

Best Value Audit Report – BVPP  
2001/2002

Hertfordshire County Council – version 3

ACTION PLAN



**DISTRICT AUDIT**

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<b>Reference:</b>	12 – Draft Version
<b>Date:</b>	November 2001

The Authority is invited to respond to all our recommendations listed in this action plan.

Statutory recommendations, to which the Authority is required to make a formal response within 30 working days, are those in ***bold italics***.

Ref.	Issue	Suggested Action	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Authority's response	Officer responsible	Timescale
<b>The BVPP</b>						
<b><i>R1</i></b>	<b><i>The BVPP omitted the inclusion data relating to approximately 10% of BVPIs.</i></b>	<b><i>The Council should ensure that all appropriate BVPI data is included.</i></b>	<b>3</b>	We will ensure that all appropriate BVPIs are included and that targets and estimates are provided for each Performance indicator	<b><i>Anne Fisher</i></b>	<b><i>Draft version of BVPP Jan 2002</i></b>

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R2	Although the Council entered into a contract for the distribution of the summary BVPP, it is difficult to evidence that it reached all households in the county.	<p>Review the outcome of the distribution of the summary BVPP with the supplier to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assess reasons for non-delivery</li> <li>• consider scope for performance penalties</li> <li>• facilitate future improvement</li> </ul>	1	<p>Every household in Herts should receive Herts Direct, quarterly.</p> <p>Corporate Communications monitor each delivery. Staff from across the county are asked whether they received the newspaper and a record is made of their response.</p> <p>Non delivery issues are raised with Royal Mail who closely monitor performance to ensure improvement.</p> <p>Corporate Communications meet regularly with Royal Mail to assess the deliveries, raise any issues and encourage improvement of service.</p>	<i>James Odling-Smee</i>	<i>June 2001</i>

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R3	The Council has undertaken joint working with district councils on its BV reviews where appropriate. There is scope to extend this joint working to include co-ordination of summary BVPPs.	Continue to develop liaison with district councils over the publication of the summary BVPP.	1	The County Best Value and Policy Officers Group has agreed this as an area for exploration in 2001-02	<i>Anne Fisher</i>	<b>Nov 2001</b>

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<b>Integrating Best Value into the Council's business</b>						
R4	<p><b><i>The Council needs to review its best value review programme to ensure the planned reviews link to the Council's priorities:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>At present, the review programme does not address the weakest services amongst the first reviews</i></b></li> <li><b><i>The review programme should continue to be updated in the light of changes in the Council, e.g. re-organisation of services</i></b></li> </ul>	<p><b><i>Ensure the BV review programme prioritises the weakest performing services and corporate targets.</i></b></p>	3	Programme of reviews centred on organisational priorities, promises and PSA regime being developed	Clare Kaye	In progress

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R5	Links between the top level priorities ("promises") and individual targets are at present limited to the performance contracts of the top three tiers of management	Demonstrate that priorities and targets are cascaded through all levels of the Council.	2	We need to build on the good practice present in some departments such as Adult Care Services where the promises and targets are cascaded through the department	<i>Anne Fisher and Performanc e and Planning Group Sarah Pickup Martin Surtees Heidi Ebrahim Jim Wallace Richard Brown Gill Hibberd Clare Kaye Andy Nightingale</i>	<i>Discussed at August 2001 meeting and departmenta l implications being explored</i>

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<b>Performance management</b>						
<b>R6</b>	<p><b><i>There are weaknesses in the reporting and evidencing of PIs at departmental level. This includes:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is currently no corporate methodology on calculating estimates or target setting</li> <li>• Explanations of variances between estimates and targets and between year-on-year targets could be more meaningful in order to improve the value of the PI information to readers</li> <li>• There is limited evidence of both quality</li> </ul>	<p><b><i>The Council needs to take a more robust approach to producing PI information. Actions should include:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A corporate methodology on calculating estimates and targets for PIs should be produced</li> <li>• Explanatory commentary on PI performance could be enhanced</li> <li>• Guidance on the quality assurance</li> </ul>	<b>3</b>	<p>We will ensure a more robust approach to producing PI information. This will include guidance on calculating estimates and setting targets and on the evidence necessary to justify data. We will also provide further commentary for data given, develop greater independent verification of the data given and further develop the system of responsible officers so that the named officer can explain the data. We will enhance the system for collection of data to reinforce these points.</p>	<p><b><i>Anne Fisher Sarah Pickup Martin Surtees Heidi Ebrahim Jim Wallace Richard Brown Gill Hibberd Clare Kaye Andy Nightingale</i></b></p>	<p>Agenda item August 2001 and implementation by end October 2001</p>

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	<p>assurance and independent verification of estimates and targets, which has contributed to errors in the PIs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are instances of poor audit trails to evidence both target action planning and estimates in PIs, which impacts upon continuous service improvement.</li> </ul>	<p>process and independent verification of PI estimates and targets should be developed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guidance should be issued on evidencing.</li> <li>Lead officers should be required to "sign-off" that appropriate evidence is available</li> </ul>		As above	<i>As above</i>	As above

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R7	There are departmental differences in applying corporate guidance. To BV reviews This was also acknowledged by the BVI of the Procurement Review.	Ensure consistency in the application to BV reviews of policy guidelines underpinning BV	2	<p><b><i>There is some confusion here. We acknowledge that in some cases corporate guidelines (such as on procurement) have not been consistently applied across the authority. This issue was identified &amp; addressed by our own BVR.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>However, corporate guidelines on Best Value reviews have been consistently applied across all Best Value Reviews. We have demonstrable mechanisms for doing this (including checklist for project management to be adhered to, Training for members, lead officers, project managers, sharing department good practice)</i></b></p>	Clare Kaye	Systems in place

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R8	The PIs do not always link closely to the promises, reducing the effectiveness of monitoring.	Where there are insufficient PIs to meet the promises, consider the development of additional local PIs	1	The process for developing the promise measures will be tightened in Autumn 2001 to ensure that the PIs chosen do link to the promises next year	Anne Fisher	Nov 2001
R9	The Council operates a target of 2% efficiency gains. There is no clear methodology to allow the measurement of this target, particularly in relation to the local BVPIs.	The DETR is expected to issue guidance upon the approach to measuring efficiency. The Council ensure its approach is consistent with the DETR to enable more explicit measurement of the 2% efficiency target.	2	The Council will ensure its approach is consistent with the DTLR	Andrew Nightingale	March 2002(provided DTLR guidance is issued this year)

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R10	Although PI targets have been calculated using BVACOP and actuals will be based on BVACOP, PI estimates have not been calculated on this basis. This incompatibility will create difficulties in explaining variances in future.	The Council should fully implement the requirements of BVACOP	2	The Council will fully implement the requirements of BVACOP	Andrew Nightingale	March 2002
R11	Although meeting the criteria for reporting in the BVPP, the Council could improve the consistency of summaries of BV reviews, including details of action plans.	Establish a BVPP template for reporting summaries of BV reviews, including action plans.	2	Outcome orientated templates for publication Action plans for members	Clare Kaye	April 2001

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<b>Improving services</b>						
R12	The actions proposed by the Council in respect of the DA action plan were scheduled for March 2001. The Council should now update last years' BVPP action plan	Update last year's BVPP action plan and formalise Best Value monitoring arrangements to demonstrate continuous improvement.	2	Updated May 2001	Anne Fisher	Completed
R13	The BVPP contains a very positive summary of performance, but does not explicitly identify poorer performing services	The Council should ensure that poorer performing services are also integrated into the commentary.	2	The Summer programme for developing the promises requires departments to put forward areas of under performance	Anne Fisher	Draft BVPP Jan 2002

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R14	The Council has a range of methodologies in its BV review toolkit for consulting with users, but most commonly uses surveys.	Promote alternative methods of consultation within BV reviews	2	Questionnaire surveys are used where this is the most appropriate and efficient way of consulting people. However, all reviews have used qualitative methods to a greater or lesser extents: Focus Groups, Workshops, e-mails, Typetalk, telephone, face-to-face interviews, Working Groups made up of users & staff etc Range of approaches encouraged through consultation toolkit and training for lead officers and project managers	Clare Kaye	Implemented from Jan 2001