

SHILDON TOWN COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE PLAN 2005

Introduction

The Local Government Act 1999 placed, with effect from April 2000, a duty of Best Value on local authorities.

Parish and Town Councils with a budget in excess of £500,000 were, under the provisions of the Act, subject to Best Value and therefore, since April 2000, Shildon Town Council has been required to satisfy the duty of Best Value.

Meeting this duty requires a Best Value authority to consult local people, review all of its functions periodically, measure its performance and produce a performance plan which will be audited by an independent auditor. The authority is required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way they exercise their functions having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The central purpose of Best Value is to make a real and positive difference to the services which local people receive from their authority and consequently the engagement of all elected Members is pivotal. Elected Members need to be involved not only in the processes associated with Best value but in owning the outcomes which the processes are designed to deliver.

This is the fifth Performance Plan produced by the Town Council but it is important to recognise that the Plan is not an end in its own right. It is simply a means to an end and is less important than either the planning process which underlies it or the planned improvements that result.

Statement of Responsibility

Shildon Town Council is responsible for the preparation of this Performance Plan and for the information and assessments set out in it and the assumptions and estimates on which they are based. The Council is also responsible for setting in place appropriate performance management and internal control, systems from which the information and assessments included in the Plan have been derived. The Council is satisfied that the information and assessments included in the Plan are in all material respects accurate and complete and that the Plan is realistic and achievable.

Response to previous audit and inspection report

The Audit Commission determined that the Performance Plan 2004 complied in all significant respects with the relevant legislation and statutory guidance. The Commission concluded that the Council takes its Best Value responsibilities seriously and achieves a balance between its statutory duty and a realistic approach given its limited resources. However, a number of recommendations were made in order to improve the Plan in certain areas.

These recommendations and the response of the Town Council are detailed below:

Recommendation	Response
The Council should continue to seek ways to compare its performance with similar town councils	Agreed – the Council will engage with the Best Value town council group to develop valid comparative information
The Council should introduce a system of post implementation review to assess the impact of completed reviews and provide details within the Performance Plan	Agreed – will be implemented from 2005/06
The Council would benefit from producing a standard methodology document for conducting the Best Value review process	Agreed in principle – the Council will ensure that all of the key components of the Best Value review process are adequately addressed in each review
The Council should ensure that it produces action plans with clear measures for its Best Value reviews and review them formally on at least a six monthly basis	Agreed – will be implemented from 2005/06

Corporate aims and objectives

The Audit Commission has previously expressed a view that the overall vision of the Town Council is unclear and consequently it is not easy to determine whether or not the Council's strategic objectives and priorities for improvement are drawn from its vision.

However it is clear that the Town Council's primary aim is to, together with others, improve the quality of life for the people of, and visitors to, the town. The Town Council also has given a commitment to strive for continuous improvement in the level of services provided based upon outcomes.

Whilst the above sit comfortably with the principles of Best Value it is acknowledged that greater clarity needs to be introduced and consequently, bearing in mind the need to work together with others to deliver the primary aim, the Council has agreed to the development of a Parish Plan to produce a vision for the town for the future.

It is envisaged that the Parish Plan will provide, not only, a focus for service providers for the future but will also enable the Council to redevelop its own strategic objectives and priorities in the light of the priorities identified in the completed Plan.

Review programme

Best value authorities are required to periodically review all of the services they provide. The purpose of the reviews is to consider new approaches to service delivery and to set performance targets that will deliver continuous improvement. In reviewing its functions an authority is required to:

- **Challenge** why, how and by whom a service is being provided
- **Compare** with the performance of others across a range of relevant indicators, taking into account the views of both service users and potential suppliers
- **Consult** local people and key partners in the setting of priorities and performance targets
- **Compete** openly and fairly, wherever practicable, as a means of securing efficient and effective services

For the purpose of determining its review programme the Town Council grouped its services into three logical areas:

- Direct Works
- Civic Hall
- Central Services

The Direct Works and the Civic Hall reviews were undertaken in 2001/02 with the Central Services review being scheduled for 2003/04. This review has not yet been undertaken as a consequence of a new Council being elected, the appointment of a new Town Clerk and the determination that the attainment of Quality Town Council status was to be a priority. Therefore it proposed that this review will be rescheduled to be undertaken following the attainment of Quality status. It is anticipated that the application for Quality status will be made in 2005/06.

Nevertheless the following have been proposed for 2005/05 which will be undertaken with due regard to the principles of Best Value:

- The preparation of a 3-year Business Plan for the Civic Hall
- Review of allotment provision

Direct Works

As has been referred to previously the Best Value review of Direct Works was undertaken in 2001/02 following which the implementation of the recommendations has been monitored and details of the achievements during 2004/05 are provided below.

Recommendation	Achievement
Consider introduction of Crab style grave digging equipment	Following a successful demonstration the grave digging equipment has now been acquired which will result in a safer and more efficient service
Identify demand for new bus shelters and locations	Approval has been given to reintroduce the bus shelter on Middleton Road

In addition the following specific performance targets were introduced for 2004/05.

Target	Achievement
To continue to review working practices at Hackworth Park as the redevelopment continues	Working practices continued to be constantly reviewed and following the completion of the redevelopment of the Park this will continue in accordance with the provisions of the Park Management Plan
To continue to maintain and improve the appearance of roundabouts on approaches to the town with floral displays	Achieved
To provide all employees with a mobile phone to aid both responsiveness and personal security	Achieved
To continue to preserve a multi-skilled workforce and working practice	Achieved

The performance targets for 2005/06 are:

- To continue to review working practice at Hackworth Park in accordance with the provisions of the Park Management Plan
- To preserve a multi-skilled workforce and working practice

Key Performance Information 2004/05

a)	No. of interments	48
	No..of ashes interred	10
	Cost of cemetery per head	£5.27
b)	No. of football fields provided and maintained	3
	No. of football fields occupied	2
c)	No. of public conveniences provided and maintained	3
	Cost of public conveniences per head	£0.78
d)	No. of bus shelters provided and maintained	25
	Cost of bus shelters per head	£0.41
e)	No. of parks provided and maintained	1
	Cost of parks and open spaces per head	£16.64
f)	No. of allotment sites provided	11

Civic Hall

Performance against the targets set for 2004/05 has been as follows.

Targets	Achievement
To continue to improve the trading position of the Civic Hall	Redecoration and refurbishment of the lounge was undertaken to further increase the attractiveness of the facility Weekday opening from 6.00pm was introduced on a trial basis in order to attract more family use
To conduct a customer satisfaction survey of users of the Civic Hall	Achieved

The performance targets for 2005/06 are:

- Continue to take all step to improve the trading position
- Prepare a 3-year business plan
- Undertake a further user satisfaction survey

Key Performance Information 2004/05

i) Income generation

	<u>Budget</u> <u>2004/05</u> £	<u>Actual</u> <u>2004/05</u> £
Bar sales	109,000	113,171
Food sales	126,660	138,976

ii) Satisfaction Survey

Was the server attentive and available	98%
Was the server helpful and courteous	100%

Excellent/Good

Quality of the meal	100%
Variety of the menu	87%
Value for money	100%
Facility organisation	97%
Cleanliness	92%

Central Services

As has been referred to previously in this Plan the review of Central Services has not been undertaken to date for a variety of reasons and will be rescheduled following the attainment of Quality status.

Performance against the targets set for 2004/05 has been as follows.

Target	Achievement
The attainment of Quality status	Ongoing – submission anticipated in 2005/06
The re-introduction of a full-time Town Clerk	Achieved
Final accounts for 2003/04 approved before 30 th June 2004	Achieved and received an unqualified opinion
Review and revision of the Town Council web-site	Site reviewed with revision being an ongoing project
Introduce e-mail facilities throughout the Council Offices	Achieved
Continue to promote outdoor events at a reasonable cost including Fun Day and Christmas Procession/Craft Fair	Achieved
Continue to work in multi-agency initiatives to combat anti-social behaviour and crime in the town	Achieved
Continue to offer grant aid to local organisations	Achieved
Continue to part fund the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Community Safety Co-ordinator and the Shildon Centre	Achieved

In addition to the above the following improvements were made to the corporate management arrangements within the Town Council

- Standing Orders were fully revised and adopted
- Financial Regulations were produced and adopted
- A protocol for Member/Officer relations was developed and adopted

The performance targets for 2005/06 are as follows

- Engage in the development of a Parish Plan
- Submit application for Quality status
- Develop and adopt a formal complaints procedure
- Introduce public 'question time' at Council meetings
- Develop a policy for the use of e-mail and the internet
- Develop a 'whistleblowing' policy
- Develop a Risk Management Strategy
- To continue to promote outdoor events at a reasonable cost including Shildon Carnival, Fun Day and Christmas Procession
- To continue to encourage and work with multi-agency initiatives to combat anti-social behaviour and crime in the town
- To continue to offer grant aid to local organisations
- To continue to part fund the Citizens Advice Bureau, Community Safety Officer and the Shildon Centre

Key Performance Information 2004/05

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a) Proportion of working days lost to sickness | 3.1% |
| b) No.of organisations supported by grant aid | 27 |
| c) Cost of CCTV monitoring and maintenance per head | £0.97 |

Hackworth Park

Performance against the targets set for 2004/05 has been as follows

Target	Achievement
Complete the redevelopment of Hackworth Park	Completed
Access funding and, if successful, introduce CCTV into the redeveloped Park	Funding yet to be accessed
Develop, with Surestart, a play area for children aged 5 and under	Achieved
Introduce a Parkwatch scheme to help to protect the redeveloped Park	Achieved
To develop the 'Friends of Hackworth Park' group to help to manage the Rest House and to provide feedback on the usage of and improvements to the Park	Outstanding

Now that the redevelopment of the Park has been completed there is no longer a need to include a separate section in the Plan for the Park.

Financial Information

The Town Council has approved a precept of £538,650 for 2005/06 which represents a reduction of £55,332 or 9.3% over 2004/05. This results in a Band D council tax requirement of £193.05 which is a reduction of £20.72 or 9.7%.

Details of the approved precept are as follows:

	£
Parks and Open Spaces	183,170
Civic Hall	112,060
Cemetery	53,070
Highways	3,170
Lighting	500
Public Conveniences	9,620
Fishing Area	(10)
Miscellaneous	2,040
Allotments	(210)
Gardens Guild	(520)
Section 137	13,050
Recreation	14,820
Skill Centre	(1,170)
Town Centre	8,880
Loans and Leases	90,080
Corporate and Democratic Core	70,100

	558,650
Less Contribution from Reserves	20,000

Precept 2005/06	538,650
	=====

Conclusion

The future promises to provide some considerable challenges but also considerable opportunities for the Town Council.

The development of a Parish Plan and a vision for Shildon will provide the Town Council with the opportunity to undertake an informed review of its aims and objectives in order to ensure that the mix of service provision in the future is appropriate in order to meet the aspirations for the town.

The commitment to seek the attainment of Quality status will, if successful, enable the Council to consider, together with the Borough Council, services that could be appropriate for delivery by the local Council so that they become more responsive to the needs of the local community.

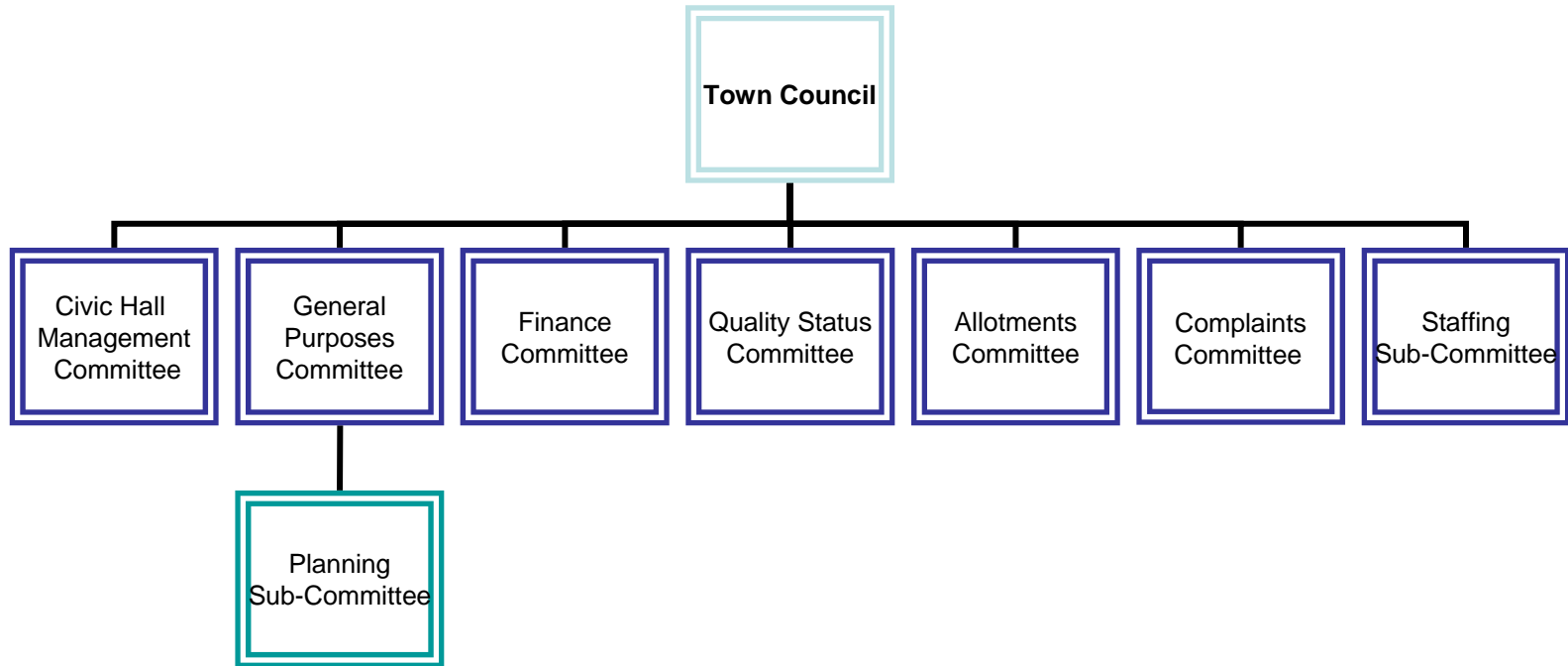
The Town Council, Borough Council and Locomotion will need to work together to ensure that real economic benefit accrues to the town as a consequence of the success of the facility.

The Government appears intent on developing the role of the local council and the Town Council needs to ensure that it is best placed to take advantage of this possible enhanced role in the future.

The Town Council would welcome comments on this Plan or any aspects of its services and if you wish to comment please contact us by either:

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