

Service Inspection Report

February 2006



Cultural Services

Brighton and Hove City Council

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Contents

Service Inspection	4
Summary	5
Scoring the service	6
Recommendations	9
Report	11
Context	11
The locality	11
The Council	12
The Council's cultural service	12
How good is the service?	14
What has the service aimed to achieve?	14
Is the service meeting the needs of the local community and users?	16
Access and community focus	16
Diversity	18
User experience	19
Economic vitality	20
Learning	22
Satisfaction with service quality	23
Is the service delivering value for money?	24
What are the prospects for improvement to the service?	27
What is the service track record in delivering improvement?	27
How well does the service manage performance?	28
Does the service have the capacity to improve?	32

Service Inspection

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

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

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

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

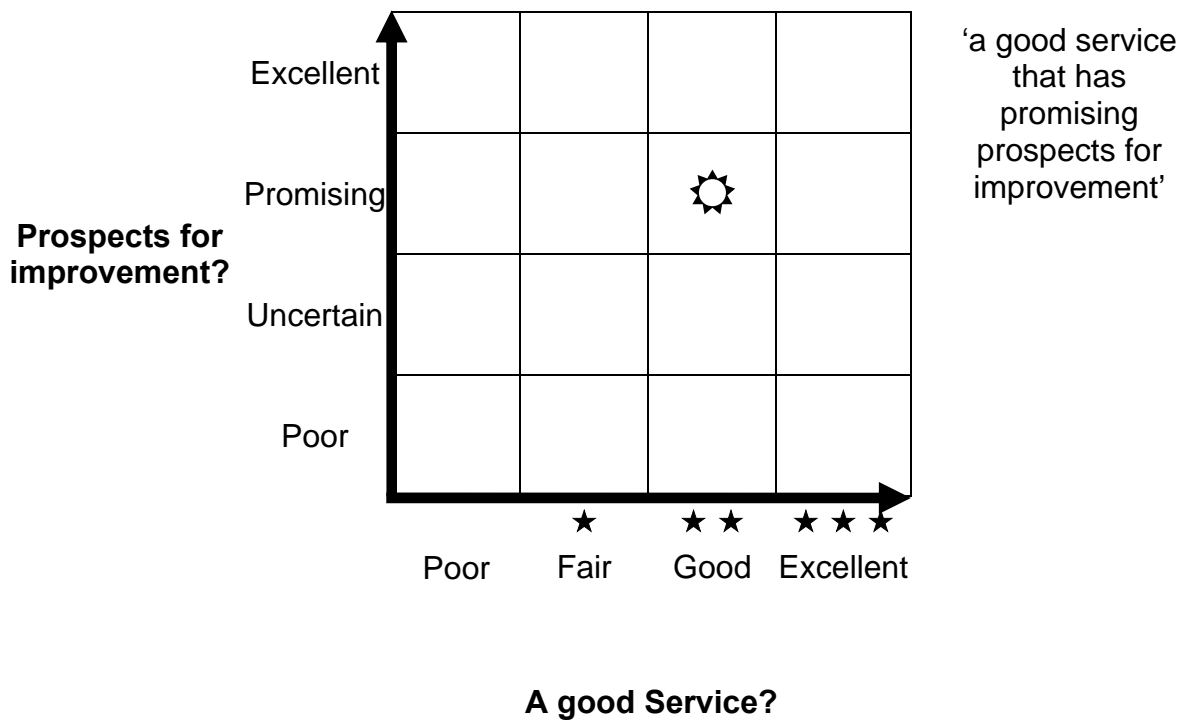
Summary

- 1 Brighton and Hove City Council provides **good** cultural services which have **promising** prospects for improvement.
- 2 Cultural services are important to the Council. Political and corporate leadership and support for cultural services are strong. There is clear understanding of the role culture can play in achieving local priorities. The Council's own challenging cultural ambitions are based on what is important locally and focus on improving the quality of life. Overall, strategic cultural partnerships are strong and the Council is considered an effective partner by key stakeholders. It demonstrates confident cultural leadership and works well as an enabler and facilitator. However, some stakeholders have unrealistically high expectations of the Council's ability to continue to deliver cultural improvements. This may be due to the Council not communicating its priorities as effectively as it could.
- 3 Cultural services contribute well to local priorities. The Council can clearly demonstrate outcomes that contribute to improving the quality of life for local people from the range of cultural activity it supports. This includes providing learning opportunities for personal and skills development and promoting economic vitality. High-quality activity using imaginative and innovative approaches is stimulating creativity and encouraging a vibrant cultural environment. Targeted communities are successfully engaged in cultural activity, such as people from minority communities and young people. Access is improving using ICT. Diversity issues are being tackled through targeted programmes.
- 4 The service's track record of delivering cultural improvements is significant. It responds well to external challenge and uses its learning to deliver improvements. Plans are in place to tackle weaknesses and the Council is progressing plans to deliver its challenging ambitions for significant improvement in leisure and conference facilities.
- 5 However, communities, such as families on lower incomes, make limited use of some cultural activity. The Council has yet to explore and tackle effectively any barriers to participation, such as opening hours, location of activities and affordability. Local satisfaction is mixed. With some individual service areas satisfaction is high and improving but in contrast levels in other services are low and not improving. Access for people with disabilities is improving but the visitor experience at some facilities is inadequate.
- 6 The Council is not yet taking a fully effective approach in delivering and managing value for money in cultural services. It is maximising its resources in a variety of ways. It delivers cultural improvements through PFI, partnerships and grant aiding to maximise the impact of its resources on the community. However, it has not yet set comprehensive quality standards for the level of service local people can expect. There is more to do to explore the relationship between service costs, quality and satisfaction levels. In addition, performance management is under-developed with target setting not fully effective.

Scoring the service

- 7 We have assessed Brighton and Hove City Council as providing a ‘good’, two-star service that has promising prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Table 1 Scoring chart¹:



Source: Audit Commission

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

- 8 The service is 'good, two stars' because of the following.
- It is making a strong contribution to improve the quality of life for local people through a diverse and high-quality cultural offer.
 - It has a clear understanding of the local needs and aspirations of most communities.
 - Local satisfaction is high with most cultural activity.
 - Access is widening using new technologies.
 - Targeted programmes are successfully promoting diversity.
 - Numerous learning opportunities through cultural activity are encouraging the personal development of local people.
 - Effective support enables a vibrant arts and creative industries environment.
 - The quality of the cultural offer is successful in supporting the economic vitality of the city.
 - Effective use of external funding, cultural partnerships and grant aiding cultural activity helps the service make good use of allocated resources.
- 9 However, weaknesses include the following.
- The service is not yet tackling barriers to participation to encourage take up by some socio-economic communities.
 - A lack of defined quality standards to assist local people understand the level of cultural service they can expect.
 - The Council is not clear if it is routinely achieving value for money in cultural services.
 - The quality of the visitor experience is mixed and satisfaction with some services is lower than the best performing councils.
 - Physical access to cultural activity and facilities for people with disabilities is currently mixed.
- 10 The service has promising prospects for improvement because of the following.
- It has a clear and long-term vision for what it wants to achieve for cultural services.
 - The Council is an effective cultural leader, and it has strong cultural partnerships to enable and deliver further improved outcomes.
 - Plans are in place to tackle weaknesses.
 - It has a significant track record of achieving improved outcomes.
 - Satisfaction is increasing following improvements.
 - It has high-calibre staff, committed to seeking further improvement.
 - The Council has strengthened its capacity through allocating additional resources and enhancing skills.

11 However, weaknesses include the following.

- Performance management is under-developed including a lack of outcome-focused targets and limited mechanisms to measure success.
- No consistent approach to using cost and quality information to achieve value for money.
- Limited opportunities to share learning.
- Workforce planning under-developed.
- There are some shortcomings in communication with stakeholders on priorities for improvement.

Recommendations

- 12 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the Council. In addition, we identify the approximate costs² and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context, the inspection team recommends that the Council should do the following.

R1 Improve participation in cultural activity and the design and implementation of provision for all sections of the local community by:

- *identifying gaps in provision and barriers to participation;*
- *tackling those gaps and barriers by targeting provision more effectively and improving access; and*
- *improving communication with stakeholders.*

- 13 The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- better prioritisation to support investment decisions;
- improving access by raising awareness of cultural activities;
- improving satisfaction rates with services and the Council overall;
- increasing participation in cultural activities; and
- improving quality of life outcomes.

- 14 The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by December 2006.

R2 Integrate value for money in cultural services by:

- *developing quality standards for service provision;*
- *setting clear targets for service improvement focused on outcomes;*
- *measuring the impact of new initiatives on both the revenue costs and the experience of users; and*
- *developing a consistent system for analysing customer feedback.*

² Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual Service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 per cent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

10 Cultural Services | Recommendations

- 15 The expected benefits of this recommendation are:
- improved strategic decision-making;
 - focusing service activity on outcomes for users;
 - improved investment decisions;
 - learning from customer feedback; and
 - improved customer satisfaction.
- 16 The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by September 2006.

Report

Context

The locality

- 17 The city of Brighton and Hove is on the south coast of England. It is a densely populated urban area with 3,042 people per square kilometre, compared to the average for the South East of 424. The city benefits from good road and rail transport links, with easy access to London and Gatwick airport.
- 18 The population of Brighton and Hove is 247,817 (Census 2001) and rising. It is a diverse population. Almost 12 per cent of the population are from ethnic groups other than white British (2001 Census), slightly below the national average of 13 per cent. The city's ethnic communities include Asian or British Asian and Chinese people. The largest ethnic community is people who identify themselves as White but not British. There is a large lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in the city. Almost 1.5 per cent of people are living in a same-sex couple relationship, which is significantly higher than the national average of 0.20 per cent. The city's population is also relatively young, with a higher proportion of people aged 18 to 45 years compared with the national average.
- 19 The profile of the city is one of sharp contrasts. Educational attainment for 15-year-olds is below the national average. Unemployment is above the national average at 3.5 per cent. It is ranked 83 out of 354 councils in England in terms of social deprivation, placing it in the bottom 25 per cent of most deprived areas in the country. Areas of deprivation include East Brighton and Queens Park. However, overall the population is well-educated. Over a third of people of working age are educated to NVQ Level 4 and above, and 50 per cent of them are managers or employed in a professional occupation. Average earnings are above the national average, but below those of other areas in the South East. House prices have risen sharply in recent years. Although still below the regional average, it is an expensive area to own a house and has more rented properties than the regional average.
- 20 Tourism is vital to the local economy as it supports an estimated 12 per cent of local jobs. It brings an estimated £378 million to the city each year and attracts almost 8 million visitors. Creative industries are the fastest growing sector in the city. It accounts for 9 per cent of employment and represents one in five of all businesses in the city. Other key industries are retail, education, health and knowledge based businesses.

The Council

- 21 Brighton and Hove City is a unitary council and comprises 54 councillors. There is a Labour-led minority administration with a Leader and committee system managing the business of the Council.
- 22 The Council's overall budget for 2005/06 is £289.5 million. This has increased by around 5 per cent based on a like for like comparison with the 2004/05 budget.
- 23 The Audit Commission carried out a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of the Council in 2002, and updates on service performance annually since then. These assessments judged the Council's performance as 'good' in 2002, which slipped back to 'fair' in 2003. Progress in education, planning and housing benefits improved the score in 2004 to 'good'. In 2005, the Council has been judged as improving well, and a 'three-star' council.
- 24 The Council's priorities for service improvement are identified in the Corporate Plan 2004 to 2007 which sets out its 'key deliverables' as:
 - developing a prosperous and sustainable economy;
 - liveability (improving quality of life in the city);
 - social well-being and caring for vulnerable people; and
 - thriving 14-year-olds able to participate in city life.

The Council's cultural service

- 25 Brighton and Hove City Council is engaged in delivering and enabling cultural services in a variety of ways in the city. There are a range of cultural activities which the Council directly provides through its Cultural Services Directorate. These are the Royal Pavilion, arts and creative industries development, museums, libraries and tourism. The Environment Directorate provides parks and open spaces, sports development and the King Alfred leisure centre. The Council also plays an enabling and influencing role through partnerships with other organisations, working with different service providers and by using grant aid. Significant partnerships include the following.
 - Working with DC Leisure Management Ltd, a leisure contractor who manages on behalf of the city council one sports complex, two leisure centres and two swimming pools in the city.
 - Grant-aiding notable venues and organisations in the city, such as the contemporary gallery and artist resource centre, Fabrica and the venue and concert hall, the Dome.
 - As lead partner in the South East Museums Hub, funded by Renaissance in the Regions programme.

- 26 This inspection of the Council's cultural services considered the effectiveness of the above service activity and approaches in meeting local needs. It also assessed the service's success in achieving value for money, delivering improvement, managing performance and ensuring there is sufficient capacity to improve services.

How good is the service?

What has the service aimed to achieve?

- 27 Culture and its importance to the aspirations of the city are highlighted in the community strategy for Brighton and Hove. The strategy, containing the vision to become a City of Opportunity by 2020, has eight priority areas. The Brighton and Hove Local Strategic Partnership developed these in consultation with local people. Culture features under the enterprising city priority. This aims to create:
- a vibrant, socially and culturally diverse place with a wide range of job opportunities supported by accessible childcare. A city that supports businesses to grow, encourages investment, innovation, and a healthy and sustainable economy and actively promotes learning and training opportunities for people of all ages.
- 28 Specific objectives of the strategy relate to major cultural developments planned for the city and to supporting lifelong learning through cultural activity. These include:
- 'redeveloping the King Alfred leisure centre and surrounding site to provide a modern sports centre and housing; and
 - capitalising on our museums, Dome complex, new Jubilee Library and redeveloped Brighton Centre to create outreach and educational opportunities'.
- 29 A review of the community strategy is currently taking place, with a report to the Local Strategic Partnership due in February 2006. Full council agreement will be sought in March 2006. Proposed additions to cultural related themes include to:
- continue to improve the visitor experience at our museums, Dome complex, Brighton Centre and libraries;
 - develop new and affordable workplaces for creative industries, with the objective of increasing the number of companies in the creative sector; and
 - support accessible and inclusive arts and cultural events which offer participatory opportunities.
- 30 The Council's corporate plan 2004 to 2007 seeks to link the local priorities of the community strategy with corporate priorities and resource allocation. Cultural activity is seen as fundamental to these priorities by making a significant contribution to achieving them.

- 31** The Council understands the local cultural market through its links with the voluntary and commercial sectors, and regional and national agencies. It uses feedback from stakeholders to inform service improvement. In partnership with others, the Council has developed its own cultural strategy. The themes of this strategy reflect corporate and local priorities. There are also specific service strategies, such as for tourism, the creative industries, and sports. Service aims and local priorities for cultural activity are contained in directorate development plans and service plans. For example, cultural services directorate aims reflect the corporate plan's objectives and are to:
- create a culturally vibrant city;
 - develop and sustain a robust, sustainable and dynamic economy that actively encourages new technology and talent;
 - contribute to the health, well-being and education of individuals and communities in the city;
 - promote equalities;
 - working effectively and embedding sustainability; and
 - deliver customer-focused services particularly through ICT and support the change management agenda within the directorate and across the Council
- 32** The Council supports several regional and national partnerships, such as the South East Renaissance in the Regions museum hub, Tourism South East and the Cultural Cities Network. It also engages with more locally-based economic, learning and arts partnerships to further its goals through joint working.
- 33** There are links between specific service strategies, and corporate and partnership strategies. For example, the Local Transport Plan recognises the importance of the visitor economy to the city and seeks to address the potential conflicts between tourism and sustainability. The Brighton and Hove Economic Partnership's strategy reflects the importance of culture to the local economy and to the quality of life within the city. It supports providing assistance to creative and digital media industries and promoting arts and sports activities to visitors.
- 34** Brighton and Hove is a pilot for Local Area Agreements (LAA). The Council supported LAA builds on the community strategy aims. Cultural related themes are reflected in the children and young people block of the agreement. These focus on widening participation in sports and physical activity and increasing the educational opportunities provided for young people living in deprived areas through cultural activity.

Is the service meeting the needs of the local community and users?

Access and community focus

- 35** Overall, the service's level of understanding of local needs and expectations is good and continuing to develop. A high level of understanding is informed by the findings of wide ranging consultation, evaluation and research, such as impact assessments, surveys and focus groups with users and non-users. This information is used well to drive service improvement. An exception to this is in leisure centres where the service's understanding of community needs is under-developed. Examples of where the service has responded effectively to the identified needs of local communities include the following.
- Consultation with a wide range of stakeholders to inform the gallery design, layout of displays and interpretation at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery.
 - Library users and non-users, including people with disabilities and young people helped design refurbished libraries and the Jubilee Library, the new central library in the city.
 - Community needs analysis and community profiles direct sports development projects.
 - The service's approach to stimulating the arts and creative industries is based on positive engagement with local artists and arts organisations.
 - Views of local tourism businesses informed improvements in leisure tourism and conference marketing.
- 36** Cultural services' use of new technologies is strong and continues to improve. The service makes good use of ICT to improve access to resources and services, and to help interpret the collections. It provides eight electronic workstations per 1,000 population. This exceeds the Public Library Service Standard (PLSS) of six. The improved online access to all the museums and art gallery collections of world, fine and decorative art, film and media, toys, archaeology, local history, costume and natural history is hugely successful. Good interpretative information and digitisation work has resulted in a marked increase of nearly 400 per cent over 18 months in the use of the website. Over 97 per cent of users of these web pages are finding them intentionally. Well developed remote access enables wider audiences to participate more fully.

- 37 Use of customer feedback to improve services is adequate. There are examples of improvements introduced as a result of the service listening to the views of stakeholders. These include introducing DVDs available for loan in community libraries and reducing the hire charge for children's DVDs. Better seating and study space are available in several libraries and stock selection and allocation continues to improve to meet needs. Tourism marketing campaigns have changed in response to feedback from the local tourism businesses. However, there is more to do to respond routinely to customer comments and complaints on an ongoing and cross-service basis.
- 38 Access to cultural facilities is mixed. The Council is actively seeking to meet its duty to take reasonable steps to ensure good physical access. It monitors access improvements introduced by grant aided organisations and is tackling the challenges posed by the listed building status of many heritage buildings. Overall, only 61 per cent of Council-owned cultural buildings are accessible for people with physical disabilities. Two museums and 10 out of 14 libraries are fully accessible, as are the Dome and Fabrica art gallery. There are plans in place to ensure a further three libraries are compliant by March 2006. Many facilities have improved sensory access with the installation of induction loops, tactile and large print labelling and through appropriate IT hardware and software. The ground floor of the Royal Pavilion is accessible and access to the rest of the collections of the palace is possible by video and computer programmes. In addition, sports development work is being run in facilities and environments that is easily accessible to target communities.
- 39 Compliance against the PLSS on access is poor. It exceeds the standard for the proportion of households living within a mile of a static library. However, it continues not to meet the standards on opening hours and visits. The aggregate scheduled opening hours per 1,000 population is 91 and the standard is 128 hours and there are 4,403 library visits per 1,000 population and the standard is 6,300. Recent unaudited data shows that visits are increasing significantly across all libraries. However, opening hours remain low, restricting access for those who may wish to use the libraries in person.
- 40 Overall, there is a lack of detailed user information. The service has knowledge of audience profiles of those attending arts events and profiles of library, museum and art gallery visitors. However, it lacks detailed information on visiting patterns and visits by target communities. Also, the profile of leisure centre users is unknown. Without this it lacks a coherent approach to diversity and an integrated approach to increasing use by target communities.
- 41 The service is not consistently engaging local people in service planning and design. At present, there are some examples of where the service has worked well with target communities, such as on new or refurbished libraries. The brief and subsequent project for public art work, for example, is developed with local people or the target audience for the piece and the site developers. Feedback from this approach is positive. However, the service is not taking a holistic approach to engaging people across all the council's cultural activity. This could result in the service missing opportunities to ensure effective cultural planning.

- 42 There is no co-ordinated cultural pricing policy. Many activities are free. Various discount and concession schemes operate, and some efforts are made to offer affordable pricing structures and targeted special offers. For example, a residents discount is available at the Royal Pavilion, the Options card gives access to half price activities and there is a discount scheme for young people. Libraries offer a range of reduced fees and charges. However, there is no overall targeted pricing policy aimed at specific communities and to stimulate new and additional use.
- 43 There is a lack of available quality service standards. The accreditation process for the Quest scheme, the Sport England quality scheme for sports and leisure, highlighted the lack of customer-focused standards in leisure centres. Local people and visitors to the city are unaware of the level of service they can expect from the Council supported cultural activities.

Diversity

- 44 The service has mixed success in encouraging all local communities to participate in cultural activity. Several local communities are under represented in service take-up. Equality impact assessments showed that few museum and art gallery visitors are from the lower socio-economic groups. Only 10 per cent of the Dome's audiences are from these communities. This could be because the Service is not yet using its good knowledge of local needs systematically to develop a cultural offer which is accessible to all communities. However, where it has taken action to encourage specific communities, it has been successful. For example, library users reflect their local community profile, demonstrating the service's success in developing a role for libraries at the heart of local communities. The service recognises it lacks good data on the affordability and accessibility of its cultural services to some communities and sees this as an area for development. Currently, it cannot be confident that its cultural activity is reaching as many people as it could.
- 45 There are successful examples of cultural services promoting diversity proactively through its targeted support and activity. Targeted arts programmes have been highly successful in contributing to breaking down barriers between some communities and agencies. Specific projects have engaged people from minority communities, including refugees and those living in deprived areas in the city. In addition, the Council is an active supporter of the LGBT community and enables the annual Pride festival, which has a strong cultural focus. Examples of successful initiatives are listed below.
- Try it! is an excellent initiative which has significant success in encouraging low paid people, homeless people, people with disabilities, and older people to attend cultural shows in the city. Commercial partners provide substantial discount vouchers for tickets, without which participants would not have been able to afford to attend. Take-up and feedback on their experiences has been extremely positive.
 - The Brighton and Hove Arts Commission funded previews of 'Dirty Wonderland', giving people from Neighbourhood Renewal communities an opportunity to experience performance theatre. Participants were all provided with transport and, although new to modern theatre, enjoyed the opportunity.

- The Twelve project linked a professional artist with people from the local Chinese communities and two newer artists. They have explored their understanding of what it means to be Chinese and created a new collection of objects for the museum and gallery's collection. It has stimulated the creativity of participants who express improvements in their confidence and satisfaction in working in close contact with artists and the diverse World Art collections.
- A dance initiative for young boys in East Brighton led to positive feedback from participants on increased self esteem, with some continuing into dance training.
- A sports participation project also in East Brighton targeted the most sedentary population in a deprived neighbourhood. It was successful in encouraging participants to take part in a range of sports activities to build their confidence and knowledge of the benefits of sport. Their involvement in sport has led to health benefits for individuals.
- A diverse multi-agency programme of cultural events celebrated Refugee Week in 2005. Participants and contributors concluded that these events had started to help break down barriers among refugee communities, BME communities, and the statutory and voluntary organisations.
- As part of the Brighton Festival, a Fringe festival in Whitehawk included artists displaying their work in their own houses. This stimulated the interest of local people and provided an opportunity for local artists to showcase their work.

User experience

- 46** The service contributes strongly to national, regional and local objectives. For example, it promotes health and well-being through its sports development work, and community capacity building through its support for the creative industries. There are clear impacts and outcomes aimed at contributing to improving the quality of life for local people and for those from some target communities. Overall, its approach enables, facilitates and provides a high quality cultural environment. The service is making effective progress against achieving its own and partners' objectives.
- 47** However, the extent of this contribution is unclear. Cultural improvement is planned specifically to contribute to local priorities and to meet many local needs and aspirations. The lack of clarity over the extent of the contribution is because target setting is poor and outcome focused measures of success are not consistently set. The service recognises that there is more to do to measure the outcomes and impacts of its work to be clear about what is being achieved and the pace of improvement. This is important if the service is to maximise its effective use of resources in future improvements.

- 48 Overall, cultural partnerships are achieving improved outcomes for local people, including the tourism industry. There are many examples of joint projects and working across all cultural services internally and with others. An effective partnership with tourism businesses means that the local tourism trade is securing additional business and creating job opportunities for local people. They are positive about these improvements to maintaining a successful and growing visitor economy. Through the Creative Brighton Partnership, the service provides high quality support for artists and digital and creative businesses in the city and enables artist led development and improvement, such as through the Fabrica gallery. Such effective approaches enable the service to achieve more than it could by working alone.
- 49 The quality of the visitor experience is mixed. Refurbished and new facilities offer a high quality environment. Modern reception areas, comfortable seating, well-interpreted displays, refreshment facilities and up-to-date equipment improve access in some libraries and at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery. Staff at all facilities are welcoming, knowledgeable and helpful. However, some facilities, such as some libraries and leisure centres, appear shabby and lack modern facilities. Library opening hours are limited. High-quality customer facilities are important to local people and can affect their experience and willingness to extend their visit or return.
- 50 Cultural services contribution to the specific national, regional and local priorities of economic vitality and lifelong learning are described below.

Economic vitality

- 51 Cultural services are improving the economic vitality of the city and supporting local businesses. Tourism is a major contributor to the local economy. The Service recognised it needed to change how it marketed the city as a conference and visitor destination to compete successfully with other destinations. Investment in improving tourism services is now securing significant results. Use of a new website has increased by 191 per cent. The creation of a convention bureau to improve conference marketing facilities has seen the rate of conference sales increase from £46 million in 2004 to £26 million in just three months this year. The service clearly understands the value of its contribution to local economic objectives and their contribution is highly valued by partners.

- 52** Marketing campaigns are successful in attracting increased visitors to the city. The Council has recognised that competition for domestic tourism is growing and that it needed to improve its marketing of the cultural offer in the city. The strong 'Visit Brighton' brand was created in consultation with tourism businesses with an easily identifiable logo. Successful campaigns under this brand include the following.
- The Brighton Alive campaign included a 12-page editorial supplement in the Independent on Sunday newspaper and distributed throughout London and southern England rail stations. Feedback from tourism businesses was positive with bookings made, discount vouchers in the supplement redeemed and increased use of the website as a result.
 - The Kids Go Free campaign was judged positive by partners in marketing the city as a family-friendly destination.
- 53** The Council's understanding of its visitor profile and the economic impacts of tourism is strong. Research and ongoing street surveys contribute well to this knowledge. The Council commissioned a visitor segmentation analysis to identify the profile of visitor groups and any gaps in the market. Economic impact assessments are carried out by Visit Britain on behalf of the Council using the industry recognised STEAM model. This provides high-level data on visitor numbers and an analysis of their spending. This information is used well in improving support for the tourism industry.
- 54** There is a clear understanding of the role of the cultural offer in the city as an attractor for tourism and as a good place to live. The cultural offer is vibrant and there is a wide range of things for local people and visitors to do. Marketing and promotion across cultural services are developing well. However, opportunities are missed to promote the wide range of cultural activities at all venues. In addition, the Visitor Information Centre is poorly sited and not directly linked with cultural heritage sites or libraries. The Council has plans in place to tackle this.
- 55** Creative industries are actively encouraged through ongoing support. The Service is successful in providing opportunities for flexible performance, workshop, retail and exhibition space for local work, although the available work space is inadequate at present. Stakeholders value the high quality support on offer. The Service has secured £100,000 of Area Investment Framework funding over two years to support the continued development of the sector. The Council's effective support for the thriving creative business sector helps it make a significant contribution to the local economy.

Learning

- 56** Cultural services contribute well to supporting the personal development of local people. They provide and enable high-quality learning opportunities which improve skills and stimulate the imagination and creativity. Opportunities focus on volunteering, vocational learning, supporting educational attainment and personal enjoyment. These are popular with local people and are securing increased take up and improved outcomes. This helps enrich local people's lives.
- 57** Learning opportunities, provided in partnerships with health and education providers, are delivering improved outcomes for local people. Museum education programmes are particularly strong. Examples are described below.
- The Say AaH arts and health partnership includes the Primary Care Trust, the Dome, MIND and the Council. Ten projects have successfully developed participants' social skills and improved learning. These include creating new art works, theatre workshops, and work with people with learning disabilities on artwork to improve their own environment.
 - The sports development participation project led to 124 participants achieving the Community Sports Leader Award with some going on to be employed in the leisure industry and others working with schools and after school clubs.
 - Accredited history of art and design courses and support for Key Stage 3 and 4 are delivered in partnership by the museums service. For many students, these courses are pathways to other learning and development opportunities including higher education.
 - The museums service through its training programme with the East Sussex Archaeology and Museums project has employed several students following successful placements. The Adult Learning Inspectorate recognises ESAMP's work with the Service as providing outstanding training for the local community enabling them to gain sustainable employment in the cultural heritage sector.
- 58** Learning opportunities for children and young people are high quality. These include Baby Boogie music and rhyme sessions in libraries, creative writing events, work with authors, performance and art development opportunities and accredited art history courses. Participants express increased skills, knowledge and understanding, changes in attitudes and feelings, enjoyment and inspiration. Examples of successful approaches are described below.
- The Image and Identity project has brought together over 350 young people in artist-led workshops. Participants explore how people express their image and identity using the museum and art gallery's collections. They then produce photographs and collage work to represent their own personal identity. Participants report gaining a better understanding of their and others sense of identity.
 - Homework clubs in libraries led by highly skilled and motivated staff have increased library use by young people aged 12 to 18, encouraged a positive attitude to learning and improved the behaviour of those participating.

- These initiatives make a valuable contribution to the corporate priority of supporting the development of thriving 14-year-olds and enriching the quality of life for children and young people.
- 59 Learning opportunities for looked after children are under-developed. Working with the National Children's Homes has enabled vulnerable young people in their care to participate in the Image and Identity project. These young people gained a greater understanding of their lives and showed better levels of educational engagement. However, cultural services have more to do to assist the Council improve its support for looked after children to help raise their levels of educational attainment and maintain the low levels of offending.

Satisfaction with service quality

- 60 Overall, resident satisfaction with cultural services is mixed. Performance varies among services and when compared with other councils. The latest 2004 survey to inform national performance indicators shows high levels of satisfaction of:
- 71 per cent with theatres and concert halls compared with 47 per cent nationally;
 - 81 per cent with parks and open spaces compared with 75 per cent nationally; and
 - 64 per cent with museums and galleries compared with 42 per cent nationally.
- 61 These levels of satisfaction are supported by other findings. For example, satisfaction with sports development programmes, arts and performance events, the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery and the Hove and the Booth Museums is high. Satisfaction with library staff helpfulness and knowledge compares well with the best performing councils nationally. The speed and quality of service at the visitor information centre is rated as excellent or good. This shows the Council's success in contributing to a high quality visitor and user experience in the city.
- 62 Service quality from the user's perspective is recognised by several external accreditations. The service has received Museums Accreditation, the national standard for museum provision. The Brighton Museum and Art Gallery achieved the highest score nationally of the entire Renaissance in the Regions Hub museums for inspiration and creativity. The Jubilee Library has won the Prime Minister's award for Better Public Buildings, recognising high quality design for publicly accessible buildings. St Ann's Well Gardens, Easthill Park and Preston Park were awarded Green Flag status for 2005/06, the national standard for parks and open spaces managed by the Civic Trust. All sport and leisure centres are Quest accredited. Such recognitions help the Council assess the quality of its cultural activity.

- 63 However, satisfaction with leisure facilities and libraries is poor, based on national performance indicator information. Only 46 per cent of customers are satisfied with sports and leisure facilities compared with 54 per cent nationally and only 55 per cent with libraries compared with 67 per cent nationally. Since the satisfaction data was collected in 2003, the library and leisure centre services have focused much of their attention on improving services and facilities. This is beginning to show in positive feedback on those improvements.
- 64 The Council's current service assessment framework score for culture does not compare well with the top performing councils. In 2005, based on the current performance data used to compile this as part of the Council's overall Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the Council scores two out of a possible four. This score combines the score for previous culture related inspections, and its current performance against the PLSS, the national satisfaction data described above and other library service related indicators.

Is the service delivering value for money?

- 65 Cultural services work well with partners to maximise resources to increase the cultural offer in the city. The Council spends slightly less than 4 per cent of its revenue budget on cultural services. This is in line with most other single tier councils who typically spend about 4 per cent. It supplements this by leveraging in financial and human resource capacity through extensive partnering arrangements. For example, the sports development Active for Life project secured five workers for three years for a cost of only £30,000 to the Council. The Service secured £750,000 from the national Urban Cultural Fund following a bid developed with a range of arts partners. This has led to the follow-up two-year 'making a difference' cultural programme, with a focus on improving the quality of local life and supporting new work. The arms length Arts Commission is a good example of how the service seeks to deliver creative industries and arts improvements through key partners. The Arts Commission has secured funding unavailable to local councils. By using partnerships well, the service is able to make better use of resources and provide more than it could by working alone.
- 66 The service uses its own resources well to lever in additional funding. For example, the Council's Percent for Art policy is successful in using the funding from developers to raise other monies. It also has a track record of securing higher awards from developers than the policy requires. In addition, the benefits of investing a relatively small amount of funding in such a way are considerable. Several public art commissions are well regarded by local people and visitors. Such discretionary investment makes an effective contribution to corporate priorities and demonstrates value for money.

- 67 The Council targets its cultural resource allocation to meet priorities. This has a positive effect in attracting investment. For example, the Council's own data shows that its investment in the Brighton Festival brings in £20 million to the local economy. It can demonstrate that it gains significant financial leverage, which impacts positively on the local economy. Much of the expenditure on the set up of the Festival is met by external sponsorship. In addition, there are several examples of the Council allocating new resources or capital funding from its limited capital programme in priority areas.
- 68 The service makes good use of resources through grant aiding cultural activity, especially in the creative industries. Over £1.1 million is being awarded during the current programme from 2004 to 2007 to support 55 organisations and projects. The approach is based on the potential contribution of the application to the Council's priorities. Detailed guidance ensures that applicants are clear about what the Council wants to achieve for the wider benefit of the community. Monitoring and reviewing awarded grants is strong and proportionate. This approach enables the Council to monitor the levels of success and how well it delivers value for money.
- 69 The Council is achieving value for money with new capital investment.
- Good use of PFI has secured cultural improvement. A successful PFI delivered a new community library at Patcham in shared premises with a community centre. The Jubilee Library is the first phase of a major PFI project focusing on city centre regeneration. It opened earlier this year on time and on budget. For an annual public sector investment of £1.6 million the projected added value to the local economy of the whole site is estimated to be worth in excess of £17 million and up to 700 jobs. The net cost of a library visit is projected to fall from £2.42 to £1.21 due to increased use and income from new services. Good relationships with private sector partners mean that the Service has been heavily involved in the design of the library. Ongoing refurbishment and the stock supply contract are part of the contract, securing levels of investment in stock for the duration of the agreement.
 - The ongoing stonework replacement programme at the Royal Pavilion has achieved better value for money. Generic areas of restoration and replacement work are combined into larger maintenance contracts.
 - Investment at the golf course has led to reduced costs, increased use and improved efficiencies.
- 70 The Council's has used PFI and smarter procurement successfully to improve cultural facilities and the cultural environment for local people because its capital programme is limited. It has used capital investment well in some cases to reduce revenue costs.

- 71 In comparison with other councils, the Council's costs in delivering some cultural services are high. Comparative data is limited, but using available information, its overall spending on tourism, museums and galleries is high when compared with other councils. However, the Council maintains an expensive heritage portfolio, including a royal palace and several buildings with listed status. Cultural activity is a priority for the Council. It spends highly intentionally in some areas as it recognises that tourism is a key economic driver for the city, attracting the Council estimates 8 million visitors. A high-quality cultural offer is the main attraction. However, it does not yet know if costs could be driven down while maintaining quality standards and satisfaction levels.
- 72 The Council is not clear if it routinely achieves value for money in cultural services. Expenditure on and satisfaction with different cultural activities varies. The service is not able to link adequately its level of expenditure clearly to anticipated outcomes for the public. It has not defined the quality standards for its activity. Without this it cannot be clear that its costs are appropriate or identify where savings may be sought. It cannot clearly demonstrate an open and consistent relationship and scrutiny between costs and desired quality, and so demonstrate that it is investing appropriately in improvements.
- 73 The Council's spend on libraries, sports and leisure is comparatively low. This is reflected in the quality of some of these facilities and services. The impact of this may be reflected in the historic low levels of local satisfaction. However, the service does not know as it has not explored the links between quality, cost and satisfaction.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

What is the service track record in delivering improvement?

- 74 Cultural services are effectively addressing weaknesses in services and managing change. Notable successes are as follows.
- Improved leisure and conference marketing stimulating the tourism business in the city and supporting continued economic vitality.
 - Improved displays and interpretation of the significant collections of the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery.
 - Improving the quality of leisure facilities resulting in increased use.
 - Improving the quality of sports pitches and park facilities leading to increased use and satisfaction among sports clubs.
 - Improved support for creative industries leading to more digital media and music businesses operating in the city.
 - Improved access using new technologies and website developments.
 - Improving libraries and their accessibility and facilities, such as display of the rare book collection, through PFI and refurbishment programmes.
- 75 However, the pace of improving community libraries is slow as there is no overall strategic improvement plan. In addition strategic developments in sport and leisure are still to be achieved and access remains mixed. The Council is strengthening corporate management arrangements and this is supporting improvement within cultural services. By strengthening these areas the Council provides a firm base from which further improvements can be delivered.
- 76 Learning from external challenge is effective. In response to an earlier libraries inspection in 2002, there is now a more systematic analysis of customer comments and responses are published. Stock display and quality has improved. A consultants report in 2000 into the support for the creative industries has led to a greater focus on providing work and performance space, developing skills and encouraging improved sector leadership.
- 77 The Council has committed additional resources to cultural priorities. This includes an additional £200,000 per year to the Brighton Dome and Festival for the last three years which generated matching funds from Arts Council England South East. The Pride festival has benefited from additional financial support for the last two years to develop a sustainable business model. Staffing capacity has been added to the Arts and Creative industries team from other council services. Flexibility in using resources to achieve priorities ensures best use is made of them.

- 78 Satisfaction with some services show year-on-year improvement. In a survey for national performance indicators in 2000, satisfaction with museums and galleries has risen from 60 per cent in 2000 to 64 per cent and with theatres and concert halls from 64 per cent to 71 per cent. Satisfaction with parks has also risen from 71 per cent to 81 per cent in 2003. The Council's efforts and focus to improve these services are being increasingly recognised by users.
- 79 Satisfaction with some cultural services is not improving. Using the same survey information, 56 per cent of people were satisfied with libraries. By 2003, this had declined to 55 per cent. In addition the number of visits to libraries is low and compares poorly with the best performing councils. The Council is in the bottom 25 per cent of all councils for library visits, with only 4,549 visits per 1,000 population, compared to the national average of 6,382. However, the latest unaudited data shows improvement. Visits and the number of items borrowed at libraries across the city are increasing. This is against a national trend of declining issues. Similarly in 2000, satisfaction with sport and leisure was low at 48 per cent and three years later this has declined to 46 per cent. The Council recognises that improvements in the quality of its sports and leisure facilities are required. It has undertaken many improvements since the time of the survey and has plans in place to tackle shortfalls at its own facilities and across the leisure provision in the city.
- 80 The service lacks a consistent approach to managing value for money. There are some effective systems in place to deliver value for money. Procurement decisions take into account the full short and long-term costs and contracts have terms built in to ensure that services are delivered efficiently and effectively within resource constraints. However, there are no quality standards for cultural services and so strategic and operational decisions are not taken to meet these and so maximise the impact of resources.

How well does the service manage performance?

- 81 Overall, the service is well-placed to continue delivering cultural improvement. It acts effectively as a cultural leader and plans are in place to tackle areas of weakness. However, there are shortcomings in performance management arrangements and as a result the service finds it difficult to measure the extent of its success in meeting its corporate objectives.

- 82** The Council is an effective cultural leader. It has been instrumental in using cultural services and enabled activity to stimulate and sustain the economic vitality of the city and enhance the quality of local life for most communities. For example, the Council is leading a large partnership project called 'Selling tourism to the local community'. This is seeking to create a sense of pride among host communities about what their area has to offer to visitors. It is good at facilitating and supporting the start up of projects which then are self sustaining. For example, the development of the Hip Hop festival was achieved through cross departmental working and the festival now works independently without further Council input necessary. However, it does have more to do to ensure a cultural offer which reaches some communities, especially residents on lower incomes. Partners recognise the Council is highly effective in using culture to meet local priorities and instigating development to build community and business capacity.
- 83** Cultural partnerships are generally strong. Key strategic partnerships with commercial providers, leisure and tourism businesses, arts organisations and learning providers work well. The service influences and enables high quality cultural activity through highly sophisticated partnerships with the public, private, and voluntary sectors. Partners rate the service highly for its leadership and also the clarity that the service brings to how cultural activity links to achieving local priorities. Working relationships with most partners are open and constructive and the relationship between the service and the leisure providers are improved. However, key strategic partnerships in sports and leisure are at an early stage of development. Also, the effectiveness of cultural partnerships are not currently evaluated in a systematic way. This may inhibit the service from focusing its capacity and resources in the most appropriate way.
- 84** Cultural services are well-led. There is political and corporate management commitment to culture and operational management is good. Communication within and across cultural service sections is effective. This leads to well-motivated cultural staff that are clear what is expected of them. They display clear levels of ownership for the delivery of high quality services. Staff are encouraged to seek innovative ways of problem solving. The appraisal system linked to work planning and personal development is effective. Many staff are engaged effectively in business planning for the future both at corporate and service level.

- 85 The Council has a clear strategic vision for cultural improvement with some ambitious future plans for major improvements to enhance the city's cultural experience. It is clear about what it wants to achieve from its investment in cultural activity. Effective and wide ranging consultation with stakeholders has informed these objectives to ensure relevance to community needs. Cultural objectives are challenging and are linked to corporate priorities. Improvement plans reflect cultural objectives and are linked to city centre regeneration and tackling weaknesses. These include the following.
- Improving sports and leisure facilities in Hove by replacing the King Alfred leisure centre through a high profile regeneration project.
 - Improving conference facilities in the city by replacing the Brighton Centre as part of work to regenerate the seafront and make better use of this public space.
 - Providing opportunities for older people to develop skills and to stimulate their creativity through the Celebrating Age festival.
 - Improving work space for the creative industries through proposals to regenerate the former municipal market site at Circus Street.
- 86 These projects are all at different stages of development. They have high profile support within the Council and from key national, regional and local stakeholders, although community support has yet to be secured for some improvements. They will be delivered through strategic partnership working and using significant external and partnership funding, some of which is secured or sources identified. Diversity issues are becoming more embedded in improvement planning. Actions in response to service equalities impact assessments are built into the team plans. As a result of these activities, the Council is becoming well-placed to deliver these cultural developments. It is confident that new developments can be delivered and sustained. This stems from the level of support the projects have within the Council and from stakeholders.
- 87 Improvement plans are also in place to improve physical access, especially at community libraries. Hove Library is currently being refurbished. A corporate budget of £500,000 for 2005/06 is funding a rolling programme of DDA remedial work. Schemes are currently being prepared for several cultural buildings, including Moulsecoomb and Hangleton libraries. This work is prioritised and has been informed by the findings of access audits. This investment meets the Council's statutory requirements and improves access for both residents and visitors.

- 88 Cultural services' approach to learning is mixed. There are some good examples of learning, including the following.
- Decisions on pricing policies lessons at the Royal Pavilion are made following comparisons on the impact of above inflation decisions on admission costs in similar facilities.
 - Approaches to audio guides at other Royal palaces were reviewed before decisions were taken to introduce them at the Royal Pavilion.
 - Lessons from the less successful Winter Blues visitor campaign have been captured and will be used in designing future campaigns with partners.
 - Through retail mystery shopping, queuing techniques were evaluated and the importance of designated and well signposted queuing points was highlighted as key to meeting customer expectations. This form of queue control has been introduced at the Jubilee Library and complaints on waiting times have reduced.
- 89 However, benchmarking, learning from best practice and sharing learning within and across services is variable. The lack of a consistent approach to sharing learning across cultural services means the service could be missing opportunities for improvements and learning from best practice.
- 90 Performance management is underdeveloped. The service monitors and reviews available performance data, but there is a lack of evidence on how this information is then used to improve services. The presentation of performance information does not adequately summarise achievement and progress to inform policy decisions. Currently, the approach to performance management does not allow councillors and officers effectively to manage performance strategically against corporate and service objectives. The service cannot demonstrate how it takes action in response to actual performance to improve outcomes.
- 91 Target setting and measuring success are under-developed. Cultural objectives are not translated into robust outcomes. Many actions in strategies and directorate plans are vague and aspirational. They focus on developing the city's reputation and status without stating explicitly what the improved outcomes will be for local people. There is a lack of consistency in setting clear milestones to allow the measurement of progress and many targets are short-term to December 2006. Action plans are not prioritised. As a result, it is not always clear what outcomes and impacts are sought from actions taken. This makes it difficult for councillors and officers to judge progress and achievement effectively and they risk losing focus on delivering what is most important.

- 92 The use of cost and service quality information to deliver improved value for money is not consistent or rigorous. The medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) expresses the Council's commitment to producing efficiency savings. Cultural services routinely deliver savings through improving efficiency and have achieved many economies of scale through combining functions across services, such as in marketing and retail. In addition, an online visitor brochure has reduced the cost per enquiry from £7 to 6p. Procurement decisions, such as on the catering provision at the Royal Pavilion, have also produced efficiency savings. However, information on service costs and quality standards is not used fully to compare and challenge levels of spend and achievement.

Does the service have the capacity to improve?

- 93 The service's capacity to improve is strong. The Council has increased capacity within cultural services. This is by a well-planned approach, sound financial management, active partnership working, increasing financial and staffing resources, securing external funding and developing existing staff. As a result it is well-placed to deliver improvement in its cultural services.
- 94 There are high calibre customer-focused staff across cultural services. Partners and local people praise staff positive attitudes and approachability and their willingness to embrace change. For example, there have been significant improvements in customer care at the leisure centres in the last 18 months. Staff value their stimulating working environment which encourages creativity. Cross-departmental working and collaboration is encouraged and results in effective project work. Improvements, such as the Jubilee Library, have boosted morale and innovative thinking. Staff are generally positive about improvements to training and opportunities for development in cultural services. However, formalised communication opportunities between sections are not in place and this restricts opportunities to share learning.
- 95 The service is enhancing internal management and service capacity in a number of ways. New appointments have built capacity to improve marketing, drive forward the strategic vision for sport and leisure and drive business development through, for example, working with potential external sponsors and looking for other income generation options. A corporate major projects team is successful in delivering effectively major capital projects. The Council formed this team to improve capacity to ensure effective project management. The team includes staff with planning, legal and finance expertise. In addition, a service review of libraries and a review of visitor information are currently underway. The reviews are based on the findings of research and discussions with stakeholders. They are seeking to enhance staffing capacity and improve business management so that resources are better allocated to deliver improvement. These mechanisms strengthen cultural services ability to deliver service improvements.

- 96** Solid cultural partnership working remains a major source of future capacity. The Service has an extensive skills base to call upon within these partnerships and partners are willing to continue to support future improvement. While much has been achieved, the Council and its partners recognise that complacency could be a threat to continuing improvement. The Council takes a proactive approach to renewing and refreshing shared objectives. In addition, new partnerships offer opportunities to deliver cultural improvement. For example, the Council is opening 14 new children's centres across the city as part of its improvement programme for children and families. Discussions are underway on linking cultural improvement, such as in community libraries, with these centres. Opportunities through the new Public Service Board of the Local Strategic Partnership and the Council's LAA also exist. At a strategic level, the Service is consolidating opportunities to deliver cultural improvement, especially in sport and tourism.
- 97** Community capacity building in cultural services works well. There are several volunteering opportunities on offer, including caring for some of the Royal Pavilion collections. Gardening volunteers increase the Council's capacity to improve the presentation of the Royal Pavilion gardens. They act as a deterrent to anti social behaviour in the gardens and improve visitor information. Volunteers welcome the learning opportunity and social interaction with new people. This initiative supports the Council's priority of enriching the quality of life locally as well as enhancing the service's capacity.
- 98** Financial capacity is enhanced by the service's significant success in attracting external funding. It has secured funding from a broad range of sources, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council England, private trusts and donations. The restoration and development of much of the cultural infrastructure has been achieved through external funding. Museum and library improvements have levered in over £2 million in external funding since 2003. The service understands well how to maximise external funding to deliver projects and is well-placed to continue this approach in the future. This is important with pressures on financial resources and a continuing focus on securing service efficiencies.
- 99** Financial planning and resource allocation is effective. There is an effective corporate financial framework in place. The MTFs and recent improvements in corporate budget management are strong. The Council's targeted budget management system identifies corporate and departmental critical budgets based on strategic priorities, risk and significance. However, the Council is aware that continuing pressures on its finances, including minimal increases in its government grant and some resource gaps in revenue budget projections, could risk its ability to fund all its priorities, including those for culture. Broad political consensus on cultural priorities, including major capital projects and efficiency savings, has been developed to enable effective political decision-making.

- 100** Workforce planning is under-developed at a corporate and service level. Directorates have completed a diagnostic identifying the main workforce planning issues. But the Council does not know if it has the skills in place to meet the demands of service improvement as no corporate skills audit has been completed. Many cultural services staff are unclear about how service improvements will affect them and what career progression opportunities will exist. Their willingness and enthusiasm can help drive improvement, so there is more to do to manage their uncertainty.
- 101** Stakeholder expectations are not always well-managed. Local people and some partners have high and sometimes unrealistic expectations of the Council's ability to deliver and enable cultural improvement. This is undoubtedly due to the Council's record of continually improving services. In the arts and creative industries sectors the service recognises that expectation exceeds available resources. User groups also have high aspirations. They rate increasing the cultural offer in terms of breadth and depth as important to them. Progress is being made to tackle this issue through the community grants system where rigorous and transparent criteria are applied to applications. However, there is more to do to communicate what is and is not a priority for cultural improvement. Unmanaged high expectations could be a risk to the service and failure to meet expectations could result in a reduction in local satisfaction.