

Performance Detailed Report

January 2008



APPENDIX A

Next Steps in Securing Improvement

Vale of White Horse District Council

Audit 2006/07

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Summary report

Introduction

- 1 Vale of White Horse District Council has been pursuing a programme of substantial change since the Audit Commission assessed the Council as 'fair' in its Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in 2004. The Council's aim has been to focus on major strategic issues, to tackle some significant challenges and bring benefits to local services and people.
- 2 In our 'Securing Improvement' report of April 2006 we reported on risks emerging from the Council's restructuring. Since then the Council has continued to invest in a programme of organisational development, and made further changes in its managerial responsibilities and structures.
- 3 In our March 2007 Annual Audit and Inspection Letter (AAIL) we reported that the Council had been working to improve its managerial capacity, although the pace of change over the previous year had been slow.
- 4 This report provides more depth to that AAIL assessment, and assesses progress and impact up to May 2007, and makes recommendations for continued improvement. The action plan in Appendix 3 was discussed with the Council in November 2007, in the light of continued progress.

Background

- 5 The Council experienced a particularly difficult period in 2005 and 2006, as it restructured and made redundancies - much of it driven by immediate financial pressures but also by wider service and outsourcing changes. It lost confidence and morale, as well as some knowledge and skills. This drained its capacity significantly, and much more so than it had anticipated.
- 6 Our April 2006 report found that the Council had achieved a broad consensus over the principles of its restructuring, with evidence that some of its investments in a more corporate approach were already having an impact in areas of recognisable and tangible service improvement. Some new systems - such as IT, e-government, staff training and other resources - were supporting and helping to secure improvement. New performance management arrangements offered the opportunity for further streamlining of both focus and priority, although our workshops suggested that these arrangements were at an early stage.

- 7 However, the Council had had less success in securing the confidence of all its councillors, managers and staff in the more complex processes of cultural change. The groups we spoke with recognised that specific effort would be needed to support the Council's transition to a more flexible and strategic organisation, capable of delivering a range of more stretching priorities. The scale of change in a relatively small district council would render this more difficult, but there were several areas where clearer leadership and direction would help the Council deliver its intentions for local residents. These included engaging more staff and managers in securing improvement, celebrating success and focusing on a range of organisational development practices in order to learn from experience of change.
- 8 Our main conclusion in April 2006 was that the Council needed to ensure that it had the capacity to achieve the improvements identified in its CPA review in 2004 and its value for money assessment of 2006, in order to meet the ambitions of its corporate and community plans. Given the extensive impact of its restructuring in 2005, and the loss of momentum and confidence involved, it would need to focus on recovering lost capacity in the short-term, as well as building sustainable capacity for the future.
- 9 Our recommendations of April 2006 are set out in full in Appendix 1. The detail of this report (paragraphs 17- 42) follows the structure of those recommendations under the following headings:
 - reinforcing and accelerating change;
 - strengthening capacity to deliver the corporate plan;
 - strengthening communications;
 - reviewing the HR function and access to specialist skills; and
 - responding fully to our 2006 report.

Review approach

- 10 Between January and May 2007 we reviewed documents and interviewed managers, staff and councillors, focusing on progress in the year since the recommendations in our April 2006 report on securing improvement. The Council responded constructively to our draft report, and we have updated this final report - and its action plan (Appendix 3) - in the light of more recent progress.

Main conclusions

- 11 The Council has responded positively and constructively to the capacity difficulties it faced in 2005 and 2006, leading to steady recovery and progress towards a new style of organisation fit for longer-term challenges. It is beginning to develop collective ownership of important new agendas and roles, and has developed much greater maturity, openness and realism over what might be required. The Council's management team is working together to tackle some of the cultural changes needed to keep pace with innovation elsewhere in local government, including with its partners. However, the Council still needs to support its investment in change with much clearer identification of the value for money expected from it, including further clarification of the leadership responsibilities of councillors and officers.
- 12 The priority given by the Council to improvement is accelerating in 2007, as its organisational development programme is now focused on challenging and supporting services to deliver improved outcomes - for example through the emphasis on improving service planning. Given the high level of investment in the programme, however, it is important that the Council begins to deliver visible improvements for the local community and evaluates the contribution of organisational development to these. If it fails to do so, the credibility of the programme among managers and staff could be at risk.
- 13 The pace of change has been picking up in 2007, with appointments in late 2006 helping overcome some earlier limitations. The Council is also investing in developing all its managers and staff. However, there are some important areas where the Council does not yet have sufficient skills - particularly for taking a more commercial and business-orientated approach through procurement, partnerships and contractual management. The Council has increased its skills levels through some key appointments, but it is important that all managers understand and share changed outlooks and approaches. Systems to develop co-working capacity and clear roles between managers and councillors are beginning to develop, however, and there is generally good will and commitment for further development.
- 14 Internal communication is much improved and providing greater clarity and confidence throughout the Council. This is helping improve morale, and is supported by improvements in visible and shared leadership. Plans to boost external communication were delayed in 2006, however. Coupled with a dip in performance in 2006/07 in addressing equalities and diversity, this puts the Council at risk of insufficient engagement with local residents, and of failing to secure impact as a result.
- 15 The Council has not addressed all the recommendations from our previous report. Partly, this is because it does not have a systematic way of responding to external reports and recommendations. While most of the spirit of our 2006 report is being addressed, there have been important areas of delays (including an HR function review that began in May 2007), and some omissions (including systematic celebration of success).

Recommendations

- 16 In the light of these conclusions we recommend that the Council now takes the following actions.

Recommendation

R1 Focus the existing organisational change programme on delivering improved outcomes that are value for money and recognisable for local people, by:

- *improving clarity of expected service outcomes;*
- *maintaining the momentum for change;*
- *emphasising innovation and challenge as part of the Council's systems and culture;*
- *increasing the level of challenge to existing services and working practices;*
- *accelerating improvement in external communication; and*
- *responding robustly to local diversity and equality needs.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- internal change is focused on external impact and step change;
- clearer and more widespread understanding of the benefits of the Council's investment in change;
- maintaining openness in communication and challenge over continuous improvement; and
- continued flexibility in adapting change to local needs.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented on a continuous basis.

¹ NB The Audit Commission May 2007 report 'Seeing the light: innovation in public services' provides one potential framework for self-assessment - a summary of its innovation checklist is reproduced at Appendix 2

Recommendation

R2 Improve the accountability of the organisational development programme through:

- *clear and consolidated information – over the full-term of the programme - on its direct and indirect costs and resourcing;*
- *setting clear, outcome based objectives and targets to measure the impact of organisational development; and*
- *working to SMART project milestones.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- enabling councillors to fulfil their roles in governance and scrutiny;
- enabling effective decision-making based on priorities and resources;
- providing a basis for OD programme evaluation, that helps ensure it is monitored and reviewed against council priorities; and
- meeting good practice in risk management and financial probity.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented by March 2008.

Recommendation

R3 Support all councillors in their shared leadership of the Council's objectives and priorities by:

- *agreeing clear roles and responsibilities for councillor-manager relationships;*
- *ensuring systematic reporting to and engagement with executive and scrutiny;*
- *strengthening councillor involvement in and understanding of the organisational change programme; and*
- *agreeing an agenda for councillor development, to include governance, overview and scrutiny, and community leadership and engagement.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- strengthening decision-making, based on priorities and resources; and
- enabling all councillors to fulfil their roles, including in governance and scrutiny.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by June 2008.

Recommendation

R4 Increase the Councils' capacity to improve by:

- *strengthening commercial capacity by addressing skills needs and gaps – and embedding risk, project, contract and business-case management, and approaches to procurement and partnerships;*
- *developing a mix of in-house and external expertise suited to the Council's changing roles in service delivery and partnership*
- *ensuring skills that support organisational change are identified, evaluated and provided, based on systematic business cases;*
- *celebrating success and learning from it; and*
- *ensure staff appraisal and development are monitored and linked with the staff survey and other feedback mechanisms.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- increased value for money;
- ability to take on new challenges;
- reduced risk; and
- improved morale.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by June 2008.

Recommendation

R5 Establish systems to ensure action on external reports and their recommendations by:

- *incorporating reports in action planning; and*
- *monitoring, within improvement planning, scrutiny, and performance management.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- increased accountability; and
- systematic improvement.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented by March 2008.

Detailed report

Progress against April 2006 recommendations (see Appendix 1)

Reinforcing and accelerating change

- 17 The Council has begun a strong, open and involving change programme, through which it aims to position itself to take on new challenges, and to overcome some of the constraints and problems of its past. It is focusing on its changing role in local government, and the culture change associated with this - notably a shift from service to community and corporate agendas. Early signs are positive; suggesting the pace of change is beginning to accelerate (including with councillors). This investment comes after a significant period of instability during 2005 and 2006, however. Thus, although the actions now taken are positive, the Council is not yet in a position to demonstrate the impact on local people and in the value for money of its investment.
- 18 The Council has made a strong commitment to cultural change, and achieved a significant level of organisational participation in it. Much of the agenda stems from consensus among the new team of senior managers about the need to become much more responsive to changing roles for local government, and to accelerate the capacity of the Council to engage effectively in it. This approach represents a significant level of ownership of the need for change and, while it is too early to achieve results, shows some commendable improvements in attitude and trust. It provides a good foundation to improve the quality of the Council's performance management, enabling services to become better connected with Council priorities.
- 19 Change management is being reinforced through a comprehensive and structured programme, led by a dedicated team. The approach has been consulted on widely and was approved by the executive in April 2007. It clarifies the organisational development agenda, based on the four areas of personal development, management capacity, stakeholder engagement, and service delivery. Each of these is linked with six core themes:
 - grow together;
 - customer focus;
 - empowerment and responsibility;
 - aim high;
 - communications; and
 - diversity.

- 20 Improved communication is bringing greater consensus and openness across the Council. This includes many of the features outlined below in paragraphs 33 to 36. Most staff have had opportunities to attend workshops to explain the change programme, and have also benefited from the much greater levels of visibility and leadership offered by the chief executive and two strategic directors.
- 21 The Council is open about the need to work further on this agenda, and has much more confidence in using internal consultation to identify priorities and processes for it. This openness is helping it gain a much firmer sense of direction, with improved morale - as well as recognition that change is likely to remain a constant, and thus a new requirement of its managers and directors to participate actively in it. This culture change is particularly evident in the commitment shared by most senior managers to their new council-wide team, as a forum for collective action and decision-making. The collective approach is important, as it shows that the Council has recognised the need to change from its previous tendency of 'silo-based' services.
- 22 Priorities for development are being set, but detailed plans are still being developed. For example, objectives for organisational development are being clarified at service-level during 2007, but it is not immediately clear how these will contribute to improved service outcomes. The Council is actively seeking to change its culture to enable this kind of objective to become shared more effectively, as it develops its plans and targets for change during 2007 - but it is crucial to do this work, and to monitor, review and evaluate it regularly, so that internal organisational change is linked firmly with tangible outcomes for residents.

Strengthen capacity to deliver the corporate plan

- 23 The Council is at a relatively early stage of increasing its capacity, but some encouraging and bold steps demonstrate much greater organisational maturity. The Council is now better managed, more strategic and more focused. If it is to deliver its strategic priorities effectively, however, it needs to ensure that its current and continuing investment in change makes greater impact on service delivery - now and in the future.
- 24 The pace of development since April 2006 has been relatively slow but has gathered more momentum in 2007. There are some very positive signs, such as the Council shifting resources towards the longer-term and that many residents are benefiting from improving services. However, the Council faces the risk that further improvement may not be sustainable, as it takes on new and more stretching local and national priorities. The Council recognises this context, and has made it the rationale for investing in organisational development. That is why it is important that tangible value for money is secured by increasing the capacity for staff, managers and councillors to work together on more challenging strategies.

- 25 The new strengths in capacity are particularly manifest in the level of senior commitment and leadership now being shown and the clearer links between the corporate plan and all portfolio holders. The resultant clarity of purpose is increasing understanding, trust and cohesiveness throughout the organisation. In turn it is leading to a much more inclusive approach and ensuring that managers and team leaders are being given opportunities to develop both their own skills and those of their staff. There is a clear focus on working together to develop greater efficiency and effectiveness, and to reduce traditional barriers across different directorates and services. The Council has also increased its focus on external partnerships, with good recent examples in procuring joint services with other districts.
- 26 The Council's political leadership is supportive of change. The Council has demonstrated a significant shift in emphasis from a restructure introduced in 2005 to secure cost-savings to one that now has a clearer focus on improving service effectiveness and impact. The restructure has helped gain senior capacity that is more credible to the executive, which is helping iron out some past frustrations. Good examples include the collaborative working between councillors and managers over the 2007/08 budget proposals, and a clearer emphasis and resource alignment on key service priorities, such as housing. This shared engagement over priorities is increasing the sense of realism over what can be achieved and, importantly, the will is there to develop this focus and clarity further.
- 27 During 2006/07 not all the Council's priorities were perceived as sufficiently clear, or achievable, but work began in 2007 to address this. Agreement on clear outcomes will be vital if the Council's change processes are to have effective impact on local services and their value for money. It is important to make sure the Council's aspirations, strategies and plans are achievable, and - within this - to evaluate and monitor the role of organisational change in supporting and securing overall improvement.
- 28 Further, the Council's agenda for delivering its new priorities is not yet shared and owned fully by all councillors, although the Council has planned to address this through a development programme for councillors during 2007. As work is now underway to develop role clarity with the executive and opposition, it presents a good opportunity to sharpen roles for all councillors in order to increase their collective impact over local service delivery. Managers we spoke with welcome these changes, which should also help councillors in their work as democratic representatives, as well as in their governance, overview and scrutiny roles. Roles may need to be reviewed now there is a greater level of management information available for use by councillors. All this will be important in maintaining a clear focus on value for money.

- 29 After its initial restructure, the Council has been aware of some managerial skills gaps and although it is working to address them has not yet resolved all its needs in some important areas. These needs include achieving a sufficient level of commercial skill and outlook across the whole organisation through stronger procurement, risk, contract and project planning, negotiation and management skills and processes. The Council has increased capacity in these areas through some new appointments and through its financial partnership with South Oxfordshire DC. However, it needs to instil more of these skills across the organisation as a whole. The Council faces immediate risks having outsourced some of its services - but without yet having modernised all the managerial skills now required.
- 30 Targets are being agreed for the organisational development programme, and the processes through which teams engage with it clarified. Although it has not added to the Council's overall costs, it is not clear what exactly the costs are - or what some of the alternative investment options might have been for achieving similar outcomes. The Council is clarifying its plans for organisational development, including for the recently-introduced local customer service points, but some of this represents a relatively belated response to a critical area of value for money and performance management. It will be important to develop sound outcome-focused plans and longer-term budgets quickly, to provide transparency and accountability. At a time when the Council is, rightly, introducing much greater financial stringency actions are needed to help ensure credibility and transparency for the Council's sizeable investment in change.
- 31 The Council faces direct risks from the performance dips in its approach to equalities, diversity and community engagement. While it is now developing its response, this is at an early stage, and managers and councillors have not yet developed sufficient understanding - for example through equality impact assessments. This means that the Council is at risk of failing to deliver services that meet the specific needs of vulnerable local people and of delivering poorer value for money in some areas. Effective and equitable consultation is an important part of addressing this balance, and of ensuring that the Council bases decisions about delivering its priorities on good local understanding.
- 32 The Council is seeking to challenge itself further, and is doing more to develop this. Its use of some consultancy and interim posts is a start, as is a greater focus on learning through partnership delivery and on systematic learning between managers. Challenge is still relatively underdeveloped however, as are skill-enhancing options such as staff secondments and exchanges. Equally, it will be important to ensure that the Council will actually achieve all the skills expected from new deployments, and this should be kept under review, including with a focus on high compliance with new appraisal processes. This is an important agenda, and will help the Council respond innovatively and effectively to future challenges.

Strengthening communications

- 33 The Council is benefiting from much stronger internal communication, and has focused resources on external relationships and communication, too. Internally, it shows much greater commitment to communication, which is now more open and involving. This is a marked improvement, and includes openness about past difficulties - which is particularly important, given some of them are still being overcome. The change programme itself, and its rationale, appears to be accepted as well-communicated. A staff survey in 2006, while challenging, set a baseline from which the Council can measure improvement. All this indicates an organisation determined to achieve greater impact through its staff.
- 34 A particularly positive feature of improved internal communications is the opportunity for learning across teams, services and departments. For example, good practice is being shared through some improved internal networks and council-wide team briefings, as well as constructive and well-regarded senior management team meetings and engagement. This suggests effective cultural change, as ownership of the need for effective communication is becoming shared among a much wider range of the Council's managers. It is also important that links are becoming better established between team leaders and portfolio holders, and over the Council's budget-setting, as it will also help the Council deliver its priorities for local people.
- 35 Communication involving councillors is generally recognised as needing further development, however. Most significant is the limited amount of councillor engagement in what the Council is trying to achieve, and why internal change is important to this. In the build-up to the May 2007 elections the Council began to address this with the senior management team exploring roles and relationships with key councillor groups (notably the executive and opposition) in order to clarify how best to use resources and manage priorities. The intention was to revisit this after the elections, including reviewing councillor portfolios to ensure better focus on priorities. This remains work in progress.
- 36 The boost in external communications through new posts is too recent to evaluate. But, again, it shows strengthened commitment from the Council. However, the communications action plan was behind schedule in 2006, notably on external consultation, which means the Council has to catch up more rapidly in 2007. This is important, especially in the light of the Council's delayed progress on equalities. The Council faces risks that until it is sufficiently aware of local need; it will not be able to respond with fully effective services.

Reviewing the Council's HR function, and access to specialist skills

- 37 The Council has invested effectively in specialist external advice, and at an appropriately senior level, in order to support organisational change. This has helped the organisation move forward at a very difficult time, ensuring the transition to new roles was achieved with a good degree of consensus about how the Council might function much better in the future. This investment has been important in helping the Council make good progress as a corporate organisation, with new commitment to some wider functions and services. It has also led to clearer understandings of new jobs for individuals and new structures for departments, and provided a lot of confidence.
- 38 The investment in specialist external advice is continuing to support the Council's learning. The Council contracted SOLACE Enterprises as an improvement partner in 2007, to maintain the focus on organisational development. This contract enables the Council to draw on a high level of skill, which it can adjust as needed, in areas where it might not want (or be able) to make a full-time employment commitment. This flexibility shows a balanced approach to resources, supporting managers in learning new roles and continuing to provide independent external challenge.
- 39 The Council has not had clear budget plans and targets for all its specialist investment. Notably, it relied increasingly (and very effectively) on external advice during 2006 to develop its restructure. This partly reflected the level of challenge the Council was facing, the scale of which emerged rather than having been anticipated fully. But it also reflects the fact that some important skills gaps have not yet been addressed and embedded fully, including in project and commercial management. Without strong project and budgetary management the Council is at risk of reduced value for money.
- 40 Although it has started this in May 2007, and already made some very constructive changes, the Council has not yet reviewed its HR function fully to ensure it is gaining the services it needs, and resources and strategies to support it in future. It has given HR much more emphasis through the structural change to create a lead service area for Council development, through which it has boosted appraisal and training. Greater confidence in HR is important to staff morale if the Council is to overcome some continuing legacies of past structural changes, such as grading reviews. A strong HR function will also be essential if further change leads the Council to become more of a partnership player and service commissioner, rather than a provider - all of which may create staff uncertainties that need to be managed effectively.

Responding fully to our 2006 report

- 41 The Council has responded positively to many of our April 2006 recommendations. Much of the response has been implicit, however, and the report itself was not shared formally or openly. This may have limited some opportunities for the Council to engage others in constructive challenge, including through audit and governance. External challenge, managed constructively, is an important part of organisational innovation, as well as accountability, and helps support clear roles and relationships between councillors and managers.
- 42 Overall, however, the Council's response to our recommendations of a year ago is very positive. The Council has become much more open and aware, made some difficult and careful decisions, and shown a strong commitment to progress along the lines suggested. It has made a significant shift towards greater organisational strength, given that our recommendations were rooted in the views of councillors, managers and staff. However, the impact of its actions is not yet clear and there are some important omissions, which may be limiting the Council's ability to maximise its impact and to improve staff, manager and councillor relationships and capacity. These omissions include the need for the Council to become more systematic in sharing external recommendations openly, developing mentoring, and in celebrating success.

Appendix 1 – Recommendations from our April 2006 review

R1 Reinforce and accelerate the Council's change programme, and take specific steps to recognise and respond to its cultural and organisational development demands, including:

- *taking immediate steps to recover from the adverse impacts of change in 2005;*
- *being open about change, by promoting shared understanding of the nature of the challenges and organisational learning involved;*
- *assigning clear leadership responsibilities specifically for change management, to include councillors, directors, managers and staff; and*
- *providing further opportunities for team understanding and team working to address the impact and expectations of changed priorities.*

R2 In the light of the Council's revised strategic priorities, strengthen the capacity to deliver the corporate plan at all levels - among councillors, managers and staff, and by teams as well as individuals, including by:

- *clarifying roles and relationships between councillors and managers, to ensure that the recent restructure has the impact intended;*
- *making sure that the changes that will be needed to deliver the Council's corporate priorities are clear, agreed and understood;*
- *progressively engaging all councillors, managers and staff in building capacity for change, for example through the new organisational development programme;*
- *ensuring objectives for service and organisational change are part of team and individual appraisal and learning systems;*
- *project and performance managing, and evaluating, the Council's new organisational development programme;*
- *establishing mentoring for councillors and the senior leadership team; and*
- *introducing a leadership and management development programme.*

R3 Strengthen existing communications to better support change and learning, ensuring that this makes a specific response to concerns about morale; including by:

- *developing and using internal consultation and feedback;*
- *establishing staff and councillor attitude surveys; and*
- *celebrating success.*

R4 Review the Council's HR function, and access to specialist advisory skills, to ensure the capacity to support continued organisational change.

R5 Respond fully to this report by:

- *sharing and discussing it openly within the Council, with staff as well as with councillors;*
- *engaging these same groups in action planning that responds to it; and*
- *developing an action plan, linked with corporate priorities, that will ensure progress is systematic and comprehensive.*

Appendix 2 – Innovation checklist

See paragraph 16, recommendation 1. Taken from Audit Commission (May 2007) 'Seeing the Light: Innovation in Local Public Services', pages 7-8 [local government national report]. Copies from www.audit-commission.gov.uk, or tel 0800 502030 (stock code LNR3392)

Drivers – does your authority feel the pressure to innovate?

- Where is your biggest performance challenge?
- How would you meet an efficiency improvement target even more stretching than one you currently face?
- When was the last time pressure from members stimulated an innovative development?
- How do you encourage local people to set you challenges and help you find innovative solutions?

Enablers – do your authority's organisation and culture encourage innovative ideas?

- Which of your targets cannot be achieved by incremental improvement?
- How can front line staff turn innovative ideas into reality?
- Do staff have enough opportunities to think creatively away from day-to-day pressures?
- Who analyses information for insight which can give rise to innovation?
- How do staff know that you encourage innovation? Who came up with the last idea you supported?
- How did you behave last time an innovative approach went wrong? What message did that send about your approach to failure?
- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that lessons and insights can be communicated within your authority, and with others?

Implementation – can your authority manage innovation effectively?

- Why was your last successful project a success (and your last failure a failure)?
- How would you assess and manage the risks associated with an innovative service improvement idea?
- What innovative projects are your senior team sponsoring?
- How many managers do you have with the ability to manage an innovative change programme? Are they doing so?
- How many of your top dozen operational managers are working on innovative projects?
- What have you recently changed in response to a suggestion from an external partner?
- How were users involved in the most recent changes you made to service delivery?

Dissemination – is your authority contributing to the spread of innovative ideas?

- Where will your authority look for good ideas for service improvement in the next three months?
- What were the costs and benefits of the last significant innovative change in your authority?
- What have you done to disseminate the success and lessons of the last innovative development?
- How will you disseminate the next one?
- Who might be interested in it? How would you know?

Appendix 3 – Action plan

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
<p>R1 Focus the existing organisational development programme on delivering improved outcomes that are value for money and recognisable for local people, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improving clarity of expected service outcomes; • maintaining the momentum for change; • emphasising innovation and challenge as part of the Council's systems and culture; • increasing the level of challenge to existing services and working practices; • accelerating improvement in external communication; and • responding robustly to local diversity and equality needs. 		<p>Lead by Deputy Director Organisational Development & Support (DD OD&S)</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the service review programme using the Organisational development methodologies approved by Executive on 7 December 2007. • Compile a service review timetable for the whole organisation, to only include those services that have the potential to deliver efficiency savings. • For each review ensure the expected service outcomes are clearly documented at the outset, including any financial efficiency savings targets. • Continue to implement the Vale's mentoring programme. • Deliver the action plans of the Communications Strategy and Consultation strategy as agreed by Executive on 5 October 2007 and 7 December 2007. • Deliver the actions of the Corporate Equalities Action Plan as agreed by the Executive on 13 July 2007. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2008</p> <p>April 2008 onwards</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
<p>R2 Improve the accountability of the organisational development programme through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear and consolidated information – over the full-term of the programme - on its direct and indirect costs and resourcing; • setting clear, outcome based objectives and targets to measure the impact of organisational development; and • working to SMART project milestones. 		DD OD&S		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate costings for OD activities. • Implement the Organisational Development Programme performance indicators. • OD Project milestones incorporated into OD Service Plan. 	<p>September 2008 April 2008 April 2008</p>
<p>R3 Support all councillors in their shared leadership of the Council's objectives and priorities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agreeing clear roles and responsibilities for councillor-manager relationships; • ensuring systematic reporting to and engagement with executive and scrutiny; • strengthening councillor involvement in and understanding of the organisational development programme; • agreeing an agenda for councillor development, to include governance, overview and scrutiny, and community leadership and engagement. 		CEO with Leader , Leader of the Opposition and Personnel Regulatory and Appeals Committee		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formulate an improvement plan which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - member/officer relations document; - member job descriptions; - member development plans; and - member briefings. 	October 2008

24 Next Steps in Securing Improvement | Appendix 3 – Action plan

Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
<p>R4 Increase the Councils' capacity to improve by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> strengthening commercial capacity by addressing skills needs and gaps – and embedding risk, project, contract and business-case management, and approaches to procurement and partnerships; developing a mix of in-house and external expertise suited to the Council's changing roles in service delivery and partnership; ensuring skills that support organisational development are identified, evaluated and provided, based on systematic business cases; celebrating success and learning from it; and ensure staff appraisal and development are monitored and linked with the staff survey and other feedback mechanisms. 		DD OD&S		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the implementation of the competency framework, which will inform the development programme. Revise and implement Vale's People Strategy. Review the external support requirements for organisational development, and identify how that may be supplied in future. Review staff appraisals. Implement training procedure incorporating the use of the HR self service software Continue with internal communications action plan. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>March 2008</p> <p>July 2008</p> <p>March 2009</p> <p>June 2008</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>R5 Establish systems to ensure action on external reports and their recommendations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> incorporating reports in action planning; and monitoring, within improvement planning, scrutiny, and performance management. 		DD OD&S		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure actions included within Corporate Governance report. Continue to report all audit findings to Audit and Governance Committee. 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>