

Improving Island Life

Best Value Performance Plan Summary 2001/02

Your councillors come from a wide range of political persuasions, but we have one common aim: To Improve Island Life. We all want to see a healthier, cleaner, safer and more prosperous Isle of Wight, where each and every one of us can reach our full potential. We have a responsibility to ensure that the council is well managed, financially sound, and responsive to the needs of local people, local commerce and others who have a stake in the future of the Island.

This is a summary of our third Best Value Performance Plan, to show you how we are dealing with our responsibilities and what we are doing to ensure that you get Best Value from your council. The full version of this plan will be available at the end of June. The information in this summary booklet highlights where we have succeeded, as well as where we have fallen short of our targets and how we aim to improve.

Councillor Shirley Smart ~ Leader of the Council



What *is* Best Value?

In the past, local government has been criticised for taking a 'like it or lump it' approach to delivering services. Private companies often list what their customers can expect and have formal 'customer charters' or 'promises'. Councils have Best Value instead. It is intended to act as a guideline for councillors and staff and a guarantee to you, our citizens.

When a potential customer looks for a product or service in the market, they usually base their choice on things like customer care, efficiency and guarantees. In other words: the best value for their money. Businesses have to review their performance continually to see if they are measuring up against competitors and keeping their customers satisfied. Best Value makes local government evaluate itself in the same way. The four pillars of Best Value are:

- **Challenge** - why we provide a service; and whether we get the levels and methods of delivery right
- **Compare** - our service with that of other local authorities or private companies
- **Compete** - by using fair competition to get the most efficient and effective services for local people
- **Consult** - by asking 'stakeholders' (anyone with an interest in our service) to tell us what they think of it: how it meets their needs; how it might be done better; what the standards of service should be; and what performance targets we should set

We want you - our customers - to feel that we provide the services you want, and in ways that allow you to make the best use of them. We want you to feel that our services are at the right level and represent the highest quality your money can buy.

As a council we can only answer the challenge of Best Value through strict self-assessment with the help of our partners and users. No organisation is perfect. There will seldom be an auditors' report which tells a service it has no room for improvement. An important part of Best Value is being open and honest with our customers, our partners and ourselves: acknowledging our shortcomings alongside our merits and setting targets that challenge us to strive toward excellence in the weaker areas and get even better at the strong ones. ■

Listening and talking to local people

Consultation is one of the four pillars of Best Value. It is not about asking people to fill in endless questionnaires or attend discussion groups and then filing away the results. It is an ongoing, open and transparent two-way communication between council and community that involves talking, listening, and feeding back. The old days when councils *told* their residents what they wanted are long gone. As a modern council we want to try our best to make sure your views and priorities are taken into account when plans and policies are being drafted and decisions made. We want to make sure that taking part in consultation with us is a positive experience and time well spent; that you aren't 'over-consulted'; and that we carry out consultations to a consistent standard that enables us to get the most from it. After all - that's what Best Value is all about.

Naturally, there are a variety of styles of consultation, and a great deal of work has been invested over the last two years in getting the right balance.

The better we get at consulting you, the more useful the results become. Our citizens' panel currently helps us with three surveys and several focus groups each year. Also, we talk to or facilitate consultation with the community in a number of ways, including consulting users of specific services; the Island Futures Partnership; community forums; the young people's Wight2BHeard project; Integration in our Island; disability information forums, and many other groups.

How are we responding to the consultation challenge?

It is important to be clear and open about the fact that sometimes the council cannot say 'yes' to something for economic or legal reasons. When we have to say 'no' we're committed to explaining why, and, where possible, seeking acceptable compromises.

One of the greatest challenges in good consultation is reporting and feedback. We recognise some real gaps in this area, particularly in identifying how we feed consultation results back into decision-making processes; and how we measure and report on the impact. We will continue to try and do better in 2002 to show how community opinions help shape services. Where this has not been possible we will communicate the reasons more clearly. ■



An Island where people are healthy and safe

Although Islanders are concerned about crime, traffic and roads, recent consultation through the citizen's panel shows that around 93% of local people regard the Island as either a fairly or very safe place to live. We are involved in promoting and increasing safety and quality of life in numerous ways, many of them involving a wide range of partners across the public, voluntary and private sectors.

Our highways and transportation department focuses on several objectives to increase health and safety on the Island, including encouraging more cycling, addressing traffic growth and reducing road accidents. The Best Value Inspection Service recently highlighted some good work, such as rights of way and street lighting, but overall they weren't complimentary, saying that the service is generally poor. In response, we have produced an action plan that covers improved road and footway maintenance programmes, further safety measures, a survey of parking, and better information for the public. We have started by introducing a regular update on our website to keep you informed about roadworks and possible congestion points.

Some figures for road accidents on the Island are higher than the average. But long-term trends show that these figures are not as negative as the year-on-year comparisons suggest. Traffic safety education continues to raise awareness among young people in schools to tackle accident rates. We work closely with the police to identify common accident sites and introduce stricter controls on speeding.

Our community safety team has been responsible for co-ordinating an Island-wide crime and disorder strategy with the police and the Isle of Wight Crime and Disorder Partnership, which represents many different organisations. This strategy brings together all the factors in reducing crime and the fear of crime on the Island, and ways in which this can be achieved and monitored.

Towards the end of 2001, the first multi-agency guidelines on domestic violence were launched, marking an historic partnership between council departments, the police, probation service and voluntary groups, and setting out a clear way ahead for identifying, preventing and tackling this problem here on the Island.

Public transport continues to be high on our agenda. With the help of the citizen's panel, we are looking at how much Islanders use public transport, what stops them doing so, and what would encourage more people to use local buses and trains.

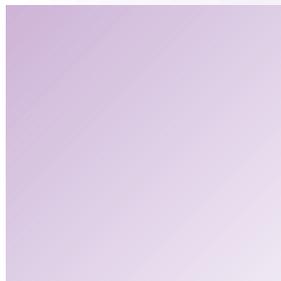
The Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service contributes to our important aim of 'caring for the wellbeing and safety of vulnerable and disadvantaged people'. Working with the police to cut down on the number of calls to malicious false alarms, Community Fire Safety's 'Juvenile Firesetters' and other schemes of fire safety education are resulting in fewer false alarms and fewer fires. Results of a review on this will be available soon, and further reviews on aspects of the fire and rescue service are scheduled for 2002/03.

Working with health and voluntary groups, we focus on our mutual aim of improving the health and general wellbeing of Islanders. Integrating our social services community mental health team with their colleagues in the Health Trust in 2001 has resulted in a better, single service for patients, while our property services department worked in partnership with St Mary's to provide suitable accommodation for the new joint team. A recent Government inspection reported that the prospects are promising.

Housing services remain an important element of our work, despite the transfer of our housing stock to housing associations in 1990. Each year we allocate about £3 million to the associations to build or buy new affordable homes, and we invest a further £1.2 million in improvements and in equipping homes for disabled Islanders.

Homelessness continues to be a major concern for us. Because of an ambitious action plan agreed in 1999, we now compare favourably with other councils. One area where significant improvements have been made is in how long homeless people stay in Bed and Breakfast accommodation before we can move them to permanent homes. We have managed to cut the average waiting time in spite of increasing numbers of people needing help.

We have also had significant success in our efforts to return empty homes to use on the Island. We helped renovate fewer properties between 1998 and 2001 because there were more urgent needs, but numbers are climbing again. This year an estimated 26 properties will be improved compared to 20 in 1999. ■



An Island community that cares

Our social services directorate helps people who need social care and protection. The need for this kind of help is increasing faster than available funds can accommodate. Because of this, during 2001 social services had to make some very tough choices about who could receive care. Some services were changed or ended, and funding was concentrated on the most needy. We aren't alone in this - dozens of councils across the country face the same difficulties. We have highlighted these problems in this year's budget consultation, and feedback from you shows that the community is generally aware of the growing demands on social care and agrees that we need to provide more funds for this work. The council's budget for 2002/2003 provides for these funds.

The Department of Health assesses all social services each year. During 2000/01 they highlighted some areas of good performance alongside others that need improvement. Their report says that we are managing to provide low-cost services to a large number of people, while improving our work with children and disabled adults. We still need to improve the way we re-assess care for adults and children in need.

We are doing well in caring for 'looked after' children at a relatively low cost per child, but we rely heavily on foster care as the Island has no children's homes. In 1999/2000 we were criticised for the high number of foster placements these children went to per year. As a result, we set up a programme to tackle this and the results are very encouraging, with the Department of Health now rating our performance in this area as 'good'. We expect this improvement to continue. The local shortage of suitable foster carers reflects a national problem. Last year we launched the first phase of a campaign to recruit more local carers and this will continue in 2002. Another national priority against which we compared poorly in the past was regularly reviewing the circumstances of every child on the Child Protection Register. By firmly tackling this failure we have reversed the situation: the Department of Health reported that our 2000/01 figures show we are 'very good' in this area.

In comparison with some other councils we do not appear to arrange services for adults very well, and the aim of re-organising our adult services department in 2001 was to make the service more efficient. Improving the way we collect information will also improve the way we communicate results. Although we still have much to do in the year ahead, we have already developed better policies for sharing information among staff and communicating it to residents.

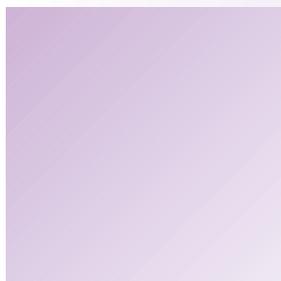
One improvement will be to give our 'clients' a clear statement of how their needs will be met. Again, in this area we are not alone, as many similar councils face similar difficulties. But our performance has improved in the last year as a result of better processes and we expect this to continue. The Government says our social care and intensive social care gives good value for money.

The increasing amount of care that is now arranged for people with more intensive needs meets the national and local priorities for helping those most in need. A survey of new clients shows that people generally feel the service is good.

In 2001, a team supporting a patient in the community, led by the Island's social services with colleagues in health and care services, became the first in the United Kingdom to develop local guidelines for dealing with New Variant CJD. The Government's CJD action team attended a workshop held by our staff and praised the Island's efforts in tackling the patient-care of this worrying and little-understood disease in such a constructive way.

Promoting independence - particularly preventing unnecessary admission to institutional care - is important for social services nationally. On the Island we are working hard to achieve this through better support of carers and through partnerships with colleagues in health and voluntary organisations. We are working closely with the local branch of the national carers' association to ensure that we contact and can increase our support for Islanders caring for someone at home. We have also used a special grant to fund more respite care and other services to these carers, such as facilitating a telephone link line, therapy courses and a free 'sitting service'. We have launched a newsletter to provide a single information source to health and social workers supporting older people and their carers in the community. So far the feedback on this has been good. Currently, we help 3,326 older people to live at home - a very large number compared with other councils. A learning disabilities team works closely with St Mary's NHS Trust toward the same goal.

Unfortunately, budgetary pressures in the years to come may limit the care we can provide to the large and increasing number of older residents. Because of these difficulties, an important future priority for us is to identify funds and ways to help increase the number of people living independently in the community with care and support. ■



An Island that is clean and green

Consultation shows us that preserving our Island's beautiful environment is a top priority for most Islanders. In various ways we ensure that the Island is kept as environmentally healthy as possible.

Through our integrated waste management contract we continue to perform better than our targets and other councils across the country. Among the best results are those for composting and recycling waste - over the last year the percentage of the Island's household waste that was recycled was almost double that of any other similar authority; and our figure for using waste to produce heat, power and energy is one of the best in the country.

The housing department's successful bids for funding have helped us focus on supporting and encouraging energy efficiency in Island homes, and providing grants to help the neediest people pay for improvements.

The property services department closely monitors carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions as part of a Government initiative to cut 'green house' pollutants. In 2002 we aim to achieve a 1% reduction. This department also received IW Conservation Awards in 2001 for new building projects at both Chillerton Primary and St Boniface schools.

Coastal Management continues to protect life and property from the risks of coastal erosion and instability: managing harbours and estuaries and seeking new funding to help maintain the Island's coastline.

Less positive news is the increasing cost per square kilometre of keeping relevant land and highways clear of refuse and litter. In comparison with similar authorities the costs are high. However, please remember that the measure includes beaches, and this makes the exact costs difficult to calculate or compare.

Recently we introduced fixed-penalty fines for dog fouling. Thirty-two penalties have been issued so far this year. We hope such tough measures will help cut down on this nuisance.

Environmental health staff try to improve standards across the Island by responding quickly to complaints and minimising risks through inspections. We estimate that we will exceed our targets in some of these areas. The number of complaints resolved within the agreed period of eight weeks is still below average but improving.

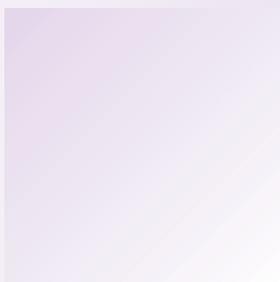
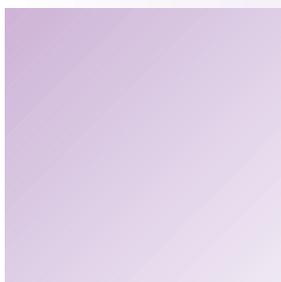
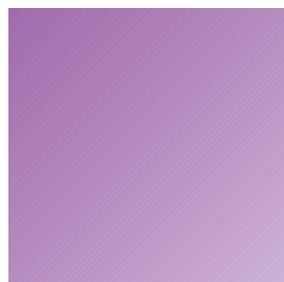
This year saw the successful launch of the 'safer food pack' (we sold 700 copies), and an accompanying training course was attended and passed by 90 caterers. The programme was designed to help catering staff understand and comply with complex hazard analysis requirements.

An Island-friendly tourism project was launched in November, together with a pilot Green Tourism Awards programme. This will recognise businesses that show commitment to protecting and enhancing our unique environment through good practice, and help ensure that future development safeguards our Island heritage. ■

Performance indicator

How we compare

2000/2001	<i>Isle of Wight Council</i>	<i>Similar local authorities</i>		
		<i>Worst</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Best</i>
Percentage of total tonnage of household waste that has been recycled	20.2	7.7	10	11.9
Percentage of total tonnage of household waste that has been composted	6.1	0.5	2.1	5.6
Percentage of total tonnage of household waste that has been used to recover heat, power and other energy sources	13.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Percentage of total tonnage of household waste that has gone to landfill	60.4	85.8	87.5	89.1
The cost per square kilometre of keeping relevant land and relevant highways for which the authority is responsible, clear of litter and refuse	84.746	32.493	55.805	66.237
Cost of waste collection per household	35.87	27.1	30.0	31.3
Number of collections missed per 100,000 collections of household waste	35.12	55.65	98.62	287.51
Percentage of people expressing satisfaction with household waste collection	87	82	87.7	88



An Island for learning and relaxing

Educating our young people and providing them with good opportunities for the future is important to everyone on the Island. But learning isn't only limited to the very young - we want to encourage and help adults to learn too.

Our education directorate focuses on raising achievement for pupils and students of all ages and all abilities. Some levels of achievement can be measured, but with others this is harder.

One area where we need to improve is in results of the Key Stage 2 English test (taken by all pupils at about 11 years old). We are measured on how many of our Key Stage 2 pupils achieve *level 4* or above in this test. Our schools achieved an increase from 68% to 76% over the last year, but we want to do better. The top score among similar councils is 78% and we want at least to match that. Our plans include working closely with all our middle schools to improve boys' writing abilities. Intensive discussions with all 16 of our middle schools have enabled us to lay out the basis of a strategy. Working with all the Island's primary schools, this strategy will help us raise standards. We've also brought in a national specialist to help us with this project.

We are using grants and other budgets to increase the number of three-year-olds who get an 'early years education' on the Island. The numbers were already above average and are improving fast. We want to ensure that 85% of all the Island's little children can get a free, good-quality early-years place by 2003/2004.

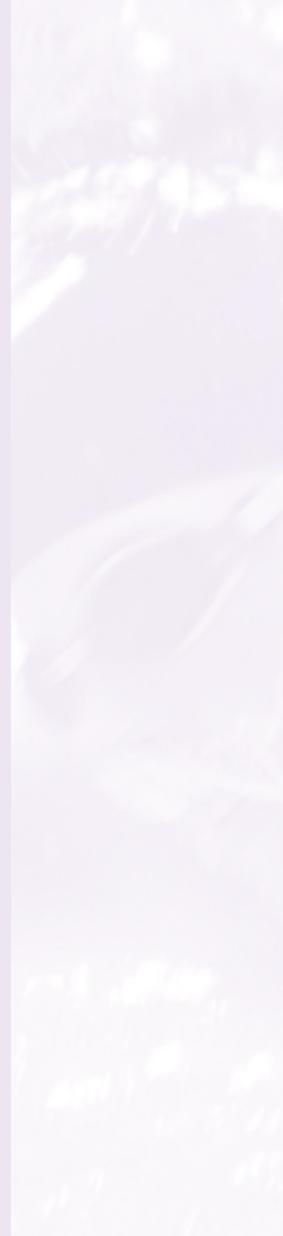
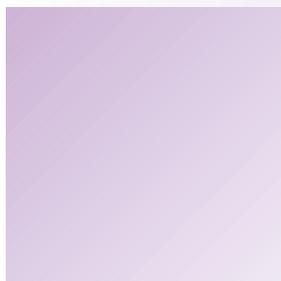
We have also been praised for our efforts to ensure our young people have access to the latest learning tools. Her Majesty's Inspectorate says our information and communications technology (ICT) strategy has "great strengths" and "is some of the best work seen nationally".

Not as good is our record on providing statements of Special Educational Needs. After a pupil is 'assessed', a 'statement' of their special requirements needs to be prepared. Government wants us to issue all these 'statements' within 18 weeks. So far we are managing about 80%. We've already started by improving our administrative systems, and we plan to reach our 100% target during the next year.

We have been working closely with the Learning Skills Council. They have produced a plan that they believe will enable the majority of young people up to 19 years old to be involved in education and training.

Our arts unit has been very successful in helping develop the Ryde Art Works Partnership. This group has put new life into the Ryde Carnival: the oldest carnival in England. This has created plenty of vibrant learning and leisure opportunities across the Island which link into the strong arts tradition in Ryde. Much more work now needs to be done on the future of theatre on the Island.

Leisure and culture are important to everyone, and we want to make sure that all Islanders can do the things we enjoy, that help us stay healthy and give us great quality of life. Although the council can't provide *all* the facilities, we want to be at the heart of ensuring that the Island can provide the things our residents want most. We already know from consultation that the majority of you are satisfied with our libraries - around 60% of Islanders use them regularly, and are happy with the services. The same applies to places like Ventnor Botanic Gardens, swimming pools and many other facilities. At the moment we are trying to get a clearer picture about your culture and leisure needs, and the citizens' panel is assisting with a survey to help us put together a 'cultural vision' for the whole Island, which we'll produce later this year. ■



An Island with a healthy future

Last year, we adopted the mission of *Improving Island Life*, which summarises our aims as councillors and staff. It is supported by our values of listening to people; working in partnership; giving good service, being open and fair; and caring for our unique environment. Together with you, this is the framework within which we will make decisions and plans for the future of our Island.

The Community Strategy, which we are currently developing in consultation with you, will bring together all other plans for the future under a single, inclusive vision. Among these plans is the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in May 2001, which forms a blue-print for development on the Island over the next decade.

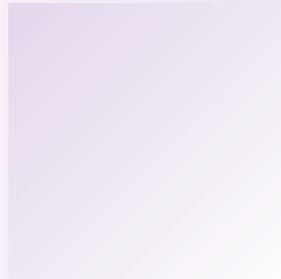
In 2001 we commissioned an independent Island-wide survey of housing needs and recently published the results (you can see a full set of results on our website: www.iwight.com or a summary version in the 28 March edition of *Wight Insight*). The survey will help us, housing associations and private sector developers to plan for future residential development on the Island within the framework of the UDP.

The number of new homes being built on previously developed land is still slightly below the Government's target of 60%, but improving. Comparisons show we are doing better than similar councils. The time taken for building control decisions has improved significantly over previous years and estimates show this improvement is likely to continue.

We have failed to achieve our national target of processing 80% of planning applications within eight weeks. However, it is important to note that the level we have achieved - 65% - is a 14.5% improvement on last year. To ensure that the service goes on getting better we are exploring opportunities for document imaging, e-government, targeting resources, and streamlining the way we allocate work within the planning department. Very good news is that our score for 'planning best practice' is more than 30% better than that of similar councils, and double our score in 1999.

Tourism is a very competitive business and is responsible for 25% of the Island's economy. Developing tourism in a way that helps boost the Island's economy while caring for our special natural environment is an important issue for us, and consultation tells us it is equally important to local people. We are trying to get the right balance between economic development, making sure there is enough housing for Islanders, and protecting our natural heritage. We see adequate public transport, an efficient roads and highways service, leisure facilities, and management of waste, beach, parks and esplanades as factors that contribute to supporting success in tourism as well as creating a happy and healthy environment for residents.

Research shows that the number of internet-visitors spending four or more minutes on the Island's tourism website has risen dramatically between 1999 and 2001. So far, figures for 2002 show that this healthy increase is continuing. This is a good sign for the future of tourism on the Island, with more than 1,500 enquiries for guides received in January alone. The Tourism Development Framework will help us to focus on putting tourism at the centre of the Island's economic development strategy. We hope this will help deliver more jobs in the future and so will contribute to the economic wealth of the Island *and* provide more opportunities for our young people. ■



An Island with an effective council

Before council elections last June, the Isle of Wight Council formally adopted the 'Leader and Cabinet' system which we had been trialling in the previous year. The new arrangement, in line with the Government's 'modernising agenda', aims to speed up decision-making and allow for thorough 'scrutiny' of how we operate.

We received a clean bill of health for our financial arrangements in the external audit of our 2000/01 accounts. Although not quite as good as last year, we still achieved the highest rate of council tax collection in our benchmarking group of similar councils. Demand for spending on social services and waste management threatened to unbalance the budget strategy during the year, but we were able to offset this expense by various savings and effective debt management.

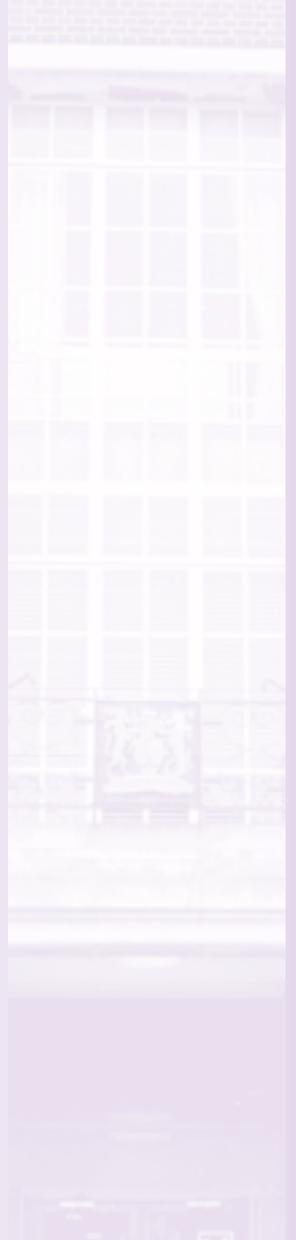
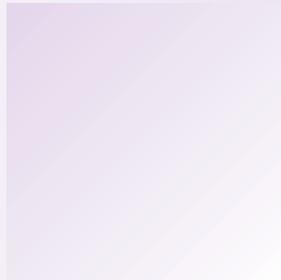
Last year's launch of our new website for the Island - iwight.com - has resulted in an increase in visits to the site from 2,300 to 100,000 a month. Despite initial delays due to the size of the task and other constraints, our five-year information and communications technology (ICT) strategy to deliver 'electronic-government' has been developed and approved. The website visits and the ICT strategy are healthy signs that we are making good use of the latest technology to improve service and information to the community.

While consultation through the citizens' panel points to the need for even better information about the services and benefits we provide, 48% of people currently say we keep you either fairly or very well informed. The council's magazine, *Wight Insight*, is quoted by 58% of local people as most influencing your view of the council, while readership of the magazine is among the highest of any council newspaper, nationally.

We are now looking at our customer services and several questions have already been put to the citizens' panel. The news so far is encouraging: most people who have contacted our switchboard, the customer services centre at County Hall, the education reception and other offices are pleased with the service they received and feel staff is polite and helpful. However, much still needs to be done to achieve consistent standards across the whole council. A staff group and a councillor's taskgroup are looking at corporate standards for reception, complaints, response times and customer service in general and how to achieve them quickly, economically and with most benefit to the community. A best value review this year will examine our interaction with residents in detail.

By requiring better proof of benefit claims we have reduced housing benefit fraud by a significant 10%, and by introducing document image processing we aim to make benefit administration faster and more efficient.

Despite the national slump in tourism during the foot-and-mouth problem in early 2001, the Island did better than many other destinations. By quickly developing a plan to deal with the crisis the council, tourism industry, ferry companies and the farming community were able to ensure that visitors could sample the best our Island has to offer while still successfully protecting our farm animals and wildlife from foot and mouth. ■



Contacts If you have any questions regarding this summary please contact the relevant person in each Directorate:

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General enquiries on the Best Value Performance Plan Tony Geeson (01983) 823291

More Information This is a short summary of the Full **Best Value Performance Plan**. The Full Plan will be published at the end of June 2002, and we'll make copies available in libraries, all council offices, and on the website: www.iwight.com from early July.

Copies of this **Summary** will be available in libraries, County Hall and all council offices and on the council's website: www.iwight.com. If for some reason you are unable to locate a copy in any of these places, please contact the communications team on tel: (01983) 823747 or e-mail: gabrielle.teague@iow.gov.uk.

Other formats We can also provide you with the information in this summary in different formats, such as Braille, audio-cassette or large print; or in other languages, on request. If you or someone you know requires this service, please contact Gabrielle Teague in communications on tel: (01983) 823105 or e-mail: gabrielle.teague@iow.gov.uk.

Island Futures - The Community Strategy - is still being developed. We hope you will take the opportunity to take part in the consultations - your views are vital. Look out for notices in Wight Insight and the local press.

We want to produce this kind of information in the way you want. Please help us get it right by giving us your comments and feedback on this summary. Please write to:
BVPP Summary Feedback, FREEPOST (SCE5502), Newport, PO30 1YU

