

Extract from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council's CPA Self Assessment – February 2004

(a) Performance Management

'The Council claims excellent performance in this area, and the [peer challenge] team would not dissent. The system is mature and robust.'
- Peer Challenge Report Jan 2004.

1. The **Borough Council's performance management system** ensures that corporate aims and priorities are cascaded down into aims, objectives, targets and improvement actions for different Council services, teams and individuals. These are set out in annually updated Section Performance Plans for all service areas and individual staff appraisals. In his 2002 Audit Letter [ref: TM12], the District Auditor concluded that the Council's performance management arrangements, "**continue to operate and develop well.**"
2. We **monitor our performance** in achieving our priorities via BVPIs and Local Performance Indicators (LPIs), including the achievement of relevant improvement actions. This is monitored at section/line management level and, corporately, at Management Team and Member levels. We are continuing to develop LPIs and our goal is to have a 'basket' of performance indicators (PIs) that collectively provide a comprehensive, balanced, clear and robust means of monitoring the Council's achievements and better inform the public about our performance.
3. For the vast majority of priorities and PIs, **responsibility for performance** has been assigned to a particular section and thereby to an individual manager. A relatively small number are the responsibility of all managers. Officers review performance against targets at service management teams and team briefings.
4. The Council's Cabinet and Management Team monitors BVPIs and the more significant, 'externally facing' LPIs each quarter [ref: TM14]. This covers performance against our own targets and against the performance of other councils. A commentary explains significant variances between our targets and performance. Management Team also monitors, at appropriate intervals, performance against a number of corporate priorities and PIs.
5. Members **monitor PI performance against targets** in a number of ways. Commencing in September 2003, quarterly BVPI/LPI reports are reviewed by Cabinet following consideration by Management Team. Prior to this, monitoring reports were included in Member bulletins. Also, targets for the next three years and, in some instances beyond, are set out in our BVPP along with results for last year and comparison of results with other councils in the year before that. A commentary explains significant variances between our targets and results [ref: C2]. The Council's Policy Overview Committee reviews a draft of the BVPP prior to it being considered by Cabinet. Reports on performance and contract monitoring are also considered by Cabinet and additional information is placed on the Members' website. Members also have a more in-depth look at performance via Best Value and Scrutiny Reviews.
6. Performance information has traditionally been made available annually to the public via leaflets or publication in the Council's newspaper, **Here & Now**. In spring of 2003, a booklet entitled "Improving our Performance, April 2003 - March 2004" was delivered to households across the Borough with Council Tax bills [ref: TM17].
7. Council plans and strategies also contain relevant indicators and targets where appropriate. For example, the Community Strategy includes a **number of Quality of Life Indicators** to judge progress, the Area Investment Framework contains economic 'barometer' indicators and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy contains targets, lead agency, time scales and anticipated outcomes for each of its stated actions. Where feasible, targets set out in our plans and strategies adopt existing BVPIs and LPIs for consistency.

8. Based on the BVPIs and the most significant 'externally facing' LPIs, our overall performance has improved year on year, our targets are encouraging improved performance, are more demanding year on year and we compare favourably with other authorities. This is illustrated in the following tables, using the most recent full-year comparable figures.

Overall (net) our *performance* improved from 2001/02 to 2002/03:

PIs	(a) Better	(b) Same	(c) Worse	(a)-(c) Net Change
BV	18	8	4	+14
LP	23	22	10	+13

Compared with 2002/03 performance (or 2000/01 for the satisfaction BVPIs), our 2003/04 *targets* encourage continuous overall (net) improvement:

PIs	(a) Higher	(b) Same	(c) Lower	(a)-(c) Net Change
BV	20	28	8	+12
LP	15	22	10	+5

Compared with 2002/03 targets, overall (net) our 2003/04 targets are more ambitious:

PIs	(a) Higher	(b) Same	(c) Lower	(a)-(c) Net Change
BV	10	17	9	+1
LP	12	31	1	+11

Our performance compares well with other authorities for 2002/03 BVPIs:

Compared with councils in:	(a) Top 25%	(b) Mid 50%	(c) Bottom 25%	(a)-(c) Net
England	17	19	6	+11
CIPFA family group	14	21	7	+7
Kent	16	17	9	+7

9. Evidence that the Council is failing to meet adopted targets is addressed by corrective action. A recent example of this has been **the Council's improvement in the processing of invoices and bills**. In 1999/00, 86.5% of invoices were being processed in 30 days. Following the adoption of more stretching targets and improved procedures, we achieved 99.64% in 2002/3.
10. The Council has adopted a range of other performance management tools to assist with the delivery of value for money. We have an **adopted risk management strategy** [ref: C9] which is regularly refreshed and updated. Although there is no formal 'section' in each of our cabinet and committee reports about risk issues and statutory officer advice, we believe that we do give proper consideration to such matters where relevant to the topic under consideration. Management Team sees drafts of more significant reports and this includes reviews by the Director of Finance and the Monitoring Officer. Both risk assessment and value for money considerations are taken into account. We will, however, be giving consideration as to how such assessments can be made more explicit within the body of such reports.
11. We adopt an open and honest approach to challenges on maladministration and it is of note that over 11 successive years, **the Local Government Ombudsman has found no cases of maladministration against the Council**. Our Peer Challenge Team were particularly impressed with the low number of 'local settlements' over the same period. There is a

comprehensive complaints management system in place for the public. The levels of complaints received are monitored by Service Management Teams. The Best Value Review of Public Access has highlighted areas where we could further improve our complaints monitoring procedures.

12. Our staff surveys [ref: TM4] have demonstrated **a good level of understanding and ownership of performance management processes and responsibilities across the Council**. The 2003 survey has revealed a good level of ownership amongst staff of Council priorities, section performance plan objectives and objectives set at an individual's appraisal. Staff reported that they were able to link these objectives well to their day to day jobs and were being given enough information for them to know how well they were performing. Only a small minority of staff felt that they had important work-related objectives that were not already captured.
13. Whilst we believe we have a well developed and consistent system of performance management in place that is well understood by staff and is driving forward improvement in key service areas, we acknowledge that there is scope for further improvements in our approach. The District Auditor has acknowledged that continued improvements are being undertaken. The Peer Challenge Team found that the Council had a good track record of seeking value for money. However, it felt that more could be done, particularly with regard to budget monitoring. Although we already undertake such monitoring via reports to Management Team and the Finance and Property Advisory Board, we plan to introduce regular monitoring reports to the Cabinet in the coming financial year to ensure that they have a strategic view of budget monitoring. We also expect to achieve improved value for money from our revised procurement strategy.