

Service Inspection Report

April 2006



Cultural Services

Manchester City Council

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high quality local services for the public. Our remit covers around 11,000 bodies in England, which between them spend more than £180 billion of public money each year. Our work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services.

As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we ensure that public services are good value for money and that public money is properly spent.

Copies of this report

If you require further copies of this report, or a copy in large print, in Braille, on tape, or in a language other than English, please call 0845 056 0566.

© Audit Commission 2006

For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 020 7828 1212 Fax: 020 7976 6187 Textphone (minicom): 020 7630 0421

www.audit-commission.gov.uk

Contents

Service Inspection	4
Summary	5
Scoring the service	6
Recommendations	9
Report	11
Context	11
The locality	11
The Council	11
The Council's cultural services	12
Local management arrangements	12
How good is the service?	14
What has the service aimed to achieve?	14
Is the service meeting the needs of the local community and users?	16
Is the service delivering value for money?	26
Summary	28
What are the prospects for improvement to the service?	30
What is the service track record in delivering improvement?	30
How well does the service manage performance?	31
Does the service have the capacity to improve?	34
Summary	36

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 co-ordination 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 web site at www.audit-commission.gov.uk.

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

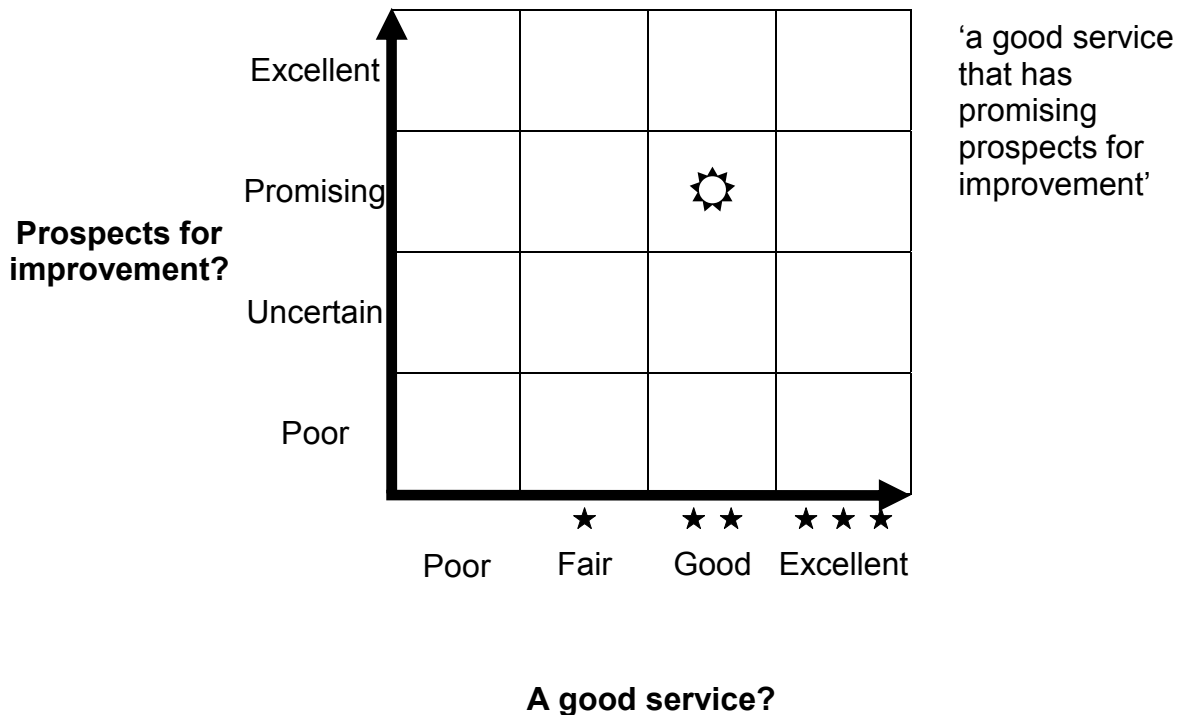
Summary

- 1 Manchester City Council provides **good** cultural services which have **promising** prospects for improvement.
- 2 Cultural services are important to the Council. Political and corporate leadership and support for cultural services are strong. There is clear understanding of the role of culture in contributing to meeting local priorities. The Council's cultural ambitions are clearly focused on developing and promoting a quality cultural offer as well as improving the quality of life for local people. Cultural partnerships are strong and the Council is considered an effective partner by key stakeholders. It demonstrates confident cultural leadership and works well as an enabler and facilitator.
- 3 Cultural services contribute well to local priorities. The Council clearly demonstrates outcomes that contribute to improving the quality of life for local people from the range of cultural activity it supports. This includes providing activities to address health inequalities and promoting economic vitality. High quality activity using imaginative and innovative approaches is stimulating the creative industries sector and encouraging a vibrant cultural environment. Targeted communities are successfully engaged in cultural activity, such as people from minority communities and young people. Access is improving through the use of ICT but all services are not yet interactive and bookable for web users. Diversity issues are being tackled through targeted programmes.
- 4 The Service's track record of delivering cultural improvements is significant. It responds well to external challenge and uses its learning to deliver notable improvements. Plans are in place to tackle most weaknesses and the Council is making progress in improving leisure, library and parks facilities for local people.
- 5 However, the Council has yet to ensure that it has a full picture of all its users so that it can monitor usage and target promotion to underrepresented communities effectively. Culture's role in regenerating local communities is developing well but is not yet consistently demonstrated through clear cultural targets in all strategic regeneration frameworks. Local resident satisfaction with cultural services is mixed, with high and improving satisfaction in some service areas but this is not across the board. Access for people with disabilities is improving but the visitor experience at some facilities is inadequate.
- 6 The Council is not yet taking a fully effective approach in delivering and managing value for money in cultural services. It is, however, maximising its resources in a variety of ways. It delivers cultural improvements through trust arrangements and partnerships to maximise the impact of its resources on the community. However, it has not yet set comprehensive quality standards for the level of service local people can expect. There is more to do to explore the relationship between service costs, quality and satisfaction levels. In addition performance management is under-developed in some services, with outcome focused target setting not fully effective. The Council needs to ensure that it can sustain activities into the future that are highly dependant on time-limited funding.

Scoring the service

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

Table 1 Scoring chart¹



Source: Audit Commission

- 8 The service is 'good', a two-star service because:
- good understanding and knowledge of local community needs informs the planning, management and delivery of Manchester's cultural services;
 - engagement with users and non-users is used well to drive service improvement;
 - the Service demonstrates a strong approach to equality and diversity and uses impact assessments to improve access for disadvantaged groups;
 - there is a good range of services for those with additional needs, through community outreach and access and participation are improving as a result;

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

- effective use of ICT is extending access to services for local people, notably through the development of libraries as community access points;
- partnership working is strong and working well in partnership to address health inequalities and to contribute to the economic vitality of the city;
- residents are generally satisfied with their cultural services and make good use of them; and
- value for money (VFM) is demonstrated in relation to specific initiatives.

However there are some weaknesses.

- Physical access to cultural facilities is mixed and library opening hours do not meet national standards.
- Community outreach work in sport and leisure is clearly targeted, however, Indoor Leisure facilities with the exception of the Aquatics Centre only track total usage of those facilities and so are unable to monitor usage by target groups.
- Some promotional activities are uncoordinated and users of the web-site are unable to book cultural facilities.
- Local plans that clearly demonstrate culture's role in addressing local issues are not in place for all parts of the city.
- There is weak engagement of young people through friends groups to drive improvement in parks.
- The Council is not routinely able to evidence achieving value for money in cultural services.

9 The service has promising prospects for improvement because:

- cultural services can demonstrate a significant track record in recent years that has delivered a range of new and improved cultural venues and enhanced services that users recognise;
- satisfaction with and usage of cultural facilities is generally increasing, and the Council can demonstrate improvements through external 'quality accreditations';
- the council is an effective cultural leader and has strong corporate and political support;
- it has high calibre staff who are driving clear and approved plans for further improvement. These plans will tackle many areas of weakness;
- there is good use of external funding to support cultural services and good partnership working to increase the capacity to deliver; and
- there are significant plans for the future at varying stages of development that should strengthen culture's contribution to delivering against corporate and community priorities.

8 Cultural Services | Scoring the service

However, there are some weaknesses.

- Cultural services lack a consistent approach to managing value for money, and consequently may not be maximising its use of resources.
- Performance management is under-developed including a lack of outcome focused targets and limited mechanisms to measure success.
- The impact of the local area agreement (LAA) on culture's perceived role and status is not known at this early stage. It is important that progress is monitored in order to deliver improvements in the future.
- The service does not have clear plans to deal with the large number of staff whose positions are funded by time-limited money.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation

R1 Improve the way it focuses on its users of cultural services to ensure that delivery of services meets their needs. This should include (but not be limited to):

- *better integration of promotional materials and other publicly available documents to suit the needs of the target market;*
- *more interactive and transactional features available to users of cultural websites;*
- *developing a co-ordinated approach to engaging with young people across cultural services;*
- *giving priority to meeting national standards, such as library opening hours;*
- *working towards public-facing quality accreditation for leisure; and*
- *better use of systems in cultural services to capture information about users.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- better targeted promotion of services to particular communities of interest;
- better access to cultural information and services;
- better understanding of young peoples' needs and co-ordinated response to them;
- clear measures of service quality that users understand;
- services that are more suited to potential users, especially priority groups; and
- as a consequence of the above benefits to users, the Council is more likely to realise its corporate objectives.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. An action plan should be produced by October 2006 with full implementation by April 2007.

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

Recommendation

R2 Raise performance standards by reviewing its performance management systems so that:

- *there is a consistent performance management framework across cultural services;*
- *there is a corporate approach to measuring impacts – working across sectors;*
- *there is a better understanding of how costs and performance compare;*
- *challenging but realistic targets are set that reflect intended outcomes;*
- *there is improved data sharing with partners; and*
- *there is a systematic approach to gathering and sharing learning.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- improved performance and a better understanding of relative performance; and
- improved outcomes for money invested.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by October 2006.

Recommendation

R3 Develop the capacity of cultural services to deliver future improvement by:

- *reviewing and consolidating the role of culture within the key blocks of the local area agreement;*
- *strengthening the integration of cultural services, including planning, management and delivery; and*
- *establishing clear priorities for mainstreaming current priority services that are short-term or time-limited funded.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- an increased awareness by councillors, managers, staff and partners of the importance of culture;
- better use of resources and a more joined-up experience for users; and
- a greater focus on priorities.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs and with potential cost savings. This should be implemented by April 2007.

Report

Context

The locality

- 11 Manchester City Council is a metropolitan council in northwest England within the Greater Manchester conurbation. It is the sixth largest metropolitan district outside London, at 11,565 hectares, and the largest of the ten Greater Manchester districts with a population of 437,500 living in 167,451 households. There are also 57,500 full time students in the city's three universities/colleges of higher education. Nineteen per cent of the population are from black and non-white ethnic communities spread across the city.
- 12 The city centre provides a regional centre for finance, retail and commerce; however the city also contains areas of significant social deprivation. It is the third most deprived council area in England. Some wards suffer from poor health, housing, educational achievement and employment prospects per cent of the population. Twenty-seven of the 32 wards are in the 10 per cent most deprived wards in the UK. The most deprived wards are clustered around the north, east and south of the city centre, and Harpurhey, to the north of the city is the most deprived ward in the UK. Local unemployment remains high at 7.2 per cent compared to the GB rate of 4.4 per cent. People of working age make up 66.8 per cent of the total compared with 62 per cent for England as a whole.
- 13 Over the last ten years Manchester has become an international city of commercial, creative and cultural repute. It is in the top ten European cities for business location, and the world's top 50 as a conference centre. It has the highest retail rental levels of any regional centre, and is the second most visited city by overseas visitors in the UK after London. This can be attributed in part to the concentration of established and emerging growth sectors (including cultural and creative industries, and tourism), the role of the city as a major transport hub, and the redevelopment of the city centre following the bomb in 1996. The hosting of the Commonwealth Games in 2002 has also played a large part in the regeneration, and raising the profile of Manchester.
- 14 The City has a range of cultural assets including Bridgewater Hall, Urbis, Manchester Art Gallery and Sportcity.

The Council

- 15 The Council comprises 96 councillors in 32 wards, with 57 Labour, 38 Liberal and 1 Green. Since 2001, the Executive Leader and 9 members of the Cabinet Executive, including two Deputy Leaders, are appointed by the full Council. Executive portfolios are structured round services and there are six overview and scrutiny committees.
- 16 The Council employs 19,205 staff in 10 directorates. The 2005/06 budgets show revenue spending of £1.333 billion gross, £632 million net. The capital budget for 2005/06 is £246 million.

The Council's cultural services

- 17 The delivery of cultural services in Manchester falls under the remit of the regeneration and community services strategic directorate which encompasses galleries and museums, leisure services, parks and open spaces, sport development and sports facilities including community facilities, library and information services and cultural strategy. An Assistant Chief Executive (ACEx) with responsibility for cultural services (CS) was appointed in September 2005. This postholder is a member of the Council's strategic management team. Heads of Libraries and Theatres, Leisure, City Galleries and Cultural Strategy report to the ACEx who in turn reports directly to the Deputy Chief Executive.
- 18 In 2005/06, the City Council's cultural services revenue budget totalled almost £30 million, with a workforce of 735 FTE delivering a wide range of cultural and leisure services in 23 libraries, 1 theatre, 1 city gallery, 3 historic halls, 8 community indoor facilities, 5 community sports centres, 167 parks and a number of other leisure venues including the world class aquatics centre and Sportcity facilities.

Local management arrangements

- 19 The libraries and theatres department is responsible for:
- the library and information service, including the Central Library and 22 community libraries, some which are co-located with other organisations, for example Wythenshawe Forum and North City Library;
 - mobile and outreach services, including the home visit service and prison library service; and
 - the Library Theatre Company including education and community programmes.
- 20 Manchester City Galleries is responsible for:
- the Manchester Art Gallery, which re-opened in 2002 following a £35 million transformation;
 - the Gallery of Costume, Platt Hall in Platt Fields; and
 - Wythenshawe and Heaton Halls, both located in parks.
- 21 Manchester City Galleries is the lead partner in the North West museums hub, funded by the Renaissance in the Regions national programme for museums.
- 22 The Council's leisure service, Manchester leisure, is responsible for the strategic and operational management of indoor leisure, sports development, including events, parks and outdoor leisure facilities. These include playing fields and open spaces. The indoor leisure service is currently delivered in the following ways.
- Manchester 50 Pool (Trust) Ltd. is responsible for the management and operation of the Manchester Aquatics Centre and 11 Community Leisure and Sports Facilities. The management agent for these facilities is an external leisure contractor.

- Wythenshawe Forum Trust is responsible for the management and operation of the Forum Leisure Centre. The managing agent for this facility is an external contractor.
 - Manchester Leisure is responsible for the management and operation of the EIS (English Institute of Sport) Sportcity facilities which include squash, athletics, tennis, hockey and gymnastics centres, the North City Family and Fitness Centre and two Sports Development Centres. The facilities are currently managed in-house, however, early in the 2006/07 financial year; all facilities with the exception of the North City Family and Fitness Centre and the two Sports Development centres will transfer to the Manchester 50 Pool (Trust) Ltd.
- 23** The Cultural Strategy Team is responsible for Cultural venues in Council ownership eg Urbis, Zion, Bridgewater Hall and all cultural revenue clients funded by the Council and delivery of the NRF culture programme. In addition the CST provides a centralised function for the implementation of the cultural strategy, including the provision of policy, research and performance management functions. It also offers a feasibility advice and co-ordinating role for capital cultural initiatives and works cross departmentally with the other cultural services.
- 24** The Council's political structure includes an elected councillor directly responsible for the cultural services portfolio.

How good is the service?

What has the service aimed to achieve?

The Local Strategic Partnership

- 25 The Manchester Partnership (formerly known as the local strategic partnership) continues to drive toward making Manchester a better place to live. The community strategy is a ten-year plan that operates from 2002 to 2012 and aims to improve the quality of life for Manchester residents by making sure that Manchester:
- is economically competitive;
 - provides a good education for the whole community;
 - has good transport links;
 - is a healthy place to live and work;
 - has sustainable communities;
 - has a strong cultural base; and
 - is a safe place to live and work.
- 26 Manchester's community strategy is being reviewed alongside development of the local area agreement (LAA), which aims to bring partners closer together and to share resources in delivering against four shared priorities. Part of this process is the development of a new vision. Visioning events have been held recently involving elected Members, the Manchester Partnership Board and Management Group. Emerging from these events has been the concept of three spines. The three spines are:
- reaching full potential through education and employment;
 - neighbourhoods of choice; and
 - individual/collective self-esteem – mutual respect.

Manchester Cultural Strategy

- 27 The development of a cultural strategy (2002) in Manchester has been a key driver in attracting external funding to the City. It takes forward the cultural theme of Manchester's community strategy. It places culture at the heart of the City's ambition as an international city and of its commitment to overcoming social and economic challenges. Manchester's cultural strategy (2002) has two main ambitions:
- to secure full recognition of Manchester's role as a cultural capital; and
 - to increase and broaden participation in cultural activities.

- 28 It will impact on the economy through employment, environment and children and young people, and citizenship through civic pride, health and education. The five themes of the cultural strategy are:
- Cultural capital;
 - Culture and learning;
 - Culture for all;
 - Cultural economy; and
 - Marketing culture.
- 29 The cultural strategy team (CST) assembled in 2003 provides a centralised focus for the implementation and development of Manchester's cultural strategy, facilitating the work of the cultural partnership, which is responsible for taking forward the actions and evaluating processes.
- 30 The Council's strategic performance plan 2005/06 has a vision of Manchester as 'an exciting and diverse city of national and international significance where people choose to live, work and play and in which companies want to invest; a city where everyone has equal access to opportunity, employment and prosperity'. There are nine corporate objectives, including:
- to create more jobs for local people by increasing economic activity and investment, promoting technological growth and maximising the use of our major assets including our vibrant city centre;
 - to prevent ill-health and improve local people's health and well-being;
 - to provide services that are relevant, efficient, effective and best value for money;
 - to improve the educational results of the city's children at all levels; to increase the number of young people going into further and higher education; to support people into work through training; and to provide opportunities for lifelong learning; and
 - to ensure that people have opportunities to participate in arts, sport and cultural activities that contribute to their quality of life.
- 31 The Manchester physical activity strategy has two overarching aims:
- to raise the average level of physical activity undertaken by Manchester residents; and
 - to reduce inequalities by targeting interventions at those who are most sedentary or who suffer inequalities in relation to access, disability or their vulnerability to disease.
- 32 In relation to e-governance, Manchester's community ICT strategy aims to deliver the Government's stated commitment to the Knowledge Economy and to address the 'digital divide' by working with internal and external partners to provide the widest possible access to ICT facilities, and in particular, the associated training opportunities.

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

Are needs of users/citizens at the heart of service design and delivery?

- 33** Overall, Manchester's cultural services are planned, managed and delivered on the basis of a good understanding and knowledge of the needs of the local community. This knowledge is used well to drive service improvement. However, there are some weaknesses, including lack of consistent plans to address local issues effectively, inability to monitor the mainstream use of leisure facilities by target groups and weak engagement of young people in friends of parks groups.
- 34** The Council's knowledge of local needs is strong. Cultural services use an appropriate mix of local context data, such as census and index of multiple deprivation information, surveys, consultation and user feedback to influence service planning and delivery. Examples of the Council's response to this knowledge include:
- development of library homework clubs to provide the 'homework help project' to looked after children in residential homes; aiming to address the poor educational attainment levels of these children; and
 - extension of the Library Theatre Company's educational remit to run children's workshops in Miles Platting and Gorton, areas that have high percentages of people with low or very low literacy.

These show that the Council is aware of the most pressing issues at a local level and is developing its cultural services to address them.

- 35** The Council has developed local plans that clearly demonstrate culture's role in addressing local issues but these are not in place for all parts of the city. Wythenshawe strategic regeneration framework is a model example where the integrated approach to regeneration provides a clear, cultural sector response to the wider needs and aspirations of this part of the city. In other areas, cultural actions are linked to ward plans but these are not so well developed and provide less of a targeted and prioritised approach to planning and delivering cultural services based on identified local needs. This means that the Council has a solid basis for cultural planning at a local level.
- 36** Services are regularly reviewed and changed in response to customer requests. There are good opportunities across services for customers to comment and complain. For example:
- customer feedback has resulted in increased opening hours and faster internet connections in the central library and all branch libraries, and these changes have been fed back to library users using a notice board in the library entrance; and
 - requests from the Chinese community to make the Manchester Art Gallery more relevant to them has resulted in exhibits and Chinese new year events.

This means users are able to influence how their services are delivered and are kept informed about the difference their input has made.

- 37 Cultural services have good measures in place for consulting, engaging and communicating with service users and there are examples of services working to identify barriers to access and addressing these effectively. For example, the galleries' visually impaired audio guide, created in consultation with visually impaired users, has developed a new group of users, supported by specially trained volunteer guides drawn from staff and local companies.
- 38 Proactive work with cultural partners has led to creative ways of engaging hard to reach communities. Radio Regen have used community radio to build the skills and confidence of local people in East Manchester and Wythenshawe and at the same time, the programme content has revealed what local people like and do not like about living in those areas.
- 39 Most services use a wide range of information on the ethnicity, vulnerability and disability of service users to ensure services are planned, prioritised and delivered in a way that does not discriminate. For example, systems are in place to record ethnic origin when customers join the library and community language stock issues are monitored. However, there are gaps in the information available to assess the mainstream use of leisure facilities by these target groups and so the Council cannot be sure that the needs of these priority users are being met.
- 40 Individual cultural services engage well with target communities. Engagement with children, older people and ethnic minority groups means users are directly influencing the way services are planned and delivered. Examples include the library service consulting with prison users in the development of the Business Inside Out Project, consultation leading to increased book stock in specific languages, and engagement with young people on specific improvements to parks. However, these tend to be service-specific rather than joined up across all cultural services and are not sufficiently integrated within services. Gaps include cross-cultural engagement with young people, and their involvement in friends groups in parks. This means opportunities to co-ordinate cultural services' response to young peoples' needs are incomplete. As a result services may be missing opportunities for exchange of ideas and greater understanding between generations.
- 41 Councillors, managers and staff demonstrate a broad understanding of the city's cultural needs. They share the view that cultural provision should suit local circumstances and that the quality of public realm is important to deprived communities. For example, the Powerhouse library in Moss Side is particularly geared to the needs of young people in the area, and the new North City library is a flagship building created in partnership with the FE College; recognising that continuing education opportunities in this part of the city had been poor until recently. On its first day of opening, the new library attracted 250 new members.

Are cultural services accessible and responsive?

- 42 Cultural facilities are well located and the Council provides a good range of services for those with additional needs, such as community outreach. Libraries are increasingly fulfilling their role as community access points. However, physical access to cultural facilities is mixed and opening hours do not meet national standards. Leisure services are unable to target non-users and some promotional activities are unco-ordinated.
- 43 The large majority of cultural facilities are located in appropriate locations and settings including a wealth of cultural opportunities in the city centre and good geographical coverage of leisure, parks and libraries across the city. Opportunities have been taken in some priority areas to close underperforming and inaccessible facilities, such as two branch libraries and Harpurhey Baths to create new leisure and library facilities that are fully accessible. This has provided the most deprived ward in the city with two quality cultural facilities.
- 44 Many cultural venues are convenient for users to access a range of Council and other services. These include Wythenshawe Forum and the North City leisure facility, which combine services such as leisure, library, adult education and Surestart provision of childcare. This means that residents are able to access a range of services under one roof and which are also close to other amenities, such as district shopping centres and public transport services.
- 45 There are good initiatives in place to provide services to people with additional needs. For example:
- a new children's mobile library was launched in February 2005 targeting looked after children, travellers' sites and other locations in Manchester. Over 1,000 new children have joined the library through the 'Voyager' since February 2005; and
 - the Library Theatre Company (LTC) organised approximately 292 visits by educational establishments during the year. These included theatre visits by schools as well as drama workshops in certain locations across the City. All LTC productions include performances offering signing, audio description and captioning services. Ofsted comment on the positive effect this has had on the speaking and listening skills of participants.
- 46 Compliance against Public Library Service Standards on access is mixed. It exceeds the standard for the proportion of the population living within a mile of a static library, the number of electronic workstations available to the public and for the number of visits per 1,000 population. However, the aggregate scheduled opening hours is currently 117 and does not meet the standard of 128 hours. In other cultural services, opening hours are convenient for users, including early morning and late evening leisure sessions that enable swimming clubs to have exclusive use of the pools.

- 47 Physical access is varied across cultural facilities. Most indoor leisure facilities comply with the Disability Discrimination Act regulations but only 12 out of 22 (54 per cent) libraries are fully accessible. There are many high quality facilities, but significant venues, such as the central library and library theatre are in need of modernisation to ensure equal access. The Manchester Art Gallery is an example of a cultural facility that offers good physical access, matched with attention to intellectual access, most notably through its interactive gallery that provides a stimulating experience, especially for children and families.
- 48 Cultural services' use of new technologies is good and continues to improve. The Service makes good use of ICT to improve access to resources and services, and to help interpret the collections. There is some good use of information technology to help people to access services by remote means, for example the Manchester Youth Arts website, but some areas are underdeveloped.
- Marketing Manchester is providing good access to visitors through late room availability, allowing the city to maximise its economic impact from accommodation bookings outside visitor information office hours.
 - The online library allows 24 hour access and the Galleries department is providing access to its collections in digital form through the development of an online gallery. This attracted 700,000 visitors in 2005/06.
 - Although the Council's website is informative and user friendly with regard to giving information on leisure and cultural activities, it is neither sufficiently interactive nor transactional. For example, it is not possible to search an interactive cultural events database or to make bookings and payments for cultural venues.
- 49 Cultural services have achieved considerable success in expanding the role of libraries as the activity centres of local communities through the 'libraries as access points pathfinder'. A range of other Council services are available to users in libraries, such as reporting environmental issues or paying council bills and users are supported by frontline staff to do this. The initiative has seen over a 1,000 per cent increase in the usage of the Council website in the pilot libraries against a 42 per cent increase in non-pilot libraries. Additional research by MORI reveals more people are confident about using computers as a result of libraries' support. This means Manchester residents are acquiring new skills and confidence as well as using libraries to access the wider Council services that they need.
- 50 Targeting of priority groups of users is mixed. Community outreach work in sport and leisure is clearly targeted on both priority areas, such as East Manchester, and target groups, such as over 50s, people with disabilities and children who are not attending school. However, indoor leisure facilities (with the exception of the Aquatics Centre) only track total usage of those facilities and so are unable to monitor usage by target groups. This means leisure facilities are not effectively targeting promotion to under-represented groups of users and are not consistently meeting the needs of vulnerable groups.

- 51 Promotion of cultural services does not always join up effectively. Summer activity programmes for young people are produced for individual cultural service areas rather than presenting the total cultural offer (provided by Council, voluntary and private sectors). This means that cultural services are not maximising the impact these activities could have and young people may not be aware of everything that is available to them.
- 52 Service standards and customer promises are clear and available to local people. Libraries produce their information in nine languages and measurable pledges, such as online registration requests, are monitored. This means that users of these services can be clear what they can expect and when those expectations are not being met.

Diversity

- 53 Cultural services fully embrace equality, diversity and human rights issues. A strong framework enables these services to be delivered in ways that enable users and potential users to enjoy fair and equal access.
- 54 The Council has robust systems in place to gather the views of users, staff and partners and uses these to plan appropriate actions. These include:
- a youth arts network and cultural diversity advisory group as working groups of the cultural partnership;
 - equality groups for each service and a cultural diversity staff group; and
 - action plans with targets for underrepresented groups (gender, race, disability and lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual).
- 55 Service monitoring of the diversity of its users is good in libraries and in the areas of activity that are delivering targeted projects and programmes, such as Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) cultural projects, arts in health initiatives, outreach activities and the wide range of sports development programmes. It is less robust in indoor leisure, where management systems are not sophisticated enough to do this effectively. This means that cultural services can demonstrate it is attracting appropriate proportions of diverse users to most, but not all of its services and activities.
- 56 Equality impact assessments are routinely carried out across cultural services and these feed into subsequent equality action plans. This will ensure that any barriers to access are addressed in the year succeeding the impact assessment. For example, the library service identified that existing requirements for registering as a library user was excluding potential users who could not provide proof of permanent residence. This included homeless people, asylum seekers and refugees and travellers. Relaxation of these requirements has resulted in over 100 new members at refugee drop-ins, 295 at organised language courses and 1,000 registering on-line.

- 57 Cultural services have successfully demonstrated their commitment to a comprehensive equality policy and appropriate assessment and consultation through their achievement of level 2 of the equalities standard. All services are now working to action plans to achieve level 3 which requires them to demonstrate the setting of equality objectives and targets.
- 58 There are many good examples of cultural services working with local communities to ensure fairness, equity and representation in service take-up. For example:
- the Wellwoman project, based at the Manchester Art Gallery targeted women from refugee and isolated communities. Participants developed healthy living skills through workshops which looked at food, nutrition, physical and mental wellbeing and also developed basic literacy and artistic skills, as well as improving their English to promote confidence and help them to integrate with the wider community; and
 - innovative outreach work through libraries, using EU funding to help prison inmates develop their own business ideas. Since the launch of the project 'Business Inside Out' at the end of 2003, 52 men have participated in the project and five have submitted 'business plan' profiles, leading to City and Guilds qualifications. This project has provided prison inmates with enhanced skills and qualifications which should assist their rehabilitation on release from prison.
- 59 Cultural services reflect the diversity of its users well in its publicity and marketing material. For example, brochures include images of younger and older people, disabled users and ethnic minorities. This means that cultural services are visually welcoming all to participate.

Service outcomes for users and the community

- 60 Although this report focuses on healthier outcomes and economic vitality, cultural services are engaged in a wide range of activities to contribute to other priorities where the city faces equal challenges, such as high levels of crime and poor educational achievement.
- 61 Evidence of the outcomes of culture's contribution to community safety is mixed. The crime and disorder reduction partnership reports a 12 per cent decrease in recorded youth crime across the city and point to the increase in community engagement and diversionary programmes with young people as a strong factor. Incident reporting in parks suggests the total volume of incidents in parks has increased in recent years with the major issues being youth nuisance and unauthorised use of motorbikes. A survey of young people in parks a year ago reveals 26 per cent feel safe in parks, but 25 per cent do not and 48 per cent are not sure. This suggests cultural activity could be having some positive impact. However some people, including young people, feel less confident about safety and access, which may deter them from using local facilities.

62 There are very strong links between all cultural services and learning. Much of community ICT provision is delivered through the libraries network and the post of Museums and Galleries Primary Consultant has been established in partnership with children's services to integrate the city's cultural opportunities with the delivery of teaching and learning in Manchester schools. These examples provide evidence of a solid foundation for culture to contribute to learning outcomes.

Healthier communities

63 Cultural services demonstrate a good understanding of health inequalities in Manchester. They are delivering and working well in partnership, targeting activity to address these inequalities. Participation in health-related activities is good and improving but outcome focused measures of success are not consistently set. This affects the Council's ability to know how successful its approach is.

64 Cultural services' activities are clearly aimed at raising overall levels of participation and addressing health inequalities, which is consistent with the overarching aims of the Manchester physical activity strategy.

65 The Council has made proactive use of external partnerships and funding to achieve its health objectives. For example, NRF funding has been used in leisure to address a wide range of targeted health issues and inequalities, including obesity, diabetes, cardiac rehabilitation and also to target areas of severe deprivation. Cultural regeneration and sports development officers are integrated within local regeneration teams and this is providing an effective link between the identification of local issues and culture's response to address them.

66 There is strong evidence of increased participation in all the areas that cultural services are aiming to target. For example:

- against the 2005/06 sports development target (700,000 sessions) to increase the number of children and young people who take part in leisure and sports activities, over 370,000 were engaged in the first half of the year; and
- against the 2005/06 target (1,500 events) to develop community programmes targeting increased participation by over 50s, disabled people, those physically inactive, women and girls, looked after children, ethnic minorities and young people who truant or commit crime, over 1,400 were delivered in the first half of the year.

67 Over a longer period, the Council can demonstrate significant increases in participation through targeted programmes. For example between 2002/03 and 2004/05:

- disability programmes have increased from 128 to 181;
- clients aged 50 years and older have increased from 82 to 511; and
- alcohol and drugs awareness programmes from none to 911.

- 68 The Council works effectively with the PCTs to deliver health improvement. Through links with the Joint Health Unit, the Council and its partners have taken a broad view of addressing health issues with considerable emphasis on prevention and awareness rather than just encouraging participation by those who have existing or previous medical conditions. The Council has been late in developing its referral schemes for people who could benefit from directed physical activity through their doctors, but these are now growing strongly. From a low base, 2005 saw 16 GPs newly engaged with referral schemes which have led to 545 new people engaged and 203 new people entering mainstream leisure opportunities. Of these, 118 new people are physically active at recommended levels.
- 69 The limitations of indoor sport's management systems detailed in paragraph 50 means that the Council is unable to directly track participants on sport development and other programmes into regular use of mainstream facilities or to demonstrate that these facilities are being used by those at risk or in most need of health improvement.
- 70 There is a sound approach to working with young people to address health outcomes. The Council is aware that it needs to 'start young' and to sustain participation over the longer term. This approach to provide greater access to sporting opportunities is enhanced by the sports development team working closely with local schools in through the passport to sport scheme targeting 107 junior schools across Manchester. This provides a range of sporting events to encourage and engage with young people, and also provides a structured approach to developing appropriate pathways into clubs for young people to continue to access local services and facilities. As a result, the Council has tracked individuals across sports that have gone on to demonstrate excellence in their chosen area and who have acquired new skills, such as becoming qualified sports coaches.
- 71 There is a strong approach across all cultural activity aimed at tackling health issues. For example:
- through its 'arts in health' partner (LIME), there is significant delivery of programmes focused on acute and mental health areas involving 2,303 participants in 2004/05;
 - healthy walks, fun-runs and buggy pushes (in partnership with Surestart) are delivered across the city's parks;
 - a Galleries partnership project 'Under my Skin' gave new skills and confidence to a group of adults with learning disabilities; and
 - health information points in all libraries, specifically promoting health-related book stock supplemented by health leaflet displays, and providing a range of health events has led to a 30 per cent increase in the issue of 'healthy books' in 2004/05.

Economic vitality

- 72 Cultural services are contributing well to developing and maintaining the economic vitality of Manchester. It shares an understanding with its strategic partners that it needs to deliver on two challenging objectives:
- to use culture to deliver its 'world class city' ambitions; and
 - to deliver cultural opportunities, including employment, to people living in deprived neighbourhoods.
- 73 The Council's long-term commitment to creative industries is showing real dividends. It was early to recognise the importance and potential of creative industries and this is now reinforced in the Manchester city region strategy as a future growth sector for the area. Ongoing support has been provided to a range of organisations, most notably CIDS (Creative Industries Development Service). Since 2002, CIDS have helped to create 167 new creative businesses, employing 230 people and generating £25 million of sales. The established strength of this sector has been a factor in the BBC relocation of channels and services to the city and in advance of this move; several London based media production companies have opened Manchester offices.
- 74 Libraries have worked effectively with the Manchester Patent Office to help local people develop innovative business ideas. The TIDE project (Talent, Innovation, Diversity and Environment) has supported innovators through specialist advice, such as registering patent applications, and staff are trained in libraries to deliver this. Since 2002, almost 250 individuals have been supported with numerous case studies of successful projects captured. This project supports an independent creativity study (the BOHO index) which found that Manchester had the highest level of new patent applications outside London.
- 75 The economic impact of major events in Manchester is substantial and provides a legacy far beyond the duration of the events themselves. For example, independent research on the Commonwealth Games shows that tourism visitors spent 20 per cent more in the city than in the previous year, and in addition, increased hotel capacity is now sustaining employment in the hospitality industry. Across Greater Manchester 36,900 FTE posts were employed in the tourism sector in 2002, a 10 per cent rise on the previous year. This growth has been sustained and in 2004, 39,976 people were employed in the industry.
- 76 The Council's support to volunteers has provided many opportunities for local people and sustained the Council's ability to stage major events since the Commonwealth Games. Not only did the original volunteers receive wide-ranging training in skills, such as customer care, with many leading to qualifications, but three years on from the games there are now more than 2,000 volunteers on the database who provide substantial capacity to the Council to deliver its ongoing programme of major events.

- 77 Major events are contributing strongly to the economic wellbeing of the city. They also attract major external partnership investment and generate national and international media interest. The Council delivered over 25 events last year, with local, sub-regional, regional, national and international significance. These included the Paralympics World Cup, where over 350 athletes and 6,000 spectators participated in the inaugural event, and the Amateur Swimming Association National Championships with 400 swimmers and 8,000 spectators. Across the whole portfolio of events, over 27,000 competitors participated, attracting over 140,000 spectators to the city.
- 78 The city's heritage and cultural offering are central to the way the city is promoted to its own residents, visitors and potential investors. Examples include cultural promotions aimed at overseas and domestic short breaks visitors and heritage trails that focus on Manchester's textile, transport and engineering achievements.
- 79 There are numerous examples where the Council is using high profile events to drive service improvement and provide local cultural opportunities, such as:
- boxing and gymnastics kit from the Commonwealth Games now available to local clubs; and
 - funding for two grass-roots disability sports officers funded from the contract to deliver the Paralympics world cup.
- These are helping to sustain local sports clubs and support the growth in targeted development programmes, such as those involving people with disabilities.
- 80 The Council has used its corporate procurement policies effectively to benefit local people. Council construction contracts require a proportion of the jobs to be provided to local people in priority areas. This has been applied to a number of large cultural capital projects, including the Manchester Art Gallery where up to 100 local people were employed for periods of its redevelopment.
- 81 The Council's support for cultural organisations is delivering real economic outcomes for local people. The Contact theatre can evidence real outcomes for its participants, such as the young writers in residence programme where talented writers were provided with training and mentoring to produce theatre; six new plays were created and the writers have gone on to receive commissions, tour their work and to work with the BBC who supported the work through their 'Northern Exposures' programmes.
- 82 The Council is not able to consistently demonstrate the impact of cultural activity on the economic vitality of local communities. It does track some individuals and can demonstrate the short-term impact of initiatives on priority communities, but there is not a comprehensive approach to establishing employment baselines and targets across the city, such as those that exist for Wythenshawe. This means that the extent to which the Council's support for culture is benefiting all local communities is not known.

User experience and satisfaction with the quality of cultural services

- 83 Based on the latest figures for 2004/05 which informed national performance indicators, overall resident satisfaction with Manchester's cultural services is mixed. Performance varies among services and when compared with other councils. The current figures, compared against all English authorities are:
- 63 per cent of residents are satisfied with museums and galleries (best quartile);
 - 60 per cent of residents are satisfied with arts activities and venues (best quartile);
 - 69 per cent of residents are satisfied with the library service (second quartile);
 - 54 per cent of residents are satisfied with sport and leisure facilities (second quartile); and
 - 70 per cent of residents are satisfied with parks and open spaces (third quartile).
- 84 Usage of cultural facilities is in the best quartile compared to all English authorities, with the exception of sport and leisure, which is in the second quartile. This indicates that Manchester residents are generally satisfied with their cultural services and make good use of them.
- 85 Service quality from the user's perspective is recognised by several external accreditations. Twelve city parks have achieved Green Flag status for 2005/06, the national standard for parks and open spaces managed by the Civic Trust. The Manchester Art Gallery has received museums accreditation, the national standard for museum provision. However, the library service only meets six out of ten public library service standards and there is no national quality accreditation for leisure venues (the private operator applies its own quality scheme).
- 86 The Council's current service assessment framework score for culture compares well with other councils. In 2005, based on the current performance data used to compile this as part of the Council's overall Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the Council scores three out of a possible four.

Is the service delivering value for money?

- 87 While cultural services can demonstrate value for money (VFM) in relation to specific initiatives, there is not a coherent and systematic approach to VFM. Service managers do not routinely assess VFM and target setting remains weak across the service, in particular around service outcomes. It is therefore not possible for the Service to demonstrate that it provides VFM overall.
- 88 The combinations of high spend, high usage and above average satisfaction in cultural services means that overall value for money is average. The Council is a high spender on cultural services and this is particularly so in parks, tourism and libraries. At £96.54 spend per head on cultural services; the City Council was the third highest spender in 2004 of all Metropolitan councils (behind Liverpool and Sheffield). This spend is attracting high usage of cultural facilities.

- 89 Culture is a key priority for the Council, and resources across the cultural sector have been allocated in accordance with policy decisions and are used to target and deliver organisational priorities. Areas of higher spending are also in line with stated service priorities and the investment has resulted in improved services. For example, investment within parks and open spaces and indoor sports provision has resulted in an increase in user numbers and high resident satisfaction.
- 90 The Council has an effective mechanism in place to operate subvention (a guarantee of financial support) for conferences and conventions. Marketing Manchester have identified a priority list of events to bid for and clear criteria exist for bidding eligibility and for monitoring effectiveness, such as number of people attracted and estimated spend. This means that the Council can demonstrate the added value attracted by its subvention of these events.
- 91 The Council supports, through grant aiding, a number of cultural organisations who can demonstrate a strong commitment to equality and diversity. These include:
- contact 'youth theatre', which has won the Eclipse award for its approach to diversity through its staff, board, participants and audiences; and
 - all FM work with diverse groups, including assistance to the Somali and other minority language communities to develop and present community radio programmes tailored to those community's needs.
- 92 Cultural services work well with partners to increase the cultural offer in the city. It supplements its revenue budget by leveraging in financial and human resource capacity through extensive partnering arrangements. Examples include:
- leisure trust management arrangements forecast to save £2.8 million over ten years through business rate relief;
 - £500,000 (11 per cent) of City Galleries' annual spend comes from income earned from trading activities and the work of the Manchester City Galleries' Development Trust;
 - the Council has secured the largest Heritage Lottery Fund scheme for a public park with an investment to Heaton Park of over £11 million;
 - of the sports development community programme, 30 per cent of the total cost of staffing (£250,000 of £850,000) is from commercial sector sponsorship; and
 - an additional £50,000 of value has been achieved through buying library stock through the Manchester Stock Purchasing Consort.
- 93 Cultural Services' approach to procurement is delivering cost savings and enabling increased investment in premises.
- Partnership arrangements for indoor leisure management are delivering significant cost reductions within the revenue budget.

- The environment partnership arrangements, within which the parks and open spaces service is based, are not focussed on cost savings but concentrate more on improving the quality of open spaces and improved customer service and satisfaction. This partnership has delivered an impressive increase in user satisfaction and continues to focus on further improvements.
- 94 The Council has helped to attract significant private sector investment in capital cultural regeneration projects; however the extent to which these achieve VFM will need to be demonstrated over time.
- The operational risk at Bridgewater Hall is effectively transferred to a private operator thus minimising Council investment whilst continuing to demonstrate public benefit.
 - The Council is using its controlling stake in GMEX to drive potential economic benefits for the local economy, to safeguard existing activities and to achieve better integration of the marketing and operation of the GMEX, MICC and Bridgewater Hall venues. The draft business plan for GMEX shows that there will be a strong return on investment over time, if the Council manages the risks detailed within the plan. The Council, through its strong links with Marketing Manchester, has already helped to attract high profile events to the facility, such as the main labour party conference, the NUT annual conference, the liberal democrat spring conference and the conservative party spring conference in 2006.
 - Urbis is seen as an important part of the cultural attraction in the North of the city centre. However, at present the Council is not able to demonstrate that it is delivering VFM, this is acknowledged by the Council. Steps are being taken to improve the operational management of the facility utilising the current monitoring of its budgetary performance.

Summary

- 95 Overall, Manchester's cultural services are planned, managed and delivered on the basis of a good understanding and knowledge of the needs of the local community. The Council demonstrates a strong approach to equality and diversity and provides a good range of services for those with additional needs, such as community outreach. Cultural services have achieved considerable success in expanding the role of libraries as the activity centres of local communities.
- 96 Cultural services are delivering and working well in partnership to address health inequalities and to contribute to the economic vitality of the city. The Council works effectively with the PCTs to deliver health improvement and the Council is using high profile events to drive service improvement and provide local cultural opportunities.
- 97 Manchester residents are generally satisfied with their cultural services and make good use of them. There is strong evidence of increased participation in areas that cultural services are aiming to target.

- 98 However, there are some weaknesses. Physical access to cultural facilities is mixed and library opening hours do not meet national standards. Leisure services are unable to monitor indoor leisure usage and target usage effectively and some promotional activities are uncoordinated. City-wide plans including culture's potential to address local issues are not in place and there is weak engagement of young people to drive improvement in parks.
- 99 A coherent and systematic approach to achieving value for money is not in place across cultural services; however it can demonstrate good VFM in relation to specific initiatives.
- 100 Overall, we judge that Manchester's cultural services are delivering a **good**, two-star service.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

What is the service track record in delivering improvement?

- 101** Cultural services have implemented a number of significant changes in recent years that have resulted in new, high quality facilities and delivery of services that have improved the quality of life for some of the city's most deprived residents. Performance against key indicators, such as satisfaction and participation, are generally increasing. However, the Service lacks a consistent approach to managing value for money.
- 102** Council investment linked to external funding has delivered substantial improvements to the cultural infrastructure. Over the past ten years cultural initiatives in terms of physical regeneration have attracted nearly £400 million investment in the city's art and sports facilities, libraries and museums. This includes Commonwealth Games facilities now available to local residents, Manchester Art Gallery, Bridgwater Hall, Millennium Quarter, including Urbis, Heaton Park and North City library. This means local people have access to a wider range of new and improved cultural facilities.
- 103** A summary of recent cultural improvements demonstrate differences that users would recognise. These include:
- over £7 million of capital investment in leisure facilities which are open for longer hours (such as early morning swims and longer weekend opening);
 - estimated number of customers using outdoor leisure facilities has increased by 70 per cent over the last five years, attributable to an extended events programme in parks, increased warden activities, and the introduction of new facilities;
 - growth of parks friends groups from six in 1995 to over 55 groups in 2005 have helped to regenerate many parks during the last five years, including the introduction of 39 multi-sports areas and the delivery of 31 new or refurbished children's playgrounds; and
 - capital investment to Heaton Park of over £11 million, which is the country's largest Heritage Lottery Scheme for a public park.
- 104** Satisfaction with parks, museums, arts and venues is increasing (the last two from a high base) although comparable satisfaction with libraries and sport and leisure has not improved over the same period. This means that the investment and service improvements are starting to be recognised by users.
- 105** The most recent user surveys for libraries, the PLUS surveys, show an upward trend in overall user satisfaction:
- adult satisfaction has improved from 89 per cent in 2002/05 to 92.8 per cent in 2005/06; and

- child satisfaction has improved from 69 per cent in 2002/05 to 86 per cent in 2005/06.
- 106** Usage of cultural facilities is also generally increasing. For example in libraries, there has been an overall increase of 12 per cent in active members in 2004/05 against a national decline of 6.5 per cent. Membership at ten libraries has increased compared with only four in the previous year and membership of under 4s has increased by 43 per cent. The number of items borrowed from libraries has increased by 3.9 per cent against a national trend of declining issues. This suggests that a combination of visible improvements to facilities, service enhancements and promotion of these is encouraging greater use of cultural venues.
- 107** Cultural services can demonstrate improvements through many external awards that have been gained in recent years. These range from 12 Green Flag awards for parks, numerous national access awards for the Manchester Art Gallery and architectural design awards for cultural facilities such as the Sportcity stadium and Urbis. As well as generating substantial, positive publicity for the city and helping to raise local pride, these awards reflect improved experiences for users of these facilities, such as the high quality of access enjoyed by users of the Manchester Art Gallery.
- 108** The Service lacks a consistent approach to managing value for money. There are some effective systems in place to deliver value for money, however there are inconsistent quality standards for cultural services and so strategic and operational decisions are not taken to meet these and so maximise the impact of resources.

How well does the service manage performance?

- 109** Overall the Service is well placed to continue delivering cultural improvement. It acts effectively as a cultural leader and plans are in place to tackle many areas of weakness. However, there are some shortcomings in performance management arrangements and as a result the Service will find it difficult to measure the extent of its success in meeting its corporate objectives.
- 110** Senior management and service leadership is strong with the recent appointment of an Assistant Chief Executive for cultural services strengthening these services' profile within the Council. This leads to well motivated staff who are open to change and innovation and are clear what is expected of them.
- 111** Corporate and political support for culture is also strong. The role and potential of culture to deliver against wider corporate and community aims is shared by senior managers and members who also demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the service areas and associated issues.
- 112** Cultural partnerships are effective. Partners are very supportive of the Council's work in culture and there is a clear sense of shared priorities and working well together to deliver them across the public, private and voluntary sectors. Key strategic partnerships with commercial providers, leisure and tourism businesses, arts organisations and learning providers are enabling high quality cultural activity to be delivered.

- 113 Although there has been some progress to integrate cultural services, there are still many areas where services plan and deliver independently. For example, there is currently no integrated cultural services plan (each cultural service has its own business or action plans) and there is not a cross-cultural approach to issues such as organisational development or risk management. The Council has plans to develop a single service plan and integrated management plan in 2006/07. Currently, this means cultural services are not joining up services for the user as effectively as possible and may not be maximising efficiencies of joint planning and policy development.
- 114 Similarly, an integrated performance management framework for cultural services is underdeveloped. Work in this area is more advanced in libraries than the other services and libraries are leading on the development of a consistent approach to performance management across all services.
- 115 All services monitor performance regularly but the presentation of performance information does not consistently summarise achievement and progress to inform policy decisions. Service target setting is focused on outputs rather than outcomes and action plans lack explicit statements about what differences will be experienced by local people.
- 116 Many cultural services' longer term targets are not stretching as they have been exceeded for some time, following the Commonwealth Games. The cultural strategy contains five and ten-year targets relating to participation, satisfaction, employment and the economic value of culture. However many of these five-year (2007) targets have been exceeded and so are not providing explicit challenge. The Council has plans to revise these in discussion with partners during 2006/07 in line with the community strategy review to 2015. This will allow for the integration of new performance management requirements and the setting of newly appropriate stretch targets.
- 117 Cultural services are aware of the need to develop longer term outcome measures that show how cultural activities are making real differences to users and the community. It is making real efforts to strengthen this area. Examples include:
- negotiation of the LPSA 2 target to assist community cohesion by increasing cultural participation by residents. The number of people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds can get on well together is currently 55 per cent. By March 2008, this would be expected to rise to 58 per cent but the stretch target for the Council to achieve by this time is 63 per cent;
 - research on the impact of the cultural primary education co-ordinator in the museums and galleries on educational attainment;
 - work to link homework club activities to educational attainment; and
 - partnership work to research culture in health outcomes and potential savings in mainstream health services.

- 118** Cultural services have been effective in developing service improvement plans to contribute to the Manchester Improvement Project (a major corporate change agenda). These identify current weaknesses in structures and service delivery, learn from previous service reviews and anticipate future service demands and changing agendas. There are currently six project mandates across cultural services that have been approved by the corporate board although not all of these have yet started implementation.
- 119** The service improvement plans represent clear intentions to review and improve value for money for specific projects across both cultural services and the Council. They are designed to find ways in which the service can improve outcomes for residents at the same or lower cost. An efficiency gains methodology supports this procedure and has been designed to enable identification of gains in performance and efficiency gains that may arise from implementation projects. Manchester Leisure in 2005-06 has forecast it will save 2.2 per cent of its net costs in 2005/06 and the library and information service intends to make savings of £160,000 by reducing sickness absence.
- 120** Overall, the arrangements to drive and deliver improved value for money are improving but not comprehensive or consistent across all services:
- libraries have developed a VFM indicator that takes into account visits, enquiries, computer sessions and issues, and divides overall costs by the total figure to give cost per transaction. Last year, this was £1.77, the target this year is £1.60 with an expected outturn of £1.66. This is being further developed this year to add virtual visits; however
 - leisure's service improvement plan details planned efficiency savings of £640,000 over the next three years, but there is insufficient detail on performance targets, such as increasing participation, access or service quality to be able to assess future value for money effectively.
- 121** There is limited evidence to demonstrate that underperformance is managed effectively. Libraries started 2005/06 with an absence rate per employee of 14.23 days. Staff training in addressing absence management and a range of actions was implemented and absence is now down to 11.59 days per employee. This is a substantial improvement but still represents a high level of employee absence in excess of the corporate target.
- 122** The Council can demonstrate effective scrutiny of cultural services leading to improved outcomes for users. For example, Social Strategy Scrutiny Committee requested information on arts activity to see if schools were engaged with and benefiting from cultural interventions, particularly those in deprived wards. The analysis helped to redirect the work with the highest impact to the schools and wards in greatest need and was shared with Creative Partnerships to inform their 2006/07 delivery plan.

- 123 Although there is a need for greater integration of the cultural service areas, the cultural strategy team has been very effective in providing a unique resource to strengthen culture's influence and perceived role within the Council and with external partners. This team has taken the lead in providing a cultural response to corporate, partner and regional/national strategies and policies and this is providing greater co-ordination and consistency of aims between cultural and wider community ambitions. The recent development of the children and young people's plan is a good example of this.
- 124 Cultural services have been slow to gain a complete picture of physical access barriers across all facilities with DDA access audits and reviews still in progress. There is commitment to addressing the priority issues, notably £2.5 million for the central library in 2006/07, but there are still cultural facilities that will not be made fully accessible to people with disabilities within the next two years.
- 125 Cultural services demonstrate mixed performance in developing a workforce that closely reflects the wider population. Services have been more successful in attracting and promoting women to senior positions, but fail to meet most corporate targets relating to ethnic minorities and disabled people within the total workforce and senior posts. This means cultural services' staff do not adequately reflect the diverse population that they serve.
- 126 Cultural services makes good use of learning from cultural networks and high performing providers at national and international levels and has been very active in sharing its own experiences and expertise with others. The Council's input to London 2012 Olympics planning, based on its Commonwealth Games experience, is a good example of this. The services also make good use of customer feedback to inform future delivery of services.

Does the service have the capacity to improve?

- 127 Cultural services have access to significant skills, tools and finances to deliver future improvement and there are significant investment plans at varying stages of development that should strengthen culture's contribution to delivering against corporate and community priorities.
- 128 Cultural services have invested in staff at all levels and are well placed to meet the demands and challenges of both corporate restructuring and changes in the cultural sector. The services' approach to, and investment in, staff and training is robust and workforce development programmes are in place across these services, although the commitment to training is uneven across services. Cultural services demonstrate good consideration of equalities and human rights issues in its policies, employment practices and service delivery. This has resulted in high calibre staff who are committed to further improvement.

- 129** These services have demonstrated considerable success in attracting external funding and private sector support, including sponsorship, to expand service delivery. However, success in attracting external funding can create problems in sustaining activity and retaining staff posts after the funding ends. Although there are examples of posts being mainstreamed by the Council, a significant proportion of staff across cultural services are supported by time-limited funding; currently 115 FTE staff representing over 15 per cent of the total. This presents a challenge to the Council; to ensure that priority work is not lost at the end of the funding regime.
- 130** The services' ability to identify non-priorities and to disinvest in those has not been strong in the past, but there are signs that the senior management is prepared to address this area more robustly. For example the external bidding resource within libraries has been reduced and this indicates a more considered approach to attracting external funding that is consistent with existing priorities.
- 131** The cultural strategy team has shown good leadership in its work with partners to make more efficient use of external funds and Council resources. It has built a new strategic partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage, enabling a process for local prioritisation of capital developments funded through these sources and is working to rationalise the monitoring requirements of its main cultural funding partners. This will mean that cultural projects will be prioritised and agreed at an earlier stage and project monitoring arrangements will be streamlined for all those involved.
- 132** Future plans for the cultural branding of the city are strong and present opportunities for greater co-ordination as well as introducing consideration of quality into the way the city is projected nationally and internationally. The city has worked closely with strategic partners to develop the new Manchester brand, which celebrates the strengths of Manchester's heritage, but places the city's history of originality in the modern context of diversity, respect and quality innovation. The Council has retained control over the use of the 'original-modern' brand to ensure that the way it is applied is consistent with the values of the brand.
- 133** Manchester City Galleries, through its leadership of the North West Museum Hub and Manchester Museums Consortium, has a clear agenda for improvement and significant new resources from Renaissance in the Regions to progress the regional museums strategy, both in the city and across the region, in partnership with MLA North West. Plans for the service are in line with the Cultural Strategy and focus on audience development, further innovative work with schools, workforce development, and collections stewardship and interpretation, all aimed at increasing access to and standards of services.
- 134** Culture has already played a significant role in Manchester's large-scale regeneration plans, such as the housing market renewal areas, and this role is set to be strengthened. Working with Arts Council NW and other regional partners, the Council is looking at ways in which culture can impact more widely across renewal areas and has established a dedicated (and integrated) resource, through the cultural regeneration officers, to deliver effectively at a local level.

- 135 Delivering these high profile projects and ensuring that they integrate effectively with the complex community agenda remains a challenge for the Council and it is not yet clear what impact the local area agreement (LAA) framework will have on the wider recognition of culture's potential role and securing resources for the sector. Cultural services presented a strong bid for the Manchester LAA to include a fifth discretionary block for culture. Ultimately this was not successful, but is widely acknowledged to have been a bold statement of commitment to culture by the Council. As a result, cultural services have mapped the sector's potential contribution across the four existing blocks and the new three spines of the community strategy, but it is not yet clear that this potential will be realised through wider recognition and corresponding resources allocated to culture. This is important because NRF funding for culture is reducing and cultural services will need to maximise its share of the funding resources available to the Council.
- 136 There are promising signs that the future role and positioning of Urbis are becoming clearer and that measures are in place to improve its performance. These include appointment of a new director, plans for improved access to the venue, consistent with the city's ambitions to provide vibrant evening and night-time economies, increased partnership working with other cultural venues and a greater commitment to community engagement. The latter will be enhanced by the imminent location of Channel M community TV within Urbis.

Summary

- 137 Cultural services can demonstrate a significant track record that has delivered a range of new and improved cultural venues and enhanced services that users would recognise. Satisfaction with and usage of cultural facilities is generally increasing, and the Council can demonstrate improvements through external awards. However, the Service lacks a consistent approach to managing value for money, so the potential impact of resources may not be being maximised.
- 138 The Service is well placed to continue delivering cultural improvement. It acts effectively as a cultural leader and plans are in place to tackle many areas of weakness. All services monitor performance regularly but the presentation of performance information does not consistently summarise achievement and progress to inform policy decisions. Service target setting lacks explicit statements about what differences will be experienced by local people.
- 139 Cultural services can demonstrate strong capacity to deliver improvement in the future, including effective leadership, well trained and committed staff, a history of success in attracting external funding, and good partnership working. Cultural services have access to significant skills, tools and finances to deliver future improvement and there are significant investment plans at varying stages of development that should strengthen culture's contribution to delivering against corporate and community priorities. However the impact of the local area agreement on culture's perceived role and status is not yet known and the services' plans for the sustainability of a large number of time-limited staff are not sufficiently clear.
- 140 Overall, we judge that Manchester's cultural services have **promising** prospects for improvement.