

Report to: **Audit Committee**
Date: **12th June 2008**
Report of: **Principal Corporate Development Officer**
Subject: **End of year performance review/ Best Value Performance Plan**
Ward: **All**

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To give an overview of the Council's performance during 2007/8, report on the progress of the Performance Improvement Teams, and to agree to the publication of the Council's annual Best Value Performance Plan.

2.0 Consultation

- 2.1 The performance information in this report has been gathered from managers across the Council and verified by members of Management Team. The Best Value Performance Indicator data has also been checked by my Unit and will be subject to external audit as part of the Audit Commission's Data Quality inspection, which feeds into the annual Use of Resources assessment. This report has been presented to Management Team.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Performance management remains a key element of modern local government and has been one of the cornerstones of CPA assessment. We use the information available to us on how we are performing to improve our services and to develop action plans to ensure that our customers benefit from our delivery programmes.
- 3.2 This report provides the end of year results for the BVPI's, local PI's and outcomes from within the Councils' Transitional Plan, covering the period 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008 and presents a high level summary of performance across the following areas:
- Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs)
 - Local performance Indicators
 - Corporate/Transitional Plan outcomes
- 3.3 In addition to providing the results of last years' performance, this report also presents an appraisal of the Performance Improvement Teams, set up in accordance with recommendations made by Council, to tackle the areas of under performance identified from the previous year's results. Last year, we identified eight areas for specific focus.

4.0 The New National Performance Framework

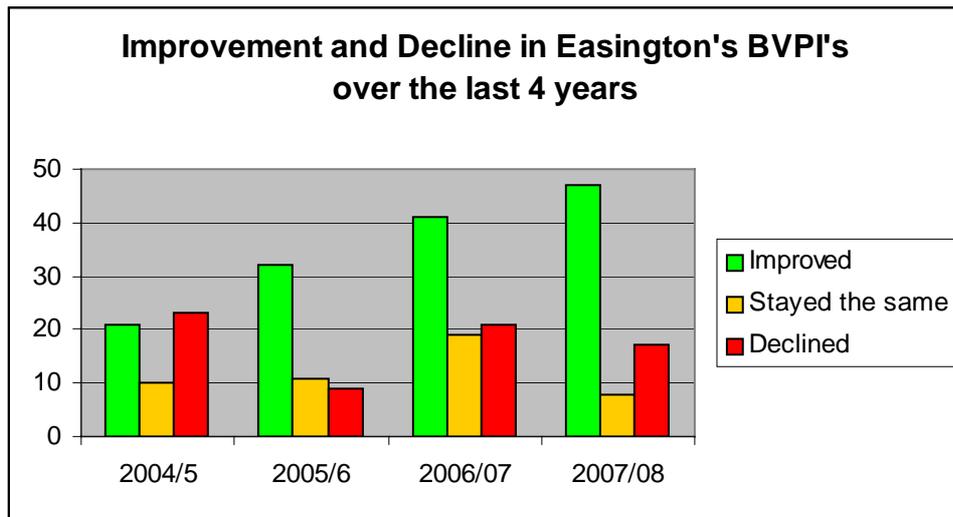
- 4.1 The Government's white Paper *Strong and Prosperous Communities* set out a new Performance Framework for all Local Authorities, reducing the number of statutory PI's, and introducing a new National Indicator set, comprising 198 indicators, based on outcomes for local people. The new indicator set replaces the BVPI's and has been in place since 1st April 2008.

5.0 Performance summary

5.1 Best Value Performance Indicators: overall performance

5.2 For 2007/8 there were 74 statutory BVPIs against which the Council was required to measure progress. Two of these indicators relate to census figures, which are only available every 10 years. This leaves us with 72 indicators against which we can track progress. A full BVPI performance table is included as Appendix 1.

5.3 In overall terms, we can look overall at whether our efforts to improve performance have worked. We have recorded how we have performed for each PI in comparison to the previous 4 years. The graph below demonstrates this, showing that the overall picture from last year's outturn figures demonstrates that the Council has achieved a high rate of improvement, year on year, over the last four years:



5.4 Best Value Performance Indicators: performance against the targets set

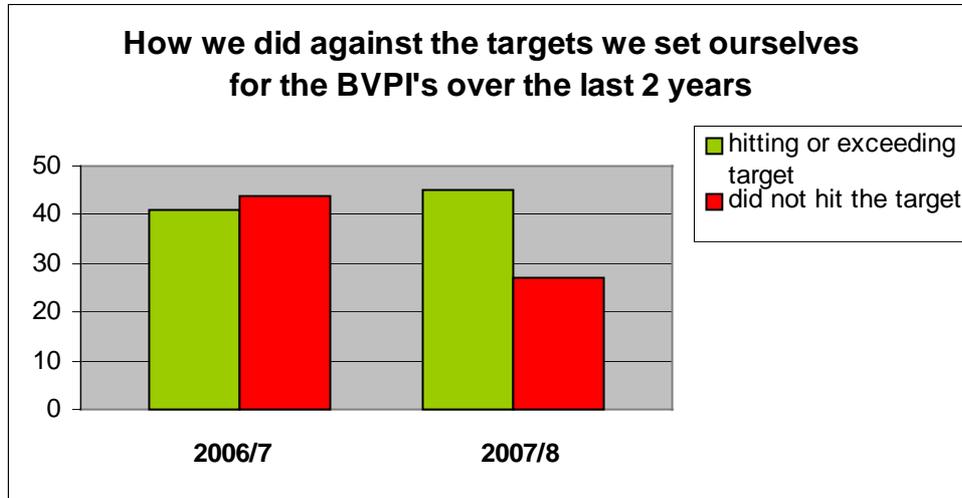
5.5 Each year, the Council agrees a set of targets for each performance indicator. These targets are used to determine our local aspiration for improvement within that particular service area. There are differences in how some of the target setting is carried out, as described below:

- Some of the targets are set nationally, by government; in areas where the government expects a minimum standard, which applies across all Councils. One such area is in Planning, where there are minimum standards for the expected percentage of Planning applications determined within the laid down timescales, for example 60% of all major Planning Applications are expected to be determined within 13 weeks.
- Some of the targets are set in conjunction with partners or other agencies, as these are included within the Local Area Agreement and are supported by a targeted approach and specific delivery plans.
- Some of the financial indicator targets are determined by the CLG, to ensure that Authorities have an ambition to achieve the highest quartile rating; this applies to the Council Tax and Business Rates Collection rates.
- In previous years, we have recognised that this Authority has not achieved the number of top quartile rating positions indicative of an Excellent Council, and have endeavoured to improve this by agreeing a focussed approach, aimed at driving up the performance of certain indicators, to achieve a higher number in top quartile position. This has been a long term approach, and reflected in the Corporate Plan target of 50% in top quartile, by 2010.

5.6 In the last couple of years, we have taken a more considered approach to target setting, to ensure that the targets being set are both realistic, but also reflect our desire to improve our services; in areas where we have targeted resources as a

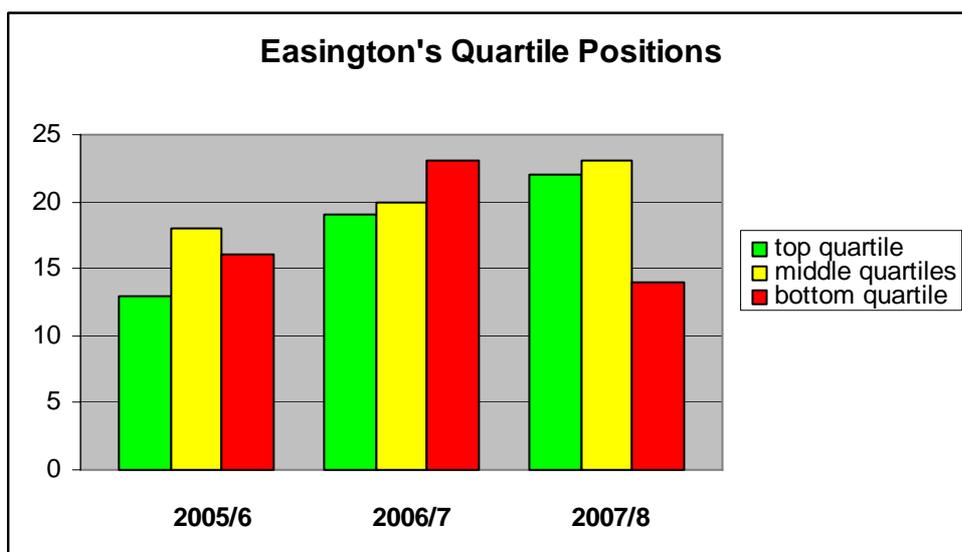
priority, the targets set have shown our ambition to achieve improvement, and have been used to both promote change and motivate staff.

- 5.7 The table below indicates our overall level of performance against the targets we set ourselves for 2007/8. Following our work on improving the target setting process, in comparison to last year's BVPI results, we did better at achieving the targets we had set ourselves:



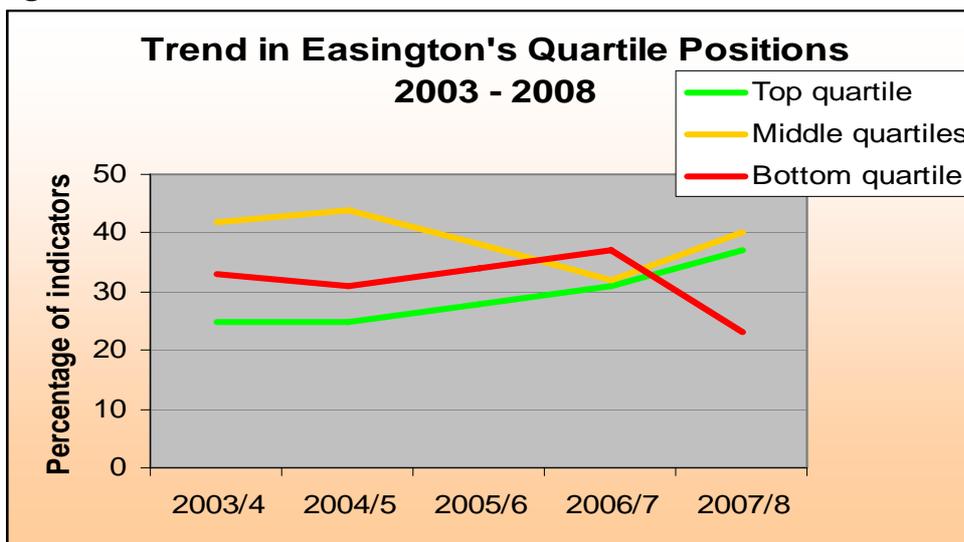
6.0 Best Value Performance Indicators: quartile positions

- 6.1 In terms of comparison with other authorities, quartile position information is available for 59 of the PIs. The table below shows how Easington compared with the national District picture for the outturn results for the two previous years. It is worth noting that this is a general picture and does not show a "like for like" comparison, as some Indicators are deleted each year, whilst new ones are introduced. However, we can see that the picture which emerges from this exercise shows that we have, year on year, improved on our number of top quartile positions, the number of middle quartile positions have steadily improved; it is particularly pleasing to report that this year, we have achieved our lowest ever number of bottom quartile indicators.



- 6.2 If we compare our quartile positions in 2007/8 with those of the previous four years, it is clear to see the trend of improvement, the numbers of indicators in top and middle quartile positions have significantly improved over the course of the last five

years, and the numbers in bottom quartile have very pleasingly reduced, showing that we have driven up our performance and are achieving service improvements at a significant rate:



The percentage of BVPI's in top quartile position has risen each year, since 2004/5; this year we have achieved 37% in top quartile, almost reaching the 40% target set in the Corporate Plan. Equally as pleasing are the reduced number in bottom quartile position.

6.3 Best Value Performance Indicators: quartile positions – success stories

6.4 During 2007/8 the Council has moved into the top quartile on the following indicators:

<p>BVPI 66c Tenants of Council owned homes in rent arrears with notices seeking possession served</p> <p>Moved from bottom to top quartile, improving from 36% to 12%</p>	<p>BVPI 213 Number of Homelessness cases prevented</p> <p>Moved from bottom to top quartile, from a return of 1 to 4</p>
<p>BVPI 79a Accuracy of Benefits calculation</p> <p>Improved from 98.60% to 100%</p>	<p>BVPI 79b (ii) Housing Benefits overpayments recovered as a % of HB Overpayments debt</p> <p>Improved from 39.12% to 49%</p>
<p>BVPI 199c Percentage of land with unacceptable levels of fly posting</p> <p>Improved from 1% to 0%</p>	<p>BVPI 106 Percentage of new homes built on brownfield land</p> <p>Increased from 87.58% to 93.89%</p>
<p>BVPI 204 Percentage of appeals allowed against the Council's decision to refuse planning applications</p> <p>Moved from bottom to top quartile, Decreased from 54.6% to 14%</p>	<p>BVPI 127b Robberies per 1,000 Population</p> <p>Improved from 0.4 to 0.2</p>

7.0 Eight areas of performance focussed for specific attention during 2007/8

7.1 Last June's Performance "Washup" report highlighted a number of areas where service improvements were necessary and it was recommended that eight areas of performance would be given particular attention during 2007/8 and accordingly a number of measures were introduced in these areas to address the poor performance.

7.2 The information below summarises the actions taken in relation to these 8 areas of poor performance and the resulting outcomes:

Performance Improvement Teams 2007 - 2008

KEY
Improvement and target met
Some Improvement but target not met
No improvement

Waste and Cleanliness

BV82a and BV82b- Percentage of the total tonnage of household waste arising, which have been recycled and sent for composting – combined

Result from 2006/7	Result in 2007/8	Target	Top Quartile
Combined 33.97%	Combined 19.22%	Combined 34%	Combined 42.16%*

Actions taken to improve performance

Targeted promotion of recycling, "parc it" plastics and cardboard pilot, the introduction of no-side waste policies and continued waste treatment through the aerobic digester were setting the authority on course for a combined performance of over 48% (well into top quartile position).

In the final quarter of the year, an investigation by regulatory authorities of the aerobic digester operated by Premier Waste Management resulted in a requirement to landfill much of the compost-like output (including parc it), and hence a significant loss of performance. The digester is currently out of operation whilst the company is undertaking improvements.

Further actions to improve performance during 2008/9 include District wide plastics, cardboard and greenwaste collection services.

** Combined figure, can't compare like for like, as every Council will have different results for both composting and recycling*

Target not met, decline in overall performance, due to circumstances outside the Councils control

BV84 – No of kgs of household waste collected per head

Result from 2006/7	Result in 2007/8	Target	Top Quartile
458.7kg	449.8kg	462kg	381kg

Actions taken to improve performance

The introduction of a no side waste policy from October 1st 2007 has had a dramatic effect. For example, in the first half of the year residents put out 238.5kg per head. In the second half of the year, following the introduction of the policies this dropped 14% to 204.9kg per head. Overall reduction compared to last year is 2%.

The policies were introduced following significant communication with residents and have been adhered to by the vast majority of residents. Whilst in a minority of cases advisory stickers were required to be posted, these have been complied with, and no enforcement action has been necessary.

Target exceeded, significant reduction in kgs of waste collected

Planning

BV109 – Planning application turnaround:
a) major applications,
b) minor applications,
c) other applications,

Result from 2006/7	Result in 2007/8	Target (govt minimum)	Top Quartile
a) 63.89% b) 68.69% a) 80.83%	c) 69.44% d) 78.08% e) 90.75%	f) 60% g) 65% h) 80%	a) 80.71% b) 83.66% c) 92.57%

Actions taken to improve performance

The Improvement Activity around Planning has continued during this last year, with the agreed changes to working practices becoming embedded. Specific Improvement Activity has included:

- Officers receiving training on Project and Time Management, by the Planning Advisory Service
- Increased flexibility on the use of delegated powers to enable more devolved decision-making.
- Further improvements to the validation process to enable Officers more time to deal with the applications
- Improvements and additional resources put into the “back office” functions

Achieved Govt set targets, improvement across all types of applications. Each of these indicators were previously bottom quartile, all have now moved out of this position

Corporate Health

BV 156 : Accessibility to public buildings for people with a disability			
Result from 2006/7	Result in 2007/8	Target	Top Quartile
27.27%	39.39%	42.25%	No figures available
Actions taken to improve performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In total £211,000 has been spent upgrading the Aged Persons Units during 2007-8 to ensure these properties meet the current regulations. In total 5 of the units are now compliant and finishing works are being undertaken to the last remaining property, which will be completed by the end June 2008. These final works were delayed as a consequence of a further review of Dormand Villas. In addition a full consultation process has been undertaken at the units, in conjunction with the Councils specialist Access consultant to ensure that the works undertaken will meet the needs of current and future user groups. ▪ All condition surveys have been undertaken on the Day Centres and works are currently being implemented in conjunction with an overall review of the centres by the Head of Housing. ▪ Significant works have been completed at the Council offices complex, to create a public reception area, which is fully compliant, together with improvements to the access and car parking facilities. Signage has also been significantly improved in consultation with user groups. 			
Target not met, due to delays to some of the works, as described above, however, overall improvement and works progressing well			

Housing

BVPI 66b Council Housing tenants with more than 7 weeks of rent arrears			
Result from 2006/7	Result in 2007/8	Target	Top Quartile
8.56%	5.36%	7.68%	3.43%
Bottom Quartile			
Actions taken to improve performance <p>Performance Improvement Activity at East Durham Homes during the early part of the financial year led towards a restructuring of the Rent arrears team, resulting in the creation of additional capacity to provide better focus on this area, including carrying out more frequent preventative work to take early action with tenants running into arrears.</p>			
Exceeded the target, moved from Bottom to Third Quartile performance			

BVPI 66c Council Housing tenants in rent arrears with notices seeking possession

Result from 2006/7	Result in 2007/8	Target	Top Quartile
36.06%	12.26%	28%	13.61%
Bottom Quartile	Top Quartile		

Actions taken to improve performance

Performance Improvement Activity at East Durham Homes has seen the implementation of a number of initiatives which have all contributed to making significant improvements in this area:

- “pre – determination” assessments for new tenants to consider an individual’s personal circumstances prior to signing the tenancy agreement; giving tenants a better awareness of the financial commitment they are making in accepting a tenancy
- More personal contact with tenants in severe arrears, particularly in relation to telephone contact, which has been found to be more effective than home visits. This personal contact has resulted in more agreements being reached to avoid tenants losing their homes.
- Improvements to the Welfare Debt and Benefits Advice Service, to provide more comprehensive advice on dealing with financial matters and sourcing help with Benefits
- From early this year, the introduction of the “Lifewise” project, a multi agency scheme for under 25’s, offering skills training on household management skills, including budgeting.
- From April 2008, the Tenancy Sustainment service for 16 to 25 year olds provides additional support and regular contact with these young tenants, monitoring several aspects of the tenancy agreement, including rent payment and “behaviour” of the tenants.

An Excellent result, showing significant improvement, exceeding the target and moving from Bottom to Top Quartile

BVPI 212 Average Re-Let times for Council Owned Homes

Result from 2006/7	Result in 2007/8	Target	Top Quartile
60	41	55	25

Actions taken to improve performance

- Performance Improvement Activity at East Durham Homes in relation to void turnover has increased the focus on key management to ensure that there are no blockages/delays in the repairing and re-letting process. This has also involved the housing management and maintenance teams working more closely together and better prioritisation of works.
- The budget for void properties was also increased to tackle a backlog of properties. With the additional finance, all void properties which are to be re-let are repaired without delay.

Target exceeded, moved out of Bottom quartile for the first time since this indicator was reintroduced as a BVPI (2005)

Benefits

BVPI 80g Overall Satisfaction with the Benefits Service			
Result from 2006/7	Result in 2007/8	Target	Top Quartile
76%	N/A (see below)		83% Bottom Quartile – 75%
<p>Actions taken to improve performance</p> <p>Following the User Survey, the results were analysed to pinpoint areas of dissatisfaction. This resulted in the following changes being made to the Working Practices within the Benefits section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ' fast - track ' team was strengthened. The team processes new applications where all the information has been provided at the initial application stage, resulting in a higher proportion of new applications being processed within quicker time periods. ▪ Implementation of a system of taking telephone applications, enabling applications to be completed over the telephone, using on-line facilities. ▪ Implementation of a Saturday morning facility to improve access to the service ▪ Improved reception service, to enable a form to be instantly checked and the applicant to be informed of their benefit amount. <p>The Service is in the process of measuring customer satisfaction; due to the implementation of LGR it was considered appropriate to get a consistent approach to this across all the Durham Districts, therefore a standard questionnaire and methodology will be used. Information will be gathered on a quarterly basis. It is hoped that the actions as described above, will help to improve the overall satisfaction rates, once the surveys are undertaken.</p>			

7.3 To summarise, 6 of the 8 poor performing Indicators have improved, 5 have achieved, and most of these have significantly exceeded, the targets set for them. Four of the indicators have moved from bottom quartile position and 1 has moved from bottom to top quartile position. These good results show that targeting specific PI's and focussing effort on them, does pay dividends.

8.0 Bottom Quartile positions

8.1 In relation to this year's results, Easington had 14 PIs in the bottom quartile for 2007/8. Of these indicators, two; 199d - incidents and enforcement of fly tipping, and 82b – Waste sent for composting, have dropped into bottom quartile position this year. This compares to 26 indicators in bottom quartile last year, of which 10 had fallen into bottom quartile that year. Those indicators in Bottom Quartile position for 2007/8 are listed below; context is provided for those with a decline in performance

8.2 Corporate Health

- Council Tax collected (96.27%) Bottom quartile is 97.35% A drop in performance from last year. However members will appreciate that the Council prioritises the payment of former debt first and whilst this affects the current year collection rate for BVPI purposes, our policy has allowed the bad debts provision to be reduced by over £800k over the last 3 years releasing £300k for use by this Council. The remaining £500k has benefitted other precepting authorities such as the County Council, Durham And Darlington Fire Service and the Police Authority.
- Business Rates received (97.03%) Bottom quartile is 98.53% A drop in performance from last year. Easington had to face the ending of “Enterprise Zone” status two years ago, which meant the end of free rates, after 10 years, resulting in small companies having to face paying rates bills. A number of businesses are having difficulties with this, despite our policy to try to help wherever possible; this, combined with a higher than normal number going into liquidation/administration, has meant that this indicator is not performing as well as we would hope.
- Top 5% earners that are women (15.56%) Bottom quartile is 20.39% Performance has remained static
- Top 5% earners from Ethnic Minorities (0%) Bottom quartile is 0% Performance has remained static
- Employees from Ethnic Minorities (0.47%) Bottom quartile is 0.8% Improved performance from last year

Housing

- Non decent Council homes (89%) Bottom quartile is 33%. A higher percentage than last year. There is an ongoing elemental replacement, Decent Homes Programme, which has brought 146 Council Owned Homes up to Decent Homes standard during 2007/8. However, this issue is related to the substantial investment needed to enable East Durham Homes to manage the full programme of works required to bring the Council Stock to the required Decent Homes standard. This investment will be realised by East Durham Homes achieving a 2 star rating from the Audit Commission.
- Change in decency of Council homes (3.2%) Bottom quartile is 3.7% Improved performance from last year

Benefits

- % overpayments recoverable during the year which have been recovered (top quartile 2 years ago) (63.41%) Bottom quartile is 64.63% Improved performance from last year

Environmental

- Waste sent for recycling (14.95%). Bottom Quartile is 16.88% Improved performance from last year
- Waste sent for composting (4.27%) Bottom Quartile is 4.84%. A drop in performance, from top to bottom quartile
- Household waste collected (449.8kg). Bottom Quartile is 444.6kg. Improved performance from last year
- Levels of graffiti (4%) Bottom quartile is 4% Improved performance from last year
- Dealing with fly tipping (3) Bottom Quartile is 3. A drop in performance, from top to bottom quartile

Community Safety

- Domestic burglaries (11.4 per 1000 households) Bottom quartile is 10.1 Improved performance from last year

9.0 BVPI's: Conclusions

9.1 Based purely on our BVPIs, it seems fair to draw the following conclusions:

- For the last year of the operation of Best Value Performance Indicators, as national measurements of performance, this year's results show an overall improvement in service provision, with an excellent set of indicator results. Over the course of the last 4 years, there has been a year on year record of improvement, reflected by the graphs in this report.
- The information provided in this report shows that focussed effort on specific areas of performance does result in improvement and the overall picture from last year's outturn figures demonstrates that the Council is now in a much more positive position. This reflects the hard work within service teams to improve performance, and these achievements should be acknowledged and celebrated.
- The scale of improvement has lifted our overall performance higher than where we were in 2004/5, achieving our highest ever number of top quartile positions and equally our lowest number of bottom quartile positions, reflecting the significant improvements made in the last four years, in driving up performance standards, particularly in service delivery areas with the most impact on our residents.
- The main focus for improvement over the next year, will be the two areas of direct service delivery, where we have identified a need to continue to provide focussed activity to drive up performance; these are in Housing (decent home standard) and in environmental services, particularly Waste Management and Fly- Tipping.

10.0 Local Performance Indicators

10.1 The Council's set of local performance indicators reflects the key areas of work for Easington, either where there are no applicable national BVPI's, or where it is felt local indicators give more context to the national indicators. In relation to last years' results, of the 29 Indicators within the data set, 18 have improved, 8 have declined in performance, 2 have stayed at last year's level and there is a new indicator (Wheelie Bin Arson). The full set of local indicators is shown in Appendix 2.

10.2 It is worth noting the following successes:

- ***Secondary and deliberate fires*** – reduced from 866 last year to 628 during 07/08
- ***Total Crime*** – decreased from 98.1 per 1,000 households last year to 86.1 during 07/08
- ***Criminal damage*** – down from 29.8 in 06/07 to 24.9 in 07/08.
- ***Homelessness presentations*** – reduced by 40% in the last 12 months
- ***Housing Applications from those fleeing domestic violence*** – 61% reduction over the previous year.

10.3 Unfortunately, there are some areas of concern, which will need to be monitored over the next year:

- ***Standard searches carried out in 10 working days.*** Performance has improved from 76% to 79%, however, further improvements need to be made to increase this to a higher level.

11.0 Progress against the Corporate Plan

- 11.1 Last year's new Corporate Plan described the focus of work for the next three years for the Council. Following the onset of LGR, the Council has approved a transitional plan to accommodate the work of setting up the new Unitary Council, highlighting priorities and key areas of focus for the transitional year. The Plan contains smart targets to enable the delivery plans to be monitored for effectiveness. A review of the Transitional Plan is currently taking place.
- 11.2 Progress in achieving the actions is monitored on a monthly basis by Management Team, and any action to address shortfalls in targets or delivery is subsequently managed through Corporate Support Team.
- 11.3 Delivery of these key areas and the detailed operational activity needed to enable the council to meet these targets, are described within Service Plans. Progress of these service specific measures and targets will continue to be reported to Scrutiny on a regular basis.

12.0 Best Value Performance Plan

- 12.1 The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 removed the requirement for best value authorities to compile and publish an annual best value performance plan (BVPP); however, following the DCLG subsequently made "savings provisions" in order to retain the requirement for best value authorities to compile a BVPP for a further year, ie by June 2008. The content of this BVPP is restricted to the reporting of outturn performance data on the 2007/08 BVPIs and a statement certifying compliance with the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters. The savings provisions enabled the retention of that part of the existing statutory guidance on best value covering the reporting of BVPI performance data and compliance with the Code of Practice on workforce matters.
- 12.2 It has been left to each Authority's discretion as to how we actually publish or otherwise make available the information, although the requirement to make it available to relevant stakeholders, for instance employee representatives in the case of the compliance certification, remains. In addition, the Audit Commission will continue to consider data quality arrangements as part of their Code of audit practice responsibilities, and will review some of the BVPI data reported to the Commission for 2007/08.
- 12.3 As the information required for the Best Value Performance Plan is contained within this report, which must be published by 30th June 2008, it is recommended that this report be used as the basis for the publication of this year's Plan

13.0 Implications

13.1 Financial Implications

This report has no direct financial implications

13.2 Legal Implications

This report has no direct legal implications

13.3 Policy Implications

This report has no direct policy implications but performance has been taken into account as part of the reviewing of the Council's priorities during 2006

13.4 Risk Implications

A risk assessment has been carried out.

13.5 Communications

It is recommended that highlights messages about the past year's performance are developed and communicated to all staff.

13.6 Corporate Implications

13.7 Corporate Plan and Priorities

This report summarises performance against priorities in the Corporate Plan. Performance has been taken into account in reviewing priorities during 2007/8

13.8 Service Plans

Performance is taken into account when shaping service plans.

13.9 Performance Management and Scrutiny

This report presents the year-end position in terms of the Council's performance during 2007/8. More detailed reports on service delivery will be brought to Service Delivery Scrutiny. Quarterly monitoring and progress updates on performance will be reported throughout the year.

14.0 Sustainability

There are no sustainability implications.

15.0 Expenditure related to 'well-being' powers

There are no direct well being implications.

15.1 Human Resource Implications

There are no HR implications.

15.2 Information Technology

There are no I.T. implications.

15.3 Equality and Diversity

There are no direct Equality and Diversity implications.

15.4 Crime and Disorder

There are no direct crime and disorder implications.

15.5 Human Rights

There are no human rights implications.

15.6 Social Inclusion

There are no direct social inclusion implications.

15.7 Procurement

There are no specific procurement issues.

15.8 Local Government Review

The new Council's arrangements for Performance Management are being progressed by the Policy and Partnerships Workstream. This includes the Framework once the new Council is operating, as well as the arrangements for reporting overall performance to the new Cabinet during the transitional year. Performance Management continues to be monitored and managed within each Council until "Vesting Day".

16.0 Conclusion

The information provided in this report shows that focussed effort on specific areas of performance does result in improvement, as this set of excellent results from 2007/8 show. The overall picture from last year's outturn figures demonstrates that the Council has achieved a high rate of improvement over the last four years and is now in a very positive position.

15.0 Recommendations

The Recommendations made within this report are :

- To note the information on the performance against the BVPI's, Local PI's and Corporate Plan;
- Approval that the Best Value Performance Plan is published in accordance with the statutory deadline and guidance.

Background Papers

Corporate Plan 2007/10

Transitional Plan February 2008

Best Value Performance Plan 2007

CPA framework (CPA- The Harder Test). Audit Commission March 2006

Guidance – Best Value Performance Indicators 2007/8 Audit Commission

