

Corporate Assessment Report

May 2008



Corporate Assessment

Leeds City Council

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Introduction

- 1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is the means by which the Audit Commission fulfils its statutory duty under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003 to make an assessment, and report on the performance, of local authorities. Corporate assessment is one element in the overall assessment that leads to a CPA score and category.
- 2 The purpose of the corporate assessment is to assess how well the Council engages with and leads its communities, delivers community priorities in partnership with others, and ensures continuous improvement across the range of Council activities. It seeks to answer three headline questions which are underpinned by five specific themes.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- Ambition
- Prioritisation

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- Capacity
- Performance management

What has been achieved?

- Achievement

Considered against the shared priorities of:

- sustainable communities and transport;
- safer and stronger communities;
- healthier communities;
- older people; and
- children and young people.

- 3 Corporate assessments are normally aligned with a joint area review of services for children and young people (JAR). In practice this means that the Council's achievements in relation to children and young people are assessed using the evidence provided from the JAR. In addition, examples of outcomes and activity, which are relevant to the other themes and which are identified through the JAR, are considered within the corporate assessment.

- 4 The JAR covers specific services for children and young people that are directly managed or commissioned by the Council, as well as relevant health and youth justice services provided by other bodies. It focuses on the contributions made by services to improving outcomes especially concerning safeguarding; services for looked after children; and services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The separate JAR report also covers the leadership and management of services for children and young people and, in particular, the way that such services work together to improve outcomes. The description and judgement in respect of children and young people in this report is summarised from the JAR report and the most recently published Annual Performance Assessment from Ofsted which covers all of the Council's children services.

Executive summary

- 5 Overall, the Council is performing well. Leeds City Council, with its partners, has a clear and challenging long term vision to improve the economic prosperity and the quality of life for all in Leeds. Key challenges facing the city in achieving this vision are meeting the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse population and in particular narrowing the gap for those living in the more deprived areas. This includes reducing worklessness, developing improved city and regional transportation links, providing enough affordable housing, maintaining improvements in educational attainment, further reducing criminal activity and improving the relatively poor health of the population. The Council has developed a clear longer term vision with partners which provides a strategic approach to these challenges. The Council and partners are utilising the considerable inward investment and regeneration of the city to narrow the gap in inequalities and meet demands caused by demographic changes. This vision is based on a good understanding of the national and regional context.
- 6 There has been investment in organisational development to improve the Council's capacity to deliver its ambitions. It has improved its performance management arrangements and political governance. It has streamlined and focused managerial capacity and works effectively and invests strongly in partnerships to support shared delivery of its ambitions for the city. Success is demonstrated by good community outcomes and performance against national performance indicators compared with other core cities. There are improvements in educational attainment which is now rated as good compared with other core cities, adult social care is rated as good and there have been significant reductions in criminal activity. The Council has improved its Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) score to four-star as ranked by the Audit Commission. However, some areas of performance are poor when compared nationally. Overall satisfaction with the Council, as measured by the Best Value General Survey 2006, fell between 2003 and 2006, although the Council's own annual residents' satisfaction survey undertaken in 2007 is showing an improvement in overall satisfaction.
- 7 The Council provides strong leadership particularly at a regional level where it has developed a clear city region business case focused on improving prosperity. It has shown strong leadership in both shaping the vision for the City and delivery through the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The corporate plan translates this vision into clear priorities and ambitious targets for action. Partners are involved in setting targets within the LAA, ensuring they are both challenging and realistic. For example, significantly reducing crime levels or getting long term unemployed people back into employment. At the same time the Council is focusing service delivery more closely to community needs through the city regeneration strategy, area plans and good use of community intelligence. However, it has yet to embed some strategic agendas including those for climate change and the over 50s and it has had only limited progress in its strategic approach in partnership to health. Overall, this sets an ambitious framework for action to balance the social, economic and environmental needs of the city.

- 8 The Council effectively engages with local people and partners to ensure that it is meeting the diverse needs of the whole community. A key strength is that this engagement is ongoing; the Council regularly consults and seeks people's views through effective working with local communities which contributes to a good shared understanding of what the Council is trying to achieve. There is a strong strategic approach to diversity and this is being built upon to further embed the Council's strong approach to customer focused services.
- 9 The Council is clear and explicit about the challenges it faces in delivering its ambitions for the area. Priorities are robust and consistent with the overall vision, although links through service planning until recently have been inconsistent. It is able and willing to make difficult decisions to achieve a balance between meeting community needs and providing value for money for example, in closing residential and nursing homes for the elderly which were not providing effective care or reducing the number of schools to provide better education facilities. Effective leadership - both internally and in the community - means that partners understand and generally support what the Council is trying to do.
- 10 Council services provide value for money. While delivering many high quality services, council tax rises are below the national average and council tax levels remain at a low level. It has also worked within budget settlements by focusing resources on priorities and identifying efficiency savings. A corporate approach to achieving value for money is supported by good medium term financial planning and notable practice in its approach to procurement. Close monitoring allows early intervention and action to be taken on predicted budgetary pressures. Financial standing and management are good.
- 11 There is good capacity to deliver priorities through effective strategic staff management, supported by employee development and training to ensure that staff are focused and committed to providing customer focused services. However, while there is good departmental workforce planning this has yet to be developed corporately. Corporate governance is sound and there is good political leadership and good investment in councillor development. Political decision-making is transparent and effective, but challenge through scrutiny and scrutiny boards remains inconsistent.
- 12 Strong and highly effective partnership working in most areas is increasing capacity and providing services that are focused on user needs. The Local Strategic Partnership (called the Leeds Initiative) is a mature partnership which is effective and supported by a strategic approach to managing partnerships within the Council. As a result significant outcomes have been achieved with effective strategic and operational partnership working across most sectors.
- 13 The Council has created a robust approach to performance management with partners which is most developed in the monitoring and performance management arrangements for the Leeds Initiative and LAA. Data sharing is effective and one notable success is in the joint use of data in the Leeds Safety Partnership. However, there is an inconsistent focus on performance at team and individual level within the Council. Overall the performance framework supports improvement and enables the Council to maintain high standards of service delivery in many areas.

- 14 The Council, with its partners, can demonstrate consistent and significant achievement against its own priorities. Together they have made good progress against social, economic and environmental agendas - though progress against some targets has been slower for example, in improving worklessness and in some areas the gap around health inequalities is not being narrowed. There is a coherent corporate approach to achieving a better quality of life for all that responds to the planned regeneration agenda and the diverse nature of the population. These achievements demonstrate a proactive approach and a willingness to work in partnership to achieve real community outcomes.

Areas for improvement

- 15 The Council does not have a strategic approach to supporting the over 50s and although it supports older and vulnerable people effectively there is no coordinated approach to the delivery of services by the Council and its partners. To ensure consistently high levels of service provision for all older people the Council needs to develop and embed a coordinated approach to supporting all over 50s.
- 16 The health of the city remains poor in some areas in comparison to other areas of the country. While there has been some progress in improving health in some targeted areas this remains inconsistent while health inequalities are also not significantly reducing. The Council needs to strengthen its strategic approach in partnership to ensure it has a greater impact on reducing health inequalities and improving the health and wellbeing of the local population.
- 17 While scrutiny has improved with the introduction of seven new Scrutiny Committees these still remain inconsistent in their approach to challenging policy development. As a consequence effective challenge to the Council through overview and scrutiny remains inconsistent. Further development is required to ensure a robust approach for all scrutiny boards and call-in arrangements need to be reviewed to support a fair and effective approach.
- 18 There is no consistent approach to individual performance management. While most staff receive appraisals these are not consistent across the Council and mainly focus on development needs. The Council needs to introduce target setting and review for all staff. Workforce planning is not developed corporately and does not yet involve partners fully and therefore the Council cannot be sure it is using its capacity as effectively as it could and ensure the organisation is fit for purpose in meeting its long term ambitions. The Council should develop a corporate approach to workforce planning.

Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	4
	Prioritisation	3
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	3
	Performance management	3
What has been achieved?	Achievement	3
Overall corporate assessment score**		3
*Key to scores		
1 – below minimum requirements – inadequate performance		
2 – at only minimum requirements – adequate performance		
3 – consistently above minimum requirements – performing well		
4 – well above minimum requirements – performing strongly		

**Rules for determining the overall corporate assessment score

Scores on five themes	Overall corporate assessment score
Two or more themes with a score of 4 None less than score of 3	4
Three or more themes with a score of 3 or more None less than score of 2	3
Three or more themes with a score of 2 or more	2
Any other combination	1

Context

The locality

- 19 The City of Leeds is in West Yorkshire and is the second largest local authority in England covering an area of 552 square kilometres. The city is the regional capital of Yorkshire and the Humber and comprises of three distinct areas. The inner city which has the business and commercial sector, the suburban ring which comprises of densely populated housing and some of the more deprived areas and a large sparsely populated rural hinterland with small market towns. Geographic and transport links between these areas are difficult and delivering accessible services in these distinct environments is a major challenge to the Council and its partners.
- 20 Leeds has a population of around 750,000 people which has rapidly grown over the past decade and is becoming more diverse with over a 130 nationalities represented. There is an increasing elderly population which is projected to significantly increase over the next 20 years, especially in the over 85s. In response, the Council has developed a strategic approach to targeting service to the elderly and frail but this will still place further challenges for the delivery of services to support independent living and provide social and nursing care. Ethnic diversity is relatively high for the region at just under 11 per cent but is around 17 per cent for primary school children. Although increases are projected for this sector of the community there are also marked increases in migrant workers and asylum seekers which are starting to impact on the community and the delivery of services.

- 21** Overall, Leeds ranks 63rd out of 149 in terms of the government indices of deprivation (where 1 is the most and 149 the least deprived). As a result, it now only receives limited European and transitional funding from Government. However these figures disguise the fact there are areas of deep seated deprivation in certain parts of the city with 21 per cent of super output areas in the 10 per cent most deprived and 32 per cent are in the 20 per cent most deprived when compared nationally. In contrast there is also a large and relatively prosperous rural area which has the affect of mitigating the impact of the deprived areas on the city's overall deprivation ranking. Leeds has developed a generally thriving economy with large amounts of economic regeneration and investment of over £3 billion over the last decade. The area has benefited from its location as a regional centre to produce higher average income levels than many cities in England. Investment has ensured a diverse economy based on retail and service industry together with manufacturing and small businesses. Many businesses have located to the area increasing the demand for skilled labour. One significant issue is reducing barriers for getting people from long term unemployment and on benefits into work. The thriving economy has helped drive population growth, counter to the position in other parts of northern England and this has put pressure on the provision of new and affordable housing requiring many workers to live outside the city and commute. There has been significant growth in housing resulting in 319,000 homes currently in the city, 60,000 Council owned, and this is projected to rise by a further 12 per cent by 2021.
- 22** Some education levels are improving at higher than the national average with 56 per cent of pupils achieving five or more grade A-C at GCSE level in 2007 which is amongst the best when compared to other core cities. The number of schools below the national floor target has fallen from 33 per cent to 5 per cent since 2003. The health of the city is comparatively poor, linked to areas of deprivation including comparatively high mortality rates and teenage conceptions. There have been significant improvements in recent years in reducing criminal activity but incidents in many areas and the fear of crime remain above the national average. Although economic activity is increasing there are significant pockets of worklessness but employment levels are high relative to other core cities.
- 23** The area's proximity to major road networks, rail links and Leeds/Bradford airport ensures that the area has good transport links to the rest of the country. However, there is demand for good citywide affordable transport to increase access. Delivering growth and providing appropriate infrastructure while protecting the environment and improving the quality of life for all are key challenges facing the Council.

The Council

- 24 Leeds City Council is long established and is one of the Government's defined core cities. A Joint Conservative/Liberal Democrat administration took control in 2004 that resulted from no overall political majority for a single group. Formal leadership is rotated every six months. Of the 99 council seats Labour holds 44, Conservatives 23, Liberal Democrats 22, Morley Borough Independents 5, Green Party 3, BNP 1 and Independent 1. Political direction is provided by an Executive of 10 councillors who, together with the Leaders share responsibility for the Council's work. There are a number of Policy (scrutiny) Boards whose chairs constitute the overview and scrutiny committee enabling a broader range of councillors to get involved in policy making decisions. There is also a range of non-executive and regulatory committees, for example, covering development control, standards and appeals and complaints.
- 25 The Council employs 35,000 staff (including school based), making it one of the largest employers in the area. Staff leadership is provided by the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive supported by two Assistant Chief Executives and five Strategic Directors while responsibility for service delivery is delegated to Heads of Service. The Council has structured its services into four thematic directorates and a central functions directorate.
- 26 The Council plans to spend (gross) £2.8 billion, including Dedicated Schools Grant, on services in 2007/08, with a capital programme of £3.98 billion. The council tax band D level is £1,182 which is one of the lowest nationally.
- 27 The Council was assessed under the Audit Commission's corporate performance assessment process in 2002 and 2003 as 'good' and as 'excellent' in 2004. Under the revised CPA methodology the Council was judged as; four-star which has been maintained in 2007'.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

Ambition

- 28 The Council is performing strongly in this area. It has very clear ambitions for the city and region and demonstrates strong leadership in meeting international, national, regional and local challenges through a well developed strategic planning and delivery framework. It has developed a clear and challenging long term vision for the future, based on strong and ongoing engagement with partners and local communities. The LSP (called Leeds Initiative) is very well established and has extensive participation by senior partners. It shows strong ownership of the vision, and has developed a long term community strategy with a clear agenda for action. Overall the Council has a clear understanding of the underlying needs of the region and its role in meeting them.
- 29 The Leeds Initiative has two complementary ambitions in its vision and community strategy. 'Going up a league', which focuses on further improvements to the city's economy, and 'narrowing the gap', which focuses on ensuring everyone in Leeds benefits from economic success and good quality of life. These ambitions reflect challenges relating to Leeds which are to maintain a thriving economy and regeneration of the city, reduce crime, improve education, provide new and affordable housing while reducing inequalities. Its 20-year vision, developed to meet these challenges, states that in 2020, 'Leeds will be an internationally competitive European city at the heart of a prosperous region where everyone can enjoy a high quality of life'. To achieve these ambitions the Council and partners have already attracted £3.2 billion of investment and a further £7.2 billion is planned.
- 30 The community strategy sets out a clear agenda for action. To support the two main ambitions there are eight key themes which are that by 2020 Leeds will be an internationally competitive city and region, have a reputation for environmental excellence, be a centre of excellence for cultural activity, be a fair city where people from all backgrounds take part in community life and be a healthy city. These themes are supported by clear objectives that set an agenda for action. To support these objectives are action plans with medium and long term priorities which are supported by measurable targets. These action plans reflect the views of partners and local communities. Priorities are annually reviewed and set a clear framework for action to meet the social, economic and environmental needs of the area.

- 31 The achievement of this vision is supported by highly effective partnership working and a good framework for delivery within the Leeds Initiative. This is based on a mature partnership formed in the early 1990s which has received external accreditation 'green light' awards for the past three years. Senior councillors provide support and leadership to the partnership while there has been significant funding provided by the Council exceeding £600,000 a year. This has helped develop a strong recognisable and independent brand for partnership working in Leeds. There has been significant improvement in sharing data with partners which is helping reduce duplication and focus attention on areas for improvement. A particularly strong example is the integrated work of the Safer Leeds partnership in reducing crime.
- 32 The Council is recognised by partners and increasingly by Government as a strong regional leader where it effectively champions the development of the wider city region. It has, with its partners, developed the 'Leeds' brand for this region which it is using to champion the region as an area for investment not only nationally but from Europe. Over, 75 per cent of jobs in Yorkshire and Humber in the next decade are expected to be generated in Leeds city region. However, the Council and its partners have not developed clear measurable outcomes relating to their ambition of becoming a successful European city. Following the success of its first Local Public Sector Agreement (LPSA 1) the Council is providing strong leadership in developing the second Local Area Agreement (LAA). Responsibility for delivering the many targets across the Government's shared priority areas are clearly allocated and effective monitoring arrangements are in place. This provides a good basis for developing a shared understanding, pooling of resources and a collective focus on meeting regional and local needs.
- 33 Partnership ambitions have significant breadth covering international, national, regional and local aspirations. To achieve this, the Council has effectively translated the 20-year vision and strategy for Leeds into its own plans and strategies. The corporate plan 2005-2008 establishes a three year vision that directly outlines how it will deliver its responsibilities within the community strategy through seven high level ambitions which are reviewed annually. This sets out what the Council intends to do each year with specific priorities and targets identifying how success will be measured. Underpinning this are key strategies such as the children's and young people's plan, and the plan to regenerate the city, which are well aligned with the corporate plan and community strategy. For example, the City has established the Strategic Affordable Housing Partnership to deliver 1,100 affordable homes each year until 2020, including 335 each year on Council owned land. The Council is developing a joint community strategy, LAA and corporate plan to be implemented in April 2008. This will streamline strategic planning and further integrate the Council's ambitions and priorities with those of the Leeds Initiative which has supported clear understanding of Council and community priorities by stakeholders.

- 34 The Council's ambitions are based on a good understanding of need through extensive engagement with stakeholders and local people. Effective use of different methods of consultation is supported by good use of community intelligence which is delivered through a corporate engagement policy and toolkit. This has helped inform the ambitions of the Council and its partners for example, on the need to reduce worklessness, reorganise health data to neighbourhood levels and target activity to reduce crime. Activity is targeted to areas of most need as a result of good use of local intelligence for example, the regeneration of areas in the east of the city which are more deprived. Consultation on the community strategy and various Council strategies have also informed and shaped these documents. Consultation is ongoing in local communities through area forums and there are targeted approaches to what is perceived as hard to reach groups. Policy changes as a result of consultation are evident, and good feedback is given to those who have been consulted. This level of engagement and the clarity of presentation of Council plans contribute to good shared understanding among partners and stakeholders of what the Council is trying to achieve and their role in delivery.
- 35 The Council is ambitious for itself as well as the region and city it serves. It aims to be a more efficient and effective Council with two of its seven ambitions focused on improving services and staff performance. All its stated high level ambitions require effective cross-cutting action both across the Council and with its partners which is clearly understood by councillors and staff. Ambitions are realistic and have to be delivered within the budgetary constraints imposed by the corporate drive to secure annual efficiency savings and maintain low levels of council tax. These are key challenges for the Council and its partners but do ensure that its ambitions are challenging, but realistic.
- 36 The Council has demonstrated good community leadership in balancing the needs of the business sector in regenerating the city together with the supporting infrastructure. It is also ensuring the needs of its more deprived communities are addressed through social regeneration projects. Through the Leeds initiative and active involvement in area forum, councillors have helped shape the vision for the city and also been involved in making difficult decisions. These have included residential and nursing homes for the elderly closures, school closures, rebuilding programmes and changing the eligibility criteria for adult services. Overall these decisions have been managed well and have resulted in better services. There are good outcomes including the provision of many regional facilities in the city and the recent sale of the Leeds/Bradford airport to attract suitable investment for the expansion of facilities and the financial benefits this brought partners. Other regional agencies regard the Council as providing good regional leadership including Government Office and the Regional Development Agency. Overall the Council is effectively helping to shape the future of the city and region while ensuring it has the infrastructure to support planned regeneration that the whole city benefits from.

Prioritisation

- 37 The Council is performing well in this area. It has established priorities that reflect local needs, support the Council's ambitions and respond to regional and national agendas. A robust delivery framework is in place to ensure that resources are allocated to priority areas. There is a strategic approach to diversity and vulnerable people and hard to reach groups are effectively engaged. Overall the Council knows what matters most to local people and concentrates its efforts accordingly.
- 38 Priorities clearly reflect the key challenges, needs and context of a large and diverse area. These priorities are outlined within the current corporate plan (2005-2008) and support the ambitions contained in the community strategy. Priorities are grouped under seven themes and include creating a leading city in Europe with an international reputation, reducing health inequalities and the impact of poverty on health and targets for reducing unemployment to groups receiving benefits or living in deprived areas. Priorities are reviewed through the annual council plan to reflect changing community needs while councillors are involved in reviewing priorities within their own portfolio areas and strategically through the executive. The Council's localised approach through good use of neighbourhood intelligence, area forums and ongoing targeted engagement is a notable strength. At a strategic level regional partners are effective in ensuring a coordinated approach to regional prioritisation. This allows the Council to remain focused on issues such as regional housing growth or transport infrastructure and more local issues including breaking down barriers to get people into employment.
- 39 Priorities reflect local needs. In addition to the seven corporate priorities there are five specific priorities which local communities have identified as areas for improvement. These include repairing roads and pavements and creating more activity for teenagers. Priorities are effectively publicised with outcomes reflecting key community and internal interests including value for money. Each priority area is well defined and has a series of measurable short and medium term targets and outcomes which are regularly monitored and translated into the Council's strategies.
- 40 There is effective engagement with most sectors and stakeholders to ensure that priorities meet the diverse needs of different communities. For example, effective dialogue with specific local communities enabled them to generate suggestions to improve their neighbourhoods which were then actioned. Other more strategic examples include dialogue with the business, environmental, voluntary sectors and local communities on regenerating east and south east Leeds which will bring investment of an estimated £1 billion over the next 20 years. Ongoing engagement with all sectors and levels within the community using different mechanisms is a particular strength. This has resulted in good action planning, stronger networks and improved results such as implementing local projects that are having a real impact in improving local communities.

18 Corporate Assessment | What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- 41** The Council has a strong strategic approach to equalities. It has a well established corporate equalities board supported by an equalities team. Engagement takes account of the need to target hard to reach groups for example with disabled people on the provision of adaptations to Council services to meet their specific needs. Effective engagement with some groups including older people and migrant workers has informed the Council and its partners on further actions required to support these sectors of the community. There is a clear and comprehensive equalities strategy with action plans to improve its approach externally but also internally in raising a wider awareness with staff of dealing with customers from diverse backgrounds. Overall, there is an integrated approach to targeting diverse groups and individuals and involving them in shaping services which more closely reflect individual needs.
- 42** Partners and stakeholders are effectively engaged in setting priorities and realistic but challenging targets. Through the Local Area Agreement (LAA), good and sustained focus is placed on tackling both local and national issues and partners work together to drive solutions through setting targeted outcomes. For instance, criminal activity has been high in Leeds and as a result of targeted activity in partnership there has been significant reduction in recent years. The Council has led engagement with the community and partners to develop priorities for negotiations with Government Office on targets for the new LAA. Stakeholders have also contributed to other strategies and plans to develop realistic, outcome based targets, for example, to reduce health inequalities. Staff are also involved in target setting at a service level, ensuring realistic service targets are set based on the knowledge and experience of those delivering services. Priorities are clearly understood by external stakeholders and staff and are reinforced through effective communication. This contributes to a shared ownership of what the Council is trying to achieve.
- 43** Robust financial, planning and performance management frameworks are used to maintain a strong focus on delivery of priorities. The medium term financial strategy is aligned with the current corporate plan with intention to update this to support the new combined community and corporate plan. Through an effective approach to value for money and efficiency savings the Council has focused resources towards priority areas including reducing criminal activity, creating a better environment for people to live in and targeting frail and vulnerable older people to receive higher levels of care. Performance management also supports the delivery of priorities through effective monitoring of progress and target setting. As a result there is a clear framework and understanding to ensure effective allocation of resources to priority areas.

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

Capacity

- 44 The Council is performing well in this area. There is strong corporate governance, effective financial management and staff and councillor capacity is good, enhanced by a strategic approach to project management and notable practice in procurement. Risk management and ICT are supporting the delivery of customer focused services. Partnership working is strong in most areas. There are some weaknesses including the lack of consistent challenge through scrutiny and the lack of a developed corporate approach to workforce planning. However, overall the Council uses its resources very effectively and is seeking to further increase capacity through an internal modernisation agenda.
- 45 Councillors and officers are clear about their roles and responsibilities. This is enhanced by good and effective working relationships. The Council's joint leadership approach works well with clear internal and external leadership and decision making which is based on community outcomes and not along political lines. Portfolio holders provide good leadership in their areas of responsibility and champion some cross-cutting areas, including diversity. This enables effective engagement of councillors in making strategic and policy decisions, allowing officers to focus more on operational issues. The Council has transparent and broadly effective decision-making processes. Portfolio holders are openly accountable for the delivery of service and cross-cutting targets. There are sound arrangements for ethical governance with an active standards committee which is promoting greater awareness of governance and standards at its meetings. Councillor skills are developed through induction, specific targeted training and the Council has achieved charter mark status for its training framework including personal development plans for portfolio holders. This is building on the already strong capacity of councillors to play an active part in the decision the making process.
- 46 Overview and scrutiny is improving but not delivering a consistent and effective challenge. Call in arrangements are not as effective as they could be, which has resulted in few call ins in recent years. While scrutiny has been enhanced by using policy boards which allow a broader range of councillors to get involved in policy making decisions these are currently operating inconsistently. Some boards effectively challenge at a policy development stage while others are not challenging at this stage which has resulted in scrutiny not providing consistent challenge in this area.

20 Corporate Assessment | What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- 47** There is a very strong focus on financial management and financial control is good. Councillors, managers and staff give high priority to balancing budgets and achieving value for money (VFM). The Council is aware of its relative costs and performance. Activity-based budgeting focuses managers' attention on delivering VFM in their services and achieving substantial efficiency savings of around £70 million over the past two years. Costs are low for some services, complemented by good and improving performance. Where the Council has increased costs this is commensurate with improving services. The Council ensures that its resources are used cost effectively.
- 48** The Council's financial plan is robust and underpinned by effective management and control. The medium-term financial planning process ensures resources are linked to current priorities and that the Council is aware of potential future funding shortfalls. The Council is developing longer term financial planning to support the longer term community strategy and align with the revised priorities. Effective monitoring ensures that resources support priorities and areas of underperformance, for example, reducing criminal activity or improving planning services. No significant departmental overspends have occurred in recent years and the Council has been very successful in leveraging external funding particularly through PFI schemes. For example, in the building of new schools to support improved educational attainment and street lighting which is impacting on reduced crime and fear of crime. The Council is managing its risks through a strategic approach and service risk registers which identify key operational and generic risks. A corporate approach to project management and notable practice in the Council's regional approach in procurement is further enabling it to make best use of capacity. This helps the Council focus its resources on areas of greatest need and maximise outcomes for the community.
- 49** Staff capacity is good and supported by a strategic approach to human resource (HR) management which links to the Council's priorities. The Council has a people strategy and action plan to ensure a more strategic and consistent approach to personnel policy. It achieved organisation wide investors in people (IIP) in 2001 and then also attained the IIP Leadership and Management Standard in 2005 demonstrating a strong commitment to developing its staff supported by effective internal communications. Management capacity is being increased through a more structured approach to management based competency and leadership training. A recent staff survey indicates high levels of staff satisfaction while good progress is being made on the implementation of the new single status job evaluation scheme. Capacity is further supported through flexible working policies, reduction in sickness absence and generally effective recruitment and retention which enhances the Council's capacity to deliver its priorities.

- 50 Some aspects of corporate personnel policy and workforce planning are not consistently implemented. In some departments the implementation of personnel policies has been inconsistent through local interpretation. This is being strengthened through personnel department restructuring which is already impacting on a more consistent approach. There are departmental workforce plans but the Council has yet to implement a corporate approach to workforce planning across the organisation or externally with partners. As a result the Council cannot be sure that it is shaping its staffing resources to meet its long term ambitions.
- 51 The Council makes good use of IT, particularly to improve customer access to services. This is guided by a highly effective strategic approach and a considerable investment improving the functionality of internal systems. Key elements are the customer contact centres and interactive website which has been externally accredited. Use and satisfaction with the telephone contact centre has steadily increased and face to face service centres enable good access across the city to a wide range of services. IT systems are used effectively to support performance management information through an accessible system and also through systems to share partner information on performance. Access to IT is improving for all sectors of the community and is resulting in greater take up of services via the website. This helps users to access services remotely, which is particularly relevant for people living in outlying areas or in deprived communities where local access reduces the need to travel.
- 52 Strong and well developed partnership working is a particular strength and is central to delivery of the Council's aims across all sectors. The Council seeks to work and engage with partners in all areas of its activities and is considered as an effective partner by most external stakeholders. Of the many examples, there are notable achievements in the integration of services in the Leeds safer partnership or the maturity and effectiveness of the Leeds Initiative. Other notable areas are the Council's partnership working with neighbourhoods through area forums and plans, and the joint working on the redevelopment of the city which is resulting in large amounts of inward investment. The Council has developed a strategic approach to partnership working through use of service level agreements (SLAs) while capacity is being built in the voluntary sector through direct Council support enabling the delivery of many services, particularly for older people through this sector. This demonstrates commitment to build stronger and effective arrangements that are responsive to local needs and increase capacity both for the Council and its partners.

Performance management

- 53 The Council is performing well in this area. A clear, open culture of performance is in place engaging partners, councillors, senior managers and understood by key staff. This is supported by an effective performance management framework which enables the Council to focus not only on service improvements and performance indicators but cross-cutting issues including diversity and customer focus. Monitoring is systematic and focussed with appropriate involvement of councillors and senior managers with the Council making good use of customer feedback to drive improvement. Performance management with partners is strong, supported by the alignment of Council and partners' plans and a clear approach to monitoring outcomes led by the Council. There is not yet a consistent approach to managing the performance of individuals in the Council. Overall performance is improving in most priority areas and where it is not, action is being taken to address it.
- 54 Performance management with partners and data sharing is strong and is part of the performance culture. At a strategic level the LAA and performance group on the Leeds Initiative manage performance against agreed targets and challenge areas of underperformance. The Council uses detailed information on its most deprived neighbourhoods to target resources, in partnership, to reduce inequalities. A good example is in Community Safety where there is integrated working and use of performance systems with West Yorkshire Police which has helped to significantly reduce crime levels and improve community safety. This model of working is beginning to take effect in other areas of the Council including children and younger people's health.
- 55 There is a strong performance culture in the Council which is supported by robust performance management and reporting arrangements. The Corporate plan and LAA provide a focus, setting priorities for action and monitoring performance against these. Quarterly reports provide very clear data on areas of poor performance or exceptions and describe action that has been taken. These reports include helpful trend information and data quality indicators which help drive improvement in poorer performing areas and enable councillors and managers to take appropriate actions. There is clarity on responsibilities for tackling under-performance through the LAA code of governance and within the Council. As a consequence performance is reviewed at the appropriate stage within a clear internal framework and at a wider partnership level. Under-performance has been targeted in key areas such as street cleanliness where LAA and corporate plan targets were set for improvement, additional resources allocated and performance has improved which has been recognised by residents.

- 56** Councillors are effectively engaged in performance management. Performance reports are considered by the executive, overview and scrutiny and relevant scrutiny boards, which are increasingly able to demonstrate their impact in some areas. Scrutiny does appropriately challenge poor performance in key areas. A recent example is the children and young people's scrutiny board's investigation into adoption. This focused on speeding up the process and increasing the pool of people willing to adopt which has resulted in a marked increase in adoption rates. Other examples of using performance information to improve outcomes include the use of road casualty information in specific neighbourhoods and the use of local data to reduce deprivation particularly around crime and grime. There is regular performance review between portfolio holders and the appropriate corporate or operational directors enabling councillors to challenge performance across the Council effectively.
- 57** Senior managers have clear targets and these are regularly reviewed to ensure progress but this is not consistently in place throughout the organisation. Appraisals for front line staff are more focused on development needs and there is a lack of consistency for the review and setting of individual targets and objectives. Target setting is predominantly SMART but there are a limited number of areas where this is not the case. In addition, the presentation of service plans was up until this year inconsistent. Inconsistencies in target setting and presentation of service plans do not support the embedding of a performance culture to all areas of the Council.
- 58** The Council uses intelligence and customer feedback to improve performance. Good use is made of benchmarking with similar organisations to drive improvement while performance is effectively reported to the public through Council publications, the website and other media. Customer feedback is used to improve performance corporately and departmentally. For example, customer feedback has been used in city services to improve performance of bulky waste collections resulting in a significant fall in complaints. Complaints are logged centrally and recurring themes are identified and addressed. Yearly comprehensive satisfaction surveys are carried out with residents which allow a detailed analysis of responses down to a neighbourhood level, analysis of trends and assessment of the impact of initiatives. There is effective use of external challenge to drive improvement through use of consultancy and effectively responding to recommendations contained in inspection and audit reports. This has included using consultancy to help create a service prioritisation model and Leeds University to measure deprivation trends to help target resources and drive improvement.

What has been achieved?

- 59 The Council is performing well in this area, and can show significant achievement across the shared priority areas. Key achievements, linked to local ambitions of 'going up a league' and 'narrowing the gap' include raising economic prosperity, reducing inequalities in specific communities, improving housing, improving educational attainment and significantly reducing crime levels. Other achievements include supporting independent living for the elderly with high standards of social care, and a regional approach to promoting cultural activities with nationally and regionally important facilities including the relocation of the Royal Armouries to the city. However the Council has not achieved all it wants in some areas, for example, there has been a widening of the gap in some communities around health inequalities and although there has been significant investment in the planning service, performance remains below average, although improving. Achievements show a regional focus but also reflect local need and this is a significant strength of the approach taken by the council.
- 60 Partnership working to improve community cohesion is successful with reductions in anti social behaviour and the fear of crime. Customer contact centres and an accessible web site are improving access to services for all areas of the community. There have been notable developments in some areas around healthier communities where there are good examples of partnership working and successful outcomes including smoking cessation. However, a strategic approach for reducing health inequalities has yet to be implemented. The delivery of services to older people has improved with innovative approaches in partnership, improving the quality of life for the over 65s but the Council has yet to implement a strategy of supporting the over 50s. Overall, the Council is performing well to meet the needs of children and young people and the capacity of the Council to improve based on its track record is good.
- 61 A strong approach to working in partnership has meant that many of the achievements are jointly owned. There are very strong links with the voluntary sector and the Council is using its expertise and experience to further promote capacity-building and target consultation to diverse communities. This has resulted in greater accessibility and more focused service delivery to meet the needs of particular communities. The Leeds Initiative is particularly strong and achieving real outcomes for the community supported by improved joint performance management and data sharing. Joint working and the introduction of some integrated budget arrangements are delivering more efficient joint service delivery particularly around community safety. The achievements testify both to the Council's effective work in partnership and to its own efforts.

Sustainable communities and transport

- 62** The Council has a good strategic approach to sustainable communities, focussing with its partners on moving up a league economically and narrowing the gap between its best performing and most deprived areas. This is consistent with the long-standing 'Vision for Leeds'. It has set ambitious targets for moving its already thriving economy up a league and taking its place amongst the top performing European cities; although how this will be measured has yet to be defined. At a national and regional level, the Council is helping to develop the profile of the region and it has gained support with partners for Leeds as the driver and focus of the city region's economy with successful outcomes including the sale of the Leeds/Bradford airport.
- 63** Employment levels in Leeds are high with 59,000 new jobs created in Leeds in the last decade. This reflects a 15 per cent increase which is above the national average. Income levels are high relative to other core cities and increasing. This reflects the strong record of the city in attracting new employers in both the public and private sectors. Gross Value Added to the economy has increased above national average levels, and levels of multiple deprivation are also reducing as a result.
- 64** The Council and partners have not yet made a significant impact on their target to reduce worklessness. The number of people on key working age benefits has not come down in the most deprived areas. The Council has established commissioning arrangements with partners to target the key groups and areas, based on shared detailed analysis. There are examples of best practice of working with the private sector such as the job guarantee scheme agreed with retail employers. The Council has shown leadership through initiatives such as the Contact Leeds Academy which trains and employs long-term unemployed people in its call centre. Actions such as these are starting to have an impact but long term worklessness remains a key issue for the city.
- 65** The Council has made good progress towards the decent homes standard, and is being proactive in addressing the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse population. The Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) for housing are working well with the Council on ambitious regeneration schemes such as the East and South East Leeds project (EASEL). Although the Council is achieving targets in line with its housing and planning strategies, affordable housing remains a challenge, particularly in the more prosperous areas of the city. The Council has revised its Supporting People strategy to ensure the needs of vulnerable people can be met. However, progress in moving people from temporary accommodation is slow. Residents' satisfaction with the Council on housing remains in the bottom quartile and satisfaction has declined steeply amongst the BME community. However, overall the Council is meeting need for most.

- 66 The Council recognises the importance of the private sector to the continuing prosperity of the city. The stock of businesses registered for VAT increased by 4.7 per cent and has played a significant role in attracting new businesses to invest. It has also recognised the role it can play in reducing burdens on business, for example by procurement geared to local businesses. While its own planning performance has been significantly below average it has recently invested in this area and performance has improved to just below the national average. The majority of private sector investment has been in the city centre, and this has not always benefited more deprived communities. However, over the past two years this has changed, through the City Growth Initiative, and now through the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative programme. These programmes target investment in enterprise at the most deprived communities across the city for example, in Gipton. The Construction Leeds Partnership has helped train over 250 local people with 56 being placed into jobs, and over 650 local people have been helped into work in the health sector by the Council and NHS Trusts working in partnership.
- 67 Public sector investment in Leeds is helping to reshape communities affected by deprivation. Six primary care schemes have been completed under local improvement finance trust arrangements (LIFT) across the city with a further six to be completed in 2008. The Council is working closely with Yorkshire Forward on major housing, transport and business developments in Holbeck Urban Village and Aire Valley.
- 68 The Council is making adequate progress on environmental issues and climate change. It is developing a strategic approach to creating a sustainable environment in the city but this is at an early stage. It has a waste strategy in place, an approach to climate change is being developed and it signed the Nottingham Declaration in June 2006. However, it has not yet embedded sustainability into its planning processes. There has been good impact on reducing waste and steady progress with recycling but this still remains bottom quartile when compared to other councils. Green spaces in the city have received significant investment, particularly parks, resulting in increased visitor numbers and improved satisfaction. Air quality has improved.
- 69 There is a good focus on cultural activity and facilities. This builds on established venues and events with a national reputation such as the West Yorkshire Playhouse and Leeds International Pianoforte Competition, and now reflects the diversity of the city's population. Over £150 million in capital investment is now underway, including the refurbishment of the City Museum and plans for an Arena while the relocation of the Royal Armouries was the first by a major national collection. Marketing Leeds is the city's destination marketing agency, created by a partnership between the public and private sectors and it is achieving success in marketing the city on the basis of its cultural and leisure attractions, as well as its retail strength. As a result, the city is increasingly seen as an attractive destination for visits and stays.

- 70 The Council has worked well with partners to integrate its planning around transportation with some good outcomes. It has secured private sector investment for the East Leeds link road, and has an effective private sector partnership for highway design. Over 100,000 people commute into the city each working day, and there has been a good focus on improving their journey by the city and neighbouring councils. The inner ring road is now nearing completion. There has been significant investment in Leeds Central Station. Use of bus priority lanes is extensive on key routes. As a result, there has been improvement in the use of public transport, although there remains a recognised need to develop the public transport strategy further in the wake of the bid for a 'Supertram' being rejected. The Council has further plans developed to meet these future challenges, for example by bus-only routes to link the Aire Valley with neighbouring deprived areas, and through giving priority to multi-passenger car use on the East Leeds Link.

Safer and stronger communities

- 71 The Council and its partners have made significant progress in the reduction of crime and the fear of crime. There is a strategic approach to safer and stronger communities which is clear and outlined in community and Council priorities. The Council has taken a leading role in helping to reduce crime. This has resulted in 86 per cent of crime indicators improving and overall crime has reduced by 23.6 per cent over the last three years, although crime still remains high when compared nationally. This is reflected in the fear of crime which although reducing remains slightly above the national average.
- 72 The Council and its partners understand the impact of its services on the delivery of community safety priorities and outcomes. This has been achieved by targeting resources to specific areas and effective integrated working with police and other agencies. The Leeds Safety Team is an integrated team of Council and police staff which focuses resources, effectively sharing data while ensuring all Council and police services work together to support community safety. Another example is Operation Champion which targeted high priority areas and local communities in reducing criminal activity and antisocial behaviour by addressing key environmental issues over a three day period in a partnership. This has resulted in a reduction in criminal activity in all the 17 community areas targeted.

- 73 Partnership working and a targeted approach have resulted in reductions in crime and increase in reassurance. The latest residents' survey shows that people feel safer with a seven per cent increase in people feeling safer walking alone at night and less people are concerned with anti social behaviour. The city centre is covered by a comprehensive CCTV system which has contributed to a reduction in incidents while many of the city's car parks meet the safer car parks standard. Responding to residents' consultations, the Council has worked closely with the police introducing Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). There are currently 392 PCSOs of which 170 are funded by the Council. They have been involved in dealing with 3,175 incidents, spending 85 per cent of their time working in local communities. The Council has implemented a scheme which has helped support the victims of crime, reduce burglary and identified vulnerable people. A dedicated officer has given practical support and advice on replacing locks and improving security to almost 3000 properties. These schemes not only support the victims of crime but also helped reduce burglary by 50 per cent since 2003/04.
- 74 The Council and its partners have good arrangements in place to deliver initiatives to reduce antisocial behaviour (ASB) which is a clear priority in the Safer Leeds strategy and is resulting in positive outcomes. The most recent residents' survey indicates that residents feel the level of ASB is reducing after a number of years of increases. Good partnership working and community engagement was recognised when Leeds became a Respect Action Area in 2006 giving the Council more resources to increase enforcement and family support. A dedicated antisocial behaviour unit has led and developed extensive partnership working and community engagement. Activities are based around prevention, enforcement and victim support which demonstrates that a rounded approach to ASB is in place illustrated by the effective use of ASBOs. There is also a range of prevention schemes for example, an alley-gating scheme and investment in improved street lighting. The Council have an ASB dedicated hotline which has received 6,500 calls since April 2005 and is helping to target activity and provide effective response to individuals, partner agencies and local communities. Acceptable behaviour contracts are also used avoiding the need for further action in many cases.

- 75 The Council has introduced several initiatives which are having a positive impact for those effected by drug and alcohol abuse. There is a good understanding of local needs and partners in the Drug and Alcohol teams to co-ordinate activity in line with clear targets set out in the Safer Leeds strategy. A Drug Intervention Programme was set up in 2003 and over 3,800 people have accessed the programme with 79 per cent retained in treatment for over twelve weeks. There is specific targeting of vulnerable groups such as fast tracking prostitutes into the programme. Access to intensive support from a support worker and offender manager is available for those who continue to commit crime and this is reducing re-offending. The Council and partners have targeted alcohol related violence in the city centre including extending the existing pub watch scheme, taxi marshals and better late night transport resulting in a 19 per cent reduction in alcohol related violent crime. The Council has recently developed an alcohol misuse strategy for 2007-2010 which ensures that the existing multi agency approach which articulates the Prevention, Control and Treatment strategy and delivery mechanisms and links to 'well being' strategies integrating the activities of the Council and its partners.
- 76 Good progress is being made on improving road safety. The number of people killed or seriously injured on Leeds' roads is the lowest since 1987 and has reduced by 22 per cent since 2001. The Council through a variety of schemes has succeeded in reducing child casualties and is on track to achieve its 2010 target. The targeted campaign in primary and secondary schools where accident rates were particularly high has been successful and has reduced by around 50 per cent with the programme now being taken up by other schools in the city.
- 77 Up to date and well resourced emergency arrangements are in place working across the Council and partners, which were fully tested in recent flooding. There are good co-ordinating activities and evacuation arrangements with the business community as part of its voice alert system to avoid traffic build up during an emergency. The Council published award winning guidance which resulted in a good response during the floods. It works with other partners in West Yorkshire in developing the Community Risk Register. This is backed up by a Leeds-wide register which links directly to the Council's operational and strategic risk register and ensures an integrated approach to Council and community risk.
- 78 The Council has a strong and progressive approach to building community cohesion. There are policies and procedures in place for addressing disadvantage and the Council uses community engagement to inform its approach to building stronger communities. The Council is developing its approach to monitoring and measurement and has published a report on progress in strengthening community cohesion illustrating many positive outcomes. Other positive outcomes include the Community and Civic Pride awards, the streets are cleaner with one disadvantaged local community winning Silver Gilt Award in the 2007 Britain in Bloom. There is a positive response to safer communities with the Council and its partners' approach to arrests connected with the London bombings with public reassurance, communication and positive engagement with local communities. This has had an ongoing positive impact and there were no major public order/racial incidents after the arrests.

Healthier communities

- 79 There is not a consistent approach to reducing health inequalities across the city. Whilst there are good plans in place services are not consistently provided across the city, partnership working at a strategic level is under developed and there has yet to be an impact on reducing health inequalities. For example the gap in life expectancy between the wealthiest and poorest communities has slightly widened over the last ten years. Overall many health indicators are average when compared nationally but this disguises significant inequalities in the most deprived areas. Priorities are focussed on tackling these inequalities and are reflected in the Leeds Health and Well being plan, Council's corporate plan and LAA. Specific vulnerable groups have been identified in areas of deprivation and although there are many initiatives these have yet to show a significant impact.
- 80 The Council and its health partners are currently developing their strategic approach to partnership working. The city is now served by one primary care trust (PCT), replacing five, which is now facilitating interagency working and starting to develop from a low base a strategic and consistent city wide approach to health care. The Healthy Leeds partnership provides strategic direction and shared priorities are clear. These are articulated in the Leeds Health and Well being plan which is linked to the Council's corporate priorities and the vision for Leeds. Plans are based on a detailed assessment of needs, shared data and research which is targeting action. There are five clear priority areas supported by detailed strategies linking both to the Council's and partnerships' detailed plans. The Council and PCT have recognised the need to strengthen commissioning and a new joint commissioning approach not possible under the previous configuration of PCTs is planned. This is intended to re-focus services and better target resources to those in need in the future.
- 81 There is a range of initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles which is improving the health of some targeted groups. The Council has developed capacity in the voluntary sector supporting a network of 43 neighbourhood schemes across the city many with a specific health improvement focus. There are good examples where hard to reach groups including BME are targeted using these schemes which is starting to impact on better health. The Council is working with the PCT to produce a unified approach to community development, so services are consistent and are provided where needed. It is taking a systematic approach to promoting healthy lifestyles in its children's services with positive outcomes. It is also improving decent homes, participation in physical activity by children and access to better heating for vulnerable elderly residents.

- 82 There is a proactive approach to improving some areas of poor health including smoking cessation. There has been significant progress with 31 per cent increase in people quitting smoking and there is a high degree of compliance with the Health Improvement and Protection Bill. There has also been good progress in reducing obesity in children and young people. However, there are some areas of health where progress has been slow; for example, there is limited success in reducing teenage pregnancies which are higher than the national average. There is a strategic approach to mental health with good engagement with users in developing a shared vision and planning service delivery but this has yet to be embedded.
- 83 Partnership working is good in many operational areas. There are a number of new co-located teams and joint posts in children's services to support joint working and policy development while adult services are moving towards a similar model. There are a range of services provided in partnership including mental health services for children which has had positive outcomes and good links to the Youth Offending Service to facilitate prompt referral. There are 23 Children's centres with a further 27 planned to be completed in 2008 providing multi disciplinary family support with centre based and outreach services. The Council has been pro-active in using the voluntary sector to increase capacity such as the eight dementia cafes which enable better access to health and social care. This demonstrates a commitment by the Council and its partners to a shared agenda to tackling health issues in a co-ordinated way.

Older people

- 84 There is good provision of adult social care with the service rated as two-star (good) by the social care inspectorate. With specific reference to older people, the primary focus has been targeted at care for the most vulnerable older people, and this has been enhanced by the necessary, but difficult decision to re-assess the eligibility criteria in order to use available resources for this group more effectively.
- 85 The consequence of this is that the Council and its partners have not developed a strategic approach to people over 50 years which goes beyond health and social care. Consequently, much of the very good work which is currently benefiting older people is having less impact than it could. Although it is encouraging that there are three older people's champions representing the three main political groups, their impact is also reduced because there is no agreed strategy to guide their respective roles. The Council has not evaluated the cover provided by the voluntary sector and other partners and is therefore not in a position to know if provision is consistent across the city. This is also hindering negotiations over financial support for the sector and highlights the lack of a strategic approach for older people.

- 86 The Council and its partners have delivered good outcomes against its ambitions to promote and support the independence of older people. In the city, 99.5 per cent of service users are supported and maintain independent living. Stretching targets to improve the take up of direct payments from a low base have been built into the new business plan. The Keeping House project, involving older people, has resulted in over 2000 older residents receiving practical support for basic domestic chores such as shopping and gardening, from a range of voluntary and quality assured private providers. The number of supported housing units has increased, increasing access to independent living.
- 87 Partnership working, especially with the voluntary sector, is a key strength and is playing a full role in supporting older people through a range of services. Examples include the neighbourhood networks, which are supported by £1.7 million investment by the Council. There are lunch clubs and cultural and social activities to support older people in the community and improve their quality of life.
- 88 The Council has a good approach to engagement with older people and involving them in service development through various means such as the Older People's Forum and the Older People's Reference Group. A significant investment, in excess of £300,000 over three years, has enabled older people to provide the Council with feedback on issues which are important to them. This involved using a range of consultation methods which led to the Council being part of the Link Age pilot programme providing good access to information. As a result the Council knows what is important to older people and is shaping its service around effective engagement. For example, the Leeds Dignity Campaign used inputs from older residents in its successful bid to access £1 million of dignity in care funding for older residents in care homes with the condition that residents decide how the money is spent.
- 89 Services provided through partnership with the health sector are improving and the primary care trust now employs a health specialist for older people which is helping integrate service provision. The Heart Watch scheme is embedded in some of the Council's leisure centres which has resulted in four million visits last year. Healthy Being Centres have been placed in community centres and there is joint commissioning for the Cardiac Phase 3 preventative project, mainly for males aged 50+ at risk of myocardial infarction.
- 90 There has been an increase in the range of intergenerational activities through the Neighbourhoods for all Ages project which has largely been driven by older people's groups and particularly in BME groups where actions are supporting community cohesion. The Council has developed the 'Building Bridges' intergenerational programme in twenty of its schools - recognition of which has resulted in it winning a 2007 Euro-cities award.

Children and young people

- 91** Outcomes for children and young people in Leeds are good because of the impact of recent and rapid improvements. Standards at Key Stages 1 and 2 are in line both with similar authorities and national averages. There were considerable improvements in attainment at Key Stage 3 in 2006, and the average points score in all three core subjects increased. GCSE results continue to improve. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C is increasing faster than nationally and is now in line with that found in similar authorities. However, despite this, many young people are still leaving school without any GCSE passes. Attainment at AS and A-level is low in around half of schools with sixth forms and in the tertiary college.
- 92** Service management in Leeds is good. Recently introduced innovative Children's Trust arrangements have stepped up the pace of change and improvement. The team of senior leaders and managers is determined and energetic, with a clear shared vision and long-term strategy. Services are characterised by high levels of staff commitment. A significant number of new strategies have been introduced. These are being implemented effectively and good early progress is being made. Key joint appointments, between health and children's services, have strengthened joint working and 'locality enablers' are supporting multi-disciplinary arrangements on a more local level. Good performance management systems are being developed that align with those of partner agencies. Effective joint commissioning strategies are ensuring value for money.
- 93** The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good overall. CAMHS offer good support to vulnerable groups, including looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good links between CAMHS and the youth offending service facilitate prompt referral and treatment of young offenders with mental health needs. An effective Healthy Schools programme has achieved Beacon status. Most schools provide a good range of sports activities. National targets to reduce the number of mothers smoking at the time of delivery have been met. Rates of teenage pregnancy are high.
- 94** Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are adequate and improving. The LSCB is developing well and partnership working is increasing. All children on the child protection register are allocated qualified social workers. The quality of reviews varies and some core assessments are not produced within the required timeframes. The number of looked after children and young people has remained steady following a significant earlier increase in unaccompanied asylum seeking children. Placement stability for looked after children is good. The number of children in residential care is low and compliance with national standards in children's homes has improved recently.

- 95 The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is good overall. School improvement work is effective and focused. Early years provision continues to be a strength. There has been a considerable reduction in the number of permanent exclusions from school. A wide range of innovative strategies have been introduced to improve attendance and there is evidence of improvement, although the number of unauthorised absences in secondary schools remains too high. There is a very good range of recreational activities and voluntary learning provision for young people to enjoy.
- 96 The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. Leeds has been at the forefront of a number of initiatives to support the personal and social development of young people. A well-established and effective mentoring scheme is in place to support children and young people from disadvantaged areas and from minority ethnic backgrounds. The Investors in Pupils Award and the Stephen Lawrence Educational Standard both originated in Leeds and are nationally recognised for developing engagement and supporting cultural change. Very good efforts are made to involve young people who are traditionally hard to reach. The number of anti-social behaviour orders has been more than halved over the last three years. The number of first-time offenders is falling, but there is still a high proportion of looked after children and young people involved in the youth justice system.
- 97 The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate. There are clear signs of improvement in some areas of work. There is very good support for families. Childcare provision is expanding at a faster rate than in comparable authorities. Partnership working and collaboration is very good at 14 to 16 but less well developed at 16 to 18. Good progress has been made with the online prospectus and common applications. The integrated youth service is re-engaging many young people in education, employment and training, improving attendance and raising attainment. The proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 in education, employment and training improved by 5 per cent in 2007, a figure greater than the national average. The proportion of young people not in education, employment and training whilst reducing is high for 19 year olds, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for some Black and minority ethnic groups. Good progress has been made on providing decent housing for children and young people, and Leeds has an excellent record for providing suitable accommodation for care leavers.
- 98 The capacity of council services to improve is good. The council made a bold but considered decision in creating innovative management arrangements for children's services. These arrangements are strong and are beginning to have a positive impact so that, although many outcomes for children and young people are currently at or below national expectations, the overall trajectory is very positive. Recent improvement rates have been rapid and are better than those of statistical neighbours in many areas of service provision.

Appendix 1 – Framework for Corporate Assessment

- 1 This corporate assessment was carried out under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, under which the Audit Commission has power to inspect local authorities' arrangements for securing continuous improvement. The results of the corporate assessment contribute to the determination of the overall CPA category for an authority, which the Audit Commission is required to assess and report on under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2 The Council's self assessment provided a key resource in focusing the assessment activity which included consideration of:
 - key documentation, including the Council's improvement plan;
 - updated performance indicators and performance data; and
 - interviews and meetings attended.
- 3 The assessment for Leeds City Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 3 to 14 December 2007.
- 4 This report has been discussed with the Council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission's assessment. This report will be used as the basis for improvement planning by the Council.