

Report to Cabinet

Report Reference: C/003/2006-07.

Date of Meeting: 5 June 2006.



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support.

Subject: Best Value Performance Plan 2006/07.

Officer contact for further information: Steve Tautz (01992 – 56 4180).

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 – 56 4470).

Recommendations:

- (1) That the Council's draft Best Value Performance Plan for 2006/07 be approved;**
- (2) That, at its meeting on 29 June 2006, the draft Best Value Performance Plan for 2006/07 be recommended to the Council for adoption; and**
- (3) That, to incorporate any outstanding details in relation to the Council's performance for 2005/06, the Joint Chief Executive (Resources) be authorised to amend the draft Best Value Performance Plan for 2006/07 as necessary prior to its adoption by the Council.**

Report:

1. The Local Government Act 1999 and the Best Value regime require all local authorities to publish an annual performance plan by no later than the end of June each year. Copies of the draft version of the Council's Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) for 2006/07 have been distributed to all Portfolio Holders, further copies are available on the Committee Management System or from Democratic Services.
2. It will be noted that the draft BVPP reflects the portfolio structure of the authority that was in operation until the recent annual council meeting. Members are reminded that the BVPP is statutorily required to be formally adopted by the authority, and must therefore be considered at the meeting of the full Council to be held on 29 June 2006. The adoption of the BVPP is additionally a matter reserved to the Council by its constitution.
3. The requirement to prepare an annual performance plan provides an opportunity for authorities to articulate proposals for improvement in the coming year, including how weaknesses will be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered for local people. BVPPs are required to.
 - (a) summarise the Council's successes in meeting its key priorities, objectives and targets for the last year;
 - (b) show where these priorities, objectives and targets were not met; and
 - (c) detail key priorities, objectives and targets for the forthcoming year.
4. The BVPP is produced in two versions each year. The detailed version subject of this report is primarily prepared for the Council itself, the Government, the Audit Commission, and other bodies involved in the evaluation and assessment of

performance. It is intended that the audience for performance plans should be primarily the authority itself, as members and officers with responsibility for delivering local services need to be aware of priorities in order to influence improvement measures. However, the detailed BVPP is also available to those who require a comprehensive explanation of how well the Council is performing and its future plans. In addition and in accordance with a recommendation of the Audit Commission, a summary of the BVPP is distributed to all households in the district within the explanatory leaflet issued with the annual Council Tax demands in March each year. The summary version of the BVPP issued in March 2006 also reflected the previous portfolio structure of the authority, and was agreed by the Cabinet on 6 February 2006.

5. The Department of Communities and Local Government (formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) issues guidance to local authorities about the content of BVPPs, stipulating what matters should be included. In recent years the Government has focused on improvement and performance as its main priorities, and has given authorities classified by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) process as either 'Excellent' or 'Good', freedom from BVPP reporting in as much detail as originally necessary. BVPPs are required to concentrate on improvement planning and how weaknesses will be addressed, and to demonstrate improvement proposals for the coming year. In accordance with the Government's approach to deregulation, it is no longer necessary to publish information in performance plans that can be obtained from other sources and, as a result, the following no longer need to be published in the BVPP:
 - CPA scores (where available);
 - Summary financial information;
 - Progress in implementing improvement measures over the past three years (e.g. Best Value Reviews);
 - Progress against Local Public Service Agreements (now known as Local Area Agreements);
 - Details of the way in which the Council exercises its functions.
 - The five-year programme of Best Value Service Reviews;
 - An efficiency summary or consultation statement;
 - Historical, quartile and other comparative data on Best Value Performance Indicators; and
 - Local Performance Indicator data.
6. However, local authorities may choose to include any, or all of this information in their plans if they consider that it helps improve understanding of improvement proposals, or their context. With the exception of CPA scores and the efficiency summary, the majority of these matters have traditionally been included in the Council's BVPP.
7. To reduce the overall length of the BVPP, the majority of the detail not now statutorily required has been removed, and the corporate and strategic information previously included in the BVPP has been transferred to the revised Council Plan currently in preparation. However, areas such as the Council's CPA score and improvement proposals, and Local Performance Indicator (LPI) data will continue to be detailed in the BVPP. Although not required to be included, it is considered appropriate to continue to incorporate these matters and historical, quartile and other comparative data on Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) within the BVPP, as these details are an essential part of the Council's performance monitoring arrangements. The Finance and Performance Management Overview and Scrutiny Panel considered and agreed the proposed format and content of the draft BVPP for 2006/07 at its meeting on 25 April 2006.
8. Annual BVPPs are required to include details of outturn performance over the past year for all BVPIs, and to include targets for the forthcoming year and subsequent two

years. Although these details are provided within the draft BVPP for the majority of BVPIs and LPIs, performance for a number of the waste management and environmental performance indicators for 2005/06 is based on estimates until data is provided at year-end by Essex County Council and external contractors, and it has not therefore been possible to publish performance outturns for these indicators. The Council will incorporate these outstanding details within the BVPP prior to the consideration of the draft plan.

9. The Cabinet is requested to consider the draft BVPP for 2006/07, to recommend to the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2006 that the Plan be adopted, and to authorise the Joint Chief Executive (Resources) to amend the draft document as necessary prior to its adoption by the Council, to incorporate outstanding information in relation to the Council's waste management and environmental performance for 2005/06.

Options for Action:

10. No other options are available in this respect. The Council is statutorily required to publish its BVPP for 2006/07 by 30 June 2006. Adoption of the BVPP is a matter reserved to the Council, which is not currently scheduled to meet again in order to meet this deadline.

Statement in Support of Recommended Action:

11. The agreement of the recommended action will enable the publication of the BVPP to meet the prescribed timescale. Failure to adopt and publish the BVPP by 30 June 2006 will result in the qualification of the Plan by the Audit Commission.

Consultation Undertaken:

12. The format and content of the draft BVPP for 2006/067 has been subject to consultation with the Finance and Performance Management Overview and Scrutiny Panel, Management Board, and all Heads of Service.

Resource Implications:

Budget Provision: Publication of the BVPP can be met from existing budget provision.

Personnel: Publication of the BVPP can be met from existing provision.

Land: Nil.

Council Plan/BVPP Reference: None.

Relevant Statutory Powers: Local Government Act 1999.

Background Papers: None.

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications: None.

Key Decision Reference: N/A.