	REPORT TO REGENERATION, ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL	**Agenda Item No.**
	15 September 2005	

Planning Best Value Review Improvement Plan Monitoring

Ward(s)   All

Portfolios: Cllr M Longhi
                        Environment and Transport

Summary of report:

To advise the Regeneration, Environment, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel of progress made on the implementation of the Best Value Improvement Plan of the Planning Best Value Review. This is the third quarterly monitoring report following the approval of the Review by Cabinet on 1 December 2004. As part of this approval, the Panel requested that the progress in the implementation of the Improvement Plan (appendix G) shall be reported to the Panel on an exceptions basis.

Background papers:

Best Value Review of Planning Report 1 December 2004

Reason for scrutiny:

In order to review and scrutinise the performance of the implementation plan on an exceptions basis.

Signed: ……………………………..

Executive Director: Jamie Morris

Date: 7 September 2005

Resource and legal considerations:

The actions contained in the Improvement Plan will be completed during 2004/05 and 2005/06 within existing budgets.

Citizen impact:

The Improvement Plan is designed to improve planning services in Walsall and to ensure we provide the best possible performance and customer service.

Environmental impact:

Amongst other things, the review considered ways of improving the quality of development and impacts on the environment.

Performance management:

The service improvements detailed in the Improvement Plan will support improvements in performance in key performance indicators, thereby contributing to continuous improvement in the Beacon Index.

Equality Implications:

The improvements support equality of access and treatment for all to enable services to better meet the needs of all citizens, business and other sectors of the community.

Consultation:

The Improvement Plan was approved following consultation with staff, applicants/agents, third parties, key stakeholders, other councils who provide the same or similar services and the trades unions.

Vision 2008:

- 1) Ensure a clean and green borough
- 7) Make it easier to access local services
- 8) Strengthen the local economy
- 10) Listen to what local people want

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1. **Planning Best Value Review Improvement Plan Monitoring**

1.1 The Improvement Plan has been updated to reflect progress made to date with all individual actions, copy attached.

1.2 With the exception of items 1c/4c, 6g and 8b, Members will see that good progress has been made in completing many tasks.

1.3 1c/4c relate to the development of a mapping link with MIS (the planning application management software) in order to facilitate electronic communication/consultation. This has experienced some delay due to the 'E-access' product being delayed in its development by our strategic software provider MIS. However, the service has recently taken delivery of the product and it is now being integrated into the existing MIS system with a view of it being on-line by October 2005.

1.4 6g relates to the production of a new supplementary planning document for the use of planning obligations under section 106. It was anticipated that this could be produced by now but the government has deferred making its proposed significant changes to the way authorities use S106 until next year. It is therefore considered prudent that any new supplementary guidance is produced taking these changes into account and the Local Development Scheme is to be amended accordingly.

1.5 8b relates to the completion of the restructuring of Planning and Transportation by December 2004. Whilst good progress is now being made this will not be completed at all levels until November 2005 following a full consultation process commencing with the Unions and staff which commenced on 20 July. However, all Service Managers and Group Leaders have now been appointed.

PLANNING PERFORMANCE REVIEW IMPROVEMENT PLAN
2003/4 and 2005/6

Updated: 7th September 2005
IMPLEMENTATION MANAGER:
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PERIOD OF PLAN

September 2004 TO March 2006

This improvement plan is in respect of the performance review undertaken in 2003/2004 and the final report which was published on 1 December 2004. The overall outcome of that review was that the report was welcomed and approved. The improvement plan was considered to be comprehensive and, when implemented, would deliver significant improvements to the service. The outcomes were challenging the tenets of Best Value – compare, consult, challenge and compete. The review highlighted high levels of satisfaction in most areas of the service although some areas were identified for improvement, in particular, the speed of planning application decision making.

This plan addresses all the issues for improvement identified within that report as either specific recommendations or comments made indicating where improvement is required or is possible. The mainstream performance improvement agenda for the services covered by this plan are contained within the relevant service plans, team plans, and individual performance targets as part of the IPM scheme. There are also cross cutting issues, which are already being dealt with as part of other improvement plans (for example the annual audit letter). This plan does not seek to replicate those actions, and certain issues are therefore signposted to other plans to ensure the relevant connections are made.

This plan focuses on the improvement agenda, so does not cover the many strengths and good practice identified within the report.

The actions for improvement have been devised using SMART principles to ensure clear focus and the best outcomes, as follows:

S	Specific	What exactly are you going to do/change? Absolute clarity is vital.
M	Measurable	How much observable and quantifiable change is planned? What will be different and what will it look like?
A	Action-oriented	What action are you going to take that will ensure the change? How will you know when you've succeeded?
R	Realistic	Your timescales and targets should be stretching and realistic. Identify the critical path to ensure foundation targets are achieved first.
T	Time-based	By when are you going to do it/complete it?

The actions in this improvement plan are grouped into logical themes. Each theme has a nominated "theme leader" who is responsible and accountable for ensuring all actions within their theme are implemented to the required standard and within the required timescales. There is one overarching generic theme applicable to all improvement plans entitled "Corporate Performance Management". This is intended to ensure all performance management and improvement activity takes place within the wider improvement agenda, embeds our corporate approach, enables consistency, and promotes sound corporate governance. The theme leader for this is always the relevant Executive Director, with every senior manager ensuring compliance in their service.

Each recommendation/issue raised in the report is shown in this plan; relevant actions are directly linked to it. Improvement actions are prioritised as either ①, ② or ③, with ① being the highest priority. **BLUE** priority ❶ s are of particular/critical importance and/or are foundation actions that need to be done first as other actions are dependent upon them. Each action has a named individual, responsible for implementation. The relevant Cabinet portfolio holder is also shown.

Many issues are crosscutting and/or covered in other plans. Where appropriate, these connections to other plans and/or sections of this plan are signposted. Each theme leader should liaise with the Implementation Manager of the other plans to ensure actions are neither duplicated nor missed. The key for other plans is as follows:

AAL – annual audit letter (formerly known as annual management letter) issued by the Audit Commission.
ACAR – Audit Commission audit report action plan
BMCM – budget management and control manual
CS – communication strategy
EAP - equality action plan
EP – environment improvement plan
HP – housing improvement plan
IAAR – internal audit report action plan
MTFP – medium term financial plan
NRF – neighbourhood renewal fund plan
RMP – risk management policy

RR – risk register
SP – service plan (state which one)
SSP – social services improvement plan

The final column shows the current status of each action against target. This enables the original version of the plan to be updated for monitoring and reporting purposes. The traffic light and arrows system in common use throughout the performance management framework, also applies here:

🟢	means on target		⇧	**Performance improving since previous report**
🟠	**means slightly off target and/or not on target but entirely recoverable**		⇔	**Performance stable since last report**
🔴	**means off target and at risk**		⇩	**Performance declining since last status report**

The final column should indicate when the action is entirely **COMPLETE**.

The themes within this improvement plan are as follows: Key responsibilities/frequencies are as follows:

THEME			
No	**SHORT TITLE**	**LEADER**	**TEL**
A			
1	**Decision making - speed**	D Elsworthy	652409
2	**Decision making - quality**	D Elsworthy	652409
3	**Staff resources and development**	D Elsworthy	652409
4	**Communications and IT links**	D Elsworthy	652409
5	**Customer service**	D Elsworthy	652409
6	**Enforcement**	T. Upton	652411
7	**Cost of services**	D Elsworthy	652409
8	**Section 106 and corporate working**	D Elsworthy	652409
9			
10			

OVERALL PLAN	
Implementation Manager	**David Elsworthy**
Cabinet Portfolio Holder	**Cllr Longhi**
Scrutiny Panel	**Regeneration**
Reporting to Cabinet	**Annually**
Reporting to EMT	**Quarterly**

A. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	THEME LEADER:
Working within the wider performance improvement agenda	Executive Director

REF	CORPORATE ISSUE	IMPROVEMENT ACTION	PRIORITY 1 2 3	BY WHOM?	SIGNPOST PLANS	CURRENT STATUS
A	Service planning	100% coverage - Compliance with corporate template - Signed off by 30.04.05 - Reviewed quarterly by DMT	①	**All EDs, ADs and GMS**	**SPs**	**Completed**
B	Team Plans	100% coverage - Connected to service plans - Reviewed quarterly	①	**All ADs and GMs**	**Link to SPs**	**Completed**
C	Team Meetings	100% coverage - Taking place at least monthly - Minutes/action notes taken - News and views 100% coverage	①	**All EDs, ADs, and GMs**		🟢
D	Risk Management	- Directorate risk register in place and reviewed quarterly at DMT - Full participation in relevant risk actions arising from strategic risk register - Risk assessments in place for every post - Risk assessment in place and being used for every project	①	**All EDs** **All ADs/GMs** **All ADs/GMs**	**RR/RMP**	🟢
E	Investors in people	Current recognition for whole directorate	①	**All EDs**		🟢

REF	CORPORATE ISSUE	IMPROVEMENT ACTION	PRIORITY 1 2 3	BY WHOM?	SIGNPOST PLANS	CURRENT STATUS
F	Equality standard	▪ Level 2 achieved ▪ Level 3 actions being implemented for achievement by 31.03.05	❶	**All EDs**	**EAP**	🟢
G	Sickness	▪ Sickness policy being followed ▪ 12 month absences to be reduced to x by 31.03.05 ▪ 6 month absences to be reduced by y by 31.03.04 ▪ Total absence to be reduced by x by 31.03.05	❶	**All EDs, ADs and GMs**		🟢
H	Resources	▪ Budget reported alternate months to mgt teams at various levels. ▪ Corrective action taken promptly ▪ Savings implemented ▪ Investment implemented ▪ Delivering targets within budget	❶	**All EDs All EDs All EDs All ADs/GMs**	**MTFP BMCM**	🟢
I	Scrutiny	▪ Relevant scrutiny panel fully engaged in general performance improvement agenda for this service ▪ How the relevant scrutiny panel will be engaged in the implementation of this action plan, the continuous improvement arising from it, and in preparing for the next inspection.	❶	**Exec Direc ADs**		🟢

1. Decision making - speed									
How to improve our performance timescales on decisions					THEME LEADER: David Elsworthy				

REF 1	REPORT RECOMMENDATION OR ISSUE	IMPROVEMENT ACTION	PRIORITY 1 2 3	BY WHOM?		BY WHEN?	SIGNPOST TO OTHER PLANS	CURRENT STATUS V TARGET
				MANAGER	PORTFOLIO HOLDER			
1a	Balance of speed against quality	Task group to look at a potential duty officer role and limited availability of officers to customers	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Jan 05		**Completed**
1b	Finalise structure	All posts filled	①	Martin Yardley	Councillor Longhi	Dec 04		🔴 **Now Oct 05**
1c	Increase electronic means of consultation to speed up response time	Complete MIS mapping link. Set up service level agreements with consultees	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Apr 05		🟠
1d	Enable and encourage electronic planning applications	Full integration with the planning portal	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Dec 05		**Completed**
1e	Improve performance of the development control committee. Improve the number of decisions made	Review the performance of the Development Control Committee and implement new procedures	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Jan 05		**Completed**
1f	Increase number of applications delegated	Review of delegations to officers as part of the review of the Development Control Committee	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Jan 05		**Completed**
1g	Increase speed of determining major applications	Set up process of close monitoring major applications	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Dec 04		**Completed**

| 1h | Reduce the number of 106 agreements | Review the threshold set for commuted sum payments under 106 | ② | D Elsworthy | Councillor Longhi | Apr 05 | | **Completed** |

| REF 2 | REPORT RECOMMENDATION OR ISSUE | IMPROVEMENT ACTION | PRIORITY 1 2 3 | BY WHOM? | | BY WHEN? | SIGNPOST TO OTHER PLANS | CURRENT STATUS V TARGET |
				MANAGER	PORTFOLIO HOLDER			
2a	Balance of speed against quality	Task group to look at the duty officer role and limited availability of officers to the public	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Jan 05		**Completed**
2b	Improve consistency and availability of information for officers	Electronic means to record pre application advice	③	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Mar 06		🟠
2c	Better information to applicants	Improve information on literature and website	③	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Dec 04		**Completed**
2d	Comprehensive procedure mapping to improve performance transparency	Implement new internet based procedure manual	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	April 05	Service plan	🟠
2e	Continual improved knowledge base of members	Develop and deliver a regular comprehensive training for members	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing		🟠
2f	Keeping applicants / third parties informed on the progress of planning applications	Develop an intranet based summary tracking system of applications	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Mar 05		🟠
2g	Improve officer specialist knowledge base	Develop individual specialist officer knowledge base	③	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing		🟠
2h	Increased information to all on applications	Look to improve publication of applications following working group	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Jul 05		**Completed**

2i	Improve rates of success at appeal	1. Member training. 2. Use of consultants 3. Improved delegation	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Apr 05		**Completed**
2j	Achieve better designs outcomes	Service level agreement with Environment Regeneration Produce supplementary design guidance	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Apr 05		**Completed**
2 k	Improve sustainability of development	Produce checklist and monitor Identify sustainable methods and materials	③	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Mar 06		🟠
2l	Reduce crime through better design	Greater involvement of police through pre application Include the police in development team	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Jan 05		🟠

| 3. Staff resources and development | | | | | | | | THEME LEADER: |
| How we can improve our retention and training of staff. | | | | | | | | David Elsworthy |

| REF 3 | REPORT RECOMMENDATION OR ISSUE | IMPROVEMENT ACTION | PRIORITY 1 2 3 | BY WHOM? | | BY WHEN? | SIGNPOST TO OTHER PLANS | CURRENT STATUS V TARGET |
				MANAGER	PORTFOLIO HOLDER			
3a	Increase training and development of staff	Developed focused learning strategy linked to IPM / service planning	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Jan 05	Service plan IIP	**Completed**
3b	IT training for all staff	Continue training on new systems	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing	Service plan IIP	🟠
3c	Increase skill base , knowledge ands performance of technical support staff	Set up regular training and development sessions of technical support and professional staff.	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Dec 04	Service plan IIP	**Completed**
3d	More efficient use of staff time	Evaluate the use of external consultants to handle appeals and increase both speed and efficiency	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Mar 05		🟠
3e	Recruitment and retention of staff	Evaluation through ongoing restructure. Improve conditions of service and consider improvements (Golden hello, market supplement etc.) Continue benchmarking with family group. Improve the image of Walsall as an employer.	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing		🟠

3f	Number of professional staff	Continued succession planning. Grow your own	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing	IIP	🟠
3g	Increase accessibility and use of knowledge and legislation through the use of IT	Improve access to IT systems – encyclopaedia - notebook	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Dec 04		**Completed**

4. Communications and IT links	THEME LEADER:
Development of processes and technology	David Elsworthy

REF 4	REPORT RECOMMENDATION OR ISSUE	IMPROVEMENT ACTION	PRIORITY 1 2 3	BY WHOM?		BY WHEN?	SIGNPOST TO OTHER PLANS	CURRENT STATUS V TARGET
				MANAGER	PORTFOLIO HOLDER			
4a	Increase electronic means of consultation to speed up response time	Complete MIS mapping link. Set up service level agreement s with consultees	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Apr 05	Copy of 1c	🔴 Now Oct 05
4b	Enable and encourage electronic planning applications	Full integration with the planning portal	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Dec 04	Copy of 1d	Completed
4c	Service user groups	Increase attendance by - CPD events - Timing / venues	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing	Service Plan	🟠
4d	Communications with staff out of office	Evaluate use of electronic means of communication	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Apr 05		🟠
4e	Deliver all planning processes by electronic means	Complete 15 of 22 e enabled services by December 2004	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Dec 05	Service plan	Completed
4f	Web site development	Improve usability / presentation on front page and behind	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing		🟠
4g	Text service	Research and develop a text service as a means of communication with the public	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	July 05		🟠

5. Customer service
Availability of officers, satisfaction rates etc

THEME LEADER:
David Elsworthy

REF 5	REPORT RECOMMENDATION OR ISSUE	IMPROVEMENT ACTION	PRIORITY 1 2 3	BY WHOM?		BY WHEN?	SIGNPOST TO OTHER PLANS	CURRENT STATUS V TARGET
				MANAGER	PORTFOLIO HOLDER			
5a	Equalities	Reach level 3 equalities action plan	①	D Elsworthy			Equalities action plan	🟠
5b	Translation service	1. Introduce telephone translation service. 2. Availability of literature in selected languages	②	D Elsworthy		Ongoing Jul 05		**Completed**
5c	Blind customers	RIB audit to improve service	②	D Elsworthy		Mar 06	PTCF	🟠
5d	Plain English	Seek crystal mark (or similar) accreditations for literature	③	D Elsworthy		Mar 06		🟠
5e	Correspondence tracking system	Improve tracking and performance of correspondence	①	D Elsworthy		Ongoing		🟠
5f	Letters of notification	1. Review all methods to improve effectiveness 2. Implement changes	②	D Elsworthy		Jan 05 May 05	PTCF	🟠
5g	Customer feedback / satisfaction	Monitor and react to customer phone survey and user group.	③	D Elsworthy		Ongoing		🟠
5h	Service standards	Complete and publish as standard leaflet and on web site	②	D Elsworthy		Mar 05		**Completed**
5i	Customer access / contact	Dovetail with PTCF to provide ease of access	①	D Elsworthy		Ongoing	PTCF	**Completed**

6. Section 106 and corporate working

THEME LEADER: David Elsworthy

REF 6	REPORT RECOMMENDATION OR ISSUE	IMPROVEMENT ACTION	PRIORITY 1 2 3	BY WHOM?		BY WHEN?	SIGNPOST TO OTHER PLANS	CURRENT STATUS V TARGET
				MANAGER	PORTFOLIO HOLDER			
6a	Development Team (FSS approach)	Enhance and widen attendance and effectiveness.	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing	Service Plan	**Completed**
6b	Walsall Regeneration Company	Develop better linkages and process improvements	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing		**Completed**
6c	Cross service working with Building Control, pollution Control and local land charges	Better cross working by shared information and process improvements	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	May 05		**Completed**
6d	LNP's	Feedback issues to inform planning policy and SPG. Develop consultation with LNP's	①	B Pell	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing Mar 05		🟠
6e	106 planning obligations	Monitor review and be responsive to Government changes	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing		🟠
6f	Reduce the number of 106 agreements	Review the threshold set for payment under 106	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Apr 05		**Completed**
6g	Help to deliver other service area requirements	Produce SPG on planning obligations	②	D Elsworthy B Pell	Councillor Longhi	Apr05		🔴 **Awaiting government policy announcement**

| 6h | Use of solicitors for planning obligations | Review solicitors panel and in house capability | ② | D Elsworthy B Gill | Councillor Longhi | Apr05 | | **Completed** |
| 6i | Improved Financial and auditing monitoring of 106 | Review existing procedures and identify improvements | ② | D Elsworthy P Simpson | Councillor Longhi | April 05 | | 🟠 |

7 Enforcement	THEME LEADER:
Effectiveness and monitoring	David Elsworthy

REF 7	REPORT RECOMMENDATION OR ISSUE	IMPROVEMENT ACTION	PRIORITY 1 2 3	BY WHOM?		BY WHEN?	SIGNPOST TO OTHER PLANS	CURRENT STATUS V TARGET
				MANAGER	PORTFOLIO HOLDER			
7a	Service standards / PI's	Review and develop service standards Set new local PI targets	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Mar 05		**Completed**
7b	Communication and publication	1. Update series of service literature. 2. Develop a specific website area	② ②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Jan 05 Jul 05		**Completed**
7c	IT Improvements	Move enforcement from MKA to MIS system	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Dec 04		**Completed**
7d	Delegations to officers	Review delegations available to officers to improve efficiency	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Mar 05		**Completed**
7e	Concordat approach	Take lead on evaluating potential efficiency's on enforcement cross working with other Council services	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Mar 06	Service plan	🟠 **New Corporate initiate**

8. Cost of services Charges and comparisons								THEME LEADER: David Elsworthy	

REF 8	REPORT RECOMMENDATION OR ISSUE	IMPROVEMENT ACTION	PRIORITY 1 2 3	BY WHOM?		BY WHEN?	SIGNPOST TO OTHER PLANS	CURRENT STATUS V TARGET
				MANAGER	PORTFOLIO HOLDER			
8a	Measuring costs of the service	Develop local PI (107)	①	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Mar 05		🟠
8b	Complete Re-structure	Complete implementation	①	M. Yardly	Councillor Longhi	Dec 04		🔴 **Now Oct 05**
8c	Consultants	Review costs versus quality and speed	②	D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing		🟠
8d	Planning delivery grant	1. Achieve highest possible grant. 2. Review spend of grant with staff consultation - IT	①	D Elsworthy D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Ongoing Ongoing		**Completed** **Completed**
8e	Miscellaneous charges	1. Review all current charges following benchmarking exercise. 2. Look to develop areas of added value to increase income	② ②	D Elsworthy D Elsworthy	Councillor Longhi	Mar 05 Mar 05		**Completed** **Completed**