Audit Commission

PERFORMANCE REVIEW IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

a handbook for auditors and local authorities

Leisure and Libraries
Performance Review in Local Government

Leisure and Libraries
Acknowledgements

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Preface

This booklet is part of 'Performance review in local government: a handbook for auditors and local authorities'.

The handbook has been prepared by the Audit Commission as a working document to help auditors and local authorities appraise the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of services. It should help to focus attention on aspects of services that appear wasteful or capable of improvement, and to identify aspects of services that merit further investigation. It should also help to promote debate on how quality in services is to be assessed, alongside the quantifiable measures of efficient performance.

Summary of contents
The handbook consists of ten sections:

1. Introduction
2. Education
3. Environmental Services
4. Housing
5. Law and Order
6. Leisure and Libraries
7. Planning and Transportation
8. Social Services
9. Central Services (to be published in 1987)
10. Statistical Supplement (to be published annually from 1987)

This preface is reprinted for reference at the start of each booklet.

The introductory booklet gives the background context to the need for performance review, considers arrangements for it within an authority, and explores some of the difficulties which authorities may face in measuring performance and implementing change.

The service-specific booklets, like this one, provide for each service:

1. A brief description of the main elements of the service, and a discussion of the key issues in examining the performance of the service in terms of value for money. This section includes a bibliography of useful government and other publications.

2. A more detailed series of review questions which will help to guide the assessment and improvement of current arrangements for managing the service. Useful references and performance indicators are shown alongside the relevant questions. These include indicators of effectiveness (for example inspectors' reports, trends in usage, public attitudes) as well as quantifiable measures of efficiency (for example pupil/teacher ratios, m² per client).

Some of the questions in the performance review guides relate to policy matters to be decided by members, or are the professional responsibility of officers as their advisers. These questions are shown in italic. The auditor's interest is in ensuring that these issues have been addressed and that appropriate policies and management arrangements have been determined. Auditors should also be sensitive to such wider considerations when making judgements on resources usage.
The indicators listed in this booklet are not accompanied by a value. They simply designate what is to be examined, for example clients per employee, costs per m². However, there are some norms, standards or benchmarks which are widely accepted, or which have been positively identified during detailed reviews by the Audit Commission or some other recognised body. Where these exist, the appropriate value or range of values, for example X clients per employee, £Y per m², will be listed in the statistical supplement, which will be published annually.

Careful comparisons with other local authorities can provide a useful starting point for reviewing current practices. However, differences in the value of indicators between one authority and another, or between an authority and the given norm, should never form the sole basis for conclusions. Rather they should lead to more searching enquiries into the circumstances which give rise to such differences, and the opportunities which exist for improvements to be made.

The approach of the handbook
This handbook does not suggest that there should be uniform approaches to service provision, or standard levels of output. It recognises that the very essence of local government is variety, but emphasises that variety should stem from the efficient and effective meeting of local needs, rather than from poor management or inadequate policy making.

Three themes therefore run through the handbook:

1 The need to emphasise the outputs of services, and relate these to inputs.
Success in the public sector lies in the quality of the services provided. In general, the balance needs to be tipped from the current emphasis on inputs by providers, to an emphasis on the outputs received by the public. In some services, measures of output are clear. In others, where detailed research has not been carried out, the approach needs to be more cautious, particularly for services where the outputs may well be contentious, for example social work or the police service.

2 The need to make best use of available resources.
Performance appraisal is often portrayed as mere cost cutting. But in essence it is about querying whether money is being spent on those things that will improve the quality of services now and in the future. For example, money tied up in low-occupancy schools is money that cannot be used to pay for more teachers, or be diverted to provide care for the growing number of elderly people in our society.

3 The need for performance review to be an integral part of the management process.
At officer level, departmental managers should be keeping services under continual review. Many problems can be dealt with by the officers working within agreed policies. The members’ responsibility is to satisfy themselves that the service is being managed properly and to examine in more depth those issues which have policy implications.
Using the handbook

The handbook has been prepared with auditors, officers and members in mind.

Auditors may find the handbook a useful adjunct to The Local Government Auditor (The Black Book), giving a service by service guide to value for money issues. The handbook documents and builds on a lot of the good work that has already been done around the country.

Officers may find it a useful statement on service delivery and performance. It has been developed in discussion with many professionals in the field. Chief officers may find it useful for questioning middle managers, and middle managers may find it helpful for raising issues of quality and effectiveness, when auditors are questioning efficiency and economy.

Members may find it a useful guide to the audit approach, and a helpful basis for reviewing, and where necessary challenging the approach of officers with regard to the performance of particular services.

The scope of the handbook

The handbook documents, for each service, the key elements which contribute to its success or failure, the key criteria on which to justify its continued existence.

It does not attempt to give an exhaustive description of every facet of every service, nor every issue of policy, quality, professional judgement or effectiveness. It simply represents the state of the art, drawing together the available information and work done so far. Constructive criticisms and contributions would be welcomed, particularly on issues which are omitted, or only briefly covered, in this edition.

An update service is planned, beginning in 1987 with a new section on central services, minor amendments to the service-specific sections and a statistical supplement. Thereafter the handbook will be revised in whole, or in part, according to changes in policy and practices around the country.

Comments should be sent to
The Director of Management Practice,
The Audit Commission,
1 Vincent Square,
London SW1P 2PN.
Parks and Open Spaces

Introduction to the service

Parks and open spaces may take the form of:

General parks, formally set out, for walking, sitting, and so on. These will often include flower beds, greenhouses, band stands and other facilities for more relaxed leisure activities.

Open spaces and woodland where generally the grass is uncut and the area left to nature.

Golf courses and areas for formal sports such as football and cricket pitches, tennis courts, bowling greens (see also the chapter on Sports and Cultural Activities).

Play areas for children.

Various combinations of these features.

Some parks are jointly provided with neighbouring authorities. In other cases parks, open spaces and play areas for housing estates may be provided and managed by the Housing Department rather than the Parks Department.

Table 1
Day trips by main activity (Great Britain 1982-3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Millions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic house/stately home</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castle/monument/site</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathedral/church</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum/exhibition</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park/garden/common</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnicking</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking/hiking/rambling</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoo/safari park/bird sanctuary/aquarium</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show/fair/carnival/theme park</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic ship/steam railway</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking part in outdoor sport</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching outdoor sport</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking part/watching indoor sport</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing/shooting</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boating/rowing/canoeing/sailing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre/cinema/concert/opera/ballet</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pub/restaurant</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party/celebration/anniversary</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing/disco</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathing/sunbathing</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting friends/relatives only</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General tour or drive around only</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All adult and child day trips</td>
<td>629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>594</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Leisure Day Trips in Great Britain (Summer 1981 and 1982) English Tourist Board)
Table 2
Participation (%) in selected social and cultural activities (Great Britain 1983)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage in each age group engaging in each activity in the four weeks before interview</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16-19</td>
<td>20-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open air outings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seaside</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment, social and cultural activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the cinema</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting historic buildings</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the theatre/opera/ballet</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to museums/art galleries</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amateur music/drama</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending leisure classes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to fairs/ amusement arcades</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going out for a meal*</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going out for a drink*</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home-based activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to records/tapes*</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needlework/Knitting*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House repairs/DoI*</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading books*</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size (=100%)</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>2,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(numbers)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The high participation levels are partly attributable to the fact that these items were prompted.

Source: General Household Survey (1983)

Trends
There is a dearth of reliable statistics on the use of leisure time generally and, until very recently, on the use of specific local authority facilities. However, it is clear that the amount of leisure time for those in employment has increased steadily over the last 20 years; and unemployment has brought an enforced extra leisure time for 3-4 million people in the UK.

Tables 1 and 2 show some of the leisure activities undertaken in Great Britain in the early 1980's. Only a very small proportion of the adult population use parks (although it is perhaps reasonable to assume that their use by schoolchildren is greater) and outdoor sports and other pursuits are a minority interest.

Expenditure on parks and open spaces reached a peak in 1981/2, since when economic pressures have brought it to its lowest for a decade.

Expenditure
Local authorities in England and Wales budgeted for net expenditure of more than £370 million on urban parks and open spaces in 1985/6 (£7 per head of population). Most of this expenditure (which excludes debt charges) is at district level.
Current management issues

The major considerations are:

1. The scale and location of the areas to be provided.
2. The nature of their use.
3. Resource management.

The provision of new areas is often limited by land availability, although demolition, reclamation and clearance of derelict sites present occasional opportunities, usually on a small scale.

The uses to which parks and open spaces are put will hinge on the Council's perception of public demand and, perhaps, the wider interests of the area, for example attracting tourists or providing off street play areas for large housing developments. The extent to which the Council promotes and monitors use will affect both the scale and nature of facilities provided.

Expenditure is very dependent on the use to which park areas are put. For example, flower beds stocked from greenhouses are expensive to provide and maintain; gang-mown grassed areas are relatively cheaper. Changing the character of a park by switching from one use to another may be necessary to reduce costs.

The level to which activities such as sports and concerts are subsidised is up to the Council to decide, but there should be considered policies on charging based on a knowledge of what the facilities actually cost to run. Councils may wish to keep an equitable level of subsidy for different facilities. Some facilities, for example refreshment kiosks and cafes, might be franchised to private firms.

Effectiveness is hard to assess in quantifiable terms. Achievement of the Council's plans for the amount and nature of provision and the degree of satisfaction revealed in surveys of usage and public attitude surveys are two possible indicators.

There are also serious problems in reviewing efficiency and economy except at very disaggregated levels, for example costs per m² mown, per plant provided, per round. Overall comparisons based on population or area tend to be of limited value because of the wide differences in use and level of service. Nevertheless such comparisons may provide a useful starting point for more searching enquiry.

The results of such enquiries may promote a review of the type of use and its layout. For example, it may not be possible for flower beds and displays to be properly maintained within the budget available. In such cases, the Council might decide to grass over the beds or to plant them with perpetual shrubs.

The management of parks labour and equipment is not always as efficient as it could be. Expensive equipment may be purchased when it would be more economic to buy it and share it between parks. Equipment is sometimes provided in excess of requirement and expensively maintained rather than replaced. Bonus schemes need to be kept under review and compared with those of other authorities and private contractors.
Bibliography

Looks at ways this can be done.


The contents of both these reports are applicable to the Parks Service.
Performance Review in Local Government

Performance review guide
This section sets out a detailed series of questions which will help to guide the review and improvement of current management arrangements.

Some of the questions relate to policy matters to be decided by members, or are the professional responsibility of officers as their advisers. These questions are shown in *italic*. The auditor's interest is in ensuring that these issues have been addressed and that appropriate policies and management arrangements have been determined. Auditors should also be sensitive to such wider considerations when making judgements on resource usage.

Useful performance indicators and reference documents are shown alongside the relevant questions. Careful comparisons with other local authorities can provide a useful starting point for reviewing current practices. However, differences in the value of indicators between one authority and another, or between an authority and accepted norms, should never form the sole basis for conclusions. Rather they should lead to more searching enquiries into the circumstances which give rise to such differences, and the opportunities which exist for improvements to be made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review questions</th>
<th>Key Indicators/References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Scale and location of provision</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the Council made a policy statement on the future provision of parks and open spaces and their location?</td>
<td>Policy statement available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hectares per 1000 population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the policy in line with the Development Plan and reviewed regularly for achievement?</td>
<td>Reports to Council/Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has Council decision making included a consideration of properly estimated costs?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the level of provision compare with other authorities?</td>
<td>Population using park (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons per hectare of park and open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proportion within half a kilometre of park or open space (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 Nature of provision</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the Council a stated policy on the use to be made of each area of park and open space?</td>
<td>Policy statement available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the policy being achieved?</td>
<td>Reports to Council/Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>What is the balance of use (eg flower beds, grassland, playgrounds, sports areas)?</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Are there arrangements for promoting and monitoring use?</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the Council considered the layout of its general parks and open spaces to ensure they can be properly maintained within the budget available?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Review questions

- Regularly mown grassed areas may be more pleasing than flower beds neglected through lack of maintenance resources; shrubs may provide as much pleasure more economically as beds of annuals.
- It is crucial that the Council should know the cost of various forms of use.

What facilities for sport, entertainment, catering etc are provided in parks?

Is there a Council policy on charging for facilities and the level of subsidy to be given?

- The Council should know what each facility actually costs to run.
- Charges should be reviewed frequently enough to take account of movements in cost and in public demand.
- The Council may wish to ensure equity between users in the subsidy given.

Does the Council seek sponsored events or provide advertising space?

Has franchising of facilities been considered?

If so, are results regularly reviewed?

What does the public think about the nature of parks provision?

3 Resource management

How do unit costs compare with other local authorities?

Can all adverse variances be explained by differences in the nature of use?

Is there a sound basis for staffing?

Does it take account of peaks and troughs in activities?

Do incentive bonus schemes give good value for money and a fair deal for employees?

### Key Indicators/References

- Cost per m\(^2\) (£), area by area
- Reports to Council/Committee
- [See: chapter on Sports and Cultural Activities]
- Policy statement available
- List of charges
- Income % gross expenditure on facilities concerned
- Charges compared with other authorities/private provision
- Booking requests unmet
- Income received
- Population using parks (%)
- Results of public opinion surveys
- Complaints

### Resource management

- Cost (£) per
  - 1000 population
  - hectare
  - round
  - m\(^2\) or particular forms of use
- Employees per hectare
- Comparison of standard work values etc with other DLOs and the private sector
  - Bonus % gross pay
### Performance Review in Local Government

#### Review questions | Key Indicators/References
---|---
Is the maintenance of any areas contracted out? | Cost per m²
If so, how do they compare in standard of work and cost with similar areas maintained by direct labour? | Schedule of frequencies
Are task standards and frequencies, e.g. for grass cutting, clearly established? | [See: Reducing the Cost of Local Government Purchases]
Is full use made of temporary staff and staff available through MSC schemes? | Sales income (£)
Are employees used interchangeably with cemeteries, highways and other departments? | [See: Improving Vehicle Fleet Management in Local Government]
Are purchases of seeds, plants and materials economically undertaken and use properly controlled? | % utilisation
Are there arrangements for the marketing and sale of surplus plants? | Cost per plant produced, Cost per tree planted
Are vehicles and plant fully utilised and efficiently managed? | [See: Saving Energy in Local Government Buildings]
Are buildings, greenhouses and nurseries fully utilised and adequately maintained? | 
  - It may be more economical in some cases to purchase plants privately than to continue maintaining, heating and staffing a greenhouse or nursery.
Are greenhouses and other parks buildings included in a positive energy management system? | 
Does management keep up to date with innovation? | 
  - One example is in the use of artificial sports pitches, such as 'The Nottinghamshire Family'.

---
Sports and Cultural Activities

Introduction to the service
Provision for recreational activities by local authorities includes:

**Cultural activities** such as theatres, museums, art galleries and public halls.

**Sports facilities** – swimming pools, leisure centres and outdoor sports.

**Grants and contributions** to voluntary organisations.

**General administration** of leisure and recreation departments.

There is a great variation in the facilities provided and many similar activities may be carried on within leisure centres or parks or under the auspices of adult education. Comparisons between authorities are therefore difficult and need to be made on a facility basis.

Trends
In spite of constraints imposed by the economy, expenditure at constant value rose by 20% overall between 1979/80 and 1984/5. Expenditure on grants and contributions to voluntary bodies shows a particularly marked rise.

During this period administration costs rose by 44%, and these may often merit further enquiry. However, it is important to establish precisely what is included within administration expenditure as compared with other authorities before assuming that improvements may be possible.

Expenditure
In 1985/6 local authorities in England and Wales planned to spend £740 million net (over £13 per head) on a variety of recreational activities. Most of this expenditure is at district level.
Performance Review in Local Government

Tables 1 and 2 in the chapter on Parks and Open Spaces show an interesting picture of public participation in the forms of leisure activity likely to be provided or supported by local authorities. In general, cultural and sporting interests are of considerably lesser importance in the public's perception than home-based and social activities.

Current management issues

The major issues for management are:

1. The scale, location and nature of facilities to be provided.
2. Possibilities for joint provision.
3. Charging policies.
4. Efficient management of facilities.

Consideration of the service to be provided includes both new provision and the maintenance of existing facilities. It should include marketing, both to establish demand compared with existing private and public provision within easy travel and to promote the fullest use of the facilities. Public fashion varies from one area and one age group to another, and changes often quite unpredictably.

The Council should have a clear view as to the target clients for the facilities it decides to make available. However, costs and benefits may be wider than those directly associated with the activity itself. For example, business may be attracted into the area (possibly at the expense of another's); while the provision of a leisure centre may bring the need for car parking facilities which may or may not be profitable as well as imposing a burden of noise, pollution and irritation on residents.

It may be possible to make arrangements for joint provision with other authorities or even private organisations. For example, theatres often have a wide catchment area and subsidies will thus benefit residents from neighbouring authorities.

It may also be possible to arrange dual or multiple use. For example, public pools may be used by schools and school pools by the public. It may also be possible to make such arrangements with private organisations. Equally, public halls may be an unnecessary expense if there are other suitable commercial or public premises available for letting for similar purposes.

Provision should be regularly reviewed and altered as appropriate. For example, matching opening hours to demand may make a service viable.

Charging policies should be flexible, as again wider considerations may apply. Essentially the Council has to ascertain who actually benefits from a service, those whom they wish to benefit from it, whether they are willing and able to pay for it and if not, whether its subsidy by non-beneficiaries is justified.

This can clearly be a matter of some controversy. However, it is widely accepted that, for example, the public good is served by providing at least some facilities for swimming and other sporting activities which would not be commercially viable. The situation will vary from area to area, depending on its age profile, cultural and sporting interests and general level of affluence.
Having decided to provide or maintain a service, it is particularly important that the Council's objectives are clearly stated and agreed with managers. The principles of accountable management should then be applied, with targets for achievement agreed.

Adequate management information is essential if sound policy decisions are to be made and the results monitored.

Assessments of the effectiveness of the cultural, sporting and other activities covered in this chapter are unlikely to be based on purely objective evidence. References to 'quality of life' or 'civilised values' or 'improved health', whilst meaningful, are not quantifiable. Claims that crime and vandalism are reduced by such activities are unprovable, although empirical studies do suggest a link. This does not mean that such qualitative matters should be ignored, rather that judgements on them must be subjective and a matter for local determination. More confidence in such judgements may follow from the use of public attitude surveys.

Usage is one measure of effectiveness which should be readily obtainable for most activities, and trends in the take up of facilities provided are important.

Efficiency and economy in the management of resources can be measured to varying degrees of refinement depending on the quality of information available, for example on attendance. It should include unit costs and utilisation.

The nature and size of departmental and centres' administration compared with operational expenditure should be monitored, along with central establishment charges.

**Bibliography**

*Local Environmental Services: Pricing and Service Delivery* (1981) Coopers and Lybrand

Discusses the practical prospects for economic pricing of local authority services.

*Sports Council Management Award Regional Assessment Check List* (1985)

Provides a useful vehicle for reviewing management arrangements for indoor sports facilities. Many of the issues covered are of more general application.

*Charges for Leisure Services*, CIPFA

An annual sample survey of charges for a range of leisure services.


Describes good and not so good practice in provision and management and also discusses performance measurement in some detail.


Both these reports contain recommendations of general application.
Performance review guide

This section sets out a detailed series of questions which will help to guide the review and improvement of current management arrangements.

Some of the questions relate to policy matters to be decided by members, or are the professional responsibility of officers as their advisers. These questions are shown in italic. The auditor’s interest is in ensuring that these issues have been addressed and that appropriate policies and management arrangements have been determined. Auditors should also be sensitive to such wider considerations when making judgements on resource usage.

Useful performance indicators and reference documents are shown alongside the relevant questions. Careful comparisons with other local authorities can provide a useful starting point for reviewing current practices. However, differences in the value of indicators between one authority and another, or between an authority and accepted norms, should never form the sole basis for conclusions. Rather they should lead to more searching enquiries into the circumstances which give rise to such differences, and the opportunities which exist for improvements to be made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review questions</th>
<th>Key Indicators/References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scale, location and nature of provision</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the Council stated its aims and objectives for the provision of cultural,</td>
<td>Policy statement available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indoor and outdoor sports and other leisure facilities?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the achievement of aims and objectives regularly reviewed?</td>
<td>Reports to Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achievement rates, eg persons taught to swim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Local successes, eg championships won by users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attendances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the Council is considering providing new facilities is consideration based on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>properly assessed demand?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Particularly where much capital investment is required (eg a sports centre or</td>
<td>Market research report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theatre) this should include competent market research and financial appraisal.</td>
<td>Net cost per seat pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Consideration should take account of similar existing facilities run by the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authority, other local authorities and other public and private organisations as</td>
<td>Complaints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>well as population projections for the catchment area.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The impact on the environment should be included, eg parking, traffic, local</td>
<td>Grants obtained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trade, nuisance to residents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appropriate bodies (eg Arts Council, Countryside Commission, Sports Council,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Boards) should be consulted for advice and support.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The need for flexibility in design should be kept in mind to ensure that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alterations to facilities provided may be made to meet changes in public demand.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Note that decisions about provision and charging are not necessarily based on commercial viability. Local authority provision may be made precisely because there is no commercial prospect for facilities considered to be of benefit to the community.

What are the arrangements for marketing existing facilities?

Is the use made of facilities monitored by the Council?

Are efforts made to secure sponsorship or grants and contributions to facilities or events wherever possible?

When grants or contributions are made to voluntary organisations, how does the Authority satisfy itself that these provide value for money?

2 Joint provision

Has the possibility of joint provision of facilities with other local authorities or private organisations been considered?

• Where, as is often the case, the catchment area for a subsidised facility extends to neighbouring authorities, ratepayers may be supporting the leisure activities of non-residents. In some cases this may well be justified by other benefits accruing from the facility, eg increased trade. The important point is that there should be adequate consideration of these matters.

• Is provision made for dual use, eg with LEA with regard to swimming, on mutually acceptable terms?

Is there adequate liaison with the LEA on the provision of facilities which might be available as part of Adult Education?

Are public halls in competition with (or providing facilities already available in) schools, libraries, colleges or commercial premises?

• Consideration should be given to their continued existence and the use that might be made of a capital receipt from their disposal.
Review questions | Key Indicators/References
--- | ---
3 Charging policies | Trends in attendances
*Does the Council have charging policies aligned to its aims and objectives in respect of target users?*
When were charges last reviewed with a full financial appraisal of policies?
- The Council should be adequately informed on the differences in cost and income levels between different activities, e.g., keep fit classes in sports halls usually produce more income at less cost than badminton.
How do charges compare with similar facilities run by other authorities or private concerns?
Are differential charges made:
- a) to encourage evenly full utilisation?
- b) to non-residents?
- c) to target users?
Do catering and bar facilities make a profit?
Are charges for special exhibitions at art galleries and museums set after enquiries as to current levels elsewhere?
Do charges for public halls cover costs including additional heating and caretaking?
- Some authorities require hirers to take responsibility for caretaking and security.

4 Management of facilities
Is there a system of accountable management with named managers responsible for achieving agreed aims, objectives and targets within budgets?
- This should include the ability to adjust opening hours and staffing to demand.
- Managers should be encouraged to provide alternative uses at times when facilities are under utilised for their normal purposes, and to secure sponsorship of activities wherever possible.
- Staffing should be flexible enough to cope with unusual hours and seasonal variation in demand.
- Optimum use should be made of new technology to reduce staffing needs, e.g., videos to provide information and instruction.

Trends in attendances
- Date of last review
- Income % operational expenditure
- Income per attendance (£)
- Income % gross expenditure

Profit % gross operating expenditure

Income % gross expenditure

Net expenditure per 1000 population (£)
Operating expenditure per attendance (£)
Income % operating expenditure
Trends in attendances
Gross cost per attendance (£)
Subsidy per theatre seat/facility place etc (£)
% utilisation
Bookings refused
Attendances per opening hour

Attendances per employee
### Review questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Key Indicators/References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Are facilities adequately marketed?                                     | % utilisation  
| • The existence of a suitable marketing budget shows a serious interest. However, results will show whether the budget is put to good use. |
| Is accounting and other information adequate for the assessment of performance? | Trends in attendances  
| • The Sports Council for example is developing computerised standard information systems for sports centres. |
| Are members regularly kept informed about the performance of individual facilities? | Marketing budget % income  
| • They should be aware of demographic and other changes likely to affect future performance. |
| Are bar and catering facilities well managed?                           | Profit/deficit % operating expenditure  
| Are provisions and other supplies purchased at competitive prices?      | [See: Reducing the Cost of Local Government Purchases]         |
| How does the cost of maintenance compare with other similar facilities/other authorities? | Cost per m² (£)  
| Are leisure facilities included in a Council system of energy management? | Normalised performance indicator  
| How do the costs of leisure and recreation administration compare with other local authorities? | [See: Saving Energy in Local Government Buildings]  
| What is included within administration expenditure and how does that compare with other authorities? | Proportion of gross expenditure (%)  
| Are central establishment charges fairly allocated?                     | Administration staff % total leisure and recreation staff  
| Are managers able to challenge their apportionment?                     | CEC % gross expenditure  
| How do they compare with other authorities?                             | CEC % operating expenditure  

---

**Leisure — Sports and Cultural Activities**

- **Key Indicators/References**
  - % utilisation
  - Trends in attendances
  - Marketing budget % income
  - Profit/deficit % operating expenditure
  - [See: Reducing the Cost of Local Government Purchases]
  - Cost per m² (£)
  - Normalised performance indicator
  - [See: Saving Energy in Local Government Buildings]
  - Proportion of gross expenditure (%)
  - Administration staff % total leisure and recreation staff
  - CEC % gross expenditure
  - CEC % operating expenditure
Introduction to the service

Library authorities are required by the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act to provide a comprehensive and efficient service to those who live, work or receive education within the area. The Authority's statutory responsibilities also provide opportunities for promoting reading and other cultural/vocational interests which may be thought to be beneficial to the community. Councils may wish for instance to encourage adult learning or to provide support for local industries.

The services provided increasingly extend beyond the loan of books and maintenance of a reference library to include, for example, records, tapes, video tapes and paintings. However, expenditure on books is still approximately eleven times that on other materials. A number of specialist services are also provided, for example information services, services for the housebound, ethnic minorities etc.

Libraries are also an important resource in education, particularly in polytechnics and colleges of further education where stocks may amount to £1–£3 million at a large institute. These libraries are, however, not included within the public library service, although many of the matters covered in this chapter will apply to them.

The most important factor affecting the service is the socio-economic make-up of the resident, working, shopping and student populations. Library usage still tends to be a middle class preference and the nature of demand depends greatly on educational levels and the age profile of the population. Other factors include the availability of bookshops, the expansion of book clubs, and the influence of television, the Open University and technological change.

The statutory requirement to provide a comprehensive service to those who live, work or receive education within the area inevitably influences levels of expenditure, since working, shopping and student populations are very variable additions to the residential population.

Trends

Net expenditure at constant value has changed little since 1974/5, although staff numbers have fallen. In many areas there has been a reduction in opening hours and the numbers of service points.

In spite of this, book issues continue to increase. Thus there has been a growth in usage over the years whilst staff numbers have slowly declined. This means that there has been an increase in productivity as (inadequately) measured by book issues which, taken with the widening of the service provided, implies a substantial improvement in the management of library resources.

Though book stocks continue to rise, additions tend to be concentrated more on new titles and less on renewals of old stock. Some library authorities have reduced reference and specialist services in branch libraries. Certain specialist services, for example to the unemployed, children, ethnic minorities, have tended to increase.

Library services generally have made extensive use of modern technology, as an aid both to users and to better management.

Expenditure

In 1985/6, expenditure on libraries in England and Wales was estimated at £345 million net (£7 per head of population).
Current management issues

The major management issues are:

1. Establishing the purpose, scale and nature of provision, taking into account public demand and available resources.
2. Optimising the use of staff, location of service points, opening hours etc in the light of these considerations.

The most commonly cited objectives for public libraries are education, information, culture and leisure with no generally accepted order of priority.

Within local authority areas, the service provided may differ in detail depending on the Council's assessment of need. Predominantly, this might reasonably be expected to be based on a continuous review of the requirements of borrowers, reference enquirers and other clients.

The Council may also wish to promote particular reading interests. These should be based on a sound assessment of public demand and a realistic view of what is achieved. For example, experience may suggest that public taste cannot be changed to the extent considered desirable.

The policy aims and objectives of the local library service should reflect the priorities set by the Council. The achievement or otherwise of those aims and objectives would then provide indicators of service effectiveness. In many cases the records of book issues provide ready performance indicators for the lending library. The proportion of the public registered as borrowers is also a pointer to effectiveness, although the population factors already mentioned need to be taken into account, as do registration procedures. Some authorities require frequent re–registration while others do not.

Efficiency and economy in the use of resources includes determining the allocation and mix of appropriately graded and experienced professional and other staff, the location of service points and opening hours to match public demand.
Performance Review in Local Government

The net expenditure per book issue and the issues per FTE employee are useful starting points for further enquiry, until more refined indicators are available for measuring efficiency. However, they will not reflect the variations in special services, reference libraries, and non-reading material borrowed.

Ideally, management information systems should enable expenditure to be disaggregated to the various activities. Currently this is rarely the case and, where it is, the bases of expenditure allocation may not be the same.

Bibliography

The Effective Library, B Totterdale and J Bird (1976) Library Association

Though a little dated, this report on the service in Hillingdon LBC discusses the issues facing library provision and the problems which lie in the way of providing an effective service.

Staffing of Public Libraries (1976) DES/LAMSAC


Public Libraries in Metropolitan Areas (November 1985) AMA

A position statement on the effects of government economic policies.


Includes a section on the performance of libraries from the client's point of view.


The report is of general application: supplies of books etc account for about 20% of libraries' expenditure.


Energy costs in libraries can be very high, particularly for lighting in older buildings.
Performance review guide

This section sets out a detailed series of questions which will help to guide the review and improvement of current management arrangements.

Some of the questions relate to policy matters to be decided by members, or are the professional responsibility of officers as their advisers. These questions are shown in italic. The auditor’s interest is in ensuring that these issues have been addressed and that appropriate policies and management arrangements have been determined. Auditors should also be sensitive to such wider considerations when making judgements on resource usage.

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### Review questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 Purpose, scale and nature of provision</th>
<th>Key Indicators/References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the Council have stated aims and objectives for the library service which reflect priorities?</td>
<td>Statement of aims and objectives available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the achievement of these objectives measured?</td>
<td>Book and other stocks per head population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library records should provide for identifying the demand by different client groups for various authors and subject matter, and for other library services. These records should include analyses of issues, requests met by inter-library or inter-branch borrowing and requests which could not be met.</td>
<td>Books etc available for loan % total stocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More positive marketing may be desirable if the proportion of the population registered as borrowers is low.</td>
<td>Additions to stocks per annum % total stocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A recent development has been the establishment of client interest groups to further specific priorities, eg services for the unemployed.</td>
<td>Public attitude surveys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what degree is provision responsive to public demand or subject to other priorities decided by the Council?</td>
<td>[See: Measuring Up]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are members and management kept up to date with trends in demand and the results of action taken to maintain or increase issues or to influence their character?</td>
<td>Changes in take-up of services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time taken to meet requests for books etc not on shelves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Borrowers % catchment population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book and other issues per head population</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues per book in lending stock</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change in book issues:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>– per head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– per book</td>
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</table>
Review questions

- The accumulation of stock should reflect Council decisions as to target users.
- Some authorities set 'issue targets' and monitor progress to their achievement.
- The number of weeks for which books and other items are issued and the number of issues allowed to one person at a time can have an important effect on total issues. (In one authority, switching from 2 to 3 weeks led to issues falling by 12%.)

How many branch libraries are there? Are they sensibly allocated to catchment areas, avoiding unnecessary overlaps or gaps in the service?

Is specialist provision made to meet particular subject needs?

Is there adequate liaison with hospitals, schools, colleges, universities etc to ensure both adequate and economic usage of total library resources?

Is there cooperation with local societies, cultural organisations and local special interest groups (e.g. historical societies, photographic clubs, literary groups) to support the creative use of leisure time?

Are reference and information libraries meeting the needs of users?

Are they located centrally or does every branch have one? If the latter, is it considered justified?

- Management should be aware of the numbers using the reference and other specific services, the nature of requests and the extent to which they are satisfied.
- In some libraries reference enquiries are dealt with in the lending library.
- Many reference enquiries are generated by the lending library.

Is the provision of non-book facilities justified by local circumstances?

- Management should take account of the availability of such facilities, e.g. video tape or compact disc lending and the ability and/or need of borrowers to use them.
- The nature of available non-book stocks should be related to Council decisions as to target users.
- The timing of new provision is important - too early and the public cannot use it.

Key Indicators/References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Review questions</th>
<th>Key Indicators/References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The accumulation of stock should reflect Council decisions as to target users.</td>
<td>Loan period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some authorities set 'issue targets' and monitor progress to their achievement.</td>
<td>Proportion of books etc on loan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of weeks for which books and other items are issued and the number of issues allowed to one person at a time can have an important effect on total issues. (In one authority, switching from 2 to 3 weeks led to issues falling by 12%).</td>
<td>Items on loan at any one time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many branch libraries are there? Are they sensibly allocated to catchment areas, avoiding unnecessary overlaps or gaps in the service?</td>
<td>Number of branch libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is specialist provision made to meet particular subject needs?</td>
<td>Population within one mile of branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there adequate liaison with hospitals, schools, colleges, universities etc to ensure both adequate and economic usage of total library resources?</td>
<td>Opening hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there cooperation with local societies, cultural organisations and local special interest groups (e.g. historical societies, photographic clubs, literary groups) to support the creative use of leisure time?</td>
<td>Library service books per pupil in school libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are reference and information libraries meeting the needs of users?</td>
<td>Service points per 1000 population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are they located centrally or does every branch have one? If the latter, is it considered justified?</td>
<td>Number of local societies etc supported by libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management should be aware of the numbers using the reference and other specific services, the nature of requests and the extent to which they are satisfied.</td>
<td>Unsatisfied requests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In some libraries reference enquiries are dealt with in the lending library.</td>
<td>Numbers of enquiries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many reference enquiries are generated by the lending library.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the provision of non-book facilities justified by local circumstances?</td>
<td>Issues per item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management should take account of the availability of such facilities, e.g. video tape or compact disc lending and the ability and/or need of borrowers to use them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The nature of available non-book stocks should be related to Council decisions as to target users.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The timing of new provision is important - too early and the public cannot use it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 Management of resources

Are the locations and siting of libraries, and the hours for which they remain open, kept well under review to ensure that service is related to demand?

Do members receive regular reports showing the volume of usage, expenditure and unit costs?
- Reports should include comparisons with other authorities and with other periods.
- Mobile libraries should be kept under review to ensure that:
  a) service is related to demand
  b) vehicle usage is optimised
  c) appropriate vehicles are employed, eg maximum capacity vehicles for urban areas, smaller vehicles for rural areas.

Is staffing based on criteria laid down by the Council and do these compare equitably with those of other authorities with similar resident, working and student populations?
- Staffing levels should be related to the level of public demand throughout the week.
- Full use should be made of part time staff, eg for Saturday working, and the 'pooling' of spare staff between branches.
- Note that the size of stock is an important factor in staffing.

Is full use made of modern information retrieval systems and other innovations in libraries?

Are the arrangements for the purchase of books, records and other supplies economic?

Are purchases for schools, social services homes and hospitals coordinated with those for libraries?

Are there arrangements for the disposal of redundant stock, eg by sale to the public?

Are opportunities taken to secure income from sponsorship and advertising?
- This may be in forms other than cash, eg equipment.

Key Indicators/References

Committee reports
- Net expenditure per FTE employee
- Issues per FTE employee

Comparisons between branches within the authority, and with similar authorities of:
- staff per 1000 population
- grading mix
- professional % total staff

Issues per staff hour
Reference and information enquiries per staff hour
Cost per issue

[See: Staffing of Public Libraries]

Acquisition costs (£)
Delivery times
Commodity prices

[See: Reducing the Cost of Local Government Purchases]

Sales % purchases

Income received (£)
Income % gross expenditure
Performance Review in Local Government

Review questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Are arrangements to prevent theft adequate?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Losses may account for 5% or more of stock annually.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The costs and benefits of measures to reduce theft, eg closed circuit TV and other security devices, should be carefully considered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Are charges for overdue books kept under review and is Council policy firmly applied?</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Is the library service included within a Council-wide system of energy control?</th>
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<tr>
<th>How do energy costs compare with with those in other authorities and from one branch to another?</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Is full use made of premises by keeping space utilisation under review and making use of spare capacity for other Council purposes or for letting to outside bodies?</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How does the cost of maintenance compare with other authorities/branches within the Authority?</th>
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<tr>
<th>Are cleaning costs and quality properly controlled?</th>
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<tr>
<th>Key Indicators/References</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book losses (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charges % gross expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All income % gross expenditure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normalised performance indicator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[See: Saving Energy in Local Government Buildings]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost per issue (£)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost per m² (£)</td>
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<td>Cost per m² (£)</td>
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