

Service Inspection Report

January 2006



Cultural Services

Sedgemoor District Council

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For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 020 7828 1212 Fax: 020 7976 6187 Textphone (minicom): 020 7630 0421

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

Contents

Service Inspection	5
Summary	6
Scoring the service	8
Recommendations	10
Report	12
Context	12
The locality	12
The Council	12
The service inspection	14
How good is the service?	15
Do the Council's ambitions for cultural services match those for the area?	15
How effectively do cultural services contribute to local area priorities?	16
Community life	17
Economic success	18
Environment	19
Lifelong learning	19
Crime reduction	20
Community health and wellbeing	21
Do cultural services provide a quality user experiences?	22
Customer focus	22
User satisfaction	23
Accessibility	24
Summary	25
What are the prospects for improvement to the service?	26
Does the Council have the capacity and systems to deliver its cultural ambitions? Will they drive improvements in cultural services for all sections of the community?	26
Service leadership	26
Financial management	28
Performance management	29
Addressing equality and diversity	30
Successful partnerships	31

4 Cultural Services | Service Inspection

Do the Council's plans focus on achieving its ambitions for cultural services?	32
Summary	33
Appendix 1 – Documents reviewed	34
Appendix 2 – Reality checks undertaken	35
Appendix 3 – List of people interviewed	36
Appendix 4 – Shared priorities	38

Service Inspection

This inspection has been carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 and is in line with the Audit Commission's strategic regulation principles. These principles embody the objectives of our strategic plan and strategic regulation. They also reflect the principles from '*The Government's Policy on Inspection of Public Services (July 2003)*'.

Audit Commission service inspections should:

- focus on public service outcomes from a user perspective;
- act as a catalyst to help inspected bodies improve their performance;
- concentrate inspection work where it will have most impact, so that it is proportionate and based on an assessment of risk;
- be based on a rigorous assessment of costs and benefits, with a concern for achieving value for money both by the inspected organisation and within the inspection regime itself;
- be, and be seen to be, independent of the inspected organisation;
- report in public, using impartial evidence to inform the public about the performance of public services so as to enhance accountability;
- involve collaborative working with other inspectorates and external review agencies to achieve greater coordination and a more holistic approach to the assessment of performance by audited and inspected bodies;
- share learning to create a common understanding of performance that encourages rigorous self assessment and better understanding of their performance by inspected organisations;
- be carried out objectively by skilled and experienced people to high standards and using relevant evidence, transparent criteria, and open review processes; and
- enable continuous learning so that inspections can become increasingly effective and efficient.

We assess services using published key lines of enquiry (KLOE) to inform our judgements. The KLOEs can be found on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk.

This report is issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under section 13 of the 1999 Act.

Summary

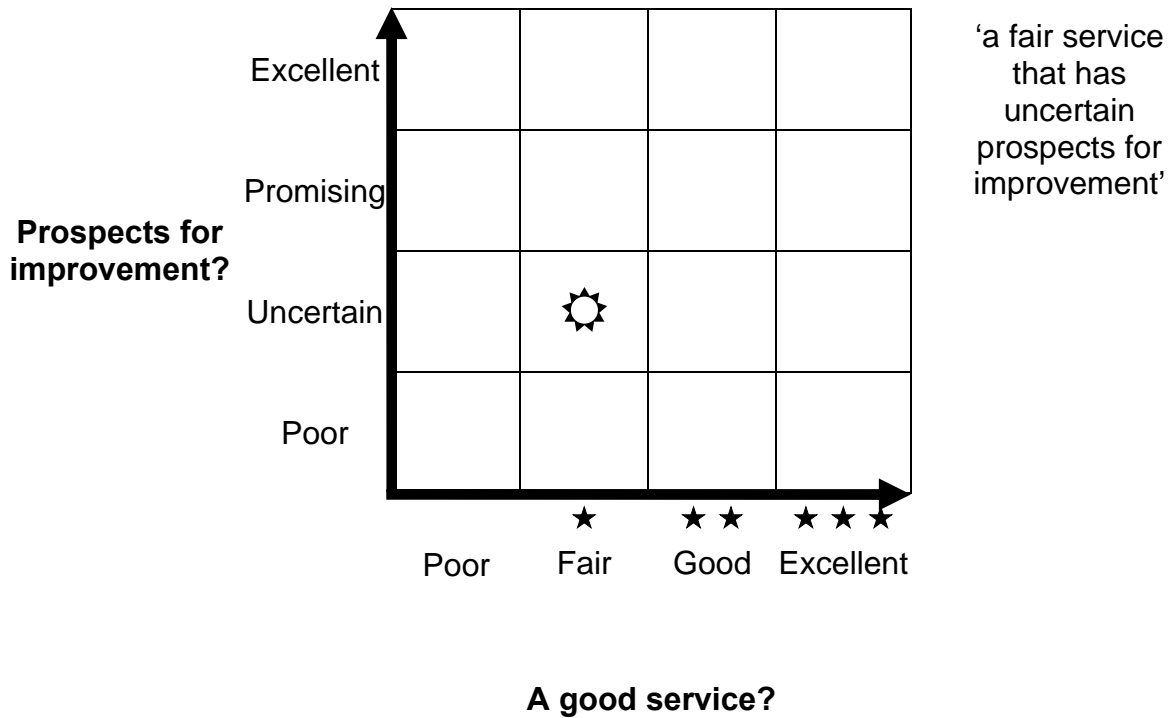
- 1 Sedgemoor District Council provides fair cultural services which have uncertain prospects for improvement.
- 2 The Council does not make it clear how its cultural activity supports community priorities. Its awareness and understanding of the potential role of culture in helping to deliver the community strategy is limited. This has resulted in the Council's cultural ambitions being underdeveloped and stakeholders unclear about what the Council is seeking to achieve. It has yet to take hard decisions on the nature and scale of cultural activity it wishes to support in order to meet community needs and make best use of resources.
- 3 Resident satisfaction with cultural services is below the national median when compared with other Councils. Low levels of investment in tackling problems associated with the age and style of some facilities affect the quality of the customer experience. There are few cultural activities for some specific communities, including people with disabilities. The Council has not been sufficiently aware of the needs and aspirations of all communities to inform cultural planning, although this is improving through community planning exercises. It has made limited progress in tackling barriers which may affect the ability of all communities to access the cultural activity on offer through its charging policies.
- 4 The Council is making progress in tackling corporate weaknesses, such as prioritisation and performance management. This has the potential to support future improvement in cultural activity. But as yet there are no clear outcome focused targets set to measure improvement and partnership working is not evaluated. Internal communication and mechanisms for sharing learning are not effective. There is also a lack of clear direction on the future of cultural activity and stakeholders' involvement in strategic planning is limited. Cultural services' approach to promoting diversity is not fully effective.
- 5 However, the Council's cultural activity is making a valuable contribution to community priorities, most notably on improving health and economic success. The Council can demonstrate some outcomes aimed at improving the quality of life for local people but the extent of the contribution is unclear. Healthy living projects are achieving some good quality outcomes for participants. Sustainable tourism and protection of the environment are encouraged through targeted improvements. In its enabling role the Council is providing good support for other cultural providers, especially in the creative industries and tourism industry.

- 6 The value of culture in contributing to the area's need for regeneration is clearly understood corporately. This is demonstrated by the work underway on neighbourhood regeneration and town centre development in Bridgwater. Since the inspection, the Council has continued to develop its commitment to delivering cultural improvements. It is now progressing proposals with health sector partners to offer combined leisure and healthy living facilities in Bridgwater. The Council has plans in place to tackle some weaknesses, for example, by improving remote access to services using ICT and using the findings of community planning exercises to inform cultural improvement. Cultural services demonstrate significant strengths in partnership working at the operational level and have had success in attracting external funding. Staff are committed and enthusiastic and partners value their positive working relationship with the Council.

Scoring the service

- 7 We have assessed the Council as providing a 'fair', one-star service that has uncertain prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Table 1 Scoring chart¹



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¹ The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a service that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent service (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

8 The service is fair because:

- residents' satisfaction with cultural services is below the national median;
- the customer experience is variable as some facilities are old, lacking investment and not meeting modern needs and local aspirations;
- not all sections of the community are well provided for and the Council's knowledge of non-user needs is limited;
- the Council's approach to removing barriers to access for all sections of the community is inconsistent;
- few opportunities targeted to improving skills and knowledge and an underdeveloped use of cultural activity in contributing to crime reduction; and
- the Council's ambitions for cultural services are not well-developed and the extent of the service's contribution to local area priorities is unknown.

9 Strengths include:

- some good initiatives are improving the quality of life for local people, such as:
 - some effective healthy living initiatives;
 - opportunities improving levels of participation and engagement; and
 - supporting local cultural organisations;
- partnership working leads to improved outcomes for local people; and
- effective contribution to the cultural environment in the district.

10 The service has uncertain prospects for improvement because:

- there is an underdeveloped understanding and demonstration of culture's potential contribution to achieving area priorities;
- some cultural facilities suffer from historical under-investment and slow progress in tackling poor service quality;
- management capacity and performance management are not fully effective;
- there are few opportunities to share learning;
- stakeholders are not fully engaged in cultural visioning and planning; and
- the promotion of equalities and diversity is not yet mainstreamed in service planning and delivery.

11 Strengths include:

- committed and enthusiastic staff;
- effective use of external funding to contribute to the development of a high-quality cultural environment in the district;
- strong partnership working at the county and neighbourhood level; and
- recognition of weaknesses in some systems and process, such as performance management and ICT, and plans in place to tackle them.

Recommendations

- 12 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the council. In addition we identify the approximate costs¹ and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context the inspection team recommends that the council should do the following.

Recommendations
<i>R1 Develop a clear vision for its cultural activity in partnership with others to improve understanding of the potential contribution of culture to achieving wider agendas.</i>
<p><i>R2 Improve culture’s contribution to local priorities and focus on community needs by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>using all available data to inform strategic cultural planning and decision-making;</i> • <i>undertaking joint strategic planning with key partners; and</i> • <i>setting outcome focused and measurable targets for service delivery.</i>
<p><i>R3 Improve staff engagement to make best use of resources to drive improvement by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>improving opportunities for sharing learning and creating a culture of celebrating success and achievement; and</i> • <i>implementing more effective communication mechanisms.</i>
<i>R4 Enhance the visitor experience by defining standards and undertaking action to meet them to achieve a consistent level of quality across all cultural facilities.</i>

¹ Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 per cent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

- 13 We would like to thank Sedgemoor District Council, who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously

Karen Esson

Mark Hough

Andrew Kewell

Inspectors

Dates of inspection: 25 to 29 July 2005

Email: k-esson@audit-commission.gov.uk

m-hough@audit-commission.gov.uk

a-kewell@audit-commission.gov.uk

Regional contact details

Audit Commission

Southern Region

Westward House

Lime Kiln Close

Stoke Gifford

Bristol

BS34 8SR

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

Telephone: 0117 988 7700

Report

Context

- 14 This report has been prepared by the Audit Commission ('the Commission') following an inspection under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, and issued in accordance with its duty under section 13 of the 1999 Act.

The locality

- 15 The district of Sedgemoor is in the south west of England in the county of Somerset. It is predominantly a rural area with many small parishes and villages. The two main towns are Bridgwater, with a population of approximately 35,800, and Burnham-on-Sea/Highbridge with a population of 18,700. The total resident population is 108,100 in total and rising, and this increases to over 600,000 during the summer with staying visitors. Less than 3 per cent of the population are from black and minority ethnic communities. A significant number of residents are elderly, with 22 per cent being of pensionable age. This is higher than the national average of 18.4 per cent.
- 16 Unemployment in the district is low at 1.5 per cent and below the national average of 2.4 per cent. There are pockets of high deprivation, particularly around Bridgwater. Hamp, Victoria and Highbridge wards are in the top 20 per cent of the most deprived wards nationally. Wages and house prices are below the regional and national average but, significantly, house prices are eight times the average income. Health concerns are higher in Sedgemoor than the average across the county with high levels of obesity, low levels of physical activity and high blood pressure.
- 17 The district has many significant natural resources, including seven miles of beach and the low-lying wetlands of Somerset Levels and Moors. Thirteen per cent of the district is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including the Quantock Hills in the south.

The Council

- 18 There are 50 councillors. The Conservative Party has overall control with 35 councillors. There are 14 Labour councillors and 1 Liberal Democrat councillor. An executive of the Leader with nine portfolio holders governs the business of the Council. There are three overview and scrutiny committees.
- 19 The Council employs 817 full-time and part-time equivalent staff across all services. The corporate management team includes the Chief Executive and four corporate directors.
- 20 The Council's overall revenue budget for 2005/06 is £12.53 million with a capital programme of £6.2 million. The net budget for cultural services for 2005/06 is £3.6 million, approximately 25 per cent of the total budget.

- 21 The Audit Commission carried out a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of the Council in 2004. This assessment judged the Council's overall performance as fair. Since then the Council has focused significant attention on improving its approach to prioritisation and performance management and building strategic capacity.
- 22 The Sedgemoor in Somerset partnership developed the area's first community strategy in 2003 called '*Sedgemoor – our district, our voice, our future*'. This community strategy sets out a long-term vision for 'everyone working together to make Sedgemoor a safer, cleaner, healthier, more pleasant and vibrant district in which to live, work, learn, invest or visit'. The long-term aims of the strategy are transport and access; community life; economic success; environment; lifelong learning; crime reduction; and community health and wellbeing.
- 23 The Council aims to work with the Sedgemoor in Somerset Partnership to meet these local area priorities and improve the local quality of life. Until recently the Council's priorities mirrored those of the community strategy exactly. However, as part of the Council's transformation programme, it has developed new objectives until 2008 and these are identified in the Council's corporate plan, the Sedgemoor Plan 2004/08. The new objectives are:
- housing – provide decent and affordable homes for all;
 - efficiency – lowering costs by delivering the right service in the right way;
 - regeneration – to seek out and take opportunities to regenerate Sedgemoor through inward investment and partnership; and
 - corporate health – to manage the finances and its staff effectively to enable a high performing council.
- 24 Some of the Council's cultural activity feature in its objective for efficiency. This objective is supported by a priority to 'ensure value for money in leisure ...through a process of 'make or buy' decisions'.

The service inspection

- 25 Sedgemoor District Council is engaged in delivering and enabling cultural activity in a variety of ways. Some of the activities directly provided are:
- Burnham swimming pool, Burnham-on-Sea;
 - Sedgemoor Splash leisure pool and fitness centre, Bridgwater;
 - Chilton Trinity dual-use sports centre, Bridgwater;
 - King Alfred dual-use sports centre, Highbridge;
 - museums service, including the Blake Museum, Bridgwater;
 - three directly managed public halls – the Town Hall and Trinity Hall in Bridgwater and the Princess in Burnham-on-Sea;
 - sports, tourism and arts development;
 - children’s play areas; and
 - parks and open spaces.
- 26 The Council also plays a facilitating and influencing role through partnerships with other organisations and by using grant aid. Significant partnerships include:
- grant-aiding venues and organisations in the district, such as the Axbridge Museum, the Bridgwater Arts Centre, the Somerset Levels and Moor Partnership, Take Art! and Somerset Film and Video Ltd; and
 - working with organisations, such as the Somerset Coastal Primary Care Trust on healthy living initiatives, the Somerset Arts Officers Group on new arts programmes, and the Somerset Tourism Partnership.
- 27 This whole service inspection of the Council’s cultural services considered the effectiveness of the above service activity and approaches in meeting local aspirations and needs as expressed through the community strategy.

How good is the service?

Do the Council's ambitions for cultural services match those for the area?

- 28 The Council has an underdeveloped awareness and understanding of the overall contribution its cultural activity can make to local and regional priorities and to wider agendas. Corporate managers and senior councillors demonstrate some awareness, particularly linked to regeneration, but generally this tends to be on a service by service basis or at an operational level. There is little connection made between corporate strategies and the potential supporting role culture can play on a daily basis in helping to deliver against local area priorities.
- 29 The Council's own overall ambitions for culture are not explicit. There are no clear corporate ambitions which explain what it is seeking to achieve through its cultural activity and its place in the wide range of Council activity. This hinders the development of the Council's awareness of the contribution culture can make to local priorities. The Council understands local challenges and the context for its cultural activity well. This has been established through widespread consultation. However, it has yet to use this understanding to develop clear cultural ambitions. As yet, it is not recognising the potential synergies which could be realised from an overall strategic approach to cultural planning.
- 30 In addition, there are a lack of explicit connections between the Council's overall ambitions and service level aims and objectives. High-level corporate ambitions, such as lifelong learning, crime reduction and community life, have not always been followed through into developing clear and linked aims for individual services. The Council adopted the regional cultural strategy '*In search of Chunky Dunsters*' in 2002, however, it is not always clear how the strategy is informing the Council's priorities for improvement and development. In 2003, the Council adopted its own service strategies for sport and recreation, the arts and tourism. Some of these strategies' aims are clear and challenging, as they are responding to regional and national priorities and local aspirations. But others are not and explicit linkages between the strategies are vague.
- 31 Stakeholders have different levels of understanding about what the Council is trying to achieve through its cultural activity. They consider it is reasonably clear about what it is trying to achieve from some of its individual partnerships or from individual service areas. However, they consider the Council less clear about what it is seeking to achieve overall for culture. This is as a result of the lack of corporate cultural ambitions and the underdeveloped nature of the Council's role as a cultural leader for the area.

- 32 Local ambitions for culture, as defined by the community strategy, are developing. Cultural activity is not explicitly identified as important in the community strategy. But it is identified as a tool in helping to achieve on shorter-term priorities, such as diversionary activities for young people or attracting funding and investment into the district. The Council recognises further work is required to develop the community strategy and there are plans in place to address this. This presents an opportunity for the Council to work with stakeholders to clarify how culture can support the achievement of community needs and aspirations.
- 33 The Council has defined what it considers are and are not priorities within specific service areas. For example, it is a priority for the Council to resolve the future delivery of its leisure facilities, and support for the arts is a lesser priority. However, without explicit overall cultural ambitions translated into service specific priorities, the Council cannot be confident that it will achieve all it could for culture and maximise the use of resources.
- 34 The contribution of culture to some local ambitions is developing well. There are links in strategic plans between local priorities, such as community health and wellbeing and economic success, and some of the Council's cultural activity. These plans recognise that the development of leisure activities and sports facilities can play a role in improving the health and wellbeing of local residents.

How effectively do cultural services contribute to local area priorities?

- 35 The Council's cultural activity is supporting local priorities as set out in the community strategy. The Council can demonstrate improved outcomes for residents from the range of activity and initiatives it supports. However, it does not systematically evaluate the level of this contribution to local area priorities. Reasons for this include weak evaluation, poor target setting, and lack of clear success and outcome measures. As a result, the Council does not know the effectiveness of its cultural activity. It does not routinely evaluate the impact of its funding awards or capacity building initiatives. It also does not know if achievements meet or exceed expectations and if it is routinely securing value for money.
- 36 The following sections outline the contribution that cultural services make to some local area priorities.

Community life

- 37** Cultural activity makes a valuable contribution to stimulating community life. The Council plays an active role in providing opportunities for local people to participate in cultural activities and so enhance locally the quality of life. This is achieved mainly through the Council acting as an enabler. It works well with partners to build community capacity by offering grant aid. Examples of successful activity are described below.
- The Engine Room media centre in Bridgwater is the home of Somerset Film and Video Ltd, the moving image development agency for the county. The centre was set up with a capital grant from the Council which attracted significant additional investment from other agencies. The Council continues to offer some revenue funding. In 2004/05, over 12,000 people participated in creative industries training and development activities. Many of those who have benefited from taking part include people who are unemployed or young people at risk of offending. This activity stimulates and supports economic growth for independent filmmaking.
 - Bridgwater Arts Centre is one of the county's key strategic funded organisations. Programming at the theatre and gallery offers access to a wide range of high-quality creative experiences. The Council is the centre's largest funder, assisting with bringing film, folk music, theatre and dance to the town.
 - Somerfest is an annual community arts festival. This offers many free opportunities for participation, including hands-on activity. It is a partnership event supported and promoted by the Council and last year over 3,600 people took part. For example, rock gigs allow young musicians with little stage experience opportunities to showcase their music.
- 38** The Council is successful at community capacity building through a wide range of volunteering opportunities supported by cultural activity. There are numerous environmental, leisure and creative opportunities available to local people. These allow them to become involved in enhancing their communities' life. For example, there are active friends groups for parks and the Blake Museum, and opportunities for volunteers in conservation projects and leading walks. This is a valuable way of delivering sustainable cultural improvement, and also maximising the Council's own capacity.

- 39 In more rural areas, the Council has improved access to cultural activity. This is through its support for village halls and through outreach activity carried out by grant aided organisations, such as Actiontrack Performance Company and the Bridgwater Arts Centre. It is an aspiration of the community strategy to have a village or community hall in all parishes by 2015. As a result of the Council's contribution to the voluntary village hall and community centre capital grant programme in partnership with the other councils in Somerset, there are several new or improved facilities in the district. These villages now participate in, for example, Take Art!, a rural arts development programme, giving access to national and international performers in a local setting. In addition the Actiontrack Performance Company, funded by the county and district councils, have delivered several performance projects in schools and community venues in Sedgemoor. This provides opportunities for local people, especially young people to develop performance and communication skills.

Economic success

- 40 Successful tourism is recognised as a key driver in improving the economic success of the district. Active promotions programmes provide good support for the local tourism businesses which is appreciated by key stakeholders. Promotional material is high-quality, with an easily identifiable image. There are initiatives and approaches, which although not systematically evaluated, appear to have been successful in encouraging new and repeat visitors. Examples are described below.
- The Bridgwater Guy Fawkes Carnival, now in its 400th year, attracts in excess of 130,000 visitors to the town. It is a significant aspect of the cultural life of the town, supported by dedicated volunteers. Similar events in North Petherton, Highbridge and Burnham-on-Sea are also popular. Partners welcome the Council's support in promoting the event and this assists with widening the event's appeal.
 - The Council led on the Somerset Tourism Partnership initiative to produce an angling leaflet for Somerset. Angling is a significant activity for the district and the leaflet provides clear information on accommodation, fishing waters and tackle shops across the county. In addition, leaflets of cycle rides are available with details of places to stay and eat, and local attractions.
 - The Council has enabled local tourism businesses to visit shows, such as the Ideal Home exhibition, to promote the district as a visitor destination. This appears to have been successful as several businesses report success in attracting new visitors through this approach.
 - Stert Island Swim is a joint event between Burnham-on-Sea Town Council and the district council. Visitor numbers increase year on year to this sporting event offering opportunities to a specialist market to participate in a half marathon, triathlon and swimming event. It is successfully marketed as a seaside fun day.

Environment

- 41 Cultural activity is making a valuable contribution to protecting the environment by encouraging responsible access and sustainable tourism, and promoting heritage assets. The Council recognises the importance of maintaining the environment for future generations balanced with improving access and interpretation for current users. This is another area where the Council takes a partnership approach to improvement, offering funding, advice and expertise. Examples include the following.
- The Council led the Brean Down Fort restoration partnership project, aimed at improving access and interpretation facilities as well as conserving a local heritage asset. It is now owned by the National Trust who estimates that the fort now receives over 200,000 visits and has a group of 30 volunteers carrying out guiding and practical projects.
 - The Coleridge Way is a new footpath developed by a multi agency approach including the Council. It promotes a medium distance walking route to increase awareness of the local cultural heritage, such as the area's connection with the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It also seeks to encourage responsible recreation and sustainable tourism in a natural environment.
 - The Quantock Fringes walking festival is an annual event of several walks based in and around the Quantock Hills. The hilltop areas are heavily used so this initiative seeks to encourage greater use of the lower slopes and to bring economic benefits to the villages. Since the festival started in 2000, visitor numbers have risen steadily. In 2004, 22 per cent of walkers were new to this kind of walking and so may have benefited from being introduced to walking as a health activity.
 - A key action of the community strategy is to improve the quality of parks and open spaces in the district. By working with partners, the Council has enabled improved access to and maintenance of a range of areas including the Apex Wildlife and Leisure Park, Highbridge, Manor Gardens, Burnham-on-Sea and the Springfield Wildlife site near Axbridge.
- 42 The Council has been less successful in maintaining town centre historic assets. There remains more to do to improve the cultural heritage assets, such as the Cornhill in Bridgwater. Opportunities exist through the Civic Pride initiative in Burnham-on-Sea and Highbridge, linked with the Market and Coastal Towns Initiative, and the town centre regeneration of Bridgwater. However, at present the Council is not fully using local heritage landmarks to foster a sense of place.

Lifelong learning

- 43 The Council makes an informal contribution to supporting lifelong learning through its cultural activity. There are opportunities for self growth provided through the range of activity on offer, for example through learn to swim programmes, and for training and business development within creative industries supported by the Council. However, the Council is not actively using its support for culture as a way of encouraging and stimulating lifelong learning through opportunities to improve skills and knowledge.

- 44 Some opportunities exist to learn about the history of the district. The collections of Blake Museum in Bridgwater present an insight to the past life of district and the programmes of talks are popular. The medieval merchant's house in Axbridge, part funded by the Council, opens up the market town's history. However, the use of new technologies and interpretation of the collections is limited and traditional. The Council is missing opportunities to widen remote access to the collections, for example, to rural communities and to people with disabilities.
- 45 Initiatives targeted at encouraging skills and knowledge development for children and young people are mixed. There are limited opportunities to engage with the history of the area. The museum developed a workshop on flags and banners for local schools linked to stimulating interest in the Battle of Sedgemoor and the Monmouth rebellion. Schools participating have increased since the project started in 2003, but this project has not been further developed. Access to the creative industries is much better. The programme of courses and activities at the Engine Room are popular with young people and during school holidays take up is especially high.
- 46 Opportunities to learn through play and physical activity are steadily improving. Since 2003, 20 per cent of play areas have been upgraded, part-funded by developer contributions linked to wider developments. These improvements include refurbishments of existing play areas, provision of new ones, targeted provision for the under fives, and the development of multi-use games areas for older children and young people. Out-of-date and poor condition facilities have been replaced by more modern and adventurous equipment. However, there are still gaps in provision, such as a skate park in Bridgwater. This has been at the planning stage for over two years.

Crime reduction

- 47 Cultural services' role in tackling anti-social behaviour and supporting crime reduction is underdeveloped. A key action of the community strategy is to provide diversionary activities for young people at risk of offending. There have been several projects targeted at supporting the local area priority of crime reduction, but many appear to have not been sustained or mainstreamed, so their effect may be partial. Examples of initiatives are described below.
- The Pied Piper project produced a video raising awareness of drug abuse targeted at young people. This has been used as a tool by several schools and youth clubs and its impact on those viewing it has been monitored.
 - The Trickster project sought to raise older people's awareness of the risks from bogus callers. A drama performance was linked with information and advice sessions. However, its success in terms of, for example, reducing fear of crime in those who attended, was not followed up.
 - The drama hangout project is in its second year and is focused on building the self confidence and esteem of the young people at risk of offending who are participating. Its impact has not yet been assessed.

Community health and wellbeing

- 48** Cultural services are contributing effectively to promoting health and wellbeing through sport and leisure activity. The Council provides a range of opportunities to participate in physical activity. This is through its directly provided leisure facilities, dual school and community use facilities in partnership with the county Council and school, grant aid and healthy living programmes.
- 49** The Council has taken positive action to promote swimming. Lessons are available for all abilities at the Splash in Bridgwater and at Burnham pool and active swimming clubs make good use of both pools. School children can enrol on learn to swim courses and lessons are provided for children at Key Stage 1 and 2 in support of the national swimming charter.
- 50** Partnership working on health improvement initiatives is a strength. The Council actively promotes the benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise on coronary heart disease and obesity, which are significant health problems in the area. The Council works successfully with the Somerset Coast Primary Care Trust (PCT) and jointly funds a dedicated healthy lifestyles post. Initiatives include:
- physical activity referral schemes available at three leisure centres offering tailored exercise programmes and monitoring improvements in participants health conditions; and
 - the Flexercise scheme providing training for carers to deliver effective chair based activity for people living in care, which receives positive feedback from participants on improved mental and social health.
- 51** The Council acts well as a facilitator to support the improved health of local people. It has helped develop cardiac rehabilitation programmes at various venues across the district offering people a choice of location for where they can participate in light activity. This approach enables more to be achieved at local level than the Council could by working alone.
- 52** Opportunities to promote mental and social health through physical activity are developing well. The health walks initiative is well regarded and participation has steadily increased since the project started three years ago. Volunteers are trained to lead walks aimed at people who wish to be more active or improve co-ordination. At present it is limited to the Bridgwater and Cannington areas. A garden buddies project has led to volunteers in Hamp working with older residents to improve their gardens. Pond conservation projects and the 'green gym' conservation project encourage local people to support the biodiversity of their local area through pond clearing. The new Re:creation Centre in Hamp provides access to learning and volunteering opportunities and there are early signs of success in reducing anti-social behaviour. These initiatives, although not widespread across the district, are building community capacity, as well as stimulating communities to work together.

Do cultural services provide a quality user experiences?

- 53 There is an active cultural environment for local people in Sedgemoor and the Council is making a reasonable contribution through its cultural activity. However, the visitor experience is mixed. Staff are helpful and knowledgeable. But there is recognition among stakeholders that the lack of investment in some facilities has had a detrimental impact on the overall quality of the user experience.

Customer focus

- 54 The Council's cultural activity is not consistently informed by local community views, although there are some examples of responding to consultation findings and projects emerging from community planning exercises. It provides some opportunities for local people to participate in service improvement. For example, the friends group at Apex Wildlife and Leisure Park has taken effective action to improve the park and protect wildlife. Volunteers work with the museums service and are engaged in the operation of the Blake Museum. However, without a consistent approach to engaging local communities and service users and non-users, the Council cannot be sure that its cultural activity is meeting local need.
- 55 The needs of people with disabilities are not being fully met and this could affect the quality of users' experience. There are a few successful initiatives, such as:
- swimming sessions for people with disabilities; and
 - the Strawberry Club at the Chilton Trinity sports centre providing opportunities for people with learning disabilities to participate in physical activity.
- 56 In addition, since the inspection, the Council secured external funding to provide adapted fitness equipment at the Splash leisure pool and fitness centre. However, other targeted provision is limited. For example, sensory access is weak with no sensory garden areas in parks and open spaces. As a result, the Council has yet to respond effectively to the community strategy priority of 'helping people at all stages of their lives to enjoy the best possible health and quality of life'.
- 57 The Council has not carried out a needs analysis or consulted with black and minority ethnic communities. These communities are very small in the district, so increasing the risk of exclusion. The Council cannot be sure that it is using its role as a cultural leader to respond effectively to the vision of the community strategy of having everyone working together to improve the quality of life.
- 58 There is no overall co-ordinated pricing policy for cultural services. There are no concessions offered at the swimming pools and leisure centres for people who are unemployed or on low incomes. There are significant pockets of deprivation in the district and the Council is not focused on ways of improving access to cultural opportunity for all sections of the community. The planned consultation with traditionally regarded as hard to reach groups offers the Council an opportunity to tackle this.

- 59 There is a lack of service standards for cultural activity. There is a customer promise for the leisure facilities, but this is vague and cannot easily be measured. There is no overall customer charter for cultural services. This means that local people are not as aware as they could be of what they should expect from the range of cultural activity on offer.
- 60 The Council has a lack of widespread knowledge about people who are not currently participating in cultural activity. Its understanding of the needs and aspirations of some communities have enabled the Council to target some provision. However, overall there is a reliance on out-of-date and partial information to inform cultural improvement. The current community planning exercises present opportunities to secure and act on better information.

User satisfaction

- 61 Overall the Council's performance in terms of public satisfaction with cultural activity is below the national median when compared with other Councils nationally. This is in contrast with high levels of resident satisfaction with Council services as expressed in the findings of the most recent Citizens Panel survey. The latest 2004 survey to inform national performance indicators shows cultural satisfaction in Sedgemoor of:
- 58 per cent satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities, compared with 54 per cent nationally;
 - 40 per cent satisfaction with theatres and concert halls, compared with 48 per cent nationally;
 - 68 per cent with parks and open spaces, compared with 72 per cent nationally; and
 - 39 per cent with museums and galleries, compared with 42 per cent nationally.
- 62 However, satisfaction with parks and open spaces has increased significantly since the previous survey in 2000/01 when it was only 54 per cent.
- 63 User satisfaction with some individual service areas is mixed. Recent local surveys indicate higher levels of satisfaction. For example users of the swimming pools and leisure centres were asked to rate the facilities. All facilities were rated as either excellent or good by between 50 and 61 per cent of users. However, 28 per cent of the users at the Splash rated it as poor, as did 14 per cent of users of the Burnham-on-Sea swimming pool. They were particularly dissatisfied with the standard of cleanliness and decoration. Stakeholders are generally very positive about the staff working in cultural activity and consider them friendly and welcoming.

- 64 Service quality from the user's perspective is recognised by some external accreditations. The Burnham-on-Sea and Cheddar Tourist Information Centres (TICs) are consistently rated in the top five of the regional tourist information centres participating in South West Tourism's mystery shopping campaign. In 2004, the Burnham-on-Sea TIC received the highest score. Burnham-on-Sea beach achieved fifth place nationally in the ENCAMS award for beach management out of 171 beaches. The district's three rural beaches and resort beach have achieved ENCAMS Seaside Awards for beach management. Such recognitions help the Council assess the quality of its cultural activity and visitor experience.

Accessibility

- 65 The provision of good quality visitor facilities is variable. It has made good progress in developing safe, attractive and sustainable beaches and open spaces with areas of high wildlife value. But several major cultural buildings, such as the Blake Museum, the Bridgwater Arts Centre and the Burnham-on-Sea pool, lack modern reception areas, comfortable seating, refreshment facilities and up-to-date equipment. The availability and reliability of high-quality customer facilities are important to visitors and can affect their willingness to extend their visit or return. This issue is important to sustaining a vibrant tourist business and improving the quality of life for local residents.
- 66 Many cultural services buildings are poor quality. There has been a long-term lack of investment in the maintenance of cultural service buildings which impacts on their longer-term sustainability. This particularly applies to the Burnham-on-Sea pool and the arts centre. Newer leisure facilities are providing an improved user experience but, overall, this level of improvement is partial. There is a slow response to repairs and general maintenance, and poorer quality buildings are reflected in some lower levels of satisfaction. However, the poor condition of the buildings has not yet discouraged users. For example, swimming pool use is increasing. The Council recognises these problems and is at an early stage of developing proposals for improved facilities.
- 67 Access to cultural facilities and activity is variable. There are some examples of community based cultural activity in rural areas delivered through the Council's enabling role. The community strategy recognises the importance of an efficient and accessible transport system to the social and economic wellbeing of such a rural area. Local communities rely on cars to access cultural activities as travelling by public transport is difficult. This may have an impact on sections of the community without access to a car, such as people on low incomes and young and elderly people.
- 68 ICT is not being used effectively to provide access to services. Cultural services' use of new technology is in need of considerable improvement especially given the rural nature of many parts of the district. At present participants are unable to book sports facilities online or pay for services electronically. Underdeveloped remote access could be limiting local people's ability to participate as fully as they could or would like to. The Council has major plans in place to tackle these problems.

- 69 Communication with local people about what is on offer is not fully effective. It is not always easy to find information in cultural facilities about other cultural services. Local people report that they are not always aware of the range of cultural activity on offer. The Council produces many high-quality promotional materials especially on open space activities and related to tourism. But overall high-quality marketing and information is not maximising opportunities to develop new audiences and encourage non-users to access activities.
- 70 Physical access to cultural buildings is improving. Most facilities are fitted with aids, such as hearing loops, to assist people with sensory impairment. Approximately 69 per cent of cultural facilities currently meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and this will rise to 84 per cent by October 2005. But some facilities, such as the Blake Museum, offer limited access to the wealth of collections and exhibitions. The Council anticipates that it will take longer for all cultural buildings to be fully compliant as access improvements are linked to wider aspirations for development.

Summary

- 71 The Council is providing fair cultural services. Overall residents' satisfaction with cultural services is lower than average and the quality of some facilities weakens the quality of the customer experience. The Council is not sufficiently aware of the needs and aspirations of non-users. It has made limited progress in opening up access to cultural activity to all sections of the community, for example people on low incomes. Cultural ambitions are underdeveloped and there is a lack of overall cultural priorities.
- 72 Cultural services are making a valuable contribution to some local priorities, but the extent of this contribution is unclear due to weak target setting. The Council's role as an enabler of cultural activity is delivering several noticeable outcomes for local people through partnership initiatives.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

Does the Council have the capacity and systems to deliver its cultural ambitions? Will they drive improvements in cultural services for all sections of the community?

- 73 The Council has not fully developed its role as a strategic cultural leader in the district with stakeholders unclear about what the Council is seeking to achieve from all its cultural activity. There is no clear overall vision in place to maximise the potential synergies and opportunities from all its cultural activity. Not all stakeholders are fully engaged in cultural planning and there are weaknesses in internal communication. This has reduced the ability of the Council to drive improvement and maximise opportunities for achievement. However, partnerships and financial management are good with a track record of achievements secured using external funding. Progress is being made at the corporate level on tackling identified weaknesses, such as performance management. This has the potential to support future improvement in cultural activity.

Service leadership

- 74 The role of the Council as a cultural leader in the district is underdeveloped. The Council places emphasis on its enabling role, encouraging local people to do things for themselves. However, this approach has not been supported by an explicit expression of what the Council is seeking to achieve from its current level of activity. The Council has no recent significant track record of delivering major cultural improvement and has not yet been able to deliver solutions to challenges associated with its cultural activity.
- 75 There is limited appreciation of the contribution cultural activity can make to support the achievement of corporate priorities and the wider agenda. Tourism has been identified as a key area that can support priorities on economic success, for example, but other cultural activities have weaker links to corporate priorities. The current service plans demonstrate this weakness with few linkages between service areas.

- 76 The Council has not been sufficiently proactive in promoting a strategic approach to planning and delivering cultural activity at the county and regional level. The Council has not played an active role in developing the regional agenda for sport. In addition opportunities may be missed, for example, to examine the synergies of cultural cross service working and so deliver more effective and efficient activity across a number of districts. As a result, the Council will not be able to maximise the use of existing resources. This is particularly relevant as the community does not recognise artificial district boundaries when accessing services.
- 77 Internal communication is not fully effective. Drop-in meetings with corporate managers, held mainly in Bridgwater House, are not convenient for staff working in cultural activity across the district, seasonal staff or those who work shift patterns. Some staff are particularly frustrated by the lack of clarity and information on the future direction of cultural activity in the district. Opportunities for councillors and senior managers to engage directly with staff appear to be not as effective as they could be. Improved interaction could ensure a better understanding of the issues on the ground and provide opportunities for clear communication with staff. Current staff concerns over lack of resources to meet basic fit-for-purpose standards are a good example of how improved communication could have clarified Council policy for staff.
- 78 The lack of clear direction in cultural services has also resulted in a failure to fully exploit the potential of staff to deliver improvement and few opportunities to celebrate success. Staff are motivated and customer-focused, and demonstrate enthusiasm for their work. They seek greater personal responsibility but are impeded by a lack of delegation, slow decision making with too many people in the chain and are frustrated by the inability of the Council to resolve even basic maintenance issues quickly.
- 79 Relationships between frontline staff and their line managers are strong. Communication at this level is good and staff have the training and development opportunities they require to support their aspirations. However, staff are not convinced that their views and concerns are communicated or listened to at a senior level.
- 80 The Council is showing early signs of acting as a cultural leader. The Executive is taking a strategic approach to the development of the cultural centre in Bridgwater. It has allocated funding for a feasibility study and is reviewing this development in association with the larger scale renewal and regeneration of Bridgwater. While this is a positive approach, it is inevitably delaying the delivery of improved provision, for example at the Bridgwater Arts Centre. Portfolio holders, with culture as part of their remit, show a good understanding of their individual portfolio and are committed to improving service delivery within their agreed resources.
- 81 The Council's change programme, 'Transforming Sedgemoor', has brought some corporate improvements for example, by centralising the delivery of management functions in Bridgwater House. However, as yet this programme has not delivered recognisable improvements to cultural activity or outcomes for the community.

Financial management

- 82 Budgetary control in the Council's cultural activities is sound with efficiency targets in place. The Council has, however, significant challenges in relation to resourcing future improvement. Approximately 1 per cent of the Council's total spend on cultural activity is on sports development, with 54 per cent on leisure facilities. The overall picture of spend at the leisure centres is one of low recovery rates, high central support costs, a catering service operating at a loss and £2 million of works needed to improve facilities. The overall trend is one of static income, with increasing staff and support costs against a lower budget subsidy.
- 83 The Council has a good track record of securing external funding and using its own funding to lever in other monies. Examples include:
- receiving £250,000 from Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) and £65,000 from English Heritage for the restoration of Brean Down fort;
 - purchasing the Chubb watercolour collection by attracting over £100,000 from the HLF, the Museums Libraries and Archives Council/Victoria and Albert purchase grant fund, and the National Art Collection Fund together with nearly £10,000 raised locally;
 - enabling the creation of the striking Willow Man sculpture by Serena de la Hey sited on the M5 by securing over £30,000 from the Arts Council and other partners;
 - securing £20,000 from SureStart to create a toddler play area in Eastover Park, Bridgwater;
 - awarding Somerset Film and Video Ltd £32,000 to create the Engine Room media centre which levered in an additional £270,000 from external sources; and
 - supporting a bid to Active England on behalf of the YMCA, which resulted in an award of £353,000.
- 84 The Council's approach to asset management is improving from a low base. It has brought asset management under one facilities manager and is conducting a full corporate review of assets which includes cultural buildings. Partnership arrangements and asset disposals will be actively considered as part of this process. The Council intends to include improving some of its cultural assets in Bridgwater through proposals on town centre regeneration and an options appraisal on the future delivery of its leisure facilities. This appraisal work was commissioned by the Council and undertaken by external consultants. The Council has decided to continue discussions with the county council on transferring the two dual use centres to its management. However, it has yet to take a decision on the future nature of swimming provision. Since the inspection, it has deferred making a decision until it has further information on other partnership options for improved facilities

- 85 In the past the Council has not maximised its asset management processes to help drive cultural improvement. It has a history of under-investment in maintaining its cultural facilities. As a result there has been insufficient funding for refurbishment programmes of frontline facilities. This has resulted in the current poor state of some facilities and failure to meet fit for purpose standards. The Council has recognised this weakness and now requires new projects to be adequately resourced in terms of ongoing maintenance.

Performance management

- 86 Performance management is not effective in cultural services. Service strategies and action plans lack measurable and outcome based targets and also clear linkages between each other and corporate priorities. There are no local performance indicators to measure local priority outcomes around cultural activity and currently limited plans in place to develop them. The Council has only undertaken limited evaluation of the outcomes of its partnerships and its understanding of what creates successful partnerships is partial. These weaknesses limit the ability of councillors and officers to properly and effectively manage the services for which they are responsible.
- 87 There is insufficient focus on measuring and evaluating the value of the Council's cultural activity in terms of contributing to cross-cutting issues. As a result, the Council cannot demonstrate that it is achieving value for money through its cultural activity. The focus of monitoring has been mainly on the financial aspects of provision, especially for sports and leisure activity due to its substantial budget. There is a risk that decisions on future service provision through, for example, the leisure options appraisal, could be based on procurement arrangements and reducing costs without sufficiently considering the benefits of a more holistic approach.
- 88 The effectiveness of the cultural grants programme is not adequately evaluated. There is a formal process for application and for consideration but there is no agreement on expected outcomes. In practice, this means that the Council knows the money has been spent as allocated but does not know what impact it has had on the community or whether it has been an effective use of resources. This is particularly important as the Council gives great priority to its role as an enabler and facilitator of cultural activity in the community.
- 89 Insufficient resources have been allocated to understanding the wider needs of the community and specifically non-users of services. It has a basic knowledge of its cultural activity users from, for example, customer feedback, surveys and the monitoring of its website usage. It has used this information to inform some minor programme changes or improvements to services. Examples include the additional yoga and Pilates programmes and improved provision of public toilets. However, service and improvement planning cannot be adequately informed without an up-to-date needs analysis of the whole community. The Council recognises this and sees the community planning exercises as a way of tackling this.

- 90 Staff performance appraisals are up-to-date and generally the support for individual future development is positive. However, there is not a consistent picture across all cultural service areas. Individual targets are generally focused on service outcomes but do not clearly pick up how they link to corporate priorities. Staff have mixed experiences of the outcomes of this process and not all are convinced that they bring added value to their personal development.
- 91 The Council is giving significant focus to improving its performance management and exhibits a good level of scrutiny of performance information through its actions tracking and performance indicator group (ATPIG). It has recently introduced a new performance management system. This offers considerable potential to track and monitor performance against actions plans, targets and performance indicators and to improve the availability of performance information to all councillors and officers. Training is planned to be completed by the end of 2005, to enable the system to be used effectively. The actions count summary of service targets has been incorporated into the system which has simplified the presentation and made it more accessible and useful to councillors and officers. Historically, the actions count summary was not effectively used to manage performance. The improvements are recent and not yet fully effective or embedded across cultural activity.
- 92 External challenge to performance is strengthening. The Council has introduced a mechanism of additional external scrutiny through a Quarterly Improvement Board. This is due to meet for the first time in August and will include external stakeholders.

Addressing equality and diversity

- 93 Promoting equalities and diversity is not yet embedded in the Council's cultural activity. The Council has achieved Level 2 of the local government standards for equality and fulfilled its statutory obligations relating to its equal opportunities policy and race equality scheme. However, there is no indication how this has modernised the Council's overall approach. There has been no impact assessment for tourism, culture or sports services and there are no specific action plans related to cultural activities. In addition, the Council only made minor comments on equalities and diversity in its own self assessment of its cultural activities for this inspection.
- 94 There is a mixed picture on targeting and improving access to cultural activity for people with additional levels of need or for target community groups. As described earlier in the report, overall activity targeted to people with disabilities and communities traditionally regarded as hard to reach are underdeveloped. Concessions are not offered for people on low incomes, but are provided for children and older people. Few significant efforts have been made to improve service accessibility for these groups, although this is improving as the Council's social and physical regeneration of deprived areas in the district progress, such as the work underway on neighbourhood development at Victoria, in Bridgwater.

- 95 Some progress has been made in improving physical access to cultural facilities. Nine out of thirteen buildings currently comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). The Council is confident that it will achieve 85 per cent compliance by November 2005. However, it has made limited progress in investigating alternative ways of delivering services, such as through outreach programmes.

Successful partnerships

- 96 Partnership working is strong. The Council has a good understanding of the importance of partnerships in delivering its cultural activities and has developed good working relationships with key partners at an operational level. It delivers or enables much of its cultural activity with key partners who include Somerset County Council, Somerset Coastal PCT, local schools, English Heritage and the local tourism industry. Examples of service achievements through these partnerships are described earlier in the report. The Council's contribution is valued by most partners in enabling them to achieve their own objectives as well as contributing to wider agendas.
- 97 Partnership working in tourism is particularly effective. The Council's partnership working in the tourism service area is a good example of how joint working and shared budgets with partners has had a greater impact on outcomes than if working independently. The success of this service area also has a positive impact on the wider agendas and supporting the Council priorities on tackling employment and regeneration issues.
- 98 Stakeholders are not fully engaged in strategic cultural planning. For example, partners have not been fully engaged in the development of high level strategic plans for cultural improvement, such as sports development. As a result, the Council has missed opportunities to seek additional capacity to deliver improved cultural outcomes and so achieve an enhanced strategic direction. Many partners would welcome increased direction from the Council to help shape the partner strategies and bring greater focus to areas of potential improvement. The voluntary sector is currently just one example of where potential increased capacity could be harnessed by the Council to deliver its cultural activities through joint strategic objectives. An opportunity to improve stakeholder involvement in cultural planning in the district exists through county-wide proposals to develop a creative industries development agency. This is at an early stage of development, but the Council is playing an active role. It recently hosted a county-wide Cultural Forum for strategic partners and is actively engaging in these discussions at political and managerial levels.

Do the Council's plans focus on achieving its ambitions for cultural services?

- 99 Culture's contribution to the newly agreed corporate objectives of housing, efficiency and regeneration is unclear. There are no direct links in major corporate strategies, for example, on housing and crime and disorder, to indicate how cultural activity could have an impact on these service areas' target outcomes. Current cultural strategies, agreed in 2003, reflect the Council's previous priorities. The Council recognises that this needs attention as linkages between culture strategies and plans, the community plan and the corporate plan are currently weak and confused. This situation will continue to inhibit service delivery and specifically improvement until resolved. It may also have an impact on the Council's ability to maximise the potential for cultural improvement from the significant external regeneration funding which the district has attracted.
- 100 There are no detailed plans in place with an agreed timetable to deliver cultural improvement. The Council has not been able to confirm its plans or financial strategy due to a number of unresolved policy issues. These include the future delivery of its swimming pool and leisure facilities in Burnham-on-Sea and Bridgwater and regeneration proposals for Bridgwater town centre. As part of the future redevelopment of Bridgwater town centre there are proposals for improved leisure facilities and a possible cultural centre. These proposals, if successful, could tackle the problems of the condition of the Bridgwater Arts Centre building and the improvement of the Splash leisure centre. There are several options being investigated by the Council and its other major partners and some potential opportunities created by the county council's 'Building Schools for the Future' plans. Since the inspection, some progress has been made with a consultant appointed to develop proposals for the Northgate site for public consultation in spring 2006. But as yet all these opportunities are at an early stage of development. The Council is maintaining its focus on these major improvements through its high-level corporate improvement plan.
- 101 Mechanisms to review strategies and plans are partial. The Council has a formal mechanism in place to review cultural service plans through the annual service and planning process. However, it does not undertake fundamental reviews of its strategies to accurately reflect the current demands of the community and changing circumstances. The Council has already recognised the opportunity to improve this through the development of its planning process. This has particular relevance to cultural activity as there is a need to update the service strategies to underpin future delivery.

- 102** Self-awareness and the willingness to learn from experience in culture are improving, but there is some way to go before the Council's approach is fully effective. Opportunities for sharing learning and experiences are limited for many staff. Some aspects of regional and sub-regional planning and working are partial. At an operational level there has been some sharing of notable practice with different events organisers. For example, staff organising the Quantock Fringes festival learnt from events organisers elsewhere in the country. More importantly, the Council has reacted positively to the strategic nature of this inspection, welcoming the benefits of a cross-cutting approach to service inspection.
- 103** There are significant plans to improve electronic access to cultural activity. These plans, with target delivery dates, are formalised in the current IEG statement. Specifically, the Council intends that online booking of sports and leisure facilities will be available by December 2005. In addition, it plans to deliver a consistent standard of service across its website, telephone system and face to face with customers by March 2006. This will be achieved through an integrated ICT infrastructure and support based on, for example, e-enabled back offices and smart card interfaces. The Council's Head of ICT is as a key member of the Council's Transformation programme delivery team and is also seconded to the Government's 'Connect' programme. This exposure brings increased capacity through first hand awareness of leading edge policy and will further support the development of future plans.

Summary

- 104** The Council has considerable challenges ahead to ensure improvement in the future provision of cultural services. These include the Council's leadership role, service planning and the agreement of significant future plans. Since the inspection, the Council has maintained its focus on cultural improvement, however, major developments are still at an early stage of development. Therefore, the prospects for improvement for cultural activity are uncertain.

Appendix 1 – Documents reviewed

- 1 Before going on-site, and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that the Council provided for us. These included:
 - the Council’s self-assessment;
 - community strategy, ‘*Sedgemoor – our district, our voice, our future*’;
 - Sedgemoor Plan;
 - ‘In search of Chunky Dunsters’, the regional cultural strategy;
 - service strategies and plans;
 - resident and user surveys;
 - performance data;
 - race equality scheme;
 - financial information;
 - executive reports; and
 - previous inspection reports and improvement plans.

Appendix 2 – Reality checks undertaken

- 2 We carried out a number of different visits, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. Our reality checks included:
- Apex Park, Burnham-on-Sea;
 - The Splash, Bridgwater;
 - Burnham-on-Sea Pool;
 - Blake Museum;
 - Bridgwater Arts Centre;
 - the Engine Room media centre, Bridgwater; and
 - the Re:Creation centre, Hamp.

Appendix 3 – List of people interviewed

Stephen Ayriss	Performance Development Officer
Jon Blake	Corporate Director
John Carter	Somerset Tourism Partnership
Councillor Mike Cresswell	Portfolio holder, leisure, sport and culture
Paul Davidson	E-government advisor
Elaine Ford	Head of Tourism, Culture and Marketing
Councillor Mrs Anne Fraser	Portfolio holder, economic development and tourism
Councillor Mrs Dawn Hill	Deputy Leader of the Council and portfolio holder, regeneration
Chris Hocking	President, Bridgwater Guy Fawkes Carnival
Colin Johnson	Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership
Ian Long	Government Offices for the South West
Cameron Lugton	Deputy Director of Public Health, Somerset Coastal PCT
Councillor Duncan McGinty	Leader of the Council
Steve Minnitt	Head of Museums, Somerset County Council
Councillor Kathy Pearce	Shadow portfolio holder, regeneration
Pauline Phillips	Audit and Performance Manager
Kerry Rickards	Chief Executive
Nigel Roderick	Leisure and Lifestyles Manager
Nicola Slawski	Head of Regeneration
Councillor Brian Smedley	Shadow portfolio holder, leisure, sport and culture
Robin Starr	Information Officer
Councillor John Swayne	Portfolio holder, performance and customer services
Jo Taylor	Facilities Manager
Alison Turner	Corporate Finance Manager

Focus group	Middle managers
Focus group	Partners
Focus group	Staff
Focus group	Users

Appendix 4 – Shared priorities

- 3 A set of shared public service delivery priorities was agreed by the LGA's General Assembly and the Central Local Partnership in 2002. Central and local government agreed seven areas in which it was most important to deliver tangible improvements over the following three years.
- Raising standards across our schools:
 - matching excellence of the best;
 - transforming secondary schools; and
 - workforce capacity.
 - Improving the quality of life:
 - of children;
 - of young people and families at risk; and
 - of older people.
 - Promoting healthier communities through key local services – such as health, education, housing, crime and accident prevention.
 - Creating safer and stronger communities, by working with the police and other local agencies.
 - Transforming our local environment.
 - Meeting local transport needs.
 - Promoting the economic vitality of localities.

Further information from www.lga.gov.uk