BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SUPPORT SERVICES – STAGE 3
Director of Corporate Resources
IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1.0   Purpose

1.1   This Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the Improvement Plan presented on the conclusion of the Support Services Best Value Review.

2.0   Recommendation

2.1   That the Committee notes the proposed Improvement Action plans developed by the Best Value Review of Support Services and considers what response should be provided to Cabinet.

3.0   Supporting Information

3.1   Attached as Appendix 1 to this report is the report considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 20th July, 2004. Details of the improvement actions arising from the Review are set out in that report.

4.0   Resource Implications

4.1   As indicated in the report there are a number of proposed improvements which could give to, potentially, significant resources implications. Due to the wide ranging nature of this review these resource implications have not been quantified at this stage, but will be presented to Cabinet once further work on the specific issues has been completed. This Scrutiny Committee may wish to indicate whether it would like to see further detailed reports arising from this review which will have resource implications.

5.   Response to Key Aims and Outcomes

5.1   This attached Best Value Review report is focused at improving the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of all AVDC support services. All of these services contribute towards the delivery of the Council's key aims and outcomes through providing essential support to front line services and helping to discharge the Council's statutory responsibilities. In addition the various support services also make a significant contribution towards our organisational aspirations.

ANNEX 1 – REPORT TO CABINET – 20TH JULY 2004

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF SUPPORT SERVICES – STAGE 3

Director of Corporate Resources

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1.   Purpose

0.1   The purpose of this report is to set out and seek approval for the Improvement Plan proposed as a result of the Best Value Review of Support Services.

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2.   Recommendation

1.1   It is recommended that the Cabinet:

- Approve the attached Improvement Plan as the basis for on-going improvement actions across AVDC Support Services;
- Request that further detailed reports are brought back on individual items that require additional investment, and that any such investment is considered within the Council's annual financial planning process;
- Refer this report to Resources and Customer Care Scrutiny Committee for comment and review.

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3.   Background Information

3.1   The Best Value Review of Support Services commenced in the summer of 2002. This wide ranging review has proved problematic to complete as a result of the need to co-ordinate contributions from a wide range of services and due to the pressure of other significant issues, including the growth agenda, the review of our key aims and comprehensive performance assessment. Cabinet considered the Stage 1 Review report on 1st April 2003, and considered two Stage 2 Reports – an Interim Report on 17th February 2004 and the Final Report on 1st June 2004. This report presents the final results of the Review and sets out the Improvement Plan for the future.

3.2   As has been detailed in earlier reports this review has identified a large number of issues and improvement opportunities, ranging from the large to the small. Many of these improvement opportunities have been taken forward by other initiatives, where there was some overlap with work already underway, or have been taken forward by the individual services where the improvement should be capable of implementation within existing service arrangements. The Stage 2 Review focused on four major areas of improvement that were not expected to be taken forward independently – this focused on the areas of Workforce Planning, Policy Development and Review, Legal Services Delivery and Marketing and Communications Services. However, all improvement opportunities have now been brought together into a single Improvement Plan to ensure that the resulting improvement actions can continue to be monitored.

4.   Review Conclusions

4.1   Overall the review has identified 80 improvement actions. Of these a total of 43 are considered to be priority improvements, which are defined as those improvements that are likely to have the most significant impact on the way in which the service is provided.

4.2   The full list of priority improvement actions is included as Appendix 1 to this report, and the full list of secondary improvement actions is included as Appendix 2 to this report. Together these improvement actions represent the overall Best Value Improvement Plan.

4.3   In summary the priority improvement actions are as follows:

Personnel
- Develop an effective workforce planning regime as a response to anticipated future staff and skill shortages in key service areas – *status in progress*;
- Implement a fully interactive recruitment website facility to support recruitment – *status completed*;
- Integrate HR policy review within core business activities – *status completed*;
- Develop an effective HR Strategy to align HR management with Council key aims and provide a framework for HR activity – *status completed;*

Financial Services
- Introduce strategic budgeting and 3 year financial planning process – *status completed*;
- Review debt position and ensure optimum financial position is taken for the Council – *status completed*;
- Develop more effective Audit Scrutiny arrangements – *status new Audit Panel established*;
- Implement Automated Audit Support Software – *status in progress*;
- Implement Automated Risk Management Software – *status in progress*;
- Achieve Benefit Fraud Inspectorate defined Performance Standard for HB/CTB fraud investigations – *status in progress*;
- Expand payroll service to external customers (ie. Chiltern DC, South Bucks DC etc) - *status completed*;
- Implement BACS payment option for suppliers – *status completed;*
- Introduce Internet payments option for debtors - *status completed*;
- Review Insurance arrangements to bring renewal process in-house and establish new claims handling system – *status completed*;

Administration Division
- Increase use of IT within Democratic Services – *status in progress*;
- Improve public engagement with the democratic process – *status completed*;
- Review and improve effectiveness of Scrutiny arrangements – *status completed*;
- Review and improve electoral canvass process – *status completed*;

Legal Services
- Further exploration of the potential for improving the case management life-cycle with client departments – *status planned*;
- A formal review of the staffing structure of the legal service to address current and possible future capacity, recruitment and retention issues – *status planned*;

- The development of ore effective time recording and case management IT systems – *status planned*;
- The establishment of a more effective approach to the outsourcing of workload peaks to private solicitors – *status planned*;
- The development of more effective partnership arrangements with other Buckinghamshire authorities, for example in sharing surplus capacity - *status in progress*;

IT Services
- Review Head of IT position – *status completed*;
- Establish agreed IS/IT strategy and strategy cycle – *status in progress*;
- Match Business Services Team capacity to the needs of the authority – *status in progress*;
- Review capacity and capability of Computer Services section - *status in progress*;

Policy Development and Review
- Establishing a new Corporate Policy Team under the Chief Executive – *status Policy Team now in place;*
- Employ a data analyst/research post on a fixed term contract – *status recruitment underway*
- Develop a clear work programme for the new Policy Team – *work programme in preparation;*

Marketing and Communications
- Development of a high level communications strategy – *status strategy adopted by Cabinet;*
- Increasing capacity of communications marketing team to allow key tasks to be completed – *Status: one appointment made, further recruitment underway;*
- The development of a 'consultation tracker' to ensure that all staff have access to survey information – *status tracker delivered March 2004;*
- Increased effectiveness of work management – *status: focus for work priorities being developed;*
- Development of guidelines to more clearly identify what communications and/or marketing issues need to be dealt with centrally and what can be managed by the local service – *status: guidelines being prepared.*

5. Reasons for Recommendations

5.1 The recommendations in this report are made in order to complete the Best Value Review of Support Services and provide a focus for on-going improvement actions across all of the services concerned.

6. Resource Implications

6.1 The Improvement Actions set out in this report cover a wide range of initiatives, some of which have not yet been fully funded. Other initiatives have either already secured approval for additional investment (ie. formation of corporate policy team, move to strategic financial planning and securing debt free status) or can be contained within existing budget provisions.

6.2 Those improvement actions that are most likely to give rise to significant financial implications in the future include:

- Initiatives to address staff and skill shortages arising from the workforce planning process;
- Initiatives arising from the establishment of the agreed IS/IT Strategy, where provision has not already been made in our e-government investment programme; and
- Possible proposals arising from the review of the legal services staffing structure.

6.3   Accordingly it is proposed that where additional resource requirements are identified as a result of making progress with the actions contained within the improvement plan, then further reports are brought to Cabinet for decision following the examination of the implications of either withdrawal of the improvement action or further investment.

7.   Response to Key Aims and Outcomes

7.1   This Best Value Review is focused at improving the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of all AVDC support services. All of these services contribute towards the delivery of the Council's key aims and outcomes through providing essential support to front line services and helping to discharge the Council's statutory responsibilities. In addition the various support services also make a significant contribution towards our organisational aspirations.

APPENDIX 1 – PRIORITY IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS FOR SUPPORT SERVICES

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Personnel Division			
Develop Work Force Planning	Agreed as Stage 2 Best Value Review – April 2003	Personnel - Deborah Simpson	Completed Feb 2004
	Stage 2 BVR Report to Cabinet – 17 Feb 2004	Personnel - Deborah Simpson	Completed Feb 2004
	Stage 2 BVR Report to Customer Care and Resources Committee – 25 Feb 2004	Personnel - Deborah Simpson	Completed Feb 2004
	Succession Planning to be developed along side service plans in 2004.	Personnel -Alison Caldwell-Nicholls	To be undertaken July – October 2004
	Workforce Action Plan developed – revised to focus on recruitment and retention issues	Deborah Simpson	3 year Action Plan developed, Feb 2004. Actions underway in 2004 to address skills shortages in Environmental Health, Building Control and Planning. Action Plan updated June 2004
Develop interactive recruitment website	Produce specification for system – 28 March 2003	Personnel – Sally White	Site has been developed, implemented, tested and is live.
	Funding agreed by ITMAG – 12 Feb 2003	Personnel – Sally White	
	Test system installed – April 2003	Personnel – Sally White	
	System live – 10 July 2003	Personnel – Sally White	

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Develop systematic way of reviewing policies	Policy review list included in HR Strategy – Jan 2004 Identify within Personnel Service Plan from 2004/05 onwards	Personnel – Deborah Simpson	Policy list reviewed in 2002. Actions taken as above. Updated in HR Strategy – Jan 2004 Policy reviews built into service planning 2002/03 2003/04 and 2004/05
Approve and implement Corporate HR Strategy	Review & Refine proposed strategy – October 2003 Secure Cabinet/Council approval February 2004	Personnel – Deborah Simpson	Proposed HR Strategy considered by Cabinet January 2004, and approved.
Financial Services Division			
Accountancy will introduce and formalise a system of strategic and 3 year budgeting / resource allocation in compliance with requirements of Local Government Bill.	To undertake a review of the present arrangements for determining the strategic allocation of resources in line with corporate priorities / key aims and to recommend and implement a revised process in time for the 2004/05 to 2006/07 resources planning exercise.	Financial Services – Peter Watson & Andrew Small	A consultant (Richard Szadziewski) considered existing arrangements and reported in March 2003. Those recommendations relating to resources planning were implemented in time to impact upon the budget planning exercise for 2004/05 to 2006/07.
Accountancy will monitor the Council's debt portfolio to determine the best time to become debt free and will inform cabinet of the implications measured against any progress towards a prudential system of capital control.	To carry out a review by June 2003	Financial Services Peter Watson & Andrew Small	The Authority obtained debt free status in October 2003

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Development of reporting to Members – formation of a Members Audit Panel	Proposal accepted by Group Leaders – November 2003 Terms of Reference approved by Scrutiny – November 2003 Audit Panel Members appointed. Introductory meeting – February 2004. Work Programme agreed and first meeting held – May 2004	Internal Audit - Cathy Durham & Peter Watson	Audit Panel in place with agreed Work programme for 2004/05
Implementation of Automated Audit and Risk Management Software – Galileo & Magique	Galileo in use for operational audit by April 2004 Develop use of Galileo & Magique during 2004/05 for full operation by April 2005 Develop quarterly reporting to DMT's on status of audits within their services – from October 2004 Develop audit planning and ongoing audit recommendation tracking and reporting using systems – October 2004	Internal Audit – Cathy Durham	Exchange version used in audits. Migration to ASP.Net version by September 2004. On course to develop management reporting and follow up processes during second half of financial year.
Achievement of Benefit Fraud Inspectorate Performance standards for Housing Benefit/ Council Tax Benefit specific to Fraud Investigations. Completion by July 2005 at standard level	Completion of self test against said performance standards in April 03 and November 2003.	Fraud Investigation, Mary Coyle	At standard for 6 of 12 Above standard for 4 of 12 at November 03
Provision of Payroll service to Chiltern DC	Live start October 2003	Payroll - S Mason	Implemented on Timetable
Provision of Payroll service to South Bucks DC	Live start June 2004	Payroll - S Mason	Implemented on timetable

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Payment of suppliers by BACS	April 2004	Payments - J Holland	95% of supplier payments now made on BACS
Internet payment of Debtor accounts	April 2003	Income - C Ball	System implemented – growing volumes of transactions
Bring Insurance renewal process in-house	October 2002	Insurance - J Warden	Process implemented successfully
Introduce new Insurance claims handling system	October 2002	Insurance - J Warden	Implemented successfully
Administration Division			
Better use of IT within Democratic Services	Minutes available - June, 03. Reports to be available - Oct, 04. Complete roll out of laptops- July, 04.	Democratic Services – Pam Bibby	Minutes now available on the Web and piloting arrangements for agenda. Roll out of laptops to Members started.
Consider opportunities to engage the public more effectively in the democratic process.	Report to Council - March, 04. Launch - June, 04.	Democratic Services – Pam Bibby	Scheme approved by Council and leaflet being prepared.
Continue to improve scrutiny arrangements.	Report to Council - April, 04. Work programmes drafted May, 04.	Democratic Services – Les White	Revised structure in place. New Work programmes agreed. Annual report made to Council.
Review electoral canvass process.	Working arrangements reviewed - Jan, 04. Contractor identified for telephone service - Feb, 04. Canvassers approached - May, 04. Canvass starts - Aug, 04.	Electoral Services – Chris Sheard	Telephone registration service arranged for when there is no change in entries. Improvements also agreed for handling work flow and use of canvassers.
IT Services Division			

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Review position of Head of IT	1. Review need for post of Head of IT. – March 2003. 2. Appoint Head of IT on fixed term to review service – June 2003 3. Review ongoing role of Head of IT – Sept 2003 4. Confirm need for role, make budget provision 2004/5 - October 2004 5. Recruit permanent Head of IT – March 2004	Corp Res – Steve Watson	The role of Head of IT has now been defined and a permanent appointment made in March 2004.
Establishing agreed IS/IT strategy and review cycle	1. Identify business strategy– Oct 2003 2. Review service needs – Feb 2004. 3. Generate draft strategy - April 2004 4. Present draft to ITMAG and Mgt Team and agree next steps -. June 2004. 5. Establish Project Office function to manage the strategy – July 2004. 6. Review role of ITMAG – July 2004. 7. Present "final" strategy to ITMAG and agree review cycle. – Sept 2004.	IT – Malcolm Oliver	This activity is on track at present after a shaky start. A draft IT strategy was presented to ITMAG and Mgt Team in May which was perceived to be at too high a level. A revised approach is being followed to generate a more tangible strategy which will be presented for review in September. Following approval the strategy will be reviewed on a rolling 6 month basis in a process led by Business Services..

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Review of the capacity and capability of the Computer Services section of IT.	1. Appoint Head of IT 2. Outline report of Service capability to Director – August 2003. 3. Benchmarking – Sept 2003. 4. Analysis of roles etc. – Oct 2003 5. Take telephony into service – Nov 2003 6. Present benchmarking results to ITMAG – Jan 2004 7. Full report – Sep 2004 8. Action plan in place for recommendations – Sep 2004	IT – Alan Evans	The review of the service has been an ongoing role for the Head of IT since appointment. This process has been disrupted by the need to divert efforts to the Bucks Online project from March to May 2004. Activity has now re-commenced on this with a report due in August 2004. Computer Services have taken on the responsibility for management of fixed and mobile telephones with no increased budget.

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Matching the capacity of the Business Services Team to the needs of the Authority	1. Define the role of Business Services and agree organisational structure. – April 2003 2. Implement the structure– Aug 2003 3. Develop outline e-govt programme August 2003 4. Define review process. – Aug 2003 5. Review workload against staff structure. Sept 2003 6. Recommend changes for 2004/5 budget. – Oct 2003 7. Engage staff and implement revised organisational structure– May 2004 8. Publish paper to review role of ITMAG and Project Office – Jul 04 9. Create revised project management standards– Sept 2004. 10. Verify the structure against both the IT Strategy and the e-government agenda. – Sept 2004.	IT – Alan Evans	This activity is on track, the capacity of the Business Services team has been increased by confirming the role of the group, setting an appropriate staffing and management structure and appointing both a Head of IT and Business Services Manager. Subsequent review has show shortfalls in capacity which have been addressed by recruitment of skilled staff who will bring top class experience from organisations which excel in the project management process.
Corporate Policy Development			
Form a Corporate Policy Team comprising existing staff	JDs agreed – May 2004	Richard Carr	Completed
Employ Data Analyst on 2 year contract	JD agreed – July 2004 Recruitment August – September 2004	Stephanie Moffat	On Schedule

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Agree work programme for Corporate Policy unit	Develop Service Plan – July/August 2004	Stephanie Moffat	On Schedule
Marketing & Communications			
High level communications strategy	Adoption by Cabinet January 2004	Comms and Marketing: T Lane	Achieved.
Creating capacity to better manage workload	Appointment of E-Communication Officer from 1 April	Comms and Marketing: T Lane	Appointment made 16 April.
Additional comms and marketing resource specifically related to the growth agenda	First appointment: general comms from 1 April 2004 Second appointment: community engagement from 1 Jan 2005 (new date to reflect changes to planning prog.) JD and person specification to be drafted by mid August for HAY evaluation. Advert September Appointment due late September	Comms and Marketing: T Lane	Second interviews taking place w/c 28 June and 15 July. Discussions started on the JD and person specification
Development of consultation tracker	First tracker produced: Jan 2004 Launch and operational arrangements agreed by Management Team: March 2004 Guidelines on role of Comms and Marketing produced and agreed by Management Team: June Tracker launched: July 2004	Comms and Marketing: T Lane	Achieved in March 2004. Agreed in March 2004. Outstanding: Revised date July 2004. Ready to launch after flexi place working project details have been sent out.

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
More effective management of workload	Corporate work priorities to be identified via the strategic guidance given by Director as part of service planning process guidance: Aug 2003 and June 04 Key services projects to be identified as part of service planning process: June 2004	Comms and Marketing: T Lane	Complete (updated June 2004). Included in discussion with Director in June 2004: to be covered in service plan.
Development of guidelines for comms and marketing activities to more clearly define when comms and marketing should be involved in supporting services to add value	Guidelines developed: September for approval by Management Team Circulation and promotion to services: September onwards	Comms and Marketing: T Lane	On schedule. Will be included as an appendix to the service plan.
Legal Services			
Explore with client departments the scope for greater legal input at key stages in the case life cycle.	Client discussions – by end Sept 04 Develop proposals – end Oct 04 Trial arrangements – Dec 04 to March 05 Prepare proposals for roll-out & submit report June 05 Roll-out arrangements to be completed by March 07	Corporate Resources – Steve Watson, Legal Division – Joanna Swift and relevant Senior Solicitors.	Planned
With assistance from IT Division review the case for an integrated time recording and case management system within the Legal Division with a view to updating and simplifying existing systems.	Prepare user specification – by 01.02.05 Carry out initial costings – 01.04.05 Prepare cost/benefit analysis – 01.06.05	Legal Division – Joanna Swift/IT Business Manager	Planned

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Review staff structure of Legal Division to address current and likely future capacity issues.	Undertake review by end Aug 04 Submit Cabinet Report Sept 04 Implement agreed proposals for 1st April 05	Legal Division – Joanna Swift	Planned
Compile a select list of private solicitors to assist with peaks of legal work and deal with one-off/specialist projects for the Council.	Advertise for expressions of interest – 01.05 Short list and interview firms 02.05 Appoint panel – 01.04.05	Legal Division – Joanna Swift	Sample paper work obtained
Explore the possibility of working in partnership with other authorities.	Strategic partnership meeting June 04. Seek views from other authorities in Bucks on partnership working – 20.09.04 Develop proposals and test feasibility by December 04 Submit Cabinet Report (if required) by March 05 Implement agreed proposals 05/06 and 06/07	Corporate Resources – Steve Watson Legal Division – Joanna Swift	Initial partnership meeting held. Countywide Legal Group asked to develop options for further consideration in Sept. 04

APPENDIX 2 – SECONDARY IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS FOR SUPPORT SERVICES

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Personnel Division			
Improve perceptions of Personnel as a barrier	Change of style to explain range of options to managers and consequences of the options, rather than perceived technically correct solution or to be seen as moving straight to the Personnel desired option. Gradual process since 2002 as opportunities have arisen around specific issues.	Personnel – Deborah Simpson	Ongoing action
Review options for making Personnel procedures more precise and including flowcharts	Opportunities taken as policies have been reviewed: Recruitment Guidance Grievance Procedure Disciplinary and Appeals Procedure Appraisal Scheme Maternity Policy Bullying and Harassment Procedure Right to Request/Parental Leave Equality Strategy Career Break Scheme Flexitime Scheme Removal & Resettlement Acting up/Honorarium	Personnel – Deborah Simpson Personnel – Alan Neal Personnel – Alan Neal Personnel – Sally White Personnel – Deborah Simpson Personnel – Edna Wolfe Personnel – Alan Neal Personnel – Alison Caldwell-Nichols Personnel - Alan Neal Personnel – Laura Nicholls Personnel – Sue Giles Personnel – Sue Giles Personnel – Sue Giles	 October 2002 December 2002 September 2003 September 2003 December 2003 December 2003 December 2003 Completed December 2003 Agreed June 2004 Pilot in operation in June 2004 Under review – June 2004 Under review – June 2004
Improve access to Personnel policies and procedures	Developed use of TROVE for employment policies 2002 onwards	Personnel – Alison Caldwell-Nichols	Trove up to date June 2004

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
	Update Employment Reference Handbooks	Personnel – Sue Giles	Handbook up to date June 2004
	Develop systems to update policies, Handbooks and Trove at the same time	Personnel – Sue Giles	Systems developed March 2004
Improve communications within the Division	Introduced fortnightly case worker meetings.	Personnel – Deborah Simpson	Ongoing action
	Set up PDMT e-mail group in 2002		Ongoing action
	Introduced additional supervision meetings within the Division.		Ongoing action
Financial Services Division			
Accountancy will consider the long term prospects for replacing the financial system in partnership with other authorities and in the mean time it will continue to develop the APTOS financial system to enable budget holders and directors to access current management information and supporting detail easily	Implement APTOS 9 (summer 2003) to see if this meets user requirements. Provide training on APTOS 9 to users. Review County / District partnership to see how well this has worked (September 2004).	Financial Services – Andrew Small	The financial system was implemented in July 2003 and provides a financial system similar to the one being operated by the County but at a lower cost. Training was provided on the new system at the same time. The County/District implementation is behind schedule and a review of this arrangement will have to be delayed until after it working effectively.
Meeting the requirements for electronic access to services and information through the development of the APTOS financial system	Publish the Council Statement of Accounts on the web site (December 02) Publish the Councils budgets on the website March 2004	Financial Services – Andrew Small	The accounts for 2001/02 and 2002/03 now both appear on the Council's website. It has yet to be agreed what level of budget information would be appropriate for the Council's website.

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Development of the commitment accounting system within APTOS to enable budget managers to see the value of orders raised in addition to invoices paid, and thus through the provision of up to the minute accurate information on spending and commitments reduce inadvertent overspending.	Trialling by users in key areas. (April 03 - onwards) Review if trials success (Summer 2004) Implementation of Commitment Accounting throughout the Authority during 2004/05	Financial Services – Andrew Small	Trialling is still continuing but only in a limited few areas. Further trialling required over a wider user base before a fair assessment of its applicability can be made.
Obtain Audit / Client feedback	Client survey completed 2002. Further Client survey to be undertaken before end of 2004/05. Identify further improvements from outcome of the survey – April 2005	Internal Audit Cathy Durham	Further survey planned for later in the year.
Policies for fraud and corruption, fraud prosecution	Adopted February 2002	Investigations Unit/Legal	Currently under discussion for review
Renewal of Payroll contract for Wycombe DC	March 2005	Payroll - S Mason	Preliminary discussions underway
Selection and implementation of new Payroll system	Begin process from April 2005	Payroll - S Mason	Process not yet started
Faxed remittances for BACS payments	Introduce by April 2005	Payments - S Mason	Discussions ongoing with Accountancy and IT
Improve management of invoice payments to meet 30 day payment target	Progressive review and refinement across Council – ongoing monitoring and reporting Develop central registration and control for on line certification – Identify and establish new process by October 2004 Implement across Council by March 2005	Payments – S Mason Payments – S Mason Accountancy – M Hall Council wide – all managers	Regular reports produced but corporate performance is not improving Solution for central control to improve management being developed – depends upon Document Imaging and system development

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Increase level of DD payment for Debtor accounts	Continuous programme	Income - C Ball	Significant increases in DD take-up
Risk management strategy	October 2003	Insurance - J Warden	Integrate claims management with overall Risk Management strategy, progressive development work on target
Administration Division			
Improve awareness of Constitution and political management processes	Member Event – May, 03 Officer Sessions – July, 04	Democratic Services – Les White	Member event held as part of induction programme. Officer sessions arranged.
Maximise use of electoral IT system	Document Management – Sept, 03 Utilise for elections in June, 04	Electoral Services – Chris Sheard	Integrated document management module holds registration forms. Election management module currently in use and working well.
More innovative approach to service delivery in electoral section	Research by March, 04 Postal vote packs ready May, 04 Changes to canvass for Aug, 04	Electoral Services – Chris Sheard	Visits made to other Councils to explore options. Outsourced preparation of postal vote packs to better cope with increased numbers. Canvass arrangements changed as mentioned elsewhere.
Develop on site management of office services	Performance measures established April, 03. Mail boxes set up June, 03. Second customer survey Dec, 03. Vending equipment replaced Jan, 04.	Facilities Management – Peter Jones and Neil Holman	Performance is being monitored monthly. Communication improved and quicker resolution of problems. Customer survey revealed increased satisfaction. Some equipment replaced.

Better working arrangements with Property and Operational Services	Agree responsibilities - July, 03.
	Building cleaning –
	  Initial meeting Jan, 04
	  On site meetings June, 04
		Facilities Management – Peter Jones and Neil Holman	List of respective responsibilities agreed.
			Discussions held on monitoring of new building cleaning contract and site meetings taking place.

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
IT Services Division			
Clarify Roles of IT and other services in training computer users.	1. Agree strategy with Training Manager – Dec 2002. 2. Communicate to all computer users – Jan 2003 3. Identify individual training needs – March 2003 4. Carry out individual training as identified in milestone 3– Dec 2003 5. Review satisfaction – June 2004. 6. Annual review and reminder to staff of strategy and review of training needs – Ongoing from Sept 2004	IT – John Metcalfe	Actions up to milestone 4 have been completed. Satisfaction with the training is being tested in a customer satisfaction survey in June 2004 and a refresher update of the training will be carried out, tailored in the light of the user satisfaction survey.
Re-activate the account management programme within IT to ensure ongoing communication with services across the council	1. Appoint Head of IT – June 2003. 2. Initiate ad hoc account management meetings between Head of IT and all Heads of Service – July 2003. 3. Regular meetings between Head of IT and Service Heads – Jan-Feb 2004 – ongoing every 6-8 months. 4. Establish Account Management responsibilities within Business Services – July 2004.	IT – Alan Evans	The ongoing Account Management has been re-instituted on an ad hoc basis by regular six monthly meetings between the Head of IT and other Heads of Service

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Customer Satisfaction	1. Conduct SOCITM satisfaction survey – Jun 2004 2. Review results with peer authorities – Jul 2004. 3. Generate action plan to deal with areas for improvement – Sept 2004. 4. Carry out sample checks quarterly and full survey biennially - Ongoing	IT – John Metcalfe	This is another subset of the service review process but is essential also for the effective targeting of services ongoing. These activities are underway and on target.
Ongoing review of the metrics and KPI's against which IT measures itself	1. Review of existing metrics July 2003 2. Review of metrics against SOCITM UK stds – Dec 2003. 3. Ongoing annual review of targets in place and updating– July 2004.	IT – Alan Evans.	This is a subset of the service review process but an important early deliverable to allow base lining of performance and is on target.
Change Control	1. Audit (externally) and report on existing arrangements with recommendations – Oct 2004 2. Create action plan for improvements with budget pressures fed through to 2005 budget. 3. Implement new procedures - Sept 2005.	IT – John Metcalfe	The effective control of changes to the live systems environment is key to the operation of any IT unit. While the current situation is adequate it does not reflect industry best practice and improvements are targeted at this area in the coming year.

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Disaster Recovery	1. Commission consultancy report. – Oct 2002 2. Agree Report – Nov 2002 3. Implement core IT disaster recovery. – July 2003 4. Review Business Continuity needs – July 2004 5. Create action plan to enhance IT response – Oct 2004. 6. Deliver changes to the action plan timescales.	IT – John Metcalfe	IT disaster recovery capability was highlighted as in need of improvement. In the absence of a Business Continuity plan basic IT disaster recovery was put into place in 2003. This will be reviewed against the needs of the corporate Business Continuity plan and an action plan put into place to ensure cohesion between the two.
Skills dissemination	1. Review Skills Needs and catalogue skills spread – Jan 2004 2. Highlight report on danger areas – July 2004 3. Action plan for dissemination – Sept 2004 4. Execution of Action plan by (at latest) – Sept 2005	IT – Alan Evans	The Best Value Review highlighted that some skills were spread too thinly across IT. There has been a natural progression from that position as some of the technologies have matured but a programme to address this formally is also in place and will be executed as part of the review of the service.
Firewall Security	1. Agreed basic needs: Independent Security probing of network. 2. Commission security probes – Oct 2003 3. Create Action Plan – Oct 2003 4. Implement recommendations – Nov 2003. 5. Ongoing annual checks planned.	IT – Jeremy Gomm	Security probing is carried out by external consultants and is scheduled for annual repeats. So far no significant issues have been identified.

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Lack of facilities for Remote Working	1. Select toolset (Citrix) – Nov 2002. 2. Commence Pilot – April 2003. 3. Review Pilot – June 2003. 4. Rollout to relevant staff – Dec 2003. 5. Initiate Flexiplace project to maximise benefit – Apr 2004.	IT – John Metcalfe	Initial piloting of solutions is now being superseded by the Flexi Place project to implement flexible working across the authority. The project is at the information gathering stage.
Corporate Policy Development			
Develop data sets to form community profiles for Aylesbury Vale	Employ Data Analyst – Sept 04 Ward profiles established and accessible by March 2005.	Stephanie Moffat	
Develop and implement a corporate performance management framework	Draft framework – June 2004 Disseminate to HoS and middle managers – Aug 2004	Stephanie Moffat	Drafted and disseminated to HoS
Marketing and Communications			
Refinement of advertisement templates to enable services to be self-sufficient	May 2004	Comms and Marketing: T Lane	Complete.

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Additional resource to enable effective comms and marketing contribution to BucksOnLine	Approval to part-time post on fixed term contract post given by Executive Management Board: May/June Draft JD and person specification approved by County and District Comms Group Advertisement placed Appointment Launch of BucksOnLine: January 2005	Comms and Marketing: T Lane	Approval given 4 June 2004. Drafted and agreed 14 June. Placed w/c 21 June. Interviews w/c 13 July.
More effective management of workload	Corporate work priorities to be identified via the strategic guidance given by Director as part of service planning process guidance: Aug 2003 and June 04 Key services projects to be identified as part of service planning process: June 2004	Comms and Marketing: T Lane	Complete (updated June 2004). Included in discussion with Director June 2004: will be reflected in service plan.

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Communications strategy - enhancing the hard to reach strategy	Developing a database of black and ethnic minority contacts for communication and consultation: July 2004 Setting up a district wide consultation group with partners. First priority: sharing plans, data and best practice on consultation with black and ethnic minority communities: September 2004 Developing similar databases and forums for the other hard to reach groups. Second priority: young people. November onwards.	Comms and Marketing: T Lane	Draft database developed by AVDC, now with partners for comment and enhancement Concept of district wide group discussed and agreed in principle. Arrangements to be made for first meeting.
Legal Services			
Review the coding structure of the time recording system to simplify the number of work types and prepare regular reports for clients on work volumes and charges	Prepare report template – 01.09.04 Amend matter type list – 01.09.04	Legal Division – Joanna Swift	Planned
Review and update procedures for receiving client instructions with a view to simplifying and speeding up existing processes.	Review existing procedures and consider alternative methods – 01.10.04 Consult with clients – 11.04 Introduce agreed changes – 01.05	Legal Division – Senior Solicitors	On-going but needs to be structured
Set up regular client liaison meeting for all client groups	Senior Solicitors to list existing liaison meetings – 31.07.04 Consult clients on frequency and officer attendance – 01.09.04	Legal Division – Senior Solicitors	Already in place for Planning Client

Improvement Action	Milestones & Dates	Service & Responsible Officer	Progress as at 30th June 2004
Promoting services provided by the Legal Division	Prepare Who's Who and Who does What leaflet – 31.07.04 Prepare A-Z of Legal Services – 30.9.04 Issue Leaflet and A-Z – within 1 month of appointment of Senior Solicitor in Property & Contract Team or 01.12 .04 Arrange for leaflet and A-Z to go on the intranet	Legal Division – Joanna Swift	Templates obtained
Assist Commercial Estates in simplification of commercial leases.	Review and redraft June 04	Legal Division - Senior Solicitor Property & Contracts	Review complete & new lease adopted.
Support Planning service review of planning application & S106 process to ensure legal input at optimum time.	Awaiting details of planning timetable for review.	Planning Service and Legal Division – Senior Solicitor Planning	Planned
Review need for improving quality of client legal 'check-lists' and provision of case study and legal precedent information.	Initial discussions with clients by end Sept 04. Prepare proposals and agree with client by end Nov 04. Implement proposals Dec 04 to Mar 05	Legal Division – Joanna Swift Legal Division – Senior Solicitors	Planned
Encourage and support litigation clients in developing more effective training programmes on evidence gathering (ie. PACE) and related topics.	Initial discussions with clients by end Sept. 04 On-going support dependent upon client responses.	Legal Division – Joanna Swift Client departments	Planned