June 2004 was unqualified with no statutory recommendations. The outcome of the audit of this next plan, in accordance with national timetabling, will not be available until the winter and will be reported and published at that time.

### **Process and Timetable**

14. The following table outlines the summary project planning timetable and process for Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan production.

11 April	Consultation with Monitoring and Co-ordination Group as to potential content and format
29 April	Deadline for production of year end outturn returns and targets for all non-financial performance indicators
12 May	Review of early performance analysis and plan format by Resources Scrutiny Committee
16 May	Deadline for production of year end outturn returns and targets for all financial performance indicators
26 May	Consideration of working draft Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan by CMT
20 June	Special Council to consider completed draft Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan
30 June	Publication of Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan 2005 - 2008
Early July	Distribution of copies to all Members, staff teams and key partners plus reference copies in all public buildings

### **Conclusion**

15. Preparations are underway to produce the Council's Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan for 2005 - 2008 that will comply in all material respects with the detail and spirit of government guidance. Producing accurate and complete year end figures necessary to meet the tight production schedule will, as in previous years, necessitate the convening of a special meeting of Council (20th June) to allow sufficient time for data collation, verification and analysis. This is in the Council's overall best interests of ensuring accuracy and completeness taking into account the external audit of the plan and its importance to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

## **Outcome of Consultation**

16. No formal consultation was undertaken in the production of this report as its content largely relates to process and actions necessary to meet compliance. Informal consultation is however an ongoing process as to content and format with regular reviews undertaken with scrutiny committees, performance management co-ordinators and the corporate planning network.

## **Legal Implications**

17. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

## **Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998**

18. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is considered that the contents of this report will indirectly lead to a positive effect based on the better performance management of relevant community safety elements and integration with the wider planning processes.

## **Council Policy Framework**

19. The issues contained within this report will lead to the production of the Council's Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan 2005 - 2008 which will impact upon the Council's policy framework.

## **Decision Deadline**

20. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

## **Recommendation**

21. It is recommended that Members:
  - (a) note the proposed approach and process for the production of the Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan 2005 - 2008.
  - (b) receive a copy of a completed draft document for a special meeting of Council scheduled for 20th June 2005.

## **Reasons**

22. The recommendations are supported by the following reasons:

- (a) to comply with the Council's legal duties in accordance with the Local Government Act 1999 and ODPM guidance (as revised).
- (b) to meet production deadlines for the design and print of the Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan.

**Lorraine O'Donnell**  
**Head of Policy**

**Background Papers** ODPM - Guidance on Best Value Performance Plans: Addendum to ODPM Circular 03/2003 (February 2004)

John Bosson : Extension 2016  
Jb/cp