



LOOKING UP

wychavon district council's annual report 2003/04

about this plan

Another year, another Annual report. Last year we produced "Reach For The Stars", this year our Annual Report is all about "Looking Up".

Here we tell you what we've been doing over the past year and our plans for the year ahead. The report helps Auditors check we're doing the right things and doing things right. But we've written the plan for you too so you can see what the Council does.

If you live in Wychavon you help pay for services in your area and we want you to know

- what your money pays for
- whether we did what we promised last year
- how we perform compared to other councils
- what we promise to do this year, and
- information about how we're run

You can't shop around for most Council services - where you live determines who empties your bin or considers your planning application. That is why we think it is important to get it right first time and provide **good services, good value.**

But sometimes we don't perform as well as we should do. Rather than dwell on this we see it as a challenge to improve on our services and make a difference to you. The experts at MORI tell us perceptions of councils are at an all time low. In our local MORI survey we managed to achieve above average satisfaction scores for many of our services and for our work overall. However we know we need to do more to build interest in our work.

So don't be put off that this is a Council publication. We cover all sorts of things that touch your life in some way - you just might not know it. In fact the more you know about us the happier you are - another MORI fact!

Read, enjoy and please tell us what you think.

“ We cover all sorts of things that touch your life in some way - you just might not know it ”

contents

About this plan

1. Summary from the Top

- Malcolm Meikle, our previous Leader looks back
- Martin Jennings, our new Leader looks forward
- Sid Pritchard, Managing Director
- A Summary of Performance

page i

2. Welcome to Wychavon

- Vital Statistics
- Our Priorities and Promises 2003/04
- How We're Run
- Our Service Units and Managers
- How People and Plans Fit Together
- Our People
- Community Matters
- Partnership Matters
- Budget and Capital Programme
- Major Schemes in the Capital Programme 2003/04

page 2
page 2
page 3
page 4

page 7
page 7
page 10
page 11
page 15
page 15
page 16
page 16
page 17
page 18

3. Performance matters

- Progress on Promises 2002/03
- National Performance Indicators 2001/02
- National Performance Indicators 2002/03
- Performance Trends, Drops and Static
- Cost Effectiveness Matters
- Money Matters
- Risk Management

page 18
page 22
page 23
page 24
page 24
page 25
page 27

4. Inspection & Improvement matters

- Inspection Matters
- Improvement Matters
- Best Value Reviews

page 28
page 31
page 34

5. Intelligence matters

- Facts and Perceptions
- Census information - the changing profile of Wychavon
- Perceptions - satisfaction and information
- Consultation Case Studies

page 38
page 38
page 39
page 40

6. Other matters

- Contract Matters
- Auditors' Matters
- And finally...
- Contact Details

page 41
page 41
page 41
page 41

1. summary from the top

Malcolm Meikle, our previous Leader looks back

It's been another great year for Wychavon and for me personally in my last year as Leader of the Council.

We've kept our promise of keeping any increase in our part of the Council Tax at the rate of inflation AND still manage to give you good services. Over 90% of you now have a doorstep recycling collection, we've made progress on the Droitwich Canal and opened Pershore Pool - a great success. We've led the way to get your views for local healthcare to the Primary Care Trust. Indeed we've put a new option forward to build a new hospital and health centre on the Civic Centre site in Pershore. We will continue to campaign to keep Evesham hospital and for improvements in Droitwich too.



I've got to grips with yet more new jargon from Government. We volunteered to work with the Audit Commission as a "Pathfinder District Council." We tried out new ways of inspection to help them decide how to rank Councils ranging from excellent to poor. This process, Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) involved 16 inspectors scrutinising our management, services, plans and achievements. It meant mountains of paperwork! Inspectors helped us identify improvements we can make and we've helped made the process simpler for the 237 other districts that will go through it after us.

We secured a draft score of 'good' in the 'Corporate Assessment' report. Inspectors praised us for our quality staff, strong leadership and value for money services. We need to get the services right for you **and** tackle what comes down from Government. Most of the time we get the balance right.

The Council has selected Martin Jennings to be the new Leader of the Council and I have every confidence that he will bring his own talents and approach to the job. I'm staying involved of course and look forward to supporting from behind rather than leading from the front!

Malcolm Meikle

Martin Jennings, our new Leader looks forward

Little did I know that when I joined Wychavon as a newcomer in 1999 that four years later I would be looking ahead as Leader of the District Council. While I take pride in Wychavon and its successes so far, I realise we face a challenging journey. Your expectations rightly increase and we know we need to match them.

I see an honest and balanced relationship with you as the way forward. I understand your frustrations when you get an ever-increasing Council tax bill so I will make sure Wychavon's part of the bill will not soar above the rate of inflation. We can do this by good housekeeping, by living up to our motto **good services, good value**, and by facing up to some difficult decisions.



We know our housing service has been poor and we will need to invest to improve it. Car parking charges may need revision, and our Concessionary Fares scheme is getting an overhaul. We provide a Rolls Royce waste service collecting direct from your back door - we could reduce costs by picking up from the roadside - often where you put it. These decisions are never easy or popular and we can't please everyone all the time - but you have my word that decisions won't be made on any services without genuine consultation. So please take part or contact your local Member, pop in to our One-Stop Shops, call our officers, call me.

I want to make sure we get it right for the whole community - not just the people who always get in touch but the people who feel we do nothing for them, or just think we're grey suited bureaucrats who don't care. I'm keen to build the trust of young people and have discovered their views through discussions with high schools. That's why we're running more summer music events in the parks and building two skateparks. Young people will need to gain the trust of the local residents nearby and do their bit too.

Despite my promotion to the top job, my feet are firmly on the ground. I couldn't leave behind two projects close to my heart - the Droitwich Canal and Lido. I'm determined to see them through to a good result.

I believe in a 'team Wychavon' approach. People make us what we are - people that get those services to you, people that go the extra mile, people that treat you as they would their friends. By supporting our people, they support you. Simple really, but incredibly effective. I'm proud to take Wychavon forward. Right back to the job ...

Martin Jennings

“ people make us what we are... By supporting our people they support you. Simple really, but incredibly effective ”

Sid Pritchard, Managing Director

My pragmatic style means we focus on delivering both sound services and finances at Wychavon. My Management Team works with me to make this happen and on the whole we do.

Highlights for the year have been getting recognition for our great customer service - this time in our Revenues service, and opening the new Evesham Community Contact Centre (ECCC) with partners from the County and Town Councils and the Police. We've been awarded yet more loo of the year awards and put our innovative publications like our 'Pizza Leaflet' on the map as good practice - it came runner-up in the 2002 Charity and Public Service Publishing Awards. Another highlight was setting out our partnership vision to improve life generally for you, for example actions to reduce crime and improve health as highlighted in our community plan 'Making life sweeter for you'. What I really liked was its new targets and specific actions - rather than vague intentions and meaningless vision.

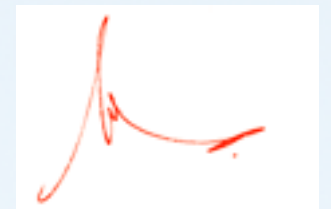


My low point was accepting that our Housing Service is failing to meet your expectations and that we really need to improve it. A few years ago we turned round our Planning Service to become the most improved planning authority in England. Environmental Health has had the same treatment, confirmed by getting ISO9001 for their services. We are now determined to do the same with Housing. We are already investing in new staff, IT and finding better ways of working to help people who really need it. There's no quick fix but sharing the problems and developing a way forward are key parts in the drive for improvement.

We always have the challenge of meeting a variety of needs:

- Members - the elected representatives that you vote for
- Government - they want this plan for a start and 22 others
- Auditors - both KPMG and increasingly the Audit Commission expect things from us
- You - the most important of all!

As I am to retire in March 2004 I hope to ensure we deliver on the promises during my last year in charge.



A summary of performance

Here we summarise our performance for the year. There are 2 key aspects

- Getting our services right and
- Sound resource management

The first we measure through our progress against our Priorities and Promises - the things we set out to achieve last year, results of performance indicators Government sets us and measures of your satisfaction. The second we measure through our ability to balance the budget and keep our share of the Council Tax as low as we can, together with our plans to develop our people, property and procurement. This plan includes more detail about our progress and finances. Here we draw out the key findings.

Money matters

We've achieved

- our key promise of limiting increases in Council Tax to 2.5%
- our £400k savings target, indeed exceeded by £200k
- our treasury management forecasts - our rate of return on our investments has been higher than expected - even in the economic climate of low rates generally

Highlights of the year were getting to the final stages of the Waitrose deal to build a supermarket in Droitwich Spa and lease this back at above bank rates. Our Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspectors scored us highly on this farsighted approach to getting a good rate of return on our assets helping us keep the Council Tax low. We're working with the Primary Care Trust on a similar venture to build a new Pershore Hospital and Health Centre on our Civic Centre site. This year we'll spend £10.5 million on services and we set out where this money goes in detail later in the report (page 17) and how we spend this on our priorities (page 25).

“ we've improved on two thirds of government performance indicators and delivered nearly all our promises.... a good deal we think... what do you think? ”

People Matter

We can't deliver without our staff of course and inspectors were impressed with the quality and motivation of the people that work for Wychavon - whether directly employed or in partnership with us. For example our Leisure Centres are run by an independent trust - Wychavon Leisure, and waste through our contract with Fosca. This contracting out allows us to keep core staff costs down and get value for money services delivered.

With only 270 full time equivalent employees we're the lowest staffed Council in the West Midlands per head of population. It's really important we have great people so this year we've developed an 'Our People' Plan to build on our Investors in People (IIP) status and improve our management, training, internal communications and staff involvement further through a formal strategy. Our staff need to be good so they can give you the best possible service.

Performance Matters

On the service performance side we really are 'Looking Up'.

Highlights are:

- We've achieved 23 of the 26 promises set last year for our 3 Council Priorities
- Many of the indicators the Government and Auditors judge us on have improved too
- Overall 15 indicators out of 23 have got better compared to last year's results with 1 staying the same and 7 marginally getting worse
- Compared to other District Councils our performance compares favourably (see page 22) with two-thirds above the District average.

Next we look at our three priorities in turn and summarise our achievements on the promises and performance on relevant National Indicators. See Section 3 for the details and explanations.

Priority 1 - A Well-managed Council

We delivered 8 of the 9 promises, including opening the new ECCC, exceeding our target for using technology to deliver services, consulting our Residents' Panel on services, health issues and our image, reducing complaints overall and improving our communications to you.

Performance Indicators improved:

- percentage of invoices paid in 30 days
- percentage of Council Tax collected
- speed of processing benefit claims
- percentage of interactions delivered electronically

However performance has dropped in:

- days lost to staff sickness
- percentage of Business Rates collected

Priority 2 - A Healthy and Safe Environment, now and for the future

We delivered 8 of the 10 promises, including implementing 4 flood alleviation schemes, expanding CCTV coverage, producing the Community Plan with partners and holding Community Forums to share your views, opening Pershore Leisure Centre, increasing kerbside recycling and youth participation in sport.

Performance has improved in the following areas:

- percentage of household waste recycled
- percentage of new homes built on brown field sites
- score against Environmental Health best practice checklist
- vehicle crimes per 1000 population

However performance has dropped in:

- number of robberies per 1000 households
- household waste collected per head

Priority 3 - A prosperous local economy

We delivered all 7 promises, including targeting 30% of community grant aid towards health schemes, making funding available to build 100 affordable homes, supporting village retail and post office initiatives, and maximising resources from West Midlands Market Town Programme to deliver practical regeneration projects.

Performance has improved in the following areas:

- proportion of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority

Your Satisfaction Matters

We will re-survey your satisfaction in 2004/5 to see if you've noticed that our performance is getting better. Facts and perceptions can be very different as we explore in section 5 of this report. This will involve another representative face to face Residents' Survey repeating the work that MORI carried out at the end of 2001. This was and still is, incredibly useful to the Council - indeed really helped identify the things that are most important to you. We based the Council's Priorities and Promises on this and our Community Plan that you'll read more about in this report.

MORI showed that you already identify Wychavon with good services and value for money - so we adopted our **'good services, good value'** strapline as the Wychavon brand. It also showed that people like living in Wychavon, on the whole are satisfied with our services but that you wanted more information about what we do. Behind our drives over the past year to increase our communications we distributed an additional Council magazine, **twm**, into homes and increased press coverage. As MORI showed the more people know, the more satisfied people are, hence our drive to get our message across. This report is yet another way to keep you in touch with our work. Full MORI results can be found on our web site.



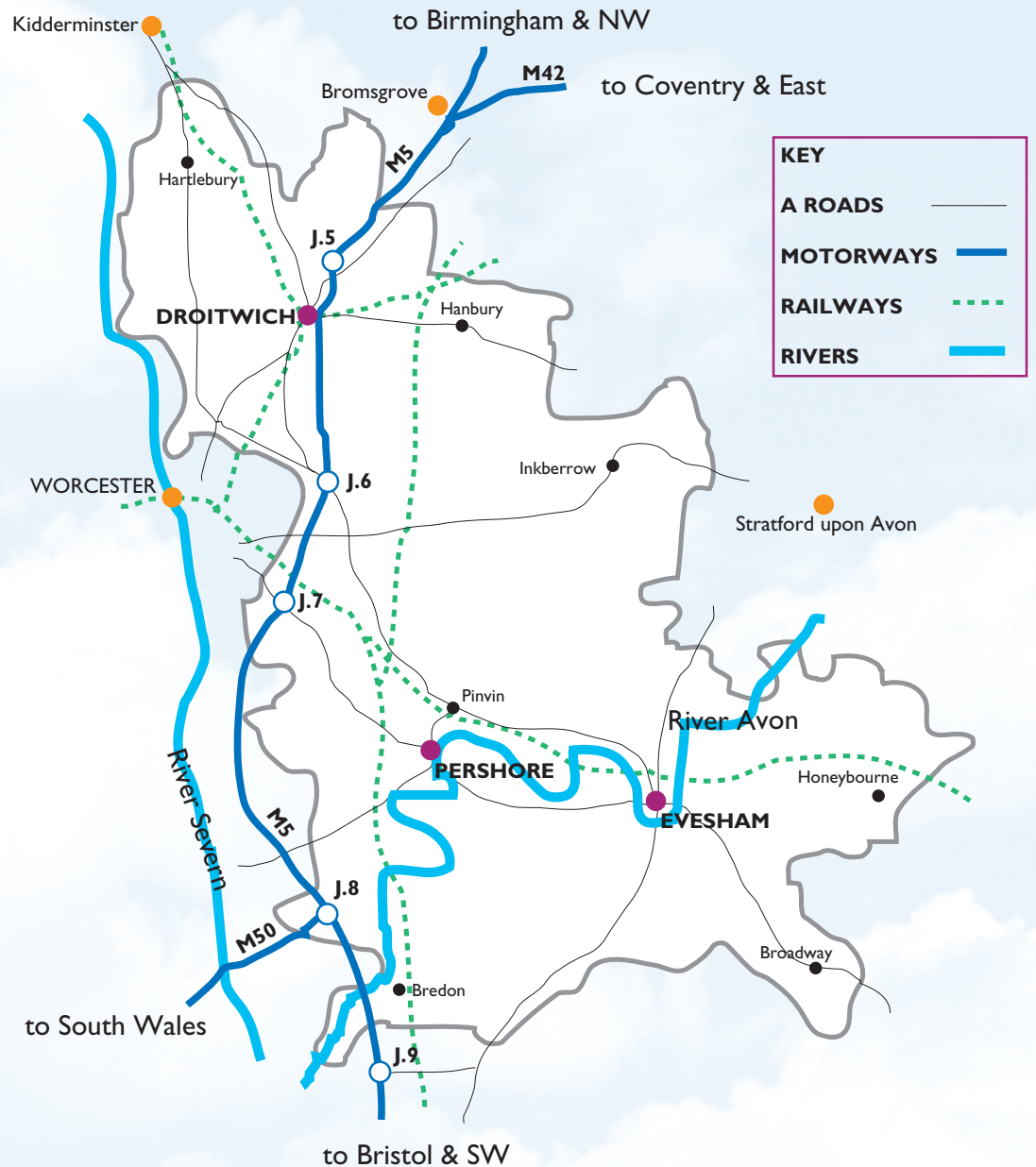
The heart of the matter

Overall we can really say we are **'Looking Up'**. We've had a good year meeting both your financial and service aspirations. We kept our promises, 65% of performance indicators are moving in the right direction and we've kept our costs down. And we can show we are becoming more cost effective. A good deal we think and backed up by the external inspectors for our CPA inspection. But it's your views that matter most. What do you think? If you've read this far, go the next step and get in touch.

Fiona Narburgh
Head of Strategy and Communications

Sonia Rees
Head of Financial Services

“Wychavon District Council has ambitions to improve its area, is delivering many quality services and has high satisfaction rates for many of its services whilst maintaining the annual Council Tax increase to 2.5 per cent.”



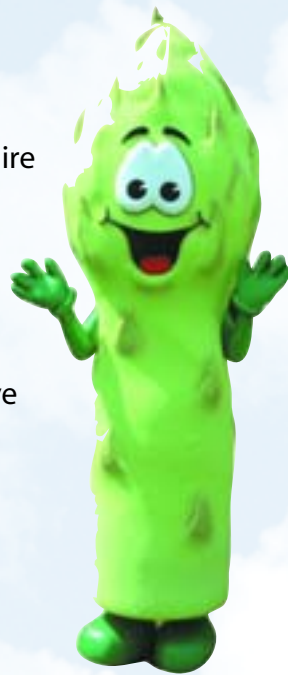
2. welcome to wychavon

Vital Statistics

The Area

- 260 square miles, largest district in Worcestershire
- 113,076 population
- Main towns of Droitwich Spa, Evesham and Pershore
- More than 100 villages
- 49,111 households
- 89% satisfaction with local area as a place to live
- 1.5% rate of unemployment
- Main employment sectors are automotive, distribution, food and public services

Famous for asparagus and Britain's only brine spa.



'Gus' the asparagus

The Council

- Our role is statutory services and community leadership
- Conservative controlled, Leader and Executive Board
- Flat management structure, Managing Director and 8 heads of service
- £10.5m Revenue, £5.9m Capital
- Main public access through One Stop Shops, Service Centres, phone and website
- 270 Full Time Equivalent Staff
- Investor in People, 2 Charter Marks and ISO9001
- Outsourced Leisure, Waste, Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleansing
- **'good services, good value'** brand

Famous for loos, innovative communications, pragmatic approach to inspection, being the most improved Planning Authority in England and recognition for best practice on Local Plan consultation.

Our Priorities and Promises 2003/04

We focus our resources - people and money - on delivering the following Priorities and Promises. When MORI conducted our Residents' Survey towards the end of 2001, we got a clear picture of local priorities and this together with national priorities and political aspirations sets our direction for the future.

Wychavon's overall aim is to "work in partnership with our community to develop a Council that provides value for money services and opportunities to meet the ever-changing needs of the community with an improvement year on year" - in short - good services at good value.

We have 3 Priorities, 3-year goals to help meet them and annual promises for the year ahead.

A well managed Council

1 running efficiently, using your money on services in line with what you want

A healthy and safe environment, now and for the future

2 because health, crime and natural environment are things you want us to focus on

A prosperous local economy

3 jobs, tourism, sports and culture are important to you too

A Well Managed Council

Goals

Ensure sound & efficient financial management leads to careful & cost effective use of public funds & assets

Consult & communicate with our customers

Maintain IIP status & continue to motivate our staff

Use technology to improve services & access

Get the 'basics' right - good value services & high ethical standards

Promises

Set an affordable Council Tax increase of 2.5%.

Improve the Government's assessment of our plan to manage our land and property to satisfactory.

Improve the way we communicate with the public by producing a simple, accessible A-Z of services, 4 issues of the Wychavon magazine a year, putting more information on our website and making it easier to use.

Listen to your views, use them to help us improve our services and tell you what we've changed as a result.

Implement year 1 of 'Our People' action plan, so that staff continue to be motivated and trained to provide excellent services.

Make sure 85% of Council business can be delivered using technology - phone, fax and computer.

Increase payment of invoices within 30 days from 93% to 95%.

Make sure all our main buildings are accessible to people with disabilities in 2004.

Implement the Race Equality Scheme.

Healthy and Safe Enviro

Goals

Encourage flood alleviation

Reduce crime & fear of crime by initiatives & campaigns through the Community Safety Partnership

Balance the need for development with protecting the environment & conserving biodiversity

Encourage opportunities in sports, leisure & arts

Increase our waste recycling record

priorities and promises for 2003/4

Environment, now and for the future

Promises

Reduce flooding at vulnerable sites by implementing 4 new flood alleviation schemes.

Work with our partners to reduce crime and the fear of crime through a District wide reassurance campaign and carry out a fear of crime survey to monitor success.

Run a drugs prevention awareness programme with 50% of schools¹, through the Wychavon Community Safety Partnership.

Together with partners introduce two new neighbourhood warden schemes - one in the Droitwich Spa area and one in the central Evesham area.

Install at least 2 CCTV cameras at vandalism 'hotspots' in Abbey Park, Evesham and Abbey Park, Pershore.

Get the Local Development Plan to Local Inquiry Stage.

Ensure at least 46% of new homes are built on brown field sites.

Carry out another review and assessment of Wychavon's air quality.

Help create a community group to manage the Stoulton Woodland.

Bring £40K into the area by helping 20 organisations get an 'Awards for All' Lottery grant.

Work with five local middle schools² and all four high schools to deliver physical activities to 800 young people.

Create skateparks in Droitwich Spa and Evesham.

Extend our backdoor recycling scheme from 50% to 93% of households, working with Worcestershire County Council.

Introduce 20 new micro recycling sites.

A Prosperous Local Economy

Goals

Target resources to people and communities needing support

Play an active enabling role in supporting housing needs

Help create a thriving economy, for residents and tourists

Promises

Give £210,000 of community grants to local projects, with 30% going to projects on the theme of play for the 5 to 15 year olds.

Expand our welfare benefits and money advice sessions into Evesham.

Take the lead in campaigning to retain and improve local health facilities.

Reduce the number of homelessness approaches by 5% by more proactive prevention work compared to 2002/03.

Develop 120 additional affordable homes within the District.

Develop projects to promote the regeneration of Port Street in Evesham and the rear of Pershore High Street.

Help 100 local businesses to gain faster internet access through Broadband and set up the first rural Broadband pilot area in Worcestershire, south of Bredon Hill.

Create 80 new jobs through Business Start-up Programme, helping individuals to set up their own new business through grants and training

Improve the skills and conditions of 100 workers in food and drink sector, targeting temporary workers to gain basic English and numeracy skills.

¹ primary, secondary and middle schools

² Westacre, Blackminster, Abbey Park, Simon de Montford and Drakes Broughton schools

How We're Run

Political Management

What makes Councils different from a business is that the people who make the major decisions about what we do are elected by you. Councillors represent your views and are active in the community to make sure our decisions reflect local priorities.

Last year the Electoral Commission completed a review of the District. This included reviewing how many electors each Councillor represents and how many members serve on the Council. The Commission also tries to maintain local and historical ties that exist between villages and communities' interests. The changes following the local elections in May 2003 now mean we have 45 Councillors representing 32 wards - four less members and wards than before.



Our Managing Director, Sid Pritchard, in action at the local Elections in May 2003.

Only 19% of residents surveyed by MORI could correctly name their local Councillor. If you don't know who your local Councillor is, contact us on (01386) 565427 or look on our website at www.wychavon.gov.uk to see their picture and learn a bit more about them.

There was an overall turnout of 34% for the local elections in May, the same as in 1999. This was a bit disappointing in view of the many high profile issues throughout the District. Results of the elections meant that the Conservative administration maintained control of the Council.

Conservatives	31
Liberal Democrats	12
Labour	2

The new Council saw a reshuffle at the top as Members were given responsibilities for certain areas on the Executive Board. The Board is made up of the new Leader of the Council, Cllr Martin Jennings and five other Members.



Cllr Martin Jennings
Leader, responsible for overall performance



Cllr Paul Middlebrough
responsible for Community Partnership



Cllr Don Lawley
responsible for Environment and Social Inclusion



Cllr Mrs Judy Pearce
responsible for Housing, Health and
Community Safety



Cllr Mrs Audrey Steel
responsible for Planning Policy and Rural Affairs



Cllr Clive Holt
responsible for Resources

Management

Our Managing Director Sid Pritchard is Head of Paid Services and has overall responsibility for the management of the Council and motivating his team of senior managers to deliver the Council's Priorities and Promises.

Over the next few pages, we introduce you to our Senior Management Team, the people responsible for delivering the services. We set out earlier our Council's Priorities and Promises - our corporate work plan. This section also summarises the key service achievements over the last year and priorities for the year ahead. Further detail is set out in the service plans available on our website.

Our Service Units and Managers

Alan Morgan, Head of Corporate Services



Remit: Information Technology, organising Elections, handling complaints & compliments, supporting Councillors, Wychavon Shops, Customer Services, CCTV, Concessionary Travel Scheme and Civic Centre responsibilities are included in Alan's brief.

Key Achievements:

- Opened Evesham Community Contact Centre
- 24 hour CCTV monitoring
- Improvements to services e.g. Internet payments

Service Priorities:

- Continuing to implement e-government in order to deliver Public Service Agreement targets
- Produce a clear plan for the development of the Health Centre in Droitwich Spa
- Implement Concessionary Fares for men between 60 and 65, followed by a review of the whole system

Staff: • 61
Cost: • £4,663,397
Capital Programme: • £275,000

Fiona Narburgh, Head of Strategy & Communications



Remit: Fiona manages many Council wide issues, including Strategy and Policy development and co-ordination, Community Planning, Communications, Community Safety, Sustainability, Health Liaison, Inspection and improvement activities, Consultation, Emergency Planning and this Annual Report!

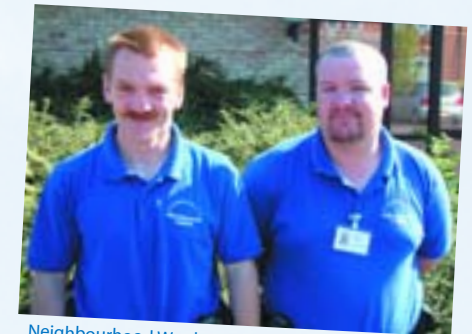
Key Achievements:

- Produced an upbeat Community Plan with real targets to improve local quality of life
- Helped the Audit Commission as a District Pathfinder for inspection
- Produced 4 issues of TWM and yet more innovative publications
- Community Safety Action e.g. new Community Neighbourhood wardens in Evesham and Droitwich Spa

Service Priorities:

- Drive CPA including re-inspection and Improvement Plans
- Improve performance management & develop consistent approach
- Make sure Community Plan progresses and is delivered
- Build our brand through great communications

Staff: • 7
Cost: • £478,370
Capital Programme: • £26,000



Neighbourhood Wardens Trevor Clarke and Tim Tyler

Staffing figure are for full-time equivalents.
Cost and Capital Programme figures are for 2003/04.

Jack Hegarty, Head of Planning and MD Designate



Remit: Everything to do with Planning sits within Jack's job including Development Control and Building Consultancy, Planning Applications, Enforcement and Appeals, Land Charges, Local Plan, Conservation and Heritage as well as Tree Preservation Orders. He also looks after Land Drainage and Flood Alleviation issues. Jack is Managing Director Designate as well.

Key Achievements:

- Continuous service improvement in relation to speed of decision making in development control
- Government recognition of Wychavon's Local Plan as best practice in terms of public involvement in plan preparation
- ISO9001 accreditation for our Building Consultancy service

Service Priorities:

- Delivery of Local Plan Review through its remaining statutory stages
- Development of joint working with South Worcestershire Authorities for Building Consultancy
- Develop model approach to Conservation Area appraisals

Staff: • 62
Cost: • £2,586,939
Capital Programme: • £253,000

Brian Norfolk, Head of Community Services



Remit: Brian's responsible for Economic Development & Tourism, Property Management, Leisure, Sports and Arts Development, Waste Collection and Recycling, Parks, Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleansing and Abandoned Vehicles, Loos and Car Parking Management & Maintenance. On top of all that Brian has responsibility for the Community Grants Programme.

Key Achievements:

- Opened Pershore Leisure Centre
- Successful bid for funding for Canal Project
- Enhancement of the derelict paddling pool in Abbey Park, Evesham to ornamental garden
- Lighting enhancements in four car parks (more planned)
- Consultation and implementation of a new free bulky waste collection service to all homes in the district

Service Priorities:

- Agree Lido redevelopment plans
- Address the outstanding issues raised in the CPA assessment
- Appoint Town Managers for the 3 towns
- Install cycle racks in car parks

Staff: • 38
Cost: • £8,600,124
Capital Programme: • £2,477,000



Abbey Park ornamental garden

Coming Soon, Head of Environmental Health,

Remit: With the departure of the Head of Service, Commercial Services Manager Debbie Herbert and Environmental Protection Manager Geoff Carpenter have been taking the lead. The Environmental Health Service includes Licensing, Environmental Protection, Food Safety, Health Promotion, Pest Control, Infectious Disease Control and Health & Safety.

Key Achievements:

- Accreditation to a Quality Management System ISO9001
- Improved customer service through new IT
- 100% of scheduled food hygiene and health & safety inspections undertaken, together with a thorough investigation of a major food poisoning outbreak. Increased educational / promotional work such as food expo
- The investigation of 1709 complaints / service requests for Environmental Protection
- Improved dog service, including new stray dog procedures
- 100% of due inspections of authorised processes and private water supplies undertaken

Service Priorities:

- Reduce initial response times to customer service requests
- Increase level of pest control service provided by use of external contractor for chargeable services
- Improve communication with the community and our partners partly by the production of a new web site

Staff: • 28
Cost: • £1,175,225

Sonia Rees, Head of Financial Services



Remit: Sonia makes sure people and money are used effectively. Areas of responsibility include Accountancy, Treasury Management, Payroll, Creditors, Sundry Debtors, Internal Audit and Personnel & Training.

Key Achievements:

- Outperformed Treasury Management targets - average return was 5.81% compared to the benchmark of 4.22%
- Strengthened the links between financial and service planning - ensuring your priorities are properly financed
- Implemented the risk management strategy
- Produced a draft human resource strategy 'Our People'

Service Priorities:

- Produce an unqualified statement of accounts for 2002/03 to timetable
- Implements HR Strategy 'Our People' Action Plan including preparations for IIP review in 2004
- Integrate Risk Management into performance management activity

Staff: • 17
Cost: • £817,505



Ian Marshall, Head of Legal Services



- Remit:** Ian is the Council's Solicitor and Monitoring Officer, providing Legal advice to the Council and having the corporate lead on equality issues.
- Key Achievements:**
- Corporate procedures established covering Freedom of Information, Investigatory Powers & Standards of Conduct; appropriate training provided
 - Successful year regarding court cases & appeals
 - Major contribution to new property developments e.g. Waitrose, Droitwich Spa
- Service Priorities:**
- Improve performance on planning enforcement (joint effort with Development Control)
 - Establish new procedures for licensing having regard to the transfer of liquor licensing to the Council (joint effort with Environmental Health)
 - Provide legal support for new projects e.g. Droitwich Canal restoration
 - Continue to drive the Council's equalities work & develop an Action Plan
- Staff:** • 8
- Cost:** • £387,436

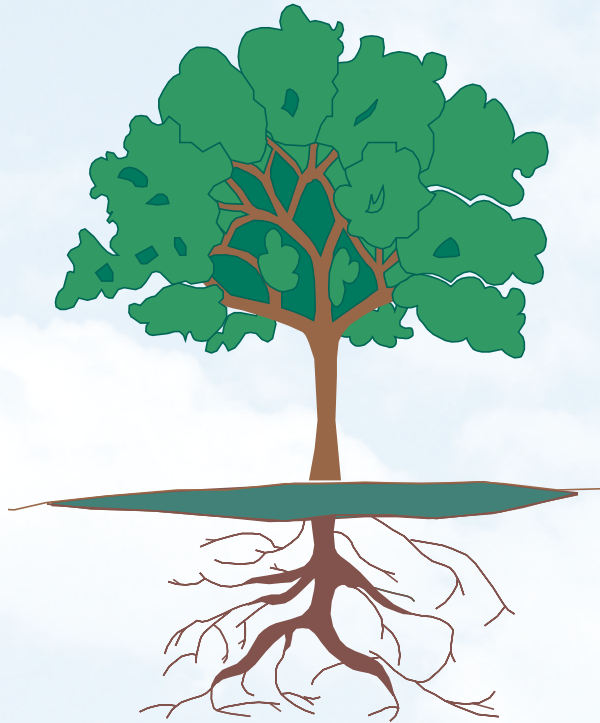
Liz Dyde, Head of Revenues & Housing



- Remit:** Liz manages the Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (Business Rates) collection, administration of claims for Housing and Council Tax Benefit and the prevention and detection of Fraud. She is also responsible for Housing which includes managing the waiting list, private sector strategies and improving the quality and suitability of housing within the district.
- Key Achievements:**
- Introduction of payments by debit and credit cards
 - Chartermark awarded to Revenues for customer service
 - Partnership working with Spa Housing Association and Advance to complete a new build supported housing scheme within Droitwich Spa for people with learning difficulties
 - Provided grants for adaptations to enable 75 persons improved access to and around their homes
- Service Priorities:**
- A smooth introduction of changes to Housing & Council Tax benefit due to new Tax Credits
 - Introduce electronic payments direct to bank accounts for refunds
 - Drive improvements in Housing Service
 - Develop Private Sector Renewal Policy to ensure resources are targeted towards those most in need
 - Produce a Homelessness Strategy with a focus on prevention and provision of support
- Staff:** • 65
- Cost:** • £2,791,723
- Capital Programme:** • £1,869,000

How People and Plans Fit Together

This simple tree shows how our main plans fit together, with our staff at the root of it all. Here we look at two crucial aspects - our people (staff) and our Community Plan. You're reading the Annual Report and our Service Plans are available on our web site if you're really keen on the detail of what we do.



Community Plan

Our Plan with our partners to improve your quality of life

Annual Report

How we have performed and what we are doing to improve our services to you

Service Plans

Setting out the achievements, promises and targets for each department, the detail of what we do and spend

Our People

Motivated staff make it all happen, we couldn't deliver without them!

Our People

Wychavon spends about £7m a year on staff. A lot of money - but our people are much more than just a commodity we exchange cash for.

Our people are our most important and valued resource. We can't achieve any of the commitments we have made to the community we serve without a well motivated workforce that is working to achieve the same overall goals.

But don't get the idea that we have just woken up to the fact that our staff are vital to our continued success. We've known that for a long time and we already have an excellent track record for getting it right. We are one of the few organisations to successfully gain and retain Investors in People recognition.

Our People builds on the firm foundations that already exist. It also aims to articulate clearly the core values that are important to Wychavon - again, nothing new. Just the first time we've tried to encapsulate the approach to work we **ASPIRE** to in a simple statement.

Aiming for excellence

Service - with sincerity and a smile

Putting customers first

Innovating to improve

Reaching out to everyone

Embracing challenge & change

Our People is a high level document that aims to set out our long-term commitments to making sure our staff are encouraged and supported to give their best. It will be a living document that we will review regularly in consultation with all those it affects, adapting it to suit changing circumstances. But commitments and intentions are no use by themselves. We have developed an action plan to translate the strategy into doing. This action plan is set out in 5 key themes:

1. Communication and staff involvement
2. Learning and development
3. Flexible employment
4. Performance and organisational development
5. Workforce planning

Community Matters

One of our key promises we're really proud of is developing a Community Plan with our partners - here we tell you more about it.

'**Making life sweeter for you**' is the first ever Community Plan for Wychavon. Its aim is simply **to improve quality of life for everyone in the District**.

It's based on the things you've told us are important to you. Things like health, crime and the environment. And it has been put together by some of the organisations working to tackle local issues - West Mercia Police, Community First, South Worcestershire Primary Care Trust, Learning and Skills Council, Worcestershire County Council and Wychavon District Council.

The plan focuses on five themes:

- **Reducing (the fear of) crime**
- **A better environment for today and tomorrow**
- **Quality jobs and opportunities**
- **Improving health**
- **Building vibrant communities**

For each theme, the plan sets what's already happening and the actions we will take in the next few years. These are presented in a 'You told us you want', 'We will' format. The organisations responsible for each action are identified and we've set timescales for most actions.

The plan also explains what our three area partnerships are doing to make life better in different parts of the District.

Bite sized and chunky versions

Some Community Plans are big, thick documents. We've kept ours short and simple. Our bite-sized version is an upbeat, colourful summary which we've distributed throughout Wychavon. The chunky version is a working document to help the partner organisations deliver their promises and monitor progress.

Tasting the difference

'Making life sweeter for you' is just a start. The next step is turning our words into action. We will be checking our progress three times a year and telling you how we're getting on through The Wychavon Magazine and our website. We're also using indicators, such as crime figures and the amount of waste recycled, to build up a picture of local quality of life over the coming years and to see what impact the plan is having.

Partnership Matters

We work with lots of other organisations to provide services for you. For example with local housing associations to build affordable homes. With schools and sports clubs to run sports activities for young people. And through our Community Safety Partnership to tackle things like vehicle crime, drugs abuse and fear of crime.

We are involved in more than 30 formal partnerships, but have never carried out a review of our involvement. This is something the Audit Commission inspectors told us we need to do. So at the time of writing, we're carrying out a review of all our partnerships to find out:

- how effective they are
- other partners' views of our contribution
- and most importantly, what the outcomes are for you.

We want to make sure we are getting the most out of them. The idea of partnerships is to work together to achieve more, so its important that we find out just how well they are working and improve them. We'll put a summary of our findings onto our website.

Wychavon provides **effective leadership to the community** in a variety of ways, for example:

- A **supporting** role in the Worcestershire E Government Partnership - working towards providing more effective and accessible public services through pathfinder projects such as the Evesham Community Contact Centre
- A **leading** role in the Market Town Partnerships in Evesham and Pershore - improving the quality of life using our own cash to lever in extra money from the Government for innovative projects
- An **encouraging** role for economic development activities at Vale Park, Evesham - working to encourage local businesses such as evesham.com to expand in the area
- A **leading** role in CCTV - extending this service in partnership with Malvern Hills District Council to provide 24 hour monitoring at no extra cost
- A **proactive** role in improving the dialogue with youth - putting on forums and events
- A **collaborative** role with the Primary Care Trust on developing a hospital on the Civic Centre site.

Budget and Capital Programme

We record our income and expenditure in two main accounts. The Revenue Account reflects our day to day activities in providing services and the Capital Account reflects the cost of creating and maintaining assets. This table shows out total expenditure and income on the Revenue Account for 2002/03 and 2003/04 split between our main service areas.

It costs us just over £10 million a year to provide the wide range of services we deliver. Your Council Tax payments fund about 40% of that cost with the remainder met by Central Government and Business Rates.

“ It costs us just over £10 million a year to provide the wide range of services we deliver. ”

	2002/03			2003/04		
	Exp £000	Inc £000	Net £000	Exp £000	Inc £000	Net £000
Central Services including Corporate & Democratic Core, Local Tax Collection, Elections, Local Land Charges and General Grants	9,200	6,893	2,307	10,149	6,949	3,200
Cultural Services including Cultural & Heritage, Recreation & Sport, Open Spaces and Tourism	4,011	267	3,744	5,901	243	5,658
Environmental Services including Environmental Health, Flood Defense & Land Drainage, Street Cleansing, Waste Collection and Waste Disposal	5,251	496	4,755	5,811	571	5,240
Highways, Roads & Transport Services including Parking Services and Public Transport	1,284	980	304	1,551	980	571
Housing Services including Housing Strategy, Registering Social Landlords, Housing Advice, Housing Advances, Private Sector Housing Renewal, Homelessness, Housing Benefit Payment and Housing Benefit Administration	15,076	13,107	1,969	15,424	13,511	1,913
Planning & Development Control including Building Control, Development Control, Planning Policy, Environmental Initiatives and Economic Development	2,793	1,103	1,690	3,023	1,251	1,772
Other Services including Sundry Properties, Grounds Maintenance for Town Councils and Other Public Amenities	4,901	4,578	323	5,022	4,500	522
Total of Service Expenditure and Income	42,516	27,424	15,092	46,881	28,005	18,876
Capital Charges	(4,581)		(4,581)	(7,459)		(7,459)
Use of Balances & Reserves		271	(271)		840	(840)
TOTAL	37,935	27,695	10,240	39,422	28,845	10,577

Note The gross cost of services includes expenditure representing the use of assets which is calculated by formula. The notional part of this charge is reversed out below the line under heading "capital charges".

Major Schemes in the Capital Programme for 2003/04

Capital spending decisions are made in line with our financial strategy for using capital resources and its capital investment strategy. The table shows the bigger, one-off type projects included in our capital programme for 2003/04.

	Expenditure 1999/00 to 2002/03 £000	Budget 2003/04 £000	Future Years £000	Total Scheme cost £000
Cultural Services				
Droitwich Lido development	4	546	0	550
Skateboard Park Evesham	0	200	0	200
Environmental Services				
Flooding Alleviation	262	288	200	750
Planning & Development Services				
Droitwich Canal	0	1,000	0	1,000
Town Enhancements	1,434	568	25	2,027
Property Investment at Droitwich Spa	61	1,998	4,147	6,206
Housing Services				
Home improvement grants	1,392	727	1,300	3,419
Central Services				
e-Government Initiatives	108	292	0	400



A view across the Droitwich Canal

3. performance matters

Performance Management to us means being clear what we want to achieve and having the right information to see if we are on track and take action to make sure we deliver. We are clear what is important to focus on and our priorities were developed to reflect your priorities.

To help us know if we are meeting your needs, we have several key measures that help us monitor what is important. These measures include our Priorities and Promises, Performance Indicators, Service Plans, Project Plans, Risk Registers and Internal Audit Recommendations. By having a wide range of measures it enables us to have a better understanding of our performance.

From this broad list we've identified our 'key basket' indicators, the most important things we need to show progress on. Our Performance Management Framework and the Indicators are available in the appendix.

These measures are managed through a variety of processes involving both Members and Officers. Joint quarterly leadership meetings between the Executive Board Members and Senior Management Team will provide the overall forum to check whether we are on track together with our Overview and Scrutiny Panel. Staff appraisals make sure 'Our People' deliver on the targets.

First we look at our progress overall on our Promises and Performance Indicators.

Progress on Promises 2002/03

Last year's Annual Report set out our promises for 2002/03. When MORI conducted our Residents' Survey towards the end of 2001, we got a clear picture of what the priorities of the local people were. These priorities became **our priorities** and helped us set a new direction for the Council. In order to measure whether we were delivering on the priorities a set of 26 promises were created. Here we look at those promises and reveal whether we achieved them or not.

Priority 1 - A well managed Council ✓

1. Hold District Council Tax increase to 2.5% ✓

We achieved this promise for the 2003/04 financial year.

2. Deliver 4 Best Value Reviews, including one to cut bureaucracy ✓

In light of CPA and other developments, the original review programme was amended to include two broad reviews of Leisure and Wellbeing and Environmental Health - a decision supported by the Audit Commission. In December we successfully completed the review of Environmental Health, but the review of Leisure and Wellbeing was incorporated into the Public Space element of the CPA Pathfinding. Reducing bureaucracy has been done but as a 'light touch' officer led investigation 'challenging' existing practices. Economic Wellbeing originally scheduled for review was incorporated into the work to develop the Community Plan.

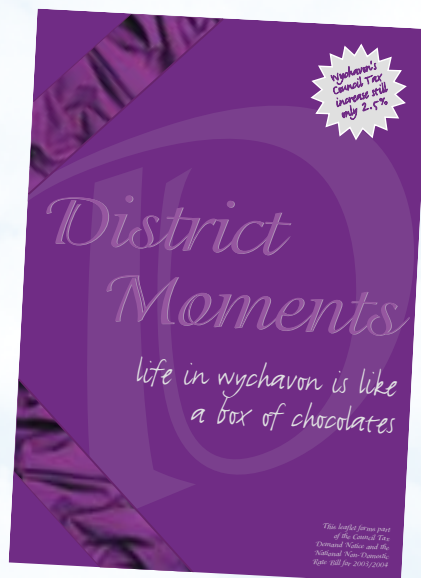
3. Consult our Residents' Panel on 4 themes - our services, image, leaflets and youth ✓

We consulted our Residents' Panel in August on information and image, Community Planning, Leisure, Environmental Health and wider health issues. A group of panel members attended a meeting during September where a useful session meant that additional views on key issues were gained. The Residents' Panel was also used early in 2003 to gain additional views on health issues in the area.

4. Develop a stronger 'Wychavon brand' and improve communications to build positive public perception ✓

New letterheads and external e-mail formats are currently being rolled out. All external literature includes the logo with the strapline '**good services, good value**'.

The Council has continued to produce four issues of TWM a year and leaflets including a new "chocolate box" one showing how resident's Council Tax is spent which was included with the bills. The "pizza-style" leaflet from 2002 was recognised in a national awards ceremony, where it came runner up in the 2002 Charity and Public Service Publishing Awards' category for Government Information Publication of the Year. Wychavon's new-look, updated website will be launched in the Autumn.



5. Review complaints and identify key measures of service and publish results ✓

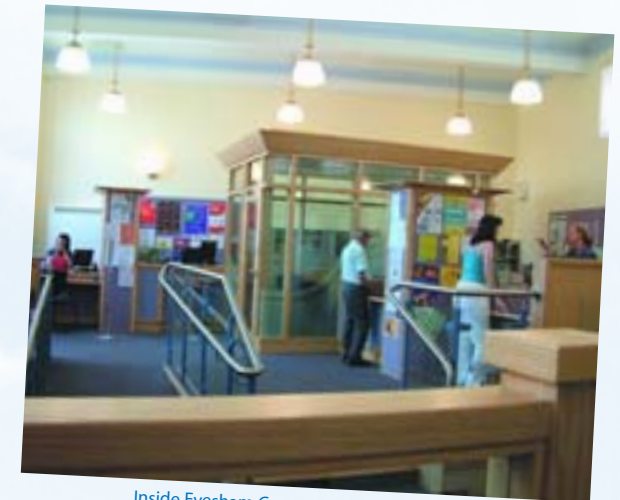
The complaints procedure was reviewed and updated, and has been reported quarterly to Overview and Scrutiny Panel since September 2002. Compliments have far outnumbered complaints. Key measures of service have been set out in the service plans, which were formally agreed by Members in February 2003.

6. Implement the liP improvement plan ✓

The Staff Learning and Development Group established project teams to address the issues arising from the liP Improvement Plan. The teams have looked at how we evaluate training, our recruitment and selection procedures, our management competencies framework and carried out a skills audit. The project teams have prepared detailed plans to ensure delivery of these key issues. The plans will be included as part of the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy

7. Open Evesham extended One Stop Shop ✓

The Evesham Community Contact Centre (ECCC) was successfully opened on March 3rd 2003 at the site of the former Magistrates Court, providing public services 7 days a week. ECCC is a joint partnership between Wychavon District Council, Worcestershire County Council, Evesham Town Council and West Mercia Constabulary. This is the first of its kind in the area although several are set to follow soon as part of the 'Worcestershire Hub'.



Inside Evesham Community Contact Centre

8. Make sure 50% of Council business can be delivered by new technology ✓

71% achieved by the end of 2003 by a combination of internet payments and improvements to One-Stop Shops and Service Centres.

9. Implement action plans for MORI perceived 'weak spots' - street cleansing, and recycling, leisure and parks, planning X

We have significantly improved our planning service, worked closely with Wychavon Leisure to improve facilities, and now have management plans for our parks. We have yet to understand why street cleansing was perceived to be poor, as our contractors are regularly monitored. Statutory 'Best Value' consultation later this year will re-measure perception in these areas.

Priority 2 - A healthy and safe environment, now and for the future

1. Implement 4 flood alleviation schemes subject to Parish and landowner involvement ✓

We achieved our promise last year with 4 schemes progressed in Peopleton, Charlton, Childswickham and Hawbridge albeit the phase 3b in Charlton was abandoned as it did not meet the financial benefit / cost analysis.

2. Get CCTV coverage into hotspots ✓

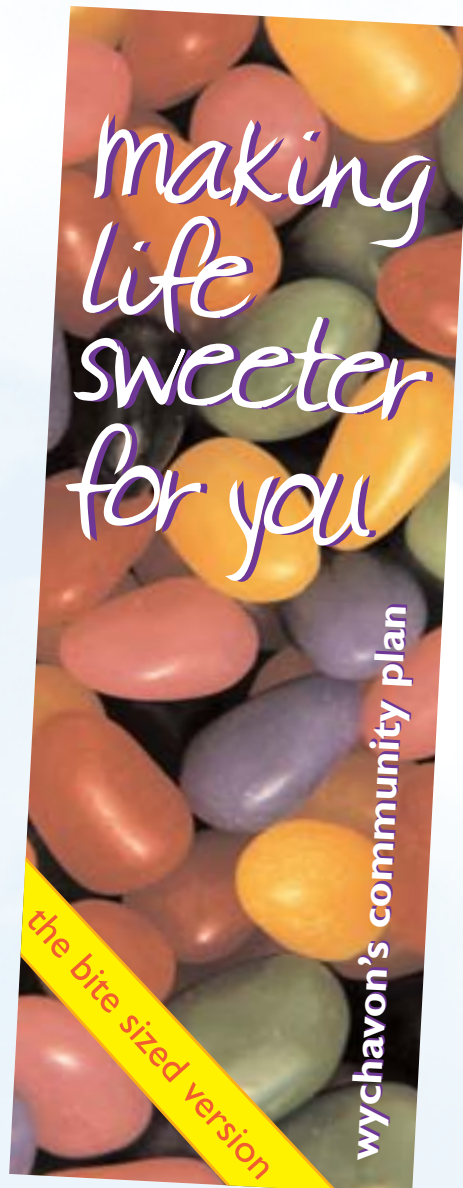
Full 24 hour monitoring of all Wychavon's cameras was introduced from February 2003, at no additional cost to the Council. Mobile covert and overt cameras are now operational in South Worcestershire.

3. Take the Local Plan to pre Public Inquiry stage ✓

Achieved. Wychavon's plan has been recognised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) as best practice in terms of public involvement in the plan preparation.

4. Develop Wychavon's Community Plan to improve quality of life ✓

Wychavon's Community Plan, 'Making life sweeter for you', was published in March 2003 and distributed across the District. The Plan's aim is to improve the quality of life for everyone in Wychavon. It is based on issues such as crime, health and the environment. It was produced by a partnership of West Mercia Police, Community First, South Worcestershire Primary Care Trust, Learning and Skills Council, Worcestershire County Council and Wychavon District Council.



5. Develop action focused area forums with the County, Health, other public services ✓

We held action focused area forums in Evesham, Pershore and Droitwich Spa on a range of current issues effecting each area. We led the forums in partnership with the Town and County Councils. As community events they provided an opportunity for many local voluntary and community organisations to take part and get residents more involved in their work. All of the issues raised at the events fed into the work of local area partnerships aiming to improve quality of life across the District. We also held forums on specific issues such as health. These forums were hosted with South Worcestershire Primary Care Trust in January 2003, aiming to keep in touch with residents' opinions and provide opportunities for them to have their say on important issues.

6. Cut Civic Centre greenhouse gasses emissions by 5% ✗

This has not been achieved. Although there was over a 10% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from gas usage, an increase in electricity use in the latter part of the year led to a total increase in emissions of just over 2%. Over the longer term, we had achieved a total reduction in emissions of nearly 10.5% in the period from 1995 to the end of 2002. This followed an even larger proportional reduction in the period 1992-1994. Further independent advice on how we can do better has been sought from the Carbon Trust, and we are continuing to work on cutting our emissions.

7. Designate at least 1 new Local Nature Reserve ✗

We are well on the way to achieving this promise. We have identified the former gravel pit at Childswickham Road in Broadway as a possible Nature Reserve. We have received confirmation from English Nature and now need to make a formal declaration.

8. Open Pershore Leisure Centre ✓

Leisure Centre re-opened mid-July.

9. Increase youth participation in sport by 5% ✓

By increasing the number of sessions available from 390 to 657, youth participation in sport has seen an increase in attendance by 20%.



The newly refurbished Pershore Leisure Centre

10. Extend kerbside recycling to at least half of households ✓

70% of households achieved by March 2003, with 93% of homes to be covered by April 2003.

“ We gave £95,000 in community grants to health projects... supported 7 village shops and awarded 57 small businesses start-up grants ”

Priority 3 - A prosperous local economy

1. Target 30% of community grant aid towards health schemes ✓

We gave £95,000 in community grants to health projects. These included a grant to Friends of Pershore Care Centre to buy a new wheelchair carrying minibus, £30,000 towards a new hospice bedded unit and a £5,000 for the Droitwich Healthy Living Centre project.



Friends of Pershore Care Centre's new wheelchair carrying minibus

2. Make funding available to build 100 affordable homes ✓

Working in partnership with Housing Associations and the Housing Corporation, we committed funding for a total of 125 new affordable homes in the District.

3. Support 6 village retail and post office initiatives in the District ✓

£37,740 of grants awarded to 7 village retail and post office initiatives during 2002/03.



4. Maximise resources from the West Midlands Market Town Programme to deliver 6 regeneration projects ✓

9 projects delivered (Evesham - Abbey Park Riverbank, Waterside, HAVEN, Riverside Lighting & Market Place. Pershore - Walkway, ICT Centre, Number 8 & Retail Website).

5. Make available 30 grants to encourage new business start-ups and 12 grants to support established businesses ✓

We awarded 57 small business start-up grants and grants to 7 established businesses during 2002/03.

6. Play our role in the Worcestershire wide Cultural Strategy ✓

Achieved. Cultural Strategy adopted.

7. Increase private sector advertising and sponsorship in publications by 10% ✓

£9,340 raised during 2002/03, a 28% increase on previous year.

National Performance Indicators 2001/02

Government requires us to monitor and report on a wide range of indicators that cover areas like Housing, Planning, Waste, Community Safety and Corporate issues.

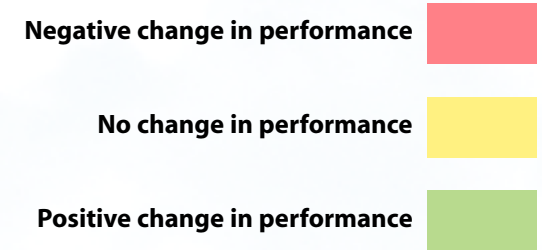
This table shows our position against all other District Authorities in England for 2001/02 and rates our performance into one of four categories. Out of the 37 National Indicators we were able to compare, two-thirds of indicators were top quartile or above average. Only 4 indicators were in the bottom quartile.

		Spend on Culture and Leisure per Head of Population (BV116)	
		Environmental Health Checklist (BV166)	
		Departure AS % of Permissions (BV108)	
		Cost of Waste Collection (BV86)	
		Cleansing Cost per KM ² of Relevant Land (BV85)	Planning Applications in 8 Weeks (BV109)
	Planning Cost per Head of Population (BV107)	Benefit Renewal Claims on Time (BV78c)	Average Time Planning Applications (BV110)
	New Homes on Brown Field Sites (BV106)	Average Time New Benefit Claim (BV78a)	Standard Searches in 10 Working Days (BV179)
	Population within 1km of Recycling Facility or Kerbside Collection (BV91)	Benefit Cost per Claim (BV77)	Planning Checklist (BV112)
	Household Waste Collected (BV84)	Homelessness Sec 184 Decisions in 33 Days (BV67)	Types of Interactions Delivered Electronically (BV157)
	Household Waste Recycled (BV82a)	Ill Health Retirements (BV15)	Council Tax Collected (BV9)
Missed Bins per 100,000 Collections (BV88)	Private Dwellings 6 Months Empty - Returned to Occupation (BV64)	Early Retirements (BV14)	Senior Women (BV11)
Recovery of Overpaid Benefits (BV79b)	Buildings with Facilities for People with Disabilities (BV156)	Days Sick per Staff (BV12)	Benefit Cases Processed Correctly (BV79a)
Average Time Change in Circumstances for Benefit Claims (BV78b)	Invoices Paid on Time (BV8)	NNDR Collected (BV10)	Burglaries per 1000 Households (BV126a)
Private Unfit Dwellings Made Fit/Demolished (BV62)	Voluntary Leavers per Staff (BV13)	Election Turnout (BV6)	Vehicle Crimes per 1000 Population (BV128a)
POOR PERFORMANCE OR HIGH COST	BELOW AVERAGE PERFORMANCE OR MEDIUM TO HIGH COST	ABOVE AVERAGE PERFORMANCE OR MEDIUM TO LOW COST	TOP PERFORMANCE OR LOW COST

National Performance Indicators 2002/03

In 2002/03 we have had to report on 44 National Indicators, the detail of which has been included in a separate appendix which is available on our website.

This table shows the indicators that have remain unchanged from 2001/02 and tracks our changes in performance through use of a traffic light system. Out of the 23 indicators we were able to track changes for, 15 have shown an improvement in performance for 2002/03. The goods news is that the majority last year in the bottom two quartiles for performance have improved this year.



		Environmental Health Checklist (BV166)	
		Cost of Waste Collection (BV86)	
	Planning Cost per Head of Population (BV107)	Benefit Renewal Claims on Time (BV78c)	Standard Searches in 10 Working Days (BV179)
	New Homes on Brown Field Sites (BV106)	Average Time New Benefit Claim (BV78a)	Types of Interactions Delivered Electronically (BV157)
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POOR PERFORMANCE OR HIGH COST	BELOW AVERAGE PERFORMANCE OR MEDIUM TO HIGH COST	ABOVE AVERAGE PERFORMANCE OR MEDIUM TO LOW COST	TOP PERFORMANCE OR LOW COST

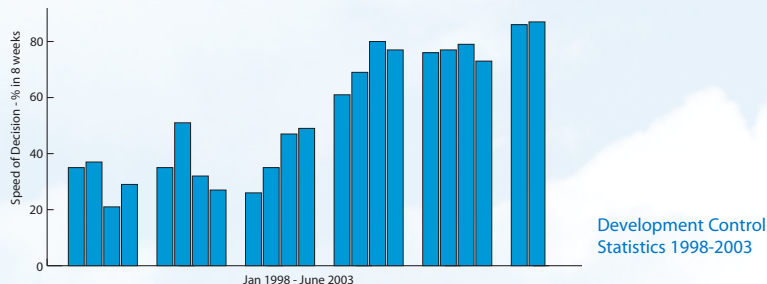
Performance Trends

Over the last two years we have seen significant improvements in

- Average time for processing new benefit claims
- Percentage of new homes built on previously developed land
- Recovery of overpaid benefit
- Types of interactions delivered electronically

Trends over the last three years have seen a continual improvement in

- Household waste recycled
- Proportion of unfit private sector dwellings made fit or demolished as a direct result of action by the local authority
- Average time for processing notifications of change in circumstances for benefit claims
- Percentage of renewal benefit claims processed on time
- Proportion of Council Tax collected
- Percentage of standard planning searches carried out in 10 working days



Performance Drops

BV79a Benefit cases processed correctly - 100% to 99.8% (variance -0.2%)

Top Quartile performance for the last 2 years has been 98-99%, drop is insignificant

BV126a Burglaries per 1000 households - 7.8 to 8.1 (variance +3.7%)

Ethical crime recording has seen a slight increase as the police have tried to bridge the gap between recorded and actual crime. For Wychavon this translates to an increase of approximately only one extra burglary per month recorded.

BV10 NNDR collection - 98.2% to 97.7% (variance -0.5%)

This reduction in the collection rate is due to increases in rateable value, which has increased the amount collectable by £147,000 in March but payment is not due until April. If the updates from the Valuation Office Agency had not been actioned it is estimated that the collection rate would be 98.3%.

BV84 Household waste collected - 406 to 416kgs (variance +2.5%)

The increase in household waste collected in Wychavon is below the national average of +3%. Both national and local waste minimisation campaigns should help reduce increase in future years.

BV12 Days sick per member of staff - 8.8 to 11.37 (variance +29%)

This increase can be mainly contributed to a greater number of cases of long term sickness. As a low staffed Council it only requires a few additional cases to considerably affect the overall performance for this indicator.

Performance Static

BV179 Percentage of standard searches carried out in 10 working days

We maintained 100% performance for this indicator.

Cost Effectiveness Matters

Our traffic lights show quite clearly that we deliver good services. Modest increases in Council Tax, Business Rates & the fees and charges for services we provide is one way in which we can show that we give you good value.

The traffic lights also show that our services are improving over time. But at what price is that improvement? Is the extra we spend on improving our services worth it? In other words, did we do it cost effectively?

Trying to measure cost effectiveness is very difficult because there are so many factors that need to be considered. It's very hard to devise a simple formula that allows fair comparison between every local authority - even the Government is struggling to decide the best way forward.

But a cost effectiveness indicator is one way in which we can show that money is following priorities and that we are investing it wisely. That's why we are following developments at the national level on measuring cost effectiveness closely - we'd like another way of proving to you that we give good value.

Using the formula that has been developed by the Government - bearing in mind that they plan to do further work on it and that this isn't a precise science anyway - we can confirm that our improvement in performance in 2002/03 was greater than the increase in spending.

Money Matters

Our budgets simply translate our plans for delivering our priorities & promises to you into £s. We worked hard during the year to strengthen the links between our service plans and our financial plans. You'll really start to see the benefits of this new approach from 2003/04 onwards as cash follows your priorities even more closely.

We were keen not to miss an opportunity to start uniting our service and financial planning processes though. Our ability to take some small steps towards this last financial year was underpinned by strong financial management. We regularly compared what we were really spending or earning to the budget to make sure we were on track. As a result, we redirected cash freed up by effective service management to community priorities during the latter half of the year.

The key financial promise we delivered in 2002/03 was keeping the Council Tax increase for the year down to just 2.5% - the average increase nationally was nearly 7.6%. We aimed to balance our books for core spending on day to day services by setting the Senior Management Team (SMT) a tough saving target of £400k or almost 4% of our net revenue spend for the year of £10 /m. We also planned to use £434k of our 'rainy day' money so we could tackle some of your top priorities.

Our formal statement of accounts for last year still needs to be signed off by our external auditor and will not be published until the end of summer. We can however give you a good feel for how we managed the finances compared to the budget plan in 2002/03, subject to audit opinion.

The savings target of £400k was increased to £475k during the year because the nationally agreed pay award turned out to be higher than we had budgeted for. Despite this increase, SMT still managed to exceed the target and turned in savings of almost £600k without a reduction in the quality or quantity of services we provided you with. Councillors were so pleased with this result they expect the senior managers to repeat their performance next financial year and have reduced the staffing budget.

Tight control over spending on staff helped reduce the need to dip into our 'rainy day' money in 2002/03 to almost nothing. Active management of our cash investments helped significantly as we outperformed the standard benchmarks again to produce an extra £280k in interest earnings. Another plus was earning £80k extra income from our planning services due to higher than expected demand.

We also spend a lot of money on projects that have a longer lasting benefit than the day to day services we provide. This is called Capital Spending.

Capital Projects 2002/03

- Town & rural enhancements
- Droitwich Canal restoration
- Flood alleviation
- Supermarket development at Droitwich
- E-Government initiatives
- Private sector renewal
- Community Grants
- New homes for rent.

In total, we made £3.7m of Capital Payments last year. We contributed £1.8m of our own resources towards that bill whilst our partners chipped in with the remaining £1.9m. That represents good value for you because we got someone else to match every £1 we spent on your priorities!

This Year's Financial Plan

Making sure we use our money effectively by spending it on the right things - the priorities - helps us to provide you with good services. Using the money wisely so we get as much out of each £ as possible is also important. We've got a really impressive track record at finding better and cheaper ways of delivering services so we offer you good value. We've earned the brand label that you recognise us by - **good services, good value** - and intend to keep it.

We will do this by making the links between service planning and budget setting stronger. Our budget and service plans for 2003/04 were developed alongside each other so we could make sure that the cash available was following our priorities. We also prepared an indicative plan of where we think the money will come from and how we are going to spend it on priorities in the following two years. Our new Council will be looking at this outline plan in the coming weeks and firming up the medium-term financial strategy that will take us to March 2007.

In overall terms, our budget for 2003/04 represents a good deal for everyone that pays directly or indirectly for Wychavon services. The increase in Council Tax was only 2.5% for the third year in a row, giving a band D tax of £91.03. The increase in Business Rates was just 1.7%. Most of our fees and charges remained the same.

Meanwhile, the Government only gave us an extra £154k or 2.5% of cash support in the form of grant to help pay for the services we provide. We therefore had to plan to dip into our cash reserves to plug the gap between what we felt we needed to spend on priorities and our income for the year.

Balancing the need to invest in our priorities and the need to look after our 'nest egg' of money carefully is difficult. It would be very tempting to blitz your priorities and spend the cash we have accumulated through careful financial in a short period. But we have a responsibility to plan ahead and protect the people who will need our services in the future and those that will be paying for them. There's just no easy way to replace our cash resources once they've been spent.

To guard against the danger of running our investments down too quickly, we've set ourselves a minimum level for income generating cash and property investments of £39m. The money we earn from these assets also helps us keep our Council Tax the lowest in Worcestershire.

Our three-year financial plan will leave us with £40m of cash and property investments at the end of March 2006 if all goes according to plan. We have carefully examined all the key assumptions in our budget and have worked out what the impact might be if they proved wrong or something unexpected happens. It is obviously important that we have made plans in the event that our budget and service plans don't go according to plan. So we have left ourselves with headroom of £1m for the future and for any unpredicted changes in our services or financial position.

The table on page 17 summarises our spending plans for day to day services in 2003/04. We plan to spend £10.5m on core services this year and expect this to grow to £10.8m and then £11.1m in the following two financial years. On top of that, we plan to target another £658k in 2003/04 at our key priorities with a further £483k and £262k to follow in the next two financial years.

So how does this year's spending plan support our three key priorities? The following shows how our planned spend on core services and the extras support our priorities:

Priority 1 - a well managed council

Core spending includes:

- £2.3m on basic running costs associated with being a Council including:
 - additional employers' pension contributions
 - allowances for Councillors
 - audit fees
 - bank charges & Treasury Management costs
- £809k on collecting Council Tax for ourselves, the County, Town & Parish Councils and the Police Authority
- £636k on Council Shops
- £147k on Elections & Electoral Registration
- £52k on collecting Business Rates.

Priority 2 - a healthy & safe environment, now & for the future

Core spending includes:

- £1.8m on Refuse Collection
- £1m on Planning Services including Building Control
- £965k on Street Cleansing
- £973k on general Public Health Services
- £664k on Leisure Services including promotion
- £230k on Grounds Maintenance
- £153k on Sports Development
- £143k on CCTV
- £141k on Licensing
- £140k on Recycling (offset by £92K of income)
- £128k managing the private sector Grants service
- £117k on Sewerage & Land Drainage
- £113k on Homelessness
- £77k contribution to a £181k Community Safety programme
- £42k on Youth Initiatives.

The extras include:

- £134k on the Local Plan Inquiry
- £88k on Recycling supported by partnership funding
- £50k investment to improve our Housing Service
- £30k on a private sector Stock Condition Survey
- £18k for extra dog waste bins.



School children visiting the local materials recycling facility



Indian dancer at the Eastern Festival in Evesham



Young people skateboarding at one of our organised events

Priority 3 - a prosperous local economy

Core spending includes:

- £1.4m cost to the Council of providing a Housing Benefits Service
- £609k on Concessionary Fares
- £578k on Parks, Recreation Grounds & Open Spaces
- £357k on Public Loos
- £153k on promoting Economic Development
- £137k on Town Centre Management
- £106k on promoting the Tourism industry
- £72k on Arts Services including development funding.

The extras include:

- £100k for Concessionary Fares
- £83k pump priming to set up a decriminalised parking service
- £40k on Community Planning Initiatives.

We have also put together a plan for Capital Spending that supports our priorities over the medium-term. This covers the cost of completing schemes that were still in progress at the start of the year and a further £2.5m of investment spread over the three financial years. We expect to have to pay £2.2m towards the £4.2m total cost of projects still in progress this year - still getting nearly £1 from someone else for every £1 we spend!

The table on page 18 gives an overview of our Capital Programme. All the projects have been chosen using a process to ensure that the available cash is targeted at the projects that deliver the most in terms of meeting our overall priorities. The following gives a better picture of how our Capital Programme supports those priorities.

Priority 2 - a healthy & safe environment, now & for the future

Projects in progress at the start of the year include:

- Flood alleviation.

New & ongoing projects include:

- Installation of new CCTV services
- Our contribution towards private sector Renewal Grants.

Priority 3 - a prosperous local economy

Projects in progress at the start of the year include:

- Droitwich Lido development
- Droitwich Canal restoration
- Town & Rural Enhancements.

New & ongoing projects include:

- Regeneration projects in Pershore & Evesham
- Pump priming for a new decriminalised car parking service.

Hopefully the narrative this year on our finances gives you a much clearer picture of how the money follows priorities in Wychavon. We've deliberately tried to give an easy-to-read account of how the figures stack up in terms of what we actually do with the money and how that also fits with our priorities and translates into the services we provide. If you'd like to know more about the detail of the figures - get in touch!

Risk Management

Risk Management is a useful tool to help us focus on the obstacles that are likely to cause us problems in achieving what we want to do. Good progress has been made with Risk Management in Wychavon in the past year:

- The Council has adopted a risk management strategy
- Officer workshops have been held to raise the profile of Risk Management and to roll out a methodology for dealing with it
- Information Pack report produced for Members
- Corporate risk assessment in report to Executive Board regarding programme options, service plans and promises for 2003/4
- Financial risk assessment of the Council's Revenue and Capital Budget
- Risks considered during the production of Service Plans
- Operational risk registers produced by each Service Unit/Team.

There are a number of common corporate risk areas that help to highlight some of the problems associated with managing risk:

- Funding availability - can we afford it?
- Staff capacity - have we adequate staff available both in terms of quality/quantity?
- Technology - e.g. are our IT systems sufficiently robust in the event of a disaster?
- Partners failing to deliver - could impact on delivery of joint commitments
- Changing legislation - can often cause extra work
- Reputation - the Council needs to continuously review its systems and procedures in order to guarantee effective service delivery, and to preserve its good name.

4. inspection & improvement matters

Inspection Matters

Leading the way on Comprehensive Performance Assessment

One of the most challenging things we've been involved in over the year has been working with the Audit Commission to develop the new process for inspecting Councils. This is called Comprehensive Performance Assessment or CPA. Along with nine other Districts, we volunteered to be a 'Pathfinder', and try out the process for real. We wanted to pathfind to:

- Help the Commission get it right for other Districts that will go through the process after us
- Get benefits from it for Wychavon
- Bring our pragmatic style to the process - our attitude was "it's coming so we might as well get involved".

By the end of 2002, 16 inspectors and peers had looked at us. They focused on how we work overall and our services covering 'Public Space', 'Balancing Housing Markets' and 'Benefits'.

Inspectors probed deeply into the way we do things, they:

- trawled through over 100 documents in their search for 'evidence'
- went out and about to see our results on the ground
- interviewed staff, Councillors, partners and even some local people to find out what we're like.

The process was hard work, comprehensive and very challenging! For us the best part was the 'self assessment' exercise. We had to take an honest and open look at our strengths and weaknesses, our achievements, plans and challenges for the future. We appreciated the benefit of 'taking stock' and having a good hard think about what we do and the way we do it.

We also liked how inspectors listened to our suggestions for improving the process, for example: clearer criteria and fewer inspectors. We will go through the process for real with the new methodology in November 2003. This will focus on how we've responded to inspectors' recommendations and a review of the newer areas covered by CPA like community safety and work with young people.

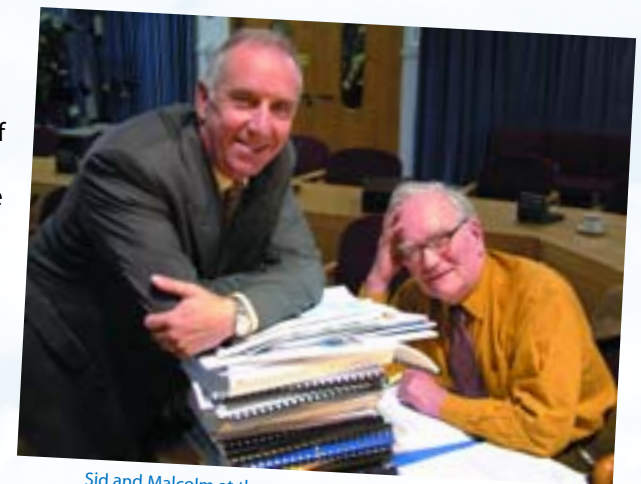
Recommendations Matter

This section gives more detail about the inspection process and the recommendations that the inspectors made for the three main parts of CPA. There were other aspects to the inspection process that were smaller - a review of how we meet the benefits standards and our use of resources for example. Do get in touch if you want more information on these parts. Here we concentrate on the main parts, tell you more about each and inspectors' recommendations, before we set out our improvements plans in the next section of the report.

The Corporate Assessment

The starting point of the whole CPA process was the self-assessment. We had a tight Pathfinder timetable to pull ours together, but shared our draft self-assessment with our members and staff, promoted what we were doing through The Wychavon Magazine and put our final version on our web site. We found we got a lot of other Councils wanting us to share our approach so this made sense. The final version involved a lot of honesty and openness, and was challenging - especially on issues we now know we need to improve.

The corporate side really involved a good look at how we run as a Council and our 'corporate governance'. Rather than involving a specific inspection inspectors looked at the issues through the services that make up 'Public Space' and 'Balancing Housing Markets' to reach their conclusions. The process for other Councils in the roll out of the final inspection model will be reversed with the corporate side the main focus with more limited service elements.



Sid and Malcolm at the summit of the CPA paper mountain

On the whole results were positive with an interim score of 'good' - the second top category. We know the scoring mechanism in the revised model will make it harder to maintain this high score, motivating us to speed up the improvement process, so that our final score is 'good' too.

Inspectors found our key strengths to be the quality of our staff, strong officer and Member leadership, effective use of financial resources and that most services were high quality and value for money with good satisfaction rates. At the time we hadn't finished our Community Plan (page 16) so inspectors felt we needed to do more to set our vision with partners, weaknesses also included making scrutiny more effective, doing more to formalise social inclusion and equalities work and strengthening performance management.

Interim Corporate Assessment Recommendations (February 2003)

"We recommend that the Council should:

- Focus on delivering the Community Plan with partners. The Council should then make sure a long term corporate vision is developed, with linked priorities and cascade these into service and staff development plans:
 - the Council's plans should address local and national priorities, specifically for housing, recycling and joint waste management arrangements and community safety.
- Provide effective leadership and direction to ensure that social inclusion and equalities becomes integral to the Council's work.
- Develop and implement an improved system for performance management that strengthens links between service plans and corporate priorities, provides clear and measurable outcomes and targets and mechanisms through which Councillors are actively engaged in managing performance.
- Develop scrutiny arrangements, including the training of Councillors, so that scrutiny makes an effective contribution to decision making and performance management.
- Review financial strategy in light of the new long term corporate vision including budget setting and linking funding to services and future priorities."

Balancing Housing Markets (BHM)

One of the key issues following the BHM inspection was the assessment of the housing service. Although the inspection looked at the Council's role in 'balancing the housing market' and included our planning service, criticisms on the whole related to housing.

Issues raised include a lack of staff capacity, poor performance management, a reliance on traditional approaches to deliver affordable homes, a lack of targeting private

“ Inspectors found our key strengths to be the quality of our staff and strong leadership... we needed to set our vision with partners and make scrutiny more effective ”

sector grants, and not enough proactive preventative work generally - for example homelessness - with increasing and longer B & B use. Inspectors recognised that liaison between planning and housing had improved - indeed the story wasn't all bad.

One of the benefits of external inspection for us has been grasping the extent of the problems and sharing this with the leadership. There is now a determination to improve the service. A new Head of Service has recently been appointed to drive this forward. At Wychavon we've proved we can turn round services that don't meet people's expectations. We did it a few years ago with planning to become the most improved Planning Authority in England - and with Environmental Health too. Strong leadership, new ways of working, getting the best out of staff and investment are key ingredients. We know these follow when we share the problem and really want to change and improve.

When inspectors return in November we want them to find a very different housing service, one that is on the way up. This will take time, stamina and hard graft! We have already appointed new staff to help with the backlog of housing applications for the waiting list and indeed we are now up to date. But we still need to address the IT issues we face, the host of Government strategy requirements as well as strong performance management. We are pulling all the things we need to do to improve the service together into a single action plan, prioritising the key issues and identifying people to lead different aspects, including outside help.

Balancing Housing Markets Recommendations (March 2003)

"We recommend the Council should:

- Determine what priority the Council gives to managing the housing market by understanding the likely future pressures for housing in the district and setting these, as measurable customer focused targets, within overall priorities as set out in 'Priorities and Promises'
- Provide effective leadership and direction to ensure that social inclusion and equalities becomes integral to the Council's work
- Develop and implement an improved system for performance management that strengthens links between service plans and corporate priorities, provides clear and measurable outcomes and targets and mechanisms through which Councillors are actively engaged in managing performance
- Ensure the private sector grant programme is targeted to those most in need and that solutions are sought to overcome capacity issues in Housing
- Develop specific guidance that identifies what its priorities are when negotiating section 106 agreements with developers. The guidance should link to the council's 'Priorities and Promises' and the new community strategy
- Evaluate the benefits of enhancing the partnership approach with Registered Social Landlords and private house builders. Earlier intervention in the development process could result in better outcome for all involved."

Public Space

A key part of the CPA process was the public space theme. This looked at our contribution to clean, green, safe and active public spaces for local people. Not just parks and streets, but the wider natural and built environment of Wychavon - how it felt for people in the street.

Inspectors looked at things like our leisure services, the town centres, waste and recycling collections, public toilets and parks. They wanted to find out what our priorities are, the things we've achieved (and those we haven't) and our plans for the future.

They found that you are generally well satisfied with our public space services. Some of the strengths they highlighted were our leisure centres, flood alleviation schemes, market town improvements, high quality loos and the way we've turned our planning service around into the most improved planning authority in the UK. They found we needed to write more down - inspectors do like a lot of paperwork. They want to see our approaches formally set out to help give us a greater focus for our work on this wide ranging theme.

Since being a Pathfinder, this theme has changed. When inspectors return in November they will look at four key areas:

- the way we manage the physical environment
- how we keep the place clean
- our work with partners to improve community safety
- our contribution to activities for children and young people

We have already started looking at the things we do well in these areas and where we need to improve.



A walk through Abbey Park in Pershore

Public Space Recommendations (March 2003)

"We recommend the Council should:

- develop and implement an improved system for performance management to include:
 - strengthened links between service plans and corporate priorities;
 - clear and measurable outcomes and targets for improvement that will demonstrate achievement of priorities;
 - mechanisms through which members in both executive and scrutiny are actively engaged in managing performance, and through which there is clear and transparent reporting and accountability for both portfolio holders and managers; and
 - systems through which appropriate data can be collected on service performance to monitor and evaluate outcomes and achievement of improvements in public space;
- provide effective leadership and direction to ensure that social inclusion and equalities becomes integral to its work;
- review all of its existing policies and strategies in the area of public space and develop strategies to give clear direction to key service such as leisure and waste management; and
- ensure a clear project plan that will show how the Council intends to meet its statutory recycling targets."

Improvement Matters

We believe the whole point of CPA is to improve public services. This is why we've worked with our Auditors to develop Improvement Plans. Over the page you'll find the themes summarising our intentions to drive us forward for the Council as a whole and for the two themes. This complements more detailed improvement plans we have for all services and set out in our eight service plans. Again these are on our web site.

Our formula for success

Our improvement plans are based on our formula for success where

Good People + Good Plans = Good Performance

- **People** - quality leadership, Members and staff, strong partnerships and social inclusion
- **Plans** - a clear direction for the future - as a Council and in partnership with others
- **Performance** - focusing on what matters, delivering results on the ground and continually getting better

“ we needed to write more down -
inspectors do like a lot of paperwork. ”

people

Corporate themes

- **Make sure our partnerships with others deliver benefits** for you, by evaluating effectiveness, our role and working relationships especially with key partners. We are involved in 30 partnerships and want to be sure they deliver community benefits.
- **Get the best out of our staff and councillors** to give you the best service we can - by strong management, effective training and other ways set out in the 'Our People' action plan.
- To make sure we focus on delivering the Priorities and Promises you want us to, **strengthen joint working arrangements at the top** for effective leadership and strategic direction.
- **Treat everyone fairly** through improving what we do on 'social inclusion' and race equality. We are auditing what we already do, so we can identify gaps and make improvements.
- Improve the decisions we make through **developing our formal scrutiny role**.
- As a low staffed council, **check we have time and people to keep improving**.
- **Do more formally to share learning and experience between staff**, rather than relying on informal processes. Includes developing an intranet site for training course notes, reviewing our big projects and holding 'what did we learn events'.

Balancing Housing Markets themes

- **Target our help at those most in need**. We need to reduce homelessness through early intervention with other partners, e.g. mediation, rent deposit guarantee schemes, money advice. For those that do become homeless we need to support people better through their difficult times and find alternatives to bed and breakfast accommodation quickly.
- For people on the **Housing Waiting List we need to provide better customer care** e.g. process applications quicker with improved technology and arrange more face to face contact and reduce formal letters.
- **Sort out the points system for the Waiting List** - we have 7 different ones that just confuse people. Translating points into time likely to wait is another key goal. We currently have 2200 on the list, yet have re-housed only around 500 over the last year.
- **Recruit and train staff so they have the skills** and ability to meet service needs effectively. A real mix of good communication skills, tact and diplomacy are essentials - and the ability to be upfront if we can't help.
- **Use our grants more strategically** to help the most vulnerable people to stay in their own homes - as a key element of our proactive preventative work.
- **Build the relationships with Social Services, the Primary Care Trust, Probation, Police and mediation services** to mirror the quality of those with the Housing Associations partners - so that more of your housing and care needs will be met.

Public Space themes

- Identify the contribution our Public Space services already make to **social inclusion and health improvement** and look at where we can do more.

summary of our CPA improvement plan

plans

- **Set out our ambitions for you** - where we want the new Council to be in the future - balancing cost and level of service.
- Make sure we are always improving and providing the service that you want - through **strong service plans** that drive improvement.

- Make sure our strategies for homelessness, private sector renewal and housing are based on **up-to-date intelligent information** so that priorities are identified and regularly monitored ensuring that public money is spent on the most important issues.
- To recognise that the provision of affordable housing should not be reliant upon new build and to identify **new innovative ways to deliver affordable homes**, e.g. private sector stock improvements, bringing empty homes back into use, addressing under occupation proactively, by commissioning research with neighbouring Districts.
- To use our adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance to maximise **new affordable housing through planning applications**.

- Review our Service Plans and identify the top three **public focused priorities** for each service.
- Produce a **recycling project plan** showing how we will meet the national targets for recycling.
- Assess what we achieved through our **sustainability strategy** and set out our current approach to sustainability.
- Identify our **Community Safety Partnership** achievements.

performance

- Make **the information about our services drive action and improvement**. We've identified a basket of key measures from our Promises, local and National performance indicators to focus on and will report results on these quarterly to scrutiny, the joint Management Team and Executive Board and use the information to activity improve performance.
- Overall make sure we **get the basics right and deliver good services, at good value**, checking that we meet your needs through consultation and feedback. The repeat of our MORI Residents' Survey next year will monitor progress and update our 2001 satisfaction scores.

- **Speed up processes and reduce paperwork** through using new technology to make the whole service more efficient - we need to spend more time with customers and less time in the back office (indeed the planned document management system will help).
- Develop a **performance framework that measures outcomes**, e.g. fewer homeless people, number of people in priority need rehoused, reduced stay in bed & breakfast accommodation.
- Aim to become **an excellent housing service** within 5 years.

- Use a set of **quality of life indicators** to help monitor the effectiveness of our services and our Community Plan.
- Look at other ways of encouraging **waste minimisation** such as green and bulky waste collections.
- Carry out an **assessment of playground provision** in rural areas.

Best Value Reviews

Before CPA, councils were involved in improvement activities as part of Best Value legislation. Originally the Local Government Act 1999 stated that Authorities must undertake a review of all their services over a 5-year period starting in 2000/01, Government last year however abandoned this 5-year requirement.

At Wychavon we had already looked at the majority of our services under Best Value over the last 3 years. We continue to use the Best Value improvement principles as part of the day job - that is challenging what we do and directly provide, finding out what people think and comparing our services with others.

Government and the Audit Commission now say that Councils should do the things that drive the organisation forward, rather than do more traditional Best Value Reviews which can be bureaucratic and too process based. Our emphasis is very much on the improvement activity we set out in the last section. We are also doing mini reviews on Car Parking and our Concessionary Fare scheme as well as using the scrutiny process to improve local health care.

One of the many auditor requirements for this plan is a review of all Best Value Reviews carried out by the Council. This is the focus of this section. The real benefit of the Best Value Reviews will be evident in the future when we resurvey residents' satisfaction next year.

Over the first three years of Best Value, we reviewed:

Year One	Year Two	Year Three
IT	Revenues and Benefits	Environmental Health
Building Consultancy	One Stop Shops	
Grants	Sustainability	
Concessionary Fares	Financial Services	
Municipal Engineering	Housing	
Car Parking		

Year One

Information Technology

The Best Value Review of IT Services was completed in April 2001. The subsequent 'deep touch' inspection rated the service 'good, with promising prospects of improvement' which put Wychavon's IT Services in the top 20% in the Country.

The Improvement Plan included 18 targets for improvement, including:

- Progressing the implementation of e-Government
- Exploring joint working opportunities with the County and other Districts
- Implementing standardised address formats for our databases
- Implementing the IT security standard
- Improvements in the operation of the HelpDesk and system response times
- Improved co-ordination of IT training
- Revised staffing structure
- Rationalised office accommodation
- Reducing the cost of voice and data charges
- Generating savings of £40,000 per year

Following a number of progress reports to Committee, Overview and Scrutiny "signed off" the Improvement Plan as complete, in January 2003.

Building Consultancy

The review of Building Consultancy was also subject of a 'deep touch' inspection, and was rated as 'fair, with promising prospects of improvement'.

The review set out a total of 40 service improvements. All have been addressed and achieved and the implementation of the plan has now been completed. The only area that has not reached fruition is joint working with other Authorities, which is currently being investigated on a South Worcestershire basis.

Grants

The improvement plan contained 17 actions aimed at improving the way we give grants to local groups and organisations. 12 of these have been achieved. Improvements included merging five separate grants schemes into one Wychavon Community Grants scheme and reducing the amount of paperwork for organisations applying for small grants.

We still need to do more work on:

- accepting electronic applications
- aligning the grants scheme with our community plan
- looking at the option of transferring responsibility for awarding grants to a community trust.

Concessionary Fares

There were four key recommendations made following the review of Concessionary Fares in 2000.

1. That we continue to offer a concession for the next financial year and that it be a choice of either a bus pass entitling the holder to half price travel within Wychavon or travel tokens or a concession towards car parking in the District.
2. That the new scheme of Concessionary Fares be made available from the 1st April 2001 with the main issue to continue from village halls to be brought forward to April from June.
3. That a more appropriate method of issuing a car park concession than the current system of car park tickets be investigated.
4. That further work be undertaken to investigate the possibility of providing
 - a. Half fare travel throughout the County
 - b. Half fare travel throughout the County and other Councils bordering the County

All recommendations have been implemented. A further review is planned for the coming financial year as a sub-group of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Municipal Engineering

The review set out 10 main areas for improvement of which seven have been achieved. Two of the other three have been abandoned because of partnership issues e.g. Parish Charter and pro-activeness on riparian owners. The rural one on capital scheme management of procedures is nearing completion. The review increased awareness of our local flood alleviation role and continued support for our Capital Programme.

Car Parking

The review of car park management and maintenance was completed in March 2001. Progress has been made on a number of these improvements covering the security, maintenance and management. A further review of car parking through the scrutiny process is planned for this financial year. Improvements made to date as a result of the review include:

Lighting on our car parks - additional lighting and improvements have already been made in Oat Street, Evesham, High Street and Milestone Ground, Broadway. Improved lighting on Milestone Ground, Broadway and Covercroft (Day Centre), Droitwich Spa. Lighting surveys still continuing in Droitwich Spa, Pershore and Evesham.

Car park supervisors - now fitted with a standard uniform and equipped with radios linked to the local police network.

Awards - Burford Road, Evesham achieved ACPO Secure Car Park Award.

Improved signage - work finished in Evesham. Continuing to progress in Droitwich Spa.

Disabled parking - additional spaces now in Oat St, Evesham and redefined disabled spaces and adjusted layout in High Street, Pershore. Merstow Green, Evesham done as part of whitelining and more disabled spaces put into Covercroft, Droitwich Spa.

Motorcycle parking - more spaces identified in High Street, Pershore and Covercroft (Day Centre), Droitwich Spa.

Bicycle parking - new cycle provision in Oat Street, Evesham. Other car parks to follow.

Decriminalisation of on-street car parking - the project has now commenced, and a budget is in place for 2003/4 and beyond.

Year Two

Revenues and Benefits

The review looked at ways of increasing efficiency and enabling effective management of performance for all staff whilst making financial savings where possible. The review was undertaken between May 2001 and January 2002.

Improvement	Get details of completed domestic extensions and alterations from Building Control. Advise the Valuation Office based on this information
Progress	Staff in Revenues are able to run their own reports to extract the relevant information from the building control system.
Improvement	Combine visits to reduce mileage
Progress	A generic visiting team is in place.
Improvement	Install scanners in shops
Progress	The scanners are now in place in the Droitwich Shop and the Evesham Community Contact Centre. This was a joint working project with the Shops.
Improvement	Introduce paperless direct debit
Progress	Electronic transactions mean customers are now able to set up a direct debit over the telephone. This has proven to be popular particularly when reminders have been issued.

Improvement Progress	<p>Introduce BACS payments direct to bank accounts for benefit payments and council tax and NNDR refunds</p> <p>Payments by BACS made to main Housing Associations from June 2003. Payments to other benefit customers by BACS will be made on request. Software not yet available to enable to Council Tax and NNDR refunds by this method.</p>
Improvement Progress	<p>Introduce Payment by debit/credit card</p> <p>Counter payments available from July 2002. Telephone payments (by cash office staff) available from September 2002.</p>
Improvement Progress	<p>Review Service Centre Software and procedures</p> <p>Overview of software undertaken and procedures in place to monitor response to calls.</p>
Improvement Progress	<p>Introduce payments over the Internet</p> <p>Internet payments now available from January 2003.</p>
Improvement Progress	<p>Achieve Chartermark status</p> <p>Confirmation was received in April 2003 that the Revenues Section has been awarded a Chartermark for excellence in the provision of public services.</p>
Improvement Progress	<p>Investigate the use of the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate model form</p> <p>The model form is currently being updated by the BFI due to the introduction of the new Tax Credits. Awaiting result of changes.</p>
Improvement Progress	<p>Implement joint working with the private sector for year-end billing</p> <p>For the 2003/04 year-end billing joint working with a private sector company meant the successful delivery of Council Tax bills and benefit notifications together. This reduced postage costs, as we were able to match the Council Tax bill and benefit notification and send them in the same envelope.</p>
Improvement Progress	<p>Set up meetings with members of the Residents' Panel</p> <p>The planned focus group has not taken place as the model form is being updated. A focus group will be held once the new form is available. Surveys were undertaken of our Benefit and Business Rate customers satisfaction over the last year, results were encouraging and continue to indicate a good level of satisfaction.</p>

One Stop Shops

A review was undertaken on our One Stop Shops between August 2001 and January 2002. Improvements were identified under 5 key themes: service delivery, shop interview facilities, marketing, joint working with internal users and joint working with external users. The review also identified a number of possible financial savings. Improvements introduced to the shops as a result of the review include:

- Single point reception facility introduced in Droitwich Spa and Evesham
- Over the counter Credit / Debit card payments now accepted
- Drop box facility for payments introduced in all shops
- Extended opening hours in Droitwich Spa and Evesham
- Improved privacy issues for customers in all shops
- Improved health and safety procedures in relation to staff security
- Improved marketing of shops
- Extended surgeries at shops with both council services and external organisations e.g. Building Consultancy and Housing advice.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a difficult word for a simple idea - ensuring a better quality of life for everyone now and in the future. This review was different to all the others we've done because it looked at the way we deal with sustainability across the Council, rather than focusing on a particular service.

The improvement plan contained 17 actions. Four of these have been fully achieved and we have made good progress on another five. Our biggest achievements were running a successful awareness programme for staff and Councillors during 2002 and producing 'Making life sweeter for you' - our first Community Plan - see page 16 for more details.

We've recognised that sustainability is an important issue for the whole council so have moved it to the centre of the organisation. But we know we've still got work to do to make sure it is at the heart of things like our procurement, decision-making and induction processes. We're also doing some practical things, improving the sustainability section of our website, producing a Travel Plan and looking at using green energy in our buildings.



Financial Services

An improvement plan for financial services was agreed in April 2002 following a best value review of the full range of services provided by the accountancy team. Ten separate improvements were identified in the plan covering:

- payroll
- creditor payments
- sundry debtor management
- standards of service
- financial training
- preparing for e-government
- presentation of financial information.

We reported regularly on progress during the year. We had to modify our approach to one of the improvements we wanted to make, made good progress on 3 more that will continue in the current year and met or exceeded expectations on the remaining 6. All in all, it was a very good year for financial services.

Housing

We've already set out how we want to drive this service forward in the CPA Action Plan above. However although we've yet to do a thorough review against the Best Value Improvement Plan completed in September 2002, some progress has taken place, including:

- Introduced surgeries at the Wychavon Shops for housing advice / homelessness / housing register services
- Review of job roles within the team is underway to ensure the most effective structure for delivering the improvement plan objectives
- The Housing Grants and Renewal Policy has been agreed at the Executive Board before Council approval, new policy starts 18th July.
- Preliminary award for the Community Legal Services Chartermark
- Through the Supporting People Initiative new services have come on stream to support vulnerable members of our community to help them stay at home
- Implemented new IT for Common Housing Register / Statutory Housing Register
- Effective piloting of Choice Based Lettings and Local Connection so that local people get a wider choice on housing
- Commissioned consultants to audit homelessness and develop a Homelessness Strategy by July 2003.

Year Three

Environmental Health

The improvement plan provides a number of improvements, some of which have longer term target dates, those due for completion in the 2003/04 have been incorporated into the departmental service and work plans together with individual appraisals.

Improvement Progress	To provide a better service to our customers Reduced response times for service requests. Meet with noisemakers at One-Stop Shops
Improvement Progress	Increasing the level and awareness of our Pest Control service Use of external contractor for chargeable services. Tender process has commenced with anticipated start in August 2003
Improvement Progress	Trial an out of hours service from 9pm to 2am on Friday and Saturday evenings for a six-month period Programme option submitted but not approved
Improvement Progress	To communicate what we do and how we do it better More publicity / media releases now being undertaken
Improvement Progress	To increase our level of electronic service delivery New departmental web site has been designed and is close to being operational
Improvement Progress	To manage an effective and efficient Environmental Health service Programme option submitted for bursery scheme for student Environmental Health Officers not approved
Improvement Progress	Further development of partnership arrangements with other local authorities and consider possibility of joint service provision Initial meetings with Worcestershire County Council and Malvern Hills District Council have taken place, further required following recruitment of new Head of Service.

“ all in all, it was a very good year... ”

5. intelligence matters

Facts & Perceptions

Political aspirations and values are a big part of what drives our priorities but we also know that many people don't vote. At the last elections only a third of the electoral register (34%) voted for all sorts of reasons. That's why we need both facts and measures of community perceptions to guide our work. We use consultation to provide us with an opportunity to find out what residents think about life in the District. And this is why local opinions are so important as they are at the heart of consultation.

Census information - the changing profile of Wychavon

Wychavon is the largest of the six Districts in Worcestershire. One of the unique things about the area is its mix of rural and urban areas. It covers 260 square miles with over 100 villages as well as the towns of Droitwich Spa, Pershore and Evesham. It is important to remember though that the profile of the district is changing all the time. A good way to look at this is through the national census information collected every 10 years.

What has changed since 1991?

The population within the District is increasing just as it is across the country. Residents may not notice this due to the large area that the District covers so its density is still low. Since 1991 there are over 7000 new households and more people of all ages and different ethnic groups. This suggests that Wychavon is becoming a more popular and culturally diverse place to live.

Compared to the rest of England, Wychavon is not only an affluent area but it has less pressing social issues than elsewhere. We have a large proportion of people who are in work and a low percentage of unemployment. Home ownership is above average and very few households lack heating or basic facilities. Because of the vast amount of rural areas, the majority of people travel around by car and nearly half of all households have more than two vehicles.

If anything, Wychavon is a family District. It has higher than average numbers of married couple households and nearly 60% of residents are married. Many residents also stay in the area for some time. Over 12000 choose to retire in the district so it obviously has lots to offer.

All of the census information shows that Wychavon is not only becoming more prosperous but it is a more appealing place to live, work or visit.

Census Information - Summary of District Figures

	2001	1991	Difference
Total Number of People	112,957	101,716	+11241
Males	55,727	49,820	+5907
Females	57,230	51,896	+5334
Aged 0 - 15	21,380	19,625	+1755
Aged 16 - 74	82,340	74,948	+7392
Aged 75 and over	9,237	7,143	+2094
Density - people per hectare	1.7	1.5	+0.2
Ethnicity	1.2%	0.4%	+0.8%
Households	46819	39565	+7254

Source: Census of Population 1991 and 2001

“ we need both facts and measures of community perceptions to guide our work ”

Summary of Wychavon Census Information 2001

	Wychavon Figure	Wychavon %	England %
People, Places and Families			
<i>Marital Status - All people over 16</i>			
Single people (never married)	21095	23	30.2
Married or re-married people	53905	58.9	50.9
Separated or divorced	9179	10	10.6
Widowed	7398	8.1	8.3
Composition			
One person households	11871	25.4	30.1
Married couple households	20390	43.6	36.5
Cohabiting couple households	4081	8.7	8.3
<i>Lone parent households:</i>			
With dependant children	1940	4.1	6.4
With non-dependant children	1199	2.6	3.0
All other households	7338	15.7	15.6
Transport - All Households			
Households without car/van	6,730	14.4	26.8
Households with 1 car or van	18,737	40	43.7
Households with 2 or more cars/vans	21,352	45.6	29.5
Housing			
Number of households with residents	46,819	-	-
Number of people per hectare	1.7	-	-
Average household size	2.38	-	-
Vacant household spaces	1,138	2.4	3.2
Owner-occupied	35,776	76.4	68.7
Without central heating	2,502	5.3	8.5
Without own bath/shower & toilet	96	0.2	0.5
Work			
<i>Status - All People Aged 16 - 74</i>			
Employed	54,502	66.2	60.9
Unemployed	1,840	2.2	3.3
Long-term unemployed	427	0.5	1.0
Student - economically active	1,813	2.2	2.6
Retired	12,487	15.2	13.5
Student - economically inactive	2,078	2.5	4.7
Looking after home/family	4,817	5.9	6.5
Permanently sick or disabled	2,771	3.4	5.3
Other inactive	2,032	2.5	3.1
<i>Travel to work - All People Aged 16 - 74</i>			
Travel to work by car	40582	72.2	61.0
Travel to work by public transport	1596	2.8	14.9

Source: Census of Population 2001

Perceptions - satisfaction and information

Consultation gives us a chance to find out what you think about our services. It provides a view from the community and makes us ask 'what do we need to be thinking about?'

Different people have different views and this needs to be considered whenever we look at research findings. Some of the things you like about your area others will dislike, so sometimes it's difficult to find a shared view. The reason for this is that there is a big difference between facts and people's perceptions. Crime is a good example as we have a low level of crime but the fear of crime is high. There is big difference between what actual crime rates are and what people perceive them to be. It's very difficult to join up facts with perceptions as everyone has their own opinion. That's why communication is so important as it helps us to keep you informed. Our MORI survey highlighted that those who are most informed are also the most satisfied. We need to make sure we deal with the facts as well as the perceptions in order to stay in touch with our communities.

Representative sample survey

Our most informative piece of research to date has to be the 2001 Residents' Survey. We got MORI to conduct this as we wanted a representative sample survey to inform our work. This has been recognised as one of the best pieces of research across the County as it allowed respondents to think about what they want from their community.

Other research is often limited, as answers are restricted or it only looks at single issues. The MORI survey was quite ambitious as it allowed respondents to think extensively about a variety of issues. These included what residents think of our services, how satisfied they are, what they think Councillors should be doing and how quality of life can be improved.

MORI top 3 priorities for the Council

1. Improving safety/combating crime
2. Better flood prevention
3. Promoting building of affordable homes

MORI top 3 quality of life priorities

1. Good health for you and your family
2. A safe environment
3. A clean and unpolluted environment

We also formed a Residents' Panel as part of the research. This has been useful in exploring a variety of issues by using questionnaires and holding workshops. If you would like to be part of our panel please contact us.

Consultation Case Study One - Young People

Why? Because we value the views of all our residents not just those over 18. And all our other consultation highlighted the need to ask younger residents what they think about their area.

What we did: Held 3 events in each town across the District. Provided facilities and entertainment and used a questionnaire to find out what younger people think about their quality of life.

Results

Overall satisfaction levels were high although the main suggestions for making the district a better place to live were:

(1) More facilities, (2) Improved public transport (3) Finding the right jobs and having the right skills (4) Provision of affordable housing and (5) Better communication

We found out that the majority of all respondents didn't know much about the District Council although over half of the respondents said the Council was OK in how it listens to the views of residents.

The main areas for improvement are in how we cater for young people and how we can improve our image.

We also asked young people what they thought about the themes of our Community Plan. They thought we had got it right and helped us to focus on specific things which matter to them. We found that the fear of crime was much higher than the number of actual incidents. Health is important and the environment in urban and rural areas needs to be attractive and clean. Jobs and opportunities were the main concern as most people said they plan to leave the area in future to attend colleges, universities or to find work.

There was overwhelming support for a skate park in the District as most young people just want somewhere to hang out. It's easy for other residents to get the wrong idea though and people often presume that kids are up to no good.

Younger residents enjoy living in Wychavon but more could be done to make things easier for them. This reflects findings at both a County and National level. Improving quality of life is about making things better for everyone. That's why young people are a priority.

Consultation Case Study Two - Health

Why? The South Worcestershire Primary Care Trust (SWPCT) announced that it would be reviewing its services, which has caused much public concern. Throughout the review all the plans would be opened up for public consultation so we wanted to make sure that the views of our communities weren't ignored. The SWPCT review provided an opportunity for them to find out what services you want and what you think of existing health facilities.

What we did: We held three health forums where residents could come along, ask questions and find out the latest direct from the SWPCT. We also used a questionnaire to find out what residents think about health services in the area and what improvements they would like to see.

Results

Overall we found that the majority of you are satisfied with current health services. If changes occur you want improvements to make things even better. On average you use health facilities twice a year and the majority travel by car.

We also looked at responses from each of the three areas of district. The highest levels of satisfaction were found in Pershore and Evesham. Some similar comments were found across the District. Below is an extract of some of the general findings.

What do you like about health facilities? Most are easily accessible and central, pharmacy on premises, doctors and staff very efficient. Good GPs and support staff, friendly and good advice.

What do you dislike about health facilities? Lack of range of facilities, some premises over crowded, waiting times too long, public transport not sufficient, constant threats to facilities, referrals to other hospitals, lack of NHS dentists. Length of referral times, threat of losing services, parking facilities at hospitals.

What one improvement would you make? Health centre with better facilities, more staff - doctors, nurses and health visitors, more parking, more beds, more dental care provision, better transport, reduce waiting lists, improved IT at service providers.

All of the findings were used by the SWPCT to inform them about what you want. As a Council we aim to work with you to make sure you get the best possible services. That's why consultation is so important, it keeps us tuned into to the your views. We will be working with the PCT in the Autumn on the Pershore Hospital and Health Centre consultation.

6. other matters

Contract Matters

We are required to include a Statement of Contracts if any staff have transferred to external organisations as a result of Best Value Reviews during 2002/03. We have not done this, so no Statement is included.

Auditors' Matters

A statutory part of Best Value is the Audit Report from our external Auditors, KPMG. This assessed whether our Best Value Performance Plan last year met the requirements of the Local Government Act 1999 and guidance from the Government on Best Value.

We received an unqualified and indeed very positive audit report from KPMG on the Council's Best Value Performance Plan. The audit report contained no statutory recommendations on the plan.

And finally...

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to producing this year's Annual Report. If you have any feedback or comments please contact:

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Civic Centre, Queen Elizabeth Drive, **PERSHORE**, Worcs. WR10 1PT
Tel: (01386) 565000 Fax: (01386) 561091
Mon-Fri : 9am - 5pm ; Sat : 9am - 12.30pm

The Council Shop, 44 High Street, **DROITWICH SPA**, Worcs. WR9 8ES
Tel: (01905) 794272 Fax: (01905) 794245
Mon-Fri : 9am - 5pm ; Sat : 9am - 12.30pm (*Wed opens 9.30am*)
(*From June 6, The Council Shop will be open from 8am on Mon & Fri*)

Evesham Community Contact Centre, Abbey Road, **EVESHAM**, Worcs. WR11 4SB
Tel: (01386) 443322 Fax: (01386) 765915
Mon-Fri : 8am - 8pm ; Sat : 9am - 5pm ; Sun : 10am - 4pm

or try one of our village surgeries:

OMBERSLEY VILLAGE HALL Second Tuesday of the month, 2.30pm - 4.30pm

HARTLEBURY VILLAGE HALL Second Wednesday of the month, 2.30pm - 4.30pm

BROADWAY LIBRARY Every Wednesday, 9.30pm - 1pm & 2pm - 5pm

If you want to telephone:

PLANNING ENQUIRIES - **(01386) 565665**
BENEFIT / COUNCIL TAX / BUSINESS RATE ENQUIRIES - **(01386) 565130**
OTHER ENQUIRIES - **(01386) 565000**

or if you're on the web:

Click on our website : **www.wychavon.gov.uk**

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