

Committee: AUDIT AND REVIEW

Date: 3 August 2007

Report: PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REVIEWS 2007/08

Purpose of the report

1. To identify the two areas of the Authority's work that should be subject to 'performance improvement reviews' in 2007/08.

Strategic Planning Framework

2. The information and recommendation contained in this report are consistent with the Authority's statutory purposes and its approved strategic planning framework:
 - **Best Value Performance Plan objectives**
'Plan and manage all aspects of the Authority's business so as to make the most consistent and effective use of our resources...'

Background

3. Members will recall that one of the key recommendations from the National Park Authority Performance Assessment in 2005 was that Members should take a more direct role in reviewing progress, and take lead responsibility for the dissemination of 'lessons learned/best practice' throughout the Authority. As a result, in July 2006 the Authority agreed a new, enhanced role for the Audit and Review Committee, which included:
 - Instigating a programme of reviews in areas where the Authority is under-performing, and report back to the Authority.
4. The framework for these 'performance improvement reviews' was agreed by the Committee in September 2006 (copy attached at **Annex A**). The Committee agreed the key characteristics of the reviews as follows:
 - they will focus on areas where the Authority is not achieving what it has set out to do, and will need to focus closely on the options for change.
 - limited to a maximum of.2 reviews in any given year;
 - each [review] team should contain no more than 6 people, including:
 - 2 Members (from the Audit and Review Committee/the relevant 'champion');
 - Head of the relevant Department;
 - Head of another Department
 - 2 further members of staff.

Identifying areas for review

5. Members have received a series of reports analysing the Authority's performance in 2006/07 in terms of:
 - the actions (as reported to the Authority in May)
 - the objectives (also reported to the Authority in May)
 - the performance indicators (see item elsewhere on the agenda)
6. Bringing that information together, it is possible to identify all those areas where there *appears* to be scope for improvement. These are listed in **Annex B**.
7. As discussed previously, the reasons for the apparent under-performance vary, and there are a number of areas where there may be little value in carrying out an in-depth performance review. Annex B, therefore, also gives a brief assessment of the appropriateness or otherwise of reviewing each potential area.

RECOMMENDATION

8. That members:
 - a) identify up to two areas of the Authority's work that should be subject to performance improvement review during 2007/08; and,
 - b) identify two members to sit on each of the review teams

Gary Smith
Head of Conservation and Policy

24 July 2007

Background documents: Nil

FRAMEWORK FOR REPORTING PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REVIEWS

1. The issue

In what area are we under-performing?

Why does it matter?

What are we supposed to be achieving (objectives, outputs, outcomes etc)?

2. Current performance

What are we actually achieving?

What resources are we putting in?

How is the service being delivered?

Does it represent value for money?

NB In each case, how do we compare to other bodies (NPAs and/or other bodies providing the same type of service)?

3. The evaluation

Are the current objectives realistic and practical?

Why are we not achieving the desired result?

What are the potential options for improvement?

Are there any other options (e.g. abandonment)?

4. Future action

Recommended action plan

Future funding/resourcing

Timetable

ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL AREAS FOR PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT REVIEW

Priorities

A1. Quality of planning service (inc. customer satisfaction/valid applications)

In bottom quartile of all local authorities on 'planning quality checklist'. This is because the Authority has previously chosen not to have a permanent arrangement to access specialist advice on design (e.g. by employing a qualified architect, or equivalent). However, the forthcoming appointment of a Landscape Conservation Officer will fulfil this criterion – taking the Authority up to 100% on the checklist. While customer satisfaction has dropped slightly, we are the best NPA. For these reasons, it is suggested that a performance improvement review is not needed. Separately, officers will be looking at how to improve the level of valid applications submitted (54% in 2006/07), to try to ensure no drop in customer satisfaction with the service.

A2 Production of digital biodiversity map

This objective was postponed from 2006/07. Production of the map will mark the end of the project to survey habitats across the Park. This is due to be reviewed as a 'major project' in February 2008 (see separate item on this agenda).

Areas where we aim to provide a good service/make steady improvement

C1. Restoration of field barns

Failed to meet 3-year objective and 2006/07 BVPI target. Due to Natural England stopping all capital funding through the ESA half-way through 2006. Not a performance issue for YDNPA. Better to pursue this issue through the NPMP steering group.

C2 Conservation area management plans

Failed to achieve objective to complete PSPP project and so missed BVPI target for producing management plans. Performance linked directly to PSPP, which has now ended and was reviewed last year as a 'major project' (A&R Committee, September 2006). Little obvious value in reviewing again.

C3. Definitive map

Identified last year as potential candidate for review this year. Small improvement in performance but still missing targets for keeping the map up-to-date. Team workshops, involving all appropriate staff and the Member Champion have taken place this year to revisit priorities and targets for this area of work. These were considered by the Access Committee prior to being adopted. Performance on these revised work priorities should be assessed before any performance improvement review.

C4. Landscape character strategy

Objective has slipped. Solely down to delay in recruitment of landscape conservation officer (now done) – so no logic in carrying out a review.

C5. Satisfaction with 'promoting understanding' services

Performance appears to have dropped significantly. Probably a statistical blip. Review next year if performance hasn't improved?

C6 Awareness of YDNP and special qualities

Objective has slipped – but only because timing of national survey has been put back. This would be an area to review next year if the objective has not been met.

C7 Customer satisfaction with toilets

Although the planned customer survey was not carried out, it is plain that the standard of our toilets is at best mediocre. Experience, public comment and complaint bear this out. Public toilets are a key element in forming visitor attitudes to the Authority and the park. Members have raised the relative priority of toilets (to an area where we “will maintain a good level of service and/or make steady improvements”). It is, therefore, considered that the provision and management of toilet facilities is an area worthy of performance review.

C8 Production of planning policy

Considerable slippage in adoption of the local plan, which was further compounded by delay in publishing it. The milestones set in the Local Development Framework for 2006/07— for consulting on housing (issues and options), and minerals and waste Issues and options — were also missed. The new cycle of public consultation on each LDF document, followed subsequently by Public Inquiry, will inevitably require raised expenditure over the long term, making this an area worthy of review now.

Areas where progress will be limited or dependent on external funding

D1. Effectiveness of National Park Centres

Performance has slipped back (missing PI target). Difficult to compare with other NPAs as only 2 provided the PI information this year. However, we are no nearer to achieving our current objective (90%) than we were three years ago. Would be strong candidate for review next year if current target is not achieved in 2007/08

E1. Bus services

Didn't meet PI target for services on bank holidays and weekends. However, services are directly provided by others, with YDNPA having only an advisory/supporting role through the sustainable travel partnership.

Core services

X1. Equality Standard

Target to achieve Level 1 missed (again). However, a comprehensive equality policy has been produced and policies are being reviewed (so we are, *de facto*, meeting the standard).

X2. Sickness absence

Failed to meet our own target this year and last, but still 3rd best NPA (and well above performance of most local authorities). Figure has edged upwards over the last two years so worthy of investigation but not through a performance improvement review. The relevant policies and procedures are currently under review, and a revised approach to managing sickness absence will be presented to the Finance & Resources Committee in December, together with more detailed information on how this Authority performs relative to other National Park Authorities.