

Corporate Assessment Report

February 2006



Corporate Assessment Report

London Borough of Hillingdon

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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

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Introduction

- 1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is the means by which the Audit Commission fulfils its statutory duty under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003 to make an assessment, and report on the performance, of local authorities. Corporate assessment is one element in the overall assessment that leads to a CPA score and category.
- 2 The purpose of the corporate assessment is to assess how well the Council engages with and leads its communities, delivers community priorities in partnership with others, and ensures continuous improvement across the range of Council activities. It seeks to answer three headline questions which are underpinned by five specific themes.
 - What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?
 - Ambition
 - Prioritisation
 - What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?
 - Capacity
 - Performance management
 - What has been achieved?
 - Achievement
 - Considered against the shared priorities of:
 - sustainable communities and transport;
 - safer and stronger communities;
 - healthier communities;
 - older people; and
 - children and young people.
- 3 Corporate assessments are normally aligned with a joint area review of services for children and young people (JAR). In practice this means that the Council's achievements in relation to children and young people are assessed using the evidence provided from the JAR. In addition, examples of outcomes and activity, which are relevant to the other themes and which are identified through the JAR, are considered within the corporate assessment.

- 4 The JAR covers 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 The London Borough of Hillingdon is performing adequately. The Council has made substantial progress over the last few years. It has sustained its focus over time to regain community trust and to put its own house back in order, from a relatively low base. Everyday, visible front line services are delivered more efficiently and effectively and previously 'failing' services such as social services have been turned around. There is widespread internal and external acknowledgement of the improvements to date and commitment to being part of the continuing improvement journey.
- 6 The shared long-term vision for the borough represents a significant step forward for the Council and its partners, setting a broad agenda to address all aspects of well being, encompass national and regional policy frameworks and the key issues of local concern. Ambitions set a clearer short to medium-term picture of what will be delivered, but the longer term tangible outcomes require further development. This makes it more difficult to assess how challenging these are in the long-term. There are clear priorities for community safety, streetscene services and raising educational attainment but these are not replicated or articulated as such in the Council Plan. What are not the priorities or those of lesser importance are less clear to staff, stakeholders and local people.
- 7 The Council has done much to increase its capacity and improve its performance management arrangements, however challenges remain. The Hillingdon Improvement Programme (HIP) has been an effective vehicle in delivering change. Financial stability has been restored and financial management is now a strength. A focus on performance management now provides a sound framework for continuous improvement. Sixty-seven per cent of performance indicators improved since 2002/03 with 52 per cent now in the top two performance quartiles, and 94 per cent of the Council's own targets were achieved. Partnerships, such as in community safety have been used effectively to increase capacity and the important role of the voluntary and community sector is being supported and enabled. But the Council's measures of success are not consistently outcome focused on what difference actions will make on the ground and its own improved working practices have not yet been transferred consistently within its partnerships. The Council faces challenges in member development, the effectiveness of scrutiny, and in sustaining and further improving recruitment of key staff.

- 8 Overall, the Council is performing adequately across the shared priority areas with stronger achievements in its priority areas of community safety and the environment. It continues to do well in meeting the area's housing requirements and its health promotion partnership work is broad and clearly targeted to need. Recent achievements in other shared priority areas, such as older people and its ambitions for 'a prosperous borough' are at an earlier stage of implementation and outcomes are more difficult to demonstrate. Programmes to take forward the legacy of the Hayes and West Drayton SRB programme have taken time to develop within the context of the new partner-shared strategy for a sustainable economy. Transport achievements are mixed, and whilst the Council has secured the Heathrow Express service stopping at Hayes, poor north/south transport links remain unresolved. Congestion and air quality particularly in the south of the borough are still key local concerns. The close proximity of Heathrow airport and associated transport movements inevitably contribute to these issues.
- 9 The Council is providing effective community leadership with widespread endorsements of its partnership working. Effective political leadership has established stability within the minority administration context. It is using mature political relationships to engender buy in on sensitive issues such as the impact on local services of unaccompanied asylum seeking children. There is clear managerial leadership and commitment to delivering the Council's own internal improvement agenda and to realise the ambitions for the area and its communities. The Cabinet and Officer Management Board work well together as a team.
- 10 The Council is engaging well with local people from diverse communities and with service users across the range of need but it is not yet a consistent approach. Engagement covers a wide range of community, including a youth Council and fora for older people and for black and minority ethnic interests. However, in some instances consultation has not been fully representative and feedback about the results of consultations are not routinely provided to consultees. Service planning has begun to use feedback, including complaints, to inform development. The Council has recognised the need to develop a corporate, strategic approach to consultation. Strategies for User Focus and Diversity, for Customer Access and for Consultation have been agreed within the last year and plans are in place to develop a shared approach with partners via a themed group within the LSP.
- 11 There is a mixed picture with regard to the Council's approach to equality and diversity, but recent progress has been positive. Comprehensive equality impact assessments and action plans now cover all services and whilst there are good examples where services have provided culturally sensitive services such as in emergency rest centres, in general it is too early to demonstrate positive outcomes from all of these. The Council has been slow to meet its DDA responsibilities in relation to building accessibility. However, human rights implications are not considered in a robust way in the planning and delivery of services, and some isolated communities feel they are not able to access services as well as others.

- 12 The Council's approach to value for money (VFM) is adequate. There is a reasonable balance between Council's cost and performance allowing for local context and policy decisions. VFM guidance and the process for review are clear but not yet fully embedded within the Council's groups and services. Understanding of the wider impact of Heathrow airport on costs is building. The Council has a good understanding of its impact on social services, particularly the high numbers of asylum seekers and non accompanied asylum seeking children. The Council has begun a programme to modernise its social services to deliver lower unit costs and better services focusing on prevention and independence. This is in addition to challenging factors impacting on unit costs, such as undertaking all placements work for the PCT.

Areas for improvement

- 13 The Council, with its partners should continue with its work in developing longer term tangible outcomes and targets for the shared ambitions. This will provide clarity on the actual level of performance and improvement that is being sought for the borough and its communities. It will also enable the medium and longer term supporting strategies which are at different stages of development to clearly define their contribution to achieving the outcomes and ensure maximum collaboration.
- 14 The Council needs to be clearer about the relative importance of its broad ambitions and what are not its priorities or priorities of lesser importance. These need to be more clearly articulated within its published plans and communicated to staff, members, partners and the public.
- 15 Developing proactive ownership and commitment across political parties to member development to ensure that the necessary skills are developed consistently, such as:
 - understanding the complex local government agenda;
 - understanding the needs of different sectors;
 - effectively fulfilling community leadership roles;
 - promoting high ethical standards; and
 - undertaking overview and scrutiny roles.
- 16 The Council needs to build on its consultation and engagement arrangements and its approach to information collection, sharing and analysis to deliver a more consistent and systematic approach. This should be addressed as a strategic approach with all partners as well as within its own services. This will ensure that as the desired outcomes from longer term ambitions become more defined, its plans to achieve these are based on and refined by as rich an understanding as possible of its changing community's needs and challenges facing the borough. This should utilise and apply the learning from services and partnerships where this is already working well.
- 17 The Council needs to strengthen its approach to human rights and ensure that implications are considered in a robust way as part of planning and delivery of services.

Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	2
	Prioritisation	2
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	2
	Performance management	2
What has been achieved?	Achievement	2
Overall corporate assessment score**		2
*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

- 18 The London Borough of Hillingdon is located on the western edge of London, adjacent to the boroughs of Harrow, Ealing and Hounslow, with its outer border close to a section of the M25. With an area of 42 square miles, it is London's second largest borough.
- 19 Hillingdon is a borough of contrasts and as such there is a stronger identity with local neighbourhoods rather than the borough as a whole. The north of the borough is semi-rural, with a large proportion of green belt land and is less densely populated than the south which has a more urban character and includes the highest proportion of dwellings in the borough. The main centres of population are Uxbridge, Hayes, Ruislip and West Drayton. Heathrow airport, the world's busiest international airport is situated in the south of the borough.
- 20 The borough has a rich green heritage which is valued and fiercely protected by its residents. The legacy includes 165 parks and open spaces, large areas of farmland, waterways and nearly 1,000 acres of publicly accessible woodlands.
- 21 Its population is changing, becoming larger, younger and more diverse. Its population of 248,700 has increased by 10 per cent over the last decade. Black and minority ethnic communities make up 21.1 per cent of the population. This proportion is expected to increase significantly. Around 41 per cent of the population is under 30 years of age, with around 19 per cent under the age of 15. These communities are predominantly located in the southern half of the borough.
- 22 Hillingdon is a prosperous borough with pockets of relative deprivation. Ranked 166 out of 354 for its level of deprivation (with 354 being the most deprived), 5 per cent of its population live in the most 10 per cent deprived wards in the country. Because of this, the borough is not able to easily access funding for large scale regeneration projects such as neighbourhood renewal funding.
- 23 Unemployment is relatively low in Hillingdon at 3.8 per cent compared to the London average of 7 per cent and national average of 4.8 per cent. The airport is the borough's largest business with approximately 68,000 employees of which an estimated 12 per cent are Hillingdon residents. Whilst its operations have a significant impact on the Council's operations and services and those of its partners, it also provides easy access to jobs, although these tend to be low skilled low paid jobs. The other major employment sectors are: wholesale and retail; real estate renting and business activities; and manufacturing. Major public sector services in the borough, in addition to the Council, include Harefield Hospital, RAF Northolt and Brunel University.

- 24 The expansion of Heathrow to include a fifth terminal is currently underway. The Council are clearly opposed to the expansion and future proposals for a third runway. However, this opposition is balanced by an understanding that the borough must maximise the benefits of having the world's busiest international airport within its boundary whilst minimising its negative impacts.
- 25 The borough's transport infrastructure is strong on west to east routes but relatively poor north to south. With the highest car ownership in London, congestion remains a consistent top local concern. The borough is well served by east/west transport links and there is easy access to orbital road networks such as M25, M4 and M40.

The Council

- 26 Since 2002, and for the second time in succession, the conservatives hold a minority administration. There are 22 wards in the Borough returning 65 councillors. The current political composition of the Council is 30 conservative, 27 labour and 8 liberal democrat councillors.
- 27 Conservatives hold all nine seats in the cabinet, with three of the six overview and scrutiny committees chaired by opposition members and the scrutiny co-ordinating committee chaired by a conservative. There are two planning committees and licensing committees with various other committees such as the standards committee.
- 28 The Council's net revenue budget for 2005/06 is £305.2 million. The local element of the council tax for band D property is £1012.11, which rose by 3.9 per cent between 2004/05 and 2005/06.
- 29 Council structure is arranged into six directorates also referred to as groups employing approximately 3,626 people across all services (excluding schools). The Hillingdon Improvement Programme (HIP), established in May 2003 is the Council's change programme. Improvements aimed at improving leadership and management impact, better use of resources and service improvements are being delivered through 17 projects.
- 30 The Council is a member of Hillingdon Partners, the local strategic partnership, as well as the West London Alliance (WLA). Hillingdon partners agreed 'Working together for a better future' - the borough's community strategy in June 2005, following consultation with local people. This follows on from previous community strategies.

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

Ambition

- 31 The Council is performing adequately in this area.
- 32 The shared long-term vision for the borough represents a significant step forward for the Council and its partners. Ensuring Hillingdon is a pleasant and vibrant place to live and work, where every member of the community has access to excellent services and the opportunity to fulfil their potential, is underpinned by seven broad ambitions. Extensive consultation and engagement with stakeholders, and local people has informed the vision and ambitions. Becoming a 'safe borough', 'a prosperous borough' through to 'a borough with improving health, housing and social care' effectively covers all aspects of well being and reflects the challenges facing the borough and the concerns and needs of local people. The community strategy for the first time provides the Council and its partners with a ten-year strategic framework to work towards delivering, based on what matters to local people.
- 33 The ambitions set out a clearer short and medium-term picture of what will be delivered for Hillingdon's communities, but the longer term tangible outcomes are not sufficiently developed. One-year targets and three-year objectives provide a complementary mixture of output and outcomes according to the different stages of development of each of the theme areas. These range from reducing alcohol related assaults in pilot locality areas by 20 per cent to finalising the strategy for improving Hayes town centre in partnership with key stakeholders. Ten-year targets exist but these primarily describe outputs and not outcomes. The supporting longer term strategies which sit beneath the themes are at different stages of development. These do not always set out tangible outcomes that can be used to measure success and demonstrate how they will support the achievement of ambitions. Hillingdon Partners are working on strengthening outcome based measurements. This will make it clearer to residents what difference the actions will make over the longer term.
- 34 Locality based working, the key vehicle for delivering the vision, represents a challenging approach and is having some success in its early stages. Pilot locality based working in eight neighbourhoods focused primarily on community safety and environmental issues have already proved successful. Expanded pilots to include other partners such as health have also proved popular. A plan to roll these out to the rest of the borough is currently being worked on.

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- 35** The approach of the Council and its partners to delivering the vision and ambitions is incremental, but realistic given its context. The Council is a different organisation to the one that it was two to three years ago. It has re-gained the trust and confidence of the community through delivering everyday front line services more efficiently and effectively and restoring its financial standing from a relatively low base. Previously 'failing' services such as social services have been turned around. The role of the voluntary and community sectors is clearly recognised and their capacity is being supported, built and enabled. Other partners have been, and are going through more challenging times, for example Hillingdon Primary Care Trust (PCT) is in severe financial difficulties. Work with the small and medium enterprise business sector (SME) is at an earlier stage of development. Whilst the pace fits with the maturity and stability of the Council and its partners, the Council has not demonstrated that the ambitions are sufficiently challenging in the long-term.
- 36** There is good understanding of and commitment to the ambitions amongst partners and staff, but the understanding of local people is less clear. Hillingdon People, the Council's magazine is used to communicate ambitions and priorities as well as achievements against these. The importance of communication is recognised through the appointment of a new Head of Communications to build on a more strategic approach. More recently the Council has embarked on cabinet roadshows which provide an opportunity for the Council leaders and key strategic partners such as the police and PCT to communicate the ambitions of the community strategy as well as answer specific local issues of concern. Whilst these events have been positively received, attendance has been variable. Internal roadshows led by the Chief Executive (CE) and Leader have set out the Council's strategic agenda. Staff have a good understanding of the strategy.
- 37** The Council's approach to information collection, sharing and analysis is improving but remains inconsistent overall. Good examples exist of sophisticated information analysis to inform ambitions between partners and the local community as seen in the safer neighbourhood pilot areas. However, this approach is not consistent or systematic. Intelligent information use helps to focus activities where they are most needed and will make most impact.
- 38** The Council is providing effective community leadership with widespread endorsements for its partnership working. Partners and stakeholders from all sectors are positive about improved partnership working and leadership by the Council both strategically through the LSP Hillingdon Partners and operationally, for example with contractors. The political leadership team has established political stability within a minority administration context. It is using mature political relationships to engender buy in on sensitive issues, such as the impact on local services of unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

- 39 There is clear political and officer leadership and commitment to delivering the improvement agenda and realise the ambitions of the area. The Council's own plan, 'Making a difference' clearly mirrors the community strategy themes setting out the Council's contribution over the short and medium-term as well as clearly articulating the Council's seven core values. The plan also sets out key internal improvements that are essential to the Council being able to deliver its part of the community strategy.

Prioritisation

- 40 The Council is performing adequately in this area.
- 41 The Council, with its partners has agreed a set of broad priorities to support its overall ambitions. In the Council plan these priorities for action are set out under eleven themes, made up of the seven community strategy themes, the shared 'improved partnership working' theme and the Council's three internal improvement themes of 'achieving value for money', 'strengthening planning and performance' and 'building a culture for success'. Priorities effectively constitute an improvement plan of one year targets and three-year objectives setting out a full picture of all the tasks and actions the Council will do. The golden thread from community strategy through Council plans to individual performance and development appraisals (PADAs) is understood by staff. However, as the Council plan is currently written, everything is a priority.
- 42 However, the articulation of the broad priorities within the Council Plan does not reflect the greater prioritisation the Council is working to. Community safety, environmental streetscene services and raising educational attainment are the consistent key priorities which align with community strategy themes. LPSA targets align to these priorities and both capital and revenue resources are clearly allocated to these areas. In 2005/06 education received an additional £2.1 million, environment £834,000, safer communities and youth services £385,000 and £500,000 respectively. Whilst there is widespread understanding of these key priority areas, and priorities are clearly aligned with financial planning, what are not the priorities remains an issue to be articulated.
- 43 The Council has allocated resources within partnerships to support the delivery of community strategy ambitions and priorities. This is particularly evident, but not exclusively, within the ambition for 'a safe borough'. The Council funds six police community support officers (PSOs) and the police Anti-Social Behaviour team. These clearly align with priorities.

- 44 There is some evidence of priorities specifically taking into account the needs of BME groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage. The community strategy, 'opportunities for all' theme and accompanying action plan encapsulates this commitment, but recognises that there is more to be done. Examples include the development of the drugs strategy which was shaped by research on the effect of drugs and alcohol misuse by BME communities and promotion of healthier lifestyles, prioritised to groups and areas of greatest deprivation. Engagement forums such as the Older People's Assembly are regularly consulted with and representative membership is being broadened. Whilst there is evidence that this is happening it is not yet consistent.
- 45 Priorities reflect national and regional policy frameworks. Following the community conference in 2004, a theme on children and young people was added in line with the government's 'Every Child Matters' framework and in response to local concerns. Affordable housing targets are in line with the London Plan and the Council's community safety priorities clearly accord with national crime reduction targets.
- 46 The Council has sustained its focus over time to deliver on what matters to local people and to improve internal processes and management. The Council's medium-term financial forecast (MTFF) process now provides a sound and improving framework for setting priorities. It brings together the intelligence from continual monitoring and assessment of local needs and opinions with service performance and national and regional policy frameworks. There are examples of more sophisticated needs analysis, but this is not a consistent picture across all services.
- 47 The Council has established a track record of delivering its stated priorities through robust action. Ninety-four per cent of the 2004/05 one-year targets were delivered and all three-year objectives are being progressed. The Hillingdon Improvement programme provides the focus and drives the internal improvement themes of 'value for money', 'building a culture for success' and 'improving planning and performance'. Over the past two years it has delivered £2.5 million of savings which has been ploughed back into priority areas. Performance of projects, performance indicators and LPSA targets are monitored by the HIP Project Board, Executive, Management Board and Scrutiny. Community strategy action plans are monitored quarterly by LSP Executive.

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

Capacity

- 48 The Council is performing adequately in this area.
- 49 Political arrangements have matured and work well overall. Member and officer working relationships are sound and the Cabinet and Management Board work as a team. The leadership style of the Leader and CE is open and approachable, and there is stability in senior management positions. There is a clear and transparent framework for decision-making and whilst delegation levels to officers are set too low in some instances, such as in financial matters, these have not impacted on the speed of decision-making. The Council has plans to revisit these, which will allow the political leadership to give a greater focus on the medium to long-term strategic direction.
- 50 Overall, the commitment to member development across political parties is low. The focus has been on member induction and although there is comprehensive training for members serving on Planning and Licensing committees, take-up of seminars is variable. Developing skills of members undertaking overview and scrutiny roles, and ensuring a general understanding of the complex local government agenda and different sectors needs, such as local businesses is generally not consistent or proactive. Although there has been budget scrutiny training for Overview and Scrutiny members in each of the last three years, which has been well received. The capacity of members to effectively undertake the full range of functions and the changing community leadership role is not being fully realised.
- 51 The effectiveness of Overview and Scrutiny is mixed and its role in policy development is underdeveloped. There is some evidence of challenge and contribution to policy making such as recommendations made regarding grant-making and service level agreements (SLAs). However, engagement between cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny is inconsistent and its utilisation as a resource has not been fully realised, for example on the children's agenda. The current arrangements do not rigorously hold the cabinet to account.
- 52 A long-term workforce planning strategy has recently been agreed with partners but it is too early to have a demonstrable impact. For example, in delivering sustained and improved recruitment to address shortages of key staff, such as in social care and planning services. There is good linkage of staff training to development needs identified through PADAs. Workforce monitoring and positive recruitment practice have produced a staff mix more reflective of the local community in line with the Council's core values.

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- 53** The Council's project management framework is developing well. HIP has established a track record of delivering change, performance improvements and improved efficiency that has allowed re-investment in priority areas including through a significantly increased capital programme. But the Council does not understand how staff involvement on HIP projects impacts on delivery of routine services and associated priorities. Some slippage in projects is due to the lack of staff with necessary skills, for example insufficient project management capacity to manage the schools capital programme.
- 54** The Council manages its assets effectively to enhance its capacity. Efficiency is improving through rationalisation of office accommodation, better space utilisation at the Civic Centre, and more flexible working supported by ICT. Released funds are financing capital programme priorities and addressing the maintenance backlog. Asset management is widening through development of a partner's asset strategy but it too early in its development to produce positive outcomes.
- 55** Risk management is well embedded within internal corporate planning arrangements and key processes such as project and capital programme management, but does not extend to partnership activity. The Council has both assessed and taken steps to address key financial risks, for example, those posed by the PCT and the children's services agenda. High risk partnerships have been identified but ownership and risk management at partnership-level is not yet owned.
- 56** The procurement strategy is sound and aligns with the National Procurement Strategy. Savings delivered through the HIP procurement project are being reinvested in priorities and a new on-line purchasing tool is about to go live to achieve council-wide savings on stationery purchases. Cross-LSP procurement initiatives are in the early stages of development and the opportunities to use procurement to support plans to stimulate the local economy, such as encouraging local supply chains have not yet been utilised.
- 57** The Council has stabilised its financial position and manages its finances effectively. Reserves have increased and council tax rises kept low in line with priorities. Medium-term financial forecasting arrangements are embedding and link to key priorities with medium-term projections informing the annual budget setting process.
- 58** The Council's approach to VFM is adequate. There is a reasonable balance between Council's cost and performance allowing for local context and policy decisions. VFM guidance and the process for review are clear but not yet fully embedded within the Council's groups and services. Understanding of the wider impact of Heathrow airport on costs is building. The Council has a good understanding of its impact on social services, particularly the high numbers of asylum seekers and non-accompanied asylum seeking children. The Council has begun a programme to modernise its social services to deliver lower unit costs and better services focusing on prevention and independence. This is in addition to challenging factors impacting on unit costs, such as undertaking all placements work for the PCT.

- 59 The Council is using e-delivery effectively to gather information about community needs, and to both improve and join up services in collaboration with partners. For example, the use of GIS for joint crime profiling. Expansion of the contact centre is enabling increased access to a range of services through a single contact point and new access channels such as iDTV are being provided. The Council's website is fully transactional and usage is increasing significantly. Investment in ICT and continuing software updates are seen as a key enabler by staff. Further efficiency gains remain in re-engineering of back office processes.
- 60 The Council uses partnerships to increase its capacity and to create flexibility to meet the diverse needs of the community. The community safety partnership is strong and the compact with the voluntary and community sectors provides a firm foundation for building and enabling their capacity. Improved joint working with BAA is making better use of the airport and the opportunities it presents. Additional resources have been accessed for service improvements through partnerships with other local authorities. External funding has been increased through working with voluntary and community sector partners.
- 61 The Council's effectiveness in its approach to user focus, equality and diversity is mixed, including integration of human rights. The Council has been doing a lot to increase their understanding of the needs of some groups, through for example, the Older People's Assembly and carer's strategy group, but other groups feel less engaged and do not always receive advertising and promotional material for events. Feeding back to users or groups on what has happened as a result of their input is not consistent. Comprehensive equality impact assessments and action plans now cover all services but it is too early to demonstrate a positive impact. The Council has been slow to meet its DDA responsibilities in relation to building accessibility. There is inconsistency in how equalities, diversity and human rights are applied in contract arrangements and used to inform service development. For example, the lack of use of equalities information from the temporary recruitment contract is a lost opportunity to target skills development and work opportunities.

Performance management

- 62 The Council is performing adequately in this area.
- 63 There is a clear 'golden thread' through which strategy, including community strategy, is translated into action on the ground. Twice yearly appraisals, monthly service reviews and quarterly performance reports from the Chief Executive ensure that monitoring of activity and outcomes against targets is systematic and routine. Key performance information, including feedback from service users, complaints and benchmarked 'traffic lights' progress measures are reported to the Management Board of Chief Officers. Improvement in services are evident across the Council. Sixty-seven per cent of performance indicators have improved since 2002/03 with 52 per cent now in the top two performing quartiles and 22 per cent in the worst performing quartile. Reliable performance information enables effort to be targeted where it is needed, with good examples in education and children's social services. These include the targeting of support through ethnic minorities achievement grant at underachieving groups of pupils with a consequent improvement in their attainment at Key Stage 2.
- 64 A clear and detailed framework for integrated service and financial planning is now in place. Interim guidance was produced for 2005/06 but timelines were short and restricted the scope of integrated planning for this year. Group and service plans are subjected to effective challenge by other senior officers with the aim of promoting efficiency and effectiveness across the Council. The framework does not address the integration of service and financial planning with partners.
- 65 The performance of key strategic partnerships is monitored and reported, but this is not comprehensive. Reports on performance against the Council Plan and community strategy focus largely on statutory performance indicators or progress against tasks rather than outcomes and their impact on local people. Reports of partnership activity do not enable local stakeholders and residents to be fully informed about the resources involved, for example the 2004/05 annual report on Healthy Hillingdon.
- 66 Cabinet members are effectively involved in performance management. Executive briefings, the Hillingdon Improvement Programme (HIP) Steering Group and regular meetings with service directors ensure regular monitoring of performance and projects. Overview and Scrutiny members receive frequent updates of performance information and poor performance which has been used to trigger scrutiny, as in the review of attainment at Key Stage 3. However, their programme of work is not aligned with the Council's risk register and the approach is not sufficiently cross-cutting.

- 67 Targets are realistic but not always challenging. The Council is using the LPSA framework to effectively stretch performance in key priority areas. However, other improvement targets such as those set through Group Plans and the BVPP are not always challenging. For example the 2005/06 target for the number of secondary school pupils permanently excluded per 1,000 pupils at 2.2 compared with the 2004/05 target of 2.4. Target setting for longer term objectives are generally not SMART.
- 68 Underperformance is effectively addressed through performance clinics with clear results. Focused problem solving in teams and services has improved older people's assessments resulting in significant reductions in waiting lists and better management of hospital discharges. High risk areas or cross cutting themes for which a corporate response is necessary are taken into the HIP and receive dedicated support from a specialist team of change managers. Best value reviews have been used effectively to identify options for improvement. The Management Board reviews performance quarterly, including the outcomes of performance clinics. However, there is insufficient opportunity for sharing learning from performance clinics across departments or for tackling performance issues more holistically.
- 69 Co-ordination of consultation and engagement with service users and residents is improving but feedback on the impact of their input is not consistent. The Council gathers feedback from service users and residents through a variety of means and there are examples of this being used to good effect in planning. However, the Council does not routinely inform service users and residents about how their views have contributed to change.
- 70 The Council is proactively using complaints to drive improvements in service performance. Complaints are included in Executive briefings and considered by the HIP Steering Group. The HIP customer access project is addressing identified low and decreasing satisfaction with complaints handling. Customer Care Standards have been re-launched, guidance has been revised and the new CRM system has been adopted as the corporate complaints system.
- 71 Frontline workers and middle managers are clear about their role in delivering priorities and appreciate the greater clarity and transparency which has developed over recent times. The Council has responded to a staff survey which demonstrated that staff would welcome a sharper focus on individual performance. Managers are receiving training and support to tackle poor performance and rates of absenteeism are showing improvement. Plans are in place to link pay progression to performance.
- 72 The Council recognises the importance of staff motivation in delivering improved services. Staff are surveyed regularly to identify their attitude to their work and to the Council. Effective action has been taken to address staff concerns including a range of measures to improve communication and contact between staff from across the Council and members of the cabinet.

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

- 73** The Council is becoming more open to learning and external challenge. It compares and evaluates its processes, costs and outcomes with those of others as part of service planning and best value review. Recommendations from an IDeA peer review have resulted in the establishment of a Learning Exchange Database which monitors planned and received visits with peers. However, these are early days and their impact is not yet clear.

What has been achieved?

- 74 The Council is performing adequately in its achievement of the shared priorities overall.
- 75 The Council is performing well in a number of shared priority areas including safer and stronger, healthier communities and aspects of sustainable communities and transport. Visible and recognised achievements have been delivered in the Council's priority areas of community safety and the environment, reflecting the issues which matter to local people. Strong partnership working with the police has had some positive effects on reducing crime levels and in safer neighbourhood areas and these have been noticed by local communities. The Council has delivered visible improvements to the streetscene including improvements to the condition of roads and pavements, street cleaning, and recycling. Health promotion activities have been broad, follow evidence based practice and are clearly targeted at areas and groups most at need. Life expectancy is improving, although it is difficult to assess the contribution the Council's activities have made to reducing health inequalities. There are examples of good linkages across shared priority areas between Council departments and with partners which are delivering benefits for localities and communities, as seen in the refurbishment of Botwell Green basket ball pitch.
- 76 The Council is at an earlier stage of implementation in terms of delivering the longer term ambitions for a sustainable local economy, older people, raising educational attainment and tackling issues around transport and air quality. In general achievements are not always reported as outcomes, making it more difficult for the Council to demonstrate to its communities the measure of its success.
- 77 The shared priorities are reflected within the ambitions of the community strategy and the Council Plan. There is a clear 'golden thread' linking ambitions to service plans. Performance management within the Council has been strengthened and there is a clear focus on the achievement of targets. However, there is a general recognition by the LSP that outcome measures need to be strengthened to drive continuous improvement. There is some good sharing of performance data between partners, such as with the police but this is not yet a consistent picture.

- 78 The Council has been doing much to increase its own and partners' capacity to deliver the ambitions of the community strategy, in some areas this has been more successful than others. For example the Council in partnership with the PCT has been effective in building capacity of health promotion specialists. Partnership working is particularly strong with the police and the council has increased capacity to deliver on issues such as anti-social behaviour (ASB) through funding the police ASB team and additional police community support officers. For other shared priority areas partnership working is at an earlier stage, such as the recently formed business forum and it is too early to assess the impact of these in delivering outcomes. Whilst there has been some successful transport lobbying, the Council does not use all its available capacity, such as its members of parliament to exert maximum influence at a regional-level to address some of the more difficult transport and accessibility issues which face the borough.

Sustainable communities and transport

- 79 The draft Local Development framework is developing well and clearly aligns with the community strategy and other key strategies such as those for transport, the economy, and housing. Balancing economic development and housing needs is demonstrated through the draft Area Action Plan for South Hillingdon. Relaxation of Heathrow planning controls support the Council's plans for regenerating this area in line with London Plan objectives. The Council has successfully lobbied to secure the Heathrow Express stopping service at Hayes and this has acted as a catalyst for development opportunities in the area, for example, Porters Way and Bourne Avenue. Lobbying for Hayes inclusion as part of the first phase of West London tram development and creation of an integrated transport hub to improve accessibility has not been successful. However, the Council's case is accepted and the Hayes 'branch' will form a later stage.
- 80 The Council has adopted a range of planning guidance and conditions to minimise the negative environmental effects of development and support sustainable development and these have featured in the planning process for a number of years. Examples include Brunel University (library and student accommodation), Stockley Park business park, Heathrow Terminal 5 and social housing provision.
- 81 The Council's ambitions to achieve 'a prosperous borough' are at an earlier stage of implementation. The impact on employment rates to date has been limited, although there are signs that the proportion of young people not in full time employment, education or training is starting to decrease. Improved partnership working between the Council, BAA, voluntary sector and other partners is now providing pathways to employment, including opportunities for the disadvantaged through initiatives such as the E2E programme and Heathrow Construction Training Centre apprenticeships.

- 82 Support for local businesses has been limited. Whilst there are examples of positive initiatives such as the 'Meet the buyer' events run in partnership with BAA and the parking 'stop and shop' initiative, there is little further evidence of positive outcomes or there having been active support for business start up and growth. Initiatives to address low skills levels, and help meet the needs and increase competitiveness of local businesses have been underdeveloped. Many of these issues are to be addressed through the LDA funded Heathrow City Programme which is underway, along with initiatives that have started during 2005 as part of the strategy for a sustainable economy.
- 83 The Council is working effectively to address the area's housing requirements, including the needs of vulnerable people. Housing priorities take account of national, regional and West London circumstances, clearly align with the community strategy themes and support achievements under other shared priorities. London affordable housing targets are being exceeded and supplemented through initiatives such as the void 'trickle transfer' scheme demonstrating the Council's achievement against one of the key areas of local concern. Lettings plans ensure that new developments reflect the community profile and greater choice for prospective tenants is offered through the West London Locata choice based lettings scheme with vulnerable people actively helped through the process.
- 84 Supported housing is provided for people with learning disabilities and extra care sheltered housing schemes for the elderly to promote independence. The landlords' finders' fee scheme provides private rented opportunities for people who would otherwise become homeless, and the Council has stopped using bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless families with children, meeting the government's target a year early. Good progress has been made in meeting the decent homes standard which incorporates homes security measures and installation of heating systems. The Council performs well in making housing fit for vulnerable private sector households. Supporting People services are effective.
- 85 The Council is making good progress in delivering its ambitions for 'a clean and attractive borough' through investments in streetscene services. Recycling performance is good and significantly exceeds the statutory recycling target. Investment in park improvements has resulted in the Council being awarded three green flag awards this year. Street cleaning is improving. Fly tipping hotspots have been effectively addressed and offenders prosecuted with the help of mobile CCTV cameras. There has been good progress against the PSA target to improve local roads in line with residents concerns. However, waste production remains high and the reasons for this remain unclear despite the Council and partners efforts to understand this better through commissioned research. Further work is required to encourage environmental sustainability across the Council and its key partners, including businesses, and to meet street cleaning LPSA targets.

- 86 Effective partnership working is ensuring that community safety is tackled as part of environmental initiatives, for example, through park refurbishment projects, car park improvements, Chrysalis funded projects, and the join up of operational delivery of the two Streetscene pilot projects with Safer Neighbourhood teams. Positive outcomes arising from these projects are detailed within the Safer/Stronger section.
- 87 Transport achievements are mixed. Initiatives to tackle air quality and congestion, key areas of local concern, and to encourage greater use of sustainable transport are being implemented but have not yet had a demonstrable impact. Examples include, the three-year programme to unblock 30 local congestion hotspots and safe routes to school programme. Pollution and congestion on major roads crossing the borough and connecting with the airport, such as the M4 remain an issue for the Council. Poor north/south transport links and public transport accessibility to local hospitals and into the borough from South Buckinghamshire remain unresolved. The Council has not effectively used its local MPs to pursue its case, and is pursuing these issues at sub-regional level through, for example, its established partnership networks with neighbouring boroughs. Funding has recently been secured from the West London transport partnership to commission a study to look at north/south orbital routes because of the existing level of settlements from TfL for bus route improvements.

Safer and stronger communities

- 88 The CSDSPI is a strong partnership with clear shared ownership and commitment to reducing crime and the fear of crime. The supporting suite of strategies are based on clear analysis of local problems to support delivery of the ambition for 'a safe borough', whilst addressing national policies. Police and Council budgets are managed as a single pot by a multi agency resource group. The Council have contributed additional resources reflecting the importance of this issue for local people, including three police ASB officers, six police community support officers and a joint commissioning manager for the drug and alcohol action team. The partnership is recognised by various stakeholders as a key strength. Strong partnership working with pooling of resources enables partners to collectively focus on the priorities for action.
- 89 Safer Neighbourhood teams have strengthened integrated joined up working on the ground with positive results recognised by local communities. The eight pilot teams have brought together Council and partner field staff to target issues of local concern within focussed geographical areas. Feedback from the public has been positive with reported improved community spirit contributing to quality of life outcomes. Reductions in crime have been achieved with 35 per cent fewer crimes recorded in Botwell Green, with domestic burglaries and vehicle crime down from 2003 to 2004 by 59 and 43 per cent respectively. Plans are being developed to roll these out to the rest of the borough.

¹ Community safety and drugs strategic partnership includes Drug Action Team and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership which merged in 2003.

- 90 Overall, crime has reduced with strong achievements in priority areas. Over the lifetime of the crime and disorder strategy, crime has reduced by 5 per cent with vehicle crime down 12 per cent and 9 per cent in 2004 and 2005 respectively, and with 16.6 per cent reductions in domestic burglaries (one of the top community priorities) the partnership is on track to achieve its LPSA target by March 2006. However, robberies and violence against the person are increasing.
- 91 Community safety issues are integrated into service planning. Reviews of compliance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act demonstrate widespread activities to support promotion of community safety. There are clear links between community safety and environment and youth services around graffiti, fly tipping and anti-social behaviour as well as more specific issues to support victims of domestic violence in housing.
- 92 The Council with its partners is being proactive to reduce fear of crime, but despite this levels remain high and are rising. A joint media strategy has ensured that only two incidents of negative reporting in the local press have occurred since its implementation. The partnership has set levels of concern about crime, a complex issue, as the challenging key indicator of success. However, three out of the four targets relating to public fear of crime have worsened from the 2005 survey. Whilst there are some early indications from the recent annual residents survey that people feel safer in Hillingdon, by the partnerships own measures of success the situation has got worse. The partnership is working on a more proactive way to measure local levels of fear of crime.
- 93 The Council has a clear and balanced approach to tackling ASB reflecting the local importance of this issue and has achieved some outcomes. These include a range of preventative and enforcement activities including investment in diversionary activities for youth, selective alley gating of problem back roads to installation and deployment of fixed and mobile CCTV systems, and use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts. The Safer Neighbourhood teams have been instrumental in tackling ASB in pilot areas and resident satisfaction has improved as a result. LPSA targets to reduce non-accidental fires in partnership with the fire brigade and to remove all graffiti within two days have been exceeded and met respectively. However, graffiti is returning as fast as it is being cleaned and preventative measures are not yet securing a significant change in behaviour. The Council is better at measuring the broad range of activities to tackle ASB than it is in consistently measuring the outcomes and impact of these on local people, and which are more effective in preventing ASB.

- 94 The Council, with its partners, is working in an integrated and proactive way to tackle the harm created by drugs and alcohol. A combination of hard and soft measures is employed. Jointly commissioned services provide a range of before and after treatment and support services to drug mis-users. Support is provided at every stage of the CJS to ensure rapid access to structured drug treatment and aftercare. Licensing policies are aligned, with the whole borough being a controlled drinking zone. The Council uses a variety of education and awareness raising programmes including curriculum support, use of theatre companies and popular 'education for life' bus to raise awareness within the school setting. However, evidence that harmful behaviours have reduced as a result of the interventions and activities is lacking.
- 95 The Council has been proactive to reduce accidents with some positive results. Road safety has improved with significant reductions in the performance indicator relating to killed and serious injuries following programmes tackling hotspot locations. Education and awareness raising has been broad, including advice to young people about medicines and safety, activity sessions for older people include promotion of good balance to prevent falls as well as information about preventing accidents in the home.
- 96 The Council is well placed to deal with emergency situations. There are sound and tested business continuity plans in place for all major operational facilities and ICT. Procedures are supported by a comprehensive GIS information system held by the Council which aids planning when incidents occur. The Council has applied learning from test exercises including a new registration process of people at rest centres to assess their needs which is applied across North West London boroughs to enable mutual aid. Further work is ongoing to improve the extent of business continuity planning across all services.
- 97 The Council is committed to building stronger communities but its approach is not yet systematic and co-ordinated. The Council's commitment to community cohesion is encapsulated within the 'opportunities for all' theme of the community strategy. The role of the voluntary and community sectors in reaching isolated communities is recognised through the compact and supported through funding linked to community strategy themes. A number of mechanisms and forums now exist to improve engagement with harder to reach groups and communities such as the establishment of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Forum, and in addition, the Council has moved swiftly with its partners in response to the London bombings to reassure and engage with communities. Individual service departments are doing much to link with isolated groups, but this is not yet a systematic and co-ordinated approach and not all communities feel as connected as others. The community strategy's vision for a borough of stronger neighbourhoods will be progressed through locality based working. Plans for this and the roll out of neighbourhood teams to remaining 14 wards across the borough are currently being developed. Diversity and equalities monitoring and evaluation of participation and take up of services is not sufficiently consistent to demonstrate how well the Council is progressing.

Healthier communities

- 98** In general terms the health of the population in Hillingdon compares favourably with the rest of England and is improving. Life expectancy for both men and women has increased and infant mortality remains below the regional and England averages. In two key areas, coronary heart disease (CHD) and cancer, mortality rates in Hillingdon are average or better compared with England. However, there are pockets of relative deprivation, predominantly in the south of the borough which lead to relative health inequalities, for example CHD and cancer along with diabetes which exhibits higher incidences than in England as a whole. Whilst there have been improvements, it is difficult for the Council to demonstrate its contribution to these outcomes.
- 99** A clear picture of health inequalities mapped out by ward is proactively being used to target activities of partners. Tackling the underlying determinants of health through a broad range of activities, and health promotion activities remains in line with the Council's and partners commitment to resolve inequalities. However, the Council's input into the initial ward profiles work was minimal, being predominantly driven by Hillingdon PCT.
- 100** Despite the relatively good health picture, the Council, with its partners, remains committed to reducing inequalities in line with its community strategy ambitions. In partnership with the PCT the Council has invested heavily in co-ordinating the health promotion activities of specialists on the ground to maximise their impact, as well as mainstreaming health promotion through its own services. Healthy Hillingdon, the joint health promotion partnership, established in 1999 has implemented a vast array of health promotion activities in partnership with others. All activities are based on evidence based practice, using proxy based measures of success. However, it is difficult to assess the impact of the activities. The second Health Promotion Strategy 2006 to 2016, currently out to consultation, recognises the need to develop more outcome based measures of success.
- 101** The partnership has been effective at targeting vulnerable and minority communities on various general and specific health related issues. The Healthy Hillingdon Schools scheme covers 75 local schools with healthy eating programmes targeted at those with more than 20 per cent free school meals. Partnership projects such as HOPE (Health, Opportunities, Prevention and Education) targeted refugees, asylum seekers, traveller community and single homeless people resulting amongst others in an increase in GP registrations. Whilst there has been a broad range of activities, measuring their impact on improving general and specific health overall is more difficult.

- 102** There is a broad offer of activities to promote mental and physical wellbeing with some positive results. Examples include fitness programmes for older people, promotion of allotments with free 'grow your own' taster sessions, engagement of minority ethnic groups in libraries to examples of very specific localised initiatives such as the restoration of Botwell Green basket ball court to promote mental well being and physical health of 14 to 16 year olds. Usage of libraries by BME groups is increasing as are the numbers of people regularly attending sports and leisure facilities. There is positive promotion of children's mental health through Parenting programmes, and specific initiatives such as the Pyramid group which provides after school clubs for children at risk of exclusion or underachievers with low self esteem. Improved access to CAHMs and good referral procedures are now in place.
- 103** The Council is making progress with health partners to deliver more integrated services. Hillingdon Hospital and social services are improving access to a range of services for older people to support independent living at home. The single care assessments are in place and there are improvements across the board in helping vulnerable people to live independently. Needs assessments of hard-to-reach groups for mental health, learning disabilities and physical and sensory impairment are now in place and there is join-up of health, education, connexions and SureStart services to tackle teenage pregnancy. Whilst there is a holistic and targeted approach to tackling teenage pregnancy, this has not yet been successful in reducing the high rate of teenage pregnancies.

Older people

- 104** The Council provides a range of services and activities for older people outside of social care and health. These include the publication of leisure directory aimed at the over fifties, and the provision of a range of taster sessions in variety of sports which are aimed at the broader wellbeing of older people. Events and activities have been held in a range of venues to promote personal safety for older people, to prevent accidents and falls in the home. However, outcome based measures for the difference these initiatives and services make to the well being of older people are currently being developed.
- 105** There have been considerable improvements in the social care services for older people in the last year. Priority has been given to the modernisation of social care services, following the CSCI review in 2004. Working in partnership with health bodies as well as voluntary and community organisations, the Council has delivered a range of initiatives which have resulted in improved performance. Notably, the waiting time for assessment has been reduced and has been sustained over the last year, removing 1,800 older people from the waiting list.

- 106** The Council has successfully delivered a joint integrated equipment store with the PCT, and the single assessment process is established. Significant progress is being made in the implementation of direct payments, with performance now in the upper performance bands, and the Council has established joint working with the Department of Work and Pensions to provide income maximisation services for older people. The Council is prepared to learn from others to improve its own services and has established links with other councils to learn about assistive technology. These developments are relatively recent, and the specific impact that they have made is not yet evident.
- 107** The Council is starting to provide more culturally sensitive services. The housing service has undertaken research with minority ethnic communities to determine the best way to provide services to meet their cultural needs, which is being used to influence future service developments, such as the extra care sheltered housing. In re-letting the 'meals on wheels' contract, the Council has ensured that the provider can cater for cultural requirements by offering more choice. Staff undertaking assessments of older people have received training to help them make decisions about providing culturally appropriate services which provide value for money for the Council.
- 108** Consultation and engagement with older people is improving. The Older People's Assembly and associated steering group is well supported by officers and has had a clear influence on the development of the Older People's Plan. The Assembly is represented on the Joint Strategy Group and through to the wider LSP. Planned use of telephone conferencing and on line chat rooms will enable wider representation, particularly for those who are housebound. Links are emerging with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Forum to ensure the needs of older people from that group are met. Housing services have captured older people's views on value for money through focus groups. The representation of minority ethnic communities is recognised as an issue that needs improvement, with planned activities contained within the Older People's Plan. Not all publications are presented in appropriate formats to enable accessibility for all sections of the community.
- 109** Co-ordination of services across the Council is just beginning. The departmental champions have not yet met, and liaison is restricted to housing and social services. There are plans for the champions to take a role in the monitoring and review of the Older People's plan but as yet there is no action plan in place to support the delivery of the aspirations it sets out. Much of the activity for older people is new, exists in isolated parts of the Council, and it is too early to identify the outcomes of the work, or assess the progress that is being made to achieve the National Service Framework.

Children and young people

- 110** The Council is working constructively with partners at both strategic and operational levels to provide a range of services to children and young people. It is focused on improving value for money and some services, such as behaviour support offer good value. Some costs, for example residential social care, remain relatively high but services provide adequate value for money overall.
- 111** Most children and young people are healthy but more vulnerable groups and those living in disadvantaged parts of the borough are more likely to have poorer health outcomes. In most cases, local partners work well with the Council in ensuring that children and young people receive adequate health care. Integrated services, for example in the SureStart area, are contributing well to improving health outcomes. Most schools are supportive of the Healthy Schools programme and engage in a range of health related work. Good work is taking place to promote positive mental health among young people. However, vulnerable groups experience gaps in provision through poor targeting of resources and this is impacting adversely on health outcomes. The teenage pregnancy rate is high and rising, particularly in areas of relative disadvantage.
- 112** The Council's Social Services department provides good support to looked after children and those on the child protection register. Children and young people appear safe. Those at risk of abuse or serious harm are protected well by effective multi-agency work across services. Social work teams are generally well staffed and morale is high. Care leavers receive an acceptable service and pathway plans are used productively. The number of unallocated children in need cases held on duty is minimal.
- 113** Overall education outcomes for most children and young people are adequate. Educational attainment remains at or just below national averages and, although there are tentative signs of improvement, it is too early to identify the impact of new investment by the Council in schools and services. There has been effective targeting of support at some black and minority ethnic groups. Services work well together to improve attendance and provision for excluded pupils and those unable to attend school is good. Children and young people who are looked after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities under achieve. Looked after children educated in local schools do not achieve as well as those who are placed outside the borough. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is above national averages but below for ages 7, 11 and 14.

- 114** Children and young people are encouraged to develop positive relationships and become involved in local youth and community activities. They make good progress in their personal and social development. Effective multi-agency initiatives are in place to address anti-social behaviour and to keep children and young people involved in positive activities during their leisure time. Effective support is given to most young people who are experiencing difficulties although transition arrangements for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities are inadequate. There are few opportunities for children to become involved in shaping the services they use. The Council's youth service is adequate and improving well.
- 115** Parents and carers are provided with comprehensive information on childcare options and finance to support them in employment. The Connexions service provides good advice and targeted support to young people from diverse backgrounds to help them prepare for working life. An effective 14-19 strategic partnership has been successful in developing the range of vocational pathways and increasing numbers of young people are staying on post-16 in education, training or employment. However, young people aged 16 and over with learning difficulties and disabilities in Hillingdon have limited opportunities for education and training. Housing for young people is decent and appropriate to meet most young people's needs.
- 116** The partnership has made adequate progress in integrating children's services. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board (CYPSPB), a multi-agency group chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council, is the overarching planning group for integrated children's services and involves key partners, including schools and voluntary sector representatives. Significant decisions about the structure and procedures of the new service have still to be made. A Children and Young People's Plan is in preparation.
- 117** The overall capacity of the Council and its partners is adequate and financial management at the Council is good. Savings have been identified and redirected to priority areas. Capacity is weakest in relation to the PCT where significant financial pressures mean that the provision of health services for children and young people is not secure. The Council is already incurring additional costs associated with the provision of therapies for children and young people with special educational needs as a result of current shortfalls in services delivered by the PCT.
- 118** Performance management at the Council is adequate overall and there is an effective framework for monitoring performance against current targets in Children's Social Services and in Education, Youth and Leisure. Performance clinics have tackled underperformance effectively in a number of service areas, such as the 14-19 strategy. Partners recognise that sharper outcome measures are necessary to assess the impact of performance on service users. Capacity to improve at the Council and in local services overall is adequate.

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 London Borough of Hillingdon was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 7 to 18 November 2005.