

The BVPP – Frequently Asked Questions

What is a BVPP?

Best Value Performance Plan. It is a statutory plan, required under the Local Government Act 1999. All local authorities are required to produce an annual performance report such as this, although there are increased freedoms for councils rated as 'excellent' or 'good.'

What areas does the BVPP cover?

It has to address specific areas laid down by the Government – these include: describing our corporate priorities; arrangements for improving our weaker areas; details on our performance on best value performance indicators (BVPIs) during the last year; our targets for BVPIs for the next three years and a statement on contracts. The ODPM (now Department for Communities and Local Government) produces guidance on the production of the BVPP – this is available from Dale Phillipson, Corporate Manager – Performance and Improvement.

When should a BVPP be produced?

The BVPP has to be published by 30 June each year. Because it has to include the end of year results for all our BVPIs (the outturn data), this part can only be completed during the period April to May. However, other elements of the report can be started earlier.

How does the BVPP link with other plans we produce?

The BVPP is one of our three strategic plans – the others being the *Corporate Plan* and our *Recovery Plan*. The Corporate Plan should set out the Council's priorities and objectives for a three to five year period and is usually pitched at a high, strategic level. A Recovery Plan is required because we were rated as a 'poor' Council in 2004. The Recovery Plan should specifically address a range of actions to improve our weaker services. Neither of these plans need to evaluate the previous year's performance as the BVPP does, nor do they have set out targets for all BVPIs. Although there is a different emphasis on each of the different plans, they should all reflect the priorities of the Council and be consistent in addressing our improvement needs.

Why has there been so little time to consider the BVPP in the past?

As a Council rated as 'poor', our short-term priorities have been to focus on preventing service failure and improving the performance of the weakest services. This has resulted in us not having a 'typical' corporate planning cycle. However, we will be changing this and moving to a new planning cycle this year – this will improve our consultation processes for all our strategic plans.

Who sets the targets in the BVPP?

The targets are set out by officers in the service areas. There is a host of guidance on how to set useful targets, but in summary the targets should represent continuous improvement in service provision. They should aim to achieve the levels of performance attained by the highest performing councils – 'top quartile performance'. This year we collected around 112 BVPIs set by the Government across all the Council's services, in addition to a range of local indicators set by the council.

Who evaluates the BVPP?

External audit is responsible for auditing our BVPP. The aim is to achieve an 'unqualified' BVPP, which means that the data set out in our plan is reliable and accurate, and that the report was published within the required format and timescale. Last year the BVPP was qualified because it was late.

How does Government use the BVPP?

As the BVPP sets out an evaluation of performance for the past year, and targets for improvement for the next three years, each Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and service inspection will routinely consider our BVPP.

Do Councillors – including Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny – have ownership and oversight of the BVPP?

Yes. The report is circulated in draft form to Improvement Board and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report will be circulated to all Councillors on the 15 June this year. Finally, the report is presented to Full Council for approval – on 26 June this year.

Does the BVPP have any effect on future Forward Plans?

Not necessarily. The Forward Plan is required to set out key decisions the Council is needed to make. The BVPP provides targets for all services, but this does not always require key decisions.

How can the BVPP help councillors in their work?

The plan provides performance results for each service area, showing how our services compare with other council's services. Councillors are able to use this information as one source of evidence about the council's performance. However, Councillors are able to receive more frequent reports on our performance – for example, we produce monthly reports, broken into service areas and showing how services are performing in relation to their targets.