

Leeds City Council

Organisational Assessment

Dated 9 December 2009



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of local public services

Leeds City Council

Overall, Leeds City Council performs adequately

Managing performance	2 out of 4
Use of resources	3 out of 4
Managing finances	3 out of 4
Governing the business	2 out of 4
Managing resources	3 out of 4

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

Summary

Overall, Leeds Council performs adequately. Many of the things the Council does are improving things for people in Leeds, but in some areas it has much more to do.

The Council scores 2 out of 4 for managing performance. It has worked well to reduce the impact of the economic recession. It has invested in better leisure and cultural facilities, improved street cleanliness, increased recycling, made progress in keeping vulnerable adults safe and helped reduce most types of crime. At the time of this assessment, industrial action had disrupted refuse collections for several weeks. The impact of this on recycling rates and street cleanliness was not yet known.

The Council has responded slowly to concerns raised last year about the safeguarding of children and young people, who have been left at risk of significant harm. The Council needs to make sure that it responds more effectively when problems are identified, particularly when they involve vulnerable people. The Council has made some progress in narrowing the gap between the richer and poorer parts of the City. But it needs to do more to achieve its ambition of bringing the benefits of a successful city to all the people of Leeds. With partners, the Council has some way to go in tackling some of the long term problems facing the city, such as burglary, which is still very high in some parts of the City, worklessness, poor housing and health. Too many young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

There is a difference between the scores for use of resources and managing performance. We decided that the score should be that overall Leeds performs adequately rather than well. This is because of the weaknesses in keeping children and young people safe. It is very important that Councils have good services for the most vulnerable people.

Ofsted's annual rating for Children's Services is poor. While most services are at least good, there are important weaknesses in social care. A recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements found that staff practice was inconsistent when completing and recording assessments of children at risk, and this was not always done quickly enough. Referrals to the child protection service did not meet the legal guidance and did not safeguard children and young people well enough - so there was an unacceptable risk of significant harm to them. Most children's homes are good or better. The Council's adoption service is good and its fostering agency satisfactory, but private fostering is inadequate. A high, and increasing, number of children are admitted to hospital because of unintentional and deliberate injuries. Many children achieve well at school and the number achieving 5 GCSEs including maths and English is around the national average. But progress is slow for children in primary school.

The Care Quality Commission rates adult services as performing well. Adult social care services continue to improve. The Council has worked hard to involve people who use services, their carers and local organisations, in developing services which meet their needs. It is working well with its partners to tackle poor health, support older people to live in their own homes, to treat people equally and to provide help to enable them to be financially secure. The Independent Living Project has helped people with a learning disability and adults with mental health needs in Leeds to live more independent lives. The Council has made good progress to ensure that older people at risk of harm are protected properly. But there is still work to do.

The Council scored 3 out of 4 for use of resources. The Council has good information about its finances. It is good at managing its money and is making savings. It has shown that it can redirect resources towards the things that are important locally. The Council understands its costs and how it performs, but can not yet show consistently the benefits of what it does for Leeds residents.

The Council understands the risks it faces and manages them well. It is also managing its use of natural resources well and is reducing the environmental impact of providing services. As with most councils, satisfaction with the Council fell in 2008, but Leeds compares well with councils in other big cities.

The Council's arrangements for governing the business are adequate and meet basic requirements. The Council could improve the way that it plans and buys services from other organisations by being clearer about the benefits that the services will deliver. The Council tries to make sure that the information that it uses is accurate, but it could improve the way that it shares information with the public agencies that it works with. The Council manages its assets well.

About Leeds City Council

Over three quarters of a million people live in Leeds, from more than 130 countries, and the city is growing. Twenty years ago, most businesses in the city were industrial. Now, Leeds has less industry and more people work in banks, building societies, legal and finance. It is the largest city in Yorkshire and Humberside and the biggest shopping centre.

Leeds Council has 99 councillors. The largest is the Labour party, but the Council is run by a joint Liberal Democrat/Conservative administration.

As with all large cities, the different areas of the city contrast greatly. People in areas round the centre, south of the centre and in the east of the city are more likely to have poor housing and ill-health, and to be out of work. On the edge of the city, in places such as Wetherby and Bramhope, people tend to have more money and to have better health. In the north of the city are two Universities. The Council therefore also has to meet the needs of the many thousands of students who live in Leeds for only part of each year, as well as those of the residents who live here all the time.

Leeds City Council, together with its partners, has decided that the most important priorities for the city are:

- culture and sport;
- environment;
- transport;
- thriving places;
- enterprise and the economy;
- harmonious communities;
- learning;
- health and well-being; and
- improving the Council's capacity to improve services in Leeds

Organisational assessment

Health and Well Being

The Council is not properly protecting children at risk of harm, and is not 'safeguarding' them well. A recent inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements found that discussions between the Council, police and other agencies do not take place quickly enough and children are not always seen by professionals, even when there are concerns about their safety. Key procedures are out of date and the speed and quality of assessments varies too much. Some children were identified as having been left at potential risk of serious harm. The inspectors also had concerns that the systems for ensuring that the service is working properly were not good enough and were not helping the service to get better.

The Council's adoption service is good and the fostering service satisfactory. Most children's homes are good or better, but inspectors rated the private fostering service inadequate. The number of children admitted to hospital

because of unintentional and deliberate injuries is increasing and is higher than the national average. Of three serious case reviews carried out, two were conducted adequately and one well.

Older people in Leeds are happier than in most similar areas. More than 80 per cent of people over 65 said that they were satisfied with their home and neighbourhood. Most people have choice about the care that they receive and more people than average are supported to live independently. For example, the Independent Living Project has helped people with a learning disability and adults with mental health needs in Leeds to live more independent lives. But people do have to wait longer in Leeds for minor alterations to their home. The Council provides good information and support to help people maximise benefits and pensions. It helped people to claim nearly £11 million in extra benefits in 2008/09.

Arrangements to keep vulnerable adults safe have improved. Staff have been recruited and more training provided. Partners are working better together and work has already been done to ensure that the new procedures are working. Further work is needed to make sure that they are having an impact.

People in Leeds are living longer than ever before. Fewer adults in Leeds are obese than the national average and more are physically active. But there are big differences in health across the city. An average man in City and Hunslet will die just over 10 years earlier than an average man in Harewood. Women in City and Hunslet can expect to live just under nine and a half years less than women in Adel/Wharfedale. The Council and its partners are working to try and improve this. They have recently introduced a more systematic approach to tackling these problems. They are targeting work more effectively on vulnerable communities, but there is still more to do.

Learning

Most children in Leeds achieve well at school, but progress is inconsistent. At age 11 results fell in both English and maths and the number of schools not hitting government targets is not getting better. The number of children getting 5 higher level GCSEs, including maths and English, is around the national average.

Progress in attainment for some groups is slow. For example, at age 11 and 16 Asian pupils perform below the national average. The gap in achievement between Asian pupils and the Leeds average for GCSEs including maths and English increased between 2006 and 2008. Behaviour in some secondary schools is often only satisfactory and despite improvements, the rate of persistent absence in some schools is still too high. 9.5 per cent of young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

More people in Leeds lack Level 2 skills than in other parts of the country, but this is improving. Level 2 skills cover a wide range of academic and vocational qualifications that are designed to help people's employment prospects.

Culture

The Council has improved cultural facilities in Leeds and more people than ever are using them. It has spent money to bring the Art Gallery, Central Library and Grand Theatre up to date, and has re-opened the City Museum and the Kirkstall Abbey Visitor Centre. Visits to museums and galleries nearly doubled to just under one million, although visits to libraries fell slightly. The number of adults being active and participating in sports rose by nearly eight per cent - one of the largest increases in the country.

But the benefits of this investment are not being felt consistently by all Leeds people, who are less satisfied with theatres, museums, parks, open spaces and leisure facilities than they were two years ago. Whilst many residents regularly use services, one in four of all people in Leeds have never used a leisure centre.

The Council is trying to improve things even further - though there is some concern about the impact of the recession on future plans. It now plans to improve the City Varieties and the Northern Ballet, and to make leisure centres better and easier to get to. Plans are well advanced to build the Leeds Arena - a 12,500 seat multi-purpose venue which is a high priority for residents and local businesses

Environment

Note: At the time of this assessment, industrial action had disrupted refuse collections for several weeks. The impact of this on recycling rates and street cleanliness was not yet known.

Over 30 per cent of waste is now being recycled, re-used or composted. This is less than most other councils, but is likely to get better as a result of more garden waste being recycled and investment by the Council in more kerbside collections. Streets are now cleaner and public access to footpaths and other rights of way has improved. Other work to improve the environment has included the crime and grime initiative and the Graffiti Charter. The Council is reviewing its environmental performance and plans to invest in areas like improved street cleaning.

The Council is managing its use of natural resources well and is reducing the environmental impact of providing services. Work to reduce carbon emissions from public sector buildings is still at an early stage. The Council and its partners have started to prepare for the possible effects of climate change and have recently agreed a Climate Change Strategy for the city. They plan to invest in projects to cope with possible floods. The Council and partners need to speed up their efforts to combat climate change. They also need to get better at measuring the results of their work to improve the environment.

Transport

Roads and pavements in Leeds have got better. In 2007, local people said that repairing roads and pavements was their top priority for improvement. The Council listened to this message and increased spending. Fewer people now see repairs as the top priority for improvement.

Reducing congestion was also a big priority for Leeds people in 2007. The

Council has improved access to the city through new roads, such as the East Leeds Link Road and the Inner Ring Road. More people are leaving their cars at home when they travel into Leeds in the morning peak, and more people cycle to work. But congestion remains a problem on many roads.

In 2004, Leeds people said that public transport was the most important thing for the future of Leeds. Since then, progress has been slow. Some improvements have been made. Bus shelters and train stations are better and new bus lanes mean that buses run faster and services are more convenient for passengers. But bus usage is not meeting targets, and passengers are no happier than before about bus services.

The council, police and fire service are doing a lot of work to help make roads safer. Success has been mixed. Fewer people have been killed on the roads, but more have been seriously injured, especially cyclists and pedestrians and the Leeds target for reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents was just missed.

The Council is working with partners on a new local transport plan for 2011. This will help link transport plans more closely with other work and help support a more sustainable Leeds in the future. Plans for the future include 'New Generation Transport' - for which the Council has secured £250M of funding. Proposals include a trolley-bus system which would improve public transport access for communities.

Thriving places

Most types of crime have fallen in Leeds, including some that people are most concerned about, such as violent crime. Most people feel safe in their local area after dark and fewer people see drug dealing as a big problem. But burglary is very high in parts of Leeds like Harehills, Beeston, Armley and Headingley. In some cases, it is up to three times the national average. There are particular problems with young offenders - just under a half of all offenders are aged between 15 and 19. The high number of young people not in education, employment or training and high rates of persistent absence in secondary schools highlight problems around the engagement of young people in positive activities. The police and Council are working together with probation and the courts to try and reduce burglary in Leeds.

Anti-social behaviour by problem families has been reduced. 'Signpost' works closely with families who are prolific and persistent perpetrators. It helps up to 98 families at any time, also helping with access to other services, for example health, housing and benefits. The families are fairly chaotic and often have problems including alcohol & substance misuse and domestic violence. Anti social behaviour fell in nearly 9 out of 10 families who completed the programme. In half the families, criminal behaviour fell and school attendance improved significantly. The recent place survey showed that fewer people in Leeds feel that anti-social behaviour is a problem than in most big cities.

The number of serious assaults fell by nearly seven percent in 2008/09. This has been helped by targeting 'hotspot' pubs and bars in the city, including a more visible uniformed police presence and stronger licensing enforcement. Special powers have been used to restrict drinking alcohol on the streets. This has reduced levels of street drinking. Plastic glasses have been introduced in

some bars and pubs to reduce injuries. A recent survey showed that fewer people in Leeds than other big cities see drunk and rowdy behaviour as a big problem. The level of concern has not increased in the last two years.

Housing is a problem in parts of Leeds. Many people in rented housing are living in over crowded accommodation. The latest official figures show that over 24,000 people are on the waiting list for housing and there are many empty properties. Fewer people than before turn down the public sector houses they are offered as unsuitable, but the rate is still too high. This suggests that the system to provide choice does not work as well as it should.

The Council has worked hard to try and increase the number of affordable houses - 400 were built in the last year. Funding has been agreed to deliver affordable housing as part of the East Leeds regeneration scheme. Planning requirements are now stronger, to ensure that 30 per cent of all new housing developments include homes that people on lower incomes can afford. The quality of public sector housing is improving. All homes are set to meet the government's 'decent homes' standard by 2010/11.

Fewer people than before are homeless in Leeds, and numbers continue to fall. Private sector tenancies are being used more to stop people becoming homeless. A sanctuary scheme is proving successful and mediation has been used in 182 cases to prevent homelessness. Council data shows that the use of temporary accommodation for homeless people has reduced by 70 per cent since 2006.

More people in Leeds do not have basic skills than in other parts of the country, and getting people into work in the poorer areas of the city is a problem. Unemployment is over 10 per cent in some parts of Leeds, compared to a city wide average of less than three per cent. Up to 30 per cent of people are either unemployed or unable to work in some inner city areas. The Council and partners are taking a lot of action to try and help people into work, but recognise that they still need to do more to improve things.

Enterprise and the Economy

The Council has responded well to the recession. As with other major cities, the recession has affected developments in the city centre. In response, the Council and partners have reviewed their priorities. They are focussing on the development of the Arena, City Park and city centre improvements, new retail developments at Trinity Quarter and improving Leeds Bradford airport. This clear approach gives confidence to investors, developers and residents that the city is in good shape to overcome the recession.

The Council is working hard to ensure that Leeds can lead the region's economic growth. It has a detailed understanding of the city and wider city-regional economy and has shared this effectively with partners. It has identified the new facilities needed to achieve Leeds' ambitions, including the Arena and improved transport.

Leeds is at the centre of the Leeds City Region. This involves 11 local authorities from across North, South and West Yorkshire working together on big issues like regeneration, skills and housing. The City Region was given 'Forerunner' status, enabling it to change the way that councils and their

partners minimise the impact of the downturn and speed up recovery. The Council has a major role to play in ensuring that the City Region has an impact on people's lives.

Harmonious communities

Fewer people in Leeds feel that people from different backgrounds get on well than in 2006/07. There are big differences within Leeds, with people in East, South and West much less positive than those in the North of the City. The Council is working with partners to improve relations between different groups. Initiatives include the Safer Schools Partnership, which places safer schools officers in high schools to work with young people on issues like racial tolerance.

Community Cohesion pilots are being carried out in three areas where there are particular tensions between different communities - Armley, Chapeltown/Harehills and Middleton. Work in these areas concentrates on trying to help people to get on better together, rather than tackling some of the underlying inequalities that create tensions between communities. A Leeds 'Neighbourhood Index' is being developed to help all partners understand the problems facing different communities, how best to tackle them and how to measure if they have made a difference.

Satisfaction levels vary widely, depending on where you live in Leeds. People in the North East of the city, are much more likely to be satisfied with their area than people in the South or West. It is likely that this hides even bigger differences within these fairly large parts of the city. The recent place survey shows a mixed picture on how well people in Leeds are involved in their local communities. Fewer people in Leeds than other big cities participate in civic activities, and there has been a big fall in the number of people who know how they can get involved in local decision making. On the other hand, the number of people who felt that they could influence decisions has increased. The Council is carrying out a much more detailed survey of residents to try and understand better the differences within the city.

Improving the Council's capacity to improve services in Leeds

Council officers and councillors work well, both together and in discussing issues with people and voluntary groups in local communities. These partners say that they regard the Council as being an effective leader, listening to and acting upon their views.

The Council's leaders have decided on a range of approaches to improve how well they can meet the needs of people in Leeds. These include actions aiming to get the best value for money from available resources - for example, 12,000 fewer days were taken sick by council staff in 2009. The Council is also taking steps to make sure that council staff have the right skills and opportunities to fulfil their potential and to collect good information for decisions about what is important.

Some of the benefits are beginning to emerge - for instance, the Council has saved £23 million in the last year by doing things differently, and can now

invest these savings in new projects.

It has introduced a new system to manage progress of both its own and Leeds-wide plans. These provide reports which identify what is going well, and what is going less well, so that this can be corrected. They have encouraged honesty and openness throughout the Council about strengths and weaknesses and make clear who is going to do what. Councillors challenge what Council officers do, to ensure services are delivered well.

But the benefits of this approach are not yet fully clear and there is also some work to do to involve other organisations in the approach. The Council needs to ensure that its arrangements for managing performance enable it to respond quickly and effectively when things go wrong. Once this base is fully in place, the Council will be better able to show how well it is performing and how things are getting better.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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