

Service Inspection Report

December 2005



# Cultural Services

Hastings Borough Council

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# Contents

Service Inspection	4
<b>Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Scoring the service</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>10</b>
Regional contact details	11
<b>Report</b>	<b>12</b>
Context	12
The locality	12
The Council	13
The Council's cultural services	13
<b>How good is the service?</b>	<b>15</b>
Do the Council's ambitions for cultural services match those for the area?	15
How effectively do cultural services contribute to service and local area priorities?	17
Do cultural services provide a high quality user experience?	20
User satisfaction	20
Summary	22
<b>What are the prospects for improvement to the service?</b>	<b>24</b>
Does the Council have the capacity and systems to deliver its cultural ambitions? Will they drive improvements in cultural services for all sections of the community?	24
Do the Council's future plans focus on achieving its ambitions for cultural services?	28
Summary	30
<b>Appendix 1 – Documents reviewed</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendix 2 – Reality checks undertaken</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Appendix 3 – List of people interviewed</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Appendix 4 – Shared priorities</b>	<b>35</b>

## Service Inspection

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

Audit Commission service inspections should:

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

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

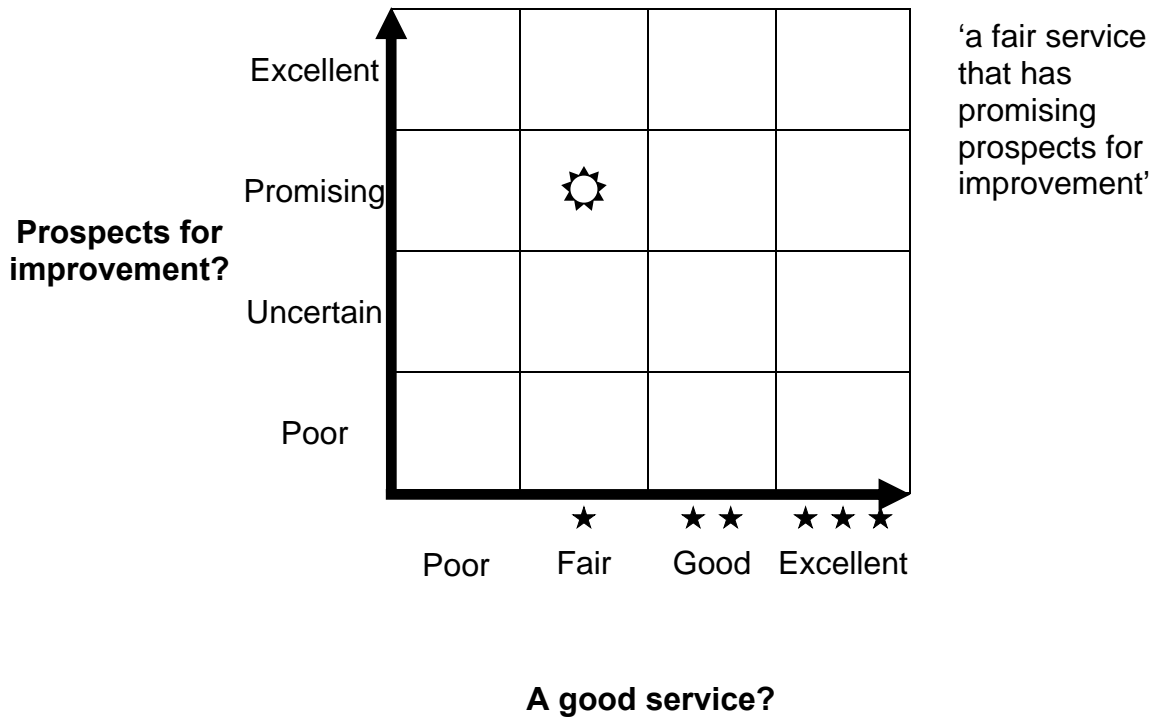
- 1 Overall, the Council is providing fair cultural services with promising prospects for improvement.
- 2 Cultural services contribute towards meeting the Council's ambitions for the local area, particularly in terms of social regeneration. This is important given the multiple deprivation issues the Council faces, particularly in terms of health, education and crime. The Council is a leading partner in promoting the regeneration of Hastings, and there is evidence of cultural links to the regional and national agenda through the service's aspirations in areas such as health and young people, particularly in the borough's deprived wards. Extensive consultation has been carried out to develop cultural services, particularly with young people. However, the fast-developing regeneration agenda means that some plans are out-of-date, and there is a lack of prioritisation and matching of resources to key priorities.
- 3 There is not a clear up-to-date vision for the service that makes explicit links to the current regeneration agenda. To address this shortcoming, a number of development plans have been produced, but these are not linked by an overview of what the Council is trying to achieve within cultural services. Although many of the cultural aims are still valid, they are now being addressed through more recent regeneration aims. So, although the service is contributing to the regeneration-driven agenda, there is currently no overall revised cultural framework that the Council is able to work within.
- 4 Cultural services can demonstrate the impact it has had in terms of local priorities, such as increasing opportunities in community participation, positive work with young people, making the town healthier and leading the social regeneration of the town. The Council works hard to support many events throughout the borough, particularly in deprived areas. Sporting activities, provided in conjunction with partners, can demonstrate good attendance numbers and positive feedback, with initiatives to promote sport to a wide range of groups such as women or those excluded from school. It also provides many innovative arts development activities. User satisfaction rates are above average and visitor numbers are increasing for some key facilities such as the White Rock Theatre. This has been important in widening participation for all sections of the community.
- 5 However, the Council is not yet clear where there are gaps in leisure provision, as their needs analysis has not yet been converted into what is needed where. Many of the facilities provided through cultural services have a tired, dated appearance and do not provide a good visitor experience or good standards of customer service. Access to and at some venues is poor. The Council has investment plans to address many of these issues. Although the Council is not responsible for transport in the area, this is of major concern to the community and an obstacle to the wider participation in cultural activities. Customer service standards are not fully in place, and the Council's 'Passport to Leisure' scheme is also currently underdeveloped.

- 6 There is strong leadership for the service, making an explicit link between cultural services and the major regeneration work starting in the town. Whether the opportunities that this brings are being fully exploited remains open to question, since not all senior officers involved in delivering and developing cultural services have had an opportunity to make a contribution in this area. Nevertheless, the significant amount of money being attracted to the area will have a major impact and the Council is clear that this is to support the quality of life issues as well as the physical fabric. And staff are clearly committed to improving and delivering the service. Another important success for the Council is how well it works with its partners to develop new initiatives and deliver improvements to the community.
- 7 The financial management of the Council is strong and is supported by the successes that the Council has had in attracting large amounts of external funding. The performance management system is robust. However, the involvement of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in performance management is underdeveloped and benchmarking needs to be improved if the Council is to demonstrate that it is achieving value for money.
- 8 The Council has well-developed future plans for important specific service improvements. A criticism is that there is a lack of consistency when identifying these many initiatives between different documents. However, funds have been allocated to pursue these plans and a feasibility study fund has been set up to use when developing these projects. This is to ensure that the resources are fully understood before a commitment is made, as well as their links to what the Council is trying to achieve.
- 9 Management capacity is not fully developed. The management development programme has not been completed by all the relevant managers within cultural services, and it is unclear what benefits the programme is bringing from discussions with staff. The concerns raised in the comprehensive performance assessment report around the inconsistent managerial style have not been addressed fully although an action plan and funding for this has been allocated. Staff morale is improving, but it is at a low base.

## Scoring the service

- 10 We have assessed the Council as providing a fair one-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 chart<sup>1</sup>**



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<sup>1</sup> 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.

### 11 The service is fair because of the following.

- Cultural services are supporting the regeneration ambitions for the local area, which is important given the multiple deprivation issues the area faces.
- Its aims are based on extensive consultation, for example, with young people.
- It is meeting a wide range of needs expressed by the community.
- Parks and open spaces are attractive and well maintained with high satisfaction rates.
- The service provides well-attended community events and healthy activities throughout the borough, including in deprived areas.
- Visitor numbers are increasing for some facilities.
- Arts development work is good, with wide-ranging events throughout the area.
- It carries out some positive work for young people.
- There is above average satisfaction from users of the service compared to others.
- There are a number of initiatives to address the needs of some diverse groups.

### 12 However:

- there is not a clear up-to-date vision for the service that makes explicit links to the current regeneration agenda;
- there is a lack of clarity of the prioritisation for plans and activities within the service;
- some facilities appear rundown;
- the Council is not yet clear where there are gaps in the provision of services;
- some facilities do not provide a good visitor experience;
- access to and at some buildings is currently poor;
- the passport to leisure scheme is currently underdeveloped; and
- customer service standards are not fully in place.

**13** Prospects for improvement are promising because of the following.

- There is strong managerial and political leadership and commitment to cultural services in the role it plays in the regeneration of the borough.
- There is clear commitment from staff to the development and delivery of services.
- Finances are managed positively.
- The service is successful at attracting significant amounts of external funding.
- A robust performance management system is in place.
- There is a strong commitment to addressing deprivation and social exclusion issues.
- Partnership working produces effective outcomes in providing a range of services and facilities.
- The Council has clearly set out important future specific schemes and actions for the next three years.
- Resources have been identified to implement key future plans.

**14** However:

- management capacity is not fully developed with issues raised during the comprehensive performance assessment still not showing improvement;
- not all senior staff have had the opportunity to be involved in some of the regeneration plans for the area;
- the overview and scrutiny role in performance management is not fully developed;
- benchmarking is underdeveloped;
- community profiling is not complete and so the diversity needs of the area are not clear; and
- there is a lack of consistency in future plans.

## Recommendations

- 15 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. In this context, the inspection team makes the following recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

*R1 Ensure that management effectiveness within cultural services is improved by:*

- *fully addressing the concerns identified in the comprehensive performance assessment relating to effectiveness and management style; and*
- *completing the management development programme and assessing the impact it makes.*

*R2 Ensure that the contribution that cultural services makes to regeneration is effective by:*

- *making sure the staff, councillors, partners and the community are clear of cultural service outcomes;*
- *revising and making clearer the long-term vision and aims for cultural services to reflect the impact of the new regeneration work;*
- *linking these aims clearly to the service delivery plans;*
- *identifying clear outcomes related to the targets set;*
- *prioritising the plans within cultural services; and*
- *involving staff at all levels in key decision-making and plans.*

*R3 Improve the quality of cultural services experienced by the community by:*

- *developing and publicising clear customer standards for what the community can expect;*
- *working with East Sussex County Council (the transport authority) to investigate with the major transport providers, how access to facilities and events can be improved through the provision of public transport;*
- *progressing web developments to provide robust on-line transactions for cultural facilities; and*
- *ensuring community profiles are completed and used to inform how the Council responds to diversity issues.*

**Recommendation**

*R4 Increase the effectiveness of the service by:*

- *developing local performance indicators that show what the Council is trying to achieve through cultural services;*
- *using benchmarking to help assess value for money; and*
- *ensuring that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to receive performance information and training that allows them to improve the way that they monitor performance*

- 16 We would like to thank the staff of Hastings Borough Council, who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

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Dates of inspection: 19 to 23 September 2005

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# Report

## Context

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

## The locality

- 18 Hastings is a south coast resort town with a population of 85,000 and an area of only 30 square kilometres. The Council boundaries correspond with the edge of the urban area, surrounded by the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The town is poorly served by rail and road links both along the coast as well as to London.
- 19 Hastings is the 39<sup>th</sup> most deprived council area of 354 in England. It experiences multiple deprivations with low educational attainment, low employment opportunity, child poverty, poor housing and poor health. Five of the town's sixteen wards are among the 10 per cent most deprived wards in the country. Crime rates are high. The population has a demographic profile similar to the national average. Six per cent are from ethnic minority backgrounds compared with an average of 9 per cent in the south-east region. The town is a reception area for asylum seekers.
- 20 The local economy has a higher than average number of jobs in smaller industries, as well as tourism and manufacturing. Gross weekly pay in Hastings is significantly less than the south-east and the Great Britain averages, with average earnings at 76 per cent of the national average, and unemployment is high at 4.6 per cent, more than twice the national average.
- 21 The proportion of private rented housing is very high (24 per cent compared with a regional average of 9 per cent) and rates of owner occupation are correspondingly low. Homelessness is also an important and growing problem.
- 22 The area has recently attracted substantial government funding of £38 million to pursue an ambitious regeneration programme. The Council estimate this will generate over £400 million in public and private investment over the next ten years. Hastings Borough Council, along with the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and other partners, has set up the Hastings and Bexhill Taskforce to oversee this regeneration. The town is also one of just 88 places nationally chosen for neighbourhood renewal initiative funding.

## The Council

- 23** The Council has 14 Labour, 13 Conservative and 5 Liberal Democrat councillors. There was Labour majority control from 1998 until May 2004, since when there has been no overall control. It has adopted the leader and cabinet model of governance and the cabinet is a multi-party cabinet.
- 24** The Leader has held the position for five years, and the Chief Executive has been in post since 1998. The Council has restructured its senior management to reduce the number of chief officers and thus the size of its senior management team. Directorates closely align with the cabinet portfolios and comprise housing and neighbourhood renewal, regeneration and planning, organisational development, environment and highways, leisure and culture, and community safety and enforcement.
- 25** Hastings is one of the highest spending district councils per capita in England. Its total net expenditure on services was £14.5 million in 2004/05 and is estimated to be £14.1 million in 2005/06. It has a capital programme of £51.97 million, including £8.59 million for subsequent years beyond 2007/08, sustained largely by substantial external funding. The current spending level is only sustainable by the use of reserves built from savings in previous years.
- 26** The Council was rated as 'good' in its Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2004.

## The Council's cultural services

- 27** The Council provides a wide range of cultural services. The facilities it is responsible for include:
- White Rock Theatre (managed by a private company);
  - St Mary in the Castle arts venue;
  - Hastings Museum and Art Gallery;
  - Hastings Castle (partly run by a private company);
  - two cliff railways;
  - Summerfield, Falaise and Hillcrest leisure centres (contracted to a private company); and
  - Alexandra Park.
- 28** The leisure and culture services directorate is responsible for seafront services, community events, museums, parks and open spaces, ecology and arboriculture, leisure services and development services such as sports arts and play. We have referred to these services as 'cultural services' for this inspection.
- 29** The net revenue expenditure for the service was £5.54 million in 2004/05, and the estimate for 2005/06 is £5.65 million. This is approximately a quarter of the Council's net revenue budget.

## **14 Cultural Services | Report**

- 30** The cultural services inspection covered the above services, but excluded the cemetery and crematorium services.

## How good is the service?

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

- 31** This section explores what links can be clearly illustrated between the Council's cultural services' ambitions and the ambition for the local area. This is in terms of its contribution to the shared priorities and balancing national, regional and local priorities.
- 32** Overall, the Council is able to demonstrate how its cultural services contribute towards meeting the ambitions for the local area. Many of its aims are based on extensive consultation. However, the fast-developing regeneration agenda means that some plans are out-of-date, and there is a lack of prioritisation and matching of resources to those key priorities. There is no up-to-date vision for cultural services that incorporates these recent regeneration opportunities.
- 33** The Council is reacting positively to the opportunities arising from regeneration in the area. There is evidence of cultural links to regional and national agendas through the Council's aspirations in areas such as regeneration, health and young people. Regeneration of the area is starting to have a major impact on the borough, and has resulted in a master plan for the area along with the development of plans for key cultural sites.
- 34** The cultural vision from 2002 does not make explicit the links to the current regeneration agenda. While there is a broad understanding of the contribution that cultural services is making to local and national priorities, particularly in terms of social regeneration, this is not accompanied by a revised specific cultural vision that reflects the greater emphasis now placed on regeneration. Instead, many cultural services plans reflect the aims of the community strategy and corporate strategy, by embracing the relevant aims within them. The cultural strategy from 2002 has been overtaken by events related to the regeneration initiatives. Although many of the cultural aims are still valid, they are now being addressed through more recent regeneration aims. The Council has focused attention on the production of individual action plans such as for sports and arts development rather than provide a coherent vision for how all this fits together. This would help demonstrate how the Council intends to take advantage of the opportunities presented through the enhanced investment emerging from the regeneration work. The future of important sites such as the Stade and Pelham Arcade and Crescent, are addressed in the seafront strategy. This is a longer-term strategy, which is not yet complimented by an updated cultural strategy. This partly explains why people feel that the Council is not addressing the future of key sites in the town such as the old ice rink area. The Council is involved in the development of a South East Culture Group which is intended to support future cultural objectives in this part of the region and ensure progress on strategic aims. This may help provide that overall up-to-date vision for culture in the area. So although currently the service is contributing to the regeneration-driven agenda, there is currently no overall revised cultural framework that the Council is able to work within.

- 35 The Council has not explicitly communicated what its priorities are within cultural services. Although most of the cultural aspirations support the corporate and community priorities, there is no clear picture of what the relative priorities are. For example, there are 14 main cultural objectives listed in the local performance plan (LPP), 12 'key challenges' in the corporate plan, 50 in the cultural services action plan and 19 'service objectives' in the service delivery plan. Many of these plans do not clearly align, and the actions are often different. Also, this year's service delivery plan lists how it links to seven of the Council priorities, whereas the corporate plan, also produced this year, lists only links with four. This lack of clear sequential links leads to confusion as to what is trying to be achieved. Given the number of current initiatives, the service is not best-placed to decide the relative priorities within them.
- 36 Resources are not yet routinely shifted to support the achievement of cultural services. The Council recognises it needs to develop further how it allocates its resources, and has already started to implement this. However, due to the lack of prioritisation, it is unable to show that it is delivering cultural services most effectively. This is important in being able to demonstrate value for money.
- 37 There has been a lack of communication with many key staff on the new seafront strategy. The implementation of the new seafront strategy should have a major impact on the area, as it contains wide-reaching plans for the regeneration of the seafront. Consultation with the community on it has been widespread, and senior officers are content with that they have had an input into it and their understanding on how it will affect cultural plans, for example with design guidance for the seafront. However, key staff have not been consulted on it, including senior managers within cultural services. This means it may not accurately reflect the knowledge and input of staff who are likely to be affected by its plans. This has also led to a lack of buy-in and understanding of what is to be achieved by some staff in cultural services. Given the implications this strategy has on the future of the area, this is of concern.
- 38 A number of key, up-to-date, strategies and plans are in place to support the achievement of the Council's priorities. These include the community strategy, the corporate plan, and specific cultural plans such as arts, sports and development plans. The community plan has 21 measurable 'smart' targets, which the lower-level cultural plans go some way towards addressing. For example, there is a clear link from the community strategy to the sports development plan on how that service will contribute towards ensuring 80 per cent of people are satisfied with provision of cultural activities. However, some key plans are not yet in place, such as the beach management plan and open spaces strategy. Overall, the Council is making fair progress towards producing a set of clear, up-to-date plans on which to plan for the future.
- 39 Cultural services actively support local priorities. Neighbourhood forums have been set up in priority deprived areas to ensure their standards are raised in terms of health, crime prevention, education and employment. Cultural services play an important role in achieving their 'neighbourhood renewal floor targets' through local action plans, for example through health improvement initiatives and diversionary activities for young people.

- 40 The Council has consulted and responded to local views to develop its cultural aspirations. Extensive consultation has been carried out to develop its plans, including making effective use of its citizens and youth panels. This means the Council has an understanding of the local community's wishes.

### **How effectively do cultural services contribute to service and local area priorities?**

- 41 This section explores the evidence of outcomes and impacts against local area priorities for various sections of the community and against corporate and service priorities. It also looks at the track record of delivering continuous service improvement and achieving targets.
- 42 Cultural services contribute to the delivery of some key local priorities, such as increased opportunities for participation, making the town healthier, and leading the social regeneration of the town. However, there are still gaps in provision and the service cannot demonstrate that all sections of the community are being catered for.
- 43 Many of the borough's parks and open spaces appear attractive and well-maintained. This is important to local people. The Council has completed a £3 million refurbishment of its large 'flagship' park Alexandra Park in the centre of the town, which has recently achieved the Green Flag award. This is a popular park, and the recent investment has included a new café, as well as redesigned play and recreation areas and an increase in the number of park rangers. The Council consulted widely on what form the installation of public art in the park should take. A wide range of community events take place in the park, for example its 'play in the park' events, to which 10,000 people attended last year. The current 'Fishing4u' project results in around 35 young attendees a week. This service also contributes to the community target to ensure that 80 per cent of people are satisfied with cultural facilities. Overall, the Council can show outcomes and impacts for various sections of the community through its parks and open spaces service.
- 44 The service is proactive in responding to the needs of young people. It does some positive work for young people as described in the CPA report diagnostic where it received an 'A' score. The youth strategy and a detailed action plan have been produced which includes actions that the Council is directly involved in from a cultural services viewpoint including initiatives such as the community football project, and work with the PCT such as Girls Getting Active. There is also direct consultation to include them in decisions on how facilities should be designed and located. The skateboard park is a good example of this working well. New playgrounds and equipment have been installed as a result of consultation with local community groups and children. This produces a more supportive environment for young people.

## Regeneration

- 45 Cultural services have played a part in the major regeneration projects of the area. This has included the opening of a media centre to support local businesses, support for cultural courses at the new Hastings University, and the improvement of seafront lighting. For example, it carried out the consultation which led to the installation of the 'sticks of rock' lighting along the seafront.
- 46 The Council actively supports the community by promoting events throughout the borough which strongly support the social regeneration of the area and health improvements for the community. For example, there is a wide range of sporting events that take place through its Sports4U programme, which involved 750 young people this year. Many of these events are held in the deprived areas of the borough, such as the Girls Getting Active scheme at Hollington Youth centre. Some 800 young people also attended free swim sessions held at the Summerfield Leisure Centre. The Council has extended cycle lanes along the seafront, which are clearly visible and well-used. It also empowers its communities by strong support for the Alexandra Park friends group.
- 47 The Council has supported social regeneration in a number of ways. For example, it works with schools and excluded children in promoting sporting activities, such as training over 250 people to be community coaches. These diversionary activities are also an important aspect in helping reduce crime levels and meeting the community safety agenda.
- 48 It also provides strong support to the arts – Coastal Currents is a popular and successful arts project that the Council runs with other local partners, such as Rother District Council. In 2004, over 46,000 people attended the events, with 137 local artists benefiting from free professional development and sales of work of over £25,000. The street art events throughout the area as part of the festival were attended by 11,500 people including free workshops with artists, poets, writers and musicians. Surveys also show that the majority of the community are aware of and appreciate this festival.

## Health

- 49 Strong partnership working with the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) enables the Council to encourage the community to lead healthier lives. For example, the Council and the PCT supports a LEAP (Local Exercise Action Pilot) programme to encourage young people in activities. It is also just starting its major new 'Active Hastings' project which includes £250,000 of funding from partners. This has included the hosting of guided walks in Alexandra Park each week. The Council and the PCT have measured the outputs of its Sport4U project, which has shown that 272 young people on average participate in these hosted sporting events each week. Fifteen per cent of the attendees came from Hollington ward, which is a prioritised deprived area.

- 50 Customer service at leisure facilities is weak. Although cultural services have taken the decision to change contractors, fitness facilities are providing only a basic service to the community. The Council expects this to change in November 2005 when the new contractors take over the running of these services. The new contractors plan to refurbish the centres in order to improve the customer experience.

### **Other**

- 51 Hastings Castle does not provide a good visitor experience and the Council has not yet improved the tourism possibilities offered by it. Although staff recognise the potential of improving the castle, it is currently a below average experience, with poor interpretation of the site, poor access and limited facilities. This means the service is not contributing as much as it could to the economic regeneration and tourist potential for the area.
- 52 The Council is not clear where there are gaps in provision of cultural facilities and services. Although a needs analysis has been done, this has not yet been converted into a definition of what is needed where. This is demonstrated by the perceived lack of facilities for young people. Over 37 per cent of the citizen's panel this year stated that 'a lot more' teenage facilities were needed.
- 53 The Council has not yet translated the impact of some cultural initiatives into outcomes. However, senior staff fully understand the need to demonstrate outcomes against the community targets, and some initial measures are in place, such as the percentage of wildlife sites that have a self-sustained community group or volunteer organisation in place. This will ensure that trend data is available for comparison next year.
- 54 Transport is an important obstacle to the wider participation in cultural activities. The Council is aware of this issue. It has worked with the County Council (the transport authority) and bus operators, but residents wish for greater improvements. For example, residents state that the timing of buses is poor at night which is an obstacle to people wishing to attend the White Rock Theatre. The Council has a community transport budget, funds an evening bus service and participates in the Quality Bus Partnership, which has resulted in an increase in bus usage. Despite this, transport is still of major concern to the community.
- 55 The Council's Passport to Leisure scheme is under-developed. Staff recognise that more needs to be done to promote this scheme so that those on low income are able to make better and cheaper use of the services on offer. The scheme is open to all residents, and has discounts on leisure activities, bus travel and other offers for cheaper meals and driving lessons. There has been some success when promoting its use by asylum seekers, but it is currently not achieving its full potential. This fact has been identified as part of a report to cabinet to undertake a full review of the scheme.

## **Do cultural services provide a high quality user experience?**

- 56 This section examines levels of user and stakeholder satisfaction, accessibility of services, including ICT and physical access, to all sections of the community, and whether services are developed in line with identified needs and aspirations.
- 57 The service offered by the Council through its cultural services is of a mixed quality. Satisfaction rates are generally above average and improving, but there are still issues over accessibility of services and the general quality of the cultural services facilities on offer.

### **User satisfaction**

- 58 User satisfaction rates are above average. Satisfaction rates are a key performance indicator for the Council, and user satisfaction of sports, play, arts and cultural activities is a key stretch target in the community strategy.
- 59 Best value performance indicators (BVPIs) show there is a high satisfaction with some cultural services. Satisfaction with parks and open spaces has risen from 73 per cent in 2000/01 to 83 per cent in 2003/04. Satisfaction with museums has increased from only 55 to 56 per cent over this period. Both these results are in the best performing 25 per cent of councils. Satisfaction rates with sports and leisure facilities and arts activities and venues have remained fairly static at 56 per cent, which is around average. The Council also undertakes citizens' panel surveys in the years that best value surveys are not carried out. The questions are phrased differently and so it is not possible to compare like with like. Overall these show that the community think that countryside facilities such as parks are good, but indoor leisure facilities are poor. For example, 35.4 per cent of the citizens panel in March 2005 (1,149 respondents) think that public leisure centres are poor or very poor, 51.6 per cent that swimming pools are poor or very poor and 45.2 per cent thought that the quality of teenage facilities was poor or very poor.
- 60 Visitor numbers are increasing for some facilities and attractions. Visits to the museums, railways and theatre increased between 2003/04 and 2004/05 and exceeded most targets. For example, the number of people attending White Rock Theatre performances rose from 68,529 last year to 78,529. Two out of the three museum-related BVPIs are in best performing 25 per cent. However, calculations for these museum BVPIs mean that visits in person have actually declined, as councils are now able to include visits to their relevant websites as well as visits in person. Interim figures for April 2005 onwards show a decline in visits to Hastings Castle and railways compared to the year before. For example, visits to Hastings Castle are down 22 per cent from 33,869 visitors in April to August 2004, to 26,444 for the same period this year. Overall, cultural services met 8 out of its 11 targets for 2004/05, 6 of which are targets for increased use of facilities.

### **Accessibility**

- 61 There are some examples where cultural services offer improving access and facilities. However, some facilities are poorly maintained and physical and sensory access is weak.

- 62 The Council has improved the use made of the White Rock Theatre, and can demonstrate increased visits by various sections of the community. The Council applied the lessons from its best value review and inspection of the service, and has made key changes to the service, for example, by appointing a new contractor for the theatre. The new contractor was given a remit to introduce a wider variety of shows – in order to appeal to more sections of the community - and increase the amount of free community events it hosts. For example, it hosted 457 free community events this year in the Sussex Room which has been renovated recently. Capacity has increased from 41 per cent last year to 46 per cent this year. Since the Audit Commission's inspection in 2002, admissions have risen from 53,924 to 78,529. Subsidy payments have reduced. Sixty young people, including those with special needs, were involved in this year's summer youth project, of which 26 were given jointly-funded free places. The Council also trained and registered 23 chaperones to help these young people.
- 63 Publicity and advertising of cultural facilities is fair. The service has some good webpages and weblinks such as to Wild Hastings. This is a colourful, well-designed and easy to use site with a wealth of up-to-date information about local wildlife. Brochures are attractive with relevant information and contact details. Local nature reserves have new interpretation boards. However, limited use is made of IT to improve access, for example, it is not possible to book most services on-line and there is no mention of the seafront strategy on the Council's website which is likely to have an impact on the community.
- 64 Few customer service standards are in place or publicised. Basic corporate customer care standards such as telephone answering response times are just being introduced. However, there are no customer standards in place for the facilities that set out what people using them can expect in terms of the standard of service provided. Other areas of the Council, such as the car parking service, have clearly displayed charters, but this learning has not been shared throughout cultural services. Responses to comments or complaints are not publicised.
- 65 Physical access to some facilities is below average, and many are not compliant to Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) standards. The BVPI figure for the whole of the Council was 53 per cent in 2003/04 which is around average. These cultural facilities include important ones such as Hastings Museum and Art Gallery, Hastings Castle and St Mary in the Castle. Improvements have been made to some, such as the installation of a lift and disabled toilet facilities in the Old Town Museum, and local nature reserves have installed bridges and boardwalks as part of the 'Access for All Trails' at Hastings Country Park. A DDA audit has been carried out, and a programme is now in place with imminent plans for improvement as detailed in the next judgement. Overall though, this means a proportion of the community are currently unable to easily make use of all of the facilities.

- 66 Many of the facilities provided through cultural services are tired and have a dated, appearance. Summerfield Leisure centre has an unwelcoming reception area and customers have to travel down the road to use gym facilities at a separate leisure centre. Other facilities such as St Mary in the Castle, the sports pavilions and tennis courts are poorly maintained and many are not fit for use. The Council has investment plans in place to address many of these issues.
- 67 Accessibility or provision of services for black and minority ethnic (BME) communities is not extensive but reflects the relatively small BME population in the area. The Council provides some events targeted towards black and minority ethnic communities. This includes art exhibitions with artists from minority communities, as well as a 'Kids and Muslim Mums' project which involved 23 young people who wrote and designed a newsletter to promote their work. One of these young people is now employed by the Council as a casual play worker to promote play events to the local Islamic community. Museum staff are also working on plans for its refurbished building with the BME community, and the directorate leads on traveller and gypsies issues for the Council on the Sussex-wide forum. However, the Council has not completed a survey of community needs or profiles for this section of the community and so cannot be certain it is fully addressing their needs.

### Summary

- 68 Overall the Council is providing fair cultural services.
- 69 Cultural services contribute towards meeting the ambitions for the local area, particularly in terms of social regeneration. The Council is a leading partner in promoting the regeneration opportunities in the area, and there is evidence of cultural links to the regional and national agenda through the service's aspirations in areas such as health and young people, particularly in the borough's deprived wards. Extensive consultation has been carried out to develop cultural services, particularly with young people. However, the fast-developing regeneration agenda means that the cultural vision from 2002 does not make clear the links to the current regeneration agenda, some plans are out-of-date, and there is a lack of prioritisation and matching of resources to key priorities.
- 70 Cultural services can demonstrate the impact it has had in terms of local priorities, such as increasing opportunities in participation, making the town healthier and improving the social regeneration of the town. For example, parks and open spaces are now well-used, attractive and well-maintained. The Council works hard to support many events throughout the borough, particularly in deprived areas. Sporting activities, provided in conjunction with partners, can demonstrate good attendance numbers and positive feedback, with initiatives to promote sport to a wide range of groups such as women or those excluded from school. It also provides many innovative arts development activities such as the widely-appreciated 'Coastal Currents' project with large attendance numbers and support to local artists.
- 71 User satisfaction rates are above average and visitor numbers are increasing for some key facilities such as the White Rock Theatre. This is important in widening participation for all sections of the community.

- 72 However, there are still perceived gaps in provision and the service cannot yet demonstrate that all sections of the community are being catered for, as the Council's needs analysis has not yet defined what is needed where. Many of the facilities provided through cultural services are tired and have a dated, worn appearance and do not provide a good visitor experience or good standards of customer service. Access to and at some venues is currently poor. Although the Council is not responsible for transport in the area, this is of major concern to the community and an obstacle to the wider participation in cultural activities. Customer service standards and the Council's 'Passport to Leisure' scheme are also currently underdeveloped.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

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

- 73 This section examines the effectiveness of cultural services' leadership in ensuring ambitions and priorities for improvement are owned and achieved. It explores cultural services' leadership in contributing to building cohesive and sustainable communities and improving the range of opportunities available to local people. It also examines service budget management and resource allocation, performance management, and the service's understanding of the communities it serves. Finally it explores the service's approach to maximising capacity and use of resources through alternative means of service delivery.

#### **Service leadership**

- 74 Senior staff and councillors are demonstrating strong leadership and commitment to the regeneration of Hastings. As part of this, cultural services are regarded as playing an important role in helping to achieve the Council's regeneration objectives. This recognises that regeneration means more than simply refurbishing buildings in disrepair and redevelopment of key parts of the town; it also involves improving the quality of life. The importance of cultural services within the Council is reflected in the Deputy Leader being the portfolio holder. In this respect cultural services are seen to be important to support the rejuvenation of Hastings.
- 75 There is a clear commitment from staff involved in cultural services to developing and delivering these services. The desire to deliver what is best for Hastings is apparent. This provides a climate within which new initiatives come forward, taking advantage of external funding when available.
- 76 The communication links between those delivering and developing cultural services within the Council, and those working as part of the regeneration task force are not fully effective. The Leader and Chief Executive represent the Council on the task force steering group, and there are regular meetings with council officers responsible for regeneration, finance and cultural services. However, the task force is focussed on economic and physical development, and does not directly involve those with responsibilities for service development, including senior managers within cultural services. There is consultation with all interested groups on the proposals, but this misses an opportunity for cultural services to contribute more directly to the schemes being promoted at the inception stage, thereby linking these proposals more clearly to the cultural strategy objectives. Strengthening cultural services officers' contribution to social regeneration would maximise the benefits obtained for local people from public investment in these areas.

- 77 Management capacity is not yet fully developed and effective. This was an issue raised for the Council as a whole in its Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The assessment identified issues such as the 'inconsistent quality of management'. The issues raised in that report remain to be addressed fully. The Council has put in place a detailed improvement plan, including a management development programme, and allocated £150,000 to facilitate this. However, due to the need to rethink elements of the programme after managers reporting that the first modules did not meet their needs, there have been delays in fully rolling out the programme. Some managers indicated a lack of awareness that modules they had attended formed part of a specific programme. This has been addressed since this inspection by a programme prospectus issued to all staff. Overall, it is therefore unclear at the moment what benefits or outcomes the programme is bringing. In addition, the Council has conducted a staff survey which shows that, for the Council as a whole, morale has improved from 9 to only 20 per cent of those who responded, saying that they felt that morale is good. The results have not been broken down to indicate whether there are differences between the Directorates, but the figure remains too low and the evidence from interviews and focus groups suggests that the results for the Leisure and Culture Directorate would not differ too much from this Council-wide survey. These are important challenges for the Council and Directorate to address.

### **Financial management**

- 78 The Council is managing its financial resources positively to prepare itself for the future. The Council's medium term financial plan as contained in the budget book 2005/06 sets out the expectations for the revenue budget to 2007/08. It recognises the Council is very successful in attracting external funding, but that this tends to be time limited. This is taken into account when setting out the implications for the budget. The Council is using the priorities, income and expenditure reviews (PIER) process to align expenditure more closely to its priorities and has identified the need to continue with this process when considering the revenue budget forward plan beyond 2006/07. This provides a structured approach when deciding the future service budgets for areas such as cultural services.
- 79 The Council is very successful in attracting external funding to support cultural related schemes and initiatives. So far, in 2005/06, the Council has attracted over £490,000 against its own funding contribution of £83,000. Similarly, for capital schemes, the Council has been in receipt of significant funding that has supported initiatives such as the restoration of Alexandra Park for which some £2.55 million was obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund against the Council's contribution of £909,000. These exclude the significant regeneration money that is being attracted to Hastings to fund schemes that include a cultural element such as the provision of a multiplex cinema. The impact of this funding is to enhance the existing facilities. In the case of Alexandra Park it is a safer place to visit and more use is being made of it. This provides a sound basis for the Council to deliver schemes that develop cultural services.

- 80 There are sound processes in place to monitor expenditure. This is done through monthly reporting within the directorate with service managers with an exception report submitted quarterly to the performance review panel. This ensures that the Council is able to take action should any unexpected overspends be likely.

### **Performance management**

- 81 A robust corporate performance management system is in place. This is described by the Council as the 'plan-do-review' framework. This links the community strategy to the Council's vision, which in turn influences the three-year corporate plan that sets the context for the priorities identified annually. Based on these, the local performance plan (LPP) and service delivery plans are developed to guide how the services are delivered. This is then the basis for the quarterly monitoring processes which are referred to the overview and scrutiny committees and cabinet. This provides a sound basis to ensure that performance is managed.
- 82 Learning from other councils is well developed in cultural services. This includes the work of the overview and scrutiny committee when looking formally at key policy areas such as the future of the Cliff Railways when visits to other places operating such railways are organised. Also, the decision on whether to close the White Rock Theatre or not was taken in the context of visits to other theatres to examine how they could be run if the Council did not do so directly. This led to the Council entering into a contract with a management company to operate the theatre on its behalf which saved a facility highly valued by the community.
- 83 Some targets in the service delivery plans are not SMART and the links between these and the LPP that identify what actions are to be monitored are not consistent. Where the overview and scrutiny committees monitor actions from the LPP the ones referred to do not match all those set out in that plan. The Council recognises that the service delivery plans need to be reviewed to provide consistency and enable the actions to be translated more easily into actions that can be included in staff appraisals. There are some good examples of SMART, outcome based targets in the sports development action plan.
- 84 The involvement of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in performance management is underdeveloped. Quarterly reports are produced on an exception basis to monitor progress against the LPP actions and these also include an assessment of how performance compares to BVPIs. However, there are few BVPIs that are applicable to cultural services, but the Council has only identified one local one as part of the reporting process to bolster the monitoring of performance in this area. This is the number of users of the Cliff Railways. The annual report for the White Rock Theatre is now presented to the committee, but how the information is to be used to monitor how well the theatre is performing has not been decided. This is an important area for the Council to address if it is to be satisfied it is achieving value for money.

- 85 Benchmarking is not fully developed. The willingness to visit and learn from other organisations is important, but coupled with this it is also important to be able to assess how well the Council is delivering its services in terms of cost and performance. The White Rock Theatre is a key example where the Council is not benchmarking the performance of this venue against other similar ones. This would help the Council monitor the extent that it is achieving value for money through the contract arrangements with the operators of the theatre. It is important to do this if the Council is to assess whether the subsidy provided is comparable to other Council supported venues.

### **Addressing equality and diversity**

- 86 There is a strong commitment to addressing issues of deprivation in the town. External funding such as the Single Regeneration Fund is obtained to support initiatives in the most deprived wards. There are a number of examples of how this is being put to good use as described earlier in the report. To help support this commitment, the Council has an Equalities Action Plan in place and currently is at Level 2 of the Equalities Standards, expecting to meet Level 3 requirements by the end of 2005. However, not all staff have received equality and diversity training. It is important for the Council to demonstrate its commitment to addressing these issues through action to ensure that all staff understand what is expected of them.
- 87 Cultural services are making an important contribution to addressing social exclusion in the town. This tends to focus on young people, but, working with the PCT, the Council is introducing Active Hastings, a scheme that addresses health inequalities for adults through encouraging the take up of fitness sessions.
- 88 The Council does not yet have a full understanding of diversity issues in the town as a whole based on a comprehensive survey of these needs. Community profiles are currently being completed. While the Council has a clear understanding of the deprivation issues it faces, the full impact of diversity needs on what services are delivered and how is unknown. This is particularly the case for the black and ethnic population. Until the Council has completed this work it is unable to be certain that it is fully addressing diversity issues in the town.

### **Successful partnerships**

- 89 Cultural services work well in partnership with other organisations. This is particularly the case when attracting external funding to support initiatives that help address deprivation issues. An important example is the Healthier Hastings Partnership where the Council is supporting the PCT to address health inequalities. As well as receiving £1.8 million for the Active Hastings project there is the successful bid to be one of the ten local exercise action pilots (LEAP). The Active Hastings project has a range of initiatives being promoted. They range from the provision of the five multi use games areas (MUGAs) about to be built to the 'health walks' attended by over 30 people each week. Other examples include working with SureStart to promote play development. This is crucial for the Council if it is going to be able to make a positive impact on the service level delivered.

- 90 The Council is being pro-active in addressing the deprivation issues in the town through participation in national initiatives. It is in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal funding, being one of 88 places in the Country selected. An important example is the substantial levels of investment being attracted to the town through the partnership with The South East Development Agency (SEEDA). A taskforce has been established, that includes the neighbouring council, to oversee the development of the Hastings and Bexhill economies. This is expected to generate over £400 million in private and public investment over the next ten years. The substantial level of economic activity is already promoting cultural initiatives such as the provision of public art that is enhancing the quality of life in the area.

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

- 91 This section examines the evidence of realistic corporate plans reflecting cultural service priorities, where the Council has not achieved what it wanted to, and the engagement of stakeholders in developing cultural plans. It also explores the mechanisms for reviewing future plans to reflect changing circumstances.
- 92 While the Council has set out clearly its ambitions for the future for cultural services in terms of specific schemes and actions to be pursued, this is not in the context of an overall vision that can help determine priorities. These ambitions are in the corporate plan where 12 key challenges for cultural services over the next three years are set out. These include reviewing the future of the indoor leisure facilities, St Mary in the Castle and the Cliff Railways. Also the provision of multi-use games areas (MUGAs) is described, together with the need to complete the beach management plan and open spaces strategy. Those which are planned for 2005/06 are set out in the LPP, where 14 actions are explained. There are some smaller initiatives included in the LPP which do not appear in the corporate plan 2005 to 2008, such as the production of the arts development action plan, nor are the various actions prioritised. However, the Council is making a strong statement to the community about what it intends to do.
- 93 The Council is supporting its future plans well through the identification of resources to implement them. Subject to the outcome of feasibility studies, the schemes are identified in the capital programme to 2007/08 and in subsequent years as earmarked funding. While there is no guarantee the funds will be made available, the opportunity provided by prudential borrowing forms part of the deliberations to bring forward schemes such as the leisure centre refurbishment/replacement. Without the resources being identified to support potential schemes, the commitment to them is not certain.

- 94 There are good examples where the Council has invested in facilities and contracts to achieve longer-term savings. The pitch drainage works at Bulverhythe Pitches costing £300,000 have increased use made of the pitches from 60 per cent to 90 per cent. The new ground maintenance contract is output-based and has brought savings to the operation as well as a commitment to improve the service. New service standards have been agreed as part of the leisure and grounds maintenance contracts as of November 2005. The private sector is investing £520,000 in leisure facilities in the near future. Also, the contract with the operator of the White Rock Theatre secures future savings against the level of subsidy provided by the Council and, at the same time, delivering improvements to the fabric of the building. This demonstrates that the Council is able to use different approaches to procurement to improve services and cost effectiveness.
- 95 The Council is actively pursuing the schemes set out as future challenges in the corporate plan. Feasibility studies are in hand for the replacement of the indoor leisure facilities and the provision of the MUGAs. The £1.2 million funding for the improvements to the Hastings Museum and Art Gallery has been confirmed and a start on work there is expected later this year. A DDA programme is now in place with imminent plans for improvement. Also the 'Open Spaces' audit work is nearing completion, which will prompt the completion of the 'Open Spaces' strategy for the next ten years. £185,000 is being invested in the West Marina Chalets over the next year. This demonstrates that the Council is taking advantage of opportunities to improve the performance of existing services while at the same time pursuing new opportunities.
- 96 The cultural services provided by the Council in the town are being supplemented well by those emerging from the work of the regeneration task force. These are major schemes that the service is not directly responsible for and include proposals for a redevelopment of the Pelham area to provide facilities including a seafront hotel. Also, as part of the redevelopment proposals for part of the town centre, there is a space for public art and a new cinema. This recognises that cultural services are not solely the responsibility of the Council to provide and takes advantage of the opportunities being made available through the regeneration work.
- 97 The Council is demonstrating its commitment to involving the community in decisions for their local areas. There are consultation exercises undertaken for individual schemes such as that for Alexandra Park. On an ongoing basis, neighbourhood action forums have been established to promote improvements to their areas. These include actions the responsibility of cultural services and are agreed on an annual basis. A criticism from those consulted is that, while the willingness to consult is welcomed, the Council is poor at providing feedback on how it is responding to that consultation. It is important for the Council to engage fully with the community and this includes explaining what it does in response to that consultation.

- 98 The scale of the Council's future plans is not clear in terms of what the longer-term priorities are. There is a discrepancy as described previously between the corporate plan and LPP, but the various action plans produced for the strategies do not, as in the case of the arts development plan always cover the full period of the plan. Usually only the current year is described. This can lead to a short term approach which can hinder the achievement of longer-term ambitions and identification of what the priorities are.
- 99 There is a lack of clear outcomes associated with the actions being pursued. The targets set are normally related to the completion of the action within the timescales set rather than placed in the context of what that action is expected to achieve. The targets are not necessarily challenging for service improvements, although there is a process in place that is intended to do this. The targets set for service improvements do not relate to the level of best performance and thus how the Council intends to move towards that level. It is acknowledged that the lack of BVPIs with associated best and worst performance levels identified makes this task less straightforward. However, it is important for the service to be aware of what level of performance is being delivered and the extent that this is meeting appropriate standards.
- 100 Project management is underdeveloped. Slippage has occurred regularly when implementing projects. To help address this, the Council has established a central project team that is responsible for the delivery of larger schemes and also set up a feasibility fund. This fund allows projects to be worked up in more detail before a commitment is made to proceed. This means that there are fewer instances where estimates are significantly different from tenders such that the scheme has to be reviewed.

## Summary

- 101 Overall, the service has promising prospects for improvement.
- 102 There is strong leadership for the service, making an explicit link between cultural services and the major regeneration work starting in the town and staff are clearly committed to improving and delivering the service. Whether the opportunities that this brings are being fully exploited remains open to question, since not all officers involved in delivering and developing cultural services feel they have an opportunity to make a contribution. The Council has well developed future plans, but these are not based on a cohesive vision and thus appear to lack consistency and make it difficult to identify the priorities. Nevertheless, the significant amount of money being attracted to the town will have a positive impact and the Council is clear that this is to support the quality of life issues as well as the physical fabric. But the Council has not completed the work to determine how it should respond to diversity issues. The community profiles are not finished. This is aside from the information the Council holds on the deprivation levels in the town.

- 103** The financial management of the Council is strong and is supported by the successes that the Council has had in attracting large amounts of external funding. The investment expected through SEEDA to support regeneration is the most significant, but the service has been successful in attracting funds from other sources. A notable example is the Heritage Lottery funding to support the restoration of Alexandra Park and this illustrates how well it works with its partners to develop new initiatives and deliver improvements to the community.
- 104** The performance management system is robust. There are regular reports produced and senior councillors are directly involved in the process. The involvement of the overview and scrutiny committee in performance management is underdeveloped and benchmarking needs to be improved if the Council is to demonstrate that it is achieving value for money, especially in the case of the White Rock Theatre. But overall, the management of performance is built on a sound foundation.
- 105** Management capacity is not fully developed. The Council has started to address this with an improvement plan and allocated funds to facilitate this. However, its management development programme has not yet been completed nor widely understood and the concerns raised in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment report have not been addressed fully.

## Appendix 1 – Documents reviewed

The purpose of a best value inspection is to make two judgements. The first is how good is the service being inspected? The second is what are the prospects for improvement? We carried out a range of activities to enable us to reach our judgements.

- 1 Before going on-site and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that the Council provided for us. These included:
  - self-assessment;
  - local performance plan;
  - organisation and structure documents;
  - cultural strategy;
  - community plan;
  - corporate plan;
  - seafront strategy;
  - cultural service delivery plan;
  - financial and benchmarking information;
  - minutes of meetings and performance reports; and
  - CPA report.

## Appendix 2 – Reality checks undertaken

- 2 When we went on-site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. Our reality checks included:
- Summerfield and Falaise leisure centres;
  - White Rock Theatre;
  - Alexandra Park;
  - St Leonards Park;
  - Hastings Castle;
  - Cliff Railways;
  - seafront;
  - Hastings Museum and Art Gallery;
  - Old Town Museum;
  - St Mary in the Castle arts venue;
  - White Rock Gardens; and
  - phone calls/emails/meetings with various partners such as SEMLAC and Hastings and St Leonards PCT.

## Appendix 3 – List of people interviewed

3 We met a range of people involved with the service.

Jim Beveridge	Estates Manager
Cllr Jeremy Birch	Leader of the Council
Kevin Boorman	Communications Manager
Verna Connolly	Personnel Manager
Neil Dart	Deputy Chief Executive
Martin Etchells	Leisure Manager
Cllr Peter Finch	Shadow Portfolio Holder
Jane Kilsby	Policy and Performance Manager
Cllr Jay Kramer	Portfolio Holder for Culture and Deputy Leader
Mike Marsh	Executive Director - Leisure and Cultural Development
Peter Mead	Amenities Manager
Nick Sangster	Resort Services Manager
Cllr Trevor Webb	Scrutiny Chair
Sally Webb	Senior Personnel Adviser
Victoria Williams	Museum Curator
Partners focus group	
Staff focus group	
Residents focus group	

## Appendix 4 – Shared priorities

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