

Corporate Assessment Report

August 2006



# Corporate Assessment

**Manchester 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 Councils 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 Manchester City Council is performing well. The Council is highly ambitious with a strong, well articulated commitment to improve the area and the quality of life for all its residents. The city has achieved an impressive record of economic growth and the regeneration of some of its most disadvantaged areas. There is a stretching and challenging focus on continuing economic growth that ensures that all its communities benefit fully from the regeneration. This has been driven by strong leadership from the Council working in partnership with government, public, voluntary and private sectors. The Council still faces significant challenge in tackling the widespread deprivation that remains across the city and needs to ensure that it can continue to respond at the scale and pace needed.
- 6 There is a strong sense of place and a well grounded understanding of local needs underpinning the Council's and its partners' plans and strategies. The Council is strongly user-focused and has a sound understanding of the diverse needs of its communities; regenerating neighbourhoods, tackling deprivation and valuing diversity are central to their approaches. The Council and its partners are clear about what matters most to local people and have focused their efforts and resources to tackle these issues, such as crime and street scene improvements.
- 7 The Council has clear, high level priorities which are well understood by partners, reflect the needs of Manchester's residents and provide a good fit with national priorities. Indeed in a number of areas Manchester has been at the forefront of the development of regional and national policy frameworks, particularly around the Respect and the City Region agendas.
- 8 The organisation is well led and well managed. There is a high calibre of senior officers and senior councillors, who have strong commitment to, and pride in, the city and its ambitions. The Council works effectively and imaginatively through partnerships to deliver its priorities. It is financially sound and has been successful at attracting and using external funding to support priorities for local people. However, there is still room for improvement, for example with the way it manages its assets.
- 9 The Council's ambitious and challenging agenda is underpinned by many sub-regional, city wide and locality-based strategies, plans and partnerships, presenting enormous complexities in terms of ensuring a coherent and robust approach to performance management. The Council has taken steps recently to develop its performance management capacity and is clear what is needed to improve its approach further. However it is not yet consistently driving improvement across the council and its partnerships.
- 10 The Council is delivering adequate value for money and is working hard to improve on this. Overall the Council's costs are higher than other similar councils and although improvement in performance indicators is steady with almost two thirds of all key indicators improving since 2002/03, this has been from a low base. The Manchester Improvement Programme offers real opportunity to drive improvements in services and value for money in a much more systematic way.

- 11 The Council is working well with its partners to develop sustainable communities. It is successfully working to address the legacy of previous economic decline, with sustained improvements to the quality of life for local people. New jobs have been attracted to the city and housing conditions have been improved. The Council has made significant progress towards creating neighbourhoods of choice. There has been a notable improvement in the quality of the built environment, recognised by community and other stakeholders.
- 12 The Council has been particularly successful in tackling the shared priority of safer and stronger communities. Partnership arrangements are strong and joint working between the Council and the police is effective and well managed. Although crime levels and fear of crime remain comparatively high, overall there has been a significant reduction in crime. The Council's focus on developing the Respect agenda and its inclusion as one of the four key priorities for the city has given a significant boost to both the profile and the pace of change in this area.
- 13 The Council is working well with its partners to tackle the problems in building healthier communities. It has put in place appropriate strategies and partnerships to tackle health inequalities and ensure that their communities live healthier lives. There has been some improvement in reducing the gap between life expectancy in Manchester and the rest of England, although there is still a long way to go.
- 14 The Council has also developed a good strategic approach to older people with many examples of good engagement and consultation processes leading to positive outcomes. The Council and its partners through Valuing Older People (VOP) have made good progress in ensuring that older peoples issues are fully considered as a cross cutting theme.
- 15 The Council has been less successful at improving outcomes for children and young people. It is ambitious to improve and has made some key improvements recently; however children and young people in Manchester remain less healthy and generally achieve less well in schools than in other parts of the country. Overall services to children and young people are adequate.

## Areas for improvement

- 16 The Council has maintained its focus on delivering ambitious improvements for Manchester and its people, through good community leadership and successful partnerships. There are many examples of improved outcomes, particularly in the physical regeneration of the area. However there are many significant challenges still to be tackled not least to ensure that the benefits of the continued economic growth of the city can be fully enjoyed by its most disadvantaged communities. To respond effectively to these challenges the Council must ensure that its own internal improvement programme (MIP) is robustly managed to ensure it can achieve its objectives.
- 17 In order that the Council can achieve its priority of equipping the workforce of the future with the education and skills to take advantage of the opportunities, jobs and prosperity created in the city; the Council needs to address the underperformance of the Manchester education partnership and continue to drive up improvements in the educational attainment of its children in schools.
- 18 Reducing inequalities in health and enabling people to live longer, healthier lives is core to the Council's intention of supporting its most vulnerable residents to access opportunities and achieve their full potential. The monitoring and evaluation of health outcomes, particularly for BME communities, is currently weak and does not enable the Council to either target resources to have most impact or measure progress effectively. The Council with its partners needs to improve the systems and frameworks for monitoring and evaluating health outcomes.
- 19 The Council needs to take a more consistent and systematic approach to managing its performance, to add rigour and ensure that a culture of challenge and continuous improvement is embedded throughout the organisation. This should include improving the contribution to managing both the Councils performance, and that of its partnerships, by the overview and scrutiny function. In addition the Council needs to strengthen the links between financial planning and service planning so that it can ensure that it improves its use of resources, including achieving better value for money and managing its assets more effectively.
- 20 To ensure that the ambitions for transformation within the Council and its partnerships can be achieved the Council needs to continue to modernise its human resource strategies. In particular, it should continue progress now being made to ensure workforce planning is comprehensively linked to service and financial planning and joined up with partners. In developing a workforce that is fit for the future, the council should take further action to tackle the under representation of BME senior managers.

## Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	4
	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	2
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

- 21 Manchester is now a thriving city in the North West situated at the heart of both the Greater Manchester conurbation and the region. It has achieved significant economic growth and regeneration over recent years. In the second half of the last century, the city suffered a massive decline in manufacturing and severe population loss. Between 1971 and 1991 the numbers employed in manufacturing fell by 74 per cent from 106,000 to just 28,000. Between 1951 and 1991 the population fell by 39 per cent, from 703,000 to 432,000.
- 22 Since then Manchester has emerged as a key economic driver of the North of England. Over the last ten years it has been the best performing city in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA) and is projected to be the largest generator of economic growth in the North West in the decade ahead. In the last five years there has been over £2 billion of private sector investment into the city with the creation of 45,000 new jobs. Manchester is the only UK city outside London to be among the top 20 European business destinations. The city lists among its assets a thriving city centre, a large international airport, the universities and new businesses.
- 23 The success of the Commonwealth Games in Manchester in 2002 provided a significant impetus to the enhanced reputation and the economic success of the city. The Games in particular provided the catalyst for the impressive and wholesale regeneration of East Manchester whose communities had suffered acutely from the decline of manufacturing in the area.
- 24 The decline in the city's population has halted and since 2001 the population has risen to 437,000 a growth of 3.3 per cent compared to the regional average of 0.8 per cent. Yet in spite of this economic and physical regeneration, the city still faces many and significant challenges in dealing with the social and physical legacy of the previous economic decline. There is widespread multiple deprivation throughout the city. Manchester is the third most deprived area in the country. Life expectancy remains the lowest in England and in spite of the high number of new jobs created in the city only 60 per cent of people of working age, living in Manchester are in employment, compared to 75 per cent in the region. In 2003/04 almost half of Manchester's children (46 per cent) were living in low income households compared to the regional figure of 22 per cent.
- 25 The city covers some 117sq km with a population density that is seven times the average for the region. Manchester is unusual amongst core cities in that it has few affluent suburbs and 60 per cent of its population, 234,000 people, live in the ten per cent most deprived wards nationally. The city has a highly transient population.

There has been a significant problem within the housing market of low demand, low cost and poor quality housing, suffering physical deterioration, although this is now being addressed through the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder project for Manchester and Salford. Fifty-four per cent of the Councils own housing stock is non decent.

- 26** The city is extremely diverse in its make up, 19 per cent of the population are from non white ethnic minorities, and this is predicted to rise to 29 per cent by 2011. The city has the largest student population in Europe. Manchester's China Town is one of the largest in the country. There is a highly visible and vibrant lesbian and gay community in the city centre focused around the area known as the Gay Village. The total lesbian and gay population is estimated to be between 10-12 per cent of the population.

## The Council

- 27** The Council is Labour controlled with 61 Labour councillors, 34 Liberal Democrats and one Green party councillor. The Leader has held his position since 1996. The Council is managed through an Executive, chaired by the Leader with two deputies and seven Executive members with service-related portfolios, in addition executive members have responsibilities for cross-cutting issues. The Executive is supported by six Overview and Scrutiny Committees each with cross-cutting responsibilities; two statutory committees and eight ordinary committees with specific regulatory and non-regulatory responsibilities. The Council has recently established an Audit Committee.
- 28** Each of the Councils 32 wards has an Area Committee with representation from all 96 Councillors. The system of ward service co-ordination is designed to focus service improvement on the specific needs of the communities in each ward, resulting in an annual ward plan; the Council devolves a small budget to each ward committee to fund community led activity.
- 29** The Councils overarching vision is for Manchester to be 'A World Class City by 2015'. This vision is underpinned by four strategic priorities: sustainable economic growth; Manchester's people reaching their full potential in education and skills; individual and collective self-esteem and mutual respect; and creating neighbourhoods of choice. These priorities are collectively known as 'the spines'.
- 30** The Council has recently reorganised its organisational structure. The Chief Executive now leads five Directorates. There are two Deputy Chief Executives, who in addition manage the Regeneration and Public Service Performance directorates. The remaining three directorates (Children's Services; Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Services) are managed by Strategic Directors. The senior management team also includes a Strategic Director with responsibility for co-ordinating the Manchester Improvement Programme and two new Assistant Chief Executives.

- 31 The Council has worked through a range of key partnerships, with a successful early example of this approach being the task force set up to oversee the recovery of the city following the terrorist bombing in 1996 that became a model of good practice. More recently, New East Manchester Ltd has been driving the flagship regeneration of this area of the city. The City Council now works through an extensive range of effective and purposeful public and private partnerships within the city and beyond in the wider region.
- 32 The Council's gross revenue budget for 2006/07 is £1.5 billion (net £415 million excluding schools). The planned capital programme for 2006/07 is £266 million. For the past seven years the Council has pursued a strategy of low council tax rises and has gone from having the highest council tax of all ten Greater Manchester councils to now the second lowest.

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

### Ambition

- 33 The Council is performing strongly in this area. Manchester is a highly ambitious Council that has a clear, well articulated and strong commitment to improve the economy and the quality of life for all its residents. The city has achieved an impressive record of economic growth, driven by strong leadership from the Council working in partnership with government, public, voluntary and private sectors. There is a stretching and challenging focus on continuing economic growth with the objective of ensuring that local people benefit from the regeneration and that all Manchester neighbourhoods become places where people want to live.
- 34 The recently revised vision to be 'a World class city by 2015' is clear, stretching and well understood. The Council intends to achieve this with its partners through delivering the core aims of Manchester people reaching their full potential in education and employment, individual and collective self esteem and mutual respect, and creating neighbourhoods of choice. These are 'the spines' that strengthen and connect the ambition to the outcomes. They are to be driven by continued sustainable economic growth. Success will be measured by a larger, stable and diverse population for the city, where people will be wealthier, happier, living longer and healthier lives.
- 35 The ambitions reflect the current issues facing the city and the progress made in the last decade. The Council has achieved much of what it previously aspired to. There has been significant economic growth at twice the national rate, the city has become an international brand, investment is increasing and more people are choosing to live there. However access to opportunity, employment and prosperity has only been partially advanced. The city still suffers from widespread and deep deprivation. Sixty per cent of neighbourhoods are in the 10 per cent most deprived nationally. The Council has now refocused its efforts on continuing economic development that will ensure all local people, particularly the most vulnerable, can access a better quality of life.
- 36 There is a strong sense of place and a well grounded understanding of local needs underpinning the Council's and its partners' plans and strategies. The Council is strongly user-focused and has a sound understanding of the diverse needs of its communities; regenerating neighbourhoods, tackling deprivation and valuing diversity are central to their approaches. The Council and its partners are clear about what matters most to local people and have focused their efforts and resources to tackle these issues, such as crime and street scene improvements.

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- 37** The Council and its partners recognise that success in delivering 'the spines' will ensure that local people will have the education and skills to access the jobs created by the economic growth, and that the development of respect and self esteem and building neighbourhoods to attract the population growth required to sustain economic growth will address some of the city's most difficult challenges. The population will grow and become more affluent and less transient; people who work in the city will choose to live in the city; as people's wealth and aspirations increase they will choose to remain in, and respect, the city and continue to make a positive contribution to its society, economy and environment.
- 38** The ambitions have been developed with partners and are supported by very clear and robust economic, social and environmental strategies and partnerships at sub regional, city, district and neighbourhood levels. The previous Community Strategy 2002-2012 has been revised and the current draft strategy 2006-2015 is in the final stages of extensive consultation. The vision and the priorities, as expressed through the 'spines', are reflected in both the draft community strategy and the corporate plan.
- 39** The Council demonstrates strong and effective community leadership through councillors and officers and through its partnership working. The Leader and Chief Executive are widely recognised as providing strong and dynamic leadership to the community and partners. They have further extended this leadership to influence the wider sub-regional and regional agendas in pursuing ambitious plans to gain maximum benefit to the city and its communities. The Council plays a leading role within the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities and has led on developing integrated public transport through the plans to extend the successful Metrolink light rail network. The Council has made good progress on establishing the partnerships to pursue the City Region agenda. Partners describe a 'can do' culture and inspirational leadership. There have been many high-profile economic successes from the Council's ambitious planning, including the commonwealth games, the expanded international airport, investment from the Bank of New York, attracting the BBC to relocate to the North West and rebuilding the city centre following the terrorist bombing. The city has seen a decade of economic growth at twice the national average.
- 40** The Councils communication of its ambitions and priorities are clear and unequivocal. They are well understood by councillors, staff, partners and communities. Stakeholders can see clearly how they can contribute to achieving the ambitions. The Council has been particularly successful at raising awareness of the Respect agenda and promoting the need for every citizen to have individual and collective self-esteem and respect. The Councils success in this area has been hailed by the government as a model of good practice.
- 41** Ambitions are founded on an in-depth understanding of the problems and opportunities faced by each district of Manchester. This is translated into a clear set of challenging objectives, managed at the community strategy level through the seven thematic partnerships and underpinned by the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA). These are then translated by the Council into the corporate plan and service strategies.

In addition the Council has established a series of five strategic regeneration frameworks (SRFs) covering all areas of the city to ensure a local focus and clear sense of place, to enable it to balance ambitions with local needs. This provides a robust framework through which the Council can ensure ambitions for the city can be realised with appropriate engagement from all partners.

- 42 There are strong and well established mechanisms for community engagement. The system of ward service co-ordination, although not always consistently applied, does provide an effective mechanism through which residents views and local needs can be articulated. This is further enhanced through the 24 Local Action Partnerships (LAPs) and Local Tasking Groups (LTGs) established through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). Through the Manchester Partnership the Council is now consulting on the Mancunian Agreement, an innovative approach to community engagement. This agreement between the city and its people establishes a set of principles through which the mutual respect agenda can be enhanced.
- 43 The Council has created and maintained effective working relationships within partnerships. Senior officers and councillors are respected and trusted by partners; private, voluntary and public sector partners are enthusiastic about the Council's approach to collaborative working. This has led to real improvements such as co-location of NHS primary care services with other council and police services in deprived neighbourhoods. Manchester aims to reduce the gap between its most deprived communities and the rest of the city region to address income levels and joblessness. It established a City Skills Board, focused Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) and Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets on partnership working on raising education attainment, supported residents off incapacity benefits and into work and ensured that local labour is used in major construction schemes. These effective and purposeful partnership arrangements increase the Council's capacity to deliver its ambitions and priorities for local communities.
- 44 The Council makes good use of a range of consultation processes to gain the views of its residents. In addition to surveys, it uses bespoke and innovative approaches to consulting and engaging with people to ensure that it reaches the full range of diverse communities. Examples include the Agenda 2010 (race equality) road shows and the Challenge Manchester; 100 days Big Conversation events. Consultation activities are managed well and the Council understands how to use them to best effect. It provides appropriate arrangements for different groups including children, disabled people, older people and black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. It also ensures a wide range of choice for responses including face to face, internet and traditional mail methods. As a result the Council has a strong understanding of the needs and expectations of Manchester people.

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- 45 There are good mechanisms within the Council to share learning and information from consultation for example through the community engagement co-ordinators group and the various equalities groups, such as the race equality group. These have led to some outcomes such as peer support in schools and disabled access for the rebuilt city centre. In other cases outcomes of consultation have not been fed back, for example, the results of the recent budget consultation process.
- 46 There is clear accountability for delivery of partnership ambitions. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was restructured in 2004 with a clearer focus on delivery and performance. The LSP collates both thematic and ward based performance information on LPSA targets. This is used to understand the needs of the area and is shared with partners. This analysis helps the Council to understand some of the social and environmental challenges and inform the vision for the community. Annual partnership conferences with public and voluntary sector partners and the proposed Mancunian agreement with residents set out mutual expectations.
- 47 There is a willingness to take difficult decisions to address areas of improvement whilst balancing competing demands in order to address areas of improvement. This includes closing public libraries and swimming pools, and pursuing regeneration schemes involving re-housing hundreds of local families, in the face of political opposition.

## Prioritisation

- 48 The Council is performing well in this area. The Council has clear high level priorities which are well understood by partners, reflect the needs of Manchester's residents and provide a good fit with national priorities. Indeed Manchester has recently been at the forefront of the development of regional and national policy frameworks, particularly around the Respect and the City Region agendas.
- 49 The Council's vision to become 'a World Class City by 2015' is underpinned by four clear outward facing priorities. These are: to create the conditions for sustainable economic growth, to enable people to reach their full potential through education and employment, to enable individual and collective self-esteem and mutual respect and to develop neighbourhoods of choice. These are known as 'the spines' and match the priorities of the new draft Community Strategy. The spines are well integrated into both annual and medium-term service planning within the Council and with its LSP partners. The Council recognises the links and interdependencies across the priorities and this enables it to develop cross-cutting programmes and plans that address priorities and ensure appropriate engagement with partners.
- 50 The Council's Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) with its partners focuses improvement activity and sets challenging targets in areas that will support the delivery of 'the spines'. These include specific targets for improvement in employment and education, anti-social behaviour and crime, health, transport, culture and community engagement. These provide a realistic and outcome-based set of priorities to support the vision.

- 51 In addition there are a series of internally-facing priorities which the Council has identified to enable it to develop organisational ability and capacity to deliver across its ambitious agenda. These priorities provide a focus for Councillors and staff to ensure that internal improvements are systematically targeted and delivered to enable the delivery of plans and strategies.
- 52 The Council provides strong and visible leadership and works in effective and mature partnerships within the city and in the wider region and sub-region. The Council plays a key role in working across the seven thematic partnerships of the LSP and across the ten Greater Manchester councils. It has more recently extended its influence to the wider North West region in developing the ambitious Manchester City Region submission. A sophisticated understanding of national priorities and clarity on local and regional priorities has enabled the development of a set of complex and sensitive proposals with a range of partners. This is not only enhancing the reputation and credibility of the city but also enabling the Council to increase the pace of delivering its priorities, particularly in respect of providing a platform for further economic growth, neighbourhood regeneration and transport developments.
- 53 There has been a longstanding political focus within the Council of keeping council tax rises below inflation. The Council has now moved from having the highest Council Tax in Greater Manchester in 2000, to the second lowest. This has been achieved through setting cash-limited budgets for each department and requiring them to make efficiency savings each year in order to fund service improvement. All departments now produce three-year service and budget strategies showing how services will be improved whilst keeping within their cash limit. The medium-term financial strategy makes the link between service and financial planning, although this could be strengthened to ensure a more comprehensive, corporate approach.
- 54 The Council has also assessed its activities and made clear strategic decisions to modernise service delivery to achieve better outcomes in priority areas and has moved resources away from old forms of service provision. Housing and Libraries, for example, have moved away from a geographical base to focus on customer service. There has been an increased use of private sector provision in children's services. Housing management is provided through a range of service providers to best fit local circumstances. The Council has entered into a joint venture with the private sector to provide car parking. These changed approaches to provision not only achieve better outcomes for local people they also represent significant efficiency savings.
- 55 There is a strong sense of place and a neighbourhood focus throughout the Council's prioritisation processes. The Council recognises that prioritising neighbourhoods is very difficult since there are few neighbourhoods in the city that are free from disadvantage in one or many forms. The SRFs developed by the Council for all districts of the city have been prioritised to tackle the areas with the most acute needs first. The fifth and final one to be completed in 2006 will be South Manchester. SRFs provide a set of comprehensive strategies based on the different needs and opportunities in each of the five districts.

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This enables the Council with its partners to prioritise interventions that will have the greatest regeneration impact in each area. Each is managed through a Public Agency Forum. This enables the Council to translate its ambitions into coherent locality based implementation plans to regenerate areas in line with priorities, which are clearly understood and informed by stakeholders.

- 56** Through its own race equality strategy launched in 2000, Agenda 2010, the Council is explicitly aiming to close gap between BME communities and the city as a whole in key areas of health and social care, crime and disorder, education and employment and looking to build cohesive communities. Instead of their usual annual conference to promote community involvement in the strategy, this year the Council held a series of locality based road shows. Agenda 2010 is addressed through both the Council's service plans and the action plans of the LSP thematic partnerships. The Council recognises that still more work needs to be done although there are examples of positive outcomes within all public services such as a BBC project to support Somali people in media opportunities, the Friendship Games in 2005, which brought together 1500 young people in sports, arts and cultural activities, and the development of an annual teaching resource for Black History Month.

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

### Capacity

- 57 The Council is performing well in this area. It has enhanced its own capacity by working effectively and imaginatively with both statutory and non-statutory partners including the voluntary sector. It has also been successful at attracting significant external funding. This increased capacity has been targeted at securing improvement in priority areas. The organisation is well led and well managed. There is a high calibre of senior officers and senior councillors, who have strong commitment to the city and its ambitions. The Council is financially sound and for a number of years has maintained a focus on reducing service costs. This has met with some success enabling it to reduce council tax increases to improve value for money. There is still room for further improvement in the areas of asset management, workforce planning and risk management.
- 58 The Leader and Chief Executive provide impressive leadership and ambitious and visionary direction. They are well respected both internally and amongst partners. The Executive Members Group (EMG), comprising the senior management team (SMT) and executive members, works well and provides an effective focus at the appropriate strategic level on driving improvement and achieving objectives. The overview and scrutiny committees add value to the strategic and policy development of the Council and its partnerships, for example the chairs have linked with the seven thematic partnership chairs in the LSP to join up their work to ensure greater impact.
- 59 Councillors and officers work together effectively and appropriately with each other and within partnerships, within an ethical framework. There are many examples of constructive working at both strategic policy level and at ward level. Officers and councillors are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities and working relationships are appropriate and constructive.
- 60 The Council uses partnerships with other public agencies extensively and effectively. This helps to increase its capacity to achieve ambitions for the city and to deliver flexible services that meet diverse local needs. For example, a partnership with Job Centre Plus and Department of Work and Pensions has targeted a significant proportion of its Neighbourhood Renewal funding (NRF) to support the Stepping Stones project. This is aimed at helping Manchester people who are long-term unemployed, and on incapacity benefit, back into work. The CDRP is working effectively to contribute to both the neighbourhoods of choice and mutual respect priorities and has overseen significant improvements in levels of crime and disorder. Investment in neighbourhood wardens and the structure of ward co-ordination are also supporting delivery in these priority areas.

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- 61** The Council has been successful at investing very significant amounts of external funding to support priorities. In developing neighbourhoods of choice and promoting respect, the Manchester Partnership invested over £35 million of NRF and Safer Stronger Communities Fund in 2005/06 and plans to spend a further £32 million this year. This is also supported by action to reduce low demand housing in areas suffering the worst deprivation. This has been possible by working in collaboration with neighbouring Salford MBC, to secure Housing Market Renewal (HMR) funding for the Manchester Salford pathfinder project. The New East Manchester Partnership is a good example of what the Council has been able to achieve with a combination of external funding including New Deal for Communities, HMR, NRF and mainstream Council and partner agencies budgets, and is one of the best examples of the Council recognising and responding to the interplay and interdependence between priority areas in order to maximise impact.
- 62** The Council works extensively and effectively with the voluntary and community sectors to deliver in priority areas. For example, it successfully bid for POPPS funding (Partnership for Older People's Projects), and the majority of the money will be spent on additional grants for projects to support older people in the community in the priority areas of neighbourhoods of choice and mutual respect
- 63** The Council uses a variety of partnerships with the private sector to improve efficiency and to deliver more cost-effective services in innovative ways. A joint venture with NCP to provide off-street car parking has reduced significantly the Council's costs and generates over £5 million per year in extra income for the Council. Similarly the creation of a trust and contract with SERCO for indoor leisure provision has enabled the Council to improve these services using private sector investment. The successful Commonwealth Games in 2002 was delivered through public/private partnership and the Council was able to secure major investment in facilities and infrastructure for the city with minority Council investment. The Council invested £33.3 million in the stadium attracting £78.7 million of external funding. The stadium now delivers £2 million income per year to the Council.
- 64** The Council is financially sound and has significant balances and reserves. It has used its financial capacity through ambitious investment decisions such as the airport expansion and the purchase of the GMEX centre. These not only enable the Council to achieve its priority of sustainable economic growth, but also produce significant income streams through which the Council can invest in other priority areas to achieve its wider ambitions. The medium term financial plan is adequate in identifying known pressures and income forecasts but there is more work to be done in aligning it with other business planning processes, to ensure that it more clearly drives the allocation of financial resources to priorities.
- 65** The Council's approach to procurement is adequate and is improving. There are examples of innovative approaches to procurement such as eAuctions. A flexible and open approach has been taken in transferring its total housing stock through a combination of different means including arms length management organisations, registered social landlords and private finance initiatives to suit each locality.

- 66 The Council is good at managing risks in projects. There is a strong track record of the successful and effective risk management in major projects, not least the commonwealth games. Other examples include large-scale regeneration projects and the recent successful implementation of new IT systems, where projects are consistently delivered on time and to budget. Risks have been assessed systematically in service planning through the management action plans for the last two annual cycles. However at the corporate level, the corporate risk register has only recently been introduced, so its effectiveness in securing improved performance has yet to be demonstrated.
- 67 Arrangements for managing the Council's significant asset base are not well developed, there is now a new asset management strategy and capacity in the corporate property function is being reviewed to improve this area.
- 68 Staff are well supported and empowered to innovate in service delivery. There is a strong commitment to, and pride in, the city, amongst officers and councillors. Morale and motivation is high among the workforce, as illustrated by the Council's own staff survey showing higher than average satisfaction with the Council as an employer. The Council has recognised it needs to refine its approach to workforce planning to support its own and its partners future plans and is developing an improved framework to ensure that workforce planning is aligned with annual service planning processes and service improvement plans through the Manchester Improvement Programme (MIP). These developments are at a very early stage and are not yet embedded.
- 69 The Council is now working in collaboration with partners to develop joint approaches to workforce planning and training for example there are police partners jointly receiving training alongside City Council staff on the Councils Black leadership programme. Whilst overall the Council's workforce is broadly representative of the ethnic diversity of the population, this is not the case at senior levels, where only 2.4 per cent of senior management posts are held by BME staff.
- 70 There are nominated strategic directors, executive members and scrutiny chairs with responsibility for maintaining a focus on each of the seven thematic objectives within the community strategy. The new corporate plan sets out a series of priority actions under each of the four main externally focused priorities and the internal capacity building priorities. Each action shows individual officer, executive and scrutiny chair responsibilities with measurable targets and milestones to ensure delivery.
- 71 The Council is taking steps to ensure it can sustain future improvement through ambitious and challenging internal plans, most notably the MIP. The MIP will be delivered through four broad mechanisms; the introduction of SAP integrated council wide systems for procurement, financial management, human resources and customer relationship management; the delivery of 'Access Manchester', designed to bring a consistent customer focus, to improve access by all sections of the community, supported by services redesigned to meet customers needs; a council-wide programme of Service Improvement Projects; and finally a budget and service strategy process that aims to facilitate both transformational and then continuous improvement in value for money and service quality.

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

However the programme is in the early stages of development and presents a challenging agenda of change.

- 72 There is a clear commitment from councillors and officers to ensure that the MIP succeeds. The Council has reorganised its senior management structure to ensure it has the capacity to deliver and there is now a Corporate Director on SMT whose role is to lead and co-ordinate the MIP. The Council has further strengthened capacity at SMT level by the appointment of two new Assistant Chief Executives.
- 73 The Council is delivering adequate value for money and is working hard to improve on this. Overall the Council's costs are higher than other similar councils. The MIP provides an opportunity to drive improvements in services and value for money in a much more systematic way.

## Performance management

- 74 The Council is performing adequately in this area. Its ambitious and challenging agenda is underpinned by many sub regional, city wide and locality based strategies, plans and partnerships, presenting enormous complexities in terms of ensuring a coherent and robust approach to performance management. There is a generally thorough and open approach to performance management. The Council has taken steps recently to develop its performance management capacity and is clear what is needed to improve its approach further however it is not yet consistently driving improvement across the council and its partnerships.
- 75 The Council and its partners are refining the framework for accountability and performance management of the new community strategy, overseen by the Manchester Partnership Board. This will be underpinned by the LAA, the Partner Agreement and the planned Mancunian Agreement. The four-tier approach to performance targets (strategic, quality of life, partnership priority, earlier warning indicators) is innovative but recognised to be at an embryonic stage. Several partnerships, for example the CDRP, have made considerable progress recently in overall performance management and sharing data to good effect. The Council and its partners acknowledge that this is a developing area with further development and refinement needed on the overall approach. For example, monitoring performance achievements by ethnicity, strong and consistent evaluation and benchmarking relative to other organisations are still to be developed.
- 76 Within the Council itself most elements of a performance management framework exist. However work is still underway to integrate them into a complete system that drives performance improvement consistently across the organisation and partnerships. The Council is aware of the gaps and inconsistencies and these will be addressed by the performance management approaches inherent in the MIP, the major vehicle for driving service improvement across the council. There are examples of where the Council has identified areas of underperformance in priority areas and has taken steps which have led to improved performance; these include libraries and street cleanliness.

- 77** There has been a general improvement in most areas of performance, although this has been from a low base and many indicators are still below average. Whilst some indicators of performance show significant improvement for example in adults' social care, other key areas have shown limited improvement to date, or the improvement relative to other councils has been weaker and therefore has not narrowed the performance gap. Educational attainment is the most notable example of an area that is critical to the Council achieving its ambitions where improvements, although steady, have not been driven at the pace or scale required.
- 78** Performance data is produced and regularly considered by both senior officers and executive councillors, all of whom have a strong grasp of the key performance issues in their portfolio areas. The Executive Member for finance and human resources provides strong political leadership to performance issues and has recently established an LPSA oversight group. This ensures a strong corporate focus is maintained on those targets critical to the success of the LPSA. However the role of scrutiny in systematic performance management is still underdeveloped and is an area that the Council is working to improve. Scrutiny committees have responsibility for scrutinising performance and contributing to council improvement priorities but approaches between different committees are inconsistent and lack rigour with little evidence of real outcomes from this work as yet.
- 79** The Council deals with complaints effectively. The approach to corporate complaints handling has been reviewed and recent feedback from the Ombudsman suggests that the previously identified problems have largely been addressed. There are several good examples where user complaints have led to service changes that local people would recognise, such as in white goods collection, quad biking action and anti-social behaviour.
- 80** The Council's strategic, operational and performance planning are well connected and the Best Value Performance Plan is easily accessible for residents interested in performance detail. Staff are consistently clear what is expected of them and what training and development support is available to them in delivering their targets. Departmental service plans have good links to priorities but there are inconsistencies around linking activities to available financial and human resources and to inherent risks to delivering successful outcomes.

## What has been achieved?

- 81 Overall the Council is performing well in this area. The community strategy, the corporate plan, the area based strategic regeneration frameworks and the three year service and budget strategies are well linked and provide a coherent set of mechanisms through which local and national priorities are delivered. There is a close match with the seven thematic areas of the community strategy to all of the shared priorities. Older people are the only community of interest who are not explicitly recognised as a thematic area, although the Council and its partners through Valuing Older People (VOP) have made good progress. The Council achieved eight out of the thirteen targets in its first LPSA, including those in education, crime, housing, health and environment.
- 82 The Council is working well with its partners to develop sustainable communities. It is successfully working to address the legacy of previous economic decline, with sustained improvements to the quality of life for local people. New jobs have been attracted to the city and housing conditions have been improved. There has been a notable improvement in the quality of the built environment, recognised by community and other stakeholders.
- 83 The Council has been particularly successful in tackling the shared priority of safer and stronger communities. Partnership arrangements are strong and joint working between the Council and the police is effective and well managed. Although crime levels and fear of crime remain comparatively high, overall there has been a significant reduction in crime. The Council's focus on developing the Respect agenda and its inclusion as one of the four key priorities for the city has given a significant boost to both the profile and the pace of change in this area.
- 84 The Council is working well with its partners to tackle the problems in building healthier communities. It has put in place the right things to tackle health inequalities and ensure that their communities live healthier lives, and there have been some improvements in reducing the gap between life expectancy in Manchester and the rest of England, although there is still a long way to go.
- 85 The Council has also developed a good strategic approach to older people with many examples of good engagement and consultation processes leading to positive outcomes. The Council and its partners through Valuing Older People (VOP) have made good progress in ensuring that older peoples issues are fully considered as a cross cutting theme.
- 86 The Council has been less successful at improving outcomes for children and young people. It is ambitious to improve and has made some key improvements recently. However, children and young people in Manchester remain less healthy and generally achieve less well in schools than in other parts of the country. Overall services to children and young people are adequate.

## Sustainable communities and transport

- 87 The Council has achieved high economic growth whilst maintaining a focus on the quality of the environment, increasing job opportunities for local people, improving the condition of housing, and increasing the use of public transport.
- 88 It has clear and robust plans for sustainable economic development and improved quality of life. Local people and partners recognise the achievements, and support the plans to regenerate the city although it is appreciated by all that there is still a long way to go and that the Council needs to work harder to ensure that all sections of the community benefit from economic success.
- 89 The Commonwealth Games and the rebuilding of the city centre have in the last five years contributed to successfully attracting over £2 billion of private sector investment into the city. Over 45,000 new jobs have been created leading to a 1.8 per cent increase in the employment rate, higher in the most deprived wards, and a 22 per cent reduction in unemployment.
- 90 Despite this success, unemployment still remains significantly above the regional and national average. Thirty five per cent of the working age population is economically inactive, and there are high numbers claiming Incapacity Benefit especially those aged over 50. The Council is aware of this and is working well in partnership to overcome the legacy of previous economic decline. The Stepping Stones programme for example, has taken over 1,100 people off incapacity benefit and into work in last 18 months mainly from the most deprived communities. The Employment Task Force aims to get 12,500 people into work by 2009. However, outcomes for priority groups such as BME communities and older people are less clear.
- 91 The Council's developing regeneration strategies provide a holistic approach to neighbourhood renewal. Through local development plans, and using statutory powers, it links economic growth and Housing Market Renewal to environmental improvements, supported by a clear approach to transport in creating neighbourhoods of choice.
- 92 All regeneration in the city is subject to the Council's Guide to Development which supports the strategic ambition to be 'Britain's Greenest City' as part of the strategic priority for neighbourhoods of choice, ensuring well designed, environmentally sustainable schemes. Developments such as Maine Road are required to have BREEAM rating of good or better, and solar panels and other technologies are expected to meet at least 10 per cent of energy consumption. The Council's approach to the use of Section 106 planning gain monies to support its ambitions is, however not yet clear.
- 93 The Council's approach to housing supports sustainable economic development and improved quality of life for local people. Its strategic use of temporary and permanent accommodation including in the private sector, has helped reduce the level of homelessness and through SAFESTOP, the Council is addressing the needs of vulnerable groups such as young rough sleepers.

- 94 In partnership with Salford Council and selected RSLs, the HMR Pathfinder programme in North, East and parts of South Manchester is making good progress, with improvements to housing conditions and the physical environment encouraging people to move into and stay in previously declining areas. The Council with the support of residents, has used a mixture of stock transfer, PFI and the creation of an ALMO to improve housing estates elsewhere, and is on track to meet the Government's decent homes standard. It is working with private owners and using the landlord accreditation scheme to improve conditions in the private sector and to support the creation of sustainable neighbourhoods.
- 95 The Council is working well with its partners to make other environmental improvements. As part of its ward co-ordination process across the city, it provides grants to local groups to tackle their concerns over issues such as nuisance and vandalism. There have been recent overall improvements in street cleanliness, refuse collection, grounds maintenance and highways as a result of attention to city-wide concerns over 'crime and grime'. Waste and recycling rates have improved at a rate above the municipal average, though starting from a low base. Clean Teams also contribute to wider objectives for jobs, training and personal development initiatives within the most deprived communities. Stakeholders are positive about the tangible outcomes from environmental improvements in the city.
- 96 The Council is working effectively to reduce its own resource consumption and is working with partners to promote environmental issues to the wider community. It has established a network of Green Champions within its own workforce as an example of notable practice, issuing a handbook and using the intranet to provide a series of practical measures that staff can take to address issues of local and global environmental concern. Another example of notable practice is the creation and promotion of the country's first dedicated Biodiesel filling station in January 2006, arranged through the Manchester Biodiesel Co-operative, which is part-funded by the Council.
- 97 The Council is working in a holistic way to ensure its plans for transport meet wider local and regional community ambitions. New developments are located adjacent to key arterial routes and transport networks, reducing the commuting pressure on outlying greenfield sites. The new Local Transport Plan developed in partnership with its neighbours, recognises that more and bigger roads is not a sustainable strategy, and places emphasis on developing the capacity and attractiveness of all modes of public transport. There has been an increase in bus and cycle usage, achievement of air quality standards, and reduced road traffic accidents as part of a sustained commitment to use transport to support the development of neighbourhoods of choice.

## Safer and stronger communities

- 98 The Council recognises it has a very real challenge in addressing crime and providing public reassurance given the levels of crime in the city. Creating safer and stronger communities is at the heart of its mutual respect priority and will make a significant contribution to creating neighbourhoods of choice. Real progress has been made with demonstrable outcomes around crime reduction in several key areas.
- 99 The CDRP is highly effective and is led by the council, providing a strong example of community leadership. The partnership functions well both at the strategic and the operational level, has a clear grasp of its priorities (crime reduction, tackling anti-social behaviour, drugs and alcohol misuse and public reassurance) and has a clear and robust crime and disorder reduction strategy to drive its work. The degree of cross-organisational working is impressive, particularly the relationship between the city council and the Greater Manchester Police with officers leading on the agenda from both partner agencies being of high calibre and high commitment, supported by clear and consistent political leadership.
- 100 The Council adopts a 'whole council' approach to tackling community safety with various departments having roles and actions built into their business plans to ensure the discharge of their Section 17 duties. The council and its partners have learned the lessons from less effective historic activity and where necessary are prepared to take difficult decisions to progress one of the city's most pressing agendas.
- 101 The Council's approach to anti-social behaviour has been one of the most impressive in the country and has won the backing of central government as an exemplar for others. A range of interventions is always considered (with ASBOs as the last step) with the involvement of victims, support for witnesses and those complaining, and local case panel sessions to identify the families and young people concerned and ensure that further social exclusion is not the unintended consequence of action taken.
- 102 The council's approach to tackling drug dependency, alcohol misuse and associated crime and public disorder are well integrated into the CDR strategy. The approaches are wide, intelligence-led and cover supply, education, community support, treatment and enforcement. The council recognises that a vibrant night time economy is important to the prosperity of the city and therefore works with a full range of partners in balancing the potentially conflicting demands of the broader community, particularly with a highly effective introduction of the new licensing regime.
- 103 The council and its partners have succeeded in reducing accidents, with fewer people being killed or seriously injured on Manchester roads. Neighbourhood renewal monies have been made available to the transport thematic partnership to target areas with the worst accident records and the council was successful in reducing road traffic accidents via the first LPSA target.

Concern about the high number of fatalities on roads has led to LTP monies being targeted at those 'hotspot' areas where most impact could be delivered. The performance monitoring system used has subsequently been developed with a more sophisticated approach to ensure that hotspots are identified earlier, analysed and prioritised for capital investment where that is required.

- 104** Business Continuity Planning is firmly embedded within the operating systems and the management culture of the council and its partners. An impressive business continuity strategy sits at top level, linked to key service area plans. These are currently being extended, with an emphasis on developing organisational capacity to undertake and update those plans. The council also properly discharges its statutory duty to provide advice to the business and voluntary sector via a specific strategy and an on-line presence and through joint work with AGMA.
- 105** The Council undertakes a range of community engagement and capacity building techniques to develop a stronger community in the city. The council is rightly proud that despite the considerable diversity of its population, it has managed to avoid the fracturing of its communities along ethnic lines seen elsewhere in the north west of England. Its Agenda 2010 programme (providing a range of activities and projects to support BME communities and their aspirations) is now well embedded and the Council has long funded and worked well with the Manchester Council for Community Relations. The Council has a good understanding of the communities it serves and their diverse needs. Several BME community and voluntary organisations however have expressed concerns about community capacity and infrastructure, that the lessons are not being necessarily learned for new communities arriving in Manchester, that transparency and certainty of grant funding can be problematic and that the benefits of the agreement with the Scarman Trust, an organisation commissioned by the Council to provide support to community and voluntary groups, are not yet universally experienced.

## Healthier communities

- 106** The Council and its partners demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring that their communities live healthier lives. Health outcomes in Manchester are currently amongst the worst in the country. Health improvement and reducing health inequalities for local people is an explicit priority in the LPSA. The Council achieved its target of increasing life expectancy in the first LPSA and is on course to exceed the 2008 target for improvement.
- 107** Despite improvements in reducing the life expectancy gap Manchester still has the lowest life expectancy in England for men and equal lowest for women (with Liverpool). In contrast the Council is aware that internal health inequalities have not improved and is developing a strategic approach to improving the health of the most deprived communities and reducing the gap across the city. Teenage conception rates have not fallen in line with targets.

The target to reduce under 18 years conceptions based on the 1998 baseline by 55 per cent by 2010 is not expected to be met and has shown an increase of 7.7 per cent compared with a national reduction of 9.8 per cent.

- 108** The Council and its partners have developed a Health Inequalities Partnership and action plan. The strategy has seven clear priorities that help to ensure focused resources and collaboration. Delivery is through partnership groups for the various programmes such as Food Futures Strategy and Teenage Pregnancy. The Council has a good understanding of the health issues facing disadvantaged parts of the communities. This assessment and analysis is being used to performance manage the LPSA targets and guide services and partnerships on health improvement and reducing health inequalities.
- 109** There are challenging targets to narrow the gap of life expectancy between Manchester people and the rest of the country. The current target is to reduce the gap to 4.5 years for men and 3.2 years for women by 2008, from a current gap of 4.7 years and 3.4 years. Progress is on track for Manchester to exceed the target by 2008. There is a systematic approach to addressing health inequalities that links through wider regeneration strategies. For example, strategies such as Food Futures, Tobacco Control, Teenage Pregnancy, Alcohol and encouraging Physical Activity link with other plans such as environmental improvement. Greater investment in health improvement and reducing health inequalities is targeted in areas of higher deprivation. Resources are targeted through area based SRFs and aligned to other priorities to deliver health outcomes.
- 110** The Joint Health Unit (JHU) is a partnership between the Council and the three Manchester Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). Employees from the PCTs and Council are co-located at the Town Hall. The JHU is managed by a partnership board including representatives from the PCTs, the three Acute Trusts, mental health and social care trusts. Resources and priorities are aligned with those of partners and partners have responsibility to deliver specific projects and achieve outcomes. The JHU has an annual budget of £7 million from Council resources, NRF and NHS Choosing Health. This unique arrangement gives a significant opportunity to secure health improvements in Manchester.
- 111** The Council and partners through the JHU have a performance management arrangement to track progress against health indicators. A traffic light system is used to manage key targets. Performance Information is regularly reported to the Health Inequalities Partnership where robust challenge takes place. The LPSA target is reported to a senior members and managers group.
- 112** The Public Health Intelligence Unit is based in the JHU and provides health indicator profiling information across the city and down to ward level. Local health inequalities data is web-based and shared with partners. Access to services and projects in particular wards is contained on this web-based system. The Health Inequalities Monitoring Framework looks at short-term change in some of the wider determinants that impact on health inequalities. It is an innovative way of dealing with the fact that there are long time lags between current interventions and future mortality outcomes. The framework is a tool that could be used as a proxy to measure progress on achieving reductions in health inequality.

- 113** Health and regeneration plans are closely aligned to ensure that the large scale regeneration includes health benefits for local communities. The JHU has created a post of Health and Regeneration Programme Manager who has a specific remit to work across regeneration projects to ensure that health improvements and tackling health inequalities are taken into account in the design and delivery of regeneration projects. Regeneration projects have targets for health improvements and recent projects have included co-location of services with health partners. The Council and PCTs have established a partnership structure to link up NHS and Council regeneration capital schemes. The schemes are delivered by LIFT initiative and involve co-location of Council and primary health services in five settings. The Council is a partner in an Employment for Health action plan for residents who are jobless due to illness, disability, mental health problems or in receipt of incapacity benefit. This action plan aims to contribute to supporting vulnerable people into employment and reducing levels of disadvantage thereby promoting greater independence and reducing inequalities in health.
- 114** A substantial number of projects in 2005/06 were intended to tackle needs of specific groups to address health inequalities, but evaluation processes focus on activity and outputs, they are less robust on evaluating health outcomes. Although this is acknowledged and efforts are being made to improve outcome monitoring through the health inequalities monitoring framework. Some 60 projects cover a wide range of areas of activity and are grant aided by the JHU. Annual evaluation is undertaken to ensure that the projects have achieved expected outcomes and projects that have not delivered are no longer funded. The evaluation process is not fully effective in assisting the Council to understand whether it is making progress in improving health of communities.
- 115** The Black Health Agency and Manchester Race and Health Forum work as advocates on behalf of BME and hard-to-reach communities to address inequalities and to act as a broker between the Council, NHS, voluntary sector and communities. Projects include support for African women and men who are affected by HIV. Engagement with these groups and access to appropriate services will assist most vulnerable groups to narrow health inequalities.
- 116** The Council and partners recognise that alcohol related health and illnesses are an emerging risk factor that based on current trends will have become a major health problem in the next few years. Consequently the JHU have developed an Alcohol Reduction Strategy that aims to work with a range of stakeholders to reduce the harmful and contributory affects of alcohol on health and crime. Implementation of this strategy is recent and benefits have yet to be delivered
- 117** The Council and partners work to address health improvement through a range of initiatives on accident prevention, diet, exercise and nutrition. These projects are funded by the JHU. Accident prevention projects are targeted in the home for young and older vulnerable people to provide advice and undertake cost-effective measures to prevent falls. There several projects to promote sensible alcohol consumption, food futures and tackling childhood obesity. Work is being undertaken with 150 schools to support them in progressing towards health education programmes for pupils.

- 118** The Council is providing community leadership to other public and private sector employers and aims to have a smoke-free Manchester by 2008 when all employers have smoke free work places. The Council has a smoking cessation strategy for its own employees and since 1995 has had a smoke free policy for all council buildings. Smoking cessation services are led by the NHS and the JHU funds a co-ordinator post to raise the profile of the service across the city. Data is collated and shared on a four weekly basis.

## Older people

- 119** The Council and its partners have developed a good strategic approach to older people and ageing. Social care services for adults and older people have been assessed as good by the Commission for Social Care Inspection, meeting the needs of most people and with promising prospects for further improvement. However, partners realised that the 2002-2012 community strategy focused mainly on social care and health, and made little reference to how other services and partners could contribute to promoting independence. A Valuing Older People (VOP) strategy group was set up and in 2004 it consulted on the Developing a Quality of Life strategy. This is wide ranging, and covers many areas that older people say are important to them, including crime and safety, benefits, housing and neighbourhoods, sport, cultural activities and lifelong learning. The strategy is delivered through the VOP board, which includes partner organisations and older people's representatives, the VOP strategy group and a number of task groups responsible for particular themes.
- 120** The Board has successfully delivered the 2005/06 action plan, which focused on awareness raising through events and publications, and on building infrastructures and networks. In 2006 work has been refocused on achieving outcomes. VOP has created a community of interest in which the promotion of the older people's agenda is seen as legitimate, worthwhile and important, both in Council departments and across partners. Issues to do with age are increasingly mainstreamed within the Council's actions, and there are positive examples of departments responding to the needs of older people. A wide range of partners contribute to delivery of initiatives, including the police, health, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), DWP and many voluntary and community organisations.
- 121** Political support is strong. The older people's champion is active and knowledgeable, and is supported by the executive member for health and social care in ensuring her work has prominence. The health representative on the LSP board is also a core VOP group member. There is no thematic group for older people, but discussion has taken place in each of the thematic partnerships and the equality update will be used to ensure accountability back to the LSP. The Council and its partners have begun to incorporate VOP within strategic plans. The Economic and Local Employment Partnership Action Plan makes suitable reference to VOP themes, but action plans are currently underdeveloped.
- 122** There is good engagement with older people at a range of levels, and this has clearly influenced the priorities for action. Older people's representatives are involved in matters that affect them, and feel increasingly sought after.

Consultation has improved significantly, and there is far more involvement of older people in making decisions. This has led to older people feeling they have more credibility, and that the Council has become more responsive. Older people are increasingly participating in the design and evaluation of services. BME elders were involved throughout the process of tendering for BME-specific home care services, and will be involved in monitoring the contract. Others have been trained to interview potential strategic partners, and future training is planned to enable older people to act as evaluators for funded schemes. There are further examples of representation in regeneration projects and community safety initiatives. Older people are very keen to increase their contribution to planning and service design, and are encouraged by progress to date. However, current arrangements for engaging more vulnerable older people, including those suffering social isolation and those in residential homes, are less robust.

- 123 Information for older people is increasingly provided in accessible formats. In particular, the 'Guide to Life in Manchester' contains a range of information on around 120 services provided by both the statutory and voluntary sectors. It promotes a wide range of opportunities and advice including staying safe, healthy ageing, money and work, lifelong learning and advocacy, and provides some information directly targeted at communities of interest, including BME older people.
- 124 The promotion of VOP as a regeneration issue rather than just being about old age has raised awareness and given older people's issues a higher profile throughout the Council. Work has been undertaken to promote positive images of ageing, and there have been a range of intergenerational projects that form part of the wider social inclusion agenda.
- 125 There is an established range of projects that help to promote independence. For example, the Council identified the potential to train people aged over 55 who were long term unemployed and claiming incapacity benefit as tutors for construction training. It successfully employed 25 people to deliver this training. There has also been good progress in increasing the take up rates of direct payments.
- 126 Through grant aid, the Council enhances the capacity of the voluntary and community sector to provide a range of coherent services that promote quality of life, independent living and well being. For example, the Longsight and Moss Side Community project works with South Asian older people, their carers, and women with mental health needs. Following a successful bid for POPPS funding (Partnership for Older People's Projects), there will be additional grants for projects to support and care for older people in the community
- 127 Services provided by the Council and its partners are generally positively received and valued by older people. There are three areas that can be further improved – housing, transport and lifelong learning. In housing, there is a good strategy for older people, but some of it remains aspirational due to the poor quality of the area's social housing stock. This is partially being addressed with partners through work on decent homes and housing market renewal, but there is currently limited choice for older people wanting homes in extra care or retirement villages.

Manchester's success in reversing population decline, coupled with initiatives to strip out low demand homes is now creating affordability issues for those wanting to downsize.

- 128** There is a very comprehensive concessionary transport scheme for older people, but routes are generally into and out of the city centre, rather than across. There has been some progress on flexible transport, most notably within the Wythenshawe area, to enable people to get to health care facilities and employment at Manchester airport. The Council is working with the passenger transport authority to increase the amount of cross-city transport available on less commercially attractive routes. Ring and ride schemes had variable feedback about flexibility and coverage.
- 129** Changes to funding regimes have led to a reduction in the provision of leisure based adult education programmes. There is recognition that available funding will be targeted to training and retraining older workers for employment. However, this means the withdrawal of financial support for leisure courses, leading to charges beyond the means of some older people. Leisure courses are seen as key contributor to mental health, well-being and getting people out and about. This was recognised as an issue by the Council but has not yet been resolved.

## Children and young people

- 130** The degree of ambition shown by the council and its partners for children and young people is good. All partners are committed fully to jointly agreed aims for young people, although a few relationships are still developing. The Council's track record of improvement is mixed. There is a very clear awareness of what still needs to be done but the pace of change, though increased significantly in recent months, has been slow. There are adequate arrangements for managing performance. There are good examples of the council working with voluntary and community organisations to increase opportunities for young people but there is no integrated strategy for commissioning children's services. Value for money varies between services.
- 131** Overall, children and young people are generally less healthy than nationally. The council is helping to reduce variations in health outcomes across the city through Sure Start programmes and children's centres. The Healthy Schools initiative is a good example of schools and health services working together. There are good arrangements between the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and the youth offending team to provide young offenders with support, but often the young people do not take up this support.
- 132** The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate. Children and young people appear safe generally. A higher than average proportion of children and young people surveyed said they feel safe in and out of school. Agencies concerned with children and their safety work well together but their effectiveness is inconsistent across the city. The number of looked after children is exceptionally high.

- 133 Council services provide adequate support to help children and young people enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve. Standards of attainment are too low at most stages of children's and young people's education, despite the priority given to it by the Council and its partners. The Council has a good understanding of the weaknesses in the performance of individual schools and specific groups of children and young people. Schools' performance is affected significantly by the very high number of pupils who move between schools during the year. Admissions to schools are managed adequately. The management of secondary school places is good but there are too many surplus primary school places. Attendance at school is improving but remains well below the national average. Support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is adequate. Support for the education of looked after children is inadequate.
- 134 The work of council services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate. A good range of planned opportunities for them to contribute to their community is available. There is a satisfactory range of mechanisms to identify children and young people at risk of offending. Fewer young people are now reoffending. Children and young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have been consulted on a range of issues by different services but the impact of this has yet to be seen and the Council's engagement strategy is not yet implemented fully.
- 135 Children and young people are provided with adequate support to achieve economic well-being. Children's centres provide convenient access for most parents and carers to a range of integrated services, such as family support, financial and employment information, especially in more deprived areas. A well managed strategy for early years' provision and childcare has ensured there are sufficient places for three and four-year-olds across the city, particularly in those areas with the greatest disadvantage. The planning and coordination of 14-19 education and training have improved recently through closer collaboration between the Council, the local Learning and Skills Council, colleges and schools. However, relatively few pupils benefit from the increased range of programmes provided through links between schools and colleges. The numbers of young people in education and training after age 16, the success rates for 16-18 year olds, and entering higher education have improved, although the level of improvement varies across the city.

## 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 Councils self assessment provided a key resource in focusing the assessment activity which included consideration of:
  - key documentation, including the Councils improvement plan;
  - updated performance indicators and performance data; and
  - interviews and meetings attended.
- 3 The assessment for Manchester City Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 2-12 May 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.