

Corporate Assessment Report

December 2005



Corporate Assessment

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council

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Introduction

1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is the means by which the Audit Commission fulfils its statutory duty under Section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003 to make an assessment, and report on the performance, of local authorities. Corporate assessment is one element in the overall assessment that leads to a CPA score and category.

2 The purpose of the corporate assessment is to assess how well the Council engages with and leads its communities, delivers community priorities in partnership with others, and ensures continuous improvement across the range of Council activities. It seeks to answer three headline questions which are underpinned by five specific themes.

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

- Ambition
- Prioritisation

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

- Capacity
- Performance management

What has been achieved?

- Achievement

Considered against the shared priorities of:

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

3 The corporate assessment was carried out alongside a joint area review of services for children and young people (JAR). This means that the Council's achievements in relation to children and young people have been assessed using the evidence provided from the JAR. In addition, examples of outcomes and activity, which are relevant to the other themes and which are identified through the JAR, are considered within the corporate assessment.

- 4 The JAR covers all services for children and young people that are directly managed or commissioned by the Council, as well as health and youth justice services provided by other bodies. It focuses on the contributions made by services to improving outcomes. The separate JAR report covers the leadership and management of services for children and young people and, in particular, the way that such services work together to improve outcomes. The description and judgement in respect of children and young people in this report is summarised from the JAR report.

Executive summary

- 5 Calderdale Council has clear priorities and an ambitious change agenda. It is restructuring its approach to deliver services to children and young people and has plans to improve communication and engagement with local communities and to continue to improve services for local people. It has a track record of improving services and local people are satisfied with services. The challenge is to ensure that this continues and that it works effectively with partners in order to achieve its ambitions for the community.
- 6 Good leadership along with effective financial and performance management have driven service improvements over recent years. Good relationships between Councillors and senior officers and a strong consensus about priorities have been a strength of the Council. Areas of poor performance have been tackled and led to improvements in areas such as benefits, planning, street cleanliness, crime and anti-social behaviour. These are in addition to improvements in services such as education and social care which were perceived to be failing in the late 1990s.
- 7 Developing the approach to children and young people is a priority and educational achievement continues to be a strong area of performance. The majority of children enjoy their education and have a range of opportunities to make a positive contribution to their communities. There are areas to develop including reducing high levels of teenage pregnancy, reducing inequalities in health and attainment of young people from the Pakistani/Kashmiri community and ensuring that arrangements for children at risk are improved.
- 8 Good progress has been made in tackling crimes such as burglary and vehicle crime. In line with national trends, there are concerns about fear of crime and the increasing number of violent crimes and these are important areas to tackle. Community cohesion and engagement are priorities and improvement strategies have recently been agreed. These are still to be fully embedded in order to address the needs of hard to reach and BME communities in a systematic way.
- 9 The Council is developing its approach to ensuring sustainable communities. There are a number of examples of projects and schemes to support economic regeneration and individuals to access employment. While some progress has been made, there remain challenges to reduce the inequalities between the most deprived and least deprived wards and to address the post 16 education and skills agenda. The draft housing strategy sets out proposals to address areas of low demand housing and affordable housing. Major improvements have been made to the public housing stock by Pennine Housing. Transport congestion is an important issue for Calderdale and plans and initiatives have yet to make an impact.
- 10 Progress in developing a strategic approach to tackling health is developing. A health inequalities strategy has recently been agreed and there are good foundations to build on. There are a range of projects and initiatives to tackle health inequalities and joint working with the PCTs is generally good.

- 11 The Council's overall approach to older people is still to be developed. Social care services are good but the Council's response to the national framework for older people has been slower. The approach to older people is still largely focused on services and pays insufficient attention to the older person as an active citizen who is engaged in the life of the community.
- 12 The Council's community leadership role is developing. Members are actively involved at a local level but the implementation of the overall approach to community engagement is at an early stage. There is no overall approach to communicating and promoting the Council's wider community leadership role although a wide range of communication approaches are used. Surveys indicate that communication with the public is an area for improvement and the Council is investing in better communication. This investment is important as there is poor overall satisfaction with the Council as a whole although there is a higher level of satisfaction with individual services.
- 13 The Council and its partners are developing the future plans for the borough. The Council led the development of the local strategic partnership and the development of the community strategy in 2003. The community strategy sets out the vision for Calderdale. There is a wide range of ambitious targets to underpin the vision although it needs to be updated to reflect some complex cross cutting developments - for example around health inequalities. This work is underway.
- 14 The council performs well in terms of achieving value for money. Overall costs and performance are in line with or better than other authorities. The Council challenges high unit costs and there is a sound understanding of value for money issues. Financial and performance management have yet to be fully aligned and this is important if the Council is to continue to achieve value for money.
- 15 Plans for the future are generally good but there are key gaps which have the potential to hinder the Council's capacity to deliver its ambitions. Strategic human resource plans are weak and progress in addressing them has been slow. There are other areas to develop if the Council and its partners are to have the capacity to progress. These include a strategic approach to procurement, the role of the voluntary and community sector, a strategic approach to long-term leadership and management development and workforce planning.
- 16 The Council has good plans in place to address these areas of weakness through its organisational improvement plan and funding of £500,000 per annum has been allocated to support this development of corporate capacity.

Areas for improvement

- 17 Work on the next community plan and the vision for Calderdale is underway. The Futures Plan was a good start but progress has been slow in a number of more complex areas than was anticipated when the Futures Plan was published. Updating the plan to reflect these developments and improving performance management across all areas of the partnership are important development areas.
- 18 There are a number of challenges facing the Council with regard to the shared priorities. These include continuing to develop the approach to health inequalities, developing a wider strategy for older people in line with the national framework for older people and continuing to develop strategies to address skills and education for the post 16 age group.
- 19 The development of the updated community plan provides an opportunity for members to continue to develop their community leadership role. This has been recognised as an important issue in the organisational improvement plan.
- 20 The Council has focused on developing its communication, community engagement and community cohesion strategies over the last year. It needs to make sure that there is a strong and sustained focus to ensure that they become fully embedded and make an impact.
- 21 The Council needs to make sure that they have the capacity to deliver their ambitions. Strategic procurement, human resource management and workforce planning are vital areas to develop and deliver on.

Summary of assessment scores

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

**Rules for determining the overall corporate assessment score

Scores on 5 themes	Overall corporate assessment score
Two or more themes with a score of 4 None less than score of 3	4
Three or more themes with a score of 3 or more None less than score of 2	3
Three or more themes with a score of 2 or more	2
Any other combination	1

Context

The locality

- 22 Calderdale is in West Yorkshire, between Manchester and Leeds. The borough is one of the smaller metropolitan districts with a population of about 193,400. However it covers a very large, mainly rural area of 363 sq km. About half of local people live in the historic town of Halifax. Other towns include Brighouse and Elland to the east; Hebden Bridge and Sowerby Bridge to the west and Todmorden on the border with Lancashire. Together with Halifax, these towns and a number of surrounding villages were brought together to form Calderdale in 1974.
- 23 Over 80 per cent of the district is rural in character. It has areas of outstanding landscape beauty and a rich architectural heritage. The trans-Pennine M62 motorway provides the main road link across the region.
- 24 Between 1990 and 2001, the black and minority ethnic population increased to seven per cent with most of those being of Pakistani/Kashmiri origin. This community lives mainly in one area of Halifax where it comprises more than half of the population. Smaller ethnic minority communities live in Elland and Todmorden. Although the district is now relatively prosperous overall, there are areas of deprivation. Some isolated communities also experience difficulties with transport and access to services.
- 25 Calderdale's traditional economic base was founded on textiles and engineering. These industries have declined although manufacturing remains important to the local economy. Recent years have seen a growth in financial services, particularly Halifax Bank of Scotland (HBOS), and the area has benefited from the economic success of Leeds and Manchester, both within easy reach. Local job creation remains a challenge with increasing numbers of residents travelling to work in nearby towns and cities. Average earnings are now the highest in the region and unemployment is below average. Housing is predominantly owner occupied. House prices have risen by 56 per cent over the past two years.

The Council

- 26 Calderdale Council was established in 1974. The Council has often had no overall control and, currently, the Conservatives lead a minority administration. They hold 21 of the 51 seats. There are 15 Liberal Democrats, nine Labour, three British National Party and three independent Councillors. The Council also has six town and parish councils. The Council has a high turnover at elections, often with a significant number of new Councillors.
- 27 Since May 2003, the Council has had a single party Conservative executive. The five scrutiny panels have briefs that shadow Cabinet portfolios and are chaired by opposition Councillors.

- 28 The Council's gross revenue budget for 2005/06 is £363 million with a capital programme of £30 million. About 4,900 people (FTE) work for the Council, excluding staff employed by schools and the management team comprises the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and five Group Directors.
- 29 Calderdale Forward was established in 1999 and became the LSP in 2000. It was developed from the Calderdale Economic Regeneration Steering Group. The Calderdale Futures Plan sets out a vision for the borough with six priorities based on a sustainable economy, lifelong learning, safer communities, a good environment, healthier communities and community engagement. The leader of the Council is the chair of the LSP.

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

Ambition

- 30 The Council performs well on ambition.
- 31 The Council and its partners have developed a shared vision for the area. The Futures plan sets out a vision of a community based on wide ranging consultation. The key priorities are to ensure decent homes and safe communities within a sustainable local economy. The area should be clean and healthy with vibrant and safe town centres and people should have opportunities to learn and have active, healthy lives. The plan also recognises the diverse nature of Calderdale and places a strong emphasis on community involvement and integration. The partnership have continued to refine and develop the approach to target setting since the plan was initially prepared and there are a wide range of ambitious targets set on baseline information and community priorities. The Council and its partners are currently in the process of reviewing the plan and this is scheduled to be completed by April 2006.
- 32 The ambitions are based on a good knowledge of the borough. A wide range of approaches were used to inform the development of the Futures Plan and are used to develop on-going policies - for example, through the 'Talkback' citizens' panel. There are some gaps in the Council's approach particularly around the BME community. The community cohesion plan and the racial equality plans have been developed to ensure better engagement but are still at an early stage. It is important that they become fully embedded in order to assist the Council and its partners to fully understand the needs of all groups in the community.
- 33 The Council provided a strong lead in establishing the LSP and continues to support its development. The leader is the chair of Calderdale Forward board and the Chief Executive works well with local and sub-regional partners in representing the interests of the area. The Council is viewed by partners as cooperative at all levels and partnership working is seen by its staff as integral to their activities.
- 34 The LSP is well established. There are good working arrangements in place and there is clarity about accountabilities for the delivery of the Futures Plan. The LSP is currently improving the arrangements for performance management by Calderdale Forward Board and community engagement and involvement is an area for further development. Although the community forum is not yet providing an effective vehicle for involving the community and voluntary sector in the work of the LSP, the sector is represented on the Calderdale Forward Board and key partnerships.

- 35** There are strong arrangements in place to ensure the delivery of the community priorities through the Council's corporate and service planning arrangements. There is a close alignment between the community priorities and the Council's own objectives in its corporate plan and service plans and this is well embedded. Targets reflect community and service delivery priorities and are ambitious with a number aspiring to achieve top quartile in the medium-term.
- 36** There is good political leadership and the leader works well with the leaders of the main groups. There is a willingness to take tough decisions that are in the interests of the local community such as to relocate schools and close residential homes in favour of community based care. Members are active and involved in a number of partnership and locally based schemes.
- 37** The Chief Executive provides clear and strong leadership to his management team and staff. There is a good understanding of the Council's priorities and staff surveys indicate a very high level of satisfaction and commitment. Senior managers are visible and communicate effectively with staff.
- 38** The Council's community leadership role is developing. Members are actively involved at a local level but the implementation of the strategic approach to community engagement is at an early stage. There is no overall approach to communicating and promoting the Council's wider community leadership role although a wide range of communication approaches are used. Surveys indicate that communication with the public is perceived to be an area for improvement and investments in communication have been made. This investment is important as there is poor satisfaction with the Council as a whole although there is a higher level of satisfaction with individual services.

Prioritisation

- 39** The Council is performing well.
- 40** There is a strong political consensus around the direction and ownership of priorities. Short and medium-term priorities are reviewed annually to ensure a specific focus on local issues and priorities. For example, the key priorities for 2005/06 are to develop an integrated children's service, to improve performance in the key areas measured by LPSA and CPA indicators and to improve community engagement and customer focus.
- 41** The priorities are used to establish spending and resource allocation decisions. The medium-term financial plan clearly sets out how resources are to be allocated in line with the priorities. All service areas are reviewed and assessed against the priorities and are allocated a high, medium or low rating. These ratings are used to make decisions about investments and savings. For example, more funding has been allocated to children's services whilst spending reductions have been made in non-priority areas such as leisure and corporate administration. This framework provides a good basis for making decisions, although the Council has not carried out a more fundamental review of base budgets across all areas and changes have been more incremental with only £2.3 million of the total Council budget being explicitly transferred to priority growth areas.

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- 42** There is a strong planning framework which supports a clear focus on the priority areas. The corporate plan has clear links with the community strategy and the relationship between the different planning levels within the Council are also clear. Action plans are comprehensive and set out the actions and timescales for action. The Council has recognised that it needs to develop and maximise its capacity in order to deliver priorities. The Corporate Plan is supported by an Organisational Improvement Plan (OIP) which details how the Council will develop its capacity to ensure it delivers.
- 43** Robust targets underpin the priorities. The plan is supported by 173 performance measures which make up targets for the LPSA, the Council's contribution to the Futures Plan, the Organisational Improvement Plan (OIP) and service improvement. A balanced scorecard approach is being developed to refine the number of indicators to enable senior members and managers to focus more effectively on the key issues.
- 44** The priorities are well understood by managers and staff. The Chief Executive and Directors hold regular briefings with staff and core documents clearly reflect the priority areas. The Council has improved its communication with staff and uses a variety of approaches to keep staff up-to-date such as briefings by managers and regular newsletters. The appraisal scheme has to fully bed in so it is applied consistently. Action has been taken to address this, but up-to-date figures are not available until the next survey.

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

Capacity

- 45 Capacity is adequate.
- 46 There is clarity about the respective roles and responsibilities of members and officers. Decision making processes are clearly set out in the constitution and are understood and adhered to. The cabinet focuses on strategic matters and scrutiny is beginning to add value - for example, through reviews of housing and care standards for the elderly which have informed policy development.
- 47 Councillors are mindful of the ethical framework and have high standards of conduct and the Council has strong governance arrangements. Progress in some areas has been slower than expected - for example, a written whistle blowing policy has only recently been agreed. Risk Management is well embedded throughout the Council.
- 48 Member development is good. Each member has an individual training needs analysis and senior members have completed leadership development courses by the IDeA. An annual programme of training and seminars to support members is arranged and attendance is satisfactory. A learning and development resource guide has also been developed to meet other learning and development preferences. The programme has been limited in terms of helping leading members understand their wider community leadership role and this has been identified as a priority in the OIP.
- 49 Managerial leadership is good. Staff surveys indicate high levels of morale and commitment to Calderdale. Staff development is high on the agenda and programmes such as Calderdale One have had an impact in supporting cultural change. The Council has a strong focus on directorate and service based leadership with the post of the Deputy Chief Executive providing developmental capacity. In some cases the lead responsibility for themes lacks clarity, with responsibility for strategy and delivery being split, for example, some elements of training and organisational development.
- 50 The financial capacity of the Council is generally strong. Financial management is robust, although demand-led overspends in social services and in community services have impacted on the levels of reserves for 2005/06. Reserves are sufficient at £4,565 million, although they have fallen below the Council's own target of £5 million as a result of the overspending. Plans are in place to address this.

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- 51** There are a number of significant changes happening in Calderdale with a key one being the establishment of a Children's Trust. Calderdale is a pathfinder Children's Trust with its governance formalised through the Children and Young People's Management Group (C&YPMG). This is the strategic and organisational vehicle by which the partners discharge their responsibility to co-operate under the Children Act 2004. The Children's Services Director Designate will take up responsibility in December 2005 and the top team will be in place by January 2006. There are good arrangements in place to manage this transition, with the C&YPMG providing the strategic leadership. Members are well informed and knowledgeable about the Every Child Matters agenda, there is a strong lead member for children and young people and scrutiny is generally operating effectively in this area.
- 52** There are, however, a number of areas to develop if the Council is to deliver its ambitions. Good management and a strong focus on priorities have led to significant improvements in performance over recent years but there are new challenges facing the Council. Strategic human resource (HR) plans and HR capacity are weak and progress in moving this forward has been slow. This is being addressed and consultants have recently completed a review of the HR function. This is important as the current HR strategy is inadequate and does not provide a good framework to manage change and develop staff over the longer term. Important areas such as workforce planning, the development of a long-term strategic approach to leadership and management development and high levels of sickness absence management have still to be addressed.
- 53** The council performs well in terms of achieving value for money. Overall costs and performance are in line with or better than other authorities. The Council challenges high unit costs and there is a sound understanding of value for money issues. Financial and performance management has yet to be aligned and this is important if the Council is to focus on costs as well as performance.
- 54** Strategic procurement is a weaker area. There are some examples of service level procurement and the use of private finance initiative funding to enhance capacity, but the overall strategic approach is underdeveloped. The Council are seeking to address this through a number of examples of joint procurement but processes, especially in relation to the corporate approach to procurement, have to be embedded.
- 55** The Council has recognised the need to develop community engagement, procurement, HR, community leadership and has included them in the OIP. Funding of £500,000 per annum has been allocated to support improvements in capacity.

- 56 The Council has used the OIP to enhance performance management and ICT infrastructure to support delivery and improved user focus. ICT is being used to improve access to services as part of the Customer First programme and this has resulted in improved access to services and the Council has achieved Government targets in relation to e-government outcomes. The Council has not yet fully evaluated the benefits and financial savings of its investment in ICT and this is important to ensure that it achieves value for money. It is not clear whether investments in e-government have been made based on defined customer need or to make savings. Decision making around ICT investment is at times service driven and this dilutes the Council's corporate focus.
- 57 Partnership relationships are good but the Council is not maximising the additional capacity these relationships could bring for the people of the borough in some areas. Partnership activities have contributed to improvements in community safety and the LSP has led on a number of flagship initiatives such as establishing the Harley Bank project. There are areas to develop including reviewing arrangements to reduce overlaps and to improve performance management arrangements across some of the sub-groups. This is in hand.
- 58 The Council is supporting the voluntary and community sector to develop its strategic capacity. The Council spends over £1 million a year in the voluntary sector, including £120,000 to Voluntary Action Calderdale to develop and support the sector. The Council and its partners have agreed a compact and have now produced a toolkit to support its implementation. The approach is sound but it is too soon to see any impact.

Performance management

- 59 The Council is performing well in this area.
- 60 Performance management arrangements are well developed and have led to improvements in most service areas over the last few years. In particular, effective performance management has been key to securing improvements since the poor performance of the late 1990s.
- 61 The performance management framework is largely embedded and the Council uses good monitoring systems to actively manage performance. The Council has invested well in developing arrangements across the Council and this has been directly led by the Deputy Chief Executive. A performance management strategy has been developed and directorate and service planning toolkits have been prepared.
- 62 Performance management reports are good and widely used. They set out performance trends and actions to be taken to improve performance where it is falling below targets. Further improvements to reporting are being developed through new performance management software that will be rolled out in 2006.

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- 63** Performance is actively managed. Performance information is used by members and officers to secure improvement. There has been a continuous trend of improvement in most areas which resulted in a significant improvement in CPA service scores in 2004. This trend has continued as 65 per cent of performance indicators improved in 2005/06 and there was a significant improvement in the number of targets achieved. Cabinet and scrutiny councillors use performance information to challenge performance and improvement plans. For example, the information has been used to improve poor performance in benefits, planning and social services. Members and officers used the information in a proactive way to continually manage the situation.
- 64** Information other than performance indicators is used to support performance improvement. User satisfaction data, staff feedback, inspection and audit findings and complaints data are used to give a rounded picture of performance. However, the gaps in BME engagement and consultation limit the ability of the Council to fully consider the views of all service users.
- 65** Financial management is good and well embedded. Reports on the financial position are submitted on a regular basis and overspending is identified and managed. Overspending in 2004/05 occurred in demand-led services and the Council is implementing plans to address this. Whilst financial and performance management are good, financial and performance data have yet to be integrated into a common management framework. This is important in terms of continuing to secure value for money. Work on this is under way.
- 66** Performance management arrangements are embedded throughout directorates. A recent audit by the external auditor commented that arrangements had been strengthened since 2002 and was consistently applied. The Council has responded positively to the recommendations in the report to further develop systems to see through discussions and decisions. The Council is also addressing inconsistencies in the implementation of the appraisal systems as the staff survey indicated that there were problems in application.
- 67** Arrangements for partnership performance management are underdeveloped. A range of sub-groups of the LSP manage performance for their areas but arrangements for the LSP executive are an area for improvement. The LSP has recognised the need to review the effectiveness of the board and ensure that a consistent approach to performance management is adopted across the key strategic partnerships. This is an important piece of work if the Council and its partners are to achieve the cross cutting ambitions set out in the Calderdale Futures plan.

What has been achieved?

- 68 Performance in achieving the shared priorities is adequate.
- 69 The Council has made good progress in some of its key local priorities such as improving educational attainment, street cleanliness, crime and anti-social behaviour but there are still considerable challenges in other areas that are local priorities. For example, ensuring the safety of children at risk, improving post 16 achievement and in reducing economic and health inequalities in the borough.
- 70 Developing the approach to children and young people is a priority and educational achievement continues to be a strong area of performance. The majority of children enjoy their education and have a range of opportunities to make a positive contribution to their communities. The Council has established an integrated approach to children and young people. There are areas to develop including reducing high levels of teenage pregnancy, reducing inequalities in health and attainment of young people from the Pakistani/Kashmiri community and ensuring that arrangements for children at risk are improved.
- 71 Community safety is a local priority and the Council and its partners perform well in this area. Crime and anti-social behaviour have reduced as a result of good partnership working. Crime and the fear of crime are a high priority for local people and good partnership working and joint investments have resulted in reduced crime in most areas. Fear of crime remains an issue as do the increasing number of violent crimes. Community cohesion has a high priority and a strategy which builds on long standing work has recently been agreed.
- 72 Strategies to ensure that Calderdale has sustainable communities have been put in place but the impact is not clear at this stage. The number of commuters from and to the borough is increasing and these are increasing the pressures on house prices and the transport system. Average weekly earnings are high and unemployment figures have improved. While some progress has been made, there remain challenges to reduce inequalities between the most deprived and least deprived wards and to address the post 16 education and skills agenda. There is a strong drive to preserve the heritage of the borough and investments in the clean, green agenda have improved cleanliness standards. Investments in recycling have resulted in improved performance and recycling targets are being met. However, waste levels are rising and the Council has yet to decide on its longer-term waste strategy, although this is in progress.
- 73 Progress in developing a strategic approach to tackling the local priorities around health is adequate but there needs to be a more joined up approach amongst partners. Work on developing this area is underway with a health inequalities strategy having recently been agreed. There are good foundations to build on such as a range of projects and initiatives to tackle health inequalities. Joint working with the PCTs is generally good

- 74 The Council's overall approach to older people is adequate. Performance in terms of social care is good but the Council's response to the national framework for older people has been slower. The Council's approach to improving the lives of older people is still largely focused on services and pays insufficient attention to the older person as an active citizen, engaged in the life of the community.

Sustainable communities and transport

- 75 The Council and its partners are clear about the issues to be addressed in terms of the local economy but there are weaknesses in terms of expected outcomes. The integrated regeneration strategy reflects local issues facing Calderdale - such as the lack of available land, the need to regenerate and stimulate activity in the town centres and the increasing reliance on commuter jobs. However, the strategy is limited as it lacks baseline information and specific targets against which to measure success.
- 76 There are some positive indicators around the local economy but there are still significant challenges to address. Average income levels are above the regional average and claimant levels are reducing. The Council has worked well with partners to create job opportunities, regenerate local areas such as Sowerby Bridge and support people to access jobs. The planning service is proactive in supporting business opportunities and performs well.
- 77 These schemes have had some impact but inequalities between the most and least deprived wards remain. The deprivation ranking for some of the most deprived wards remain unchanged and the percentage of the population living in low income households is above the regional average.
- 78 The Council is beginning to address issues around low demand and affordability. The number of properties in low demand has decreased recently and clearance schemes in Todmorden and central Halifax are at an advanced stage of planning. House prices have risen dramatically over the past year - with the average price rising by 56 per cent and this has been recognised in the draft housing strategy.
- 79 There have been significant improvements in the quality of public housing over recent years and other areas are being addressed. Nearly all homes reach decent homes standards following large scale investment by Pennine Housing. Services for homeless people have improved and arrangements are in place to reduce the use of temporary accommodation for families. There are a range of initiatives in place to address fuel poverty, energy and resource efficiency across all types of tenure. Good progress has been made since last year's supporting people inspection in supporting tenancies for vulnerable groups.
- 80 There is a strong focus on the heritage of the borough and there has been an increase in the use of brownfield sites for housing and employment purposes. There have been significant improvements in street cleaning and the removal of graffiti over the past year.

- 81 The Council is taking steps to improve the local environment and it addresses the environmental impact of its own activity and that of local businesses. There have been improvements in recycling but waste levels continue to rise. The Council has developed programmes to raise recycling awareness and recycling targets have been met following investment in kerbside collection services. The Council has yet to consider the long-term strategy for waste disposal but has engaged consultants to look at the options.
- 82 Traffic congestion is a key issue for the borough's economic development but little impact has been made so far. There is an integrated approach to transport planning and a number of good schemes to support bus use, particularly by school children, walking and cycling. However, there has been little impact to date and car use is increasing. The residents' survey highlighted local concerns as 78 per cent of people felt that congestion is getting worse.

Safer and stronger communities

- 83 There are good partnership arrangements in place. Community safety is a priority for local people and there is a co-ordinated approach to crime and community safety. Partnership working is having an impact with reductions in most areas. For example, there has been a reduction in vehicle crime and a 40 per cent reduction in burglary over the past two years. The partnership has also focused on improving high levels of accidents with reductions being achieved in the past year.
- 84 There is a good awareness of the wider role the Council plays in community safety and there is a strong contribution from services such as social services, highways and leisure services. The Council is an active partner in the community safety partnership and co-ordinates activity through the safer communities' team. It has committed resources including street wardens and police support officers. However, there are issues to address. The Council's approach to mainstreaming community safety takes place through partnership arrangements and working groups. It has not carried out a formal evaluation or audit of how it meets section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act. The consequence of this is that there is a risk that important community safety issues may be overlooked.
- 85 There are areas to address. Violent crime is increasing and this is a key issue for local people. There is an underdeveloped approach to dealing with the fear of crime. Whilst crime levels are falling, there are still high levels of fear of crime. This is being driven by media reporting and a recent residents survey commissioned by the Council recommend that the partners should improve communication about successes and investments.
- 86 The approach to anti-social behaviour is good. The Council has worked with partners on anti-social behaviour issues and action has been taken where appropriate. The number of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour has fallen and anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) have not been breached.

- 87 There are effective arrangements around youth offending. There are a range of services available which include development in reparation schemes and work in communities experiencing high levels of youth crime and have reduced the number of looked after children who re-offend.
- 88 There is strong work around drug abuse. The number of people continuing with drug treatment is amongst the best in the country and just under half of the estimated problem drug users have received some kind of service. The drug and alcohol team is highly rated by government office and there are a range of interventions in place.
- 89 There are good arrangements for emergency planning. Major incident plans are updated regularly and training exercises are carried out. The Council's major incident plan is clear about accountabilities and roles and the links between the Council's work and those of the emergency services and the wider region are well-made.
- 90 Community cohesion is being addressed and work is in progress to establish a co-ordinated approach. An overall strategy was agreed in early 2005/06 and there are a range of initiatives in place or planned. There are good relationships between partners and the local community. These relations were used to manage tensions in 2001 and more recently. There is also evidence of improving relations between communities with 52 per cent of people now feeling that ethnic differences are respected – up from 32 per cent in 2003.
- 91 There are issues to be dealt with. The residents' survey highlighted that a substantial number of people of different races feel uncomfortable outside their own communities. Calderdale is also in the worst quartile for the percentage of residents who think that racial or religious attacks are a problem.

Healthier communities

- 92 There are some good examples of partnership working but progress in developing the Council's corporate approach towards tackling health inequalities has been slow.
- 93 Capacity is being developed to support the Council's approach to health inequalities. A health inequalities strategy has recently been approved and a health inequalities co-ordinator has been appointed to provide the Council with additional capacity to take forward this work. However, there is still no explicit statement which sets out how the Council and its partners will work together to narrow the gap between the communities with the best and worst health.
- 94 There are some good examples of joint working and programmes to address health inequalities. For example, the Healthy Living partnership, partnership working to promote health as part of the LSP's flagship programme and a healthy schools programme. Other initiatives include encouraging people to take more exercise and helping older people keep warm by promoting energy efficiency in homes.

- 95 There are improvements in health in some areas but the Council is not yet making a systematic contribution across the board. For example, there is no strategic partnership approach to identifying and targeting those communities with the worst health. The Council and its partners can identify some recent improvements in health such as reduced infant mortality and some narrowing of inequalities in some areas. There are also examples of improvements in increased take up of preventive programmes such as smoking cessation and exercise programmes. However there is little evidence to show that any of the health improvements are the result of a co-ordinated long-term partnership approach.
- 96 A co-ordinated approach is important as there remain significant challenges. Life expectancy is four to five years lower than the national average and there remain pockets of the district which fare much worse. Teenage pregnancy rates are reducing but not at target rates and evaluation of the impact of all policies and strategies is an area to develop.

Older people

- 97 The Council provides good care services for older people but has yet to develop an overall strategy for older people as citizens.
- 98 Calderdale has prioritised its social care services for older people and provides good services. The service is rated as serving most people well by the Commission of Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) with strengths such as increasing the number of people helped to live at home, responding promptly to requests for help and then providing services quickly after assessment. There are other areas of good practice such as increasing use of direct payments, more services for carers and ensuring that service users are at the centre of the planning framework. Developments are needed in intermediate care provision, commissioning arrangements and helping people with learning disability gain paid employment.
- 99 Partnership working around older people is good. The relationship with the PCT is good and the PCT Chief Executive leads on older people within the LSP. Activity to date has a strong partnership focus. Calderdale has an enthusiastic Older People's champion and some good scrutiny has been carried out in the within the portfolio.
- 100 The Council has not yet developed a coherent response to this larger number of people that extends beyond care services into the wellbeing agenda promoted by the National Service Framework. The approach outlined in the newly developed 'Shared Vision' paper is not an innovative one and does not explore the role of older people as citizens and contributors. Although the review of the Future Plan recommended that the profile of older people needs to be strengthened, the approach to achieving this is still at an early stage of development. Consequently, areas of concern to older people, including housing, community safety, transport, leisure and employment are not brought together in strategy development. There are no nominated leads for older people in the other Council directorates apart from housing.

- 101 There are some areas of good practice to be built on, including the Pensions Plus programme and sheltered housing developed with Pennine Housing. A specific target has been included in the 'Choosing Health' strategy to encourage those in middle age to adopt healthier lifestyles.
- 102 Engagement with older people around care services is good but under developed in other areas, particularly around BME elders. Calderdale uses community representatives and a limited range of other techniques to collect views of older people but other than in social care does not have a systematic way of involving older people in shaping and planning services.
- 103 These gaps are being addressed. The Council is working with the Community Foundation for Calderdale and Voluntary Action Calderdale to develop community networks to strengthen the infrastructure and knowledge of community groups and gaps around BME elders are being addressed. The Council has recently completed an audit with BME elders to help shape the future direction of health and social care provision.

Children and young people

- 104 Children and young people are generally healthy. Most health indicators are either in line with or above the national average but there are variations across the area in relation to some health indicators such as low birth weight and infant mortality, which is particularly high among the Pakistani/Kashmiri community. Teenage pregnancy rates are high and are above the national average. Strategies are beginning to have some effect but there is still much to do to reduce overall numbers. Oral health is poor for children under five.
- 105 Most children feel safe in schools, but a small number are worried about bullying in school and in their local area. There is good inter-agency action to support children on the Register and families who suffer domestic violence. Young people at risk of sexual exploitation are being safeguarded. There are some concerns that children for whom there are general welfare concerns and children reported to be at risk are not identified and assessed early enough by social care. Systems for monitoring cases, prioritising work, recording of decisions and quality assurance are not firm enough to ensure early identification and assessment. Inter-agency child protection procedures are out of date. All child protection cases are allocated to a qualified social worker and interagency work is effective. There is good performance in moving children to adoption. Not all looked after children's cases are allocated; effective temporary measures are in place but are not adequate in the long-term.
- 106 The majority of children enjoy their education and achieve well. Children and young people of Pakistani/Kashmiri heritage achieve less. However, some targeted work in schools is helping to close this attainment gap which is now in line with the national average. Attainment levels for looked after children are good. The vast majority of children with learning disabilities are educated within mainstream schools, but the cost of out-of-area placements is too high.

- 107** There is a good range of opportunities for children and young people to make a positive contribution to their communities. However, there is a lack of effective feedback on the outcomes of such consultations. There is effective joint working to reduce offending and re-offending, which has particularly benefits looked after young people and those most at risk of committing a criminal offence.
- 108** Many children and young people are able to achieve economic well being, but some do not reach their full potential. There is a shortage of work-based training and education to employment (E2E) provision. The proportion of young people aged 16 and over not in education, employment or training is higher than the national average. However, Calderdale has the best performance in West Yorkshire and has exceeded recent connexions targets. Vulnerable groups are well supported, but there are gaps in provision for young people with complex needs particularly when they reach the age of 19. Regeneration programmes are focused on family learning, and some parents are getting effective support to develop their skills to make them more employable. The achievements of looked after children at age 16 are above the national average. There are good progression rates to post-16 education, training and employment. A higher than average number of looked after young people go into higher education.

Appendix 1 - Framework for corporate assessment

- 1 This corporate assessment was carried out under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, under which the Audit Commission has power to inspect local authorities' arrangements for securing continuous improvement. The results of the corporate assessment contribute to the determination of the overall CPA category for an authority, which the Audit Commission is required to assess and report on under Section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2 The Council's self assessment provided a key resource in focusing the assessment activity which included consideration of:
 - key documentation, including the Council's improvement plan;
 - updated performance indicators and performance data; and
 - interviews and meetings attended.
- 3 The assessment for Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 26 September to 5 October.
- 4 This report has been discussed with the Council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission's assessment. This report will be used as the basis for improvement planning by the Council.