

Inspection report

April 2005



Comprehensive performance assessment

Corporate Assessment Report

Leeds City Council

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Introduction

- 1 The local government White Paper *Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Service* encourages greater focus on improved services for local people. Better performing councils are freed from central government controls and restrictions and poorer councils receive better focused support for improvement. The first step in this process was to make an overall judgement, a comprehensive performance assessment (CPA), of where each council stands.
- 2 In December 2002 the Audit Commission reported the results of the comprehensive performance assessment, for the first time, for each council. Your council was categorised as good.
- 3 In December 2003 new CPA information was published for each single tier and county council, based on reported changes in service performance during 2003 and you council was again categorised as good.
- 4 This report presents the results of a corporate assessment carried out in November 2004. The judgements are based on the Audit Commission's published key lines of enquiry, and include an update and analysis of your council's progress against:
 - ◆ the strengths and weaknesses contained in the 2002 report; and
 - ◆ the council's own priorities for improvement.

Summary of judgements

- 5 During a period of major organisational and political change there has been a sustained focus on priority issues and the council continues to display effective community leadership. Through the well established approach to strategic partnership a new 'Vision For Leeds' has been agreed which raises the ambitions for the city in terms of both its economic and social regeneration over the medium to long term. The council is able to balance local and national priorities and has mechanisms in place to ensure resources are directed towards priority issues. However, the council lacks a consultation strategy which drives effective engagement with some minority groups and full redirection of resources is restricted by a continued lack of clarity about what are not priorities.
- 6 Substantial progress has been made to address organisational issues. A restructure has been completed which has had the effect of bringing related services together to provide a better focus on the needs of the public and has increased capacity in key areas. The council's management development programme has continued to be implemented and is beginning to have an impact on the culture of the organisation, although the quality of internal communication is variable. There has been progress on human resource policy and practices, but elements of this still inhibit the pace of improvement.
- 7 The council has addressed the challenge arising from the 03-04 overspend in social services. It has agreed a strategy for rebuilding its general balances and a sustainable solution to the budget overspend. A council wide efficiency review has been undertaken and it has made some key difficult decisions for implementation in 05-06. The council has used different methods of procurement to provide the financial capacity to improve the quality of its assets. However, it does not have an agreed programme to test alternative methods of procuring core front line services.
- 8 There have been modest improvements in some major services but performance against national best value performance indicators continues to be mixed. Some of the weaknesses in performance management have been addressed but others remain. The council has been successful in making significant improvements in priority areas such as raising educational attainment and reducing unemployment linked to the aim of narrowing the gap between the most affluent and most deprived areas of the city. The council has also been successful in meeting Local Public Service Agreement targets and has improved results from external assessment of environmental services, housing and libraries and leisure. The council has invested in developing expertise in procurement, asset management and risk management although this is not yet fully embedded.
- 9 There are numerous examples of how the council has learned from its own experiences and from those of others. The council is also proactive in facilitating the sharing of learning with others. The management development programme is beginning to encourage a learning culture, although the council has not yet been successful in achieving a fully effective systematic approach to learning across the organisation.
- 10 In response to the ambitions contained in the new 'Vision For Leeds', the council is developing a range of plans to support the economic and social regeneration of the city. These include major regeneration projects, such as the East and South East Leeds (EASEL) project, which is targeted at one of the most deprived areas of the

city. The council also has a range of plans to improve core service delivery and accessibility. There are also plans to build on local community engagement by devolving decisions about local services to the recently established local area management committees.

Corporate Assessment Score

Key Question	Theme	2002 Final Weighted Score	2004 Un-Weighted Score	2004 Weighted Score
What is the council trying to achieve?	Ambition	3	3	3
	Prioritisation	3	3	3
	Focus	3	3	3
How has the council set about delivering its priorities?	Capacity	3	3	3
	Performance management	2	3	3
What has the council achieved to date?	Achievement	6	3	9
	Investment	6	3	6
In light of what has been learnt, what does the council plan to do next?	Learning	3	3	3
	Future Plans	3	3	3
TOTAL THEME SCORE		32	27	36

Context

The locality

- 11 Leeds City Council is one of five metropolitan districts in West Yorkshire. In terms of area, it is the largest metropolitan district in the country, covering 55,270 hectares. In 2001, the population was 716,500 and is expected to increase to more than 740,000 by 2010. Ethnic minority groups make up 11 per cent of the population; this is significantly higher than the regional average.
- 12 The city of Leeds has continued to benefit from significant economic regeneration which has transformed the city centre landscape in recent years. However, despite the thriving city centre economy, stark contrasts remain between the most affluent and most deprived areas of the city. At 2.5 per cent, the level of unemployment is slightly above regional and national levels (Claimant count at July 2004).
- 13 The 2000 Index of Multiple Deprivation identified that seven of Leeds' thirty-three wards (21 per cent) fell within the 10 per cent most deprived wards in the United Kingdom. Nineteen per cent of the city's population lived in those seven wards, which are located in different parts of the city. The 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation indicates similar levels of deprivation.
- 14 These issues continue to be more acute in ethnic minority communities. For example, unemployment levels within ethnic minority communities stand at around four times the average across the city as a whole.

The council

- 15 After a long period of Labour control, the local elections in June 2004 resulted in a significant change in political balance. At those elections, the Labour party won 40 seats, the Liberal Democrats 26, the Conservative party 24, the Green party 3 seats. In addition, there are now 6 Independent councillors.
- 16 Political control is now vested in a coalition of Liberal Democrats, Conservatives and the Green party. They have agreed that leadership of the council will alternate between the leaders of the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives on a six-monthly basis. The leader of the Liberal Democrats was leader of the council until the end of the calendar year when he handed the leadership over to the leader of the Conservative group.
- 17 The council has a net revenue budget of more than £750 million for 2004/05 and is the largest employer in the city with 35,000 employees. Since April 2003 the council has undergone a major managerial restructure, with the number of departments being reduced from fifteen to seven. This has been accompanied by significant changes at senior management level. The organisation is now managed by a Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and six Directors.
- 18 The council has also introduced five district partnerships, each split into outer- and inner-city area management committees. These provide a mechanism for engaging with local communities about their priorities. The areas covered by each district partnership are based on operational areas for the local police force and health organisations to support better alignment of joint working.

19 In partnership with members of the Leeds Initiative, the local strategic partnership, the council has agreed a new Vision for Leeds for the period from 2004 to 2020.

The vision's main aims relate to:-

- **“going up a league” as a city;**
- **narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged people and communities and the rest of the city;**
- **developing Leeds’ role as the regional capital.**

What is the council trying to achieve?

Ambition

- 20 The council has worked with its partners to develop a bold set of ambitions for the city, seeking to bridge the gap between the most affluent and the most deprived. There are more strengths than weaknesses in this area.
- 21 Through the Leeds Initiative the council has raised the ambitions for the city through the agreement of the second Vision for Leeds covering the period 2004 to 2020. This aims to make Leeds an internationally competitive city with the economic benefits being translated into a high quality of life for all local people. The vision is based around eight themes covering a range of economic, environmental and social issues which are underpinned by twelve major projects and programmes. These include programmes to:
- ◆ improve public transport, including the development of a Supertram system;
 - ◆ improve learning and achievement in schools;
 - ◆ regenerate local communities;
 - ◆ tackle crime, drugs and anti-social behaviour;
 - ◆ develop world class health services;
 - ◆ further develop the local economy, both within the city centre and in the most deprived areas such as the Aire Valley to the South East of the city.
- 22 Projects such as the East and South East Leeds (EASEL) regeneration project, one of the largest projects of its kind in the country, illustrate the scale of the council's ambition for improving the quality of life in the most deprived areas. It reflects the scale of the problems facing the city, aiming to create new jobs and improve the quality of housing, schools, transport and the local environment. There is clarity about the outcomes to be achieved and each project and programme includes a range of long term targets.
- 23 The vision has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders and the process has included extensive consultation with a range of community groups. However the council does not have a consultation strategy in place to guide, coordinate and support ongoing and regular consultation activity. Consultation generally with some minority groups, is not as comprehensive as it could be, although there is extensive consultation with some hard to reach groups in the context of key issues which affect them.
- 24 The council is currently preparing its new corporate plan in the context of the new vision for Leeds. In the main this will require changes in emphasis rather than major changes in priorities. There are some key issues such as health inequalities and environmental sustainability where the 2002-2005 corporate plan is not sufficiently ambitious but the new corporate plan contains more specific ambitions related to these areas. The new plan provides the basis for financial and service planning this year. Ambitions relating to the role of the city within the region are less

clearly articulated. The lack of clarity about what are not priorities, identified in the 2002 corporate assessment, remains.

- 25 The council continues to provide strong community leadership and the change of political control has not affected this. Partnerships with major stakeholders are strong however the relationship with health bodies is less effective. Engagement with communities at a local level is being strengthened through the introduction of local area committees.

Prioritisation

- 26 The council has a clear corporate plan, underpinned by an annual plan that prioritises what the organisation needs to do to deliver its ambitions. However the lack of clarity about what are second order priorities limits the pace of improvement and change. There are more strengths than weaknesses in this area.
- 27 The council's priorities are identified through its three-year Corporate Plan 2002-2005. Although in need of realignment, it nevertheless includes strong links with the new Vision for Leeds. Priorities are given a short term focus through the annual Council Plan, and the council has been successful in targeting resources at areas of deprivation and disadvantage. Current year priorities include supporting lone parents into work, educational attainment of targeted minority groups such as black Caribbean and Bangladeshi pupils, and securing investment to achieve the housing decency standard. However, the weakness relating to communication with some residents and service users, particularly with minority and hard to reach groups, remains.
- 28 The council has been able to respond to both local and national priorities. It has been successful in delivering an initial Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) and is currently negotiating the content of a second agreement.
- 29 The Medium Term Financial Plan, which covers a rolling three year period, provides a framework for directing resources to priority areas as part of the annual budget process. The council has been successful in directing new resources to priority areas and redirecting resources within some services. It has also been successful in securing external funding for priority issues. However, a lack of clarity about what are not priorities means that the movement of resources away from lower priority services remains limited. This slows the pace of change.

Focus

- 30 The council has been able to sustain a focus on the priority issues it faces. The new Vision for Leeds provides a continuing focus on narrowing the gap between the most affluent and most deprived areas of the city and this is reflected in the way the council plans and delivers its services. The council has managed to sustain this focus on priorities throughout the organisational restructure. The change of political administration has also been managed without losing a focus on priorities and without undermining the effective partnership working established to deliver them. Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area.
- 31 Some effective mechanisms have been put in place to support a focus on priorities. These include the creation of executive panels to focus on key themes within the Vision for Leeds and better alignment between officer and member portfolios. This

is reinforced by regular meetings between leading members and the Corporate Management Team. The bringing together of related services through the organisational restructure has resulted in a better user focus in priority areas. Corporate Priority Boards, chaired by the appropriate director, have also recently been created to strengthen the corporate focus on priority issues.

- 32 Other mechanisms are less effective in maintaining a focus on priorities. For example, the agendas for scrutiny meetings do not reflect a consistent focus on priority issues. Some progress has been made in addressing the alignment of mainstream resources with priorities through the Medium Term Financial Plan, although full alignment has not been achieved.

How has the council set about delivering its priorities?

Capacity

- 33 Substantial progress has been made by the council in addressing organisational issues. A restructure has been completed bringing related services together to provide better focus and increase capacity in key areas. The council's management development programme is having an impact on the culture of the organisation. The council retains its strengths in partnership working and leadership. There is a robust plan to address the overspend in social services. There has been progress on human resource policy and practices, but elements of this still inhibit the pace of improvement and the level of sickness absence remains a problem. The quality of internal communication is variable. There are more strengths than weaknesses in this area.
- 34 The council undertook a major restructure in 2003. This has reduced the number of departments from 15 to 7, has brought new managers into the authority from outside and has increased capacity in key areas and strengthened the arrangements for ensuring consistency in the delivery of the performance management framework, human resource policy and communications. Progress has been made in modernising human resource policy and practice. New redundancy and redeployment policies have been introduced and efficiencies have also been achieved by introducing monthly pay for all staff. The Leeds Leadership Programme has continued to be rolled out and is starting to have an impact on management capacity. The council's current relationship with local trade unions is positive in spite of the council taking action to eliminate weekly pay and to amend the appeals procedure. The most recent staff survey showed that nearly 90% of respondents were positively aware of the council's key values and objectives and their role within the organisation.
- 35 Compared to other councils Leeds is significantly above average in its employment of disabled workers and people from black and minority ethnic communities relative to the composition of the local population. It still has some way to go however before the make up of its workforce reflects fully this profile. Women and minority ethnic employees are less likely to be found in the top 5% of earners, but again Leeds' performance is above average.
- 36 Throughout changes to the organisation and to the political composition of the council, working relationships between officers and members have remained positive and roles and responsibilities remain clearly defined. Some council meetings are not always efficient in terms of managing agendas and conducting business but most have consistent agendas with a strategic focus. A strong member development programme is in place with good attendance for key modules. Members are increasingly satisfied with the support they were getting from officers. In particular leading members receive substantial specific briefing support from officers which related to their new portfolios although the member development programme itself does not formally address their specific needs.
- 37 The council is strongly led by both its senior politicians and senior management team. The senior team has recently been streamlined and strengthened by external appointments. The arrangement whereby the two main parties in the administration share the leadership is unusual but effective. The council has built on its good partnership working as the Leeds Initiative has developed. It has also made good

use of partnerships at an operational level to improve services to local communities.

- 38 The council has maintained the overall adequacy of its financial capacity in spite of recent pressures. The budget for 2005-06, allocates additional resources to key priorities and puts in place a strategy to increase general reserves from their current level of £9 million. This budget also includes a robust but challenging plan to provide a sustainable solution to the overspend on social services incurred in 03-04. This overspend in 2003/04 was accommodated through the use of one-off financial adjustments. The council moved in a timely manner to investigate and manage the deficit within the service during 04-05.
- 39 The council has continued to use the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) to provide capacity to improve the quality of its assets. This has had a significant impact in improving school facilities. The success of the council's Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) has also enabled them to access significant funding which will be used to improve the quality of local housing.
- 40 Despite having an appropriate absence management strategy, actions by the council have resulted in limited improvements to levels of sickness absence which remain in excess of 12 days per year. There is effective workforce planning in some service areas but there is no overall corporate approach to workforce planning. There are some aspects of practice which inhibit the council from maximising the benefits of its change programme. These include some workforce practices and the variable quality of internal communications although the latter has been subject to a concerted improvement effort.

Performance management

- 41 The council's existing performance management framework is embedded at departmental and corporate levels and drives improvement. Weaknesses identified in the 2002 assessment have been addressed. Staff appraisal is effective for most staff but is not applied consistently across the council. Project management is strong. Performance management arrangements are being developed to ensure they monitor delivery of the new priorities in the new Vision for Leeds. There have been weaknesses in the council's financial management in some areas. Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area.
- 42 The corporate planning framework continues to be a strength of the council's approach to performance management by ensuring that there is alignment between corporate and service priorities. Departmental performance is monitored at service and corporate levels. Accountability meetings, chaired by the deputy chief executive, to monitor and manage service performance meet quarterly with involvement of the leader and the relevant portfolio lead on a six-monthly basis. Performance issues identified are systematically tracked to ensure follow up. These arrangements have been in place for several years and are embedded.
- 43 There are examples of good performance management in corporate priority areas, such as the monitoring of performance against LPSA targets. The mechanisms for monitoring and reporting performance relating to cross-cutting outcomes are the corporate priority boards, chaired by executive directors. These have only been introduced over the last year to improve focus on the corporate priorities and they

have had little impact to date. The weakness in target setting noted in 2002 has been addressed.

- 44 Staff appraisals support the performance management arrangements and link individual performance to service and corporate priorities. The appraisal system for senior management is particularly comprehensive. The use of appraisals in practice varies between departments however and has recently reduced during recent major organisational change. Between 60 and 70 per cent of staff reported having had an appraisal in the last year.
- 45 Progress on risk management has been slow but risk management is effectively deployed on key areas. The council strengthened its corporate risk management unit as part of its major restructure. The council has been developing a corporate approach to risk management and this has been used in conjunction with major projects. The recent proposal for a major efficiency savings programme as part of the preparation for the 05-06 budget was subjected to a rigorous risk assessment process. Corporate risk management policy and strategy are still in draft form.
- 46 The council has had to develop alternative arrangements for the delivery of education and housing services because of external pressures and has made the relevant changes effectively. Although the council has benefited from using external procurement in these ways to provide additional financial resources, it does not have a programme to rigorously test alternative options for the delivery of the many of its core services. It is only now reviewing arrangements for the delivery of waste management services in spite of a period of high costs.
- 47 Corporately financial monitoring and management arrangements are sound but there are weaknesses in some departmental areas and in some arrangements for monitoring the performance of external contracts. The significant overspends in social services were identified, investigated and addressed but audit work has identified difficulties with financial monitoring and management in the housing revenue account and in the monitoring of some contracts with schools.

What has the council achieved / not achieved to date?

Achievement of improvement

- 48 The council has improved its performance in most major service areas since the corporate assessment in 2002. Levels of public satisfaction are generally high, and the council has been successful in targeting improvements in the most deprived areas. Overall performance against national indicators remains mixed however., Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area
- 49 59 per cent of BVPIs showed improvement in 2003/04 and there is a trend of continuing improvement over the two years since the first corporate performance assessment. The council's current performance, as measured by national BVPIs, continues to be mixed however. In 2003/04, only 22 per cent were top quartile, whilst 50 per cent were above average. 18 per cent fell within the worst quartile.
- 50 Improvement in BVPIs relating to major services is variable. For example, while more than two thirds of education indicators showed improvement, albeit from a low base, the majority remain below the national average. 73 per cent of environmental indicators improved and the majority are now better than the national average. However, the majority of indicators relating to social services and housing failed to improve and the percentage of non-decent housing remains above average.
- 51 Although the levels of crime are generally high, the incidence of most categories of crime has reduced over the last two years. The number of domestic burglaries reduced by almost 11 per cent between 2001/02 and 2003/04 and the theft of motor vehicles reduced by 23 per cent over the same period.
- 52 External assessment of a number of key services also indicated improvement. The results of assessments of environmental services, housing and libraries and leisure all improved in 2004.
- 53 The council continued to achieve incremental improvements in a number of priority areas. For example, indicators relating to educational attainment at GCSE, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 2 improved by an average of two percentage points. Results for young people leaving care also improved.
- 54 The council achieved a much more significant level of improvement in the most deprived areas, in line with the corporate priority for 'narrowing the gap'. For example, across the city the percentage of 15 year olds achieving five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C increased from 40 per cent to 44 per cent between 2001/02 and 2003/04. However, in the more deprived areas of inner East Leeds, there was an increase of 7 per cent over the same period. Between 1999 and 2003, levels of unemployment in East Leeds reduced by around 4 per cent against a city wide reduction of 1.8 per cent. The council has also worked with partners to achieve improvements in key quality of life indicators such as teenage pregnancy and coronary heart disease. Overall public satisfaction with the council is top quartile although satisfaction with some specific services, such as housing and planning, are lower.
- 55 Other measures of improvement include the achievement of LPSA targets, some of which focused on improvements in the most deprived areas. The council has

achieved beacon status in five areas of service and has delivered successful projects and initiatives in targeted areas. One example is the East Leeds Family Learning Centre which provides an integrated service in providing childcare facilities and training and support to help people into employment. This has had a positive impact in terms of reducing unemployment in this part of the city.

Investment

- 56 The council has invested in a number of initiatives designed to enhance capacity, although some issues remain to be effectively embedded. Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area.
- 57 There has been significant investment in organisational development over the last two years. A complete management restructure has reduced the number of departments from fifteen to seven. This has resulted in related services working much better together and strengthened the council's focus on the needs of the public. The introduction of district partnerships and area management committees has also improved the focus on local priorities and provides a mechanism for bringing together local stakeholders.
- 58 There has been significant investment in the development of the workforce through the Leeds leadership programme. Key human resource policies and practices have been modernised, but more needs to be done to achieve the full benefits of cultural change. Despite a range of actions over the last two years, internal communication remains an area that needs further investment if it is to support the delivery of the council's priorities. The council has invested in programmes to reduce sickness absence but further work is needed to reduce the level of absence down to even average levels.
- 59 The council has continued to build on its strong approach to partnership working to improve co-ordination with key partners such as the police to deliver more sustainable solutions to local communities, although more work is required to make operational partnerships with health bodies effective. The customer first initiative and improvements to IT infrastructure are making services more accessible and developments are taking place to improve engagement with minority and hard to reach communities.
- 60 Innovative procurement has been used to secure funding for improving the quality of services. The ALMOs now have access to substantial funding to improve the quality of the city's housing stock and the council has used PFI to finance improvements to schools and community centres. However, the council has been less innovative in procuring services where funding is not an issue. Expertise in procurement continues to develop; the council is the lead authority for the regional Centre of Procurement Excellence. The council has developed a robust approach to asset management with clear links to the council's strategic priorities.
- 61 Actions have been taken to address weaknesses in capacity and performance management. These have started to have an impact. These include the introduction of accountability meetings and corporate priority boards as a mechanism for strengthening performance management. There has also been investment in risk management, with a corporate team established to develop the council's corporate approach. Although risk assessments are carried out in

connection with major projects, this is yet to be embedded across all council services.

In the light of what the council has learned to date, what does it plan to do next?

Learning

- 62 The council understands the importance of developing a culture where learning is used to improve the quality of what it does. It has embedded a number of practices and has continued to learn from major projects and partnerships. However learning across departments needs to be more systematic. Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area.
- 63 Since 2002 the council has taken action aimed at embedding a learning culture across the organisation. The Leeds Leadership programme is a key element of this approach and a learning strategy is also being developed. The council has learned from its experiences in a number of areas. For example, improved partnership working with the police has had an impact on reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. The council has learned from its early experiences of PFI to make the process more efficient. And the council has used pilot schemes such as the streetscene pilot in Headingley to develop city wide service improvements. There are also examples of learning from other authorities across a range of services,
- 64 The council also uses external challenge as a mechanism for learning. It has been successful in achieving external accreditation in a number of areas and, through success in the beacon council scheme, has been able to facilitate learning for other councils. Another example of this is the council's participation as a site for learning through the Public Service Leaders Programme. This is a management development programme supported by the Cabinet Office whereby managers from a range of public sector organisations carry out action learning by reviewing a number of the council's services.
- 65 Progress has been made in addressing weaknesses identified in the 2002 corporate assessment, although a weakness in terms of systematic learning across departments remains. A review of previous years' successes and failures is not a strong feature of the service planning process and learning activities across departments are not specifically planned in a consistent way.

Future plans

- 66 The council is currently updating existing plans and developing others in response to the recently published Vision for Leeds 2004 – 2020. The new corporate plan is currently being finalised to recognise the raised ambitions for going up a league in terms of economic development, coupled with the sustained focus on narrowing the gap between the most affluent and most deprived areas of the city. The new corporate plan is not yet complete as it lacks robust targets in some areas as these will be set once the relevant year end data are available. However strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area.
- 67 In response to the aim for “going up a league” in terms of the profile of the city, the council has taken the lead in setting up a company, ‘Marketing Leeds’, with funding provided by a range of partners across the city. The council also recently hosted the Leeds City-Region Economic Summit attended by a wide range of

partners to debate the future economic development of the region. The event was supported by speakers from regional and national government.

- 68 Progress has also been made in developing major projects that will have a significant impact on both the economic and social regeneration of the city. These include the recently re-launched Supertram project and the East and South East Leeds (EASEL) regeneration project. Plans to improve the delivery of front line services to the public include well advanced plans to improve street lighting through PFI funding, better integration of children's services and a project to introduce a city-wide customer contact centre to improve access to services. Stretch targets for a second LPSA are currently being negotiated and robust plans are in place to devolve some major service elements to local area committees in 2005.
- 69 The council has developed corporate plans for improving human resource management, internal and external communications and equalities and diversity. Although some of these plans are in place centrally, they are yet to be fully mainstreamed into departmental planning processes. This holds back the pace of progress in the council as a whole on these areas. The council is facing a more challenging financial future and has initiated an authority-wide efficiency review. This has identified potential efficiency savings of £56 million between 2005/06 and 2007/08. Areas of saving are now mainly supported by action plans and the council has already taken some of the difficult policy decisions, for example in relation to changing key eligibility criteria for social services. User impact assessments and risk assessments relating to £20 million of efficiency options have now been completed.

Summary of theme scores and strengths / weaknesses

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Ambition	3	<p>Vision For Leeds raises ambitions for the city</p> <p>Strong partnerships with key stakeholders</p> <p>Council provides good community leadership</p>	<p>Consultation less effective with some community groups and consultation strategy requires development</p>
Prioritisation	3	<p>Corporate plans set out clear priorities linked to ambitions</p> <p>The council is able to balance local and national priorities</p> <p>Resources are targeted to areas of relative disadvantage and deprivation</p> <p>Additional resources are targeted at priority areas</p>	<p>Redirection of resources is limited by a lack of clarity about what are not priorities</p> <p>Internal and external communication are not fully effective</p>
Focus	3	<p>Sustained focus on priorities over time</p> <p>Changes to organisational and partnership arrangements support focus on priorities</p>	<p>Scrutiny agendas lack consistent focus on priorities.</p>
Capacity	3	<p>Clear, effective relationships between members and officers</p> <p>Restructuring has improved managerial and service delivery capacity</p> <p>Leeds Leadership Programme has enhanced management capacity</p> <p>Procurement used to increase capacity to improve assets</p> <p>Examples of good partnership working</p>	<p>Some human resources practices inhibit pace of cultural change.</p> <p>Inconsistent internal communication</p> <p>No effective workforce planning at corporate level</p>
Performance management	3	<p>Sound corporate and service planning framework</p> <p>Strong tracking arrangements through accountability boards</p> <p>Good monitoring of performance in some corporate priority areas</p>	<p>Risk management strategy still in draft form</p> <p>Some weakness in financial and contract management</p> <p>No programme to test alternative means of provision for core services</p>

		Addressed weaknesses in target setting	
Achievement	3	<p>Significant achievement in 'narrowing the gap'</p> <p>Achievement of LPSA targets</p> <p>Improved outcomes from external inspection and assessment</p>	<p>Mixed performance against BVPIs</p> <p>Limited overall improvement in major services</p>
Investment	3	<p>Continuing investment in management development</p> <p>Further development of key building blocks</p> <p>Investment to secure substantial amounts of funding to support improvement</p>	<p>Some corporate developments not embedded across all services</p>
Learning	3	<p>Learning culture developing</p> <p>Examples of learning from experience and from others</p> <p>Facilitation of sharing of learning with others</p>	<p>Systematic approach to learning across departments not fully effective</p>
Future Plans	3	<p>Plans in place to support economic and social regeneration</p> <p>Plans in place to improve service delivery and accessibility</p> <p>Developing plans to meet savings requirements.</p>	<p>Some corporate issues not mainstreamed into departmental service planning</p>

Framework for comprehensive performance assessment

- 70 This comprehensive performance assessment was carried out under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003. This section imposes a duty on the Audit Commission to, from time to time, produce a report of its findings in relation to the performance of local authorities in the exercise of their functions. This report must categorise local authorities as to their performance.
- 71 The main elements of the assessment were:
- ◆ the council's improvement plan;
 - ◆ the Audit Commission's qualitative assessment of continuous improvement;
 - ◆ updated performance indicators;
 - ◆ inspection findings; and
 - ◆ the 2002 corporate assessment and supporting documentary evidence.
- 72 The assessment for Leeds City Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 7th to 10th February.
- 73 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.

Corporate assessment team leader: Geoff Norris

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