
REPORT TO: CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE OF MEETING 4 August 2003

REPORT FROM: PERSONNEL & DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

MEMBERS'

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SUBJECT: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT –
BEST VALUE REVIEW FINAL REPORT

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To inform members how the HRM Best Value Review has been undertaken, and the final outcomes / actions being recommended as a result, that the review team leader will present for approval to the Finance & Management Committee in September 2003.

2.0 Executive Summary

- 2.1 The terms of reference for this review were for a review of the whole service to ensure effective and efficient delivery of quality Personnel & Development Services to the authority that also provides value for money; to include a review of the policies and systems that support performance management and the management of change throughout the Authority.
- 2.2 The review is now complete and has gone through due process, including addressing the four 'C's' Challenge, Compare, Consult & Compete.
- 2.3 A Baseline Assessment has been prepared and duly challenged.
- 2.4 The review team has drawn out the key issues they consider the authority should address in relation to HR and have evidenced how they have arrived at these recommendations. These can be found at paragraph 6.1. The Finance & Management Committee approved these key issues in January 2002.
- 2.5 The key issues have undergone an option appraisal exercise, and proposals for action have been made and challenged.

- 2.6 A range of focus groups have been undertaken, to consult with service users, members, and Personnel & Development staff on the options proposed. The most recent in July 2003. All show Personnel & Development as an improving service.
- 2.7 The IIP Interim Assessment in June 2002, acknowledged improvements in the service provision, in particular relating to Employee Development, and the procedures we introduced to support performance management in the organisation. The assessor considered the organisation had a *'forward looking and professional HR department committed to introducing appropriate change for the right reasons'*. The final IIP report in April 2003 awarded the Authority the Investor in People Award. The Assessor re-confirmed her earlier views on employee development procedures, practice, and availability of the service in her final report and recognised the work done to improve this further, plus the introduction of measures to improve communication, and morale.
- 2.8 Joint working opportunities with other authorities, internal divisions, and the Learning Skills Council have been developed and continue to progress.
- 2.9 A range of comparative data studies have been undertaken. The review team considers the impact of the financial crisis in 1999 clearly affected the 'Organisational Health PI's', and employee morale, which formed a key part of the comparative data of the service at that time. It was a difficult time for such a service to be compared.
- 2.10 The Review Team were informed that before the final report and action plan could be taken to Finance & Management Committee in April, the review was required to undergo a 'reality check' as part of the BV assessment process. This was to be organised by the BVWG and would be done by an external organisation/consultant. This was outside the control of the review team, and was not concluded until October 2002. It delayed the review by some 10 months.
- 2.11 The Action Plan was completed, and forwarded to the BVWG for approval. (**See Annexe A**) Further delays occurred outside the review team's control. However, due to the delays a number of key tasks have been undertaken already by the service, as we could not wait any longer, for the Best Value review to be concluded and the action plan has been cut down considerably, with those tasks already achieved identified in Section 13 of this report. The follow up focus group in July 2003 provided some further suggestions for improvements that were incorporated into the action plan too.
- 2.12 The review will no longer be inspected as a stand-alone review. The inspectors will cover HRM when they undertake the Council's Corporate Performance Assessment. Ongoing monitoring processes for the action plan have been identified.
- 2.13 Further relevant supported reading will be made available for the inspectors, details of relevant documents can be found at (**Annexe B**).

3.0 Detail

3.1 Terms of Reference

As part of the Best Value process, Members agreed a Best Value Review for Human Resource Management in Year 2. The Best Value Performance Plan identified this review as being justified in terms of improving performance, and providing high quality, value for money services. The Plan identified that both Personnel and Development Service areas would be reviewed. It also indicated that effective policies and systems were required to support Performance management and the management of change throughout the Authority.

- 3.2 The terms of reference were therefore already clearly identified. It was to be a review of the whole service to ensure effective and efficient delivery of quality Personnel & Development Services to the authority that also provides value for money. This would include a review of the policies and systems that support performance management and the management of change throughout the Authority.

4.0 Scope

This has been a whole service review to look at the level and range of Personnel and Development services being delivered, where and how they are being delivered, and their involvement at corporate, operational and administration levels. The review has applied the four C's, - (Comparison, Challenge, Competition, and Consultation) and produced an implementation plan for improvements.

- 4.1 An officer review team was established in May 2001, which comprised of: -
- Personnel & Development Manager (Review Team Leader)
 - Employee Development Officer
 - Personnel Officer
 - Council Tax Team Leader
 - Environmental Protection Manager (Health & Safety and Best Value Working Group representative)
 - Personnel Admin Asst. (Note taker / Administrative support)
 - An officer from the Learning Skills Council
 - GMB trade union representative
 - UNISON representative
- 4.2 Councillors were allocated to the review team in August 2001, they are:
- Councillor J Carroll
 - Councillor M Lauro
 - Councillor R Walton
- 4.3 A project plan along with the terms of reference, and scope of the review and were approved by the Finance & Management Committee on 19 July 2001.

5.0 Baseline Assessment

A Baseline Assessment outlining the current position of the service was completed. The assessment addressed the following areas: -

- Profile of the District
- Scope of the Review
- Democratic Process inc. User & Employee Involvement
- Corporate Vision & Objectives
- Legal Framework
- Current Resources
- Service Costs
- Organisational & Management Structures
- Current Standards, and Best Value Performance Indicators
- SARATOGA Comparative Benchmarking
- Audit Group Comparisons
- East Staffs BC Comparative Benchmarking
- Corporate Employment Policies & Procedures
- Service Providers
- Relationships with other Internal services
- Who are our Stakeholders?
- Local, Regional, and National Context of Service
- Recommendations from Significant Others

6.0 Challenge

The Baseline Assessment was challenged at a review team meeting on 28 November 2001. A further meeting on 19 December 2001 enabled the group to then draw out the key issues for the authority to address. The Finance & Management Committee approved the key issues in January 2002.

- 6.1 The approved key issues arising from the HRM Baseline Assessment are identified in the table below:-

KEY ISSUE	EVIDENCE
1. Clarification & Communication of role of Personnel & Devt., including areas of overlap with other service providers	Staff Survey P&D Staff Consultation Member Survey Feedback from other internal support service providers
2. Democratic Processes – do existing arrangements support/add value to HRM function. Ethical Standards Agenda. Employee & Member Development, & Staff Consultation mechanisms	Change to Council's Structure 2-7-01 Corporate Plan Service Plan ESBC Survey Members Survey
3. Implementation of transparent, and responsible Single Status Agreement, which includes the Single Status Job Evaluation Scheme	Corporate Plan Service Plan National Joint Council Agreements ESBC Survey Local Agreement with Trade Unions Legislation re: Equal Pay Staff Consultation SSSG Terms of Reference
4. Recognition of the importance of People Issues, and dynamic impact legislation has on the service area Need to understand and manage high levels of Sickness Absence & Ill Health Retirements Ensuring People are treated fairly & equitably in employment Supporting the Improvement of Employee Morale	44% of Critical Success factors in Corporate Plan are people related Service Plan Legislation SARATOGA Report BVI's Audit Group Comparison BV Inspectorate Reports ESBC Survey Staff Survey P&D Staff Consultation Members Survey
5. Supporting the ongoing development of a performance management culture	Corporate Plan Service Plan District Audit Letter to Management 1999/00 BV Inspectorate Reports
6. Role of assisting the organisation to develop its customer focus	Corporate Plan Service Plan ESBC Survey Staff Survey
7. Delivery of a Value For Money service & need for continuous audit and review of systems, linked to organisational priorities	Corporate Plan & Service Plan ESBC Survey Best Value Performance Plan P & D Staff Consultation SARATOGA Report

- 6.2 These key issues have been assessed in an option appraisal exercise, by the review team. The review team has had an external member from the Learning Skills Council. Additionally the Deputy Chief Executive and Policy & Best Value Manager attended these meetings as 'challengers' to the approach taken by the review team and to the options proposed.
- 6.3 An external reality check was undertaken at the latter stages by an external consultant. Also reports have been taken to the Best Value Working Group, and Corporate Scrutiny Committee for challenges to be made on the process and reports at key stages, outlining findings / recommendations have been made to the Best Value Working Group, and Finance & Management Committee to be challenged.
- 6.4 External Reality Check**
- 6.5 The main findings of the Reality Check in October 2002 were that the Personnel & Development Division:-
- ❖ 'provide a reasonable service but as they acknowledge, there are areas needing attention. The service aims are clear. Because of the financial problems in previous years there is a considerable element of 'catch up', so all of the targets are challenging.
 - ❖ The key aims are being met, but there is room for improvement. Some of the targets need to be more specific.
 - ❖ Personnel Division is doing a similar range of work to a comparable size of company in the private sector. More precise comparisons would require benchmarking statistics.'
- 6.6 When asked if the service would improve he confirmed:-
- ❖ 'Yes subject to maintaining the existing level of resources. There is a long way to go but, if attention is paid to the recommendations, then there are new opportunities for improvement.'
- 6.7 The key issues he identified were:-
- ❖ Corporate challenges and opportunities
 - ❖ Staffing in Personnel
 - ❖ Strategic or Admin function?
 - ❖ Training and Development
 - ❖ Personnel profile
 - ❖ Monitoring
 - ❖ Use of I.T.
 - ❖ Equal Opportunities
 - ❖ Role of Line Managers
- 6.8 The key recommendations he made in October 2002, were that the service needs to:-
- ❖ raise our profile and be more proactive
 - ❖ work more closely with line managers to ensure delivery of personnel policies

- ❖ introduce effective monitoring to ensure policies and procedures are carried out as intended
- ❖ control and justify costs
- ❖ introduce successfully Single Status
- ❖ monitor trends & patterns of Absence levels & ensure managers have feedback
- ❖ address any teething problems to PDR process
- ❖ evaluate effectiveness of all Training & Development (internal and external)
- ❖ review computerised system for recording Training records re: integration with main system
- ❖ clarify purpose of introduction of Management Development Programme
- ❖ address issues around poor diversity levels
- ❖ streamline recruitment processes through use of IT, and pass over more of administration to managers
- ❖ utilise job specifications from SSJE to develop JD's for posts
- ❖ evaluate impact of legislation in service plans
- ❖ have a key role in implementation of Data Protection legislation for employees
- ❖ identify lead officers for key tasks in the plan
- ❖ Review efficiency of HR/Payroll system and look at feasibility of new E-HR systems
- ❖ Clarify role re: Health & Safety training
- ❖ Change priorities in action plan from customer priorities to organisation's priorities
- ❖ Consider whether IT training should remain with Personnel & Development
- ❖ Give line managers more responsibility for dealing direct with external training providers and relevant budgets
- ❖ Consider outsourcing staff newsletter
- ❖ Explore possibility of employee forum, but only let it contribute to not control policy direction
- ❖ Continue with members development programme

7.0 Consultation

7.1 A written questionnaire was sent out 40 employees, plus Divisional Managers, and CMT members. The questionnaire was to assess their view of the current level of service, and whether or not they perceived it to be improving, staying the same, or deteriorating. They were also given a further option of confirming whether or not they were aware we undertook the particular areas of service. Results of Staff Survey undertaken identified that:-

- Mainly PO2 – Sc3 Clerical employees responded
- There is a need to clarify the Division's role and improve communication of what we do
- There was a positive recognition of the quality of information available on employment policies
- There was a lack of understanding of responsibilities, i.e. JD's

- There are still ongoing fears / insecurity following LGMB JE and the 2000 organisational review.
 - There was positive feedback with employees seeing us as improving service
- 7.2 Following the advice of the Councillors on the review team, the Employee Development Officer undertook a telephone questionnaire of members. This was to focus on similar themes to the staff questionnaire. A letter that made them aware of what we were trying to do and what to expect preceded it. Members Survey results were as follows:-
- There was again a lack of understanding of our role
 - There was a view that through LGMB JE we were seen as management tools
 - That low staff morale is our responsibility
 - There are currently a limited number using the member development opportunities we provide.
- 7.3 The Personnel and Development general staff meetings that are held monthly have had the Best Value Review as a standing item since some 6 months prior to its commencement. All relevant documents relating to the review were placed on a shared drive for the staff to view, and a considerable amount of work in preparing the baseline assessment involved the staff. There was a number of the staff on the review team.
- 7.4 Additionally a specific consultation meeting was held with them, to formally ask their views on the comparative performance data results, and the feedback from the consultation surveys. They provided a group written response to these questions. Their views were:-
- There is a need to clarify our role
 - Is the service too wide-ranging?
 - SARATOGA report – there were concerns over how it had been presented and recognition that it did not provide a qualitative comparison
 - They see the comparison results as a snapshot of a difficult year following the financial crisis.
- 7.5 In response to the feedback from the Staff questionnaire their views were that: -
- Feel employees generally in the organisation seem insecure
 - There is a need for improved communication, and visible leadership at all levels of the authority.
 - There is a need to in-build ongoing evaluations of service
 - They have already offered some ideas for improvement for next stage of review
- 7.6 A range of focus groups were undertaken, to consult with service users, members, and Personnel & Development staff on the options proposed, and to seek views on prioritisation of tasks. The group utilised this feedback to assist in the formulation of the final action plan. Generally customer priorities matched across the groups, i.e. Members, CMT, &

employees, so in the majority of areas we should be able to accommodate them all.

- 7.7 However, there is an exception in that CMT placed Equal Opportunities and the Democratic Process much higher. Whilst our other customers don't perceive these to be big issues for the immediate future, CMT consider some key tasks to cover statutory requirements will need to be undertaken, and this is agreed. There are other statutory tasks that will also have to take priority regardless of customer views.
- 7.8 Also our customers would prefer the one stop shop, - gold star service, where everything including all Personnel related administration, is undertaken by the Personnel & Development Division. This was put to CMT, but their view at that time was that any such approach would only be through IEG solutions, and that our action plan should be within existing staffing resources, therefore we did not follow this up in this Best Value Review.
- 7.9 To provide such a 'gold star' service was therefore not realistic at that time within current organisational resources and priorities. It really would require a follow up review to consider this and additional resources. We have therefore taken the approach in this Best Value review, based on the recommendations of CMT at the time, to have a vision to build the capacity of our managers, to enable them to effectively manage their people resources, with clear statements of standards of our service provision. The key task will be to communicate our approach positively and clearly to our customers. We will be looking at further improvements however, in terms of utilising I.T. facilities to improve service delivery to our customers.
- 7.10 There are a significant number of the Corporate tasks which whilst we can do a lot of the underpinning work, it will be CMT, Divisional Managers and Supervisors that will be required to demonstrate the commitment and input to the processes, if they are to be successful.
- 7.11 A further consultation exercise took place in June 2002. This was the interim IIP Assessment. The Assessor undertook a number of confidential focus groups, and one to one interviews with a cross section of employees. The outcomes of this showed positive improvements in the service since the Baseline Assessment in November 2001, particularly in relation to Employee Development and the procedures supporting Performance Management. The organisation was accredited with 66% of the sub-indicators.

- 7.12 The final assessment was undertaken in March 2003, when the Authority was awarded with Investor in People status.
- 7.13 The IIP Interim Assessment in June 2002, acknowledged improvements in the service provision, in particular relating to Employee Development, and the procedures we introduced to support performance management in the organisation. The assessor considered that *'processes that have been introduced have been done well and the route to the Investor in People Standard is being used for the benefit of the organisation not as a badge gaining exercise.'* The organisation has a *'forward looking and professional HR department committed to introducing appropriate change for the right reasons.'*
- 7.14 The final IIP report in April 2003 awarded the Authority the Investor in People Award. The Assessor re-confirmed her earlier views on employee development procedures, practice, in her final report and recognised the work done to improve this further, plus the introduction of measures to improve communication, and morale.
- 7.15 She stated *'at the first assessment people at senior and middle management levels felt valued and involved and communication to Divisional Management was working well but there was a mixed response below this level. However the impact of the new communication processes and work with line managers has been very positive and people at all levels now feel appreciated and more involved. The PDR process gives the opportunity for structured discussion of performance on an annual basis and people receive informal feedback on a one to one basis and through the core brief process.'*
- 7.16 The Audit Commission in July 2003 undertook a further focus group with employees. This was partly to review the Core Brief process, performance management framework, but also to as a follow up to the BVR review. Their key conclusions that were relevant to this reviews were:-

Conclusions and thoughts of the Audit Commission relevant to the HRM Best Value Review

Clarify role

Clarify where 'management' stops and 'personnel' starts. There was sympathy for the department because of its small size and acceptance that with more resources. Personnel would be able to take a more supportive role than they could accomplish now. People would ideally like there to be more support but recognise the council's financial limitations.

Improvement continues.

Communication

The review of the core brief showed that some managers were not prepared for the meetings and in some cases did not hold them (see audit report).

Focus groups showed things are improving; though there is a long way to go. Staff focus groups demonstrated that all their direct managers had applied the system, and that staff felt that most managers were delivering the system. Generally, there was acceptance that managers were committed to improving the way the council operated. However at the ground level, there was a variable view of the level of buy in due to manager inconsistency in application of the processes and systems, based on managers' perceptions of its value.

The focus groups also demonstrated that not enough was being done to demonstrate leadership from the management team. The core brief was not being used effectively to discuss issues which are on management team agendas, and ask for feedback from staff on their and members' ideas, direction for the council and actions/decisions. Reference was made to Members comments about 'if you don't like it here, leave' and not wanting to hear difficult messages as not demonstrating effective leadership.

Reinstate newsletter

Make core brief properly consultative and on matters of substance being discussed at CMT and by members

Give timely and specific feedback

Rationalise and manage public folders properly

PDR System

(PDR) System needs review and streamlining

Make clear that the annual appraisal has to be done well, but does not have to take a long time (cut to suit circumstances)

Explain how performance information is used

There is a need to explain the 'corporate' parts of the system and their value to services and PDR plans.

Employee feed back information to be in a consolidated format (fewer forms) and for managers give praise for jobs well done.

Training & Development

The council is investing in training and development.

Divide training into essential and desirable

Deliver essential training first

Tell people why they are getting/not getting training

Look at creative ways of developing and motivating long standing staff

Recruitment & Retention

Ensure consultation on Recruitment & Retention Working Group issues / findings in the core brief

Explain outcomes from Recruitment & Retention Working Group

Communicate fair application of incentives to new and existing staff

Recruit as soon as vacancies appear, if post is on establishment and will remain so.

Plan effectively for interim management where there are gaps

Apply same standards for flexible working to all, or define and communicate all eligible, rationale, and process for taking flexible working/working from home

Absence Management

Urgently address fear of new Absence Management system

Investigate the exceptions to improved levels, in those Divisions, i.e. Technical Services & Customer Services.

More training for managers on policy application

Occupational health advisor should be a help for line manager at trigger point

Personnel application of phased returns to work needs investigating

Equal Opportunities

A corporate future development priority, not an immediate staff issue

Officer/Management/Member Relationships

Trusting relationships are starting to be re-established.

Members should be required to have training on what the council does

Members should listen to those doing the work

8.0 Compare

8.1 The Best Value Performance Indicators were analysed in relation to Government National Targets.

- (a) The Division produces a service plan, approved by committee each year, which identifies the current standards, and PI's.
- (b) A wide-ranging service is currently provided to divisions, in addition to a corporate role.
- (c) There is concern over how Financial Crisis may have impacted on BVPI's during the year of comparison.
- (d) BVPI's reflect the organisational health, in areas where the Division does not have direct control over results. The authority has implemented an absence management policy recently to address the issues of ill health.
- (e) Results of BV PI's for the year 1999/2000 showed compared to national targets:-
 - High levels of sickness absence
 - High level of early retirements
 - High level of ill health retirements
 - Some work undertaken on Equalities Monitoring, that needed to be developed further.

8.2 Other comparative PI data and supporting financial information was collated and assessed by SARATOGA for the year 1999/2000. They are a private sector organisation who works in partnership with SOCPO (Society of Chief Personnel Officers). SARATOGA undertook comparisons with other districts on their database, and national figures, which include Private Sector. They also provided their assessment of the key issues/challenges, which arose from this data in a follow up report. The results were as follows:-

- **Employee pay & pensions**, as a % of total expenditure was 25.3%. This is an average level in comparison to other districts, and the national figures.
- **Sickness Absence Rates** were high in comparison to the district and national samples at 4.6%. The levels of sickness absence costs are therefore equally high. They recommend action to particularly target the 'hot spots' of concern.
- **Employee Voluntary Turnover** was healthy at 6.0%.
- **Ill Health Retirements** were very high at 1.4%
- **Involuntary Termination Rates & Early Retirements** were high

- **Recruitment & Equal Opportunities** demonstrated that **female diversity** in the authority was below the diversity within the local workforce, at all levels.
- **Levels of employment for applicants from Ethnic Minority backgrounds** were also below the local workforce diversity. There were also some positive trends emerging however, following recruitment exercises over the last 18 months.
- CRE Standards had not been fully adopted by the authority, and clearly this required urgent attention.
- **Disability Diversity** was relatively low at 18% of local diversity, although this is above average in the district sample, although the appointment rate is poor, with no disabled employees being appointed in the last 18 months.
- **Overall appointments of external candidates** generally were low; this is to be expected bearing in the mind the restructure at that time, and the recruitment freeze for a large part of the year. Also acceptance rate of external candidates was low.
- **Training & Development** in comparison to the SARATOGA district sample, had a larger ratio of Training staff per FTE.
- However, when compared to the national averages, which includes the private sector, the ratio reduced significantly, to demonstrate average staff ratio levels per FTE.
- Economies of scale should be considered and SARATOGA confirmed that the private sector generally invest more in training and development.
- Training costs therefore when compared to the SARATOGA district sample were high.
- However, when compared to the national average, this reduced considerably, and Training costs were well below average.
- The authority's current needs, delivery and effectiveness are what the authority has to consider.
- The levels of training days per FTE compared to the SARATOGA district sample was well above average
- The levels of training days was just below average compared to the national figure.
- It is important to note that good levels of training activity occurred within the authority, despite the fact, that there was no internal training during the first half of the year, due to the financial crisis.

- SARATOGA confirm SDDC, need to ensure that retraining quantity and costs are linked to these organisational outputs.' The newly implemented Performance Development & Review process should assist with this, by providing all employees with the opportunity for a PDR interview, and individual training plan linked to corporate objectives. A local performance indicator has been introduced this year for the first time to measure the level of employees receiving PDR interviews, and having individual training plans.
- **Personnel Services** When compared with SARATOGA district sample, also demonstrated a relatively large function
- However, when compared to the national average they were well below average, and sit close to the lowest quartile. The costs of the function are similarly reflected. However the Cleansing the environment Best Value review concluded that Personnel costs were relatively low in respect of Refuse.
- SARATOGA recognised the need for successful organisations to align HRM policies and strategies to meet corporate needs. The Division's Service Plan demonstrates how the service has made these links.

8.3 Additionally, when all this was complete a comparative telephone survey was also undertaken to clarify specific areas agreed by the review team, with our Audit Group authorities. Generally the survey results from audit group authorities seem to reflect the similar outcomes in the SARATOGA benchmarking exercise, and national BVPI comparisons.

BVPI 11	Senior Mgt Posts filled by Women - 5 authorities had better results than SDDC, 3 had poorer results
BVPI 12	Working days lost due to sickness absence – 6 authorities had better results than SDDC, 2 had poorer results
BVPI 13	Voluntary Leavers – 1 authority has a lower turnover, and 7 have poorer levels of turnover
BVPI 14	Early Retirements – 7 authorities had better results than SDDC, and one was poorer
BVPI 15	Ill Health Retirements – 7 authorities had better results than SDDC, and one was poorer
BVPI 16	Staff who meet DDA as % of workforce – 2 had a better result, 1 was the same as SDDC and 5 had a poorer result
BVPI 17	Ethnic Minority Staff as % of workforce – 7 had a better result and one had a poorer result.

Actual No. of Personnel Staff – 3 had a higher number of staff, 2 didn't respond, 3 had a lower number of staff

Actual No. of Training Staff – 2 had a higher number of staff, 2 didn't respond, and 4 had a lower number of staff - (which equated to 1 or zero training staff)

- 8.4 Work was also undertaken in collating information about the service, its structure, corporate objectives, statutory requirements placed upon it, areas of service provision, corporate policies and the skills and expertise of the staff etc. Comparisons were made with benchmarking data provided by East Staffs BC Best Value Review. This Council is our neighbouring authority, and although different in size and structure, are seen as comparators by our general public. Their survey provided a summary of HR service delivery across their audit group. Areas where outsourcing is typically undertaken is in Occupational Health & Counselling. Results of this survey demonstrate that in relation to the areas of service surveyed:-
- the source of provision was predominantly similar to the arrangements at SDDC. Although the survey did not necessarily cover every service outlined in the Division's service plan, or the level or quality of service in each area.
 - When asked 'What are the major issues facing their family group authorities HR services in the next few years' the issues were similar to SDDC's.
 - When asked 'What processes do you use for communicating to staff?' the results again reflected similar processes to SDDC's.
- 8.5 The comparative data analysed in the baseline assessment influenced the selection of the key issues identified, as identified in paragraph 6.1 of this report.
- 9.0 Compete – Cost effectiveness, partnership opportunities and can anyone else do it better?**
- 9.1 Some analysis has been undertaken of a survey conducted by East Staffs BC, on the areas of work that authorities in their Audit Group have outsourced. This shows a general theme of limited HR outsourcing in small authorities, and more specifically where there is any, it tends to be for Occupational Health services, including Counselling.
- 9.2 Indications are from previous exercises we have undertaken, that with a small number of employees, service providers are not interested in us on our own. Our contract size is not attractive for wholesale outsourcing. We need to have joint tenders to secure any real benefits / attract any profitable arrangements.
- 9.3 A number of Joint working opportunities with other authorities, and the Learning Skills Council have developed throughout the life of the review.

- 9.4 A partnership has been developed for the procurement and management of Occupational Health & Counselling Services with East Staffordshire Borough Council, Tamworth Borough Council, and Lichfield District Council. A service specification was produced, and invites to tender advertised. Tenderers were shortlisted and interviewed jointly during February 2002, and the new private sector service provider was procured and the contract commenced for a period of 3 years, on 1 April 2002.
- 9.5 Previous attempts as a stand-alone authority trying to procure Occupational Health services had received rejections from providers, who this time decided to tender. The new service provides a better quality service, on site, with the flexibility for appointments at other authorities, joint review of the service provision, and economies of scale in the contract price.
- 9.6 Developments have also been made in terms of procuring services from the private sector in relation to online recruitment services, enabling all South Derbyshire's prospective employees, to view our advertisements, and apply for jobs through the Internet. This took effect from 1 May 2002, with an organisation who is in partnership with SOCPO. It means we have also been able to market our organisation through links to dedicated websites, to prospective candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds, and those who may have disabilities.
- 9.7 The training budgets have been reallocated to divisions, for them to spend. The budgets are allocated, under certain criteria, and are based on cost estimates of required training needs from managers each year arising out of PDR's. The service provider is the division's choice. There is now 66% of total training budgets allocated to divisions.
- 9.8 The remaining corporate budget is used to support corporate internal / external training activities. Currently work is taking place with Burton College, and the University of Derby, in the delivery of our management development programmes, which is taking a substantial part of the corporate budget for the next 2 years. Also discussions are taking place relating to shared activities with a couple of authorities.
- 9.9 Shared benchmarking data was undertaken with East Staffs BC during the Best Value Review. Additionally internal opportunities for joint working have also been undertaken, with the Community & Leisure Development Division and the Environmental Health Division relating to employee health and welfare issues and the Legal & Democratic Services Division in relation to Officer / Member policies, and training.
- 9.10 There have also been opportunities for support and funding from the Learning Skills Council provided, with further work continuing through the advice provided by their employee on the review team. Opportunities to-date provided have been in terms of work to achieve the Investor in People standard, and introduction of NVQ's for front line manual worker posts.

- 9.11 Knowledge has also been improved through inter-authority meetings, professional association meetings and network contacts; to assist in the progression of the review.
- 9.12 SARATOGA confirmed that 'the authority's investment must be appropriate to the requirements of the authority.' Until January 2001 the authority had a significantly under-resourced Personnel & Development function. There will therefore inevitably be a fair amount of 'catching-up' to do.
- 9.13 Levels of staffing resources should be reviewed as other divisions i.e. in terms of the reprioritisation and refocusing exercises. Decreases have been made to the Division's budgets over the last 2 years already. Any further reduction in resources at this time could be detrimental to significant level of personnel & development related corporate aims and objectives of the authority, that are clearly outlined in the Authority's Corporate Plan.
- 9.14 Wholesale outsourcing is not recommended for the following reasons:
- it is unlikely that there will be cost benefits, when generally the private sector and national averages (which is where the organisations are who could take on our work are) demonstrate that they have higher ratios of staff and costs per FTE than we do.
 - the likelihood is that without going into partnership with others we will not be attractive to suppliers.
 - The service is a small wide ranging function covering every aspect of Personnel & Development work, with cross over of duties between team members. It is not easy to divide up the work into independent sectors for outsourcing purposes.
 - The opportunities for outsourcing are proving limited when looking at the benchmarking data provided by East Staffs BC.
 - The service was identified as providing a reasonable service by the external consultant who undertook the reality check in October 2002, with prospects of improvement. The IIP assessor in June 2002 and then in April 2003 saw the service as a forward thinking professional service, continuing to improve and improving for the right reasons. Current procurement guidance recommends that you don't look to outsource your achieving / improving services.
- 9.15 Continuing the work undertaken already during the life of the Best Value Review to develop suitable partnership arrangements on projects / areas of work is recommended as appropriate is the way forward.

10.0 Recent background history affecting the service

- 10.1 The review team consider the impact of the financial crisis in 1999 clearly affected the 'Organisational Health PI's' in a number of areas such as retention, redundancies, VER's, and absence levels, required for the baseline assessment. These are the some of the main PI's that Personnel & Development are monitored against, and therefore affected the findings of comparative data, in terms of performance. The crisis had a significant impact on the organisation. In the first half of 2000, 10% of the establishment required to be deleted within a matter of weeks, vacancies being frozen, employee benefits being cut permanently, training budgets being cut dramatically for 2 years and no training and development provision for the first half of that year. It was a difficult time for such a service to be compared and recovery from such an experience takes time to rebuild, in terms of the organisation's capacity and the breakdown of relationships / trust within it.
- 10.2 Concern was raised by Personnel & Development staff as to the level of impact this would have had on staff morale corporately and their perception of the service generally. This was based on the fact that we had had an active role in implementing compulsory redundancies for the first time in the organisation's history and facilitating significant cuts to employee related budgets / benefits.
- 10.3 One other factor through the crisis is the loss of administration support in departments that used to undertake many Personnel related administration functions, leaving resources tighter for front line services, who may perceive they are having to take on 'Personnel's work'.

11.0 Delay in timescales

- 11.1 The review was on schedule in January 2002. At that point a draft action plan had been prepared.
- 11.2 The Review Team were then informed that before the final report and action plan could be taken to Finance & Management Committee in April 2002, the review was required to undergo a 'reality check' as part of the BV assessment process. This was to be organised by the BVWG and would be done by an external organisation, / consultant.
- 11.3 Some months later the consultant was identified by the BVWG, and sent all relevant papers. He had his first meeting with the Personnel & Development Manager at the beginning of September 2002.
- 11.4 The Consultant concluded this check during October 2002, and presented his findings to the review team. He raised a number of issues for the review team to consider before producing their final report, but also in relation to wider corporate issues. These were discussed with the Deputy Chief Executive & Policy & Best Value Manager.

11.5 The Action Plan was completed, and forwarded to the BVWG for approval in January 2003. Further delays occurred outside the review team's control. However, due to the delays a number of key tasks have been undertaken already by the service, as we could not wait any longer, for the Best Value review to be concluded and the action plan has been cut down considerably, with those tasks already achieved identified in this report.

12.0 Vision for the Service

12.1 The Council's Vision is:-

"To promote and enhance the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the community through the provision of cost effective, customer focused services"

12.2 The new Personnel & Development Vision is:-

To provide an effective, forward looking professional Personnel and Development service to the council. To have a key role in enabling the organisation's development and to assist in building the capacity of managers to enable them to effectively manage their people resources.

We will provide policy development, specialist advice and support, and training and development to the Members of the Council and employees as an internal support service on both corporate and departmental matters.

This is a service that looks for continuous improvements in service quality and efficiency, and demonstrates value for money. We will treat people fairly and promote equality of opportunity in employment generally and in our own service provision.

12.3 Corporate guiding principles interpreted into Personnel & Development Opportunities

Making decisions openly and with integrity

- ❖ to contribute to the development of members, and all employees of the council, to enable the Council to meet to its corporate aims, by having the necessary skills, and knowledge.

Being accountable to the people of South Derbyshire for our decisions

- ❖ to ensure the service is open and accountable in its actions, through effective committee reporting and openness to scrutiny.

Involving the community in choices about services and local priorities

- ❖ through the development of members, and all employees of the council, providing them with the necessary skills, and knowledge.

Being open and responsive to change

- ❖ to deliver Best Value
- ❖ through the development of members, and all employees of the council, providing them with the necessary skills, and knowledge.

- ❖ By effectively responding to the dynamic changes imposed by employment legislation.

Treating people fairly and promoting equality of opportunity in employment and service provision

- ❖ to assist the organisation in its aim of treating all people fairly, with the provision and monitoring of effective employment policies.
- ❖ through the development of members, and all employees of the council, providing them with the necessary skills, and knowledge.

Providing reliable and responsive services to our customers

- ❖ to focus the resources of the Personnel & Development Division on the key strategic priorities of the organisation, that are now clearly identified in the new Corporate Plan
- ❖ to clarify and communicate the level of service provision to our customers.
- ❖ To regularly review customer views on our service provision

Working with partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors to achieve more than we can on our own

- ❖ the development of joint working / partnership opportunities for relevant areas of our service.

Ensuring that the actions we take are sustainable in the long term

- ❖ to contribute to the ongoing organisational development
- ❖ to deliver Best Value
- ❖ to focus our resources on effectively delivering our plan.
- ❖ to acknowledge that we require both the commitment and ability to deliver by our Corporate Management Team and the organisation's other internal services, to achieve many of our targets.

Valuing employees and the essential role they play in service provision

- ❖ to contribute to the significant people related challenges identified in the Corporate Plan.
- ❖ to have a lead role in the Council's work on being an Investor in People employer
- ❖ to contribute to the development of members, and all employees of the council, to enable the Council to meet to its corporate aims, providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge.
- ❖ to continue to develop our partnership working with the trade unions, including the implementation of the Single Status Agreement.
- ❖ to assist the organisation in safely adhering to UK and European employment legislation and developing best practice as an employer.

13.0 Achievements

- 13.1 The next section identifies many key actions that appeared in the original draft version of the BVR Review Team's Action Plan, but have been achieved during the interim of the final report being checked and finalised by the various parties. Had the report been recommended for approval when it was complete in January 2002, then Members would

have seen these tasks in the Action Plan. However, based on advice from the Best Value Working Group, these have been removed from the final version of the action plan, and identified separately, as they are now successfully completed.

13.2 Issue 1 - Clarification & Communication of role of Personnel & Devt., including areas of overlap with other service providers

- ❖ Provision of marketing literature to Members outlining the Division's role, and areas of service.
- ❖ Effectively communicated our role to Members at Induction Programme.
- ❖ Clear descriptions of roles in each Personnel policy/procedure as they are reviewed.
- ❖ Introduction to new policies / procedures through core brief / team meeting process.

13.3 Issue 2 – Democratic Processes – do existing arrangements support/add value to HRM function and the Ethical Standards Agenda.

- ❖ We have supported the Legal & Democratic Services Manager in revising the existing codes of conduct for employees, in light of the new ethical framework for local government, and the protocol covering member / employee relations

13.3 Issue 2 contd. - Effective provision of Employee & Member Development

- ❖ Effectively implemented IIP Action Plan and achieved the Investor in People Award which includes:-
 - Implementation of the Performance Development Review process for employees, which sets clear objectives for employees, and allows them the opportunity to request relevant training needs to assist them achieve.
 - This has been linked to a corporate overview of the planning and evaluation of employee development, linking development needs to organisational objectives. The no. of employees who have a training plan following a PDR interview has risen significantly to 73%.
 - Compulsory training provided for all Team Leaders and Managers on undertaking Performance Development and Review Meetings, with further supplementary training as required on setting Performance objectives.
 - Range of qualification based training and external seminars procured as a result of this to improve individual employees' performance in their professional roles & for long term devt, as a result of this process.
 - Provision of reports to CMT on progress of PDR's received
 - Established corporate training and development plans for employees in accordance with service plan deadlines
 - Produced improved version of annual Corporate Employee Training Programme – which includes internal training needs arising from employees PDR' and some general Health & Safety

Training to assist in promoting good practice, in accordance with a specification from H&S Officer. Other specialist Health & Safety training is bought in as required. This reflects suggestions provided by External Reality Check where relevant.

- Team briefings provided to all employees about the IIP standard the Council is aiming to attain, and about the improvements we intend to deliver, plus all other people related training for managers / team leaders
- Started to build the capacity of managers to effectively manage change & their people resources, through effective & relevant development programmes.
- Management competencies drafted and approved by CMT, and consulted upon with Divisional Managers
- Team Building Module for Divisional Managers procured through University of Derby
- Consultation with Divisional Managers undertaken on type of Management Development programme to follow, that will be most suited to their learning styles, working with University of Derby
- Management Development Programme procured for Unit Managers through Burton College
- Internal training programme covered:- Effective Meetings, Leadership and Teamwork
- Specific team building training for Housing Services Management Team
- A change to the Annual training budget allocation process, so that Divisional Training budgets are now allocated annually on a 'prioritised needs basis', focusing training resources where they are of greatest need. This provides managers with greater discretion & responsibility for where they purchase their training from.
- System developed for each Division to provide an overall divisional training plan linked to service objectives, as part of the service plan process, and evaluate effectiveness of training provision, in contribution to service successes.
- Corporate evaluation of employee development, in relation to its links to the organisation's achievements against the first corporate plan. Provided analysis for corporate report to Council, which recognised how employees and their development contribute to the organisation's successes.
- Follow up seminar / course evaluation system set up
- Compulsory training for all Team Leaders & Managers on leading Team Briefings
- Procured training to develop communication skills in the organisation i.e. - Diploma Public Relations for PRO, Desktop publishing for member of P&D team to improve skills for production of Staff Newsletter, Provision of internal training programme on the following:-
 - Letter & Report Writing Skills
 - Presentation Skills
 - Assertiveness
 - Leadership and Teamwork

- ❖ Development of effective internal member induction programme, based on identification of needs by L&DS manager.
- ❖ Continue to support EMRLGA Modern member development programme
- ❖ Significant development of an Open learning Centre, E-Learning Modules and I.T. Training provision, on CD ROM / Workbooks or Learn Direct, within existing budgets, with in built tracking system for progress monitoring.
- ❖ The increased, and diverse no. of customers through further developing e-learning facilities.
- ❖ Increased number of employees and members able to effectively use relevant IT systems within the organisation in line with IEG developing strategy and targets.
- ❖ Development of bespoke E-Learning programmes, through Idea Learning Pool Scheme
- ❖ Assessor training procured for a member of P&D team to enable them undertake CLAIT assessments

13.4 Issue 3 - Implementation of transparent and responsible Single Status Agreement, which includes the Single Status Job Evaluation Scheme

- ❖ Key tasks undertaken to-date include:
 - Developed terms of reference and scope
 - Developed project plan
 - Developed and gained approval for evaluation, moderation and appeals procedures
 - Selected Benchmark Sample
 - Drafted Local Conventions
- ❖ Provided briefings and demonstrations to Single Status Steering Group
- ❖ Attendance at Regional JE User Group meetings
- ❖ Gained access to support and funding from Learning Skills Council, for training being provided to manual worker employees on NVQ's
- ❖ Increased numbers of front line employees working towards / have achieved NVQ's e.g. Cleaners, Grounds Maintenance workers and supervisor, Administrative employees, with funding to assist from Learning Skills Council.
- ❖ Negotiated change in Housing DSO workers terms and conditions to move to monthly pay, market tested salaries, removal of allowances in line with Single Status principles

13.5 Issue 4 – Recognition of the importance of People Issues, and dynamic impact legislation has on the service area

13.6 The development/review of, with follow up training and support for the following procedures:- Grievance Procedure, Relocation Scheme, Corporate Training Plan – 'Training Matters', Sickness Absence Management Policy – plus follow up review, Disciplinary Procedure, Temporary Regrading Procedure.

- 13.7 We also have in draft format policies relating to, Recruitment & Selection in relation to CRB, managing capability of employees, Car Allowance Scheme,
- 13.8 Data Protection Act 1998 - Supported the Data Protection Officer in considering revised Code of Practice, in relation to employment issues, i.e.
- ❖ Sensitive employment records, including Sickness absence data
 - ❖ Recruitment & Selection risk assessment
 - ❖ Recruitment & selection policy
 - ❖ Communications use and monitoring
- 13.9 Employment Act 2002 –
- ❖ Drafted & consulted upon Flexible Working policy – re hours of work, and pattern of hours worked (policy guidance on how managers should consider such applications)
 - ❖ Maternity Rights – reviewed and communicated employee guidance information
 - ❖ Paternity Rights, Adoption Leave, & Special Leave – draft new scheme, gain approval and communicate new scheme through core brief
 - ❖ A range of internal mandatory training for managers has been undertaken in relation to new / revised corporate personnel policies and procedures
 - ❖ Monitoring systems have been put into place to monitor how long all our processes take to conclude, range of employees using them, reasons for delays, and outcomes
- 13.10 Issue 4 contd. - Need to understand and manage high levels of Sickness Absence & Ill Health Retirements**
- ❖ Development and implementation of Sickness Absence Management Procedure.
 - ❖ Mandatory training on policy as part of corporate training programme on absence management, with statutory attendance for all new managers / team leaders
 - ❖ Regular reports provided to managers, CMT and Members as appropriate within Data Protection Guidelines
 - ❖ Provision of reports, which identify trends in types of illness, or where high levels in specific occupational / service areas to identify 'hot spots' to target with support
 - ❖ Gained understanding of reasons and locations of areas of greatest absences.
 - ❖ Fundamental review and procurement of new Occupational Health provision, providing improved service levels, and on site access to professional advisors, utilising the flexible benefits of a partnership approach through the joint consortium arrangements with 3 other local authorities.
 - ❖ Redecoration & Refurbishment by P&D of H&S Asset - First Aid Room, to develop it into a suitable surgery room once a month, as well as remaining a First Aid room within existing budgets.

- ❖ A further review and amendments made to the policy after 12 months operation, that have been communicated through team meetings, core brief and further training.
- ❖ Levels of absence across all Division's but one, have either stayed below or at Government target of 3%, or have been reduced dramatically to around this level.
- ❖ The number of employees in long term absences has reduced significantly, through a combined approach of dismissals on grounds of capability due to ill health, and phasing employees back to work following ill health where possible.
- ❖ Increased numbers of successful return to works.
- ❖ A reduction in no. of ill health retirements to government target levels.
- ❖ Continue to maintain low levels of absence within the Personnel & Development Division
- ❖ Continued provision of professional support to managers to assist implementation corporately.
- ❖ Managing Pressure / Stress training provided as part of internal training programme
- ❖ Stress Management training provided by Learn Direct
- ❖ Counselling skills training provided to member of P&D team
- ❖ Proactive action undertaken for areas of greatest risk, as a result, with specific health awareness events, Independent Counselling Provision procured with link at start and end of process through Occupational Health service, specialist training etc.
- ❖ Implementation of walking your way to health project completed within existing budgets, through Com & Leisure Devt. Service
- ❖ Held a stand at the Council's Health & Safety Awareness day
- ❖ Review of project through employee survey
- ❖ Some improvement in employees' morale and overall well being of staff in the organisation identified through IIP assessment feedback

13.11 Issue 4 contd. - Ensuring People are treated fairly & equitably in employment

- ❖ Published the first results of ethnic monitoring of staff in post and applicants for jobs, & promotion
- ❖ Set up system to ethnically monitor and analyse grievances, disciplinary action, performance appraisal (where this results in benefits/sanctions), training and dismissals and other reasons for leaving
- ❖ Procurement of On-line recruitment service
- ❖ Positive promotion of the authority re: recruitment and selection to minority audiences, through online recruitment service to a number of sites specifically aimed to support both ethnic minorities and candidates with disabilities.
- ❖ Equal Opportunities training through E-Learning modules made available for all employees.
- ❖ Equal Opportunities elements covered in each training course covering specific Personnel policies and procedures for all Managers / Team Leaders

13.12 Issue 4 contd. - Supporting the Improvement of Employee Morale

- ❖ Effective implementation of new Occupational Health service provider - on site, through the joint consortium arrangements.
- ❖ Proactive health and welfare action undertaken for areas of greatest risk, as a result, with specific health awareness events, specialist training, Independent Counselling Provision procured with link at start and end of process through Occupational Health service etc.
- ❖ Implementation of Walking your way to health project undertaken within existing budgets, through Com & Leisure Devt. Service and review of project through employee survey
- ❖ Some improvement in employees' morale and overall well being of staff in the organisation identified through IIP final assessment report
- ❖ Increased no's of employees returning to work after ill health
- ❖ Significantly reduced levels of long term absence
- ❖ Achievement of Investor in People standard, more specifically the following actions:-
 - Implementation of the Performance Development Review process for employees, which sets clear objectives for employees, and allows them the opportunity to request relevant training needs to assist them achieve.
- ❖ Improved 2-way communication through IIP, with employees through:-
 - the launch of weekly team briefings, with a corporate core brief produced weekly by CMT.
 - Developed understanding of employee views from exit interviews, and follow up focus groups.
 - Provision of 'people related' training for managers / supervisors.
 - Procured training to develop communication skills in the organisation
 - Developed system for divisional staff meetings to discuss service plan once approved and how the key tasks are allocated across the division, and then use quarterly div. meetings to feedback on progress/changes
- ❖ Development of family friendly employment policies and improved working conditions for employees, to address proposed legislation
- ❖ Continue to produce management reports on the outcome of exit interviews when employees leave the authority to the relevant Divisional Manager, and an overall report on a 6 monthly basis to CMT.
- ❖ Continue with the implementation of the Single Status Job Evaluation Scheme in line with the project plan.

13.13 Issue 5 - Supporting the ongoing development of a performance management culture

- ❖ To undertake the HRM Best Value Review with clear understanding of service position, through extensive benchmarking exercise and customer consultation.

- ❖ BVR action plan drawn up and consulted upon, amended following consultation, following reality check recommendations, and following BVWG feedback to improve service delivery for our customers, with many tasks already actioned.
- ❖ Produced a clear service Plan for 2003/04, approved by committee
- ❖ Have produced regular service plan monitoring reports on clear outcomes arising out of its effective implementation.
- ❖ Outcomes achieved as outlined in this report.
- ❖ Improved organisational performance our BVPI's and local indicators this year, with 2 out of 3 govt targets being met, and an improvement in 6 out of 9 indicators in the year 2002/03.
- ❖ All staff within P&D have received a PDR interview, have an individual training & development plan and are undertaking appropriate agreed training and development activities.
- ❖ Provision of monitoring reports to CMT on progress of PDR's received.
- ❖ Revised the corporate service planning system, to ensure each Division provides an overall divisional training plan linked to service objectives, as part of the service plan process, and evaluates effectiveness of training provision, in contribution to service successes.
- ❖ Developed evaluation mechanism of corporate impact & benefit of devt. activities to the authority, and reported outcomes in the final review of first corporate plan.
- ❖ Provision of training to Best Value Review teams on:-
Best Value Awareness
Project Management
Performance Management
- ❖ Procured EFQM Business Excellence Model training
- ❖ Training on how to conduct effective Performance, Development and Review Meetings

13.14 Issue 6 - Role of assisting the organisation to develop its customer focus

- ❖ Undertaken customer satisfaction surveys of our service
- ❖ Have improved levels of customer satisfaction in our own service area.
- ❖ Have feedback of recognised improvements in service delivery from employees through the IIP reports.
- ❖ Procurement of On-line recruitment service
- ❖ Effective implementation, and on-line recruitment applications being received & shortlisted. Applications received online being 16%, & 9% of appointees having used this media.
- ❖ Provision of training on Customer Care, Equal Opportunities, and Handling Aggression as part of internal training programme.
- ❖ Some front-line staff & Customer Service Assistants are undertaking NVQ's in Customer Services
- ❖ Assessor training for a member of P&D team to enable them undertake NVQ assessments

13.15 Issue 7 - Delivery of a Value For Money service & need for continuous audit and review of systems, linked to organisational priorities

- ❖ Human Resource Management Review completed and final report presented to committee for approval
- ❖ Effectively implemented a significant part of the improvement plan that focuses on corporate priorities and has been met within the resources available.
- ❖ Ongoing annual assessment of costs undertaken and review of ways to find efficiency savings
- ❖ Savings have been made on our budgets for the last 2 years, since original costs were compared.
- ❖ Introduction of effective quality management evaluation systems, for areas of priority corporate attention e.g. Absence Management, Equalities, Retirements and turnover
- ❖ Improved organisational performance our BVPI's and local indicators this year, with 2 out of 3 govt targets being met, and an improvement in 6 out of 9 indicators in the year 2002/03.
- ❖ Have met the governments standards in E-government in our service area
- ❖ Implementation of Open learning Centre, E-Learning Modules and I.T. Training provision within existing budgets.
- ❖ Increased number of employees and members able to effectively use relevant IT systems within the organisation in line with IEG developing strategy and targets.
- ❖ Procurement of On-line recruitment service
- ❖ Effective implementation, and on-line recruitment applications being received & shortlisted
- ❖ Have despite all service developments continued to effectively support the ongoing reviews that result in organisational development and subsequent casework.
- ❖ Organisational change has been able to progress within reasonable timeframes, and within employment legislation, and good employment practice.

14.0 Action Plan

14.1 The action plan was finalised taking on board where relevant the Consultant's recommendations from the External Reality Check in October 2002. It was also taken to the BVWG on for approval and had further amendments following their advice. This final plan runs from September 2003 to October 2004 to pick up those outstanding tasks. Additionally following the feedback from the Audit Commission focus groups some of the tasks have been revised. It is not just a plan for HRM but the organisation as a whole. It requires in many areas the commitment of CMT, all managers, supervisors and team leaders for it succeed. So the role of CMT driving through some of the corporate tasks will be a key factor to its success.

14.2 It is also important to note, that a number of key tasks that were in the original draft have been successfully completed already by the service, as we could not wait any longer, for the Best Value review to be concluded. The action plan has therefore been cut down considerably, with those tasks already achieved identified earlier in this report.

14.3 The outstanding actions in the plan have been prioritised over the next 12 months. Many have already been put into the 2003/04 Service Plan, and have therefore already been approved in November 2002. The actions are categorised as follows:-

- ❖ HIGH = 3 months – (Statutory must do)
- ❖ MEDIUM = 3 - 9 months (Corporate Key Task must do and or other statutory reqts. with later deadlines for implementation / lesser risk to the Authority)
- ❖ LOW = 12 months (Desirable tasks identified)

14.4 The review team has also been informed that the review will now not be inspected as a stand-alone review. The inspectors will cover HRM when they undertake the Council's Corporate Performance Assessment. However, the Review team does have some concerns, as this will be some 2 ½ years on from when the review began, and 2 years from when the baseline data was collated.

15.0 Monitoring of the Action Plan

15.1 It is proposed to include annually a summary of key tasks arising from this plan, in the annual service plan. We will break down in the service plan, the more complex tasks, or those with longer deadlines, into more detail relating to that specific period. Therefore monitoring will also be ongoing as part of the 6 monthly monitoring reports to committee that we are required to provide on our service plans. Additionally, specific monitoring reports will be taken to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee as required by their agenda.

15.2 There are separate project plans for large projects such as Single Status, that are monitored separately. Additionally, individual members of staff in the Personnel & Development team will have specific tasks allocated to them through their PDR interviews, and will be monitored against them.

15.3 Further relevant supported reading will be made available for the inspectors, details of relevant documents can be found at **(Annexe B)**.

16.0 Conclusions

- 16.1 The HRM Best Value Review has been completed in accordance with due process.
- 16.2 There have been significant delays that have been outside the review team's control.
- 16.3 The action plan recommends how the key issues identified in the baseline assessment are to be improved upon. This plan is not just a plan for HRM but the organisation as a whole, and requires in many areas the commitment of CMT, all managers, supervisors and team leaders for it succeed. So the role of CMT driving through some of the corporate tasks will be a key factor to its success.
- 16.4 Due to the delay in completing the review many of the key actions have already been completed and are identified in the Achievements section of the report. The action plan has therefore been reduced considerably and also covers suggestions made in recent feedback from focus groups held in July 2003.
- 16.5 Continuing the work undertaken already during the life of the Best Value Review to develop suitable partnership arrangements on projects / areas of work is recommended as appropriate is the way forward, as opposed to wholesale outsourcing.

