

Progress Assessment Report

March 2006



Progress Assessment

East Lindsey District Council

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Progress assessments

In 2002, Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) was introduced at single tier and county councils (ST&CCs) and at district councils in 2003/04, as a way of supporting councils to deliver improvements in services to local people. CPA brought together existing information on service performance in councils with a corporate assessment of each council's ability to improve. This was used to reach an overall conclusion about whether a council was 'excellent', 'good', 'fair', 'weak' or 'poor'.

Councils have prepared improvement plans following CPA and those councils classified as 'underperforming' have received annual progress assessments by the Audit Commission. Those cases giving most cause for concern have also been the subject of formal engagement by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). Through its network of relationship managers, the Commission worked closely with lead officials assigned by the ODPM in developing an appropriate monitoring programme.

Audit Commission progress assessment work has sought to measure the impact and sustainability of improvement activity. The progress assessment work has been tailored to local circumstances to provide appropriate public assurance and to contribute to improvement reporting. It involved an evidence-based judgement on progress against the original corporate assessment criteria, but without producing a score.

The progress assessment is part of the Commission's commitment to helping Councils ensure continuous improvement to services for local people. It does this in the context of its strategic regulation principles, which look to minimise the burden of regulation at the same time as maximising its impact. We are committed to working in partnership with other regulators and the ODPM in this aim.

Introduction

- 1 In March 2004, the Audit Commission published a CPA category for East Lindsey District Council. This assessment categorised the Council as 'weak'. The key strengths and weaknesses from the corporate assessment are set out in Appendix 1.
- 2 In December 2004, an Audit Commission assessment of progress by the Council concluded that the Council had been quick to take initial steps following CPA aimed at improvement and reversing an overall trend of decline in service performance. This report presents a second analysis of the Council's progress to date, based on the Council's implementation of its improvement and recovery plan and comparison with the initial baseline position of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

Summary

- 3 East Lindsey District Council is making reasonable progress in improving service delivery to local people. Encouragingly it has taken appreciable and effective action to deliver future improvement by increasing its strategic capacity and has plans to extend this further, although this is not yet improving service outcomes for local people significantly.
- 4 Service performance does not compare well based on audited performance indicators (PIs) for 2004/05 and has continued to decline relative to other councils for three years. However, monitoring information for 2005/06 shows an improvement trend, particularly in priority service areas, and public satisfaction remains relatively high.
- 5 The Council has focused effectively on delivering many areas in its corporate improvement programme (CIP) to address the weaknesses found at CPA. It has concentrated on developing the necessary capacity to plan, focus on, manage and deliver improved services and outcomes for local people. It has changed both officer and councillor structures to increase strategic capacity and the new management team has worked hard to improve performance management, to break down silos and increase the Council's focus on its customers. It is developing its managerial and HR capacity. The cultural change has been significant.
- 6 Action is being taken to achieve future improvement. The Council has fully funded plans to implement its recycling scheme across the district and for development of a new leisure facility at Louth. It is investing in improving access to services. Through more effective performance management it has achieved recent good improvement in some services such as planning, benefits and homelessness, and is changing structures and systems to help sustain this.
- 7 The Council has not yet expressed a coherent ambition or developed an effective framework of future plans explaining how, together with its partners, it will focus and impact on some of the significant challenges that the district is facing. For example, the current corporate plans and strategies do not set out clearly how the Council will tackle deprivation on the coast and the outcomes it is seeking. The Council intends to better integrate plans, involve stakeholders in future planning and be clearer about outcomes but this is yet to be achieved.
- 8 Investments in improving community leadership and engagement have made mixed progress although the Council has had particular success in developing its relationships with its many parish and town councils. However, its efforts are not yet well co-ordinated, and it has engaged external help to help overcome its underdeveloped focus on diversity.

- 9 The Council is increasingly aware of the significant challenges it faces to improve things for people in East Lindsey. There has been a marked change in its approach to learning from others and this has increased awareness of what remains to be achieved. Performance management, risk management, scrutiny and HR management have all improved but all need time to support consistent future improvement in outcomes for local people.

Recommendations

10 It is recommended that the Council:

- actively and promptly shares the findings of this progress assessment with staff;
- takes it to an appropriate public committee meeting; and
- uses the key findings as the basis for revising the recovery plan.

Context

The locality

- 11 East Lindsey District Council is in Lincolnshire and is the third largest district in the country, with an area of 700 square miles. It has a population of 136,200, of which around a third live in the towns of Skegness, Louth and Mablethorpe. Its sparse population is served by 189 town and parish councils. The percentage of people from non-white backgrounds is 2.3 per cent, compared to a national average of 13 per cent and 22.9 per cent of the population is of pensionable age compared to 16 per cent nationally.
- 12 The main industries are tourism and agriculture. Unemployment is 2.3 per cent compared with 2 per cent nationally, average earnings and skill levels are relatively low, and dependence on benefits high. Indices of deprivation show that the Council stands at 89th out of 354 district councils, where one is the most deprived. There are pockets of acute deprivation and five wards are in the top 10 per cent most deprived. There are also issues of rural deprivation, particularly access to services. The district receives a large influx of population during the summer season which impacts upon services and crime rates.

The Council

- 13 The Council comprises 60 councillors and is led by an alliance. The '95 Group', with 24 councillors, has formed a joint administration with the conservative and liberal democrat groups, with 12 and 5 councillors respectively. There is an Executive Board of 9 drawn from these groups. Twelve Labour councillors make up the opposition, and there are 6 Independents and 1 vacancy. The Council has changed its constitution and political structures and now has an overview committee and two scrutiny groups, with cross-party membership.
- 14 The Council employs around 600 staff. Roughly 70 per cent work at the Manby headquarters and others from area offices and venues. Its net revenue budget for 2005/06 was £17 million. It sold its housing stock in 1999 and has invested in a significant capital programme since then.
- 15 The Council's aims, as identified in the corporate strategy 2004/07, are as follows:
 - to create safer and stronger communities;
 - to enable employment opportunities and access to employment;
 - to encourage and develop healthy and active lifestyles;
 - to improve the quality and cleanliness of our environment; and
 - to promote and develop decent and affordable housing.

16 These are supported by seven priorities:

- achieve high standards of cleanliness;
- improve sport and leisure provision and usage;
- improve the quality of housing and enable more affordable homes;
- minimise waste and maximise recycling;
- promote healthier lifestyles and improve the availability of health services;
- develop sustainable quality employment opportunities; and
- tackle crime and disorder.

What is the Council trying to achieve?

- 17 The Council has made improvements in its prioritisation and focus, but still lacks a clearly expressed vision and ambition for how it will tackle some of the challenges the area faces.
- 18 The Council has sustained focus on delivery and evaluation of its corporate improvement plan (CIP) during the last year. The delivery of its many key projects is effectively monitored at both councillor and officer level and this has ensured that several key improvements in corporate arrangements have taken place. Through the CIP improved performance reporting is now helping increase the focus on service improvement.
- 19 The Council has maintained a sense of urgency about the need to change but has not yet clearly expressed a coherent strategic vision for the area. It has taken a step toward this, by developing with its partners a community strategy and its own corporate strategy, and the aims and priorities within these are broadly consistent. However, these are limited and there is still a lack of clarity about how the Council will co-ordinate and integrate its efforts and those of partners to focus on some of the key issues facing the area, such as deprivation, rural sparsity and low skill levels. Many priorities still lack targets by which to gauge their delivery. The Council recognises the limitations of its currently expressed ambition and priorities and intends to further develop their scope through revision of its corporate strategy this year.
- 20 Community engagement is developing from a low base and is not well co-ordinated. The Council is taking action in a number of ways to improve its approach to engaging with communities and stakeholders. It has invested in the Lincolnshire Assembly and a new Town and Parish Councils Assembly and relationships have significantly improved. It plans to introduce a systematic approach to corporate and service consultation during the year. Its ineffective area committees have been subject to scrutiny review although no changes have yet been made. One project in the CIP relating to community leadership has not yet been sufficiently developed to indicate how it will bring together these strands into a coherent approach.
- 21 Ambitions and priorities for the area have so far had limited external validation. The Council has begun to change this by, for example, involving stakeholders in budget modelling to develop budget priorities, and intends to improve it significantly as part of the process of reviewing the corporate strategy.
- 22 Leadership from both managers and councillors has improved. Political leadership is improving, supported by the commitment of the corporate management team (CMT). Senior managers' leadership profile has increased both internally and externally, even during a period of significant internal investment.
- 23 Planned spending is better aligned with priorities, although the Council has yet to identify what its areas of lower priority, and therefore lower spending, are to be. It has aligned resources to its priorities in housing, recycling and leisure.

12 Progress Assessment | What is the Council trying to achieve?

- 24 Structural change has also improved focus. A new constitution has been adopted with changes to decision-making structures and delegated decision-making for portfolio holders. The Executive Board has become more focused on key service issues and performance, and better forward planning is enabling scrutiny to begin to have an impact on policy and performance.
- 25 The Council's focus on diversity has been weak. It has no compliant, up-to-date race equality scheme, is making slow progress with developing its equalities scheme and there is not a shared understanding of the issue. The Council recognises this as an area of weakness and has secured external support to help it move forward.

How has the Council set about delivering its priorities?

- 26 The Council has invested significantly in both capacity and performance management and as a result both have improved.
- 27 Strategic capacity has improved. The Council has restructured, appointing an effective senior management team and streamlining its middle management. It has established an organisational improvement team in the Assistant Chief Executive's department to drive corporate improvement and learning. This team has already had impact in introducing new planning and performance management systems and supporting managers to use them. Senior officers and councillors have constructive working relationships, including across political groups. They relate appropriately and with mutual respect, and councillors are better supported to lead the Council.
- 28 Managerial capacity is improving. Developing leadership and managerial skills at all levels has been given high priority. A joint management development programme with a neighbouring council has begun, and feedback so far has been very positive. The new management team has undertaken 360 degree appraisals. A managers' forum has been established which helps learning to be transferred across internal boundaries.
- 29 The Council is developing councillors' capacity. Leading councillors are benefiting from 360 degree appraisals, have attended the IDeA Leadership Academy together with scrutiny chairs and have individual and group peers. A member support group oversees member development and councillors have access to an extensive training programme which is helping improve leadership capacity.
- 30 HR management practice is improving. Although the related projects in the CIP have made less progress than planned, the recent Investors in People accreditation commented positively on cultural change, improved communication and management effectiveness. The Council has strengthened its use of appraisals and they now inform a corporate training plan. Sickness has decreased recently, although remained above the average in 2004/05. The Council is tackling difficult staffing issues to improve capacity and performance, such as in restructuring the planning service. Nevertheless, morale is improving.
- 31 The Council has taken a number of opportunities to increase capacity through partnership. Examples include a single building control body with North East Lincolnshire Council, a joint procurement officer with another district, and participation in an ODPM diversity project with other councils. It is actively engaging with other Lincolnshire councils on the development of a local area agreement. It has continued to invest in the local strategic partnership and has appointed a new manager. However, the constructive approach has not been consistent. An Audit Commission community safety inspection in 2005 found the Council had lacked commitment to the Community Safety Partnership, although this has recently improved.

14 Progress Assessment | How has the Council set about delivering its priorities?

- 32 Financial capacity has increased. Through a reduced second homes discount and commitment from the County Council of their income share, additional money is available for community safety and affordable housing in the district. Significant grant revenue continues to be secured.
- 33 Areas of relatively weak capacity remain, such as in some newly established areas of community services, where new roles and structures are not yet fully embedded and effective.
- 34 The Council still lacks clarity and capacity in expressing and measuring some of the outcomes it is seeking, for example in leisure and economic development. Draft service plans are improved, and have been consistently developed involving all staff this year, although they vary in the extent to which they are clear about the outcomes they will achieve and how they will achieve them. The Council is seeking to increase its focus on outcomes through the service planning process, though with variable success. This is hindering its ability to evaluate and demonstrate progress in some areas that matter to local people.
- 35 A new performance management system has been established and is beginning to drive improvement. Although not fully embedded, the Council has plans to reinforce and develop its use through next year. Performance information has significantly improved, including trend analysis and presentation of performance against profiled targets. It is monitored by Executive and CMT and Overview Committee regularly and robustly. Action plans are required and monitored when performance is off target, and the impact is now showing in service improvement. However, there is a general lack of comparative and benchmarking information and it is not always clear how challenging the Council's targets are and how well actual performance compares with the performance of others. The Council is planning to address this area next year.
- 36 Councillors are more active in performance management. As well as regular performance monitoring by the Executive Board, monthly portfolio meetings are effective in enabling Councillors to oversee improvement in their areas.
- 37 Risk management and project management are more effective. For example, in housing benefits the risk of performance slippage while new systems were implemented was managed effectively. The customer relationship management (CRM) project is being implemented as planned. Project management of the CIP overall is good.

What has the Council achieved/not achieved to date?

- 38 Because of a necessary period of investment in organisational capacity, processes and systems, the Council has only recently begun to improve services and outcomes for local people.
- 39 Although service performance does not compare well or show good improvement based on audited performance indicators (PIs) for 2004/05, monitoring information for 2005/06 shows an improvement trend, particularly in priority service areas. Based on published, comparable BVPI data the rate of improvement has slowed since 2002/03. The CPA found that 56 per cent of PIs improved between 2000/01 and 2002/03, but only 38 per cent did so between 2002/03 and 2004/05. The Council has also performed less well year-on-year when compared with other councils. At CPA, 57 per cent of 2003/04 PIs were above average, compared with 69 per cent in 2000/01. In 2004/05, this had fallen further to 38 per cent.
- 40 Satisfaction levels remain above average. However, local people are not as satisfied with the Council or with how it handles complaints as they were in 2000/01, in line with a national decline, and a recent local survey suggests that this has declined further.
- 41 The Council has begun to improve some priority services during 2005/06, although progress is recent. For example, in line with the priority to achieve high standards of cleanliness, the district is very clean and the Council is removing fly-tipped rubbish and abandoned vehicles much more quickly. Similarly the council is improving sport and leisure provision and usage in support of this priority: more people have used swimming pools and sports centres and usage is above target levels, although based on the most recent comparative information satisfaction and participation rates were both relatively low. The Council is investing in a significant new leisure facility at Louth.
- 42 Priority service improvement is not consistent. The Council's contribution to community safety, another corporate priority, has been judged to be 'poor', with 'uncertain' prospects for improvement by a recent Audit Commission inspection. The Council has integrated an improvement plan with the CIP, but in the meantime, although levels of some types of crime are falling, the Council does not compare well with other similar councils.
- 43 The Council is generally improving in its priority of minimising waste and maximising recycling. Although they have not kept pace with other councils, recycling rates have improved, and remain above average, have exceeded government targets and satisfaction is high and has increased. The amount of waste collected has increased slightly but performance is still above average. The Council's funded plans to implement its recycling scheme throughout the district over the next year will increase the rate of improvement.

16 Progress Assessment | What has the Council achieved/not achieved to date?

- 44 In the Council's priority to improve the quality of housing and enable more affordable homes, improvement has been mixed. Homelessness services, including its prevention, have improved significantly compared with other councils and are exceeding targets. The Council is returning more vacant houses into occupation and has made available more affordable homes, although the last comparable information shows that other councils are improving more quickly. However, unfit housing has increased and performance remains among the worst.
- 45 Limited outcome measures make it more difficult to judge achievement in some priority areas. For example, the Council does not identify how it is progressing in developing sustainable quality employment opportunities, and although it has achieved good improvement in health and safety inspections, impact in promoting healthier lifestyles and improving the availability of health services is unclear.
- 46 The Council is now improving services that are not expressed priorities but are nevertheless important to local people. For example, performance in processing most planning applications quickly has recently improved significantly on the relatively poor performance at the end of 2004/05. In benefits, all PIs were below average at the end of 2004/05, with only marginal improvement in the speed of processing new claims and other PIs declining. However, new benefits claims are now being processed more quickly following the introduction of new systems, and satisfaction is high. Income collection has improved.
- 47 The Council has improved customer services. Although it has only recently agreed an access policy, it has, nevertheless, invested in improving access, opening six new customer service centres supported by CRM technology and, based on recent information, 100 per cent of services are now available electronically. Its customer service has been highly rated by an ODPM mystery shopper exercise. However, physical access to services for people with disabilities remains relatively poor, despite steady progress with the Council's Disability Discrimination Act programme. This is significant because of the relatively high elderly and disabled population. The Council's approach to service access does not always recognise the diversity of its communities and their needs.
- 48 As part of the CIP the Council has invested significantly in procurement but so far has seen limited outcomes from its new procurement strategy. Although the Council has explored joint procurement of waste services with neighbouring districts and the private sector provision of legal services, these have not come to fruition and there are still few examples of effective procurement increasing capacity. It is currently exploring delivery mechanisms for the leisure strategy.
- 49 Since CPA the Council has concentrated on developing the capacity and systems that it needs to improve services and outcomes for local people. It has invested in poorly performing services, such as £3.5 million in enhancing customer services, restructuring the planning service and introducing new systems in benefits. This effort is now beginning to improve services, although the sustainability of recent improvement is yet to be proven. Investment in developing community engagement is slow to show impact.

In the light of what the Council has learned to date, what does it plan to do next?

- 50 The Council's self-awareness and learning from others is improving but some of its current plans as mentioned below undermine confidence that improvement will be achieved and sustained.
- 51 The Council has a greater external focus and willingness to learn from others, and this has increased its self-awareness and understanding of what has been achieved and what remains to be done. Learning from an 'excellent' district has informed developments in performance management, internal audit and the scrutiny review of area committees. Other examples of this new openness to seeking learning from others include peer mentoring and membership of the Warwick Consortium and the New Local Government Network. The Council is not consistently aware of the performance that other councils are achieving, and therefore of where it can seek help to improve its own services, but recognises this as an area for improvement and plans to improve this in the future.
- 52 Significant internal barriers to learning and improving are being broken down. The restructuring, new managers' fora, improved communication, the organisational improvement team and improved streamlined scrutiny arrangements are all enabling learning and experience to be shared within the Council and brought to bear on executive decisions where appropriate.
- 53 The Council's response to external challenge is mixed. It has made some good use of consultancy support and has commissioned work such as a mock housing inspection. It invites input from the IDeA to self-assessments. However, it has not always responded quickly to external assessment.
- 54 Some of the Council's plans and strategies do not show that significant improvement will be achieved in some important areas. For example, its current corporate plan does not show how issues such as deprivation and access to services for rural and sparse populations will be tackled and improved. Aims are broadly expressed but objectives and success measures, where they exist, are narrowly defined. In some areas, it is unclear how the Council will know whether it has made any progress. The Council intends that the planned revision of the strategy will include a significant exercise to develop priorities that are better informed by local needs and targeted at these key contextual issues, and will also integrate the CIP. A delivery plan covering all of the Council's improvement activity is planned. In the meantime, the Council's service planning and improvement efforts lack an effective overall framework.

18 Progress Assessment | In the light of what the Council has learned to date, what does it plan to do next?

- 55** Other plans have similar weaknesses. The current draft economic development strategy lacks robust focus on the diverse challenges faced in different parts of the district and does not make clear what specific outcomes the Council aims to achieve in areas of acute deprivation such as Mablethorpe, through effective targeted action together with its partners. Implementation of the leisure strategy is regularly monitored but does not make clear the intended outcomes from the variety of actions that the Council is taking.
- 56** There are robust, funded plans to deliver some specific projects and service improvements, such as the Louth leisure development and bringing the waste management service back in-house to roll out the doorstep recycling scheme. These are aimed at making a positive difference in areas of national and local priority in the medium-term. Improved service plans provide more confidence that some services will improve, but are not consistently clear and robust.
- 57** The historically poor approach to systematic consultation and lack of a corporate approach to compliments and complaints means that the Council still does not learn systematically from its customers, and local people are still not effectively engaged in developing the council's future plans. Recent appointments to posts to manage complaints and feedback, and the establishment of the corporate improvement team, are aimed at improving this.

Appendix 1 – Summary of theme scores and strengths/weaknesses as reported in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2004

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Ambition	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supportive and positive role in local strategic partnership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No clear vision for the area, the Council itself and no long-term targets or outcomes. Limited understanding of community leadership. Engagement with the public is mainly service-specific and area committees are too narrowly focused. Not integrating its approach to tackling key 'contextual' issues such as deprivation, health, skills and transport. As senior officers and councillors have no shared vision, staff are unclear about what is important.

20 Progress Assessment | Appendix 1 – Summary of theme scores and strengths/weaknesses as reported in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2004

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Prioritisation	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources targeted to some priorities, for example, housing capital investment. Some clear service level priorities and adoption of some national priorities has had a beneficial impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current priorities are not corporate-based and have little external validation by the community. No clarity on lower level priorities. Weaknesses in aligning budgets, resources and priorities. No joined up, or corporate approach to public consultation/engagement. Internal communication about priorities is limited.
Focus	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term focus in tackling some key issues, for example housing, regeneration. Executive receiving progress information on short-term priorities, review groups starting to support focus. Sustained focus in some priority service areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of clear corporate focus. Weak mechanisms to maintain focus. Staff have no clear sense of corporate focus – history of stop/start initiatives. No implementation plan for how priorities will be ranked. Agendas for executive and SMT not yet sufficiently disciplined.

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Capacity	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound financial position. • Enthusiastic and experienced staff. • Some progress in embracing change since May 2003 elections. • Effective and constructive partnership arrangements and outcomes. • Good understanding of the ethical framework and effective standards committee. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear leadership and direction. • Senior managers lack a sense of urgency about the need for change. • No planned management of staff resources. • Poor representation of disabled, BME groups, women top earners within council; sickness absence levels deteriorating. • Lack of review of delegation levels means some decisions are taken at too high a level. • Appraisals inconsistently applied and not linked to corporate priorities. • Scrutiny arrangements weak.
Performance management	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some service-specific good examples of performance management. • Regular reporting of performance to executive – monthly for priorities. • Sound financial management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No embedded corporate approach to performance management or target setting. • Lack of corporate approach to service planning and staff appraisals. • Too many ineffective local PIs. • Lack of information to executive on PI trends and no external comparison. • Complaints procedure managed ineffectively. • Mixed performance on cost and value for money in services.

22 Progress Assessment | Appendix 1 – Summary of theme scores and strengths/weaknesses as reported in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2004

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Achievement in quality of service	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fifty-seven per cent of PIs in best or second quartiles. • Good levels of customer satisfaction with the Council, for example, cleanliness, waste collection. • Good levels of performance in, for example, planning, council tax collection, regeneration/ tourism, waste collection, housing/ homelessness (short listed for beacon status) and benefits – BFI judgement of ‘fair to good’. • BVI results show one ‘good’ and four ‘fair’ services. • Delivered 519 affordable homes, housing strategy ‘well above average’. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor levels of satisfaction with sport and leisure facilities and parks and open spaces. • Low participation in kerbside recycling scheme. • Limited input to and impact on improving community safety.

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Achievement of improvement	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56 per cent PIs have improved in last year. • BVI results 'excellent' for building control and 'promising' for development control. • Improvements in specific services such as recycling and e government, tourism and regeneration. • BFI proven capacity to improve 'good'. • Social home completion is 18 months ahead of target. • Increased satisfaction with HAS and private sector housing service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forty-three per cent of targets not achieved in 2002/03. • PIs in top or second quartile fell from 69 per cent to 57 per cent. • No corporate means of tracking improvements or capturing user perceptions. • BVI results show two 'uncertain' (customer services and leisure services) and one 'poor' (swimming pools) prospects for improvement, with patchy approach to implementing action plans and recommendations. • Performance in some priority areas declining, for example, homelessness decisions, with some unambitious targets eg, new claims processing. • Accessibility to council buildings remains static.

24 Progress Assessment | Appendix 1 – Summary of theme scores and strengths/weaknesses as reported in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2004

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Investment	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound and robust approach to financial management, an effective medium-term budget strategy and debt-free status. • Track record of winning and leveraging external funding. • Starting to address key HR weaknesses. • Risk management developing. • Review groups starting to contribute to improvements. • ECSEL and area offices improving customer service and management information. • Community needs analysis used to inform corporate strategy and new priorities. • Starting to welcome and act on external challenge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear plans for addressing weaknesses in performance management. • Some areas of staff concern still to be tackled including widespread lack of appraisals and target setting. • No procurement strategy and limited consideration of alternative means of service provision. • Weaknesses in area committees recognised but no action identified to remedy this.

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Learning	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promising awareness amongst councillors and staff of problems/ issues facing the Council and the value of learning from outside. • Task and finish groups starting to address key issues. • Some examples of applying best practice and external experience both in service delivery and capacity building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No systematic approach to corporate learning. • Silo culture/lack of cross-service working means there is a limited track record of learning from its own experiences. • Variable and inconsistent approach to 'corporate' initiatives such as BV and complaints' handling.
Future plans	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear progress on draft corporate and community strategies. • Clear plans for individual services or projects, for example ECSEL, economic development, housing. • Coastal Action Zone effective from 1 April 2004. Plans for integrated action with Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder bid and Sports Action Zone bid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of HLAP focused internally not externally in order to address major gaps in building blocks. • No clarity about what will change for service users. • No robust framework for future plans.

Scoring key:

- 1 – Weak
- 2 – Weaknesses outweigh strengths
- 3 – Strengths outweigh weaknesses
- 4 – Strong

Appendix 2 – Progress monitoring against the findings of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment

- 1 The original comprehensive performance assessment was carried out under the Local Government Act 1999 and published in 2003/04.
- 2 Under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 ('the Act'), best value authorities have a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions, having regard to the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. By virtue of sections 10 and 13 of the Act the Audit Commission may carry out inspection activity to ensure that a best value authority is complying with this duty, and may issue a report as to its findings. This progress monitoring activity and reporting to assess improvement falls within sections 3, 10 and 13.
- 3 The main elements of this progress monitoring report were collation and analysis of evidence from:
 - self-assessments of progress made, completed by the Council;
 - appointed auditor evidence from performance and financial audit activity;
 - audited performance indicators, inspection reports and plan assessments;
 - reviews of key corporate documents including performance reports, committee papers and management reports; and
 - observations, interviews and focus groups with managers, staff, customers and partner organisations.
- 4 This progress monitoring report for East Lindsey District Council was collated by the Audit Commission and reflects evidence gathered over the period from March 2004 to December 2005.
- 5 This report has been discussed with the Council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission's assessment. This report will be used as the basis for reporting progress to any Monitoring Board and updating and improving any improvement/recovery plan as appropriate.