Read All About It

Guidance on the Publication by Local Authorities of the Citizen's Charter Indicators
This document provides basic guidance for local authorities on publishing locally information about their performance in providing services to the public, as required by the Local Government Act 1992. It may also be helpful to other organisations and individuals interested in how local authorities undertake this task.

The guidance is based on research conducted by the Audit Commission with local authorities and the public during 1993. The Audit Commission would like to thank Epsom and Ewell Borough Council for joining with the Commission in undertaking one part of this work. Thanks are also due to a number of public relations experts working in local government who gave the Commission their advice and to Robertson Bell Associates Ltd.

This document has been produced by the Commission's Citizen's Charter team. The Commission welcomes comments and these should be sent to:

Paul Vovers  
Citizen's Charter Indicators  
The Audit Commission  
1 Vincent Square  
London SW1P 2PN.
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Between April and December 1994, local authorities will for the first time publish information about their performance as required by the Local Government Act 1992. The information to be published relates to the year 1993/94 and was specified by the Audit Commission in December 1992 as part of its role under the Act and as part of the Citizen's Charter initiative. This document outlines the legal obligations which local authorities have in relation to publication and provides basic guidance about communicating effectively information about performance.

The main legal requirements are that the information must be:

- published between 1 April and 31 December 1994;
- placed in a newspaper (the Commission is advised that this means a commercial paid-for publication);
- accurate, as far as is practicable;
- published in a form which makes it comprehensible without reference to other material.

Effective communication with the general public is a key objective of the Citizen's Charter. To achieve this with performance information, local authorities may want to consider doing more than the minimum the law requires. Examples of issues to be considered are:

- the use of an authority's own publications to provide an additional and better presentation where more space is available than in a newspaper advertisement;
- providing further information, such as explanations of local services and policy decisions and additional local performance measures;
- the use of comparisons, particularly with neighbouring authorities.

The document also describes research with the general public conducted in the area of a local authority which published Citizen's Charter indicators on a trial basis during 1993.

The guidance does not include detailed advice on the design and style of local publication, as there is already a wealth of such information in the public domain. References to such advice are included in the document.
Introduction

1. Between April and December 1994, local authorities are required by the *Local Government Act* 1992\(^1\) to publish a range of information about their performance in providing services to the public. This document provides basic guidance for local authorities about responding to this requirement in ways which will achieve effective communication with the public. It may also be useful to others with an interest in how local authorities publish information about their performance. The guidance is based on research conducted by the Audit Commission with local authorities and the public. The Commission has restricted its guidance to some basic principles. These do not cover the presentation and design aspects of publication, for which there is already a wealth of advice available to local authorities. Some sources of such advice are referred to in this document.

2. The information which local authorities must collect and publish is in the form of 'performance indicators' - factual measurements, mostly numerical, of services and their costs. The Audit Commission has drawn up a list of these indicators as part of its role in the *Citizen's Charter*\(^2\) programme for improving the quality of public services. The publication of the performance indicators is intended to increase accountability to local residents and taxpayers by highlighting what authorities do with their money and how well they do it. The Local Government Act says that the indicators should allow comparisons to be made, between authorities and over time. This is intended to help identify the stronger and weaker aspects of each authority's performance and the extent to which it has developed services in the interests of its residents.

3. The information local authorities must collect and publish is decided each year by the Audit Commission, which set out the requirements for 1993/94 in *The Publication of Information (Standards of Performance) Direction*\(^3\) in December 1992. This lists the information to be published, provides detailed definitions, identifies the authorities responsible for publication and specifies some requirements about the format in which the performance indicators should be presented to the public.

4. The Citizen's Charter encourages the providers of public services to communicate effectively with their customers - about the services which are available, about the standards these services should meet and about how well these standards have been achieved. Publication of the indicators by local authorities in their own areas - 'local publication' - will provide an opportunity for them to rise to the challenge of improving communication.

\(^1\) Local Government Act 1992, London, HMSO.
5. This document is in three sections:

- Section 1 reviews the main requirements about local publication contained in the Local Government Act 1992 and the Commission's Direction;

- Section 2 makes general recommendations about the format and timing of publication;

- Section 3 provides references to sources of advice about some of the presentation and design implications of publishing performance indicators and summarises some research into the response of the public to indicators, which the Commission conducted jointly with a local authority.
Section 1
The Main Legal Requirements

GENERAL LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

6. A number of the main publishing requirements are outlined below. Local authorities should consult the Local Government Act 1992 and the Direction to ensure that they have understood the full range of their obligations. They are also subject to general legal obligations in relation to the publication of information.

PUBLICATION IS OBLIGATORY FOR RELEVANT AUTHORITIES

7. Section 1(1) of the Act says:

*The Audit Commission … shall give such directions as it thinks fit for requiring relevant bodies to publish such information relating to their activities in any financial year as will, in the Commission's opinion, facilitate the making of appropriate comparisons (by reference to the criteria of cost, economy, efficiency and effectiveness) between -

(a) the standards of performance achieved by different relevant bodies in that financial year; and

(b) the standards of performance achieved by such bodies in different financial years'.

The Publication of Information (Standards of Performance) Direction 1992 gives effect to this.

8. The Act applies to all bodies with which the Audit Commission is concerned, subject to exceptions listed in Section 1 (8) (a) to (h), which relate to health authorities, parish councils and other organisations which are not included in this initiative. There are some further exceptions in the Direction.

NOT EVERY AUTHORITY HAS TO PUBLISH EVERYTHING

9. The statutory body responsible for providing each local service is responsible for publishing the indicators about it. The responsibilities of different types of authority are detailed in the Direction.
TIMING OF PUBLICATION IS FLEXIBLE, WITHIN LIMITS

10. Section 1 (2) (b) of the Act says:

'[it is the authority's duty] within the period of nine months beginning with the end of that financial year [detailed in the Direction] to publish the information, in accordance with the direction ...'

As the indicators included in the first Direction related to 1993/94, local authorities must publish the required information between 1st April and 31st December 1994.

THE INFORMATION MUST BE ACCURATE, SO FAR AS IS PRACTICABLE

11. Under Section 1 (2) (a) of the Act, authorities must:

'... make such arrangements for collecting and recording the information as secure that the information is available for publication and, so far as is practicable, that everything ... is accurate and complete.'

AUTHORITIES MUST PUBLISH THE INFORMATION IN A NEWSPAPER

12. The Act requires publication in 'a newspaper circulating in the area' (of the authority). The Commission is advised that local authority publications do not qualify as newspapers.

PRESENTATION MUST BE COMPREHENSIBLE

13. Section 7 of the Direction deals with this:

'The information required to be published shall be published in a form which:

(a) is comprehensible without reference to other explanatory material;

(b) presents and groups information by reference to the activities specified in column 2 of paragraph 3 [ie service by service];

(c) identifies information which relevant bodies are required by this direction to publish.'
PUBLICATION IN A NEWSPAPER

14. The Commission is advised that the Local Government Act 1992 requires the indicators to be published in a commercial newspaper printed for sale. Although the newspaper must be one 'circulating in the area', it does not have to be available everywhere in the authority, not to be available only within the authority's boundaries. Local authorities may decide to publish in more than one newspaper.

15. Publication in a newspaper does not have to be a cramped presentation in a minimum paid for space. Authorities may want to explore the possibility of encouraging the newspaper to run feature articles or a supplement to expand on the indicators. Authorities could also consider using an insert to convey the information most effectively.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES’ OWN PUBLICATIONS

16. The requirement to publish the indicators in a newspaper does not prevent an authority from presenting them also in its own information news-sheet or magazine, in another publication such as an A-Z guide to council services or a local charter, or in some other form such as a special leaflet. In these cases, authorities need not include every indicator or service, though care should be taken not to choose indicators for publication in ways that might be misleading. As a general guide, authorities are likely to avoid this if, when publishing information about a particular service, they include all the indicators relevant to it.

MAKING THE INDICATORS COMPREHENSIBLE

17. The Commission’s Direction contains a number of requirements about the comprehensibility of what authorities publish (see paragraph 13). Local authorities should consider how else they can ensure that the indicators can readily be understood. In the Commission’s view, authorities should:

• describe the indicators in words (not just by using their reference numbers in the Direction);

• use a clear title and headings to distinguish the different services reported and the name of the local authority to which the information applies;

• include a short description of the origin and purpose of the indicators.

Clearly readable type and the use of plain language are also important basic requirements.
THE TIMING OF PUBLICATION

18. Neighbouring authorities whose areas are served by the same newspaper, and authorities from different tiers of local government which serve the same areas, should consider the implications of the timing of each other’s publications. If authorities publish separately in the same edition of a paper, they may confuse the public. Authorities could consider joint publication or staggered publication, or other options. Co-ordination will be important in all these cases. If neighbouring authorities of the same tier publish together this may have the added advantages of facilitating comparisons and reducing costs.

19. There is no legal requirement that all the indicators must be published in one place at one time. However, the Commission recommends that authorities do use a single comprehensive presentation when publishing in a commercial newspaper, to ensure that a complete view of their performance is available to the public. This is included as a specific requirement in the Commission’s second Direction (for 1994/95).[^4]

20. Local authorities’ external auditors have a legal obligation to satisfy themselves that authorities have made arrangements for collecting, recording and publishing the indicators which ensure that they are accurate and complete, so far as is practicable. Authorities should take account of the timetable for the audit process when planning the timing of publication, and should discuss their plans with auditors sufficiently in advance of publication to ensure co-ordination with auditors’ timetables for the audit.

PROVIDING EXTRA INFORMATION

21. Within the limits of their legal obligations, local authorities are free when they publish the Citizen's Charter performance indicators to include other measures of the quality and efficiency of their services, describe services set up to respond to local needs and to put the indicators in the context of local circumstances. Where additional information is provided:

- it should be likely to interest the public rather than, for example, the professionals who provide particular services;
- the Citizen's Charter indicators must be clearly identified;
- presentations should not seek to discredit indicators since this is more likely to confuse the public than improve understanding and may be seen as seeking to explain away poor performance.

MAKING COMPARISONS

22. The focus of Section 1 of the Local Government Act 1992 is on information which will allow comparisons to be made between authorities and over time. Comparisons will make the performance indicators more interesting to the public. Even in the first year of publication, many authorities will be able to compare some of their results with those achieved in the previous year (1992/93) and this may be particularly effective for attracting the attention of the public. National averages and ranges are also available for some indicators from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, government statistics and statistical profiles of local authorities produced by the Audit Commission.
23. Some authorities are discussing the exchange of information with their neighbours to allow comparisons to be made. The Commission's research suggests that the public would find such comparisons interesting.

24. In future years, all local authorities will be able to report how their performance compares with that in a previous year or years. In addition, they will be able to use the information published nationally by the Commission to make comparisons with a wide range of other authorities or with local government as a whole.

25. The Commission recognises that there are many factors to take into account when making comparisons between authorities. The Commission will publish in 1994 a guide to interpreting the indicators and their use in making comparisons.

PUBLICATION BY POLICE AND FIRE AUTHORITIES

26. Where a police or fire authority covers the area of more than one county or metropolitan district council, it will need to consider how indicators which it must publish can be linked most effectively with those of the councils in its area. The public is likely to appreciate being able to examine together the indicators relevant to all services in a particular area. And collaboration with local councils - or even joint publication with them - may enable police and fire authorities to reach a much wider audience than they would be able to do by publishing on their own account.
GETTING EXPERT ADVICE

27. In keeping with the spirit of the Citizen's Charter, the Audit Commission encourages local authorities to present the performance indicators in ways which will reach a wide audience and attract the public's attention. But it recognises that local authorities' budgets for this will vary widely, as does their experience in publishing. Authorities regularly take advertising space in commercial newspapers of many types and are familiar with their work being reported in the local press. Many also produce their own publications, ranging from occasional information news-sheets to full-colour magazines. Because many local authorities have expertise in communications and because guidance on publishing information of this nature is already widely available, this document does not cover this aspect of publication.

28. To help make available more detailed advice for authorities which would find it useful, the Commission has supported work among communications specialists in local government to set up ways of sharing their experience and expertise. The local government section of the Institute of Public Relations has produced a brief introduction to a range of issues about presentation which need to be considered when planning the publication of performance indicators. This includes a list of sources of further information and contact names and addresses. This advice will be circulated to all local authorities.

USING FEEDBACK FROM RESEARCH

29. Professional advice about communication, design and public relations will help local authorities meet their objectives for presenting performance indicators. But the test of success will be whether the public understand what is published and find it interesting. This can be assessed in detail once authorities have begun to publish the information, but some feedback on the impact on the public of the publication of performance indicators is already available from two sources.

- Analysis of the experience of providing information to council tenants

Local authorities have had to publish a range of information to their tenants since 1991. A study of the effectiveness of this programme and an analysis of lessons learned over the first two years has been carried out by the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Birmingham University, for the Department of the Environment. One of the published reports from this work, *Producing Reports to Tenants: A Good Practice Guide* covers many of the issues facing local authorities when they are planning publication of the Citizen's Charter indicators and presents a wide range of practical advice about achieving effective communication.

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An assessment of a trial publication of Citizen's Charter indicators by a district council in June 1993

This study was carried out for the council and the Audit Commission and is described in Appendix A.

30. The need to publish performance indicators places obligations on local authorities but also provides them with a new opportunity to provide valuable information to their residents and to explain their services, their policies and the effectiveness with which they meet local needs. The purpose of the Citizen's Charter is to improve the quality of public services; raising awareness of what local authorities provide and how they compare with one another can make an important contribution to this objective. The Audit Commission encourages local authorities to respond positively to the challenge of the Charter and to attract the interest of the general public.
Appendix A

PUBLIC REACTION TO CITIZEN'S CHARTER
INDICATORS PUBLISHED BY A DISTRICT COUNCIL

BACKGROUND

In June 1993 Epsom and Ewell Borough Council published its results for a range of Citizen's Charter indicators on an experimental basis, reporting all those for which information relating to the 1992/93 year was available.

The Council put the information in its news-sheet, Insight, a 16 page tabloid paper, printed in colour, which is published four times a year and delivered to every home in the Borough.

This early publication of these indicators provided an opportunity to investigate the public's interest in them and to obtain their views about how to present this new and complex information effectively.

The research involved a series of group discussions with residents of Epsom & Ewell. The research was carried out by Robertson Bell Associates Ltd and supported jointly by the Audit Commission and the Borough Council.

TRIAL PUBLICATION

The performance indicators were presented in tables, taking just over half a page of Insight (Exhibit 1). Some headings were highlighted in green; there were no illustrations or graphs.

A brief introduction explained what the indicators were and invited comments. Although the other 15 pages of Insight contained a range of reports about the Borough, nothing provided any specific background or context for the indicators, except the other items on the same page. These dealt with:

- future spending plans, listing the budgets for the main council services in 1993/94 on a £s per resident basis. Similar information is included in the Citizen's Charter indicators, but in this case local authorities will have to report actual spending rather than budgets;

- the complaints system in the Borough;

- an analysis of action taken by the Borough in response to the results of a survey of residents carried out in 1992.
The trial presentation did not include all the indicators which Epsom & Ewell will have to publish for 1993/94. But the range was wide enough to convey a fair impression of the kind of feedback local authorities will be giving their residents and how this might be presented. (Unitary authorities will have to report a considerably longer list of indicators, but the problems of presentation are likely to be similar.)

RESEARCH METHOD

The views of a total of 30 residents were canvassed at four group discussions, each lasting about 90 minutes. The groups were drawn from all social categories but split into broad age bands - 21 to 39 and 40 to 64 years. Half the participants had been in touch with the council in the previous six months, the others had not (except to pay a bill). Councillors, council employees and activists were excluded because their personal knowledge of the services covered by the performance indicators might allow them too much influence on group discussions.

The meetings were guided by a facilitator, using a discussion plan. He made extensive use of example publications as prompts to encourage debate among participants. These included:

- current local literature, including local commercial newspapers, Insight, and Epsom & Ewell's A-Z Directory of Services, annual report and leaflets describing services;

- sample materials showing various other ways of presenting the indicators.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Epsom & Ewell is a small local authority with a population of 67,000. It borders the main London conurbation on one side and the Surrey countryside on the other, and is situated in Surrey county. It has over 55% of economically active heads of households in social groups A and B, compared with under 40% for South-East England generally.

The area has a paid-for and a free local newspaper. Insight and the A-Z Directory of Services have both been launched in the last five years as part of a programme to improve communications with residents. Surrey County Council produces its own publications but these were not distributed door-to-door until October 1993.
The Format for Trial Publication Adopted by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council

The indicators were presented in tables, taking just over half a tabloid page.

Exhibit 1: The indicators were presented in tables, taking just over half a tabloid page.
Remember - we are here to help you

At Epsom and Ewell Borough Council, we try to give you the best service we can. If you're not satisfied, we would like to hear from you.

All our staff are expected to take complaints seriously, and deal with them promptly. If you have a complaint, telephone or write to the section concerned - they are the best people to sort your problem out. You will have a reply to any written complaint within 7 days. If you're not satisfied, contact the department's Chief Officer, and if you don't get a satisfactory response, telephone the Town Clerk and Chief Executive, or write to them.

If you still feel that we have not dealt with your complaint properly, you can ring the 'Management Support Unit' and ask for a formal complaint form. When you return this, the Town Clerk and Chief Executive is obliged to investigate the complaint formally with the Chief Officer and the Chairman of the relevant Council Committee. You will be notified of the outcome of the investigation and, if you still feel that you have been unjustly treated, you may contact the Local Ombudsman. He is an independent person appointed by the Government to investigate complaints against local authorities. We can give you information about the Local Ombudsman and how to contact him.

At any stage of your complaint, you may wish to contact your local ward Councillor, who can act on your behalf.

More details of the complaints procedure are available at the Town Hall reception.

Future spending plans

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council plans to spend £5.454m on services in 1993/94. The Council is budgeting to spend £60.20 per resident on a range of services including:

- Community transport and concessionary fares: £8.49 per resident per annum.
- Planned and building control: £12.69 per resident per annum.
- Refuse collection: £7.54 per resident per annum.
- Road maintenance: £15.52 per resident per annum.
- Parks and open spaces: £23.45 per resident per annum.
- Housing services: £10.27 per resident per annum.

- Reviewed our new reception facility to make sure it is welcoming and efficient.
- Organised a Town Hall Open Day.
- Produced INSIGHT quarterly.
- Re-introduced the 'Directory of Services' to every household.
- On this page you can see how we plan to spend your money in 1993/4.

68% thought that we don't keep you informed about what's going on when you have an ongoing problem. 55% wanted to know the name of the person you are dealing with.

- Trained all staff to give their name, on the phone and in person.
- All staff now wear identity cards with their names on.
- 45% wanted guaranteed timetables for putting things right and 38% asked for guaranteed timetables when we answer letters and complaints.

- Established a complaints procedure across the Council. We will deal with your letters in 5 working days, so you will always receive a reply within 7.
- 49% wanted specialist help-lines for certain services.
- Set up special help-lines for the Council Tax and the housing stock transfer.
- 73% wanted the Council to do more to prevent crime in the Borough.
- Allocated a budget for crime prevention.
- Improved lighting in our parks.
- Given grants to elderly people for home security improvements.
- Supported a car crime prevention festival in Nonsuch Park.
- Conducted a major survey to find out about crime and fear of crime in the Borough.
- Set up regular liaison meetings with the police.
RESEARCH RESULTS

General attitudes

There was considerable cynicism about the quality of services provided by local government but at the same time poor knowledge about how it operates and its financing. For many people, the main communication with the council was receiving and paying the annual tax demand, which was what some thought the council was most interested in. Participants were more positive about particular services, perhaps reflecting their actual experiences rather than underlying attitudes.

One consequence of this was mistrust of information from the council, which was commonly regarded as 'trumpet blowing' and likely to rely on selected statistics.

Most participants recognised the A-Z Directory of Services; it was highly regarded and kept for reference. Insight was less well recalled and, though well received by those who had seen it, thought of as a publication which they would not keep for any length of time.

Most participants had heard of the Citizen's Charter but were hazy about what it meant in practice. In discussion, the principles behind it received widespread support but there was scepticism about using it to make things happen - reflecting, for example, a belief that complaints were not satisfactorily dealt with.

Performance indicators were new to most people in the groups. No-one knew about the requirement for them to be published and the presentation in Insight had made little impression. Once the idea had been put forward, however, it generated a lot of interest, though participants remained doubtful about whether the figures would be presented fairly and whether anything would happen if complaints were made on the basis of published indicators about the quality or cost of services being provided.

Publishing the indicators

Once the groups were shown the Insight tables and the ideas for other styles of presentation, they became much more positive and made constructive proposals for getting the information across effectively. The main messages to emerge were:

- the information is important enough to justify spending a reasonable amount of public money on publishing and distributing it each year. Reliable distribution is also important - money spent on publications which do not reach everyone would be poorly regarded;

- the indicators should be accompanied by a 'contact' telephone number, so that residents can call to complain, seek further information or query the figures;

- all the indicators should be published together in one place rather than in presentations about individual services, even if these are in the same document. This allows readers to find the items which interest them most and focus on these. Putting the information in
leaflets about particular services is considered expensive and open to presentations designed
to highlight good points and conceal weaknesses;

- comparisons are very important, particularly with neighbouring authorities with which
  people are familiar personally or through friends and relatives. National or 'family' averages
  are little understood or considered uninteresting. Comparisons with last year's performance
  are also very useful; objective data of this type can be an antidote to exaggerated claims
  about service improvement;

- targets can cause confusion. Residents want to know that the targets set for providing
  services are reasonable (not too low) and want them to be simple - something happening
  78% of the time, for example, is a 'fudge'. The council should say what level of service all
  its customers should get, and whether or not they provided it;

- background information is essential to explain the indicators. Too much explanation would
  be better than too little. The participants suggested a number of areas where background
  information would be useful. These included the Citizen's Charter itself and how to make
  use of it; how the indicators were drawn up; and how performance is measured in practice;

- there should be explanations of any areas of poor council performance and details of the
  action proposed to improve these in the future;

- the indicators should be presented in tables showing where possible figures for this year, last
  year and neighbouring authorities. Symbols or simple graphics could be used to brighten
  this up (Exhibits 2 and 3) but 'fancy' graphical presentations (Exhibit 4) can be confusing
  and should not be used instead of tables. In a publication such as Insight, the centre pages
  were identified as a good place for the main presentation. Commentary should be separated
  from the basic data;

- plain English and bigger print were the most frequent suggestions for enhancing the
  materials shown to the groups.

Further information about this research can be obtained from: Keith Horner, Epsom & Ewell
Borough Council, PO Box 5, Town Hall, The Parade, Epsom KT18 5BY. Tel 0372 732132.
Members of the public found the presentation in tables easiest to understand.

### Sample Presentation in Tables

**The Citizen's Charter**

**IT'S YOUR COUNCIL, but how did we perform for you?**

The Council is constantly renewing its ways of improving their services to you. A year on, here is a chance for you to judge how well we have done in responding to your concerns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEALING WITH THE PUBLIC</th>
<th>THE HOUSING STOCK (ACCOMMODATION)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target for answering calls.</strong></td>
<td>Dwellings managed by the authority at March 31 1994.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target for answering letters.</strong></td>
<td>1761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The number of complaints considered by Ombudsman.</strong></td>
<td>Dwellings adapted for elderly and disabled people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local settlement.</strong></td>
<td>Flats in blocks of three storeys or over managed by the authority at March 31.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maladministration with injustice.</strong></td>
<td>The percentage of these flats with controlled entry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Handling complaints. Our definition: ANY COMMUNICATION EXPRESSING CRITICISM OF THE COUNCIL, EITHER FOR THE WAY A SERVICE HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT, FAILURE TO DO SOMETHING WE SHOULD HAVE DONE OR THE LEVEL OF SERVICE WE OFFER.
- Does EBC have a written policy and procedure for dealing with complaints covering all services, up to date and available to the public? YES
- Does it contain information on the procedure for making complaints? YES
- Does it contain a clear allocation of responsibility for receiving, investigating, and managing the arrangements for dealing with complaints? YES
- Does it contain time limits and targets for dealing with complaints? YES
- Does it specify that, when time limits and targets are not met, complainants must be informed of the delay, the reason and the revised target? YES
- Does it specify that those complaining in writing must receive a written explanation of the outcome of the complaint? NO

- Dwellings let to new tenants. 165
- Nominations to housing associations. 27
- Dwellings and authority nominations to housing associations let to homeless households. 36
- Dwellings and authority nominations to housing associations let to others. 129
- Empty dwellings which are available for letting or awaiting minor repairs. 7
- Empty dwellings which do not fall into the above categories. 2
- The average time taken to relet dwellings available for letting or awaiting minor repairs. 4.5 weeks

**Housing the Homeless**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Households accepted by the authority as homeless at March 31 and housed in:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bed and Breakfast accommodation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostel accommodation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other accommodation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By December 1994, the Borough Council will have published details of its performance against around 80 "indicators" to help you compare your Council's service levels and achievements with others and decide how well we are working for you. The indicators will relate to the Council's performance in the year up to April 1994.
In order to get “ahead of the game” and make sure that the Council can produce the information next year, staff have been busy preparing information for a pilot “dry run” with last year’s figures.

The Audit Commission hopes to add more indicators if there is public demand for that information.

The areas of information for next year are given opposite, with some examples of the Council’s performance in the year up to April 1993.

If you would like more information published, or have any other views about the proposed performance indicators, please feel free to phone the Charter Line.
Members of the public liked simple graphics which brightened up the presentation.
An Example of Confusing Graphics

The public thought this approach was eye-catching but difficult to understand.
HMSO publications are available from:

HMSO Publications Centre  
(Mail, fax and telephone orders only)  
PO Box 276, London, SW8 5DT  
Telephone orders 071-873 9090  
General Enquiries 071-873 0011  
(queuing system in operation for both numbers)  
Fax orders 071-873 8200  

HMSO Bookshops  
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