

GUILDFORD BOROUGH BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2001

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL ISSUES

INTRODUCTION

Since 1 April 2000, Guildford Borough Council has had a statutory duty to ensure 'Best Value' in the way our services are provided to the local community. The Government asks us to establish what services are needed at what level, and to review them under a five-year rolling programme. We must ensure that our services are provided as economically and effectively as possible by setting realistic goals and comparing our performance with over 100 national targets.

Guildford Borough Council began the process of review ahead of requirement and published detailed performance results and targets for six service areas last year. This year a much larger range of services has been reviewed for Best Value and Executive Summaries of each are contained within this document.

THE BEST VALUE REVIEW PROGRAMME

Best Value is a national programme of consultation, review and planning which aims to ensure that local councils provide the right services to the right standards at the right costs. The Government has asked all local councils to undertake an extensive performance review of the services they provide in order to assess whether Best Value is being achieved. Services are being measured against national targets, and the four key points below are being addressed in every area. A different range of Guildford's services will be looked at in each year of the review programme.

THE 4Cs

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| Challenge | Why do we provide each service and why do we provide it the way we do? Could it be delivered more efficiently or effectively? |
| Compare | How does the standard and cost of Guildford's services compare with others? |
| Consult | What does the whole community – young and old, residential and business, professional and voluntary – really think about Guildford Borough services? |

Compete How competitive are the Council's services in comparison with providers of similar services?

Guildford Borough is striving for Best Value in all its activities and is committed to providing services according to its Core Values and Strategic Priorities, for the benefit of all who live or work in Guildford as well as visitors to the Borough.

Although Best Value itself is a relatively new process, the idea behind it is not. Guildford Borough has always tried to provide high quality service at very competitive costs. Under the previous regime of compulsory competitive tendering for services, the Council was very proud of its 100% record in winning all contracts to supply local services.

THE ANNUAL BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN

The Government legislation requires all councils to produce an annual Best Value Performance Plan. The full plan provides a framework for achieving Best Value by looking at individual service areas and identifying:

- ❖ where we are now
- ❖ what we are trying to achieve
- ❖ how we are going to do it

Over the life of the first five-year performance review, all the services provided by the Council will be assessed. Each will be looked at against the 4Cs mentioned above and will be reviewed within the framework of Best Value.

EQUALITIES STATEMENT

The Council has always recognised and attempted to meet its statutory obligations for Equalities and this has recently been re-enforced through the employment of an Equalities and Access Officer and the formation of an active Equal Opportunities Policy.

The Equalities and Access Officer has now commenced implementing recommendations (corporately) made by various acts such as the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Race Relations Acts of 1976 and 2000, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Human Rights Act 2000.

The Council has produced an Access Strategy as a pledge to its' clients and employees regarding access arrangements to services. This is a continued commitment, reviewed annually and the process is further assisted by the Access Group Guildford (a group of voluntary members, representing different disabilities). Applications for Planning Permission concerning public access are also reviewed both by the Access Group and Equalities and Access Officer.

The Training Officer has ensured training for staff including Recruitment and Selection Training. This programme also includes Equalities Training for all

members of staff. Monitoring of disabled and ethnic minority staff is in place providing sufficient data to enable the Council's performance in meeting its objectives.

The Council has adopted the definition of a Racist Incident as recommended by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. The Commission for Racial Equality Standard for local government has also been achieved to Level 1, for 2001/02, the Council has set a target of level 2.

The Council is dedicated to reviewing access, including all forms; physical, intellectual and sensory. This will be achieved through training of staff, an audit of council buildings, a new approach towards encouraging plain English as well provision of alternative formats and different languages for its publications.

As part of the Council's commitment to Best Value, a strategy is being developed to successfully approach and consult hard to reach community groups including Black and Ethnic Minorities, Mental Health/Learning Difficulties Groups, Gay and Lesbian Groups.

'STOP PRESS' – INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ACCREDITATION: MARCH 2001

The Council is a major employer in the Borough and most of its budget is spent on staff who are the major resource in providing public services to the Community.

The Council is therefore delighted to announce that, on 19th March this year, the Council was formally awarded Investors in People accreditation in respect of all its services, initially for a 3-year period. This is the highest such employment accreditation in the United Kingdom and requires very well-developed staff training and development programmes on the part of the organisations aspiring to this standard. The Council's achievement of this accreditation should help to ensure well-qualified and motivated staff to deliver services of the quality expected within this Performance Plan.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

The Local Government Act 2000 requires all local authorities to develop a Community Strategy for their area, in partnership with other public and private agencies, the business and voluntary sector, and the community at large. The legislation requires that the Community Strategy must promote the economic, environmental and social well-being of the local community and also contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom.

The Council has already made a start on this process and our 'Local Agenda 21' Strategy has already made significant environmental improvements. The Community Strategy will seek to involve the whole community and during the coming year the Council will be working with local people to develop an overall vision for the way our community should be, with a plan of actions to achieve it.

Best Value relates directly to the development of the Community Strategy in two key ways. Firstly, the Best Value review process itself, particularly in relation to public consultation, will help to inform the development of the Community Strategy, as it will reveal the community's expectations in relation to every public service provided by the Council. Secondly, once the overall Community Strategy is in place, it will provide the overall direction for service provision, and the Best Value process will provide the means to ensure that the Council procures the right services to the standards required by the Community Strategy.

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY

It should be noted that the Borough Council is responsible for the preparation of this Performance Plan and for the information and assessments set out within it, and the assumptions and estimates on which they are based. The Council is also responsible for setting in place appropriate performance management and internal control systems from which the information and assessments in this Performance Plan have been derived. The Council is satisfied that the information and assessments included in the Plan are in material respects accurate and complete and that the Plan is realistic and achievable.