



POLICY AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

18 October 2005

Report of the Chief Executive

COUNCIL PLAN 2005 - 2008

purpose of the report

1. To present to Committee the draft Council Plan for 2005-8. The draft plan is attached as annex 1 to this report.

Introduction

2. The Council Plan sets out the strategic priorities that Wear Valley District Council has for the area and how it will improve its own performance over the next three years. It is therefore a key document for the Council in its ambition to become 'the Best District Council in England' and in assessing its progress towards realising that ambition.
3. The Council Plan also details the Council's contribution to the Community Plan prepared by the Local Strategic Partnership. This will be published in November.
4. The first Council Plan was published in 2004 and during the summer of 2005 officers in Management Support Unit in consultation with Directors and senior elected Members have analysed evidence on Council performance, external inspections, and public consultation to develop new objectives for the Council for the next three years. These are presented in the draft Council Plan.

crime and disorder and other implications

5. The Council Plan contains the priorities shared by national and local government and local people. Reducing crime and disorder is a corporate objective and the Council Plan describes the actions the Council will take, in partnership with others to reduce crime. Promoting sustainable development and sustainable communities are also shared priorities and the Council Plan describes how the Council will seek to improve the economic, social and environmental well being of the District over the next three years.

monitoring arrangements

6. Progress on the actions in the Council Plan will be reported every 6 months to Corporate Management Team and Policy and Strategic Development Committee.

consultation

7. The objectives and actions in this report draw together the findings of community consultation conducted by the Council on key issues including the Council's spending priorities and community safety priorities. This Plan supports the Community Plan prepared by the Local Strategic Partnership and the LSP has been consulted about the contents of the Council Plan.

conclusion

8. The Council Plan 2005 – 2008 builds on the progress the Council has made in this year to become a more modern, effective, efficient and responsive Council and lists further steps the Council must take to achieve its ambition to become the best District Council in England.

RECOMMENDED

- i It is recommended that Policy and Strategic Development Committee approves the Council Plan 2005 – 2008.

Officer responsible for the report

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POLICY & STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

18th OCTOBER 2005

Report of the Chief Executive
LOW PERFORMING BVPI UPDATE

purpose of the report

1. To report on the status of the low performing Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's).

background

2. At the end of the 2004/05-year the MSU identified a list of best value performance indicators that were performing poorly. These indicators are to be monitored on a quarterly basis. This report presents BVPI data for the 1st Quarter (April-June).
3. Annex 2 tabulates the 1st Quarter BVPI data in relation to our targets and previous performance. Top quartile figures are from 2003/04 as top quartile figures from 2004/05 have not yet been released.
4. Trends in performance are presented graphically in Annex 3.
5. An analysis of each indicator is presented in Annex 4.
6. Three indicators have been removed from the original list of Low Performing BVPI's, these are listed below;
 - **BVPI 17b** – *Percentage of economically active minority ethnic community population.*
This indicator has been removed as the data is based on census information and will not change until the next census in 2011.
 - **BVPI 74** – *Satisfaction of tenants of Council housing with the overall service provided by their landlord.*
This indicator has been removed as the data is based on a triennial survey and will not change until the next survey.
 - **BVPI 176** – *The number of domestic violence refuge places per 10,000 population which are provided or supported by the authority.*
This indicator has been changed to BVPI 225, which is the number of actions against domestic violence. Due to the change in definition it can no longer be

calculated as before, and thus it cannot be classed as a low performing indicator until new figures and comparisons become available.

conclusion

7. Overall 11 of our Low Performing BVPI's have improved this quarter, 4 have remained the same and 3 have not improved.

RECOMMENDED

- i. That the contents of the report are noted.
- ii. That the MSU continues to monitor these indicators on a quarterly basis.

Officer responsible for the report

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POLICY AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

18th OCTOBER 2005

Report of the Director of Central Resources

REPORT OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION – UNDERSTANDING ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

purpose of the report

1. To advise members on the conclusion of a survey by the Electoral Commission on the Electoral Registration process – summarised below.

background

2. The register check involved constructing a sample of records for England and Wales using the 2001 Census and the Labour Force Survey (LFS), and then comparing population with registration data having taken eligibility into account (we are working on ONS to scope similar analysis for Scotland). Use of the LFS provided us with greater scope of determining eligibility and a broader range of variables for analysis purposes.
3. Such an approach was necessary to produce robust estimates of non-registration overall and among different groups and parts of the country. At the same time, however, our estimates are inevitably a snapshot and there is some evidence of recent falls in registration rates, including analysis among a sample of local authorities that found an average percentage return of registration 'Form As' of 89% following the 2004 canvass, down on the 91% return in 2003.

the extent of non-registration

4. According to ONS the best estimate for non-registration among the eligible household population in England and Wales at 15 October 2000 (the qualifying date for the February 2001 register) lies between 8% and 9%. This compares with 7-9% in 1991. This means that in the region of 3.5 million people across England and Wales were eligible to be on the register at their main residence but were missing from it in 2000.
5. Our register check with ONS enabled us to estimate levels of non-registration among different socio-economic groups and in different areas (summarised in the

table below). In 2000, non-registration was higher in metropolitan areas, particularly inner London. Young people, especially attainers, were less likely to be registered, as were those who lived away from home resulting, partly, from their greater mobility. Among all age groups, men were less likely to be registered than women.

6. People from some minority ethnic groups had a relatively high likelihood of non-registration, but rates among Asians (those from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities) and black Caribbean people were similar to those for white people. The level of non-registration among Asian people fell between 1991 and 2000.
7. Mobility was a key factor. Non-registration declined with length of time at the address in question: it was 35% among those resident for two to three months and 2% for those resident for 10 or more years. Non-registration was also highest among private renters, the unemployed, those without qualifications and those in non-permanent employment.

explaining non-registration

8. ONS found that the majority, 52% of non-registrants in 2000 came from just three groups:
 - Those living with parents (in particular, attainers);
 - Those having moved within the six months prior to the qualifying date; and
 - Those renting from a private landlord.

Estimated non-registration among selected groups, 2000	
Group	% not registered
16-17-year-olds	28
18-24-year-olds	16
Inner London	18
West Midlands	4
Indian	6
Black Caribbean	9
Black African	37
At same address six months prior to qualifying date	6
At different address six months prior to qualifying date	33
Students	22
Own property outright	3
Renting from private landlord or letting agency	27

9. Further statistical analysis confirms strong associations between non-registration and **age, sex, ethnicity, tenure** and **mobility**. These findings are similar to those of 1991 although there have been some changes: ethnicity, for example, was less significant as an explanatory variable in 2000 than it was in 1991 and was also found to be strongly conditioned by nationality and length of residence in the UK.

10. In 2000, the eligibility and mobility of the head of household, as well as the eligible individual's relationship with the head of household, were important predictors of non-registration.
11. The analysis by ONS points to the central role of the head of household, in both positive and negative terms, for example:
 - The head of household was significantly more likely to be registered than other eligible household members.
 - Being unrelated to the head of household at an address reduced an individual's likelihood of being registered.
 - Being an eligible person in a household where the head of household was registered was a strong predictor of registration.
12. According to ONS, it would seem that 'the presence and actions of head of household increased the likelihood of registration for many groups...', but it has not been possible to '...quantify such an effort, so we cannot determine whether it may have outweighed any negative effect on registration rates caused by a failure on the part of the head of household to recognise eligibility in others'.
13. This is only part of the explanation of non-registration in 2000. The research by ONS and our subsequent qualitative public opinion research with MORI (see box below), has highlighted the importance of **situational reasons**, relating to people's individual and household situation and circumstances, and **attitudinal reasons**, including perceptions of the principle and practice of electoral registration and, ultimately, attitudes towards voting and politics.
14. Our survey found in eligibility to be one of the two most common reasons for non-registration with lack of interest in voting the other. While some non-registration is unintentional, some is quite deliberate and MORI's focus group research found that among some non-registrants there was 'a conscious decision not to register, for ideological reasons... they simply wish to play no part in [politics].'

Public opinion and registration

- Common top-of-mind associations with registering to vote include 'old-fashioned', 'time-consuming', a 'chore'.
- There is a broad consensus that registration is not a priority.
- There is no depth to knowledge about the registration process.
- Some people falsely assume they are registered when they are unlikely to be so.
- Ineligibility and disinterest in voting are the most common explanations for not being registered.
- Few non-registrants see benefits to being registered.

15. Our research also found some significant gaps in people's **awareness and knowledge** of the registration process and, in some cases, this might militate against registration. At the same time, however, it seems likely that low knowledge is, in part, related to a lack of enthusiasm for registering to vote: i.e. low knowledge can be an effect, as well as a cause of, non-registration.

16. The impact of **administrative practice** on registration rates in 2000 is hard to evaluate – not least because it is likely that innovative methods were used disproportionately, and more intensely, in areas where registration was already most difficult. Similarly, it is difficult to definitively assess the impact of **rolling registration**, but most of our eight case study authorities took the view that it had not had a significant impact on registration rates, but had increased the accuracy of the register.

conclusion

17. The research provides analysis of the extent and nature of non-registration. Our estimates are inevitably a snapshot and registration rates in 2005 may well be different.
18. It is also the case that the evidence presented in this report – including the link between the presence and actions of the head of household and non-registration – raises a number of questions worthy of further enquiry. Finally, in our view, this research again highlighted the difficulties involved in collecting robust evidence on registration given current arrangements and also the importance of building effective evaluation mechanisms into any future reforms of those.

RECOMMENDED

1. The report be received and noted

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