

Legal and Democratic Services (2007-2008)

Part 1 Purpose and description of service

A. Purpose of Service:

-Legal

- Statutory Monitoring Officer pursuant to Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the Local Government Act 2000
- Provision of a comprehensive and cost effective legal service to the County Council, including advice, representation, document drafting, property transactions, childcare applications, litigation and debt recovery.
- Responsibility for propriety and standards issues within the Council.
- Complaints officer and Advice on serious or difficult complaints
- Administration Support for the democratic process through the servicing of all formal member bodies; the processing of complaints to the Ombudsman and administering the Scheme of Members` Allowances and other member support procedures.
- Support for Schools appeals

B. Brief description of services provided: -

Legal and Democratic support to all the services in the County Council, and some external clients

C. Volume of service: -

Annual fee income approx 2.87million pounds

Support for Corporate Legal function and Democratic Services function 658,000 pounds

Part 2 Factors to consider before determining outcomes

A. Key themes Statutory requirement for Monitoring Officer and Local Government Ethical framework

Service working to be a top performing service

Support provided for all services in achieving plan/ ATP objectives

B. Cross-cutting projects

Legal and Democratic Services work with other services within the County Council to help them achieve their Council plan objectives/PSA targets.

Main areas are:-

Joint outcome/shared dependency Services/partners involved

Reprovisioning of Care Homes Adult Social Care/Housing providers/ District Councils
Roll out of s 31 partnerships Adult social care/ Children and Young People/ Health District wide parking areas BCC/Private contractor/District Councils
Pathfinder 2 tier working between County and Districts
Fly tipping initiative County and Districts
Waste initiatives - County wide
Anti Social behaviour partnerships between county and districts

C. Review

Membership of local authority bench marking groups/ extension of quality initiatives/ visits to top achieving authorities to examine practices and adopt if appropriate. Value Management programme whereby all processes are subject to scrutiny and revised to achieve greater efficiency or effectiveness.

D. Consultation

Most income negotiated under a SLA annually, when clients' needs are discussed. Regular consultation by Client satisfaction survey at the completion of a matter, results monitored by management team.

E. Diversity

Some monitoring to ensure that processes – e.g. Complaints, ethics and prosecution procedures do not adversely affect disadvantaged groups. Clarification that interpreter facilities are available if required in respect of Council records/ constitutional documents/schools appeals.

F. Achieving top performance

State how the eight values of the organisation will shape service delivery over the next 1-3 years.

F1. Value - Empowers and values its staff

Service response - These services have been at the forefront of flexible working arrangements, which will continue to be supported when the budget permits. Staff are encouraged to put forward ideas for improvement/ development of the service and a prize awarded for best idea. Staff development and training is encouraged.

F2. Value - Focuses on customer need

Service response - Client satisfaction surveys/regular client meetings cover all areas of our service. We will continue to seek ways to streamline info flow to make more accessible to clients.

F3. Value - Works in partnership both internally and externally

Service response - With other agencies and private sector organisations both as service provider and client.

F4 Value - Takes performance management seriously

Service response – Ongoing development of service measures to aid management to continue to identify areas for improvement that meet customer expectations.

F5. Value - Is Member led

Service response - Changes to the Constitution will reflect increased member participation. One of the functions of the service is to provide support for members to enable them to perform their role effectively.

F6. Value - Is adaptable and flexible to change

Service response - Changes in working practices to retain the Law Society's quality mark and to make efficient use of new process software; to develop our culture of continuous improvement and client care.

F7. Value - Is innovative in its approach

Service response - Changes to take advantage of IT developments – new case management system continues to be implemented to replace manual processes; Modern.Gov being introduced to publish democratic decisions; and SAP to standardise processes across the Council.

F8. Value - Is business-like in its operation

Service response - To introduce improvements and monitor our achievement of targets to meet needs. Ongoing review of how we deliver our service whether in-house or through partnerships to be professional and cost-effective. Ongoing commitment to support all our clients – both internal & external – to give them relevant & timely information to carry out their duties effectively. Implementing IT systems in a controlled manner and using standardised documentation, to provide a consistent and effective level of customer service.

Outcome 1: Improve quality of processes - Improve Client care processes

Target Description	Last Year		Targets			Improvement Plans
	Target	Actual	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	
Performance at external assessments for Quality Marks for Legal Service	Pass Lexcel AMV by May 2006	Target will be achieved	Pass Lexcel AMV by May 2007	Pass Lexcel Assessment by May 2008	Pass Lexcel AMV to new Lexcel Standard by May 2009	
Modern.Gov software implemented, with Services using it to process Council decisions			Implement Phase 1	Implement Phase 2	Consider further software modules	

Outcome 2: Client feedback is used to improve our service

Target Description	Last Year		Targets			Improvement Plans
	Target	Actual	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	
Legal Services - % of clients surveyed on Client Sat Surveys (end of each case) that rate Legal service as satisfactory	90%	95%	90%	90%	90%	

Democratic Services - % of Officers that rate service as satisfactory on annual survey	85%	97%	85%	85%	85%	
Appeals survey - % of clients that rate service as satisfactory on annual survey	75%	75%	75%	75%	75%	
Democratic Services - % of Members that rate service as satisfactory on annual survey	85%	Target will be achieved	85%	85%	85%	

Outcome 3: Partnerships used to deliver service or reduce costs, where appropriate

Target Description	Last Year		Targets			Improvement Plans
	Target	Actual	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	
Flexibility/availability of legal expertise	2 external partners + 5 chambers with special relationship		2 external partners + 5 chambers with special relationship	2 external partners + 5 chambers with special relationship	2 external partners + 5 chambers with special relationship	

Outcome 4: Legal & Democratic has trained and valued employees

Target Description	Last Year		Targets			Improvement Plans
	Target	Actual	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	
Number of Trainees (studying for professional exams, including NVQ3)	9 (including 4 trainee solicitors)		9 (including 4 trainee solicitors)	9 (including 4 trainee solicitors)	9 (including 4 trainee solicitors)	

Outcome 5: Corporate advice role delivers high quality, proactive advice at earliest appropriate stage of decis

Target Description	Last Year		Targets			Improvement Plans
	Target	Actual	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	
No. of successful challenges to Bucks CC decisions (where LDS guidance was adhered to)	0	0	0	0	0	

Outcome 6: Achievement of Best Value Performance Indicators

Target Description	Last Year		Targets			Improvement Plans
	Target	Actual	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	
Total amount spent by LA on Advice and Guidance services provided by external organisations. (BVPI 226a)	£208,841.00	£208,841.00	£208,841.00	£208,841.00	£208,841.00	
% of monies spent on advice and guidance services provision which was given to orgs holding the CLS Quality Mark at `General Help` level and above. (BVPI 226b)	6.15%	6.15%	6.15%	6.15%	6.15%	

Satisfaction with Complaint handling (BVPI 4): 3 yearly satisfaction survey by Comms.	32%	28%	0%	0%	28%	
Total amount spent on Advice and Guidance in the areas of housing, welfare benefits and consumer matters which is provided directly by the authority to the public (BVPI 226c)	£1,012,662.00	£1,012,662.00	£1,012,662.00	£1,012,662.00	£1,012,662.00	

Outcome 7: LDS Risk Levels are managed

Target Description	Last Year		Targets			Improvement Plans
	Target	Actual	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	
Regular review by management for new and existing risks, using Risk Register	2 reviews by 30/4 & 31/10/06	Target will be achieved	2 reviews by 30/4 & 31/10/07	2 reviews by 30/4 & 31/10/08	2 reviews by 30/4 & 31/10/09	
Statement of Internal Control risks considered			Completed Certificate of Assurance submitted to deadline	Completed Certificate of Assurance submitted to deadline	Completed Certificate of Assurance submitted to deadline	

Outcome 8: Improve efficiency of processes for handling legal work

Target Description	Last Year		Targets			Improvement Plans
	Target	Actual	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	
Case Management software implemented, with staff using it to process all casework	3 out of 5 Legal sections	Target will be achieved	4 out of 5 Legal sections	5 out of 5 Legal sections	-	

Outcome 9: Better representation and communication between the Council and outside bodies

Target Description	Last Year		Targets			Improvement Plans
	Target	Actual	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	
Review representation on outside bodies with Deputy leader	Carry out review and make appointments	Target will be achieved	Report to Deputy Leader and appointments reviewed	Report to Deputy Leader and appointments reviewed.	Report to Deputy Leader and appointments reviewed.	
Effective representation on key partnership groups	Annual statement on membership and impact on interests of Bucks by 31/3/07		Annual statement on membership and impact on interests of Bucks	Annual statement on membership and impact on interests of Bucks	Annual statement on membership and impact on interests of Bucks	

Outcome 10: Improved efficiency & closer working of Legal Services covering the whole of Bucks CC

Target Description	Last Year		Targets			Improvement Plans
	Target	Actual	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	
Implement Pathfinder 2 tier with District Councils			Implementation Plan & Corporate structures	Initial integration as per implementation	Further integration as per implementation	

			agreed	Plan & Corporate structure	Plan & Corporate structure	
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Further Service Plan Information:

Associated Plans:

Accountable Officer
Anne Davies

Strategic Director
Ian Trenholm

Cabinet Member
Frank Downes

Associated Resource Plan: