



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Best Value Performance Indicators (2007-2008)
Date:	24 October 2008
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Relevant Background Information

Since 2001 the Council has been preparing an annual submission of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's) in accordance with our commitment to continuous improvement. This has not been a statutory requirement since the introduction of Best Value legislation in 2002 (Local Government (Best Value) Act (NI) 2002) and is completed in response to a formal request from the Local Government Division of the Department of the Environment (DoE).

Unlike Best Value regimes in other parts of the United Kingdom, central government in Northern Ireland (NI) has no power to issue directions or guidance to Councils in relation to their duty to ensure continuous improvement; the District Councils in NI are solely accountable to their Elected Members, ratepayers and the users of their services.

Concerns have continually been raised regarding the value and usefulness of some of the indicators reported; in particular the lack of clarity with certain definitions and the absence of independent validation of the data. This has resulted in variations in performance data reported across the 26 District Councils and cannot be solely attributed to variations in standards of performance but potentially a result of differing interpretation of the definitions. In recent years not all the District Councils are submitting BVPI's and it appears little is done with the figures once they are reported to the DoE Local Government Division and re-published in a "league table" form.

Recent developments in England, around the performance management of Local Government where there has been a move away from the use of over 1,000 national BVPI's (largely manifest through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime) and a subsequent move towards the use of smaller sets of indicators (c. 200) which combine robust local performance data and a Council's and its partners' own assessment of performance

(Comprehensive Area Assessments).

The performance information relating to the Council's 2007/08 financial year has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines provided by the DoE. Previous years' figures have been included for comparison purposes, where possible.

Members are asked to note that:

- (I) since 2004/05 there has been no change to the definitions of indicators collected; and
- (II) this report considers recent data relating to the 2007 public consultation survey.

Key Issues

The BVPI's for 2007/08, although not necessarily providing a balanced view of the Council's performance, do go some way in assisting the Council to assess aspects of its performance across a number of years.

Appendix 1 provides the performance data for 2007/2008 to be submitted to the DoE – including trend data from previous years and an analysis of variations.

Performance Highlights 2007/08

In general the Council has performed well in many of the key indicators and in particular improvements can be seen in areas identified as priorities for the organisation including the following:

- **% Citizens satisfied with the overall service provided by their Council has increased by 9% to 74%** in the 2007 Public Consultation Survey.
- In 2007/2008 the average number of working days per FTE lost due to absence has continued to fall by **1.17 days or a 7.75% reduction on the previous year**. This is a continuing trend and reflects the significant amount of work carried out across the organisation to reduce staff absenteeism.
- A further key priority for the citizens of Belfast has cleanliness standards across the city. This year there has been a **very impressive increase of 26% in satisfaction to 73% compared with 47% in the previous survey in 2004 and also a 5% increase in satisfaction with the refuse collection service to 83%**.

Other highlights include top performance in Food Safety and Health & Safety in the areas of management; service delivery and quality controls for Environmental Health; a 4% increase in household recycling; a 3% reduction in the net cost of waste collection per head of population and a 30% reduction in the net cost of indoor leisure per admission.

The BVPI's in spite of their limitations do provide the organisation with a means of highlighting performance across a range of key Council services and functions; particularly as the ethos of performance management is becoming embedded within the organisation.

BVPI's and RPA

The future of BVPI's remain unclear and must be viewed in the context of future regional performance management arrangements post RPA. Consideration of potential future performance arrangements is being taken forward under the auspices of the RPA Policy Development Panel C "Service Delivery" and associated Performance Management Working Group. The Council is represented on this working group and it will be important to ensure alignment between the continued work of the Council in regard to Performance Management and the emerging RPA proposals.

Belfast City Council Performance Management Framework

Further work on the development of the performance management framework via the Value Creation Map process and the recently procured Performance Management system is ongoing. Work has started to populate this system with a range of corporate and service level performance information. This will provide the Council with performance data linked to strategic objectives and priorities. It is hoped and expected that a blend of both a new regional framework and our own arrangements will provide Members and Senior Managers with the means to accurately evaluate and compare the Council's performance in the future.

Decision Required

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and approve it for submission to the DoE Local Government Division.

Documents Attached

Appendix I Best Value Performance Indicators 2007/2008

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