

Service Inspection Report

August 2006



Culture Inspection

West Lindsey District Council

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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.

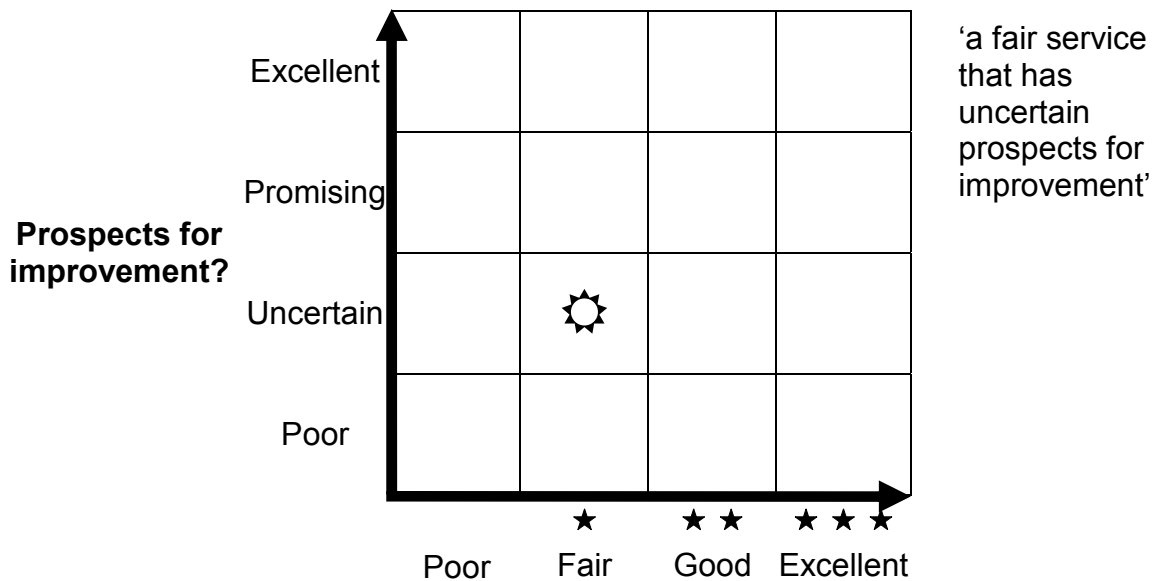
Summary

- 1 West Lindsey District Council provides 'fair' cultural services that have 'uncertain' prospects for improvement.
- 2 The Council directly provides and supports a range of cultural services to the three market towns and large rural area within the district. These services include arts, sports and leisure, parks and open spaces and tourism. Some services have been developed in conjunction with the community but the Council's under-engagement with non-users of the services has limited its ability to fully meet the needs of the whole community. Equality and diversity issues are not taken into account consistently in the planning and development of services.
- 3 The services use a good range of techniques to obtain the views of customers attending events and using sports and leisure facilities. However not all avenues for obtaining feedback are fully developed and the action taken in response to customers' comments and requests is not always publicised.
- 4 Cultural services are developing the ways in which performance is managed, but this development is not far enough advanced to effectively drive improvement across the services. The services have not achieved all that they set out to accomplish and some key strategies still need to be developed. A more systematic approach to service planning is developing that is helping give a clearer sense of direction for cultural services and providing a firmer base for managing performance.
- 5 There is some information on costs but this is not used with an evaluation of service quality or service outcomes. Value for money is not being consistently achieved across all services. A more strategic approach to value for money is emerging corporately but has yet to filter down to service level. Procurement has been centralised and is achieving savings through modern procurement methods.
- 6 The general political consensus regarding the relevance and importance of cultural services in delivering overall corporate and community aims provides stability for the future development of the service. The councillors who have recently taken on responsibility for cultural service are supportive, but are not all fully conversant with service issues and have yet to give a clear steer to future service development. Appropriate resources are in place to enable the delivery of service plans.
- 7 The Council works effectively in partnerships and encourages community involvement, thereby increasing its capacity to further develop cultural services and is increasing community ownership of events and services.

Scoring the service

- 8 We have assessed West Lindsey District Council as providing a fair, one-star service that has uncertain prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Table 1 Scoring chart¹



A good service?

Source: Audit Commission

- 9 The service is a fair, one-star service because:
- there is a wide range of services that are accessible across the District and have been tailored to the needs of current users;
 - existing customers are generally very satisfied with the services that they receive;
 - partnership working is generally effective and this has increased the quality and level of services; and
 - the services are effective in promoting economic vitality and safer and stronger communities.

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.

However:

- the Council has limited knowledge of the views and needs of all groups within the community and of reasons for non-use of services and facilities;
- customer focus is weak in some areas;
- the Council cannot clearly demonstrate outcomes being achieved across all cultural services; and
- value for money is not being consistently achieved.

10 The service has uncertain prospects for improvement because:

- residents' satisfaction has remained very low;
- performance management is under-developed and not effectively driving improvements for customers across the services;
- councillors with responsibility for cultural services have yet to all become fully conversant with service issues and to give a clear steer to future service development; and
- there is a lack of a clear strategic approach with two key strategies not in place to ensure that activity is clearly focussed on priorities.

However:

- attendances at facilities and events, and the number of visitors, have increased;
- improvements to procurement, contract monitoring, performance management, service planning and achieving value for money are being driven corporately and beginning to have an impact on the services;
- partnerships and community involvement are increasing capacity to further develop services; and
- there is cross party support for cultural services and budget allocations are in place to support planned service developments.

Recommendations

- 11 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 Research the views of all sectors of the community to inform future service development.

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the Council will gain a clearer understanding of the reasons for residents' dissatisfaction and of reasons for non-use of the services and facilities; and
- cultural services will be able to better tailor provision to meet the diverse needs of all groups within the community.

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

Recommendation

R2 To improve customer focus by:

- *engaging with customers to agree the standards of service that they should be entitled to expect from cultural services;*
- *improving the user friendliness of the website with regard to access to information on cultural services and increasing the amount and currency of the information; and*
- *ensuring that the needs of diverse groups are met through incorporating appropriate information in all publicity and information.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- improved engagement with the community to help shape service delivery; and
- easier access to information by all potential users.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented 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

R3 Further embed performance management within cultural services by:

- *having a consistent approach to service planning with clear, measurable customer outcome focused targets relating to service and corporate objectives and agreed in consultation with stakeholders;*
- *developing performance management procedures for partnerships; and*
- *having clear challenge from councillors to drive improvement.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- clarity for service users and staff regarding the services' targets;
- outcomes that improve the experience for service users;
- improving quality of service; and
- an understanding of how effectively partnerships are contributing to service delivery and improvement.

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

Recommendation

R4 Develop a more strategic approach to achieving value for money within cultural services by:

- *securing leisure provision in the short term;*
- *reviewing procurement options and selecting the most appropriate approach;*
- *setting targets to improve value for money;*
- *use of benchmarking data; and*
- *assessing the balance between costs and outcomes.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- better value for money; and
- understanding about how services compare with those provided by other councils and opportunities to learn from others.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by June 2007.

Report

Context

The locality

- 12 West Lindsey District Council is on the western boundary of Lincolnshire, with the river Trent separating the district and county from Nottinghamshire. The district covers a large rural area of 1,158 square kilometres, with three market towns: Gainsborough, Caistor and Market Rasen, and includes the Wolds area of outstanding natural beauty.
- 13 Office of National Statistics data indicated a total population of about 84,000 in 2004. Overall the district is sparsely populated with only 72.7 people per square kilometre, compared to the regional and national averages of 272.5 and 384.5 respectively. Over 18,000 people live in Gainsborough, with the next largest settlement, Market Rasen, having a population of around 3,500. There is a higher than national average percentage of people aged 65 years and over, at 18.6 per cent compared to 16 per cent nationally. The proportion of people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds is lower than national and regional averages at 2.4 per cent.
- 14 An above average proportion of the population is employed in declining industries including 16 per cent in manufacturing and 6 per cent in agriculture and land related industries. Unemployment in March 2005 was close to the two per cent national average at 2.1 per cent, but slightly higher than the 1.8 per cent regional average. Higher levels of unemployment (over six per cent) are found in Gainsborough. Earnings are comparatively low at a median of £317 per week, compared to £334 regionally and £357 nationally. At 11 per cent, the proportion of people with no educational qualifications was lower, according to 2002/03 data, than the 16 per cent regional and 14 per cent national averages.
- 15 There are areas of affluence and also of deprivation. The district ranked 164 out of 354 local authorities based on the average deprivation scores in 2004 (where 1 is the most deprived). No areas fall within the ten per cent most deprived in the country, but Gainsborough East, and parts of Gainsborough South West rank within the most deprived 20 per cent. In contrast there are several wards that are amongst the 20 per cent least deprived. Anti-social behaviour is not a major issue and the large majority of residents feel safe in their local area. Life expectancy is average.
- 16 Average house sale prices are £10,000 less than the regional average, which is also low compared to national averages. A higher than average proportion of homes are owner occupied. The Council transferred the bulk of its housing stock to a registered social landlord in 1999 and only retains a few houses connected with Council owned commercial premises.

- 17 There are few major tourist attractions, although visitors are attracted to a variety of events, including a range of festivals and horse racing at Market Rasen. Visual aspects of this town have been recently improved with the help of European social regeneration and regional development funding. A Townscape Heritage Initiative aims to preserve and enhance Caistor's conservation area. Caistor has a large number of listed buildings and grants are available to assist owners with replacement of period details and repairs to important buildings. The Wolds attract cyclists, walkers and other who enjoy the quiet beauty of the area. Trinity Arts Centre in Gainsborough provides an artistic hub and offers an alternate cinema and performing arts experience to that available in main centres such as Lincoln. The range of sporting clubs across the District includes an East Midlands League croquet club.

The Council

- 18 The Conservatives gained overall control in May 2004. Previously there was no overall control. Political control changed again in May 2006 and is now held by the Liberal Democrats. There are 19 Liberal Democrats, 17 Conservatives and one Independent. The Council has retained the committee system as its political management structure. The work of the council is performed by five service committees, with a performance management and scrutiny committee and a standards committee.
- 19 The Chief Executive was appointed in May 2005 and is supported by four directors, one of whom is responsible for Community Services.
- 20 The Council's base revenue budget for 2005/06 is £12,718,530. The base capital budget is £6,156,194. The revenue balance is £2.496 million. The full time equivalent of 329 staff is employed.
- 21 In March 2004 the Council was rated as 'fair' in its Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The assessment found that the Council had clear ambitions but lacked methods to implement them, that capacity was sometimes inadequate due to staff changes and shortages, and that performance management was weak. The Council was working effectively in partnerships and delivering levels of a service that were comparable to those provided by similar councils, with a strong focus on local priorities, especially the regeneration of parts of Gainsborough, Market Rasen and Caistor.
- 22 An inspection of the waste management service in 2005 found the service to be fair with uncertain prospects for improvement. While performance on recycling had improved, weaknesses remained in relation to performance management and use of feedback to improve the service.

The Council's cultural services

- 23 Arts and leisure services fall within the Community Services directorate, while tourism is part of the Economic Regeneration and Tourism service in the Chief Executive's department.

- 24 West Lindsey Leisure Centre in Gainsborough is managed by an external contractor on behalf of the Council. The current contract is due to expire at the end of 2006. The Council is considering options for the future with the help of external consultants.
- 25 De Aston Sports Centre in Market Rasen is directly managed as part of a dual use agreement with De Aston School. Pupils use the facilities during the school day and sports activities are available to the public in the evenings at weekends and during the school holidays. The Council is in the process of taking over the management of the sports hall at Caistor Yarborough School from that school.
- 26 Parks and open spaces managed by the council cover approximately 100 acres. This includes churchyards, closed cemeteries and other small areas, plus Richmond Park, Sandsfield Lane playing fields, Aisby Walk football pitch, Marshalls playing field and the 17 acre Roses playing fields and pavilion, all of which are in Gainsborough. Outside Gainsborough, children's play provision and playing fields are largely provided by parish councils, with some playing field provision by clubs and schools.
- 27 There are two maintenance contracts for open spaces, both of which run until December 2010. These are for:
 - Roses and Marshalls Playing Fields; and
 - churchyards and cemeteries and maintenance of ornamental grounds, plus a number of smaller areas.
- 28 Marshalls Sport and Social Club is owned by the Council but currently managed by a voluntary management committee. The future of the site is uncertain due to a number of factors, including the capital costs necessary to bring the buildings to an acceptable standard.
- 29 Sports development includes advice and support to schools and to clubs to help build capacity within the community to provide sports opportunities locally. Involvement in the Lincolnshire Youth Games, short mat bowls and other activities are promoted.
- 30 Trinity Arts Centre has a 200-seat auditorium with a programme of films and live shows four nights a week. It also carries out educational workshops for children and adults. The Centre is managed by the Council and staffing is supplemented by a small group of volunteers.
- 31 Arts development is provided in the form of advice and project development, outdoor events, participatory activities, public art and support for the creative industries.
- 32 Tourist information is provided through public information points, such as the Council's area offices at Caistor and Market Rasen, the Trinity Arts Centre and at the Guildhall and is also displayed by tourist businesses. The tourism service co-ordinates and produces publicity material and provides support and advice to local tourism businesses.

- 33** Cultural services employ 63 staff (a full time equivalent of 53.52). The revenue budget for the services in 2005/06 was £1,718,184, and for 2006/07 it is £1,851,480. In its original 2005/06 budget the Council set aside £1.05 million for leisure facilities at Market Rasen and a further £213 484 for construction of an artificial turf pitch at Roses playing fields, The revised medium term financial strategy for 2006/07 - 2010/11 contains increased allocations of £4.1 million for leisure facilities across the district and £220,000 for the artificial pitch at Roses.

How good is the service?

What has the service aimed to achieve?

- 34 Service planning for 2005-06 was based on the existing corporate aims that covered the seven broad themes identified in the 2004 community strategy. Corporate aims were to increase wealth and quality of life, reduce crime and the fear of crime, improve the built and natural environment, raise the skills base and continually improve services and access to them. The community strategy themes were transport, the environment, community safety, the economy, health and housing, community development and culture and learning and skills. Both the community strategy and the corporate aims have been redrafted from 2006.
- 35 The key tasks for cultural services in 2005-06 were identified in the service plan as:
- through the arts and sports strategy, develop a range of events and participatory activities across the district that contribute to raising skills, provide new opportunities and help reduce the fear of crime;
 - to develop North Warren Road (Roses) playing fields and to encourage additional use;
 - develop a play strategy;
 - develop a young people's strategy;
 - manage and develop the Gainsborough Community Safety (Act Fast) project;
 - begin the procurement process for determining the future management of the leisure centre;
 - Investigate the feasibility of future running and development of leisure facilities in Market Rasen/Wolds area; and
 - procurement of grounds maintenance contracts.
- 36 The action plan for delivery of the cultural services 2005-06 service plan detailed actions to deliver all the key tasks. Linkage with the corporate aims was indicated for each action. Enhancement of the quality of life for local people was the aim of a range of actions to extend the services available and improving awareness and usage. Improvements to the built environment were envisaged in terms of improved leisure facilities. Specific actions were identified to help keep young people occupied and therefore less likely to indulge in anti-social behaviour. School holiday activities were planned that would contribute to skills development. Re-development of an 'exercise on referral' scheme was planned if a growth bid was successful.
- 37 Aims and key tasks from the arts strategy and actions from the sports strategy also informed the work of the cultural services team.

- 38 The 2005-06 economic development and tourism service plan had an objective 'to increase the quality of tourism facilities and ensure a high quality visitor experience'. The action plan listed a range of actions to support the tourism industry, such as a tourism seminar and improving ICT skills and production of visitor information and guides.
- 39 The Council is aware of the local cultural environment, in terms of the artistic and sporting groups and clubs across the District. The leisure options review identified existing and potential sources of competition from providers of leisure services, such as a planned health and fitness facility with swimming pool within a new retail development close to Gainsborough town centre.

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

- 40 This inspection looks at all aspects of the cultural services provided by the Council and especially focuses on the contribution to the agreed shared priorities³ of economic vitality and stronger and safer communities.

Community focus, access, customer care and diversity

- 41 There is a lack of a systematic approach to ensuring the needs of the whole community are identified and addressed in the planning, management and delivery of cultural services. The Council has sought public engagement, for example through focus groups and public meetings as part of a leisure options review, and there has been some targeting of non-users such as through postcode leafleting by Trinity Arts Centre. But overall the Council has limited knowledge of the views and needs of those who do not currently use its cultural services, and cannot be sure that it is meeting the diversity of needs in the wider community.
- 42 In contrast, the service uses a good range of techniques to obtain the views of customers attending events and using sports and leisure facilities. The views of participants in specific activities and events are canvassed, customer comments cards are readily available, video consultation has been used for arts events, and user group meetings are held at the sports and leisure venues. Feedback is used to better tailor events and services to customers' needs and to introduce new activities. For example, daytime sessions for older people have been negotiated at the dual-use De Aston Sports Centre. Similarly cutting schedules for bowling greens were changed at the request of customers, and a Kids Club was established at Trinity Arts Centre. By actively seeking feedback and using this to shape services the Council is effectively meeting the needs of its existing customers.

³ Between central Government and the Local Government Association.

- 43 Not all avenues for obtaining feedback are fully developed and the outcomes of customers' comments and requests are not consistently advertised. The website does not offer easy routes for comments on all aspects of cultural service provision and for feeding into consultation on cultural issues. Action being taken in response to feedback is not prominently displayed at all venues. Opportunities are being missed to obtain views from the wider community and to demonstrate that it is a listening and responsive Council.
- 44 A wide range of activities is offered. The main facilities are logically based in the three towns, with Trinity Arts Centre being the main focus for the arts. The Centre's film programme caters for a range of tastes and interests and theatre, opera and music performances are staged by both professional groups and local amateur groups. Arts workshops are provided for adults with learning disabilities and reminiscence opportunities, for example through film, are offered to elderly people in residential homes. The West Lindsey Leisure Centre in Gainsborough and the De Aston dual use centre at Market Rasen offer a range of activities for all ages, from tots to teens to group fitness and swimming classes with special sessions for older people or those returning to exercise. Membership options or 'pay as you go' are available across all cultural services so the people of West Lindsey have access to a varied and flexible range of sporting and leisure opportunities.
- 45 Gainsborough residents benefit from the selection of generally well maintained outdoor venues provided by the Council. Provision by parish councils, clubs and schools across the rest of the District meet locally identified needs. The pitches at Marshall's and Roses are well maintained and used by a range of sporting clubs. Richmond Park provides a popular venue for relaxation, children's play, croquet, the Lark in the Park family fun days, arts events and other activities.
- 46 Cultural services generally work effectively together, and with internal partners, to make better use of staff skills and contacts. Richmond Park provides an open air venue for drama and other events organised by Trinity Arts Centre. It is hosting a creative workshop to produce costumes, processional sculptures and flags for the Riverside Festival in which arts and tourism officers are heavily involved. Tourism staff are consulted regarding planning applications for tourist related businesses and have worked with conservation staff to identify potential sites for commercial film producers. However, not all opportunities for a more joined up approach with internal partners have been taken. For example staff identified missed opportunities to work with the planning service in its consultation with parish councils in relation to open space, playing field provision and play facilities. The increasing joined-up approach that has resulted partly from the restructure and partly due to individual officers using their initiative is producing a generally coherent approach to service delivery, although the scope for cross-council co-operation has not yet been fully exploited.

- 47 Cultural services work effectively with external partners to extend the provision available. Partnership with neighbouring councils provides a pool of expertise to inform the tourism sector and has resulted in joint ventures such as the Wolds Walking Festival in partnership with East Lindsey District Council. Working with the voluntary sector and local community has added to the success of the festivals and of Trinity Arts Centre. The Act Fast project is a particularly good example of co-operative working with a range of partners including the police, Rainer Lincolnshire and Gainsborough motorcycle club and County Council agencies to achieve positive results for disaffected young people. Partnerships are increasing the services that that can be provided both in terms of quality and quantity.
- 48 The problem of accessing services in the largely rural area has been tackled through effective arts and sports outreach. The Council has been active in finding promoters and encouraging community involvement and ownership for the rural touring theatre scheme run by Lincolnshire County Council. Plans are well developed for the introduction of a similar touring film programme. Workshops at Trinity Arts Centre are offered to schools, for example a ballet workshop with a visiting professional company, followed by the opportunity to see the show at a reduced price. Despite limited resources, the Council's sports development team is active in a range of sports including tennis and volleyball, supporting coach education, developing links between local clubs and schools and providing competitive opportunities through the Lincolnshire Youth Games. By ensuring widespread provision, the Council is spreading the benefits of cultural services across the District.
- 49 Services are generally accessible. Opening hours cater for a range of users and lifestyles, for example West Lindsey Leisure Centre is open from 7.00am until 10.30pm, enabling customers to exercise before or after work. Provision has been made for specific groups such as parents with small children, for whom film showings, events in Richmond Park and swimming sessions are offered at convenient times, while elderly people can participate in day time sessions at De Aston Sports Centre and at West Lindsey Leisure Centre. Costs are not generally a barrier to use, with concessionary rates for specific groups such as children, people in receipt of benefits and older people. Free access is available at West Lindsey Leisure Centre for local talented sports people who perform at national standard in their sport. Access for people with disabilities has been improved. By considering pricing, timing of events and physical access issues the Council is enabling access to cultural services by different groups within the community.
- 50 The services are proactively promoted through a range of well designed and informative leaflets displayed in local venues, libraries and in tourist information points. There is up to date arts information on the website and the Council newsletter, West Lindsey News, contains information about cultural services. The tourism service produces a range of leaflets promoting local attractions and events and uses the countywide branding to help promote a consistent Lincolnshire image for visitors. By providing plentiful information the Council is helping to ensure that residents and visitors are aware of the services available.

- 51 However, customer focus is not consistently strong. Apart from the contractor's own customer charter at West Lindsey Leisure Centre there are no standards of customer service and there are no customer care targets in service planning. The website is slow regarding access to some information on cultural services, has limited interactivity and aspects of its design are unhelpful. Sports and leisure information is not regularly updated and it is not yet possible to book services on line. By not consistently looking at the experience from the customer's point of view cultural services risk existing and potential users being discouraged from using the available services.
- 52 Aspects of information provision have not been thought through. For example Language Line is available corporately, but is inadequately advertised throughout cultural services. Leaflets that are available in large print have this information noted in small print inside them. The ability to change font sizes is clearly displayed on the home page of the website. Although this change can be made on subsequent pages, this is not made obvious. This is not helpful to people with visual impairment who may not have seen the facility advertised on the home page. By failing to make information on its cultural services fully accessible the Council is inadvertently creating a barrier for some potential users.
- 53 Attention to diversity issues is at an early stage of development both corporately and within cultural services. There is some provision reflective of cultural and sexual diversity in the cinema and live events programming at Trinity Arts Centre, but the potential of cultural services to promote greater understanding of diversity issues has not been fully developed. This is a missed opportunity to engage more effectively with diverse groups and to promote community cohesion.
- 54 However, cultural services effectively engage with people with disabilities. Local disability groups have been involved in the re-design of facilities and this has led to small changes, for example the addition of a handrail in a shower cubicle that improves ease of access for people with disabilities. Advice regarding the best design for the pool hoist at the West Lindsey Leisure Centre was sought from people who would make use of this mobility aid. The hearing loop system at Trinity Arts Centre is supplemented by portable systems that can be loaned to individuals to better enable them enjoy performances. This attention to detail increases the accessibility of the services to people with disabilities.

Service outcomes for users and the community

- 55 The service has delivered against most of the key targets it identified for 2005-06, although development of the planned strategies has been slow. There has been effective development of events and activities across the district and specific projects such as the development of North Warren Road (Roses) playing fields and the Gainsborough Community Safety project (Act Fast) have been effectively delivered. New grounds maintenance contracts have been procured and work has started on the future management of the leisure centre and on investigating the feasibility of providing a swimming pool at Market Rasen. However the play strategy and young people's strategy are still being developed. While achieving delivery of specific projects, the service does not have some key strategies in place to ensure a coherent approach to service provision.

- 56 The service has been generally effective in contributing to wider corporate, community and national aims. Linkage of cultural services action planning with corporate aims (which reflected community priorities) has resulted in service delivery contributing to Council and community priorities. For example by ensuring continuation of community access to facilities at Caistor Sports Hall, and adding new facilities such as static cycles, a service has been maintained that contributes to the health agenda and to the corporate priority of enhancing the quality of life for local people. However, links with the local primary care trust are under-developed and the service has been unable to establish an 'exercise on referral' scheme or other initiatives aimed at health improvement. The links between tourism service aims and wider priorities and agendas was less explicit in service planning, but by supporting the local tourism industry the service is playing a clear part in promoting economic vitality and delivering the corporate priority of increasing the wealth of the District.
- 57 Partnership work is generally effective. Festivals are run in close partnerships with community groups and the Trinity Arts Centre has a regular group of volunteer helpers. County partnerships such as Lincolnshire Tourism and the Lincolnshire Sports Partnership provide access to specialist expertise and support for bids for external funding. This has resulted in sports development programmes linked to regeneration initiatives in Market Rasen and Keelby, funded by the Lincolnshire Sports Partnership and Active Communities programme. Lincolnshire Tourism is supporting the development of the destination management system (enhanced website) to assist businesses in using ICT and greater use of the internet to assist with tourism business growth. Partnership working has been less effective in the development of key strategies. Through its more productive partnerships the Council is increasing the quality and levels of provision.
- 58 Until the Council is clear about the issues causing dissatisfaction it will be unable to develop its services effectively to address the situation. Residents, whether or not they used the services, were asked their views in the 2003/04 national satisfaction survey. The results indicated comparatively very low levels of satisfaction with parks and open spaces, arts activities and venues, and sports and leisure facilities. This contrasts with the high levels of satisfaction expressed by service users at most facilities. Continued dissatisfaction with West Lindsey Leisure Centre was noted by the Leisure Options Review, with consultants reporting that a survey indicated satisfaction levels were well below average and the second lowest of the 17 leisure centres that were included in a countywide study in May 2005. However, satisfaction levels were above the county average for the Caistor and De Aston sports centres. Action has been taken to address issues that have caused customer dissatisfaction at West Lindsey Leisure Centre, but the Council has not researched into the reasons for low satisfaction levels with cultural services among residents.

Safer and stronger communities

- 59 Community safety was one of the seven themes in the 2004-2009 community strategy and this focus has continued in the Sustainable Community Strategy for 2006 to 2016, in which safer, stronger communities is one of the three main priorities.
- 60 In a December 2002 survey 63 per cent of respondents said they were worried about being the victim of a crime, but 94 per cent said they felt safe in their local area, falling to 69 per cent at night. When measured in 2003/04, residents indicated generally positive perceptions of community safety, with concerns about teens hanging out, graffiti and other anti-social issues being comparatively low. However, burglary, robbery and vehicle crime were all very high compared to the Home Office family of similar councils, although all were decreasing. Violence and sexual offences were high and increasing. Over a third of crime was in the Gainsborough area and fear of crime is higher in the town.
- 61 The Council has been an active and well respected member of the local crime and disorder reduction partnership and cultural services have delivered effectively against the planned actions to strengthen community cohesion, especially in more deprived areas. Trinity Arts Centre is situated in a deprived ward in Gainsborough. The Centre engages effectively with the local community, for example consultation regarding the development of a 'pocket park' outside the Centre led to an attractive 'fish pond' design inspired by local children. The range of free activities at Richmond Park attracts a diverse range of visitors and is effective in encouraging participation by lower income families who might not otherwise access services. Support is given to play provision by the Gainsborough Adventure Playground Association, and Sure Start in Gainsborough and at Brookenby. Community sports development is promoted, for example through the school holidays activity programme, involvement in the Lincolnshire Youth Games and support and guidance to clubs across the District. By engaging with local groups and providing accessible services the development of community links is being supported.
- 62 Cultural services are actively tackling concerns regarding young people not having constructive ways to occupy their time. The services effectively contribute to the relevant partnership initiatives. The Gainsborough Community Safety project, Act Fast, is targeted at socially excluded and unemployed young people and includes intergenerational drama work. This partnership has been successful in encouraging young people to return to education or training or secure jobs. At Brookenby, where comparative isolation adds to the social deprivation on this former RAF base, the Council has an arts outreach project for young people. They were asked what they wanted and this led to workshops, such as on film making. The Council is working with young people to establish a skate park in Gainsborough. School holiday activity programmes include provision for young teenagers, such as the popular Art of Graffiti project encouraging young people to develop their skills in a controlled environment. By providing targeted activities and support for young people the services are helping them to keep occupied, and feel valued and encouraged to play a constructive role in society.

However, the Council is unable to provide evidence that its work is having an impact on crime rates or incidences of anti-social behaviour due to difficulties in collating crime data.

- 63 However, a strategic approach to community safety issues is not yet fully developed within cultural services. While community safety considerations are becoming integrated into service planning, the approach is not yet fully comprehensive. Agreed objectives for key officers do not mention deployment of cultural services to address community cohesion and safety issues, although these officers do get involved, for example in the youth action group that is part of the local community safety partnership.

Economic vitality

- 64 Economic development is one the three main priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy for 2006 to 2016 and the economy, learning and skills and community development featured in the seven strands of the earlier community strategy.
- 65 The District has seen a decline in some of its main industries including manufacturing and land related industries. Although unemployment is near the national average it is above the regional average and earnings are comparatively low. Unemployment rates are significantly higher in Gainsborough which has two wards within the most deprived 20 per cent nationally.
- 66 The Council has aimed to increase the quality of tourism facilities to ensure a high quality visitor experience and to support the development and sustainability of the area's economy. Its commitment has been to raising the skills base and the facilitation of social and economic regeneration in order to create a more prosperous area to live, work, invest in and visit.
- 67 Cultural services contribute to the local economy by supporting a range of festivals and events. The well established Churches Festival involves over 90 churches and approximately a third of the 4,000+ visitors have been from outside Lincolnshire. The Lincolnshire Wolds Walking Festival introduced in 2005 in partnership with East Lindsey District Council attracted mainly Lincolnshire residents, with only four per cent of participants being from outside the County, but there was positive impact on the local tourism economy, for example through use of local accommodation. The Gardeners' Fair in Market Rasen receives effective support from the tourism service having been set up by the Council in 2002, as does the Riverside Festival in Gainsborough in which the arts service plays an active role. These events have increased sales for local businesses by 50 per cent during the festivals with subsequent increases in turnover of 30 per cent year on year.
- 68 The tourism service provides effective support to local tourism businesses. In 2004/05 and 2005/06, 23 businesses were advised about aspects of running a tourism business and seven of those have become new businesses. Opportunities to attract tourists to local heritage sites are well exploited and have resulted in an increase in visitors to tourist attractions.

Marketing material to support the tourism sector is co-ordinated and produced by the tourism service to maximise the potential of the attractions on offer. The number of accommodation businesses with customer care training has risen from 36 per cent in 2004/05 to 64 per cent in 2005/06 through the participation of tourism services in 'Welcome to Excellence' training events. As part of the Greater Lincoln Partnership the tourism service contributes to seminars involving over 60 businesses and partners. The focus is on topics of interest to the local tourism industry, for example quality issues and initiatives such as Tastes of Lincolnshire. Local café and tea house owners and providers of accommodation are encouraged to support Tastes of Lincolnshire by serving locally sourced food.

- 69 Local creative businesses receive practical support. For example the local artistic community is supported through provision of display space at Trinity Arts Centre. Local artists were commissioned to produce pieces for the Turning Tides public art project as part of the riverside walk by the side of the Trent in Gainsborough. The Council contributes towards the Art on the Map open studios project and helps creative industries access the European funded county wide Lincolnshire Creative Industries Project.
- 70 Arts and sports initiatives aimed at young people help build skills and raise confidence, for example through the activities and educational workshops at the Teen Scene drop in centre in Gainsborough, the Youth Theatre and Lincolnshire Youth Games. Of the nearly 100 young people who have been involved in the Act Fast scheme 61 have achieved accredited qualifications, 32 have secured jobs, and 27 have returned to education or training.

Is the service delivering value for money?

- 71 There is currently a lack of a strategic approach to achieving and improving value for money and a lack of staff awareness of the issues in cultural services. The Council's overall approach to value for money is developing and there is commitment to achieving value for money in the corporate plan. Service plans include details of efficiencies made. Work at a corporate level with neighbouring authorities particularly North Kesteven is moving forward the value for money agenda and is looking at developing a strategy and key measures. The corporate approach to procurement of ICT Services in partnership with North Kesteven has resulted in a £250,000 saving year on year with cultural services benefiting from this with recharges reducing from £112,000 in 2004/05 to £71,000 in 2006/05. The Council's Star Chamber challenge of existing budgets has made savings in cultural services. However this more strategic approach has yet to filter down to a service level and whilst officers have had basic financial management training this has not included assessing for value for money. Accurate information on costs is not being collected regularly and is not being used effectively to compare services to other providers. It is not possible as a result for the services to understand the differences and review cost effectiveness.

- 72 The value for money achieved from revenue expenditure in cultural services is low. There is higher spend on culture and heritage and a lower spend on sport and recreation than near neighbours and satisfaction levels across the District for 2003/04 are low for all services. Achievement of value for money has been hampered by poorly designed contracts in leisure services and poor performance monitoring. This has led, for example, to deterioration in the main leisure facility in Gainsborough and low customer satisfaction as a result.
- 73 The Council has not considered reviewing charges in order to achieve value for money while ensuring that charges are not barriers to participation. Concessions are applied across specific groups such as older people but the Council has not broken down these groups into those from a low or high income. The Council has not maximised its income effectively.
- 74 There is some evidence of value for money being achieved from capital expenditure. People with disabilities were consulted when changes were being made to the access at cultural services venues. Suggestions arising from this consultation were incorporated into the design, rather than needing to be added at a later stage. The opportunity was also taken to improve general layout, such as at Trinity Arts Centre where an unhelpfully positioned refreshment kiosk was removed and the reception area redesigned so that refreshments could be provided by the same staff. This is cost-effective in staffing terms and also provides better service to customers who no longer have to join two separate queues to pay for admission and to purchase refreshments. Readiness to spot opportunities and engage customers in changes that will affect them has resulted in savings plus better customer focussed provision.
- 75 The tourism service is achieving value for money through participating in partnerships, for example by working collaboratively with neighbouring councils and through its service level agreement with Lincolnshire Tourism. This enables a wide spread of publicity material for tourism businesses in the District with every £1 spent by the Council securing £11.50 from Lincolnshire Tourism of associated promotional activities.
- 76 Efficiencies have been achieved for the service through staff rationalisation. The creation of an activities officer post out of an existing park warden post has helped to promote Richmond Park and increase the range of activities. Through negotiations with Caistor Yarborough School and the County Council the sports service has extended the role of the manager of the De Aston dual use sports centre by bringing the Caistor Sports Hall under his control. This is leading to a more efficient management of the service with savings made in staffing being used to enhance facilities for users.
- 77 The Council has modernised its approach to procurement and has a new procurement strategy. It is using methods such as electronic tendering and particularly collaborative working with organisations such as the Lincolnshire procurement forum to reduce costs and improve the process, giving improved use of resources and value for money. A more corporate approach is developing with a corporate officer in post to drive forward improvements.

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Cultural services have benefited from the new approach through the use of electronic tendering for the all weather pitch contract at Roses Playing Fields. Savings will be made as a result of more effective procurement to invest in cultural services.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

What is the service track record in delivering improvement?

- 78 Cultural services have not been a priority for the Council until the last couple of years when increased emphasis has been placed on sport and leisure in helping deliver wider corporate and community priorities. The leisure options review is evidence of this increased focus and of a more strategic approach to service provision.
- 79 The Council has successfully attracted inward investment to improve facilities for specific groups within the community. The Football Foundation and Waste Recycling Environmental Limited awarded £147,000 for the all weather pitch at the Roses playing fields. This is currently under construction. European social fund funding of £250,000 was awarded for the Act Fast project which is delivering positive outcomes for young people in the Gainsborough area.
- 80 Effective action has been taken to ensure cultural provision continues, for example at Caistor Sports Hall and at Trinity Arts Centre. The latter is now a vibrant venue for film, theatre and local arts events enjoyed by a cross section of the community as both audiences and participants. It was taken over by the Council from the voluntary sector when it fell into decline and the Council has improved the quality of the venue with a varied programme of entertainment to appeal to a broad range of customers. User satisfaction is high and there has been increase in attendances and participation in recent years.
- 81 The service has been proactive in developing facilities for local people. Richmond Park and Trinity Arts Centre have been well maintained and improved as a result of an effective partnership between the Council and the local friends groups. Health monitoring equipment and static cycles are being introduced to enhance the sports provision for the user at the Caistor Sports Hall.
- 82 The service has been responsive to the views of local people. The Roses playing fields and pavilion is another example of partnership working between the Council and the local community to secure funding to provide an all-weather five a side football pitch for local teams. Improvements are being made to the West Lindsey Leisure Centre facilities as a result of concern expressed by customers. Services and facilities have been improved for local people in accordance with their wishes.
- 83 A range of projects provided directly or supported by the Council have developed community capacity and increased economic vitality. These have included the Riverside Festival; in its third year and is moving towards being managed independently of the Council; the Gardeners' and Food Fairs, bringing visitors and business opportunities into the Market Rasen area; the tourism seminars providing advice and support to a range of tourism businesses and the Churches Festival providing support and bringing money into the churches of the District.

- 84 The service restructure, following recommendations emanating from the best value reviews of culture and economic development, has resulted in a more coherent approach to service planning and delivery. The services provided by the arts, leisure and parks have been brought together under one service manager. This has contributed to the successful delivery of key projects, particularly those focussing on young people such as Act Fast and the youth arts project at Brookenby.
- 85 However some planned actions dating from the 2004/05 service plan have not been delivered due to staff capacity issues. There has been slow delivery in the formulation of the key strategies for play and young people that were due for completion in October 2004. Improvements in the way the service delivers its key objectives have not been realised and services to key groups have not improved as a result.
- 86 The direction of travel of performance in cultural services is mixed. Resident satisfaction in 2003/04 showed little improvement and remained among the lowest achieved by all councils for all three relevant indicators. However, local performance indicators are more positive and show increases in attendances and income levels across cultural services from 403,273 in 2004/05 to 418,142 in 2005/06 and from £721,222 to £765,405 respectively.
- 87 Through its tourism services the Council has improved the quality of tourism in the area. The number of visitors to the main attractions and visitor spend has increased over the past two years. Tourism attraction visitor figures have increased from 2001 at 146,555 to 245,728 in 2005.
- 88 Ineffective procurement and monitoring has resulted in services not meeting users' expectations. The management agreement at Marshall's did not meet current service priorities, nor does the De Aston agreement. The West Lindsey Leisure Centre contract is due for renewal in December 2006. Due to the lack of clear performance monitoring arrangements within the contract the Council has been unable to secure value for money throughout its duration. The leisure options review found very low levels of customer satisfaction with the leisure centre. The Council is considering longer term investment and procurement options for its leisure provision as part of the leisure options review. Due to historic agreements, the services have not achieved value for money and good services for customers through procurement.

How well does the service manage performance?

- 89 Performance management is weak but improving. The corporate plan has set out a framework and guidance for improvements in performance monitoring and is driving improved ownership and analysis of performance data. A change programme is running to develop service-led performance management and the development of a performance culture. This means that a significant improvement through effective performance management is unlikely in the short term but the necessary building blocks are in place for a more robust and effective performance management approach.

- 90 Targets are not consistently SMART and outcome focussed across all of the cultural services. The targets for tourism in the economic regeneration service plan for 2006/07 are clear and measurable. However, reporting against performance indicators for cultural services 2005/06 is not in enough detail to enable meaningful monitoring and challenge. For example, composite figures have been used to measure customer satisfaction and number of service users. Involvement of stakeholders in setting of targets is unclear. Performance information is inadequate to effectively drive improvement.
- 91 Objectives set in individual plans lack clear focus and not all staff are aware of the targets to which they are working. For example an objective for the education and outreach officer for 2005/06 was for a 'Film Education Programme' with no clear targets or outcome measures. Staff reviews and team meetings are taking place, but again targets are not sufficiently focussed to effectively track performance against service objectives. Managing individual and team performance is restricted due to a lack of clear objectives.
- 92 The Council is developing a more strategic approach to its cultural services provision. Recommendations from the leisure options review are providing the basis for a more robust, holistic approach to service improvements with longer term aims and objectives. A proactive approach is being taken to address the emerging issues through a 'task and finish' group. Additional resources have been employed to look at the re-tendering of the leisure services contracts for the West Lindsey Leisure Centre, Roses Pavilion and Playing Fields and Marshalls sports facilities and to assess the feasibility of the new Market Rasen pool. This more strategic approach will help ensure that resources are deployed more effectively and efficiently to the meet the needs of the community now and in the future.
- 93 A new, more coherent approach is being taken to service planning. This encompasses work programmes from existing strategies and combines these with the corporate priorities and with the priorities identified in the new community strategy. Cross cutting issues such as crime and disorder prevention and risk management feature in the new service plans, helping such issues to become more firmly embedded. This clearer and more robust approach to service planning is enabling better prioritisation of work for individuals and for the service as a whole.
- 94 There is a lack of challenge to performance by councillors. Service plans are monitored by the Performance Management and Scrutiny Committee, who refer any items for attention back to the Community Committee but it is not clear what action is taken following this. Key performance indicators are reported to each committee on a quarterly basis but these do not include performance indicators for cultural services. Service improvement is not being driven up and there is a greater risk of the services failing to meet key corporate objectives.
- 95 There is underdeveloped use of benchmarking and performance management of partnership working. For example, there was no feedback from any of the ten partners regarding the number of attendees at *Hot'n'happenin* in 2004. In 2005 only 12 out of 21 partners returned questionnaires, even though targets had been set by Lincolnshire County Council.

The lack of detailed information and inadequate performance management arrangements means the Council cannot tell clearly what it is achieving in its partnership working or if it is improving performance.

Does the service have the capacity to improve?

- 96 Staffing capacity has been limited, but this situation is improving. Capacity issues resulted in non-delivery against service plans such as the 'exercise on referral' scheme and the planned development of strategies for play provision and provision for young people. Cultural services team members display enthusiasm and commitment to their work and a determination to provide good quality services for the people of West Lindsey. The Council has recognised the pressures faced by the team and an extra post of a monitoring officer has been created to address the acknowledged weakness in contract monitoring. This has been filled on a temporary basis while a permanent post holder is recruited. Specialist consultancy is being drawn upon to undertake some aspects of work, such as the business case for a swimming pool in Market Rasen. Corporate capacity increases, for example a new senior policy post focussing on social inclusion and consultation, customer relationship management and the development of a service managers' group to address cross-cutting issues, are intended to further relieve pressures on the services. By identifying and addressing the areas in which staff capacity is stretched, the Council is improving the service's ability to cope with the current and anticipated future workload.
- 97 The Council is working effectively in partnerships and encouraging community ownership, for example through the Friends of Richmond Park and in the Riverside Festival. This is increasing its capacity through the release of staff time that can then be used to further develop services and is also embedding provision more firmly within the community.
- 98 The Council is effectively addressing perceptions by residents and partner organisations that there has been insufficient focus on sports needs and tourism development opportunities in the Lincoln fringe area. The budget for 2006/07 and for the subsequent four years now includes £10,000 to provide grants for sports organisations in this area. The Council is developing a clearer view of the impact of Greater Lincoln on the local tourism market and this is demonstrated through its liaison with partner organisations. Business seminars are run in partnership with the City and County councils and North Kesteven District Council to bring together tourism providers in the Greater Lincoln area. The Council is demonstrating an equitable approach and awareness of the needs and potential of the District.
- 99 Staff are capable and effective in carrying out their duties, but some training needs remain unmet. Training needs are identified through the Council's appraisal system, but some staff are not subsequently receiving the training. This creates a risk that the service will not continue to have staff who are fully trained to meet existing and changing service delivery needs.

- 100** Project management is under-developed. For example there has been lack of a clear project management approach in the delivery of the leisure options actions. There is no clear responsibility for the actions which are coming out of the various strands of the review and there is a lack of overall co-ordination. This risks further slippage in progressing this key programme of work. Without effective project management actions are unco-ordinated and there is a risk that the project will not be completed in a timely and effective manner.
- 101** With the change of political administration, incoming councillors with responsibility for cultural services have yet to give a clear steer to the future development of the services. Some of the councillors were already serving on the community committee, for example the new committee chair of has been an active member of this committee for the last three years. However, other councillors are not yet fully conversant with the current service issues and there are some training needs. For example all new committee chair persons need training in the more modern approach to procurement that is being developed. It will be some time before all councillors have a full grasp of the needs of the services and are in a position to work to maximum effect with officers in shaping service delivery and in challenging outcomes to drive up improvement.
- 102** However, relationships between councillors and officers are good and there is a clear understanding of responsibilities and accountabilities. The general political consensus regarding the relevance and importance of cultural services in delivering overall corporate and community aims provides stability for the future development of the service. Following the change of political control, neither officers nor councillors have concerns that there will be major changes in direction for cultural services. Anticipated changes are more in terms of the emphasis put upon different aspects of service delivery. This practical focus on continuity of service and the effective working relationships help provide a secure base for further service development and improvement.
- 103** Investment is being made by the Council in further developing cultural services in line with corporate priorities. The leisure options review was a significant investment to secure a more strategic approach to the provision of leisure facilities and service. Budget allocations have been made to carry forward the recommendations from this review and support the growth agenda. In 2006/07 this is £113,000, in 2007/08 the growth figure is £185,180, in 2008/09 it is £136,400, in 2009/10 it is £139,300 and in 2010/11 a sum of £141,900 has been allocated. Budget management is effective and staff have been appropriately trained to manage the budgets for which they are responsible. The funding is in place to carry forward the service's development plans and staff are capable of ensuring delivery of budgetary targets.

Appendix 1

- 1 The descriptors for judgement one scores have been agreed by the Local Services Inspectorate Forum (LSIF). Members are The Commission for Social Care Inspection, the Audit Commission, The Office for Standards in Education, the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, HM Fire Services Inspectorate, Department for Education and Skills and the Healthcare Commission.

Table 2 Judgement 1 - How good is the service?

Score	AC labels and stars	LSIF descriptors
4	Excellent ☆☆☆	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users, is highly cost-effective and fully contributes to the achievement of wider outcomes for the community.
3	Good ☆☆	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users, is cost-effective and makes contributions to wider outcomes for the community.
2	Fair ☆	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users and is not especially cost-effective, nor contributes significantly to wider outcomes for the community.
1	Poor (0 stars)	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users, is not cost-effective and makes little or no contribution to wider outcomes for the community.

Table 3 Judgement 2 - Prospects for Improvement

Score	AC labels	Descriptors
4	Excellent prospects	A service with improvement arrangements and capacity well above the minimum requirements needed to deliver continuous improvements in outcomes for users and/or the wider community and in value for money. Few, if any barriers to improvement exist.

Score	AC labels	Descriptors
3	Promising prospects	A service with improvement arrangements and capacity consistently above the minimum requirements needed to deliver continuous improvements in outcomes for users and/or the wider community and in value for money. Enablers of improvement strongly outweigh barriers to improvement.
2	Uncertain prospects	A service with improvement arrangements and capacity such that delivery of continuous improvements in outcomes for users and/or the wider community and in value for money is uncertain. Enablers of, and barriers to, improvement are finely balanced.
1	Poor prospects	A service with improvement arrangements and capacity that do not meet the minimum requirements needed to deliver continuous improvements in outcomes for users and/or the wider community and in value for money. Either barriers to improvement strongly outweigh enablers of improvement, or few, if any, enablers of improvement are in place.