

**WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL****Annual Audit & Inspection Letter (March 2007)  
Progress Report**

Action Required	Progress / Action Taken	Div.
<b>A. General</b>		
1 Clarify and streamline Council Priorities	Priorities have now been agreed following consultation and workshops with officers and Members.	<b>CEO</b>
2 Ensure performance information is meaningful and use it to monitor milestones and unit costs to secure improvements	Performance information relating to the Council's priorities is reported monthly, while Best Value Performance Indicators are reported quarterly. Milestones will be identified within the Corporate Plan and 2008/09 Service Business Plans to be reported to Cabinet on 24 April and Annual Council on 14 May 2008. Unit costs will be included in ongoing developmental work on value for money (part of the Use of Resources assessment) which is to be progressed during 2008/09.	<b>CEO</b>
3 Continue to identify ways to improve capacity and ensure partnership working is effective	Opportunities continue to be explored for collaborative working, examples including property services, Worcs. Hub and waste management. Annual partnership audits are undertaken to evaluate the performance and added value that the Council is gaining from each partnership and to share best practice.	<b>CMT</b>
4 Ensure that risk management becomes fully embedded	Following the appointment of Zurich Municipal as Consultants and the recruitment of a Corporate Risk Officer, CMT have identified Corporate Risks and Divisions are developing Divisional risk registers and action plans. An updated Policy and Strategy have been approved, and a new training programme commenced in January 2008.	<b>FS</b>
5 Evaluate outcomes from the capital programme to determine how it has contributed to corporate objectives	Schemes within the Capital Programme are approved as part of the wider budget process.	<b>FS</b>
6 Set challenging targets for income collection	Targets set within the Financial Services Business Plan	<b>FS</b>
7 Monitor progress with planned savings and efficiency gains	Achievement of efficiency gains is reported as part of the quarterly budget monitoring process, and as part of the Budget and Final Accounts process.	<b>FS</b>

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<b>B. Environment &amp; Communications Inspection (May 2006)</b>		
8 Continue to raise the profile of diversity and ensure that it is appropriately championed by Councillors and managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Single Equality Scheme and action plan has been drafted and will be reported to Cabinet on 24 April 2008.</li> <li>• The Council was represented at various community events, e.g. race equality and disability awareness.</li> <li>• The Mike Oborski No Barriers Award Scheme has been established with the first awards to be made in May 2008.</li> <li>• The Council is actively involved in the County-wide TEDS equalities project, with mapping work due to begin this month (March 2008)</li> </ul>	<b>CEO</b>
9 Align communications activity to corporate priorities and develop a more proactive approach to joint planning with the media	Proactive engagement with the media and opportunities for joint planning is ongoing. Corporate publicity material will be produced for the Council's new priorities.	<b>CAPS</b>
10 Develop a clear action plan for climate change based on consultancy feedback	Having signed the Worcestershire Climate Change Pledge, a Climate Change Action Plan was adopted by the Council in June 2006. The Plan has resulted in a number of carbon saving activities, including energy efficiency measures in Council buildings, the introduction of robust energy monitoring practices for Council buildings, grants offering free cavity wall and loft insulation to people over 65 years old and £1,000 cashback for households installing microgeneration technologies.	<b>PHE</b>
11 Establish a clear vision for consultation on street scene action, including cleansing	A consultation plan is in development, however in the meantime we have consulted with the public via the Oldington and Foley Park Network and the Horsefair and Broadwaters Community Group. Wyre Forest also works closely with the Wyre Forest Community Safety Partnership whereby we consult with the Health Authority, Police and Fire Service.	<b>POS</b>
12 Develop an action plan to maximise the take up and success of home composting, based on findings from the current evaluation carried out with County partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work closely with WCC to 'tap into' their survey results avoiding duplication and survey overload</li> <li>• Using the money received from the Waste Performance and Efficiency Grant from Defra in 2006/07, £3,000 has been allocated to promote recycling in schools and a further £3,000 to advertise and promote recycling in local papers</li> <li>• Working with WCC, leaflets have been distributed to all households headed 'Mission Possible News' together with general recycling information. A page</li> </ul>	<b>POS</b>

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	<p>is dedicated to home composting - low cost of bins, easy availability, 0800 tel no, web address, what can be composted, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A series of Roadshows have been completed during the 2007. This included visits to outlying areas of the District and the town centres of Stourport, Bewdley and Kidderminster.</li> <li>• Vehicles have been fitted with promotional posters on the side panels to increase public awareness of home composting.</li> <li>• Love Food – Hate Waste roadshow held on 19 November 2007 at Sainsbury’s supermarket. Similar roadshows have been held across the County.</li> <li>• Working in conjunction with the County Council on a number of waste challenge initiatives, e.g. Sink Your Waste which provides a cash back payment to householders who purchase a waste disposal unit</li> <li>• We are linked in to a Billboard and Bus advertising campaign in response to the survey carried out by County</li> <li>• Additional campaign initiatives include composting clinics spread across the whole of Herefordshire and Worcestershire at 13 different locations. The Scheme has been chosen as an exemplary scheme for the rest of the country and we have an entry into the Waste Management Awards for the individual Champion of the Year</li> <li>• We had a target that 50% of all waste including green waste taken to household waste sites would be recycled/composted. We are currently hitting 63% in Worcestershire</li> <li>• The County Waste Management Strategy is currently being reviewed.</li> </ul>	
<p>13 Ensure that environmental sustainability is effectively championed and monitored by managers and councillors</p>	<p>Progress with the Council’s Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan is reported to the Corporate Management Team quarterly, and to Councillors on a 6-monthly basis. Sustainability issues are championed at the Corporate Management Team level by the Head of Planning, Health and Environment.</p> <p>In October 2007, Councillors received an update on progress with the Sustainability Strategy and Affordable Warmth Strategy and agreed to build on their successes with a new Sustainability Strategy in 2008.</p>	<p><b>PHE</b></p>

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<b>C. Cultural Services Inspection (March 2007)</b>		
14 Develop a local Cultural Strategy with a summary of its aims for cultural services	It has been decided by the Cultural Theme Group not to progress with a county wide Cultural Strategy but to ensure representation is made for Cultural Services in the County Community Strategy and also in each District's Community Strategy. Action Plans for Cultural Services will be produced by each District by end March 2008.	<b>CAPS</b>
15 Use the local Cultural Strategy to produce a three-year SMART plan for the service with clearly defined outcomes against which progress can be measured with particular emphasis on widening access to services	See above and to be produced by March 2008.	<b>CAPS</b>
16 Use the power of the service's partners as an action group to drive the plan forward	Noted.	<b>CAPS</b>
17 Improve performance management of the service by: - developing a formal system for analysing service and project outcomes - measuring actual against target outcomes - service benchmarking - cost comparisons	Service outcomes are contained in Business Plans and monitored accordingly. Performance indicators are to be revised for 2008/09, including local PIs. Benchmarking and cost comparison activity is to be included in value for money work (see rec 2 above)	<b>CAPS / CEO</b>
<b>D. UoR: Financial reporting</b>		
18 All working papers supporting the accounts fully explain, and are sufficiently detailed, to support figures detailed in the accounts	Implemented.	<b>FS</b>
19 A more comprehensive senior review of the accounts is performed to address presentational and financial issues	Implemented.	<b>FS</b>

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<b>E. UoR: Financial management</b>		
20 The MTFS is actively communicated to stakeholders	Communication is through the Budget Consultation Strategy, Newsywe and the Council Tax Leaflet.	FS
21 A sensitivity analysis is performed on the MTFS to improve the identification of areas for concern	Areas of concern are monitored through regular updating of the Budget Risk Management matrix and ongoing budget monitoring.	FS
22 The MTFS is extended to include balance sheet and cash-flow data	This will be considered as part of the 2009/10 budget process.	FS
23 Budget variances are clearly highlighted and readily identifiable through the use of traffic light system	A separate report of variances is prepared as part of budget monitoring and Budget Process and Final Accounts reporting.	FS
24 Progress against planned savings and efficiency gains is regularly reported with associated action plans as appropriate	Incorporated into the Budget Process.	FS
<b>F. UoR: Financial standing</b>		
25 Budgets are based on realistic income and expenditure levels	This is part of the Budget Process.	FS
26 Targets are set for levels of income and debtors	Targets are set and monitored for Council Tax and Business Rates. Debtors targets will be included in the Business Plan (see 6 above)	FS
27 Members set challenging targets for income collection and levels of variances	Monitored through Budget Monitoring and Budget Review Panel by Members.	FS
<b>G. UoR: Internal control</b>		
28 Risk management is embedded throughout the organisation	See 4 above	FS
29 The risk management strategy is updated annually to assess risks for the likelihood and impact, any mitigating controls and ownership of mitigating controls	An updated Risk Management Strategy has been adopted and will be reviewed annually.	FS

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30 All partnership risks should be included within the risk register, and for significant partnerships, in the risk management policy	Guidance for managing risk is included in the Partnership Framework. Partnership risks are included in the risk register.	<b>CAPS / FS</b>
31 An improved assurance framework is developed and implemented	See 4 above	<b>FS</b>
<b>H. UoR: VFM</b>		
32 Unit costs are driven down as far as possible, whilst providing services of a comparable level, quality and range to other authorities	Benchmarking is to be coordinated on a more formal basis, together with a review of where information is provided from. Investigations are currently being carried out to identify suitable Benchmarking Clubs.	<b>FS / CEO</b>
33 There is clear information on costs and how these compare to others and to the quality of services achieved currently and over time	The Council is currently planning a programme of value for money exercises. A model is being developed to identify costs, service standards and local need to produce a value for money statement.	<b>CEO / FS</b>
34 The capital programme is closely monitored to minimise slippage	The Capital Programme is closely monitored as part of the Budget Monitoring process. However, as with any capital programme, slippage may occur because of circumstances outside the Council's control.	<b>FS</b>
35 Outcomes from the capital programme are evaluated to determine how it has contributed to the Council's corporate objectives, and to clearly identify improvements from capital resources invested	Schemes within the Capital Programme are approved as part of the Budget Process.	<b>FS</b>