

Corporate Assessment Report

April 2006



# Corporate Assessment

**Salford City Council**

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## Introduction

- 1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is the means by which the Audit Commission fulfils its statutory duty under Section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003 to make an assessment, and report on the performance, of local authorities. Corporate assessment is one element in the overall assessment that leads to a CPA score and category.
- 2 The purpose of the corporate assessment is to assess how well the Council engages with and leads its communities, delivers community priorities in partnership with others, and ensures continuous improvement across the range of Council activities. It seeks to answer three headline questions which are underpinned by five specific themes.

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

- Ambition
- Prioritisation

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

- Capacity
- Performance management

What has been achieved?

- Achievement

Considered against the shared priorities of:

- sustainable communities and transport;
- safer and stronger communities;
- healthier communities;
- older people; and
- children and young people.

- 3 Corporate assessments are normally aligned with a joint area review of services for children and young people (JAR). In practice this means that the Council's achievements in relation to children and young people are assessed using the evidence provided from the JAR. In addition, examples of outcomes and activity, which are relevant to the other themes and which are identified through the JAR, are considered within the corporate assessment.

- 4 The JAR covers all services for children and young people that are directly managed or commissioned by the Council, as well as health and youth justice services provided by other bodies. It focuses on the contributions made by services to improving outcomes. The separate JAR report covers the leadership and management of services for children and young people and, in particular, the way that such services work together to improve outcomes. The description and judgement in respect of children and young people in this report is summarised from the JAR report.

## Executive summary

- 5 Salford City Council has worked with its partners and the wider community to determine clear and challenging ambitions for the area which are aligned to local need. It is providing strong community leadership to deliver these ambitions which are widely shared, owned and understood by partners and stakeholders. These ambitions are driving the Council's and its partners' approach to delivering improvements for local people.
- 6 Partnership working is a key strength and partnerships are facilitating the delivery of better outcomes against the Council's ambitions. Examples include a range of joint initiatives with the private sector and health. The Council has strong political and managerial leadership which is driving delivery of its seven pledges to local people, and a positive 'can do' culture is evident.
- 7 The Council can point to a range of achievements in priority areas. These improvements are visible to local people, and are reflected in increasing public satisfaction levels.
- 8 The Council has made clear progress in diversifying and regenerating the local economy. It has targeted activity on areas of greatest need, and had demonstrable successes in creating jobs from which local people have benefited and in ensuring local people have the skills they need to secure employment. It is delivering on its agenda for clean and green liveability, and provides efficient and effective refuse collection and streetcare services. It works well with the passenger transport executive and has developed schemes to improve transport in the area.
- 9 The Council has taken a strong and leading role in relation to safer and stronger communities, and works well with a wide range of partners to address crime and disorder issues. Although crime levels remain high overall, there is an improving trend and reductions exceed targets in most key areas.
- 10 The Council has clear ambitions to improve the health of local people and works well with the PCT and local hospital trusts to deliver on its ambitions. It is making progress to achieving ambitions such as a long term reduction in teenage pregnancy rates and smoking cessation. Resources are clearly targeted at areas of need and there is a multi-disciplinary team approach to addressing health inequalities.
- 11 There is strong partnership work and areas of good performance in relation to services for older people. Prevention services and intermediate care are good, and the Council performs well in promoting independence and preventing delayed transfers from hospital.
- 12 The Council is performing adequately in its provision for children and young people. Leadership from councillors and officers is good. Very effective partnership working between the Council and the other agencies and organisations is resulting in clear and challenging ambitions for children and young people across the whole of Salford.

- 13 The Council provides good value for money and has made improvements to financial management. Some barriers to improvement do still remain. For example, the Council's management of human resources is strong at service department level, but requires a more consistent focus at a corporate level and across the organisation. Also, some key tools - such as workforce plans and a competency framework - are not yet being applied corporately.
- 14 Strong partnership working with the community is helping the Council meet the challenge of understanding and responding to the needs of the diverse range of ethnic and hard to reach groups within the city, and of the less advantaged members of the community and areas of the city. However, the Council recognises corporately that further work is needed in this area.
- 15 The Council has increased significantly the pace of change in recent years, but is still not addressing some key areas of concern fast enough. For example, performance in delivery against its priorities for children and young people is improving, but educational attainment and services for young people need to continue to maintain the rate of improvement. In addition, housing remains a fair service despite recent improvements. The Council has recently determined its housing stock options, subject to government approval, and now needs to deliver the fundamental change required to meet the Decent Homes Standard.

## Areas for improvement

- 16 The Council has made great strides in improving and providing a platform for further improvements to the quality of life of the people of Salford. However, it still faces a challenging agenda if it is to achieve the ambitions it, and its partners, have set for themselves in the community plan. To secure the benefits required over the longer term the Council will need to do a number of key things.
- 17 First, it needs to continue to maintain the improvements it has made to educational attainment as a key enabler for local people to benefit from the improved prosperity that increased investment in the city will bring. Developing, and then implementing, the *Children's and Young Persons Plan* will be a key part of the delivery of that improvement.
- 18 Second, the Council has put in place a framework for delivering the improvements necessary to achieve the decent homes standard but recognises that achievement of the higher Salford standard will be a significant challenge. Decent housing is a key factor in enabling many of the wider health and socio-economic factors that affect deprivation in the city.
- 19 Third, the Council needs to improve the corporate management of human resources through continuing implementation and development of the staff appraisal process, implementation of the HR management information system, roll out of the competency framework and development of workforce planning.
- 20 Fourth, the Council - with its partners - needs to further develop its understanding of the needs of the less advantaged, minority ethnic and hard to reach groups in the city, and to shape service delivery to meet these diverse needs. Such communities are increasing in number and, range of background. While the Council has made progress in understanding the needs of some of these groups, it faces continued difficulty in gathering intelligence about and in responding to them.
- 21 Fifth, the Council - with its partners - need to better co-ordinate and resource information sharing and research. This will further strengthen an already strong aspect of the Council's capacity, and the planned refinements to the Service Delivery Partnerships should be used as a focus for determining how best this may be achieved.

## Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	3
	Prioritisation	3
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	3
	Performance management	3
What has been achieved?	Achievement	3
<b>Overall corporate assessment score**</b>		<b>3</b>
<b>*Key to scores</b>		
1 – below minimum requirements – <b>inadequate performance</b>		
2 – at only minimum requirements – <b>adequate performance</b>		
3 – consistently above minimum requirements – <b>performing well</b>		
4 – well above minimum requirements – <b>performing strongly</b>		

### \*\*Rules for determining the overall corporate assessment score

Scores on 5 themes	Overall corporate assessment score
Two or more themes with a score of 4 None less than score of 3	4
Three or more themes with a score of 3 or more None less than score of 2	3
Three or more themes with a score of 2 or more	2
Any other combination	1

## Context

### The locality

- 22** Salford City Council is a metropolitan council in northwest England within the Greater Manchester conurbation. The area covers 9,723 hectares and is a mix of rural and urban landscapes. The population is 216,400 living in 95,000 households; approximately 7.3 per cent of the population is from ethnic groups other than white British, and more than 70,000 people are aged 50 years or over (32.8 per cent of the population). The minority ethnic communities represent a wide range of diverse cultures and faiths. Across the population of Salford there is a range of disadvantaged and hard to reach groups that bring particular challenges for the Council.
- 23** Salford contains areas of significant social deprivation. It is the 12th most deprived council area in England with a quarter of the city's areas among the most disadvantaged five per cent of wards nationally. Local unemployment (3.8 per cent) for the city as a whole is now only a little above the Greater Manchester and North West average after many years of high unemployment following the loss of traditional industries. However, some wards still suffer from poor health, housing, educational achievement and employment prospects.
- 24** Regeneration accelerated during the 1990s and is continuing to do so. Significant impact is evident in Salford Quays, parts of the transport infrastructure and town centre developments. In the past ten years over £250 million has been secured for major regeneration work, and the city has also benefited from investment resulting from its designation as a Health Action Zone (HAZ). Additional significant investment is being secured through private investment, an Urban Regeneration Company, established in Central Salford in February 2005, and from area based initiatives, such as New Deal for Communities (NDC), Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and the Housing Market Renewal Fund (HMRF). Neighbourhood management areas and community committees bring the Council closer to the community.
- 25** The Salford Partnership, 'Partners IN Salford', comprising community, private, public and voluntary organisations, recently produced a revised community plan covering the period 2006-2016. Its vision is to create a city which is a superb place to live and work. The chair of the partnership is from the private sector and is also chair of the neighbouring Trafford strategic partnership. The city is at the heart of the region and is a key player in the development of the Northern Way Strategy. Seven themes set out what the partnership is seeking to achieve: a healthy city; a safe city; a learning and creative city; a city where young people are valued; an inclusive city; an economically prosperous city; and a city that is good to live in.

## The Council

- 26 The Council is controlled by Labour with 44 of the 60 seats; there are eight Conservative and seven Liberal Democrat councillors, and one vacancy. In 2003 a new leader of the Council was appointed. A cabinet governs the business of the Council, supported by six overview and scrutiny panels, community and standards committees, and regulatory and non-regulatory panels. Ten Cabinet members, including the leader and deputy leader, have responsibility for cross-cutting portfolios and service areas.
- 27 The Council's mission statement is 'to create the best possible quality of life for the people of Salford'. Seven pledges identify the Council's priorities, reflect the community plan, and provide the focus and direction for the allocation of resources.
- 28 The Council re-organised into six directorates during 2005: chief executive's; children's services; community, health and social care; customer and support services; environment; and housing and planning. There is also a jointly appointed Director of Public Health who is a member of the Council's management team and of the Primary Care Trust's Board.
- 29 The Council's gross revenue budget for 2005/06 is £507 million (£295 million net). It employs approximately 12,000 staff. The capital programme for 2005/06 is £118 million. Revenue balances are currently £7.9 million with a further £3.95 million in housing revenue account balances.

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

### Ambition

- 30 The Council is performing well in this area.
- 31 It has clear, challenging but realistic ambitions developed with its partners which are widely shared and owned. The ambitions aim to make a real and measurable difference to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the people of Salford. These ambitions are being delivered through the Council's seven pledges to the community. Plans to secure the delivery of the ambitions are generally well developed, or in development for the longer term aims. Performance management of the local strategic partnership (LSP) and delivery through the service delivery partnerships (SDPs) is good in priority areas, but needs further clarification and improvement around some aspects of living environment and social inclusion.
- 32 The ambitions and vision for Salford are clearly set out in the new community plan. The plan was developed by the LSP, 'Partners IN Salford', through a range of consultations and a major visioning event during 2005 and was launched in December 2005. The plan sets out seven themes underpinned by specific actions and targets. These themes clearly link to key strategies of both the Council and its partners, and reflect regional, sub regional and national priorities. The plan is being delivered through the SDPs, each of which is chaired by the most relevant lead partner. The SDPs are effective delivery mechanisms in most areas, but the Council and LSP accept that improvements to performance monitoring of some delivery partnerships could be improved, for example social inclusion and housing.
- 33 The plan is more outcome focused than its predecessor, and sets clear, challenging and realistic ambitions, for the area for the period 2006 to 2016. For example, it aims to reduce the overall crime rate by 22.5 per cent by 2009 and to the North West average by 2015, and to reduce the gap in life expectancy of men and women in Salford compared to the national average by 8 per cent by 2009 and to the national average by 2015. This clarity about outcomes will help the Council and its partners measure progress to achieving the plan's ambitions.

- 34** The Council has developed seven pledges to the people of Salford, which are fully aligned with the themes set out in the community plan. The seven pledges relate to: improving health; reducing crime; encouraging learning, leisure and creativity; investing in young people; promoting inclusion; creating prosperity; and enhancing life in Salford. The Council's best value performance plan (BVPP) sets out the Council's priorities in the short and medium term and includes a range of actions and targets for delivery of the pledges and the longer term aims of the community plan. The pledges, which are well understood by staff and key stakeholders, are informing and driving the Council's delivery of services to the community.
- 35** Strong and well established community engagement has enabled delivery of the Council's pledges. Close working with communities through the Council's neighbourhood management structure and its eight community committees has enabled it to develop community action plans that are aligned with the pledges. These local plans feed into the overarching themes for Salford as a whole, and are strengthened by the Council's directors having responsibility for specific committees. However, the Council recognises that it needs to do more to ensure that all of Salford's diverse communities are consulted and engaged, and able to inform the ambitions. This remains a challenge because of the range and small size of some of these communities, although there are many good examples of how this has happened and shaped service delivery.
- 36** The Council ensures that its plans clearly link to its ambitions, resources and priorities. The BVPP is underpinned by a medium term financial plan which is soundly based and provides a framework for delivery. Service plans are closely aligned to the community plan and the BVPP. Statutory plans have been further developed - for example, the housing strategy was passed 'fit for purpose' during 2005 - which will support the Council in delivering its ambitions.
- 37** There is a strong commitment to continually improving customer service through its 'Think Customer' initiative and the Council is working with partners, for example the PCT, to secure this approach in the way services are delivered. The initiative is a strategy for joint working between partners, and is strongly driven by the leader of the Council. The ambition to secure public services which are highly responsive, highly accessible and joined up at the point of delivery to meet customers' needs is being achieved in many priority areas, for example the benefits service.
- 38** In recent years the Council has introduced a more rigorous approach to budget setting and monitoring to ensure balance between delivery of low council tax increases, spending to budget and achieving ambition. The cabinet has an annual work plan which is cross-cutting, sets clear priorities and drives delivery of the pledges.
- 39** Decision making is effective and is informed by information produced through research and engagement, for example in relation to transport priorities. The Council has also made difficult decisions, for example the range of options considered to help it address weaknesses in housing services.

## Prioritisation

- 40 The Council is performing well in this area.
- 41 The Council has clear priorities which reflect local needs and national priorities. There is strong political and managerial leadership driving delivery. The Council has engaged well with its diverse communities to understand and respond to their needs through its approach to neighbourhood management and its strong partnership working, although some inconsistencies remain. Information sharing with partners needs to develop further.
- 42 The Council with its partners has set out clear priorities for the delivery of the seven themes in the community plan in the period 2006-2016. These priorities clearly reflect the key issues facing Salford, as identified through consultation and engagement with key partners, stakeholders and the wider community. The Council's BVPP identifies how it plays its part in delivering these priorities through the pledges it has made. The Cabinet's work plan sets out on an annual basis a framework for the delivery of the priorities. Improvement priorities are now consistently and effectively integrated with service plans, and are aligned to the Council's Local Public Services Agreement (LPSA). The Council can show how these priorities have informed its resource decisions over a number of years. By aligning service plans and resources with its priorities for improvement, the Council will be better placed to deliver on its ambitions.
- 43 Political and managerial leadership is strong and is driving delivery of the pledges. The annual Cabinet work plan for 2005-06 identified 11 priority areas for improvement under its wider aims of '*reaching its customers*', '*investing in its workforce*' and '*working with its partners*'. The BVPP also identifies the priorities for improvement against each of its seven pledges, and has set and refined annual targets for achievement against these. The leader of the Council regularly monitors progress against the priorities and holds portfolio holders to account for performance. This approach provides a strong focus for ensuring effective delivery of improvement priorities.
- 44 Local priorities are set out in community action plans, and take account of the views of local people and stakeholders. The Council has a significant knowledge base through targeted consultation with different groups and is increasingly taking account of the needs of all sections of the community in the design, delivery and evaluation of services in its approach to consultation. An example is the involvement of user and carers groups in the design of services for people with learning disabilities and services to older people. Involving local people and stakeholders in shaping local priorities leads to services that are better able to meet their needs.

- 45 The Council has developed a positive 'can do' culture to support delivery of its priorities. This is recognised by key partners and stakeholders, and is reflected in innovative delivery solutions between the Council and its partners. For example, the Urban Vision joint venture company is delivering on pledges for planning and highways work. The Council has sustained its focus on regeneration over time and made significant progress in addressing issues that are important to local people - for example through securing jobs, and landmark regeneration projects such as the development of Salford Quays and the Lowry. These projects represent significant achievements and have provided the basis for further investment.
- 46 The impact of scrutiny in shaping priorities is variable. The scrutiny committees have undertaken a number of useful reviews or scrutiny commissions which are contributing to policy development and involving external agencies - for example, of corporate parenting, asylum seekers, tobacco control and regeneration. However, more could be done through scrutiny work plans to ensure a more systematic independent review of the Council's pledges, key improvement plans and key business risks. This would help to ensure the Council's activity remained fully aligned to support delivery of its priorities.
- 47 The Council's approach to resource allocation is good and is driven by the medium term financial planning framework. It is overseen by the Budget Efficiency Group, Budget and Audit overview and scrutiny committee, and the Service Improvement Board. It has processes in place to help it determine what its spending priorities should be, such as scrutiny, decision conferencing in some directorates, and community committee action plans. It can demonstrate a re-allocation of resources towards priority areas such as children's services, social and health care provision over the last four or five years, and more recently towards housing, libraries and community safety. It has also found innovative solutions for funding services such as refuse collection and street cleaning which are lower priority for improvement because they are already highly rated.
- 48 While good information is gathered by the Council and used to inform its ambitions for the community, this is not yet shared consistently with partners. The Council acknowledges that improvements could lead to even better prioritisation of ambitions through the service delivery partnerships (SDP's) that underpin the LSP.

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

### Capacity

- 49 The Council is performing well in this area.
- 50 The Council has taken major steps to secure the capacity it needs to deliver its ambitions and priorities. Councillor and officer relationships are particularly strong while providing for appropriate challenge. Partnership working at the strategic and operational level and through joint service delivery vehicles is impressive. Financial capacity has been strengthened over time in a structured manner and is now soundly based. Despite important improvements, some weaknesses still remain in corporate human resources, elements of scrutiny work and maximising councillor capacity.
- 51 Councillors and officers work well together and provide effective joint leadership. They are clear about their respective roles, and schemes of delegation are clear. Since 2002 and with new political leadership, the Council has strengthened and developed its vision. Lead councillors are actively engaged in, have a clear understanding of and commitment to their role in strategic and policy decision making. This change has engendered an openness and culture of innovation and risk-taking that has driven the Council forward in recent years.
- 52 Capacity is strong at the Cabinet and portfolio holder level but outside this group councillors are not always adequately empowered and scrutiny, although significantly improved through the use of scrutiny commissions, is not yet fully effective. There is also a lack of clarity about scrutiny's role in performance management. This has led to some recommendations by Scrutiny Committees not being SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound) and therefore not all outcome focused. However, scrutiny is now being enhanced by the involvement of users, for example involving citizens in the corporate parenting review.
- 53 The Council has responded effectively to the ethical framework, and the standards committee works well with the Council's monitoring officer. Councillors have all received training in equalities and human rights issues.
- 54 Financial health has improved significantly in recent years and is now strong despite pressures to maintain low council tax and budget increases. Financial reserves have been rebuilt to a prudent level of £7.9 million based on a well-evidenced risk assessment. The Council's medium term financial plan has been developed and aligned with its pledges. A clear framework and set of principles are in place, which underpin a rolling three year financial forecast.

- 55 Human resource (HR) management requires a more consistent focus at a corporate level although this is currently offset by the strength of the devolved arrangements currently in place. Corporate HR practice has improved through the development of an HR strategy, the roll-out of a training and development programme, revisions to its approach to absence management, and - for the first time, in 2005-06 - all staff will receive an appraisal. However, the Council's HR management information system and competency framework are still being piloted, some directorates are still using their own appraisal schemes, and workforce planning is at an early stage of development.
- 56 Despite these weaknesses there are examples of strong directorate HR practice underpinning service change and delivery. For example, the call centre has recently been awarded IIP 'ambassador' status and there are examples of innovative HR practices in social care and through the work with Urban Vision.
- 57 Risk management within the Council is soundly based and has developed since the mid-1990's, but is not being fully used to enhance capacity. Risk assessments are an integral part of the procurement decision making process, for example on the development services joint venture. There is no culture of risk aversion. Service plans contain risk assessments, but risk management is not yet fully integrated into all staff appraisal and performance processes. It is not, therefore, effectively used as a tool to drive improved performance and thereby improve capacity.
- 58 The Council provides good value for money and makes an effective use of resources. It has introduced an internal value for money self assessment questionnaire which has been completed by 100 service areas, and is being used to inform 2006-07 budget preparation and the development of future service improvement programmes. There is a good commitment to, and a healthy culture around, achieving more for less in delivering against pledges. The Council has been very successful in gaining external funding for key initiatives. Taken together, these approaches help to significantly improve the Council's financial capacity.
- 59 Procurement arrangements and practices are generally good, and sometimes innovative. The Council has developed strategic partnering arrangements to deliver key services and achieve improvement, for example in legal and development services. There are many examples of successful procurement activity having provided cost savings or better value for money.
- 60 Significant efficiencies in service delivery have been delivered through effective use of ICT and the Council's focus through the *'Think Customer'* initiative, e-government, business process re-engineering and project management support. The Council is engaged in, and has delivered, a large number of initiatives to drive change and these are increasingly targeted at priority areas. It has achieved its e-enablement targets. Effective use of ICT improves the Council's capacity and ability to deliver services efficiently.

## Performance management

- 61 The Council is performing well in this area.
- 62 Performance management is strong. Political and managerial leadership and commitment are driving improvement and performance is being managed, for example the improvements in housing management, educational attainment and adult social care. A new performance management system is to be rolled out during 2006 in order to enhance the existing corporate system.
- 63 The Council has made significant progress since 2002 in addressing the weaknesses identified in this area. The seven pledges, and the ambitions and priorities of the Council, are now aligned and clearly expressed across a range of documentation. They are also linked to actions and targets which are integrated into coherent sub-pledges. The Leader and Chief Executive have presented Leadership Roadshows to staff in recent years, which have provided greater clarity about the seven pledges and feedback on performance against the targets set. These roadshows have been used as a communication tool to achieve a better understanding and ownership of the pledges throughout the Council. This has been achieved at all levels within the workforce.
- 64 At the senior level there is a clear focus on performance. Directors are held to account by senior management and the political leadership for performance against targets on both a formal and an informal basis. Quarterly evaluation meetings involve a review of all PIs, progress against pledges and cabinet workplan priorities. Cabinet members have a track record of active involvement in performance management. This is focused on top level outcomes linked to the Council's pledges, and action planning is now incisive and linked to achieving better quality of life outcomes and resolving any underperformance. Housing is a good example of a service that is improving from a low base, with improvements in the percentage of rent collected, average time to re-let dwellings, and improvements to the average time to make repairs, all improving year on year since 2002-03 due to revised performance management arrangements.
- 65 Reporting to councillors has been sharpened and is clearly linked to the delivery of the pledges. Scope remains to broaden the range of qualitative information utilised to assess performance. The Council is addressing this and has invested in a new information management unit. However, outside Cabinet, councillors are not always effectively involved in performance management. While scrutiny committees do review performance information, their effectiveness in challenging and improving performance is inconsistent.

- 66** The Council's previously weak record in meeting some LPSA and pledge targets has led to the development of an improved and more effective approach to target setting, monitoring and performance management. This is now being adopted at service level. Performance management for managers and staff is effective throughout the Council. Rigorous action planning takes place and can be seen to be delivering improvements in key areas. For example in educational attainment, results at key stages 2, 3 and 4 all improved in 2004/05 and pupils achieving five GCSE's A-C grades improved by eight percentage points. The percentage of household waste recycled or composted increased from 5 to 13 per cent from 2002/03 to 2004/05 and is continuing to rise. In housing, the average time to complete non-urgent housing repairs reduced from 20 days to 12 days, and the percentage of specified housing repairs completed in government time limits improved from 84 to 96 per cent. The number of older people being supported to live independently per 1,000 population increased from 93 in 2002/03 to 172 in 2004/05, and the average time taken to process new housing benefit claims reduced from 52 days to 30 days.
- 67** Complaints handling, monitoring and analysis has improved. New software is soon to be introduced which will enable even more effective analysis and action to be taken. Improvements have taken place as evidenced by the Local Government Ombudsman's latest report to the Council.
- 68** Performance information is available to users and key stakeholders through the Council's website and a range of other literature, as well as the BVPP. The Council's call centre routinely and pro-actively seeks feedback from users and feeds this into performance management and service re-design. A recent campaign to improve the take-up of flu vaccinations for those aged over 65 improved take-up from 40 to 73 per cent and provided additional benefits of free health checks for those attending the vaccination clinics. The Council's website includes the performance database, Salford's Performance Information Network (SPIN), which identifies a range of performance information. In a less formal sense feedback on performance is received through a series of quarterly dinners that the Chief Executive holds with key partners. The Council uses this feedback to further improve services.
- 69** Service plans are clearly aligned with other plans, and at the most local level the key performance indicators are matched against the community action plans developed in each of the community committee areas. These are also linked into the strategy and budget process, and are aligned with the key work themes of the Council and the LSP. Performance management of the service delivery partnerships that report to the LSP is good in key areas, but - as noted previously - less so in others and is currently subject to further review and improvement.

## What has been achieved?

- 70 The Council is performing well in this area.
- 71 In the last decade the Council has successfully bid for and benefited from significant additional external funds in some wards. This has allowed the Council to begin to alleviate the significant deprivation that is evident in large parts of the city. The BVPP and other performance information are increasingly demonstrating the outcomes that have been achieved in relation to the Council's seven pledges. Partnership working, both locally and regionally, is a key strength underpinning delivery. In some key service areas improvement is from a comparatively low base but it is taking place. The Council is open and self aware about the scale of the task it faces and has put in place arrangements to enable it to deliver in the future, including attracting further substantial external funding.
- 72 The Council is delivering against the shared priorities for sustainable communities, safer and stronger communities and healthier communities as well as being well advanced on the older people's agenda. While there have been some significant achievements for children and young people, this remains adequate overall and much remains to be done. Similarly, housing has now improved, albeit from a low base, but the final delivery of longer-term options for the development of the Council's housing stock remains a crucial factor for future success.
- 73 The Council can point to a number of achievements in priority areas. Significant progress is being made in addressing the need to diversify and regenerate the local economy and there is visible evidence of growth in the local economy, particularly around Salford Quays. New jobs have been created which have produced significant local benefits. The Council is addressing the sustainable communities agenda and there are signs of impact in terms of rising house prices, private sector investment and transport initiatives. An Urban Regeneration Company is now in place to develop Central Salford and significant private investment is being directed towards West Salford.
- 74 Its strong lead and work with partners is contributing to faster than average reductions in crime. Partnership working with health is very strong, and this is starting to deliver results - for example, significant reductions in numbers of people smoking and numbers of teenage pregnancies. There is also significant investment and joint working with health partners around shared community facilities to sustain further improvement. Performance in older peoples' services is strong - for example, enabling increasing numbers of older people to remain living independently for longer. Many key PIs in education, social care and health are improving for children and young people.

## Sustainable communities and transport

- 75** The Council has a good track record of achievement in regenerating Salford - one of its key priorities. It has redeveloped previously run down areas and communities, with success over a long period. The Council is a pathfinder for housing market renewal in Central Salford, jointly with Manchester, which has brought considerable additional investment into housing in Salford. It has also set up an Urban Regeneration Company (URC) for Central Salford in partnership with the North West Development Agency and English Partnerships, which is bringing both private and public sector investment into the area. It has created a joint venture company - 'Urban Vision' - with two major private companies to provide its planning and highways functions, and this has already led to increased capacity and investment, and early signs of improvement, in highways performance. The Council's planning performance is in the best 25 per cent nationally, and improving, which contributes to successful regeneration.
- 76** The Council has successfully built confidence in Salford. New investment is taking place, and a marketing campaign is helping to change the city's image. Central Salford is ideally placed to take advantage of the continuing expansion of Central Manchester, and the URC has undertaken extensive consultation on its vision for the area. Proactive partnership working has led to Salford being considered as one of two possible sites for the BBC relocation to the North West.
- 77** As a result of the Council's and partners' efforts, economic prosperity is improving. The employment rate is continuing to rise and there are now more than 10,000 people employed in Salford Quays, which is more than worked in the docks. The Council also has a number of significant initiatives under way in West Salford where it is working proactively with landowners and developers to bring forward several major schemes including a new rugby stadium. This proactive approach promotes developer confidence and enables regeneration.
- 78** The Council's contribution to a sustainable economy and labour market is strong but could be further enhanced. For example, the structure of the strategic development partnerships of Partners IN Salford which contribute to the theme of 'achieving economic prosperity' is currently being reviewed. This will help the Council to clarify how its own arrangements for promoting economic development and regeneration will be streamlined with partners.
- 79** The Council, with its partners, has successfully promoted a massive house building and improvement programme. The market renewal pathfinder has already brought £35 million into Salford: over 2,000 homes have been refurbished, 700 properties acquired, over 1,100 new homes built, and a further 2,500 are under construction. This is starting to have an impact on the housing market in central Salford with average prices in, for example, Seedley and Langworthy rising from a low of £10,000 to over £60,000. There are some innovatory schemes such as those being developed by Urban Splash, where 385 terraced properties are being modernised with balconies and car parking integrated into the scheme. These major housing schemes are significantly improving people's lives and prosperity.

- 80 The Council is now working well with local housing providers - particularly in relation to housing for vulnerable groups. Following a poor housing inspection rating in September 2002 and an assessment from the Government Office for the North West (GONW) that its housing strategy was not 'fit for purpose', the Council launched 'a fresh start for housing' in 2003. This has included setting up a housing partnership which is chaired by the chief executive of a local housing association, and includes the key stakeholders in Salford. The Council's approach is to be inclusive of all parts of the community, whether they be council tenants or not. In 2005 the Council's housing strategy and revenue account were judged to be 'fit for purpose'. As a result of this revised approach, the Council is better able to respond to the housing needs of vulnerable groups.
- 81 However, the condition of the Council's housing stock of 27,000 properties remains poor, with 67 per cent non decent in 2005, and it is improving slowly. The Council carried out a full stock options appraisal, following the failure of its arms length management organisation (ALMO) - New Prospect Housing - to achieve a two star inspection score in March 2004. It has carried out extensive and well regarded consultation with tenants and residents, and developed options for different parts of the city, which were approved by Cabinet in May 2005. They have now been subject to further consultation and development, and are ready to be submitted for government approval of funding of around £400 million. Additional investment as a result of these plans will not commence until 2007 at the earliest, and as a result the Council will be challenged to meet the government's target of the decent homes standard by 2010.
- 82 The Council's ALMO has improved its performance in the meantime by focusing on effective rent collection, repairs and re-letting of empty properties, so that many of its key performance indicators which were previously in the worst 25 per cent nationally are now in the second quartile. The Council does not use bed and breakfast accommodation for families and young people. The Council has achieved beacon status for Supporting People, and is in the final stages of developing its housing strategy for older people.
- 83 The Council has started to have an impact on the environment in Salford through a range of initiatives. For example, it has substantially increased its recycling rate from a slow start. Waste collection and street cleansing have improved and are now good. With the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (the PTE) it has introduced a carbon reduction initiative for bus operators. The Council chooses housing developers who are committed to sustainable development. All these measures will help to improve the local environment over time.
- 84 The Council works well with partners to improve transport in the area. Salford is both an area with relatively low car ownership, and an area suffering from traffic congestion as it straddles main commuter routes into Central Manchester. The Council has worked with the PTE to develop a plan for a guided bus route, with park and ride along the route from Leigh, through Salford, into Manchester. Work will commence shortly to build the route which - when complete - will reduce traffic congestion and car use.

## Safer and stronger communities

- 85** The Council, working with its partners, has successfully reduced levels of crime. Although crime levels remain high, the trend is of strong improvement. The Council has a clear pledge to reduce crime and disorder and improve community safety, which reflects the community plan theme for a safe city. Partnership working and information sharing is central to the Council's approach. It is a strong partner on the CDRP and the chief executive is co-chair. The Council's role in the CDRP is highly valued by the police, and has been commended in external reports which describe overall partnership working as outstanding. The Council has provided a successful and co-ordinated response to anti-social behaviour, drugs and alcohol misuse, accident prevention and preparedness for emergency situations. Its approach to community cohesion is also strengthening. Effective partnerships are essential to improving community safety.
- 86** Salford performs well, compared with its CDRP family group, with better than average performance in five out of six key categories of crime. In 2004/05, 87.5 per cent of BVPI's and local PI's improved in this area. Salford moved from being the 14th worst area in relation to crime and disorder to the 26th. It achieved a greater than average reduction or a smaller than average increase in most categories of crime. In 2004/05, burglary of dwellings reduced by 30 per cent, robbery offences by 20 per cent and theft from a motor vehicle by 18 per cent (and since 2000 by 37, 28 and 47 per cent respectively). The CDRP has significantly exceeded its LPSA 1 targets.
- 87** The Council takes a corporate approach with a number of its departments involved in initiatives with other agencies and providers aimed at reducing crime. Examples include placement of six school-based police officers, partly funded by the Council; a multi-agency approach to ensure the safety of a large number of EU migrant workers who moved into one neighbourhood; a local public transport group formed in Little Hulton to respond to the problem of public transport crime in the area; and a major project to reduce re-offending by those persons released from custodial sentences. Salford is a Home Office Together Action Area and the Council has implemented various initiatives to reduce anti-social behaviour, including a joint protocol with all housing providers across the city.
- 88** The Council has reduced anti-social behaviour in specific 'hotspot' areas, as a result of a range of interventions including anti social behaviour orders (ASBOs). Community committees play a key role in tackling anti-social behaviour through rigorous action by police and enforcement agencies, multi-agency case conferences, diversionary activities for young people, and building capacity within local communities. Protocols with other housing providers are a key part of this overall strategy, and contribute to effective partnership working.

- 89 The youth offending team (YOT) is having a demonstrable impact on some key indicators around reduction of youth offending. The drug and alcohol action team (DAAT) works closely within the CDRP and with other council departments, and has had notable success in its work with Trading Standards around preventing the sale of alcohol to young people. The DAAT was awarded Green Beacon Status by the National Treatment Agency. Comprehensive drug and alcohol policies for young people link to policies on crime reduction and developing safer communities, and have made support services more readily available.
- 90 The CDRP is successfully focusing on improving awareness of hate crime. It has achieved its target of a 50 per cent increase in the reporting of hate crime – a target that was set as a result of recognition that there was fear in the community of reporting this type of crime. Partners attribute the increase in reporting to the establishment of hate crime reporting centres.
- 91 The Council has helped reduce accident levels in the area. Council departments have worked with partners to reduce accidental injury. For example, health and social services have developed a joint strategy aimed at responding to falls and reducing the number of accidents.
- 92 The Council works with its partners in the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) to develop its emergency planning arrangements. Emergency plans that address issues such as business continuity are in place, but need further development and testing.

## Healthier communities

- 93 The Council has very strong partnerships in place, with clear and ambitious aims for improving health outcomes for local people. Joint working has been effective for some time through a significant number of joint council and PCT appointments and the use of commissioning partnership boards. The Council can demonstrate achievements in key areas of health inequality, and is strengthening its impact on health outcomes through the design and delivery of its own services. Services for the most vulnerable are integrated into mainstream service activity.
- 94 The Council provides strong leadership around its pledge to improve the health, well-being and social care of the people in Salford. The community plan clearly sets out ambitions to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. The health equality strategy is outcome focused and clearly aims to improve the health of the most vulnerable groups while achieving health improvement for all. The Council is refining its 2006/07 service planning process, by identifying the key ways in which each of its service areas can support the health agenda.
- 95 The Council has worked closely with partners to develop and implement the health inequality strategy. The strategy was developed with local communities, users and carers, and is underpinned by the work of the healthy city forum. The forum originally took a strategic role in development of the strategy but, after a review during 2005, now takes a more operational delivery function reporting to the Council's Cabinet, the Board of the PCT and the Partners IN Salford board.

At local level, health improvement teams work with neighbourhood managers through the community committee action plans to tackle local specific health issues. These strong links with varied partners help the strategy to meet the health needs of local people.

- 96 The work of the former health action zone is now leading to improved health for local people. Salford is on course to meet the national inequalities target for life expectancy – life expectancy has increased by 2.4 years for men and 1.6 years for women. Targets for smoking cessation have been exceeded, and infant mortality rates have reduced. The Council and its partners have also made progress in achieving wider ambitions for health. For example, increased numbers of people use drug treatment services; retail outlets have been successfully targeted to stop alcohol and tobacco sales to the under 16s; teenage pregnancy rates have steadily reduced since 1998; a flu vaccination campaign run by Salford PCT through the Council's call centre increased take up from 40 to 74 per cent; and above average numbers of people are now living at home supported by an intensive home care package.
- 97 The Council is helping to improve the take up of healthy lifestyle opportunities through Salford Community Leisure, with efforts made to reach out to groups with previous low take up. Its work to promote exercise is co-ordinated with the work of the PCT, GPs and across council departments. For example, there is a service level agreement with the PCT which covers a Healthy Hips and Hearts Programme, Cardiac Rehabilitation sessions and healthy walking sessions.
- 98 The Council has had some success in ensuring that services meet the needs of all sections of the community, for example, through longstanding partnership arrangements with the Jewish community and efforts to engage with BME communities. However, the Council recognises that it has more to do in this area.
- 99 The Council and its partners have made real progress in planning new healthcare services and facilities. LIFT (Local Investment Finance Trust) and SHIFT (Salford Health Investment for Tomorrow) are two major projects aimed at transforming the quality of healthcare in Salford. The LIFT schemes - multi-functional health and local authority centres providing a range of services - are due to come into operation in 2007 and 2008. SHIFT is a project specific to Salford and examines the wider agenda of good health and healthcare, including access, transport, public involvement and regeneration. This provides a good local joint commissioning arrangement for developing joint services. A programme board, which reports to the PCT but which has multi-agency representation, oversees a range of projects. These projects will be a crucial part of delivering the longer term health improvement programme in the city.

## Older people

- 100 The Council's draft strategy for older people focuses on their needs as citizens - it is cross-cutting and inter-agency. The strategy was developed during 2005; it goes beyond the traditional aspects of health and social care and includes a much wider range of services and opportunities for improvement. The Council has recently begun action planning to deliver the strategy through a range of consultative events with a range of older people and older people's groups to plan the future delivery of services. The Council has also piloted an innovative 'age proofing' toolkit across its services. As a result, the Council can demonstrate successes in delivering improved outcomes for older people in Salford, particularly in relation to promoting independence.
- 101 The Council has worked effectively in partnership with older citizens, health agencies, and the independent and voluntary sector in Salford to develop a vision to provide a support system for people who are growing older in the city. It is leading on implementing the national service framework, to develop guidelines for use across health and social care for identifying need, treatment and management of a number of key conditions affecting the lives of older people. A partnership board is working on joint commissioning arrangements. The board has been in place since early 2004, and it is beginning to deliver improved services on a number of fronts.
- 102 The Council engages well with older people to identify their needs, through supported groups of citizens and users of services for older people. An example of this is that health checks for people over 75 have now been incorporated within day care activity. As a result of this consultation, services have been designed and delivered in ways that better meet the needs of older people.
- 103 The Council has secured external funds to improve services. For example, it has developed a Care on Call mobile warden service using Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) project funding. The project involved assistive technology, and developing this has led to an improved multi-agency approach to service delivery.
- 104 The Council is performing well - at the level achieved by the best performing authorities - in relation to helping the elderly live at home, provision of intensive home care and timely delivery of support equipment. Prevention services and intermediate care are generally good; home care services have been remodelled; and a hospital avoidance scheme is in place, with 600 people per year diverted from residential care. There are very low levels of delayed transfers of care from hospital. Adult social care services have been rated at the highest level by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). This high quality of service provision promotes independent living for older people.

- 105** The Council's services are responsive to the needs and aspirations of older people. For example, the strategic housing team has dedicated resources to ensure that the needs of older people are met in terms of housing and that any development addresses their needs. The Council has a single funding budget for aids and adaptations, has mapped revenue expenditure, and pools and uses jointly, resources from health and social services budgets. This approach maximise the value for money and the number of people receiving the service.
- 106** The Council's approach to engaging older people from some ethnic minority communities, people in residential care and older people with mental health support needs is under-developed. Both the Council officers and the older people currently engaged in developing the Older People's strategy recognise this weakness. Older people are taking a leading role in the formulation of the strategy and the action planning. The action planning has yet to be completed.

## Children and young people

- 107** The Council is performing adequately in its provision for children and young people. Leadership from councillors and officers is good. Very effective partnership working between the Council and the other agencies and organisations is resulting in challenging ambitions for children and young people across the whole of Salford.
- 108** The Council is aware of the areas that need to improve, and has already committed itself to making major improvements in health, children's safety, educational attainment, housing and regeneration, and greater community involvement, including by children and young people. The council has created a structure that embraces an integrated approach to services for children and young people. Leadership and management of the new directorate of children's services is good overall, with effective planning and adequate performance management systems in place to ensure consistency and coherence to its work.
- 109** A new lead councillor and scrutiny committee are in place, and both are linking well to officers, partner agencies and organisations, and children and young people. There is clear political awareness that much more needs to be done, but there is energy, commitment and the will to make further improvements for all children and young people across Salford.
- 110** The council provides high levels of early years provision, with expenditure well matched to identified need. This has helped make early years a major strength in Salford, and provides children with an excellent start to their formal schooling. The benefits of this provision are seen in the performance results at Key Stages 1 and 2 in most primary schools. Most secondary schools generally do less well than the primaries, although recent results at GCSE are improving. The number of children in special schools is high, and there are too many exclusions and low attendance levels in a number of secondary schools. In comparison with other areas Salford has a high number of schools in Ofsted categories of weakness.

- 111 Feeling safe, which is a concern for a number of children and young people in some parts of Salford, is being addressed effectively through joint council, police, and Youth Offending Service work to tackle crime and make local communities safer for all residents. The council's targeted work in improving road safety has helped reduce the number of children and young people killed or seriously injured in road accidents since 2003. Other work on protecting children and young people is also meeting with some success. Some preventative services are underdeveloped. Social care intervention levels are high, and there are high numbers of looked after children. However, the Council's recent commissioning on corporate parenting has brought about a greater awareness of the corporate parenting responsibilities owed to all these children.
- 112 There is joint project working between schools, colleges and local businesses offering work experience. The result of this concerted effort is that the number of young people not in education, training and employment has reduced significantly in recent years, and overall standards are now beginning to rise and move closer to national averages.
- 113 The council has embraced the greater involvement of children and young people in local democratic processes. The new children and young people's partnership board comprises the lead member and senior officers for children's services, key partners, and a representative number of young people, some of whom are from vulnerable groups such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is evident that the views and opinions of young people are taken as seriously as any councillor, senior officer, or key partner. The youth service, however, does not have sufficiently clear priorities, and its work is fragmented.
- 114 Some very good regeneration work has taken place across Salford, with a number of very successful schemes that have improved housing for young people, parents and carers.

## Appendix 1 - Framework for corporate assessment

- 1 This corporate assessment was carried out under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, under which the Audit Commission has power to inspect local authorities' arrangements for securing continuous improvement. The results of the corporate assessment contribute to the determination of the overall CPA category for an authority, which the Audit Commission is required to assess and report on under Section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2 The Council's self assessment provided a key resource in focusing the assessment activity which included consideration of:
  - key documentation, including the Council's improvement plan;
  - updated performance indicators and performance data; and
  - interviews and meetings attended.
- 3 The assessment for Salford City Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 9 to 20 January 2006.
- 4 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 improvement planning by the Council.