

COMTECHSA

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SOCIAL ACCOUNTS

1 April 2000 - 31 March 2001

Community Technical Services Agency (COMTECHSA) Limited

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	5
2. THE SOCIAL AUDIT PROCESS.....	7
3. VALUES, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES	9
Values.....	9
Objectives and Activities	10
COMTECHSA Stakeholder Map	12
4. STAKEHOLDERS	13
5. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE SOCIAL AUDIT.....	15
General	15
Questionnaires.....	16
Interviews and Group Meetings.....	18
Omissions	19
6. REPORTING ON PERFORMANCE - VALUES, OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES	21
Notes on Methods of Reporting.....	21
Values.....	23
Objective 1	29
Objective 2.....	43
Objective 3.....	51
Objective 4	61
Objective 5.....	67
Objective 6.....	71
Objective 7.....	77
Objective 8.....	87
7. AND FINALLY	97
Issues Raised by the Social Audit	97
Themes.....	97
Issues by Value and Objective	97
Strategy Workshop 10 th & 11 th July 2001	100
8. THE NEXT SOCIAL AUDIT!	101
Publication	101

1. INTRODUCTION

COMTECHSA is a Community Technical Aid Centre that provides a wide variety of services in Liverpool, Merseyside and the surrounding areas.

COMTECHSA aims to:

- help community groups and voluntary organisations make the best use of their land, buildings and environment;
- tackle the causes and consequences of fuel poverty;
- provide high quality accommodation for community groups and voluntary organisations.

COMTECHSA is a non-profit-making members co-operative registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 (Register No. 22674R). Membership of COMTECHSA is open to any community group or voluntary organisation in Merseyside.

COMTECHSA is managed by a voluntary Committee of Management comprised of representatives from member groups. At the end of the current audit year, there are twelve members of the committee, including a statutory place for our main funders, Liverpool City Council.

COMTECHSA was established in November 1979 with funding from Liverpool City Council's Inner City Partnership programme. COMTECHSA is currently funded via a combination of grant aid from Liverpool City Council and fee income generated by the architectural service. We are indebted to Charitable Trusts and Manweb plc for donations which support our fuel rights work and to the Netherley and Valley Partnership and COMTECHSA Charitable Trust for supporting our Project Worker Training Scheme.

Groups who have the resources to pay fees for architectural services are charged in accordance with our published Fee Policy document. Otherwise architectural services are provided on an 'at risk' basis.

The information, advice and advocacy services of COMTECHSA's fuel rights unit are available free of charge to individuals experiencing difficulties with their fuel supply.

COMTECHSA is based at 60 Duke Street, Liverpool, L1 5AA in the heart of the RopeWalks Partnership area which is currently experiencing considerable investment as part of a wide regeneration strategy. COMTECHSA refurbished the former printing works in 1997 and, aside from its own offices, COMTECHSA also has fourteen small offices which are available for rent by small community and voluntary groups.

COMTECHSA has a staff team of fourteen plus two trainees with one part time admin post currently vacant. The staff structure is contained in the Appendices.

2. THE SOCIAL AUDIT PROCESS

Social Auditing was first considered as a process as COMTECHSA's three year Development Plan (1997-2000) neared the end of its lifespan. It was envisaged that the process would provide measurable outputs and a framework for a new plan and the idea was put to the Committee of Management at the November 1999 meeting.

As well as the end of the Development Plan, issues arose as a result of a change in the award of Grant Aid by Liverpool City Council from a yearly application to a three year contract. Issues were identified by the Council which needed to be addressed by COMTECHSA, namely:

- investigating the relocation of the Fuel Rights Unit to a body eligible for Legal Aid (now Community Legal Services funding);
- exploring options for generating increased rental and fee income.

Following a presentation to the Committee on 11 January 2000, CBS Network were appointed as Social Audit Consultants for the year 1 April 2000 - 31 March 2001. CBS began the initial scoping exercise in February, talking to staff and identifying information which was already being collected, with the main consultation taking place early in March to identify key stakeholders and to draft COMTECHSA's Values, Objectives and Activities.

The Social Audit Framework was presented to the Committee of Management and approved at their meeting of 2 May 2000.

The following persons have been involved in conducting the social audit process and compiling the social accounts:

- Management of process and preparation of accounts:

<i>Greg Allen</i>	<i>Director, COMTECHSA</i>
<i>Jeni Morgan</i>	<i>Admin Worker, COMTECHSA</i>

- Advice on and facilitation of social audit process:

<i>Alan Kay</i>	<i>CBS Network</i>
<i>John Pearce</i>	<i>CBS Network</i>

3. VALUES, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

COMTECHSA is a Community Technical Aid Centre that provides a wide variety of services in Liverpool, Merseyside and the surrounding areas. COMTECHSA aims to:

- help community groups and voluntary organisations make the best use of their land, buildings and environment;
- tackle the causes and consequences of fuel poverty;
- provide high quality accommodation for community groups and voluntary organisations.

The Values, Objectives and Activities as presented in the Social Accounts were drafted following a scoping exercise carried out by CBS Network in Feb 2000, and a consultation day on 7 March 2000 between COMTECHSA staff and Committee of Management members. The Committee considered several versions of the Values Objectives and Activities and approved the Social Audit Framework on 2 May 2000.

Values

There are six Values which underpin our work, as follows:

1. ***COMTECHSA believes in the concept and practice of community-owned and controlled development by encouraging and supporting community and voluntary groups to make informed choices and to have confidence in their plans and in their actions.***
2. ***COMTECHSA adopts and promotes environmentally sustainable practices in all its work.***
3. ***COMTECHSA is a user-controlled democratic and accountable organisation which seeks to encourage participation and user-control in all aspects of its work as well as in its organisation.***
4. ***COMTECHSA adopts an approachable, open and friendly style in its work and ensures the highest standards of service, integrity and honesty in its relations with members, clients and others.***
5. ***COMTECHSA is committed to achieving equal opportunities in all aspects of its work and to ensuring easy accessibility to individuals and to organisations in all circumstances.***
6. ***COMTECHSA is non-profit-distributing and is committed to reinvesting any surplus for the benefit of its community of members and to being non-exploitative in its relations with its members, staff and all other stakeholders.***

Stakeholder views and comments on these values are addressed in Section 6.

Objectives and Activities

Eight Objectives were drawn up to illustrate in more detail our aims as an organisation. Of these, five (nos. 1 to 5 below) can be considered 'external' objectives, ie they relate to things outside of COMTECHSA and are merely influenced by COMTECHSA's activities. The remaining three (nos. 6 to 8 below) all happen within COMTECHSA itself and would not be issues if the organisation did not exist.

There are 61 activities (32 external, 29 internal) which were identified as contributing to these objectives. The Objectives and associated Activities are as follows:

1. **To assist and empower community and voluntary groups in Liverpool, Merseyside and surrounding areas, in particular with regard to urban regeneration and the development of their land and buildings by ...**
 - *providing architectural and associated services.*
 - *undertaking feasibility studies*
 - *providing building maintenance advice*
 - *providing project management services*
 - *providing property management advice*
 - *undertaking health and safety reports*
 - *acting as planning supervisors*
 - *working with community and voluntary groups (the members) to strengthen their capacity as organisations to be able to take forward their projects and so contribute to improving the quality of life for their communities*
 - *contributing to the personal and social development of individuals involved in the management and development of community buildings and land*
 - *encouraging client groups to fully participate in all decisions affecting their projects and so be in control of their projects*
 - *providing general development advice*
 - *offering advice on sources of funding related to the built environment*
 - *giving appropriate environmentally aware design and other advice*
 - *communicating clearly*

2. **To assist and empower community and voluntary groups in Liverpool, Merseyside and surrounding areas by developing and managing high quality accommodation by ...**
 - *providing accessible, serviced office accommodation.*
 - *offering training and meeting facilities.*
 - *giving tenants security of tenure.*
 - *holding property as an asset on behalf of the community and voluntary sector.*
 - *adopting environmentally sustainable housekeeping practices within the workspace.*

3. **To provide services to individuals and to community groups to combat the causes and consequences of fuel poverty by ...**
 - *providing information and advice to individual clients and community groups*
 - *advocating on behalf of individual clients*
 - *campaigning and advocating on behalf of, in particular, low income and disadvantaged households*
 - *raising awareness and influencing social policy and practice by undertaking research and consultancy work and providing presentations*
 - *providing quality training in all aspects of fuel rights issues*

- 4. To promote knowledge about how the community can act to better control and influence the built environment by ...**
 - *developing and reviewing an environmental impact policy (minimising resource consumption through reducing, reusing and recycling) and promoting it*
 - *publishing information about COMTECHSA and its work*
 - *providing appropriate training to community and voluntary groups*
 - *encouraging information exchange and networking to assist the community groups manage their built environment and assets*
 - *influencing the policy and practice of funders of community organisations*

- 5. To promote and encourage local sustainable development by ...**
 - *encouraging the use of local labour and the use of local contractors*
 - *supporting community participation in making decisions*
 - *attracting other resources to a local area*

- 6. To be an open, accountable and user-controlled organisation by ...**
 - *having a democratically elected, active and informed Management Committee*
 - *increasing the number and spread of the membership*
 - *providing information to the members and the wider community*
 - *completing a regular social audit and consulting the key stakeholders*
 - *producing an annual report, accounts and having an Annual General Meeting*
 - *maintaining a complaints policy and procedure*
 - *maintaining an organisational confidentiality policy*

- 7. To be a responsible and considerate employer by ...**
 - *having good terms and conditions, eg flexitime, etc*
 - *encouraging participation through open management and good communications*
 - *providing training for staff and, where appropriate, the Management Committee*
 - *offering work experience and training within COMTECHSA's work*
 - *being understanding and supportive to staff*
 - *providing good working facilities and a safe and healthy environment*
 - *offering good pay*
 - *making the buildings accessible*
 - *having an equal opportunities policy*
 - *holding regular supervision sessions for all staff*
 - *introduction of a staff appraisal system*
 - *offering security of employment*
 - *maintaining good relations with the unions*

- 8. To make COMTECHSA a long term sustainable organisation by ...**
 - *maximising fees for work done and as a proportion of the total work*
 - *by being innovative and thinking to the future*
 - *researching the needs of community groups and the potential for the development of other services to be offered by COMTECHSA*
 - *exploring the development of additional buildings*
 - *increasing publicity and promotion of COMTECHSA and its services*
 - *attaining a position of influence through improved PR and a marketing strategy, and through increased networking*
 - *reviewing and, if necessary, amending the current Constitution*
 - *acquiring Community Legal Service kitemark*
 - *having and implementing an environmental impact policy and minimising resource consumption by reducing, reusing and recycling*

Performance on these objectives and activities, along with stakeholder views, are detailed in section 6 below.

COMTECHSA Stakeholder Map

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	FOCI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users/Clients <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - User groups of the architectural and associated services within the past two years - Tenants of 60 Duke Street - <i>Non-resident users of 60 Duke Street, eg users of the training rooms</i> - <i>Clients of the fuel rights service</i> - <i>Groups receiving general advice and information</i> 	<p>A B C E H</p> <p>A B C D E H</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COMTECHSA Internal Stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff and trainees including past staff members - Members of the Committee of Management - <i>Work experience placements</i> 	<p>B C D E F G H I</p> <p>B C D E F H</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Wider Community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Politicians and community leaders - all councillors, MP's and MEP's from the five Merseyside councils - Non-member voluntary organisations - <i>Other technical aid professionals</i> 	<p>B D F H I</p> <p>B D</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Bodies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All technical staff in the public sector with whom COMTECHSA liaise, eg Environmental Health, Fire Regulations, Planning Department, etc - <i>Regulatory bodies</i> - <i>Other statutory bodies</i> 	<p>A B C E</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All members other than those who have made use of the service within the past 2 years. 	<p>A B C D E H</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Potential Funders of COMTECHSA - Current funders of COMTECHSA, ie Liverpool City Council and Manweb - <i>Funders of client groups</i> 	<p>B D F</p> <p>B</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner Organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fuel rights partners, ie referring agencies - <i>Other partner organisations</i> - <i>Contractors and other suppliers</i> 	<p>A D E</p>

4. STAKEHOLDERS

During initial discussions with staff and committee members in February 2000, CBS Network identified the stakeholder groups in the table opposite. A list was also drawn up of focus areas upon which stakeholder groups might be consulted.

The stakeholder groups were discussed further at subsequent meetings in March and April 2000 to identify

- which aspects of COMTECHSA's operations they would have an interest in and should therefore be consulted on; and
- what priority should be given within the current social audit cycle, ie should they be put back until future years.

Focus areas for consultation were identified as follows:

- A which services have been used; quality of service
- B awareness of range of architectural services; appropriateness; importance (prioritise); other services?
- C awareness of/examples of group empowerment; strengthened capacity and/or individual personal development
- D awareness of fuel rights services
- E whether COMTECHSA lives up to its values
- F awareness of core Objectives and Activities; relevance of these; suggestions for future changes
- G working for COMTECHSA
- H accountability and user-control of the organisation
- I sustainability

In conjunction with the stakeholder groups identified, these focus areas formed the basis for both consultation questionnaires and interviews.

The table overleaf is the full map of stakeholders of COMTECHSA identified during the initial consultations. Those groups in italics were not initially targeted for inclusion in the first cycle of the Social Audit:

During the course of the year, this list was reviewed almost continually. The review process looked not only at who the stakeholders were, but whether they were to be consulted this year or during future cycle years, and how they were to be consulted.

NB: This was not the final list of stakeholder consultations. Details of how this map was altered are addressed in Section 5 below - Scope and Methodology.

5. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE SOCIAL AUDIT

General

The Social Audit Year ran from 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001. Some monitoring systems were not introduced fully until 1 July 2000. Data from these systems has been used to estimate full year figures on a pro rata basis where appropriate and notes to this effect are included in the main text of the document when this is the case.

A large quantity of the information required to compile the Social Audit was already being collected by COMTECHSA. This is listed in the Results from the Scoping Study (Appendix 1 of the Framework Document).

The Social Bookkeeping System was built on existing information systems with several additions, alterations and modifications. Examples include:

- modifications to and rationalisation of the fuel rights timesheet
- introduction of a fuel rights timesheet monitoring system
- adding project value to the existing project register
- creating a new Job Register
- introducing a recording system for advice and help given to non-members
- a new training file and record keeping system
- the introduction of weekly “added value hours” timesheets

Many of the alterations were just the simple changes needed to start to record activities identified by the Social Audit and required little, if any, explanation to staff. Others were major changes introduced in light of the Social Audit and in consultation with staff.

An example of the latter was the system for recording “added value”. Added value is a concept that tries to identify those services provided by COMTECHSA on architectural projects that would not normally be included by a private sector architect, eg “capacity building”. It was very difficult to identify these in the first place and subsequently a hard task to both devise a recording system for such work and complete the timesheets.

After the initial timesheets were completed, the system was modified slightly and, although the forms were not popular with staff, compliance in completing the forms has been almost 100%. The results are very interesting and should inform a debate about how to improve the system next year.

All information and reference sources are detailed throughout the document and a comprehensive list is provided in the appendices.

Questionnaires

These were based on the stakeholder map and focus areas identified in Section 4 above. The basis for the questionnaires was devised by CBS Network. COMTECHSA then reformatted and, where feasible, passed copies to appropriate persons to ascertain the comprehensibility and completeness of the questionnaires. Where additions and changes were made, these are described below.

All questionnaires were sent with Freepost envelopes to facilitate their return and a 'closing date' for receipt. Once completed forms had been returned, they were analysed and all comments collected together. Copies of these comments and the analysis of the results are available in the appendices. Source questionnaires are kept at COMTECHSA's offices. Also in the appendices is a table of when questionnaires were sent, to whom, how many were sent and returned, and any additional information sent with the questionnaires.

Questionnaire results were largely collated by COMTECHSA, however, in the interests of confidentiality and to encourage open and honest responses, both the staff and committee questionnaires were analysed independently by CBS Network.

The following groups of key stakeholders were selected for inclusion in the first cycle of the Social Audit Process and were consulted by questionnaire, copies of which are available in the Appendices:

- **Member Groups including User Groups of the architectural and associated services**

500 questionnaires distributed, 34 returned (7%)

It had originally been intended to consult User Groups (ie those who had used COMTECHSA's services in the last two years) separately from the Member Groups. However, since all User Groups (except four) are also Member Groups, and the questionnaires for the two groups are almost identical, it was agreed that a single questionnaire would be sent to both groups. This questionnaire asked groups to identify the services they had made use of within the last two years which would enable separation of User Groups from Member Groups were it deemed that there would be benefits from this.

These questionnaires were distributed with the AGM packs which were distributed during September 2000. Unfortunately, a clerical error meant that some 68 of these members were not included in this mailing and a second questionnaire was sent to these groups, plus new members after the AGM, in late January 2001. In addition, all other user groups were sent a further copy of the questionnaire to encourage more responses.

The response rate for the second group of questionnaires was 35 out of 68 (51%). There could be two reasons for the higher response rate. Firstly, the second set of questionnaires were sent out on their own and not as part of the AGM mailing. The original questionnaires may have been "lost" in the AGM mailing pack. Secondly, the second set of questionnaires were sent to newer members who have joined COMTECHSA in recent years. Membership of COMTECHSA is life-long for a one-off payment of £1. The first members joined in 1979 and there are now nearly 500. It may be that this means there is a large membership of whom a large proportion are no longer truly engaged in COMTECHSA and its work.

- **Tenants of 60 Duke Street**

8 questionnaires distributed, 5 returned (63%)

A copy of the questionnaire was sent to the most senior person based at Duke Street and working for each organisation. This was accompanied by a memo to explain the purpose of the questionnaire, and to offer further copies should other staff, committee, volunteers and users wish to complete one.

An extra section was included in the tenants questionnaires to ask about specific aspects of the building, eg maintenance, reception, facilities, etc.

- **Staff and Trainees**

20 questionnaires distributed, 16 returned (80%)

Fourteen staff who are currently employed, two trainee project workers and four former staff (who left within the previous 12 month period) all received this questionnaire. The questionnaire was 'test driven' prior to distribution by a committee member who had previously been employed by COMTECHSA. The completed questionnaires were then analysed by CBS Network to maintain confidentiality.

- **Members of the Committee of Management**

16 questionnaires distributed, 6 returned (38%)

The COMTECHSA Committee year runs from 1 October each year, the new committee being elected at the AGM in September. For the current social audit year, questionnaires were sent to committee members in late August, ie prior to the changeover. Two members agreed to comment on the questionnaire prior to distribution and, as with staff questionnaires, the results were analysed by CBS Network for reasons of confidentiality.

- **Politicians and community leaders**

377 questionnaires distributed, 24 returned (6%)

Questionnaires and information packs were sent to the following groups of local politicians:

- Members of European Parliament for the North West region
- Members of Parliament for Merseyside constituencies
- Local Councillors within the five Merseyside Councils - Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, Wirral and Knowsley

- **Funders of COMTECHSA's member groups**

31 questionnaires distributed, 6 returned (19%)

Originally it was agreed to only contact *potential* funders of COMTECHSA. However, it was felt that agencies which may fund our member groups are just as important - without the groups to fund, COMTECHSA would not exist to be funded. Moreover, the two groups of funders are more or less one and the same.

Funder groups broke down into the following sub groups:

- Partnership areas within Liverpool
- Regional funding initiative, eg ERDF, Objective 1 etc
- National Public Funders, eg NLGB, Millennium Commission etc
- Private Trust Funds

Liverpool City Council and other councils in neighbouring boroughs were omitted from this list because only funders of capital projects were being considered and it was not thought that LCC and other councils still provided capital funding. However, on reflection, this was realised to be an error, as some projects do include elements of funding from local councils.

- **Neighbouring Councils**

4 questionnaires distributed, 0 returned (0%)

This stakeholder group, comprising the four Merseyside councils other than Liverpool, caused some problems in trying to find the appropriate person and/or department to which the questionnaire should be sent. Despite attempts by the Director to find out this information, none of the questionnaires were returned.

- **Fuel Rights Referral Agents**

42 questionnaires distributed, 22 returned (52%)

This group comprised all those who have referred individuals to the fuel rights service for advice, including social services, benefits agency offices and citizen advice bureaux amongst others.

This questionnaire included questions on how people felt the service had performed, using criteria set out in the 1997-2000 Development Plan.

Interviews and Group Meetings

Once the questionnaires had been analysed, further views and opinions were collected as follows:

- **Committee of Management**

6 members of a total of 11

- **COMTECHSA Staff**

8 staff from a total of 16

CBS Network met with these two key stakeholders as a group to discuss preliminary findings of the questionnaire analyses. The notes of these meetings are contained in the Appendices.

- **COMTECHSA's Trainees**

2 trainees of 2

The two trainees were interviewed by the Director in June 2001 to assess their experience and views on COMTECHSA's Project Worker Training Scheme. Full notes of the interview meeting are included in the Appendices.

- **User Groups**

8 groups selected from a list of 47

CBS Network were given a list of all current user groups in the audit year to 31 January 2001. From this list, random groups were selected to be visited in order to explore their opinions of and experiences with COMTECHSA. The format of these meetings is included in the Appendices.

Omissions

The following groups were not consulted during this, the first cycle of the Social Audit:

Non-member voluntary organisations were omitted partly due to time constraints, and further hampered by difficulties in compiling a list which excluded member groups.

Public Sector Technical Staff with whom COMTECHSA liaise were omitted again due to the time factor but also due to the large number of people dealt with within the same departments.

Current Funders of COMTECHSA COMTECHSA's main funder is Liverpool City Council who, during 2000/2001, undertook a major review of grant aid to community and voluntary sector organisations. This review meant that all organisations, including COMTECHSA, had to make fresh applications for grant aid during the year. COMTECHSA's application was successful and its core funding continues. In this environment it was decided not to consult Liverpool City Council during the audit year, however, it is intended to consult with them on the results of the audit during the coming year.

6. REPORTING ON PERFORMANCE - VALUES, OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

Notes on Methods of Reporting

- i. All statistics derived from the analysis of questionnaires are based on the number of returned questionnaires, not the total number of stakeholders.
- ii. Awareness is based on a straightforward score of one point for each time a yes was recorded and then a percentage calculated from the number of respondents.
- iii. Where order of importance (1, 2, 3) is stated, this was based on the totals when awarding three points for a score of 1, two points for a score of 2 and one point for a score of 3. Equal positions are indicated in the reporting of individual objectives.
- iv. When reporting on order of importance of objectives, this is done on a 1 point per tick basis and position based on the resultant totals.
- v. Where agreement/disagreement was registered on a 5 to 1 scale, for ease of reporting 5 & 4 (agreement) and 2 & 1 (disagreement) have been reported together.

Furthermore, percentages for such questions have been calculated on the number of people responding to that particular question, irrespective of the number of questionnaires returned for that stakeholder group. For example, 12 questionnaires were returned, but only four respondents answered the question, the score is calculated as a percentage of 4, not of 12.

- vi. Some questions asked respondents to consider effectiveness and/or ineffectiveness. Awarding one point for an effective tick and subtracting one point for an ineffective tick, the total score was then converted to a percentage based on the total number of questionnaires returned. Negative percentages are reported as ineffective activities.

For example, 12 questionnaires were returned, 6 said it was effective, 3 said it was ineffective and the remaining 3 didn't know. The resultant percentage would be calculated as the effective score (6), less the ineffective responses (3) as a percentage of the 12 returned questionnaires, ie 25% effective.

- vii. The social accounting for some parts of the social audit were not in place until 1 July 2000. Where this is the case, the recorded figures have been shown along with a 'pro rata' estimated figure for a 12 month period. The estimated 12 month figure has been used for all subsequent analysis/reporting.
- viii. Where a list of 'Further Information' is given, Those items in normal typeface are included in the Appendices whilst the *italicised* items are all available at COMTECHSA's offices.

Values

The percentages in the tables below reflect the number of the respondents who scored 4 or 5 (agree - light grey - or strongly agree - dark grey) when asked whether COMTECHSA lived up to the individual values.

Where scores for the ranking of values according to importance are given, see notes (iv) at the beginning of Section 6.

Value 1 *COMTECHSA believes in the concept and practice of community-owned and controlled development encouraging and supporting community and voluntary groups to make informed choices and to have confidence in their plans and in their actions.*

When asked whether COMTECHSA lived up to this value, stakeholders responded as follows:-



eg 100% of management committee respondents believe we live up to this value

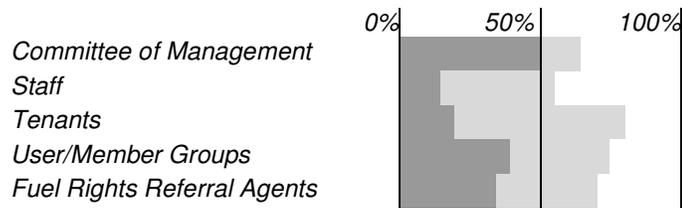
For **funders** this was the most important value of COMTECHSA (score of 16 out of a possible 18).

One of our committee members illustrated this point with reference to Old Swan Boys' Club: '... due to close. COMTECHSA's report kept it open and led to huge investment.' A new member group commented that 'Since their [COMTECHSA's] intervention, Come Alive at 55 has come alive.'

The relatively low score from tenants will reflect their experience of COMTECHSA as the Landlord, who owns and controls the property that they occupy. We have undertaken to manage this on their behalf rather than with them and therefore this objective does not really apply to them in their role as tenants. This may also be affected by the role of the people who actually completed the Tenants' Questionnaire (see Activity 2a).

Value 2 *COMTECHSA adopts and promotes environmentally sustainable practices in all its work.*

When asked whether COMTECHSA lived up to this value, stakeholders responded as follows:-



eg 65% of management committee respondents believe we live up to this value

Interestingly, 'users' score COMTECHSA higher on this issue than staff and committee members. Is this because they have lower expectations?

For **funders** this was the second most important value (score of 9 out of a possible 18).

Value 3 ***COMTECHSA is a user-controlled, democratic and accountable organisation which seeks to encourage participation and user-control in all aspects of its work as well as in its organisation.***

When asked whether COMTECHSA lived up to this value, stakeholders responded as follows:-



eg 100% of management committee respondents believe we live up to this value

One tenant commented that they 'did not know enough to answer' about this objective. One fuel rights referral agent did not feel COMTECHSA lived up to this value.

Tenants often have a more distant relationship with COMTECHSA than other service users (see Value 1) and will have little experience of COMTECHSA as a user-controlled agency. This also applies to Fuel Rights Referral Agents who are less likely to become involved in COMTECHSA's management or to be members of COMTECHSA than other user groups.

For **funders** this was the third most important value (score of 5 out of a possible 18).

Asked specifically about this value, one user group wrote: 'I admire the way COMTECHSA submits itself to control by its users. I guess it must be frustrating at times, being controlled by non-professionals who do not understand what you are trying to achieve.' Three user group interviewees felt that user control was important: 'they are working for us, we are working for one another'. However, when interviewed another user group felt that user control was neither important nor of interest.

At the staff interviews, discussion took place around COMTECHSA itself being user-controlled, ie whether it should be user-controlled and whether or not it is really user-controlled in practice.

A tenant summed up their perceptions of this value: 'In my experience I'd say responsive to users rather than controlled by users.'

A councillor made their comments on user control: 'user controlled is important, but still needs management independent of users to still function.'

Members of the Committee of Management commented on the success of this value from their own point of view: 'COMTECHSA is very open and answerable to members' and 'COMTECHSA is as open and accountable as it could be.' One committee member expanded further: '... objective is being met ... there is room for more to be done ... need more information ... structurally open but could do more ... accountability to users could be more regular and substantial.'

Value 4 ***COMTECHSA adopts an approachable, open and friendly style in its work and ensures the highest standards of service, integrity and honesty in its relations with members, clients and others.***

When asked whether COMTECHSA lived up to this value, stakeholders responded as follows:-



eg 85% of management committee respondents believe we live up to this value

For **funders** this was the sixth most important value (score of 0 out of a possible 18).

This value was outlined by a user group who stated that 'I was not sure about our first visit by a COMTECHSA member' but that the project workers were 'friendly, professional, creative, flexible and not only listened to our ideas but interpreted them in an imaginative way.' However, one noted that 'there was no disclosure of notes from meeting with COMTECHSA board', although a third commented: 'I am very impressed so far [with] the way COMTECHSA has dealt with us on a building project. I have found the staff very open.' A new user group commented that 'COMTECHSA's underpinning is vital for community groups. We have found them approachable and friendly.'

Value 5 ***COMTECHSA is committed to achieving equal opportunities in all aspects of its work and to ensuring easy accessibility to individuals and to organisations in all circumstances.***

When asked whether COMTECHSA lived up to this value, stakeholders responded as follows:-



eg 100% of management committee respondents believe we live up to this value

One tenant commented that they ‘did not know enough to answer’ about this objective.

For **funders** this was the equal fourth most important value (score of 3 out of a possible 18).

One user group cited ‘advice and support given for partial disabled access improvements’ as an example of work undertaken by COMTECHSA.

A committee member highlighted the implementation of this commitment in COMTECHSA’s work: ‘COMTECHSA is aware of disabled people’s access and provides design solutions.’ However, the group committee interview suggested that accessibility should be one of the core values.

Value 6 ***COMTECHSA is non-profit-distributing and is committed to reinvesting any surplus for the benefit of its community of members and to being non-exploitative in its relations with its members, staff and all other stakeholders.***

When asked whether COMTECHSA lived up to this value, stakeholders responded as follows:-



eg 100% of management committee respondents believe we live up to this value

One tenant commented that they ‘did not know enough to answer’ about this objective.

One user/member group did not agree that COMTECHSA lived up to this value. On the other hand one person interviewed as a user group had used COMTECHSA because they felt values were shared and, with COMTECHSA being community-based, it allowed them to put back into the community sector. The not-for-profit aspect was also underlined by another interviewee who felt that COMTECHSA is ‘very useful in the voluntary sector as we are strapped for cash.’

For **funders** this was the equal fourth most important value (score of 3 out of a possible 18).

General comments from member groups included:-

'COMTECHSA lives up to its Mission Statement'

'I have rated COMTECHSA's values and principles highly - but this is from earlier involvement. I trust it has continued for the last few years'

and two councillors who knew very little about COMTECHSA were still very supportive:-

'As you will have gathered, I was unaware of the activities of COMTECHSA, but support the objectives;' and

'Objectives seem laudable'.

Further information: Questionnaires
 Notes from Interviews

Commentary

- *Generally COMTECHSA is perceived as having the right values as an organisation and to be living up to those values in the carrying out of our activities.*
- *The Committee scores are universally high.*
- *Tenants have a different experience of COMTECHSA from other user groups. We are providing a facility for them, rather than working with them to help them provide their own.*
- *Should COMTECHSA define what it means by environmentally sustainable and set targets etc.*
- *85%-95% of users, tenants and referral agencies find COMTECHSA adopts an approachable, open and friendly style in its work and ensures the highest standards of service, integrity and honesty in its relations with members, clients and others, although funders thought this to be the least important of our values*

Objective 1 To assist and empower community and voluntary groups in Liverpool, Merseyside and surrounding areas, in particular with regard to urban regeneration and the development of their land and buildings by ...

COMTECHSA employs Architects, Landscape Architects, Building Surveyors and Technicians to work with community groups to help them to manage, repair, alter or extend their premises, maintain and improve their land, and develop new projects where appropriate.

The work is achieved by providing normal architectural services, which COMTECHSA has defined as “core services”, and additional services not normally provided by an architect which are defined as “added value services”.

As the activities under this objective have been separated out into these two sets of services when asking stakeholder views, they have similarly been treated as two groups of activities in the analysis below.

... providing Core Services (Activities 1a-1g below)

The project work carried out by COMTECHSA for community & voluntary groups during the year was as follows:-

<i>Service</i>	<i>No. of Projects</i>	<i>Total Value of Projects</i>	<i>Staff Hours</i>	<i>% of Project Hours</i>	<i>Value @ £35/hour</i>	<i>Fees Generated</i>	<i>Subsidy Value[#]</i>
Full Technical (Architectural)	23	£ 4,214,800	2,658	42%	£93,039	£45,738	£47,301
Planning Supervisor*	6	£ 3,272,000	145	2%	£ 5,058	£ 3,430	£ 1,628
Feasibility Studies	63	£40,024,000	2,341	37%	£81,944	£25,431	£56,513
Building Maintenance Studies	3	£ 1,170,000	67	1%	£ 2,328	£ 1,275	£ 1,053
Project Management	1	£ 1,800,000	251	4%	£ 8,776	£ 8,879	-£ 103
Other**	22	£ 5,811,450	836	13%	£29,269	£1,610	£ 27,659
TOTALS***	113	£53,020,250	6298	100%	£220,413	£86,361	£134,012

[#] This is the value of work provided to groups which has not been paid for by the recipients and the cost of which has therefore been supported by grant aid from Liverpool City Council or from COMTECHSA's own funds.

* Planning Supervisor services are provided in conjunction with Full Technical services and are not undertaken in isolation. Therefore, the number of projects and the total value of projects for this service are not included in the final totals at the bottom of the table.

** Includes: General Enquiries, NAFF Studies, other help, advice and assistance

*** Some rounding errors have occurred due to currency and percentage calculations.

Further information: Questionnaires
Notes from Interviews
Timesheets
Project Register
Job Register
Project Files

Activity 1a ... providing architectural and associated services.

Quantitative "Providing architectural and associated services" has been defined by COMTECHSA as Full Technical projects in the above table. These are "live" projects where the community group has raised the money to implement changes to their buildings or land and COMTECHSA is acting in the role of Project Architect.

COMTECHSA worked with 22 community groups on the 23 different projects in this category of work. Two of these projects were landscape projects and the remainder were building projects. There were two "new build" projects, Grenville Adventure Playground and Lee Valley Millennium Centre, with the balance of the projects being refurbishment, extensions or repairs to existing premises.

30% of this year's projects (7 out of 23) raised their funds using a COMTECHSA Feasibility Study. The figure for 1999/2000 was 33% (7 out of 21).

Qualitative Comments from user groups included '... very good service on a one-to-one basis ...' and '... excellent service ... very professional and helpful' although there were no comments specifically about architectural services received, despite 13 respondents stating that they had used this service within the last two years.

One group commented that 'COMTECHSA has helped our organisation since its inception. We would not have the internal facilities or the refurbishment of derelict open space if it was not for COMTECHSA.' Amongst the groups who agreed to be interviewed it was noted that they came to COMTECHSA for an efficient architectural service: 'someone to handle the technical side.' 'We use them as a straight architectural service' commented one group.'

29% of councillors were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 3rd most important of the ten. One councillor commented '... from what I have seen and been told, the service you provide is reported as being quite good'.

100% of funders were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it most important of the ten.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 83% effective whilst staff scored it 93% effective. One committee member noted 'that the social audit does not separate landscape design services - it deserves a higher profile'.

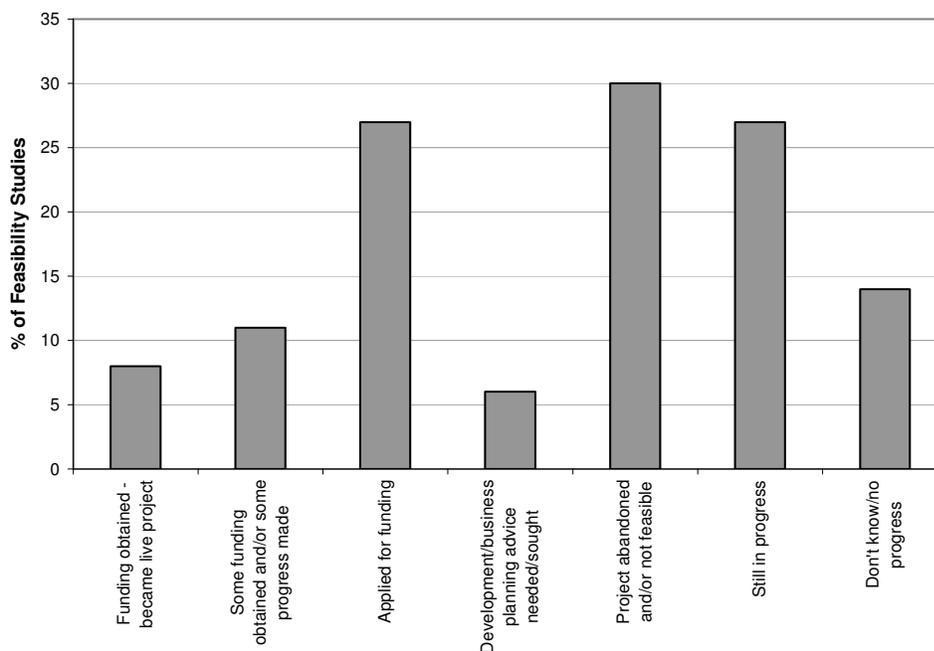
Activity 1b ... undertaking feasibility studies

Quantitative A Feasibility Study is a report upon the feasibility of a community group’s ideas of what they want to do to their buildings and/or open spaces. This will include outline plans and costings, together with advice on health & safety, planning, building regulations, etc.

Often a Feasibility Study will result in a project being abandoned or found to be unfeasible. Such an outcome is valuable because it prevents further resources being used on impractical projects and allows funds and resources to be concentrated on projects that are most likely to be a success. COMTECHSA provides this service “at risk”, ie at no cost to the community group unless they are successful in raising funds. This means that groups can test their ideas without diverting their own resources from their front line work.

During the current audit year, COMTECHSA worked with 53 community groups to assess the feasibility of their projects. COMTECHSA looked at more than one project for some of these groups. 21 groups were able to find funding to pay part or all of the cost of this service. Seven of the projects were purely landscaping projects with the remainder being building projects. Only three of the feasibility studies were looking at new build projects. The balance of projects were for the refurbishment, extension or repairs to existing premises.

Outcomes for the feasibility studies undertaken were as follows (numbers above the columns indicate the number of studies with that outcome):



Qualitative 14 of the user groups who replied to the questionnaire had used this service over the past two years.

On the whole comments about feasibility studies were positive: 'Helped us to put our dream on paper and helped us to progress with our project. COMTECHSA's input has been vital to our development.' 'Initial funding is still a problem and there is still a need for 'at risk' advice and guidance, but options must be realistic' remarked another group. This point was illustrated by another member/user: 'We recently sought COMTECHSA's advice and were given a 'ball park' figure of £0.25m but three contractors have estimated the job can be done (adequately) for £50k.' Unexpectedly high estimates for building work and failure to include a contingency element were comments that came from a user group interviewee. Another interviewee felt that COMTECHSA had not listened and that the plans produced were 'useless'.

Five feasibility studies had been prepared for groups who were interviewed as part of the audit cycle. One commented, echoing the questionnaires, how 'our wishes have been transferred to paper.'

33% of councillors were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 2nd most important of the ten.

83% of funders were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 2nd most important of the ten.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 100% effective whilst staff scored it 86% effective.

Activity 1c ... providing building maintenance advice

Quantitative A Building Maintenance Study is a report that looks at the condition of a building and the costs of repairs. Only three of these reports were carried out during the year.

Where appropriate, building maintenance advice will form part of a Feasibility Study for alterations, extension or refurbishment of existing premises. Building maintenance advice will also be given as part of a "NAFF" study, (Not A Full Feasibility). Therefore, we estimate that some advice about building maintenance issues will have been provided to about 40 to 50 community groups during the year.

Qualitative 25% of councillors were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 4th most important of the ten.

83% of funders were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it least important of the ten.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 67% effective whilst staff scored it 29% effective.

Very few requests are received from community groups to help them with a repair or to solely look at the condition of their buildings. This may account for the low score for effectiveness given for this activity by staff. Ultimately whilst COMTECHSA can provide this service, we do not publicise or promote it and demand for the service is low.

Activity 1d ... providing project management services

Quantitative The Project Management Service is a new service, introduced by COMTECHSA in February 2000. This was in response to an invitation to tender to be Project Managers for the development stage of the Netherton Feelgood Factory Project.

Netherton Feelgood Factory is the only Project Management Service provided during the year. The outcomes of the service were a completed second stage bid to the Lottery New Opportunities Fund for just under £1,000,000 and approaches to other funders for the balance of funding needed for the £1,800,000 project.

Qualitative The bid for the New Opportunities Fund was successful and Netherton Feelgood Factory have asked COMTECHSA to continue working on the project to help raise the remainder of the funds. COMTECHSA have also been asked to act as Project Managers for the technical stage of the project when it goes ahead.

17% of councillors were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 8th most important of the ten.

83% of funders were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 3rd most important of the ten.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 67% effective whilst staff scored it 64% effective.

Activity 1e ... providing property management advice

Quantitative It was intended that this area of work would be developed by COMTECHSA's Property Services Manager during the year as a specific new service to be provided by COMTECHSA. However, due to other work being prioritised, this has not happened and COMTECHSA has not provided Property Management Advice as a specific separate service during the year.

Some help and assistance may have been given to community groups about the management of their property as a part of the other services provided by the technical team, however, we have not collected any data about this service.

Qualitative 17% of councillors were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it least important of the ten.

50% of funders were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it least important of the ten.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 67% effective whilst staff scored it 7% effective. There is a large divergence of views here, perhaps explained by the fact that as a proposed new service the committee of management expects it should be happening, even though it is not. On the other hand, the staff know that nothing is being done.

Activity 1f ... undertaking health and safety reports

Quantitative There have been no specific Health and Safety Reports prepared for community groups during the year. However, health and safety forms an intrinsic part of all architectural and other services provided by COMTECHSA.

Qualitative 8% of councillors were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 7th most important of the ten.

None of the funders were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service but they rated it least important of the ten.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 50% effective whilst staff scored it 43% effective.

Activity 1g ... acting as planning supervisors

Quantitative Under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations Act 1994 a “client” who is planning to have building work carried out is required to consider the Health & Safety implications of the proposed work and to ensure that it can be undertaken in a healthy and safe manner.

A Planning Supervisor acts on behalf of the “client” on a building project to ensure that the “client” meets his/her responsibilities under the Act.

COMTECHSA's Planning Supervisor Service has been provided to six community groups during the year. The total value of projects where this service has been provided is £3,272,000.

Qualitative The Planning Supervisor Service is considered by most clients to be an extension of the full technical service. Feelings of clients about the quality of this service are included under Activity 1a.

8% of councillors were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 9th most important of the ten.

33% of funders were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 7th most important of the ten.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 67% effective whilst staff scored it 64% effective.

... by providing Added Value Services (Activities 1h-1m below)

As part of the normal work undertaken with voluntary and community groups, COMTECHSA assists groups with advice and assistance in areas not directly associated with standard architectural services. For the current Social Audit the categories were defined as follows:

1. **Capacity Building** Working with community and voluntary **groups** to strengthen their capacity as organisations to be able to take forward their projects and so contribute to improving the quality of life for their communities.

2. **People Development** Contributing to the personal and social development of **individuals** involved in the management and development of community buildings and land.
3. **Decision Making** Encouraging client groups to fully participate in all decisions affecting their projects and so be in control of their projects.
4. **General Development** Providing general development advice. i.e. anything about a project that's not strictly architectural/technical
5. **Funding** Offering advice on sources of funding related to the built environment and any support services aimed at securing the funding or putting the funders at ease, etc
6. **Green Advice** Giving any sort of environmentally-aware design and other advice.
7. **Additional Cost Management** All work and advice which is outside the usual scope of the service and not reflected in fees, eg trying to keep the costs low, reduce the costs to meet a budget, save money on other peoples fees, talking a contractor into a lower price, looking for cheaper alternative materials etc

These activities were recorded on a weekly basis by the individual Project Workers from 1 July 2000 on additional value hours timesheets, which were devised as part of the Social Audit process. These were then transferred, project by project, onto Job Register sheets, before being collated to provide the following statistics:

<i>Service</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>No. of groups</i>	<i>Hours for 9 months</i>	<i>Estimate for 12 months</i>	<i>% of total project hours[#]</i>	<i>Estimated value at £35/hour (£)r</i>
1. Capacity Building	1h	25	96.00	128	2%	4,480
2. People Development	1i	15	34.50	46	1%	1,610
3. Decision Making and Participation	1j	31	237.50	317	5%	11,095
4. General Development Advice	1k	28	112.25	150	2%	5,250
5. Funding Advice & Help	1l	25	164.25	219	3%	7,665
6. Green Advice	1m	8	26.00	35	1%	1,225
7. Additional Cost Management*	1k	11	125.00	167	3%	5,845
8. Other**	1k	11	505.75	674	11%	23,590
No Added Value		56				
TOTAL		113***	1,301	1,735	28%	60,725

The basis for this percentage is taken from the core services table above, ie 6298 hours.

* This was an activity that was added following the agreement of the objectives and activities. It was felt at the time (and subsequently supported) that this was a large part of the service we were providing.

** Includes general development advice.

*** This is the total number of groups assisted, not the column total, as many groups received several types of added value time input.

Further information: Questionnaires
 Notes from Interviews
 Analysis of Additional Value Hours Record Sheets
Timesheets
Additional Value Hours Record Sheets
Project Register
Job Register
Project Files

Activity 1h ... working with community and voluntary groups (the members) to strengthen their capacity as organisations to be able to take forward their projects and so contribute to improving the quality of life for their communities

Quantitative Project Workers recorded details of work carried out for 25 community groups under this activity. Total hours for this activity are estimated at 128. This category accounted for 2% of the total project hours during the year.

Qualitative At the group interviews, one of the interviewees was an intermediary body which noted that 'community development and capacity building happens alongside the technical service.' They also, however, asked whether funders can understand this and whether it can be isolated as an activity in itself.

'A great empowering organisation' and 'COMTECHSA staff are very approachable with a shared philosophy of empowerment and collaboration' were two comments received from user groups. Mention was made about how working with COMTECHSA a group felt as if they were 'in it together'.

When asked whether COMTECHSA undertook this 'added value' activity, six councillors who responded (25%) agreed that this was the case and a further three (13%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 67% effective whilst staff scored it 71% effective.

Activity 1i ... contributing to the personal and social development of individuals involved in the management and development of community buildings and land

Quantitative Project Workers recorded details of work carried out for 15 community groups under this activity. Total hours for this activity are estimated as 46. This category accounted for 1% of the total project hours during the year.

Qualitative At the user group interviews one person commented that they felt more confident about dealing with professionals as their dealings with COMTECHSA had helped them to learn the language of architects and buildings.

When asked whether COMTECHSA undertook this 'added value' activity, five councillors who responded (21%) agreed that this was the case and a further three (13%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 50% effective whilst staff scored it 57% effective. 'It is very difficult to claim other people's achievements - we have helped them' remarked one member of staff.

Activity 1j ... encouraging client groups to fully participate in all decisions affecting their projects and so be in control of their projects

Quantitative Project Workers recorded details of work carried out for 31 community groups under this activity. Total hours for this activity are estimated as 317. This category accounted for 5% of the total project hours during the year.

Qualitative User groups were very positive about this aspect of COMTECHSA's work: 'friendly, professional, creative, flexible', 'we have participated fully in the design of security barrier for access to our roof', 'project workers worked closely with staff and students to create a feasibility study relevant to the education site and users' needs.' 'We were given outside advice that could have been incorrectly used' commented one user group, whilst another felt that 'the consultation process was so long and thorough that I began to wish we could forget about consultation and get on with the job.'

'Good listeners who keep clients well informed about what they are doing' was a comment made during the user group interviews, although another interviewee felt that COMTECHSA could be guilty of 'sometimes making assumptions and going ahead without consulting.'

When asked whether COMTECHSA undertook this added value activity, five councillors who responded (21%) agreed that this was the case and a further four (17%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 100% effective whilst staff scored it 86% effective. One committee member felt that this activity was undertaken 'from start to finish ... meetings ... liaison ...'

Activity 1k ... providing general development advice

Quantitative The recording for this activity was split into three categories:-

- General Development Advice
- Additional Cost Management
- Other

Overall Project Workers recorded details of work carried out for 50 community groups under this activity. Total hours for this activity are estimated at 991 which accounts for 16% of the total project hours during the year.

Qualitative A user group noted that 'advice only has ever been required' whilst another commented that advice received had been 'prompt and useful in all cases.'

25% of councillors were aware that COMTECHSA provided this service and rated it 5th most important.

When asked whether COMTECHSA undertook this 'added value' activity, four councillors who responded (17%) agreed that this was the case and a further three (13%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

83% of funders were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 4th most important of the ten.

One member of staff felt 'we could do more to provide development advice to groups.' Committee felt that there was a 'pressing need' both for this and funding advice (activity 11 below) but that this might be better achieved 'in partnership with community development workers.'

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 33% effective whilst staff scored it 36% effective. It is possible that the low scores here reflect the fact that this activity was not previously identified and the questionnaires were completed early in the social audit process.

Activity 11 ... offering advice on sources of funding related to the built environment

Quantitative Project Workers recorded details of work carried out for 25 community groups under this activity. Total hours for this activity are estimated as 219. This category accounted for 3% of the total project hours during the year.

Qualitative A user/member group commented that 'based within the not-for-profit sector, COMTECHSA has an excellent grasp of how the sector works, particularly in relation to how funders operate.'

During the user group interviews, two interviewees commented that they did not realise COMTECHSA might be able to help in this field, whilst on the other hand another emphasised the value of this expertise.

13% of councillors were aware that COMTECHSA provided this service and rated it the most important.

When asked whether COMTECHSA undertook this 'added value' activity, four councillors who responded (17%) agreed that this was the case and a further two (8%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

67% of funders were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 6th most important of the ten.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 50% effective whilst staff scored it 21% effective. One staff member remarked that 'I don't think we offer enough advice on sources of funding' whilst another felt funding advice could be more structured.

Activity 1m ... giving appropriate environmentally aware design and other advice

Quantitative Project Workers recorded details of work carried out for eight community groups under this activity. Total hours for this activity are estimated as 35. This category accounted for 1% of the total project hours during the year.

Qualitative One user group provided an explanation for the low priority normally afforded to environmental design: 'Although community groups want to develop high quality and environmentally aware provision, the reality is still sticking tape and string. There seems to be an increasing gap between the roll your sleeves up and get on with it projects and the state of the art ERDF/ESF/Lottery etc funded ones.'

25% of councillors were aware that COMTECHSA provided this service and rated it 5th most important.

100% of funders were aware that COMTECHSA offered this service and rated it 4th most important of the ten.

When asked whether COMTECHSA undertook this 'added value' activity, four councillors who responded (17%) agreed that this was the case and a further three (13%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

One staff member noted that 'most of the schemes have environmental issues incorporated into the design.' At the staff group interview it was recognised that this is a good area to develop but that user and member groups did not give it a high priority. This view was echoed at the committee group interview.

Committee members also noted that to provide high quality environmental design services, the former Environmental Development Worker post (funding for which was discontinued at the start of the year) would need to be reinstated or staff given appropriate training to equip them with the necessary skills.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 83% effective whilst staff scored it 36% effective. The divergence of views is probably due to staff knowing that they were not spending much time on this activity.

Activity 1n ... communicating clearly

Quantitative No quantitative data has been collected for this activity. It is intended to judge this activity based on qualitative data.

Qualitative 'Approachable', 'use of plain English', 'don't use jargon' and 'easy to communicate with' were all positive comments made at the user group interviews.

Other user group comments which support this activity included: 'Very good service on a one-to-one basis'; 'when I telephoned ... about a meeting to be arranged [... they] explained the whole thing very effectively'; 'explanation of planning in clear everyday language'; and 'although our group has not used

COMTECHSA's expertise of recent, the advice given when required has always been clear, comprehensive and useful.'

One user group, asked to give an example of an added value service, cited 'Communicating clearly to my management committee on the roles and responsibilities about to be undertaken.' 'Having to explain things to committees who haven't a clue' was something admired by another user group. However, another group commented on the 'lack of disclosure of notes from meeting with COMTECHSA board. I received feedback [by] word of mouth.'

When asked whether COMTECHSA undertook this 'added value' activity, two councillors who responded (8%) agreed that this was the case and a further five (21%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 50% effective whilst staff also scored it 50% effective. One staff member added 'Communication can be delivered in different ways - some staff can, some can't.' However, one committee member felt that 'COMTECHSA communicates clearly - the architects ... explain the issues in an understandable way.'

Stakeholder Views

One user group commented that although they were 'satisfied with the quality of the service ... it has been very slow.' Another group wrote: 'We believe COMTECHSA to be a valuable contribution to community development. The idea arose many years ago when community/tenants' organisations gave the idea to the Community Development Officer. It was as valuable then as it is today.'

The 'at risk' nature of COMTECHSA's work was discussed in the user group interviews: two interviewees stressed the 'no win, no fee' basis which 'made it easier for them to engage professional help.'

Other comments from user groups included: 'We believe in the advice and support you give to us. Most of all you are trusted on the services you give, especially technical advice and support.' 'A valuable service to the voluntary community.' 'Excellent service. No problems at all.'

Other stakeholders were asked their views on Objective 1 and responses were as follows:

When asked to indicate the three most important of COMTECHSA's eight objectives, Objective 1 was rated as:

- the most important to **Funders, Councillors** and COMTECHSA **staff**
- =1st most important to **Committee** of Management members (see also Objective 4)

When asked if they felt COMTECHSA was achieving this objective:

Four out of nine **councillors** who answered this question agreed (44%) whilst five neither agreed nor disagreed (56%).

Five out of six **Committee** members agreed (83%) and one neither agreed nor disagreed (17%).

Nine out of eleven **staff** agreed (82%) whilst one neither agreed nor disagreed (9%) and one disagreed (9%).

Stakeholders were also asked whether they felt other or additional services should be provided by COMTECHSA. Three suggestions were provided by local councillors: accountancy advice; legal services; and security and crime prevention advice. This latter aspect is already undertaken as part of COMTECHSA's general design principles and indeed is an essential consideration for many of our groups.

Committee members also suggested 'advising community property developers on 'fully accessible design'', 'providing advice, support to area-based initiatives', and 'education and training programmes for area renewal design.'

Referring to the added value services, one committee member felt that 'COMTECHSA's development advice is ad hoc ... and amount of general advice has to be limited otherwise our hourly rate is affected.' On the same topic, a staff member commented that 'they accurately reflect the services covered by the technical team and landscape group.' One qualified their responses, commenting 'the ineffective areas are where no service is being provided' whilst another remarked that 'most of the above could be improved - not to say ineffective.'

Commentary

- *COMTECHSA has helped over 70 community groups on 113 projects during the year.*
- *The total potential value of the projects in which COMTECHSA has been involved is £53 million. During the year, around £4 million worth of projects have actually gone ahead or have been completed.*
- *All the stakeholders considered Objective 1 to be COMTECHSA's most important objective.*
- *Fee income only accounts for 48% of the value of full technical projects, all of which generate fees*
- *28% of the time spent on projects is spent on "added value" services*

- *30% of feasibility study projects do not proceed. Whilst this is a valuable service (because it may prevent poor projects from proceeding) it may be worth looking at ways that staff can use their time more effectively on such projects so that more time is freed up for projects that are likely to go ahead.*
- *On the whole, feedback is very positive about the quality of service, but there has been some negative feedback and care needs to be taken to maintain a high quality of service to all. The need to provide such a service is widely recognised and supported*

We have helped groups in a wide variety of ways and we can be proud of the achievements. However, the services provided by COMTECHSA are complex and it appears that users are often unclear about exactly what we have to offer.

- *Service definitions need to be simplified and there needs to be more clarity about the services we provide. Better publicity and promotion of the services is essential.*
- *Despite the confusion we have made significant achievements in most areas of this objective. For example under “communicating clearly” we have obtained feedback for the first time that demonstrates we are achieving this objective and living up to our value of being open, friendly, and approachable.*
- *Care needs to be exercised in giving “ball park” figures to clients without backing this up with supporting information or advice as this can lead to them misunderstanding the information they have been given and thereby giving them a poor view of COMTECHSA.*
- *Consideration needs to be given to how best COMTECHSA might undertaken general development work, including the community development we already become involved in.*

Objective 2 To assist and empower community and voluntary groups in Liverpool, Merseyside and surrounding areas by developing and managing high quality accommodation by ...

COMTECHSA has re-developed 60 Duke Street as office accommodation for smaller voluntary, community and charitable organisations, as well as its own offices. The building has integrated access, training and meeting rooms for hire, basement archives and a shop unit, and is owned and managed by COMTECHSA.

COMTECHSA's philosophy is to develop its building(s) to meet the specific and special accommodation needs of its members and other community, voluntary and arts organisations, whilst minimising the environmental impact of building construction and use.

COMTECHSA's philosophy is to manage its building(s):

- to ensure that its tenants, building users and the community at large derive the maximum possible benefit from the capital investment made;
- to ensure the safety and security of all building users; and
- to minimise their impact on the environment.

In short, COMTECHSA believes it owns and manages its building(s) in trust for, and for the benefit of, the community.

Activity 2a ... providing accessible, serviced office accommodation.

Quantitative COMTECHSA owns and has developed 52/60 Duke Street to provide the following accommodation:-

60 Duke Street

- 14 small office units providing a total of 190 m² (2,040 ft²) of accommodation on two floors which is available to rent by community and voluntary groups from the Merseyside area.
- A building reception of 15.5 m² (167 ft²), staffed by COMTECHSA.
- Two well-equipped, linked ground floor training rooms measuring 60 m² (650 ft²) in total, providing meeting facilities for 18-30 people.
- Office accommodation for COMTECHSA of 210 m² (2,260 ft²).

52 Duke Street

- A vacant shop unit at 52 Duke Street on the corner of Duke Street and York Street of 87 m² (940 ft²) at ground floor level and 87m² (940 ft²) at basement level.

There are seven community groups that rent space in the building. These are as follows:

Friends of the Earth	1 room
Irish Community Care	3 rooms
Joint Forum	2 rooms
Liverpool Citizen Advocacy	1 room
Merseyside Association of Ghanaians	1 room
Scarman Trust	2 rooms
Sheila Kay Fund	2 rooms

Of the two rooms which were vacant at 31 March 2001, one was vacated by Liverpool Citizen Advocacy on 1 November 2000, whilst the second has been vacant since 1 January 2001. All rooms have since been let and the premises are now fully occupied. The occupancy rate for the office units is in excess of 95%.

In addition to the 14 staff and 2 trainees employed by COMTECHSA, our tenants employ an additional 16 paid staff (between one and six per organisation) all based in 60 Duke Street. Two groups also make extensive use of volunteers.

Qualitative Five 'tenants' (see explanatory note below) returned a questionnaire. All felt that the accommodation met their needs and that they had satisfactory access and four felt that the accommodation generally was better than average.

With regard to the office space, the majority felt that this and the maintenance of the space was better than average. One respondent commented on the street noise being a hindrance whilst another felt that access out of hours, eg on a Saturday, would improve the quality.

The training room facilities were universally approved of, although the general feeling indicated that the charges for using them were too high.

Rent and service rent were considered to be satisfactory or better. Reception services, on the other hand, provided a full range of responses. One respondent expanded upon this: 'Fax seems expensive to me. Photocopying is OK'. Only one respondent was unhappy with the reception service: 'Most unhelpful and uncooperative and at times downright rude'. However, another commented: 'Charming, friendly, helpful and accommodating people'. Of the overall service received, one tenant commented that COMTECHSA was 'Obliging, quick to respond to queries and requests, helpful, keen to find mutually satisfactory solutions.'

We have not used the word "tenant" in the above analysis because the tenants questionnaire did not ask respondents to signify whether or not they are responding on behalf of the board of the organisation, as a manager, as an employee, volunteer or other user.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 100% effective whilst staff scored it 79% effective.

Further information: 60 Duke Street - Office Accommodation
Questionnaires
Business Plan
Tenant's Forum minutes
Tenants Phone List
Tenants Files (Property Services)

Activity 2b ... offering training and meeting facilities.

Quantitative Two linked ground floor rooms suitable for meetings, seminars and training sessions have been available for hire during office hours during the year. Each room is approximately 30m² (325ft²) and suitable for up to 30 people. Refreshments can be provided on request for a small charge.

Features include:

- En-suite toilet facilities (including accessible toilet)
- Induction loop and other audio/visual equipment
- Reception and office bureau facilities.

During the year 2000-2001, 14 different groups (including 5 tenant groups) used the room over 56 days generating £3,415 in rental fees for COMTECHSA. A further £681 was earned from 130 refreshment breaks provided by COMTECHSA. Although bookings indicate attendance by 600 persons, the actual figure is probably nearer to 500 persons. Activities undertaken by the hiring groups included training sessions, meetings and annual general meetings. A more detailed breakdown is available in the appendices.

The estimated cost to COMTECHSA for providing the rooms during 2000/2001 was £14,021 per annum. This is a combination of £3,828 of 'opportunity costs' for rent that could have been earned by letting the space and the real costs of servicing the space, eg gas, electricity, rates, refreshments, fixed assets, etc, which are in the region of £10,193. Therefore, the training rooms the net cost to COMTECHSA of providing this service during the year will be between £6,367 and £9,925 once the accounts for the year have been finalised.

Qualitative During the year the Property Services Manager was asked by the Committee to investigate ways of dealing with the deficit created by insufficient use of the training rooms and to assess how the income from the rooms could be increased. His reports suggested that there was insufficient demand for such rooms and that the best course of action for the future would be to convert half the space into further office accommodation. This was agreed in principle at the Committee of Management meeting in January 2001.

The sole evaluation form which was returned by a user of the room was very positive about all aspects of the training rooms. Verbal feedback to Reception staff from group facilitators has also been good. Eight of the groups had returned to use the room from previous years.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 100% effective whilst staff scored it 43% effective. One staff member commented that 'the training rooms are too expensive.' A committee member felt that 'the effectiveness of training meeting facilities constrained by the size of the rooms.' A tenant commented that the training rooms were 'possibly value for money, but still more money than we have!'

The difference between the staff and committee perceptions of the success of this activity is probably explained by the fact that the committee were not made aware of the problems with the meeting rooms until after the committee questionnaires had been completed. Also, the staff have day to day experience of seeing the training rooms unused, whilst committee members, who always use these facilities for their meetings, rarely see them empty. In

prior years the rooms had been relatively busy due to a local training organisation block-booking for 10-week training courses.

Further information: Membership/Information Pack
 Training Room Evaluation Form
 Training Room Analysis Graphs
 Room Booking forms
 Board/Training Room Invoices
 Financial Accounts 2000-2001
 Committee of Management Minutes & Reports
 Finance Sub Committee Minutes & Reports

Activity 2c ... giving tenants security of tenure.

Quantitative No tenants have been evicted from 60 Duke Street in the past year. One tenant increased their occupation from one to two rooms for the last three months of the year.

One tenant has reduced their tenancy to one room from two whilst a second tenant completely vacated two rooms. These reductions in tenancy have been due to cessation of projects or a reduction in the group's funding.

Qualitative COMTECHSA believes it provides security of tenure and that this is demonstrated by the fact that tenancies have remained more or less stable over the past 12 months.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 83% effective whilst staff scored it 57% effective.

Unfortunately, there was an oversight when the questionnaires for the 'tenants' were devised, and a question asking specifically about this issue was mistakenly omitted.

Further information: *Tenants Files*

Activity 2d ... holding property as an asset on behalf of the community and voluntary sector.

Quantitative 60 Duke Street is a five storey building (including basement) with a total floor area of 1,064m². COMTECHSA's Constitution outlines arrangements for holding property and other assets on behalf of the community and voluntary sector and for future arrangements for the transfer of such assets (1(d), 3(b), 69(i), 71).

COMTECHSA purchased the building for approximately £50,000 and fully refurbished the premises over a seven year period at a cost of approximately £600,000. A more detailed breakdown of the refurbishment programme, costs and funding is available in the appendices.

Prior to the major phase of the refurbishment in 1997 the building had been given an estimated fully refurbished value of £250,000 by Dears Brack & Associates, Chartered Surveyors.

The premises were re-valued by Dears Brack at 31 March 2001 and given an estimated open market value of £425,000.

Qualitative

The full commercial value of the premises could be much higher than this. The building has been valued at a lower level than similar commercially run buildings because of the following factors:-

- COMTECHSA occupies a large area of the building at no rent and with no formal lease. This reduces the contracted rental income from the building and therefore reduces its value
- The lease agreements favour the tenants by giving them security of tenure on the one hand and the ability to leave at just one month's notice on the other hand. This reduces the flexibility of the premises for an investor and also means that the income from any tenant is only guaranteed for one month at a time.
- Leases have been granted at a rent at approximately 25% below the prevailing market level.*
- The corner shop unit of the building is undeveloped and produces no income.

* This assertion is based on advice from COMTECHSA's Valuer that similar 'serviced' accommodation in Liverpool City Centre is being let for a combined rent and service rent of £25/ft² to £30/ft². We have used a comparative figure of £20/ft² to allow for the fact that 60 Duke Street is in a less desirable location than city centre office space. COMTECHSA charges a combined rent and service rent of £15/ft².

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 83% effective whilst staff scored it 14% effective. One staff member noted that the activity was carried out 'at present only in our own building but it provides a good practice model.' A committee member stated that 'ownership of a building should not be an aim in itself - it should be a means to do other things and use it as collateral.'

The wide variation between staff and committee views on this activity is probably due to a lack understanding of the issue by staff who are not involved in the day to day management or development of the building. It may also be that the staff have higher expectations than the committee and believe we should be achieving more.

Further information: Extract from Annual Report 1996/97
Financial Statements 2000-2001
Constitution
Dears Brack File

Activity 2e ... adopting environmentally sustainable housekeeping practices within the workspace.

Quantitative

60 Duke Street was designed to incorporate environmentally aware elements which are outlined in the prospectus distributed with the Membership/ Information pack.

Qualitative

During the course of the year, COMTECHSA have attempted to introduce new measures to reduce waste including greatly increased use of information technology over paper systems and sourcing of recycled paper. Attempts

Commentary

- *Demand for office accommodation at 60 Duke Street remains high which is demonstrated by the 95% occupancy rate. The provision of this facility is popular and successful*
- *Accommodation in the building is felt to be generally better than average.*
- *Two areas of the building are under used, the training rooms and the shop unit. These represent about 20% of the usable floor space in the building and would significantly enhance its value as both a social asset and financial asset if they can be brought into fuller use.*
- *The financial value of the premises which is held as an asset on behalf of the community has almost doubled in the last two years.*
- *Staff and Committee opinions about this objective vary widely. There needs to be more informed dialogue between the parties about where COMTECHSA is going, what we want to achieve and how we can do it.*
- *Targets should be set and agreed for improvements in our environmentally sustainable housekeeping practices within the workspace in future years.*

Objective 3 To provide services to individuals and to community groups to combat the causes and consequences of fuel poverty by ...

During 2000/2001 COMTECHSA was asked by Liverpool City Council to consider the relocation of the Fuel Rights Service to another agency (see Section 2). This work has been ongoing during the social audit year and in December 2000 the Committee of Management agreed, in principle, to the relocation and identified an agency as the preferred option for relocation. However, during the process of making a funding application to Liverpool City Council (see Section 5) it was discovered that there are insufficient funds for the relocation to take place. This issue is subject to a formal appeal to Liverpool City Council and in the meantime the fuel rights service will continue to be provided by COMTECHSA.

The fuel rights staff timesheets record staff hours spent under four main categories of work: casework & advocacy, campaigning, social policy & awareness raising and providing training.

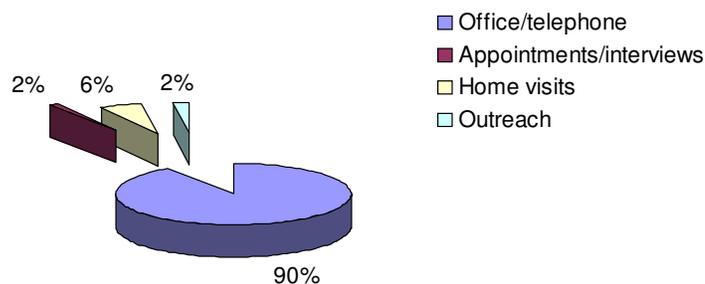
Work carried out during the year in each area was as follows:

	Activity Ref.	Hours for 9 months July-March	Estimated hours for 12 months	% of all staff hours
Casework & Advocacy	3a, 3b	1830	2439	84.5%
Campaigning	3c	250	333	11.5%
Social Policy & Awareness Raising	3d	84	112	3.9%
Providing Training	3e	2	3	0.1%
TOTAL		2165	2887	100%

Casework and advocacy (Activities 3a and 3b) are separated out into four further categories to comply with the standard recording system for Liverpool City Council (see appendices - Analysis of the Liverpool City Council Standard Recording System Statistics). The table below shows these categories:

	Activity Ref.	Workload Measurement*	% of casework	Approx. Staff Hours
Signposting (<i>referring clients to other agencies/sources of advice</i>)	3a	41	0.5%	12
Information/Advice within Agency	3a	5211	65.4%	1595
Negotiation with outside body (<i>Advocacy</i>)	3b	2714	34.0%	829
Representational Work (<i>Representing clients at tribunals, etc</i>)	3b	5	0.1%	3
TOTALS		865	100%	2439

* The workload measurement figures in this table indicate the number of pieces of work carried out in each category, eg a letter sent, or a telephone call made or received.



The timesheets for staff also record the method of providing assistance as overleaf:-

Activity 3a ... providing information and advice to individual clients and community groups

Quantitative Overall COMTECHSA's Fuel Rights staff undertook casework for 434 individuals and 73 agencies during the year. All of these will have received information or advice. The Analysis of Case Index Log and Agency Cases Log provides a full breakdown of the types of work undertaken (see appendices).

Approximate staff time spent on this activity was 1607 hours.

The Advice and Information given to clients/agencies has been summarised into 35 categories. For example 214 cases included advice about payment options, 137 had benefit checks and 92 cases included referrals to outside bodies. A full analysis of the information/advice given is included in the Analysis of Information/Advice Case Actions 2000-2001 (see appendices).

Qualitative For reasons of confidentiality, individual clients were not contacted to comment on this aspect of COMTECHSA's work. However, it is intended in future to include a feedback form as part of the fuel rights information leaflets.

Referral agents were enthusiastic about the service: 'a unique service which helps us to do our job more effectively. As a specialist group we are confident you provide the service you advertise and do your utmost to assist our clients.' 'I have used the service once on behalf of a client and was very impressed.'

Only one councillor knew that COMTECHSA offered this service and half (three) of the funders who replied were aware of this. 91% of fuel rights referral agents who responded knew about this service.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 83% effective whilst staff scored it 57% effective. One staff member commented: 'Fuel Rights is very restrictive as to who they work for - friends and neighbours - Yes; general public - No.'

Further information: Analysis of the Liverpool City Council Standard Recording System Statistics
 Analysis of Case Index Log and Agency Cases Log
Case Details Sheets
Monthly statistics sheets
Enquiries/problems sheets
Case action sheets
Complaints procedure

Activity 3b ... advocating on behalf of individual clients

Quantitative Advocacy work has been defined as that part of the casework that includes negotiating with outside agencies or representing a client in negotiations, tribunals, etc. Most of the individuals and some of the organisations identified in Activity 3a will have been beneficiaries of this activity.

Approximate staff time spent on this activity was 831 hours.

Advocacy work carried out on behalf of clients/agencies has been summarised into 31 categories. For example 41 cases included arranging for the client to have Fuel Direct, 186 arrangements were made for the client to be provided with an account breakdown, and on 89 occasions free electricity was arranged for clients in the form of "hardship fund" meter cards. A full breakdown of this work is included in the Analysis of Advocacy Case Actions 2000-2001 (see appendices).

The financial outcomes for clients from the fuel rights advocacy casework have been :-

- £877.20 of benefits arrears paid
- £15,203.40 of weekly benefits awards secured
- £94,547.29 of debt handled
- £14,386.06 of debt written off
- £1,146.00 of free electricity provided through the Meter Card Hardship Fund

Qualitative One referral agent noted that the fuel rights section are 'prepared to take on board more complex problems/cases where their expertise in fuel-related problems will benefit the Service User.' 'We are reassured that this service exists and many of our clients have had the benefit of fuel rights advice,' was another supporting comment.

None of the councillors knew that COMTECHSA offered this service but half (three) of the funders who replied were aware of this. 86% of fuel rights referral agents who responded knew about this service.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 83% effective whilst staff scored it 71% effective.

Further information: Analysis of Advocacy Case Actions
Case Details Sheets
Monthly statistics sheets
Enquiries/problems sheets
Case action sheets
Complaints procedure

Activity 3c ... campaigning and advocating on behalf of, in particular, low income and disadvantaged households

Quantitative Campaigning accounts for approximately 12% of the work of the fuel rights unit (333 hours of staff time) as demonstrated in the table below:

	<i>Hours for 9 months July-March</i>	<i>Estimated hours for 12 months</i>	<i>% of all staff hours</i>
• Campaigns/media/policy development	125	166	6%
• Networking/training	46	61	2%
• Information	79	106	4%
Total	250	333	12%

Qualitative It is very difficult to separate out the pieces of work that are carried out to meet Activities 3c and 3d because often one piece of work overlaps many areas. For example attending a meeting or conference could include campaigning, helping to develop policies, providing information, networking, consultation, liaison etc.

For the purposes of their time sheets staff have estimated the element of each different activity involved in a task, but for the “qualitative” element of this report Activities 3c and 3d have been considered together

Activities undertaken have included:

- a series of meetings and negotiations with Manweb, the major local supplier of electricity, to discuss the application of their theft policies
- a series of meetings and negotiations with Manweb to agree a possible “amnesty” for people who are interfering with their electricity meter as a way of reducing disconnection’s due to theft or alleged theft
- assisting Norweb, another local fuel supplier, with their Social Action Plan.
- attending the UK Fuel Poverty Conference and contributing to the UK Fuel Poverty Strategy Document
- making a presentation to the UN Eradication of Poverty Day Debate
- providing information and statistics to EnergyWatch, Ofgem and other fuel regulatory bodies and their working parties where appropriate.
- attending a HEES Home Energy Efficiency Conference
- a series of meetings with Warm Homes Action on Merseyside to compile and produce a leaflet to support the Warm Homes Bill
- articles for the local Newspaper and several appearances on Radio Merseyside
- compiling a programme about Fuel Rights, Energy Advice and Energy Regulation for Valley & Netherley Together Community Radio station
- on-the-job training sessions for the four staff at Kensington Winter Survival Project
- working with the Associate Parliamentary Warm Homes Group
- attending Legal Services Commission meetings and consultation days and contributing to their consultation exercises
- providing information for magazine articles to NACAB and Merseyside Welfare Rights

- presentations to the Merseyside Pensioners Liaison Committee, the Whitechapel Project, the Mental Health Income Maximisation Workers at Garston CAB and many others
- assisting the Centre for Sustainable Energy with their contribution to Ofgem's Code of Practice Working Group
- commenting on contract or supply for "green" energy suppliers
- advising Oxford University's Environmental Change Unit with a report about fuel poverty and how to address it
- providing information to MP's in support of the Warm Homes Bill
- arranging meetings with local social services departments to lobby to help get more homes on "Fuel Direct"

Benefits of the above work have included a reduction of theft disconnection cases of 50% in the last year, helping Norweb to produce a prepayment meter initiative to reduce the costs of existing customers, and improvements in all suppliers policies and practices by influencing the Governments UK Fuel Strategy Report.

Only one councillor and one of the funders who replied knew that COMTECHSA offered this service. 68% of fuel rights referral agents who responded knew about this service.

One tenant commented on the fuel rights team being 'very helpful' and have helped us establish other links and networks.'

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 83% effective whilst staff scored it 29% effective.

Further information: *Case Details Sheets*
Monthly statistics sheets
Enquiries/problems sheets
Case action sheets
Complaints procedure

Activity 3d ... raising awareness and influencing social policy and practice by undertaking research and consultancy work and providing presentations

Quantitative Staff have recorded 4% of their time (112 hours) under this activity.

	<i>Hours for 9 months July-March</i>	<i>Estimated hours for 12 months</i>	<i>% of all staff hours</i>
• Research	19	25	1%
• Reports/consultation/documents	20	27	1%
• Presentations/talks	3	4	0%
• Liaison meetings	42	56	2%
Total	84	112	4%

Qualitative See also Activity 3c above.

None of the councillors knew that COMTECHSA offered this and half (three) of the funders who replied were aware of this. 50% of fuel rights referral agents who responded knew about this service.

One committee member felt that COMTECHSA should 'offer research capability ... in conjunction with universities.'

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 83% effective whilst staff scored it 7% ineffective.

Further information: *Case Details Sheets*
Monthly statistics sheets
Enquiries/problems sheets
Case action sheets
Complaints procedure

Activity 3e ... providing quality training in all aspects of fuel rights issues

Quantitative Only two hours of 'training' were recorded on staff timesheets during the year. The Utilities Worker from Netherley CAB visited COMTECHSA's office to meet our Fuel Rights Advisor, who explained the policy and practice of British Gas and Manweb to her.

Qualitative 'We would welcome closer partnership, in particular the opportunity for staff here to learn more of the work of your staff' was the comment of one referral agent.

None of the councillors knew that COMTECHSA offered this service but a third (two) of the funders who replied were aware of this. 45% of fuel rights referral agents who responded knew about this service.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 50% effective whilst staff scored it 21% ineffective. One staff member commented that 'the training does not happen' whilst a committee member felt that 'greater emphasis on training ... would lead to more work.'

Further information: *Case Details Sheets*
Monthly statistics sheets
Enquiries/problems sheets
Case action sheets
Complaints procedure

Stakeholder Views

Other stakeholders were asked their views on Objective 3 and responses were as follows:

When asked to indicate the three most important of COMTECHSA's eight objectives, Objective 3 was rated as:

- 4th most important to COMTECHSA **staff**.
- =6th most important to **Funders** (see also Objectives 4 & 7).
- =6th most important to **Committee Members** (see also Objectives 6 & 7).
- 6th most important to **Councillors**.

When asked if they felt COMTECHSA was achieving this objective:

Two out of five **councillors** who answered the question agreed (40%). Two neither agreed nor disagreed (40%) and one disagreed (20%).

Five out of six **Committee** members agreed (83%) and one neither agreed nor disagreed (17%).

Seven out of nine **staff** who answered this question agreed (77%) whilst two neither agreed nor disagreed (23%).

Thirteen (59%) of the referral agents who responded to the questionnaire and who had used the service felt that the quality of service received was high and another two felt it was good.

The level of response from referral agents was reassuringly high - 22 out of 42 questionnaires were returned (52%). Perhaps worryingly, two of these claimed not to have heard of or to have used the service. However, these responses may have come from offices, such as the benefits agency, where a large number of people work and not necessarily all have had contact with us.

Overall, the comments provided by referral agents on the fuel rights service was extremely positive: '... reliable, efficient and helpful ... yours is a service which benefits the community and the groups that service the people'; '... supportive ... enables us to do our job more effectively ...'; '... very helpful and pleasant ... very reliable and useful service'; 'We are reassured that this service exists ...'.

Referral agents were also asked about the effectiveness or otherwise of nine qualities identified in the Development Plan. Responses are in the table overleaf:

quality	effective	ineffective
relevant	64%	
impartial	64%	
confidential	64%	
accessible	64%	9%
affordable	59%	
comprehensible	59%	
empowering	36%	5%
independent	68%	
comprehensive	45%	

Two councillors remarked specifically that they had not heard of the fuel rights service. This is in keeping with their awareness (or lack of it) of the architectural services.

One user/member group specifically stated that they had not used this service, whilst two others remarked that they would like more information.

Other comments included one from a staff member: 'What fuel rights service? Sparse staff cover leaves the impression that the service is very limited.' This was supported by another member of the staff team: 'Could be more consistent - particularly on staff cover' and further comment was made that 'Too little is being done and co-ordination and management of the service is poor.'

'A good solid service that should be in an advice environment and does not sit easily with COMTECHSA' was one committee members' view. This stakeholder group focused on the separate nature of the fuel rights service: 'I feel the fuel rights service should be separated as it does not fit in' and 'they seem to act independently with little input from the management committee ... it is not linked to the other parts of COMTECHSA.'

One noted that the unit was 'highly successful and very important' whilst two suggested that there might be 'a need for the service to be extended to water and sewage rights' and 'knowledge of public health consequences if causes of fuel, water and sewage poverty is not combated.'. One comment did note that fuel rights advice is 'rather a narrow field with few direct beneficiaries.'

Commentary

- *COMTECHSA has helped over 430 individuals and 70 advice agencies during the year.*
- *The vast majority of Fuel Rights work, 84% has been Casework & Advocacy and the vast majority of this 90% has been office or telephone based*
- *Whilst just under 15% of staff time has been devoted to campaigning and social policy work the unit has still had a significant influence on fuel poverty strategy on a national level.*

- *There is a wide diversity between the views of the staff and committee on the effectiveness of the fuel rights service in all activities. This needs further investigation.*
- *The future of the fuel rights unit within COMTECHSA is still unclear and needs to be resolved urgently.*
- *The fuel rights unit are not providing enough training to outside agencies.*
- *If the fuel rights unit is to stay in COMTECHSA in the longer term, their statistical recording and reporting needs to be more co-ordinated and focused and benchmarking with comparable agencies should be introduced.*

Objective 4 To promote knowledge about how the community can act to better control and influence the built environment by ...

Activity 4a ... developing and reviewing an environmental impact policy (minimising resource consumption through reducing, reusing and recycling) and promoting it

Quantitative COMTECHSA has an environmental impact policy which sets out our aims and strategy for promoting environmental awareness and practices in both its operations and work.

The policy was sent to Liverpool City Council as part of the Grant Aid application process. This is not yet a compulsory policy for receipt of grant aid but this is likely to occur within the near future.

Qualitative Consequently, a number of groups contacted COMTECHSA for a copy of the policy to aid them in formulating their own 'green' policy, however, no records have been kept of who these were sent to.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 33% effective whilst staff scored it 29% ineffective.

Further information: Environmental Impact Policy (Information Pack)
Liverpool City Council Grant Aid File

Activity 4b ... publishing information about COMTECHSA and its work

Quantitative As a result of direct requests, 44 groups were sent information/membership packs. These included existing members, new members, umbrella groups and those just wishing to have more information on our services, some for distribution to other groups.

A further 24 copies of the pack with explanatory letters were sent to Housing Associations in the Liverpool area as an introduction to our services.

More copies of the information pack were distributed to those groups present at a recent Social Enterprise Network event introducing the process of Social Audit which was attended by two staff members who described COMTECHSA's own experience of Social Auditing. This was followed up by a piece in the SEN Briefing, the Networks own newsletter.

The last 12 months has also seen a number of advertisements placed in local and community newsletters. These are as follows:

- Local Solutions (MCVS) - leaflets in newsletter
- Knowsley CVS Voluntary News
- Merseyside Environmental Trust (Newsletter and Environment Week leaflet)
- Scottie Press (Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council)
- Greenbank Focus (Greenbank Project)
- Lister Letter

Interest was also shown by four Partnership offices who had yet to establish their own newsletters.

We have an entry in 'Take It From Here', the Liverpool CVS Handbook to voluntary and community organisations on Merseyside.

Qualitative One local councillor suggested 'More press releases and constructive publicity to all local authorities'.

A committee member noted a 'lack of communication - no newsletter for members - we are relatively anonymous to our own stakeholders.' This was reinforced by a member: 'Since I've been in post - approximately 3 years - I have not used the services and am unaware about what is provided.' Another user confirmed that 'more information should be made available to users on a regular basis about the ongoing activities and work of COMTECHSA.'

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 33% ineffective whilst staff scored it 21% ineffective. One staff member stated that 'much more needs to be done to publicise our work.'

Further information: Membership/Information pack
Publicity File
Requests for Information Book

Activity 4c ... providing appropriate training to community and voluntary groups

Quantitative No formal or organised training sessions have been provided to community and voluntary groups during the current audit year. However the SEN session mentioned under Activity 4b above could be defined as a training/awareness raising event.

Qualitative A committee member suggested that COMTECHSA 'write handbook/guide giving strategy and advice to the community.'

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 33% ineffective whilst staff scored it 29% ineffective.

Further information: Staff and Committee questionnaires
Social Audit File

Activity 4d ... encouraging information exchange and networking to assist the community groups manage their built environment and assets

Quantitative Despite being identified within the framework of the Social Audit, this has not been undertaken as a separate aspect of COMTECHSA's activities and therefore no formal method of capturing this information has been in place throughout the year. However, project workers were able to identify groups they had put into contact with other groups. Examples were as follows (those groups in italics are members of COMTECHSA):

- *Liverpool Muslim Society* and the *Abdullah Quilliam Society* were both put in contact with Granby Toxteth SRB Partnership for fundraising and project development advice.
- *Abdullah Quilliam Society* were put in contact with Parks Partnership and CDS Housing to look at collaborative working for the redevelopment of a community facility and cultural resource and with Merseyside Muslim Business and Training Initiative for advice on compiling a business plan.
- *Anfield CAB* were put in contact with *Toxteth Health & Community Care Forum* for information on radiation from power lines.
- *7th Sefton East Scouts* and *17th Fairfield Scouts* were put in contact with each other to discuss common aspects and problems of their projects.
- *Merseyside Bangladesh Association* were put in contact with *Toxteth Health & Community Care Forum* for advice and assistance in setting up a health project.
- *Merseyside Association of Ghanaians* were put in contact with Granby Toxteth Partnership to find other ethnic minority groups looking to share accommodation.
- *Toxteth Community College* were put in contact with *TRAIN 2000 Limited* for assistance with a development plan and fundraising and *Merseyside Pro Help* for assistance with a new lease.

Qualitative One user group noted that, despite COMTECHSA being unable to provide direct assistance 'you have sign-posted us to other organisations.'

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 17% ineffective whilst staff scored it 21% ineffective.

Further information: Staff and Committee questionnaires
Social Audit File

Activity 4e ... influencing the policy and practice of funders of community organisations

Quantitative This social audit process is the first time any systematic, formal contact has been made with the funders of the various community groups with which COMTECHSA works. However, COMTECHSA frequently accompany groups to meetings with their funders, eg Millennium Commission, National Lottery Charities Board, which highlights our presence and role within the local voluntary sector.

Qualitative Liverpool City Council recently set up a fund for Access Grants for both community organisations and small business. This was at least in part as a result of COMTECHSA advising groups to contact the Access Officer for assistance with accessibility improvements.

One of the areas where influence might be exerted is that of local partnerships. Indeed, one user group mentioned in their interview that it was through a local partnership that they came into contact with COMTECHSA, proving that there is scope to develop this relationship.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 50% ineffective whilst staff scored it 36% ineffective.

Further information: Staff and Committee Questionnaires
 Liverpool City Council Grant Aid File
 Project Files

Stakeholder Views

Other stakeholders were asked their views on Objective 4 and responses were as follows:

When asked to indicate the three most important of COMTECHSA's eight objectives, Objective 4 was rated as:

- =1st most important to **Committee** Members (see also Objective 1).
- =3rd most important to **Councillors** (see also Objective 2).
- 5th most important to COMTECHSA **staff**.
- =6th to **Funders** (see also Objectives 4 & 7).

When asked if they felt COMTECHSA was achieving this objective:

Three out of seven **councillors** who answered the question agreed (43%). Three neither agreed nor disagreed (43%) and one disagreed (14%).

Four out of six **Committee** members agreed (67%) whilst two disagreed (33%). At the committee group interview however, it was noted that COMTECHSA is not achieving this objective particularly well.

Five out of twelve **staff** who answered this question agreed (42%) and four neither agreed nor disagreed (33%) and three disagreed (25%). Two explanatory comments were received: 'we could do more' and 'we don't do enough of any of the above to be effective'.

Commentary

- *COMTECHSA has a written "green policy" but neither staff nor committee members consider this to be particularly effective in practice.*
- *Whilst some efforts have been made to promote COMTECHSA during the year, both staff and committee members consider this to be inadequate and consider the performance of COMTECHSA in achieving this objective to be poor.*
- *No training was organised or provided for community and voluntary groups during the year. Should COMTECHSA consider dropping this activity? If not, clear targets need to be set for what we want to do and how we can achieve it.*

- *COMTECHSA has been successful in influencing the policy and practice of funders of community organisations, but again staff and committee members feel that we have been ineffective in this activity.*
- *The committee believe this to be the most important of COMTECHSA's objectives whilst staff and other stakeholders believe it to be much less important.*
- *Is it time to review this objective? What do we hope to achieve by it? Can it be part of other objectives?*

Objective 5 To promote and encourage local sustainable development by ...

Activity 5a ... encouraging the use of local labour and the use of local contractors

Quantitative “Local” is defined by COMTECHSA as being as close to a project as is possible in the circumstances. For example, a contractor or sub-contractor based in the same postal area as a project or based in Liverpool or Merseyside could be a local contractor, whereas local labour is likely to mean labour from the immediate community, ie the community as defined by the community group. An example of this is the use of a contractor from within the same postal district for Grenville Adventure Playground along with that contractor taking on labour from the local Partnership area.

Over the past year, twelve different main contractors have been involved in 20 ‘live’ full technical projects. Eight of these contractors are based within the Liverpool city boundaries, one being a training organisation. Of the remaining four, two have been involved in specialised projects (a concrete garage and soundproofing works) and one was a national contractor on a £2 million project, considerably larger than any other project undertaken by COMTECHSA. All contractors have a base on Merseyside.

Throughout the year a considerable amount of additional project worker hours were spent providing additional assistance on a project where the client group had specified the use of a local contractor. Chosen from a tender list of six, the contractor chosen was within the same postal district as the client group (L1), however, their experience of such a large project (£700,000) was limited. Consequently, additional assistance was needed and included acting as clerk of works on the project, producing pre-snagging lists to assist with meeting the agreed handover date, helping with negotiations with sub contractors and helping with the production of programmes of work.

A further project, Lee Valley Millennium Centre, specified the use of local labour on site. Although the main contractor was a national company, two trainees were taken on as part of the contract (one joiner and one bricklayer) and subsequently went on to gain full time employment as a result of this training.

COMTECHSA themselves have undertaken many minor works on 60 Duke Street during the year. All contractors and suppliers are, where possible, from the local area and this has been the case during the current year.

Qualitative When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 33% effective whilst staff scored it 36% effective.

One staff member commented that ‘this is a “strong” area - not shouted about enough - it is not valued enough by us ... use of local labour is a nuisance and costs money and time’.

Further information: *Project Files (Full Technical)*
Job Register
Project Register
Contractor's Files
Duke Street Files

Activity 5b ... supporting community participation in making decisions

Quantitative COMTECHSA actively supports community participation in decision making. See also Activity 1j. This was demonstrated on a number of projects throughout the year.

SPRING (Scargreen Park Recreation in Norris Green) held an open day to gather opinions of the local community on the future development of a local park and sports area and the final report for this project was produced during the year.

This project also provided a format for KADRA's (Kingsheath & District Residents Association) project to refurbish their local sports field. Questionnaires were distributed to local households and an open day held at which possibilities for the development of the group were discussed with local residents. Local schools who use the pitch were also asked to contribute, by providing their sports timetables and by entering a competition to design a new entrance gate.

TRAIN 2000 Limited held an 'Ideas Shop' in the local community for the redevelopment of Granby Street school which COMTECHSA facilitated, providing presentation materials and lists of potential future uses for the building.

In our role as Project Managers, COMTECHSA have also taken part in community participation events in the development of the Netherton Feelgood Factory project, and a tender submission for Belle Vale Park also incorporated a fully participative community consultation exercise.

Qualitative A committee member commented under this objective that COMTECHSA 'gets involved in consultancies at request of client not as a core ideal.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 100% effective whilst staff scored it 79% effective.

Further information: *Project Files*
Additional Value Hours Record Sheets

Activity 5c ... attracting other resources to a local area

Quantitative It is estimated that about **£2,000,000 to £2,500,000** of funding has been attracted to Liverpool or Merseyside during the year through the provision of architectural and associated services by COMTECHSA as detailed in Objective 1 earlier in this report.

- COMTECHSA worked on full technical projects with a value of £4,214,800. By calculating this year's fees as a proportion of total fees for each project we have estimated that about 30% of the total work on these projects was completed during the year. Therefore, about £1,250,000 was spent on implementing full technical projects during the year.
- Funds have been raised to proceed with 5 projects with a combined value of £145,000 as a result of COMTECHSA's feasibility studies during the year and Netherton Feelgood Factory has raised just over £1,000,000 towards the

development of the Feelgood Factory. Another five feasibility studies have raised small amounts of funding to pay towards fees, planning applications etc.

- Some of this work will have been funded by groups from their own funds, or by a local authority from "mainstream" grant aid. However, the vast majority of the funding comes from national or European sources of funding such as Single Regeneration Budget, Objective One funding, English Partnerships, the National Lottery, etc.

The Fuel Rights Unit has raised £31,612 in the form of increased benefits payments for clients, debts written off or free meter cards. See Activity 3b.

Qualitative When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 33% effective whilst staff scored it 21% effective. Staff and committee questionnaires were completed prior to information being available about this activity

Further information: *Project Register*
Project Files

Stakeholder Views

Other stakeholders were asked their views on Objective 5 and responses were as follows:

When asked to indicate the three most important of COMTECHSA's eight objectives, Objective 5 was rated as:

- =7th most important to COMTECHSA **staff** (see also Objective 2).
- 2nd most important to **Funders**.
- 5th most important to **Committee Members**.
- 2nd most important to **Councillors**.

When asked if they felt COMTECHSA was achieving this objective:

Four out of six **councillors** who answered this question agreed (67%) whilst two neither agreed nor disagreed (33%).

Four out of six **committee** members agreed (67%). One neither agreed nor disagreed (17%) whilst one disagreed (17%).

Five out of twelve **staff** who answered this question agreed (42%). Six neither agreed nor disagreed (50%) and one disagreed (8%).

Comments received from staff included 'this is a 'strong' area - not shouted about enough - it is not valued enough by us' and 'sustainable development is too large a concept - all we can do is support the principles'.

Commentary

- *Use of local labour, etc, has cost COMTECHSA a lot of time and effort during the year, yet neither staff nor committee members recognise the success we are having in encouraging the use of local labour and use of local contractors. COMTECHSA should be more vocal about their success in this area.*
- *There is a reluctance to 'take credit' for community groups' success in raising funds. Nevertheless, COMTECHSA has helped to raise over £3 million during the year for community and voluntary sector groups. Almost all of this money is from outside of Liverpool and is contributing to the local economy*
- *Funders and councillors believe this to be an important objective.*

Objective 6 To be an open, accountable and user-controlled organisation by ...**Activity 6a ... having a democratically elected, active and informed Management Committee**

Quantitative COMTECHSA's Committee of Management is elected yearly at the Annual General Meeting. Prospective candidates return nomination forms prior to the meeting and are then voted for by those members who are present at the meeting.

Following the Annual General Meeting in October 2000, the Committee of Management has comprised of eleven members. This is a reduction on the previous year's Committee of 15 members.

Average attendance at committee meetings and main sub committees for the year 1 April 2000-31 March 2001 has been as follows:

<i>Committee</i>	<i>Number of meetings</i>	<i>Average Attendance</i>
Committee of Management	11	7
Projects Sub Committee (6 members)	4	4
Finance Sub Committee (5 members)	8	3
Personnel Sub Committee (5 members)	0	0

A further Committee of Management meeting was devoted to discussing publicity (4 attendees) and committee members also sat on the Constitution, Fuel Rights and Publicity Working Groups (5, 3 and 2 committee members respectively).

As all current members had previously sat on the committee, no formal induction session was held for the year. No other training needs were identified and subsequently none was provided.

Only six members of the Committee returned their questionnaires (55% of this year's committee or 40% of the previous year's committee and compared to 75% of staff questionnaires), although those that did were generally positive in their replies.

Qualitative Staff were quite forthcoming with their comments on the committee of management. Comments included: '...committee is elected and informed, but activity is debatable'; 'the management committee is fonder of talking than making decisions'; and 'the management committee plays a key role but do they do it well?'. This was raised at the staff interview also, where it was questioned whether the Management Committee manages, has an advisory capacity, or more closely resembles a Board of Directors, 'pronouncing the vision and strategy. 'Staff-committee communication needs opening up and strengthening' echoed a theme which was also raised in the group interviews:.

The role of the committee also sparked comment: 'Certain key members take responsibility, others don't really bother and are led by others' commented one staff member whilst another remarked that 'lack of clarity of roles and

responsibility between staff and management committee means that it is impossible to know how to develop the management committee formally'.

Committee members themselves also indicate that they may be uninformed: 'evidence for the responses is limited and anecdotal' was the reply of one committee member asked to evaluate added value services. About the fuel rights service 'not familiar with this aspect to give definite answers' and 'I have little knowledge of these aspects' when asked about Objective 4. One remarked under this Objective that 'at times extra admin hinders the work of COMTECHSA.'

One member of the committee noted that it 'would help if more members were to participate on management committee - fuel rights clients not involved.'

However, at the user group interviews, one person commented that the service and the quality thereof was the important factor to them - user control was neither important nor of interest for them.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 100% effective whilst staff scored it 29% effective.

Further information: Staff and Committee Questionnaires
Annual Report 1999-2000 (Information Pack)
Committee Induction Pack (1999-2000)
Committee of Management Minutes
Sub Committee Minutes
Working Group Minutes

Activity 6b ... increasing the number and spread of the membership

Quantitative In the year 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001, the total membership of COMTECHSA was brought up to 492 as 20 new groups became members, as follows:

568	Rob Lane Allotments Association	WA12
569	Orrell Community Initiatives	L20
570	17 th Fairfield Scout Group	L12
571	Motor Waste Limited	L7
572	Sandfield Park School	L12
573	St Matthew's Catholic Junior School	L4
574	St Michael's Centre	L6
575	Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School	L7
576	Lister Residents Association	L7
577	Come Alive at 55 Trust	L19
578	TRAIN 2000 Limited	L8
579	Princes Primary School	L8
580	Sefton Council for Voluntary Service	L22
581	Norris Green Community Federation	L11
582	Cancer Resource Store	L3
583	Rainford Community & Youth Action	WA11
584	Lee Park Community Association	L25
585	The Yellow House	L9
586	Mersey View Special School	L17
587	WAM Friendship Centre	L15

Of these new members, 17 were from within the Liverpool City Council boundaries, one came from Sefton, and a further two from St Helen's.

This compares with 12 new members in the year 1999-2000 and 24 new members in 1998-1999.

Qualitative When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 67% effective whilst staff scored it 21% effective.

Further information: *Minutes of Committee of Management Meetings*
Membership files
Register of Members
Requests for Information Book

Activity 6c ... providing information to the members and the wider community

Quantitative Other than information about COMTECHSA (see Activity 4b), information has been sent out about various funding sources as follows:

- B&Q 'You Can Do it' Awards
- BBC Children in Need Grants
- National Lottery Charities Board Grant Application packs
- National Lottery 'Awards for All' small grants scheme packs

No formal records have been kept of to whom these have been sent, although this can be easily rectified for future years. However, each set of information was sent to between 10 and 25 groups.

The National Lottery Charities Board 'Property Applications' booklet was also circulated to groups considering large applications for lottery funding.

Qualitative When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 33% ineffective whilst staff scored it 14% ineffective.

Further information: *Staff and Committee Questionnaires*
Fundraising Information File

Activity 6d ... completing a regular social audit and consulting the key stakeholders

Quantitative The year 2000-2001 is the first time that COMTECHSA has undertaken a Social Audit and we are committed to continuing the process in future years.

Key stakeholders who were identified and consulted during the year are as follows:

- Staff Members (including those who left within the past two years)
- Committee of Management Members (as at September 2000)
- Funders and potential funders of COMTECHSA member organisations
- Councils (other than Liverpool) who may have previously been or may potentially become funders of COMTECHSA
- Tenants of 60 Duke Street

- Agents who have referred clients to the fuel rights service
- Local Councillors from all five areas, local MP's and MEP's
- Member and user groups of COMTECHSA

Each group was sent a tailored, anonymous questionnaire. In addition, interviews were held with selected member/user groups and meetings were held separately with staff and committee of management members to discuss the preliminary findings of the questionnaires.

Once the Social Audit is completed, the findings will be reported to another key stakeholder group, the funders of COMTECHSA - Liverpool City Council and Manweb.

Other key stakeholders who were identified but not consulted were as follows:

- Non-member voluntary organisations
- Statutory bodies for technical projects, eg environmental health, planning, etc

There were difficulties in compiling these lists within the available timescale and consultation with these groups will be looked at for future audit years along with other stakeholder groups which it was agreed were not to be included in the first cycle.

Qualitative When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 50% effective whilst staff scored it 21% effective.

One staff member asked 'how can we judge if it will be regular'.

Further information: Notes of User Group Interviews
 Notes of meetings with Staff/Committee members
 Questionnaires
 Social Audit file
 Social Audit Framework document

Activity 6e ... producing an annual report, accounts and having an Annual General Meeting

Quantitative The Annual Report was published in September 2000 along with the Financial Statements for the year to 31 March 2000. Copies of both these documents were sent to all members.

The Annual General Meeting which was held at Anfield Citizen's Advice Bureau on Tuesday 17 October 2000 and was attended by 15 members and their representatives plus 11 members of the staff team. Unfortunately, due to a clerical error, some 68 of our newest members did not receive an invitation which would account (along with the abysmal weather!) for the poor attendance at the event.

Qualitative This clerical error was picked up during the user group interviews by one of the groups who had not received an invitation.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 100% effective whilst staff scored it 93% effective.

Further information: Annual Report 1999-2000
 Financial Accounts 2000-2001
 Annual General Meeting File

Activity 6f ... maintaining a complaints policy and procedure

Quantitative COMTECHSA has both an Architectural Service Complaints Procedure (with accompanying notice) and a Fuel Rights Complaints Procedure. Copies of the Architectural Service Complaints Procedure Notice are displayed around the offices and distributed with COMTECHSA's information. Copies of the full policy are available for any member who requests one.

No complaints were received during the year to 31 March 2000.

Qualitative When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 83% effective whilst staff scored it 50% effective.

Further information: Information/Membership pack
 Staff and Committee Questionnaires

Activity 6g ... maintaining an organisational confidentiality policy

Quantitative The Fuel Rights service has a Confidentiality Policy and Procedure. This is outlined in the leaflet - 'your rights our services':

'COMTECHSA offers a confidential service - nothing you tell us will be shared with any other organisation or individual without your permission.'

All fuel rights clients' details are kept in lockable filing cabinets to ensure personal details such as telephone numbers and addresses are kept confidential.

There is no formal confidentiality policy for the rest of COMTECHSA's activities, however, this is covered under Section 16 of the Code & Conditions of Employment which states:

'You are required to render faithful service to the agency. Involvement in activities either during working hours or in a private capacity that are prejudicial to the interests of the Agency will be deemed to be breach of this duty and subject to disciplinary action.'

Staff personnel files are kept in a locked filing cabinet. A shredder is used for disposal of confidential and sensitive waste.

The caller identify function on the telephones has been "barred" to enhance confidentiality for incoming callers.

Qualitative During the user group interviews, one interviewee expressed concern about what they felt to be the indiscreet divulgence of information about other organisations and noted that this compromised COMTECHSA's professionalism.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee Members scored it 67% effective whilst staff scored it 36% effective.

Further information: Information/Membership Pack
Staff and Committee Questionnaires
Code & Conditions of Employment

Stakeholder Views

Other stakeholders were asked their views on Objective 6 and responses were as follows:

When asked to indicate the three most important of COMTECHSA's eight objectives, Objective 6 was rated as:

- =2nd most important to COMTECHSA **staff** (see also Objective 7).
- =3rd most important to **Funders** (see also Objectives 2 & 8).
- =6th most important to **Committee Members** (see also Objectives 3 & 7).
- =7th most important to **Councillors** (see also Objective 7).

When asked if they felt COMTECHSA was achieving this objective:

Two out of seven **councillors** who answered the question agreed - (29%). Four neither agreed nor disagreed (57%) and one disagreed (14%).

Six out of six **Committee** members agreed (100%).

Five out of twelve **staff** who answered this question agreed (42%) whilst five neither agreed nor disagreed (42%) and two disagreed (8%).

Commentary

- *It is difficult to attract and retain new committee members, but more work could be done in this area.*
- *There is a considerable disparity between the views of the committee and staff regarding the activities of Objective 6.*
- *Membership during the year has grown by about 5% which is more or less the average rate for the past 20 years.*
- *There is a general consensus that COMTECHSA should provide more and better information to our members and the wider community.*
- *Poor attendance at the AGM was probably due to our clerical error in failing to notify our newer members.*

Objective 7 To be a responsible and considerate employer by ...**Activity 7a ... having good terms and conditions, eg flexitime, etc**

Quantitative All fourteen staff have been issued with Contracts of Employment and the two trainees have been issued with Training Contracts. All contracts, accompanied by a full set of the COMTECHSA Code and Conditions of Employment, were issued within the statutory time period and incorporate all statutory rights for employees.

COMTECHSA provides conditions of employment as follows:

- A 35 hour working week, Monday to Friday
- A flexitime system between office hours of 8 am and 9 pm with core hours of 10 am - 12 noon and 2 pm - 4 pm
- Holiday pay begins at 26 days per year up to a maximum of 31 days, plus 8 days' statutory bank holidays
- Sick leave entitlement, subject to a minimum period of employment, is in excess of the statutory minimum and is paid at full and half pay, based on length of service
- Paid compassionate/special leave, up to a maximum of 5 days per annum, is granted at the discretion of the Committee of Management
- Maternity/paternity/adoption rights, etc, are also in excess of the statutory minimum

Part time working is also facilitated.

Staff sickness was 247 days out of a total of 3,976 staff working days during the year.

- 2 staff took no sick leave
- 4 staff took 2 days or less sick leave
- 5 staff took between 5 and 7.5 days sick leave
- 3 staff took between 12 and 18 days sick leave
- 3 staff took over 38.5 days sick leave

Setting aside the three staff who took over 38.5 days leave as being exceptional, the remaining staff took 84.5 out of 3,813.5 days as sick leave, an average sickness rate of 1 in every 45 working days.

Qualitative When asked about their conditions of employment, opinions were almost universally positive. Of 14 staff who replied to the questionnaire, 12 (85%) were happy with their hours of work and all (100%) were happy with other benefits such as holidays.

Eight staff (57%) agreed that there were not under too much work pressure with five (36%) neither agreeing nor disagreeing with this statement. Eleven out of fourteen staff (79%) stated that they were satisfied with their general working conditions.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 100% effective, staff scored it 79% effective.

Further information: Staff Questionnaires
 Staff Group Interview Notes
Code & Conditions of Employment
Personnel Files
Sickness Record Files

Activity 7b ... encouraging participation through open management and good communications

Quantitative Staff and Technical Team meetings are held on a more or less monthly basis, although this is quite flexible. Staff meetings are intended to take place around a week after Committee of Management meetings, allowing for verbal reports on what has taken place as well as discussion of more day-to-day issues.

Qualitative Half the staff felt that communications within the organisation are good. Four (28%) neither agreed nor disagreed that this was the case whilst a further three disagreed (21%). This was demonstrated at the staff group interview when those present indicated that they did not know how far the social audit had progressed. One member of staff commented that 'communication is too good on occasion - but only informally'. Nine staff (64%) felt they understood the work of other sections well.

When asked whether they felt their ideas and were taken seriously, 6 staff (43%) agreed. Two (17%) disagreed and a further 6 neither agreed nor disagreed. The majority of staff (57%) felt that they were happy with their involvement in decisions affecting their work. Four more (28%) disagreed with the statement.

Only four out of the fourteen staff who responded (28%) felt they were able to influence the decision-making of the organisation. Six (43%) were unsure whilst a further four (28%) disagreed with this assertion. One respondent noted that 'lines of communication between committee and staff is weak'. This was underlined at the staff group interview where it was noted that there were improvements in communications following committee members visiting job sites or during 'away days'.

During the group interviews, committee also noted that 'direct communication between staff and management committee is problematic.'

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 83% effective, staff scored it 29% effective.

Further information: Staff Questionnaires
 Staff Group Interview notes
Minutes of Staff Meetings
Minutes of Technical Team Meetings
Minutes of Committee Meetings

Activity 7c ... providing training for staff and, where appropriate, the Management Committee

Quantitative A Training Plan is prepared at the beginning of each financial year by the Director in consultation with the management team and based on needs identified at staff supervision sessions. At the time of responding to the questionnaire, the following training had been received by staff during the previous 12 month period:

Staff Training - 12 months to September 2000



Two respondents did not reply, probably because they were not members of the current staff team.

During the current audit year (to 31 March 2001) the following training courses have been attended by staff:

<i>Course</i>	<i>Duration (Days)</i>	<i>No. of Attendees</i>
BTEC National - Building Studies	30	2
CAD & Imaging Training	1	8
Emergency First Aid	1	6
Exchange Server	3	3
First Aid at Work	4	2
NT4 Core Technologies	5	2
Proxy Server	2	2
Warm Homes Training Initiative	2	2
Windows NT4 Administration	3	4

The cost of external training was approximately £13,500. This was unusually high in the Social Audit year because the local Partnership were offering grants for training to small businesses using European monies. Normal levels of training expenditure are in the region of £1,000 to £3,000.

Extensive 'on-the-job' training has also taken place, ie the technical team have also held regular meetings to discuss and swap skills gained from using the new ArchiCAD software.

The two Project Worker Trainees have given day release to attend college to study for a BTEC National in Building Studies. A further staff member has been given assistance (two hours per week) towards a Masters in Business Administration (Environmental Management) at Liverpool University.

No training was undertaken by members of the Committee of Management in their role as members of the committee.

Qualitative Half the staff agreed that they had received the training they needed to do their job effectively. Three staff (21%) felt this was not the case. Again, half

the staff felt that the training they had received was worthwhile. One member of the staff team remarked that the 'support received for college course was far more helpful than the training offered'.

One member of the committee noted that 'committee training is vital for the future'. Another committee comment referred to staff training: 'audit of staff skills essential ... and extra training ... needed for future change.'

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 67% effective, staff scored it 50% effective.

Further information: *Training File*
Timesheets
Financial Accounts 2000-2001
Budget 2000-2001

Activity 7d ... offering work experience and training within COMTECHSA's work

Quantitative Two full time trainees have been "employed" during the year on COMTECHSA's Project Worker Training Scheme which "employs" two trainees from the Netherley & Valley Partnership area on paid training contracts as Trainee Project Workers. Both Trainees have attended a BTEC National - Building Studies Course on day release.

It has not been possible to offer further trainee posts or work experience places because of the supervision needs of the current trainees and due to there being no office space available to accommodate extra trainees.

Qualitative The aim of the training programme is to equip the trainees with the qualifications, experience and basic skills necessary to compete in the job market.

The trainees were sent staff questionnaires as a part of the Social Audit consultation process. These were analysed on an anonymous basis with other staff questionnaires and therefore we had no direct feedback from the trainees about their training. To rectify this situation the trainees were interviewed by the Director in June 2001 and asked whether they had found the training a worthwhile experience, whether they liked the training and whether they felt they had received a good level of support from COMTECHSA during the year. Trainees comments included:-

"It's definitely worthwhile because I'll gain a qualification and 2 years' experience ... and knowledge of how to do the job"

"I enjoyed it ... I would recommend it to another school leaver or friend"

"There was nothing I didn't really like"

"Having my own computer is particularly useful"

"If we needed any help we just had to ask any member of technical staff"

"The office facilities, library and time to do college work in the office were helpful"

"I enjoyed the 3D computer work"

"I like designing best"

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 83% effective, staff scored it 79% effective.

Further information: *Trainee Personnel Files*
File - Employment Enquiries
Project Worker Training Files
Social Audit File

Activity 7e ... being understanding and supportive to staff

Quantitative Supervision, staff/team meetings and intra-office networking are all methods by which support is available to staff at COMTECHSA.

Qualitative Half the staff felt that they were part of a supportive team. Four others (28%) disagreed with this. Asked whether they got good support from other staff members, eight staff (57%) agreed and four (29%) neither agreed nor disagreed. One member of staff commented that it was 'difficult to feel supported when staff sickness is so high', whilst another mentioned that 'talk of future moves and changes effects morale and team spirit in a negative way'.

Asked whether their manager gave honest feedback on their performance, half agreed whilst four staff (29%) disagreed. Two further comments were made on this point: one noted that 'certain managers offer good support', whilst a second commented that 'I have no manager ... and the chair is not able to provide adequate support'.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 100% effective, staff scored it 43% effective.

Further information: *Staff Questionnaires*
Staff Meeting Minutes
Team Meeting Minutes
Supervision Notes

Activity 7f ... providing good working facilities and a safe and healthy environment

Quantitative In compliance with the Health & Safety at Work Act (1973), the Health & Safety Regulations 1992 and other relevant legislation, COMTECHSA has a regularly reviewed Health & Safety Policy, has undertaken the necessary risk assessments, COSHH assessments, etc, and has trained several staff in First Aid. To meet these requirements, and to ensure a good working environment, COMTECHSA provides:

- Individual workspaces, each with its own computer, telephone and fully adjustable office chair
- A No Smoking policy enforced throughout the building with a designated sheltered smoking area
- High quality office equipment, eg fax, photocopiers, etc
- Tea making facilities with kettle, microwave and fridge

- Provision of tea, coffee, milk, tissues and cordial
- Staff rest area
- Bike sheds
- Roof garden
- Basement shower room
- A secure entry system for the building
- A modern intruder alarm system with panic alarms where requested

COMTECHSA has a Fire Certificate for 60 Duke Street which is currently being updated to reflect changes and improvements to the building.

Qualitative Half the staff agreed that their health and well-being at work is taken seriously. A further five (36%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 100% effective, staff scored it 64% effective.

Further information: Staff Questionnaires

Activity 7g ... offering good pay

Quantitative All posts within COMTECHSA are based on the NJC salary scales and historically have been agreed with Liverpool City Council as comparable to their own staff appointments.

Salary scales in COMTECHSA range from £12,192 at the bottom of the Admin Worker scale to £30,891 at the top of the scale for the Director.

Qualitative The average salary for a COMTECHSA Project Worker was in the region of £23,000 which is considered a good rate of pay for staff without professional qualifications. Qualified staff might be able to find more lucrative work, however, this would be without some of the benefits available to COMTECHSA staff, eg a 35 hour flexible working week.

COMTECHSA pays competitive salaries for our managers, admin and fuel rights staff compared with local authority rates for similar posts and those in other organisations in the community and voluntary sector.

Eight out of fourteen staff (57%) were happy with their salary. Two more (14%) disagreed with this statement.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 67% effective, staff scored it 36% effective.

Further information: *NJC salary scale*
Personnel files
Code & Conditions of employment

Activity 7h ... making the building accessible

Quantitative 60 Duke Street has integrated disabled access to all floors via a lift and has disabled WC facilities on each floor. Only the basement areas and 'smokers' den' are inaccessible to wheelchairs. Other facilities include induction loops to the training area and reception window, high contrast colour schemes for the visually impaired, and a minicom for use by all tenants of the building.

We are within 10 minutes walk of the bus stations, mainline and underground train stations and have a SMART bus stop almost directly outside the building. There is a car park opposite the premises and disabled parking spaces available directly outside the building. We also provide a cycle park for those wishing to use more green methods of personal transport.

Unfortunately over the past 12 months, due to extensive road improvement works, there has been severe disruption to traffic flow, public bus services and pedestrian access to Duke Street.

Qualitative When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 100% effective, staff scored it 79% effective.

Further information: Staff and Committee Questionnaires
Membership/Information Pack

Activity 7i ... having an equal opportunities policy

Quantitative COMTECHSA's equal opportunities policy forms part of the Code and Conditions of Employment.

As no new recruitment has taken place this year, no equal opportunities monitoring has taken place. However, the current staff team of sixteen comprises five women and three workers from ethnic backgrounds other than white British.

Qualitative When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 83% effective, staff scored it 36% effective.

Further information: *Equal Opportunities Policy*

Activity 7j ... holding regular supervision sessions for all staff

Quantitative COMTECHSA has a supervision system in place which makes provision for each member of staff to be individually supervised by their manager on a monthly basis and for each team to meet also on a monthly basis.

Technical Team supervision sessions are held on a monthly basis with individuals and the Technical Team Leader to facilitate the monitoring of workloads and any other issues which may arise. Technical Team meetings also take place fairly regularly on a monthly basis.

Supervision of managerial staff takes place on a more ad hoc basis, however, this has become more regular within the past 12 months and a Management Team meeting is held on the first Monday of the month.

The Fuel Rights team has adhoc team meetings as and when required to discuss specific issues as they arise. Otherwise supervision with this team is carried out on an informal day to day basis. The fuel rights section does not have formal supervision sessions under the above system.

The admin team has agreed amongst themselves that individual supervision sessions be available on request but that these not be formally scheduled. They also attempt to hold team meetings on a bi-monthly basis.

Qualitative One member of staff commented that 'there is a strongish supervision system', however, another staff member noted only 'one supervision session in 17 months'.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 83% effective, staff scored it 21% effective.

Further information: Staff and Committee Questionnaires
 Supervision timetable and guidance notes
 Supervision Files
 Technical Team minutes

Activity 7k ... introduction of a staff appraisal system

Quantitative As yet, no progress has been made towards the introduction of a staff appraisal system.

Qualitative Staff recognise the lack of an appraisal system - although one noted that they were 'unsure if we have a staff appraisal system' - and the topic was also raised at the staff group interview as an issue. There is also an interesting discrepancy in the views between the management committee and the staff on the effectiveness of the staff appraisal system (see scores below).

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 83% effective, staff scored it 36% ineffective.

Further information: Staff and Committee Questionnaires
 Staff Group Interview Notes

Activity 7l ... offering security of employment

Quantitative 60% of the full staff complement have been employed by COMTECHSA for more than 10 years and only two (excluding the trainees) have been employed for less than two years. Only one member of staff has left within the audit year to take up another job elsewhere.

The last time COMTECHSA made an employee redundant was in 1993. This was a voluntary redundancy.

Qualitative One member of staff notes that 'security still dependant on LCC' whilst a committee member agrees stating that this is 'dependant on core funding'.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 67% effective, staff scored it 14% effective.

Further information: Staff & Committee Questionnaires
Staff Personnel Files

Activity 7m ... maintaining good relations with the unions

Quantitative All staff are entitled to join a trade union and eight staff are members of the Transport & General Workers Union.

Qualitative When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 83% effective, staff scored it 36% effective.

Further information: Staff Questionnaires
T&GWU File
Code & Conditions of Employment
Timesheets

Stakeholder Views

Stakeholders were asked their views on Objective 7 as a whole and responses were as follows:

When asked to indicate the three most important of COMTECHSA's eight objectives, Objective 7 was rated as:

- =2nd most important to COMTECHSA **staff** (see also Objective 6).
- =6th most important to **Committee Members** (see also Objective 3 & 6).
- =4th most important to **Funders** (see also Objectives 3 & 4)
- =7th most important to **Councillors** (see also Objective 6).

When asked if they felt COMTECHSA was achieving this objective:

Four **councillors** answered the question and neither agreed nor disagreed (100%).

Six out of six **Committee** members agreed (100%).

Ten out of twelve **staff** who answered the question agreed (84%).

One neither agreed nor disagreed (8%) and one disagreed (8%).

One staff member qualified their opinions on effectiveness saying 'ineffective areas are where we don't do enough'. Some additional comments made by staff on working for COMTECHSA included: '... don't universally enjoy the work, but on balance .. the best job in the world.' Two staff commented on their roles and responsibilities: 'Have a clear sense of my responsibilities, but detail is vague'; 'Job role too varied for anyone to really fully grasp full remit.' One member of staff underlined a recurrent theme: 'The committee/staff lines of responsibility need tightening up'.

Commentary

- *Terms and conditions for staff compare well with those in both the private and public sectors*
- *Most staff are happy with their terms and conditions.*
- *There is room for more open management and an improvement in staff communications.*
- *Levels of sickness need to be compared to national bench marks and investigated if necessary. Is more regular monitoring and reporting needed.*
- *Committee training needs should be identified and addressed.*
- *The project worker training scheme is successful and well supported by staff and committee. Further schemes should be investigated.*
- *Rates of pay at COMTECHSA are good, especially bearing in mind the Conditions of Employment.*
- *The supervision system would benefit from more rigorous implementation.*
- *Should COMTECHSA give up on the idea of introducing a staff appraisal system?*
- *Whilst 60% of the staff have been employed for 10 years or more and no staff have been made redundant since 1993, staff still do not feel secure in their jobs. This may be because COMTECHSA's core funding was under review at the time the questionnaires were completed by staff.*
- *Not surprisingly, most stakeholders consider this to be the least important objective, whilst staff considered it to be the 2nd most important objective.*

Objective 8 To make COMTECHSA a long term sustainable organisation by ...

Activity 8a ... maximising fees for work done and as a proportion of the total work

Quantitative COMTECHSA's estimated total turnover for the year is £460,000 (2000: £480,211). Separate turnover figures are not available for the fuel rights unit, the management of 60 Duke Street and the technical section. The technical section's fee income target for the year was £110,000, 23% of total turnover.

Fee income generated during the year was £86,361, 19% of total turnover, (2000: £105,007, 22%).

Separate turnover figures are available for the fuel rights unit, the management of 60 Duke Street and the technical section from the budget for 2001/2002.

The fee income target for 2001/2002 is £110,000, 30% of the budgeted turnover for the technical section of £364,484.

Qualitative Whilst generating only 30% of the income by COMTECHSA's technical section, fee generating projects take up approximately 63% of technical staff time. COMTECHSA's "value added" services account for approximately 18% of fee earning time (see Objectives 1h-1m). When these are taken into account we are spending about 52% of our time earning 30% of our funding.

The aim of earning fees is to supplement our grant income, make us less dependent on Local Authority Funding and enable us to do more work. If fee generating work is earning us less than it costs then it means that the more time we spend on fee earning, the less free or at risk work we can do.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 17% effective, staff scored it 29% effective. These views may reflect the fact that the committee more often than not receive reports that outline the difficulties we have in meeting our targets and the staff spend a lot of time trying to earn fees, but without really ever generating enough income.

One member of staff commented on this activity: 'fee income dominates this objective and takes all our time'.

Further information: Staff Questionnaires
Project Register
Finance Sub Committee Minutes

Activity 8b ... by being innovative and thinking to the future

Quantitative The Director and Property Services Manager have spent approximately 585 hours (£20,475 at £35/hr) on IT Development and support during the year. IT Training Costs accounted for approximately £12,300, 91% of the training expenditure for the year.

Nearly £50,000 has been spent on computer equipment during the last 2-3 years and this accounts for an annual "depreciation" charge in our accounts of about £9,000 per annum

The year 2000-2001 saw the introduction of Project Management services as a discrete aspect of COMTECHSA's work. The agency also undertook a social audit for the first time and joined a local network of Social Enterprise organisations to seek ways to expand our work to include development and business planning advice.

Qualitative

Computer Aided Design (CAD) was introduced in December 1999. Each member of Technical staff has a CAD Station and there has been some on-going CAD training provided throughout the year. See Objective 7.

Internal and external e-mail were introduced during the year, and additional IT equipment was purchased so that every member of staff has a computer on their desk. Working practices are under continual review to assess where we can take the maximum benefit from this new technology. For example typing, photocopying and other administrative work can now be requested by e-mail and checking of documents can be carried out on electronic copies rather than printing out work all the time.

All staff have been provided with Microsoft Outlook personal information management software, which includes diaries, contact lists, task management tools, etc, and allows staff to share information even when they are not in the office. For example, meetings involving several staff can be proposed, arranged and/or re-arranged using the diary sharing tools without all attendees needing to be present to arrange things. The software is fairly intuitive, but all staff have been given half a days introductory training by the Property Services Manager.

Staff have been encouraged to use this new system as management have made the decision to use it as the only means of communication for passing on telephone messages, requesting leave, etc .

A building-wide computer network was installed during the year and we are encouraging building tenants to begin to use it. At the moment only one tenant is using the network as a means of sharing files between their own computers.

In the longer term we hope to be able to provide a more comprehensive service to tenants on the network. We could use the infrastructure we have in place to provide services including computer security, virus protection, file storage and management, back-ups and disaster recovery, managed access to the Internet, external e-mail, provision of website space, an internal building intranet and notice board, support services for hardware and software etc.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 17% effective, staff scored it 14% effective.

These views probably reflect the frustration of both parties at the slow rate of change in voluntary sector organisations like COMTECHSA. By the time we have CAD, a computer network, email and the Internet it is no longer considered innovative by a lot of people. However, it is innovative and

forward looking for COMTECHSA and for organisations in our sector and it has involved a massive level of investment of time and money.

Further information: *Netherton Feelgood Factory file*
Staff Minutes
Timesheets
Budget file
Financial Statements 2000-2001

Activity 8c ... researching the needs of community groups and the potential for the development of other services to be offered by COMTECHSA

Quantitative The Social Audit has been the vehicle for research into needs of community groups and the potential introduction of new services.

1,002 questionnaires were distributed and 113 were returned and analysed:-

- Member Groups including User Groups of the architectural and associated services - 500 questionnaires distributed, 34 returned (7%)
- Tenants of 60 Duke Street - 8 questionnaires distributed, 5 returned (63%)
- Staff and Trainees - 20 questionnaires distributed, 16 returned (80%)
- Members of the Committee of Management - 16 questionnaires distributed, 6 returned (38%)
- Politicians and community leaders - 377 questionnaires distributed, 24 returned (6%)
- Funders of COMTECHSA and COMTECHSA member groups - 31 questionnaires distributed, 6 returned (19%)
- Neighbouring Councils - 4 questionnaires distributed, 0 returned (0%)
- Fuel Rights Referral Agents - 42 questionnaires distributed, 22 returned (52%)

Interviews were also conducted with the following three groups:-

- Committee of Management
- COMTECHSA Staff
- User Groups – 8 groups selected by CBS Network from a list of 47 supplied by COMTECHSA

See Section 5, Scope and Methodology of the Audit, for more details.

Qualitative When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee and staff members both felt that this activity was neither effective nor ineffective.

One member of staff identified a development worker as an aid to groups raising funds, whilst another staff member suggested that COMTECHSA might provide business plans and 'contract facilities management'. At the group interview, further points were expanded upon. Staff noted the need for development advice and funding information to be provided to user groups but also acknowledged that there are gaps in COMTECHSA's own skills in these areas and that partnership working might be a solution to this problem.

Suggestions from committee members included 'acting as a property developer for community groups, employing community groups and small

businesses as sub-contractors' and 'COMTECHSA has to develop partnership to lead new projects in disadvantaged areas.'

Further information: Staff & Committee Questionnaires
Interview Notes
Social Audit file

Activity 8d ... exploring the development of additional buildings

Quantitative There has been very little or no time spent this year investigating or progressing any projects that could involve the development of an additional building by COMTECHSA. No buildings have been looked at, no plans to develop space outside of 60 Duke Street have been considered and no fundraising has been carried out.

Qualitative Whilst this activity has been identified as one of the ways COMTECHSA may achieve our objective of long term sustainability specific targets have not been set for this by the Committee and as a result it has not been specifically prioritised by the Director or Property Services Manager. Given that some 20% of 60 Duke Street has been underused (see Objective 2) efforts have been concentrated on fully developing 60 Duke Street, prior to getting involved with a new building. This is likely to be the situation in the next couple of years.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 33% effective, staff scored it 14% effective. The Committee members may score this higher than staff because they consider the issue to still be on the agenda, whilst staff know that nothing is actually being done.

One staff member commented: 'very little work carried out in surrounding areas.'

Further information: Questionnaires

Activity 8e ... increasing publicity and promotion of COMTECHSA and its services

Quantitative See Objective 4, Activity 4b.

Qualitative At the user group interviews, COMTECHSA's low profile was talked about: 'nobody knows anything about them' and 'not well known in Merseyside, especially in the housing movement' were comments that came up. One of the interviewees noted that they were unaware of COMTECHSA's services and were directed there by Liverpool City Council, despite their group being a tenant of 60 Duke Street, whilst a tenant did not comment on the architectural services stating that 'I'm not familiar or informed about [these] services so don't feel I can answer this.' A referral agent to the fuel rights service commented that 'although we recommend your services to customers, we do not fully understand the full range of your services,' whilst a user/member group noted that 'since I've been in post -approximately 3 years - I have not used the services and am unaware about what is provided.'

Nearly two thirds (15 out of 24) of the local Councillors who responded made mention of either not having heard of COMTECHSA or remarked that the service was not widely publicised enough. 'This is the first time I have heard of the organisation'; '... unaware of group'; 'Service excellent but not sufficiently well known'; 'your service may be good but your profile could improve.' However, one did comment of the distribution of the social audit questionnaire: 'This is a start'.

All staff noted at the group interview that this activity, along with activity 8f below, have to be undertaken and done so effectively. A committee member felt that there was 'a lot more to do on marketing and publicity' and this was reinforced at the committee group interview - 'a lot has been talked about this and nothing has been done' commented one.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 67% ineffective, staff scored it 21% ineffective.

Further information: Questionnaires
Publicity File
Committee of Management Minutes

Activity 8f ... attaining a position of influence through improved PR and a marketing strategy, and through increased networking

Quantitative See Objective 4, Activity 4b

Qualitative Staff commented that 'our PR/Marketing strategy is non-existent' and that 'need more publicity and promotion; not enough networking with other groups.' A committee member, talking about Objective 4, remarked that there was 'insufficient attention to progressing the work of COMTECHSA ... not enough use of considerable information and experience ... to influence urban and funding policies.'

One committee member felt that COMTECHSA 'should promote accessible design.'

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 67% ineffective, staff scored it 14% ineffective.

Further information: Staff & Committee questionnaires
Committee Minutes

Activity 8g ... reviewing and, if necessary, amending the current constitution

Quantitative COMTECHSA's constitution is not accepted by the National Lottery Charities Board as "charitable, benevolent or philanthropic". This is a barrier to us raising funds from the lottery and other charitable sources and the aim of this activity is to remove that barrier. This issue has been on the Agenda since 1996.

In June 2000 a Constitution Working Group was formed consisting of four members of the committee and the Director. This group met four times during the year including meetings with COMTECHSA's Solicitor and our Auditors.

Qualitative Progress on this issue has been slow. The main stumbling block has been the need, identified by the Solicitor, for COMTECHSA to undertake a strategic review prior to any decisions being made. It is hoped that the completion of the first Social Audit and a subsequent review day that is planned for July 2001 will address these issues.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 100% effective, staff scored it 7% effective.

One interpretation of the results is that the committee score for this activity is probably over-optimistic, but perhaps they see themselves as doing everything possible to make progress on this issue. The experience of the majority of the staff, on the other hand, is that this issue has been on the agenda for five years, yet the constitution remains unchanged and no alternative constitutional structures are proposed at the moment.

Further information: *Constitution Working Group File
Minutes of Committee of Management*

Activity 8h ... acquiring Community Legal Service kitemark

Quantitative Due to the proposed relocation of the fuel rights service, this activity has not been pursued. However, it is hoped that any relocation will be to an agency which already has this status.

Qualitative When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 33% effective, staff scored it 7% ineffective.

Further information: *Fuel Rights Working Group minutes
Liverpool City Council Grant Aid Application
Committee of Management minutes*

Activity 8i ... having and implementing an environmental impact policy and minimising resource consumption by reducing, reusing and recycling

Quantitative COMTECHSA has an environmental impact policy which sets out our aims and strategy for promoting environmental awareness and practices in both its operations and work.

During the year attempts have been made to find suitable suppliers of recycled papers and collectors of paper waste for recycling but at the end of the audit year these had yet to be found. However, increased use of information technology has already reduced the need for paper copies of documentation within the office.

Further information on environmental practices is also given in Activities 2e and 4a.

Qualitative See also Value 3.

When asked whether COMTECHSA was effective in this activity, Committee members scored the activity 17% effective, staff scored it 7% ineffective.

Further information: Environmental Impact Policy
Staff and Committee questionnaires
Environmental Action Plan
Staff minutes

Stakeholder Views

Other stakeholders were asked their views on Objective 8 and responses were as follows:

When asked to indicate the three most important objectives of the eight:

Funders rated Objective 8 as =3rd most important (see also Objectives 2 & 6).

Councillors felt it was 5th most important.

Committee members felt it was 3rd most important.

COMTECHSA **staff** felt it was =5th most important (see also Objective 4).

When asked if they felt COMTECHSA was achieving this objective:

One of five **councillors** who answered the question agreed (20%).
Four neither agreed nor disagreed (80%).

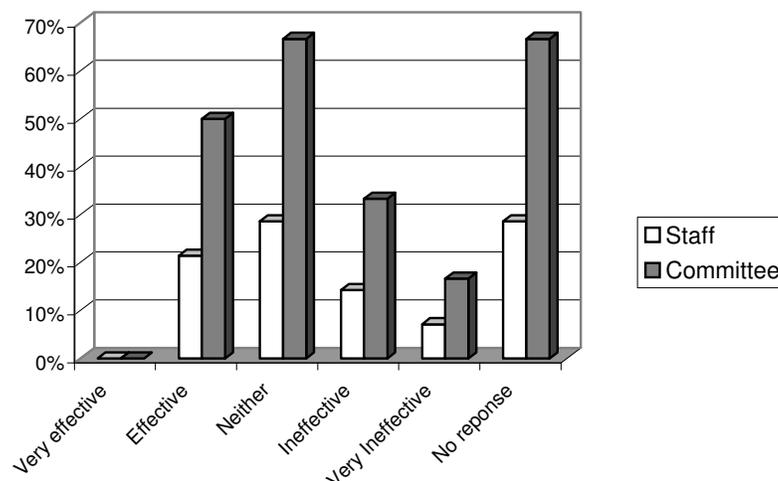
Five out of five **Committee** members who answered this question agreed (100%).

Eight out of eleven **staff** who answered the question agreed (73%).
One neither agreed nor disagreed (9%) and two disagreed (18%).

One member of staff commented that 'much of the above is ineffective as it is yet to happen' whilst another member of the team remarked 'the actual shift to make people realise we must become self-sufficient is going to be an uphill battle.' Another suggested that 'COMTECHSA needs to review structure and working practices if it is to become sustainable.'

Viability

Staff and committee members were asked more specifically about Objective 8. When asked if COMTECHSA was achieving this objective, answers were as overleaf:



These two stakeholder groups were also asked to rate the activities under this objective with the following results:

Activity	Staff ranking position	Committee ranking position
8a <i>maximise fees</i>	3	3
8b <i>innovation</i>	=4	1
8c <i>new services</i>	2	5
8d <i>more buildings</i>	6	4
8e <i>publicity</i>	1	=6
8f <i>influence</i>	7	2
8g <i>constitution</i>	=4	=6
8h <i>CLS kitemark</i>	9	=8
8i <i>green policy</i>	8	=8

Therefore, the three most important activities to ensure future viability were perceived to be:

- Staff:
- i. Increasing publicity and promotion of COMTECHSA and its services
 - ii. Researching the needs of community groups and the potential for the development of other services to be offered by COMTECHSA
 - iii. Maximising fees for work done and as a proportion of the total work.
- Committee:
- i. Being innovative and thinking to the future.
 - ii. Attaining a position of influence through improved PR and a marketing strategy and through increased networking.
 - iii. Maximising fees for work done and as a proportion of the total work.

Both stakeholder groups agreed that acquiring the Community Legal Service kitemark held least importance. Committee members rated this alongside having and implementing an environmental impact policy.

A member of the committee of management referred to COMTECHSA becoming a sustainable organisation when talking about added value services: 'COMTECHSA is technically strong with a strong social ethic. Unfortunately ... attention paid to future planning to ensure survival is very blinkered.'

Commentary

- *Fee generating work is costing COMTECHSA more to do than it earns. Whilst we continue to carry out fee generating work in this way, fee-earning does not contribute to our long term sustainability.*
- *Development Work is seen by staff and committee members as being the answer to ensuring that Objective 8 is carried out more effectively*
- *COMTECHSA needs to consider whether or not the development of a new building is a priority or can be realistically achieved whilst a significant area of 60 Duke Street remains under utilised. Resources need to be allocated to this activity.*
- *Whilst some efforts have been made to promote COMTECHSA during the year and to improve our PR and Marketing, most stakeholders consider that not enough is being done to promote COMTECHSA and we are not well enough known.*
- *Amending our constitution needs to be given priority for COMTECHSA next year for strategic reasons.*
- *COMTECHSA's Fuel Rights Section has made no progress on attaining a Community Legal Service Kitemark. Depending on the plans for relocation this may need to be made a priority next year.*
- *COMTECHSA has a written "green policy" that neither staff nor committee members consider to be particularly effective in practice. However, user groups under Value 2 do not share this opinion.*
- *Despite the low score for effectiveness for many of the activities of this objective from the committee and staff 53% to 83% believe we are achieving the objective.*
- *Many staff and committee members consider that not enough is being done to change COMTECHSA to address the issue of our longer term viability.*

7. AND FINALLY ...

Issues Raised by the Social Audit

Themes

The Social Audit has allowed COMTECHSA to carry out a thorough review of our values, objectives and activities. It has been an extremely worthwhile and valuable exercise and has produced some important insights into the organisation. It is essential that COMTECHSA uses this information to inform future strategy and action.

There are many issues upon which COMTECHSA should consider taking action with regard to the performance and/or behaviour of the organisation. These are listed below under the heading "Issues by Value and Objective". The main theme running through these issues is that of communication and this is expressed in three areas for action:

- **Clarified and Simplified Values and Objectives**

COMTECHSA's values, objectives and activities are very complicated. They are lengthy, detailed and they can be confusing. They are also time-consuming and difficult to monitor and report upon. A review of these needs to be carried out to establish whether not we can clarify and simplify them.

- **Internal Communications**

The differences in perception of the organisation between its staff and committee need to be addressed. There should be better and clearer lines of communication between these groups. The role of the Committee of Management should be clarified, agreed and clearly communicated to staff. Internal staff communications could also be improved. Clarified and simplified values and objectives will help this process.

- **Publicity & Promotion**

Much more has to be done to promote the services of COMTECHSA and to make them better known to all of our stakeholders. Clarified and simplified values and objectives will help COMTECHSA to communicate better with our stakeholders.

Issues by Value and Objective

- **Values**

Should we set measurable guidelines and targets for what we mean by environmentally sustainable?

A clearer idea of what 'user-control' really means to staff, committee, tenants, user groups and others needs to be agreed. Committee and staff need to define and agree roles.

A mechanism should be investigated for assessing the extent of user control required by each type of service user.

Communications are good, but care needs to be exercised to try to avoid mistakes.

More clarity is needed about how and why COMTECHSA charges for our services and what we do with our "profits".

- **Objective 1**

Descriptions, definitions and categories of the services we aim to provide are too complicated and confusing.

Our "added value" services are confusing and difficult to define and measure. They need to be explained more simply. A mechanism could be introduced to ask clients whether or not they want "added value" services.

Can we introduce a way of valuing the benefits of the added value service? The additional cost management costs about £6,000 at £35/hr, surely it saved much more than this for our user groups?

Feasibility Study work could be focused more on potentially successful projects with the time minimised on all the others. This could give us more time to help groups to develop their projects, raise funds and be successful

Should providing *building maintenance advice* be abandoned as a separate service?

The Project Management Service could be expanded and offered to more groups.

Do we really want to provide Property Management advice? Neither the funders of groups or the local politicians rate it as important. If we do want to do it we should set targets for it.

- **Objective 2**

COMTECHSA needs to address the areas of 52/60 Duke Street that are currently under-used.

The reception service has had mixed reviews: some people think its very good, some think its very bad. We need to investigate this to see if we can try to please all the people all of the time.

Tenants questionnaires could be sent out again in a more focused exercise.

Targets could be set for environmental housekeeping in the building

Staff and committee differences about the success of the building need to be addressed.

- **Objective 3**

COMTECHSA should decide once and for all whether or not we want to provide the Fuel Rights services and if not how these should best be secured for the future.

The huge difference between the committee and staff views about the effectiveness of the service need to be addressed.

Some of the staff comments about the fuel rights service need to be investigated

Definitions of the services and the collection of data for the fuel rights unit needs to be simplified and more co-ordinated.

Not enough training is undertaken.

- **Objective 4**

Is this objective really a separate objective or should the activities be incorporated elsewhere?

See Values and Objective 1 about environmental policies etc.

Publicity and Promotion needs to be a No 1 priority. We have a lot to shout about!

Should we consider abandoning the provision of training as a separate exercise for providing other services?

- **Objective 5**

Is this objective really a separate objective or should the activities be incorporated elsewhere.?

Funders and Councillors rate it as 2nd most important, therefore it is important that we keep collecting the data for this objective. Can this be simplified and improved?

When we are going to encourage the use of local labour and contractors we have to define it, publicise it, understand how difficult it is so that we know what it costs and be able demonstrate the value of it to user groups, funders, etc.

- **Objective 6**

Staff and committee have a wide diversion of views here. This needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

How can we attract more Committee Members?

Better recording systems are needed to ensure we know what information we are sending out and to whom.

Social Auditing must continue!

Are there checks we can introduce to prevent errors in the next AGM mailing?

Do we need to write an organisational confidentiality policy as well as a fuel rights one? In any case some staff need to be more discreet.

- **Objective 7**

Levels of sick leave need to be investigated. Perhaps regular reporting to the Committee may be required.

Again staff/committee roles relationships, responsibilities and communications etc, need to be addressed.

The Project Worker Training Scheme has been a success and could be continued/expanded.

Why is there no management committee training?

The supervision sessions need to be more rigorously implemented by managers. Is training required for this? What about a Staff Appraisal System?

- **Objective 8**

Fee income generation needs to be reviewed. Is it really an answer to long term sustainability?

Do we need a development worker? If so an action plan to develop a post is needed.

Can we realistically develop extra buildings in the near future?.

The constitution needs to be a 1 priority.

What do we do about the LSC Kitemark if Fuel Rights are to stay at COMTECHSA?

How do we identify the changes needed in COMTECHSA to make us viable in the longer term?

Strategy Workshop 10th & 11th July 2001

COMTECHSA's Committee of Management has decided to hold a facilitated Strategy Workshop on 10th & 11th July, away from the office, to begin the process of addressing the issues raised by the Social Audit. The aims of the workshop are:

- to communicate the main findings of the Social Audit 2000-2001.
- To address the perceived issue of differences in perspective from the Staff and the Management Committee.
- To obtain agreement on the aims, values, objectives and activities for 2001-2002.
- To draw up a list of actions with a programme showing what they are when they will be achieved, who will be responsible for carrying them out and how they will be reported.

8. THE NEXT SOCIAL AUDIT!

The Social Audit has been a great tool for helping us to get to grips with what we do and to define and measure the services we provide and the outputs that we hope to achieve.

The strengths and weaknesses are to some extent caused by the same factors:-

Strengths

- thorough and comprehensive
- lots of information
- relatively easy to collect data
- good form of consultation
- it was the first year and a lot was achieved
- high response rates from staff and some other stakeholders

Weaknesses

- complicated and time-consuming
- consuming, both to us and our stakeholders
- too much data
- generates a huge to-do list
- questionnaires contained errors and omissions and some times were not targeted enough
- low response rates from Committee Members

It is hoped that following a review of the values, objectives and activities that next year's Social Audit Framework can be much simpler.

The Social Audit has already begun. Data is currently being collected along the same lines as the first year. A meeting is scheduled for 10/11 July 2001 where committee and staff will review this Social Audit and set the framework for 2001/2002.

We look forward to sharing all this information with the rest of the staff and committee.

Publication

It is proposed to produce a summary of the social accounts in the form of an Annual Report and to disseminate this to all stakeholders that have been consulted as a part of the Social Audit Process and all stakeholders that are to be consulted in the next audit cycle. The summary will contain a note that a full copy of the report will be available for inspection at COMTECHSA's offices on request.

The summary will be included in COMTECHSA's information pack and will be sent to anyone who requests information about COMTECHSA. It will also be available to all staff and committee members and to all people attending our AGM.

The full report including all appendices will be issued to all current members of the Committee of Management and to new committee members who join in September at this year's AGM. It will also be issued to all staff

E-mail copies of all documents will also be available on request to all those mentioned above. (A note to this effect will be included in the summary version.)