

Corporate Assessment Report

October 2006



# Corporate Assessment

**Brighton and Hove City Council**

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## Introduction

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

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

- Ambition
- Prioritisation

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

- Capacity
- Performance management

What has been achieved?

- Achievement

Considered against the shared priorities of:

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

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

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

## Executive summary

- 5 Brighton and Hove City Council is performing well. It is very ambitious and has a clear vision of what it wants to achieve to improve the area and address the problems it considers the city faces. It has articulated these through four broad ambitions, supported by a series of strategic goals. The Council's ambitions have been developed in association with its partners and have been informed by extensive consultation with the community. They are also clearly communicated in the Council's strategic documents and publicity and are understood by staff, councillors and partners.
- 6 In taking action to achieve its ambitions there are examples where the Council has provided clear community leadership on difficult issues. When the Council needed to increase its recycling rates and improve waste collection efficiency and effectiveness it took the decision to containerise domestic waste through the provision of wheeled and communal bins. The Council continued to implement this decision in the face of concerted protests from parts of the community and as a result has improved the street scene, waste collection costs and recycling rates. However, there are also significant examples of where the Council has been led by pressure groups within the community to the detriment of the overall ambitions of the Council, for example the park and ride scheme.
- 7 In recognition that the Council needs to be clear about how it will achieve its ambitions it has a successful approach to developing priorities and has prepared a number of good quality strategic documents clearly setting them out. They are informed by local needs assessments, close partnership working and an understanding of the national context, although the Council recognises that it needs to develop greater engagement with minority communities in developing these priorities.
- 8 The Council has operated within tight budgetary constraints over the last two years yet has delivered a number of significant infrastructure projects and services to the community. Its capacity to deliver has been improved by an effective project support system which ensures that appropriate capacity, in the form of dedicated staff, is allocated to major projects, particularly infrastructure ones. However the Council does have weaknesses in its capacity to deliver all of its ambitions as it has not fully addressed the challenges presented by implementing effective scrutiny and the management of its human resources.
- 9 Strong managerial leadership has contributed to the Council's ability to deliver on major projects. It has been successful in delivering a major private finance initiative (PFI) scheme to build a nationally renowned 'Jubilee Library' and is making good progress on being the first authority in the country to set up a Children's Trust with fully integrated health and Council staff. However while unified political leadership has been given, for example over recycling it is not consistent. Significant Council initiatives, such as the housing stock transfer, have highlighted major differences within and between the political groups leading to different groups of councillors promoting the adoption of different stock options giving a potentially inconsistent community image.

- 10 The Council has put in place an adequate performance management framework and many good features are being developed. However, the overall impact of performance management is limited because it is not fully embedded across all departments. In addition, while the Council's approach to value for money is adequate and developing, it cannot demonstrate a systematic approach across all services or its work with partners. There is no process to determine the cost effectiveness of the Council's services, little benchmarking, nor a process to inform councillors or officers fully on the cost implications of alternative service provision.
- 11 Irrespective of the limitations presented by its capacity, the Council can show through its own activity and its work with partners that it is contributing to real improvements in local quality of life. Its achievements are making a positive impact on employment and overall economic development. The Council is working to reflect the needs of the diverse community it serves and is taking action to ensure that 'quality of life' improvements are enjoyed by disadvantaged communities. The East Brighton For You' (eb4u) partnership is delivering successful economic, social and environmental programmes in east Brighton and mainstream programmes, such as in health and transport are also targeted at deprived areas.
- 12 The Council is developing a more sustainable city through new regeneration proposals, sustainable transport alternatives such as the promotion of bus and cycle usage and improved waste management. Investment in the highway network is also reducing serious accidents. However, its own housing is deteriorating and increasing numbers are failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard.
- 13 The Council is making an impact on the health of residents of the city through implementing the City Health Development Plan as part of the Healthy City Partnership. It is improving intermediate care services for over 65s and achieving targets for smoking reduction, obesity and teenage pregnancy. Good engagement and effective joint working between health, housing, social services and the voluntary sector is also improving services for older people. As a result, life expectancy is improving, particularly in disadvantaged areas.
- 14 The Council with its partners is providing a good overall service to Children and Young People. It is developing joint commissioning to allocate resources to areas of highest need and priority and has developed an adequate youth offending team. Most children are healthy and those at most risk are well protected. The Council is also providing good opportunities for children and young people to enjoy and achieve.

## Areas for improvement

- 15 Brighton and Hove City Council needs to develop its performance management, building on the new systems and processes it has started to implement. Key to this is to ensure that all directorates fully implement the Council's corporate approach to performance management. Improvements are also needed in the performance management arrangements within the partnerships the Council participates in including the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The Council also needs to develop its data collection and information technology to improve speed, accuracy and overall data quality particularly in the developing Children's Trust.
- 16 The Council needs to address the management of its human resources. Training and development needs to be improved across the Council. The personal development system, which records development and training needs, is not used in all directorates with less than 50 per cent of assessments completed last year. In turn this limits the completion rate of the Council's team development plans. Councillor development needs are not presently assessed and coupled with an underdeveloped human resources function, workforce development is weak. Harassment and bullying is also an issue. There are examples at all levels within the Council and the results of the most recent staff survey (2005) indicate that just over 21 per cent of staff have experienced some sort of harassment and of those who replied to the survey 74 per cent stated the source of the witnessed or experienced harassment was another colleague. Eighty-five per cent of staff indicated that they had not received training in harassment and bullying awareness. In the year 2005/06, in addition to grievance procedures, the Council has received 34 formal complaints about bullying of which only nine had been shown to be unfounded.
- 17 The Council's knowledge of and response to minority communities, particularly black and minority ethnic communities, needs to continue to develop. While the percentage of residents from the BME community in Brighton and Hove is below the national average the Council has not developed a comprehensive consultation process which can identify their needs. The Council can't clearly show that its priorities reflect the needs of BME communities or services address their concerns.
- 18 The Council needs to improve its landlord services and should not wait for the results of its tenant's ballot on stock transfer. Although the Council owned housing stock is energy efficient, it contains a high proportion of properties that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard. Performance is within the worst 25 per cent of council's nationally. In addition, the latest audited figures (2004/05) show that management costs are above average, re-let times are slow and the proportion of repairs carried out within government time limits are below average. The Council has not completed an assessment of which parts of its stock can be made 'decent' at reasonable cost and at the time of this assessment, has not resolved the issue of GAP funding required to allow a transfer ballot.

## Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	3
	Prioritisation	3
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	2
	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

- 19 Brighton and Hove City Council is located with the English Channel to the South and the South Downs to the North. It has a resident population of approximately 251,000 (mid-year population estimates 2004) and 66 per cent of these are working age (just over 165,000). The city has a low proportion of pre-working age and a very high proportion of young working age residents. There is a well educated resident workforce - nearly 29 per cent of adult residents hold a degree or equivalent qualification. This is supplemented by a student population of approximately 32,000 with a growing percentage staying all year round. As a result the city has a high 20-29 age group (17 per cent of residents compared to 12.6 per cent in England and Wales).
- 20 Of the resident population, 5.8 per cent is from a non-white ethnic minority background. This is lower than the national average, but higher than the average for the South East region. However, amongst 0-19 year olds over 8.8 per cent are from a black or minority ethnic (BME) origin. There is no single large BME group in Brighton and Hove with people of Indian descent being the largest group accounting for 0.8 per cent of residents. However there are five wards with over 7 per cent of their population of BME origin. Most of these are not amongst the most deprived wards in the city. Both white non-British and BME residents are much more likely to be in the younger age groups than white British residents.
- 21 The large lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender (LGBT) communities in the city are believed to be amongst the highest proportion of total population in the country. In the Council's recent 'City Views' survey of residents 14.6 per cent of respondents identified themselves as LGBT. Of those who declared a religious affiliation in the 2001 Census, the largest number were Christian (59.1 per cent). The other faith groups stated were Islam (1.5 per cent), Jewish (1.3 per cent) Buddhist (0.7 per cent), Hindu (0.5 per cent), and Sikh (0.1 per cent).
- 22 Good transport links to London, a healthy local economy and a perceived high 'quality of life' factor for those living in the city has led to high demand for housing and high property costs. The city contains internationally renowned Regency terraces and the Royal Pavilion, as well as a number of attractive open spaces, the seafront and the South Downs. Brighton and Hove's economy is supported by around 8.02 million visitors per annum (2004) of which 6.5 million are day visitors (but account for 59 per cent of all visitor revenue) wanting to experience the city's mix of urban, coastal, rural, cultural and leisure opportunities (the city has 1.4 million square feet of retail space). The tourism sector supports over 6,000 Full-Time Equivalent jobs. Every May the city hosts the largest arts festival in England and in August attracts thousands to its 'Pride festival'.

- 23 Measured against key economic indicators such as unemployment rate and the number of VAT registered businesses in the city, the local economy has improved since the mid 1990s. Economic momentum has increased with the growth of new media and financial service sectors and expanding leisure, tourism and creative and cultural industries. There is currently a £2 billion programme of physical regeneration projects planned for the city, some recently completed such as the Jubilee library and others which are at early planning stages such as the King Alfred leisure development and the rebuilding of the Brighton Conference Centre.
- 24 The city includes some areas where social and economic deprivation is high. Within the South East, BHCC ranks the second 'most deprived' in terms of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 overall score. The area has 3.6 per cent of the region's residents, but 5.7 per cent of the region's income deprived residents. Unemployment remains above national and regional rates and average earnings for employees in the city are below the national mean with a reliance on low skilled and service sector employment. The areas of highest economic deprivation and lowest educational attainment are in areas with a high proportion of Council housing. The Council housing stock is deteriorating and increasing numbers of dwellings are failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard.
- 25 There are more than 40,000 adult residents who do not hold any qualification. Educational attainment at 16 is slightly below the national average. The number of young people in Brighton and Hove who are 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) is about 10 per cent which is well above the regional average and is particularly high in the east Brighton area of the city.
- 26 Overall people in Brighton and Hove have poorer health than in other parts of the South East and there are pockets of serious health deprivation, particularly in East Brighton. Relatively high numbers experience mental health problems and the suicide rate is above the national average. The Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) reported in 2005 that there were approximately 2,300 injecting users in the city, a higher rate than parts of inner London and the incidence of drug related deaths is amongst the highest in the country. HIV infection is a key health issue and overall teenage conception rates are not falling at the same rate as national rates.

## The Council

- 27 The Council was created in 1997 and in October 2001, the Council put the possibility of having an elected mayor to a local referendum. This was rejected and the 'fallback' position of an 'improved committee system' was adopted. This came into force on 16 May 2002 and means that the Council has a unique democratic structure for a unitary authority in that it is run on an Executive Committee system. It is currently led by a Labour administration, with 'no overall control' (NOC). There are 54 Councillors made up of: 23 Labour, 20 Conservatives, 6 Greens, 3 Liberal Democrats and 2 Independents. In February 2006 a new Leader of the Council was appointed and in May 2007 there are whole Council elections.

- 28** The Council has six main executive committees and an Overview and Scrutiny Organisation Committee (OSOC) which supports the work of the executive committees and the Council as a whole. The Committee has been given the power to set up panels to look at specific issues and to monitor the decisions of the executive committees. The OSOC has two standing Panels or sub-committees – the Education Overview and Scrutiny Panel and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel. An audit panel has recently been set up to help OSOC oversee the financial and performance management arrangements of the Council.
- 29** Officer management is provided by the chief executive and six directors who form The Management Team (TMT) which meets weekly to consider corporate agendas and how best to lead them.
- 30** The Council has 7,400 FTE posts (3,200 schools based) and nearer to 15,000 actual employees. The gross wages bill is around £190 million (£87.5 million is for schools). The Council is at the formula grant floor and has received minimum floor grant increases since 2003/04. The Council will receive £97 million formula grant in 2006/07 but the level of the floor support, £13 million, is such that the Council is likely to remain at the grant floor.
- 31** The 2006/07 gross budget of the Council is £636 million with a net General Fund Revenue budget of £200 million, an increase of 4.3 per cent over the adjusted base for 2005/06. The capital investment programme is planned to be £123 million over the next three years. The Council tax for 2006/07 has been set at £1,278 for a band D property which is above the national average and represents a rise of 4.9 per cent. This follows rises of 14.5 per cent in 2003/04, 7.7 per cent in 2004/05 and 4.8 per cent in 2005/06.

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

### Ambition

- 32 The Council is performing well in this area, consistently above minimum requirements. The Council is very ambitious and combines this with a clear vision of what it wants to do to improve the area and address the problems it considers the city faces. It has articulated these through four broad ambitions, supported by strategic goals, which are referenced in corporate documents, informed by consultation and understood by staff, councillors and partners. However the Council's ambitions have been developed without clear reference to minority groups such as the Black and Minority Ethnic community (BME).
- 33 The Council has identified a set of four challenging high level ambitions each of which are supported by strategic goals (priorities) which, together, set out what the Council intends to do. The Council's ambitions as set out in the corporate plan update (2006/07), which refreshes the 2004-2007 corporate plan in its final year, are:
- develop a prosperous and sustainable economy;
  - develop a safe city that values our unique environment;
  - develop a healthy city that cares for vulnerable people and tackles deprivation and injustice; and
  - ensure all our children and young people have the best possible start in life.

The Council has clearly set out what it is trying to achieve. The Council's ambitions are very wide ranging and initially can be viewed as aspirational. However, when read in association with the Council's strategic goals which underpin these four statements and define the actions the Council wants to deliver on in the next year, they form a robust yet challenging statement.

- 34 Ambitions are built on a good and shared understanding of the challenges the Council and the local area faces. There are examples where effective consultation takes place with local people and this forms the basis for identifying local needs (such as customer feedback forms in Health and Social Care and the use of the Council's citizens' panel which is shared by partners). Consultation and other demographic information is also shared amongst partners in the city using a good quality online database, [www.CityStats.gov.uk](http://www.CityStats.gov.uk) which is used to inform ambitions. This shows that the Council uses its own and partners' knowledge to help determine its strategic goals and underpin its ambitions.

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- 35** The Council has not been effective at engaging all elements of the community in developing its ambitions. While the Council has made progress with consultation, it does not collect information across all service areas and does not at the moment effectively target BME or more vulnerable groups in the community to ensure that their views are taken into account in forming the Council's ambitions and goals. While it is recognised that these groups are dispersed across the City and are not necessarily associated with areas of deprivation the Council has committed to improve engagement and has learned from the previous problems it has had. It has a long standing equality forum and it is requiring all services to complete impact assessments on all their strategies and policies. Key community leaders are now engaged. However, overall this means the Council cannot be explicitly sure that its current strategic goals will address the needs of all sections of the community.
- 36** The Management Team (TMT), staff at all levels within the Council and elected councillors have a good level of awareness and understanding of the Council's ambitions and strategic goals. Internal communication of the ambitions is good and there is widespread knowledge, not only of the ambitions and goals, but also of the challenges facing the Council (eg the poor Council housing stock) and in most cases the rationale for the adoption of specific goals. This means that most people within the Council have an awareness of what it is trying to achieve.
- 37** The Council's ambitions are understood by partners. The Council is working with key partners through the 2020 Community Partnership (LSP) and has developed a 'Sustainable Community Strategy' which while aligned with the Council's ambitions is designed to help deliver both the Council's and partners' ambitions. The Council is also actively engaged in economic development partnership working for example in the Brighton and Hove Regeneration Partnership (£130 million funding for over 150 projects) and eb4u (£47 million neighbourhood renewal money) all of which evidence a shared understanding of the needs and challenges of the area. Ensuring that partners understand and share the principals behind its ambitions means that the Council can maximise the effectiveness of joint working.
- 38** The Council has been effective at providing community leadership and its work in facilitating partnership working is a strength. The Council has supported an effective Local Strategic Partnership which is supplemented by a Public Service Board (PSB) that is leading the Local Area Agreement (LAA) development and implementation. The Council has ensured that these partnerships focus on community issues which will contribute to the achievement of the Council's ambitions while also addressing national priorities. This means that both the Council and its partners are working to achieve complementary ambitions.

## Prioritisation

- 39 The Council is performing well in this area, consistently above minimum requirements. The Council has a strong approach to the development of its priorities and is working within a framework of strategic plans which are informed by local needs assessment, close partnership working and an understanding of the national context. The Council has made a number of difficult decisions linked to its priorities and followed these through for the benefit of the community. However, it is still needs to improve the links between resources and its priorities.
- 40 The Council has a good approach to assessing the overall needs of the local community. It undertakes this work at both strategic and operational level; and has a good understanding of the issues that matter most to local people. It uses this knowledge well to inform its priorities and programmes. It used its citizens' panel and City Views, to shape LAA priorities and is exploring ways to improve consultation and communication. It also engages effectively when developing other strategies and plans, for example the Local Development Framework (LDF). This engagement is underpinned by high quality research, such as the economic baseline assessment carried out to support the Area Investment Framework and Economic Strategy. Research and needs assessment is also a strong feature of the Children's and Young Peoples Plan. In the last year, the Council has carried out eight other significant consultations on service issues such as satisfaction with the Council's landlord services, implementation of parking schemes and schools admissions processes. This work enables the Council to inform its priorities and refine service delivery.
- 41 The Council has good plans and strategies in place to deliver priorities. The new Community Strategy and Best Value Performance Plan set out the outcomes that the Council intends improve. The programme is developed and presented through a set of robust strategies. For example, the Children and Young People's plan provides a high quality response to the national agenda established in 'Every Child matters' and the Local Transport Plan is assessed by Government Office of the South East (GOSE) as 'promising'. However, the Council's plans for achieving the decent homes standards in its own stock are an exception and those presented at the time of the inspection are not currently viable. Most plans and strategies establish desired outcomes and responsibilities across the partnership are clearly assigned. Within the Council, Team Plans, although not completed throughout the Council, assign responsibility to teams and individual members of staff and targets are set in the BVPP, in some team plans and individual strategies. This helps the Council to ensure that its intentions are clear and its programme is deliverable.

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- 42** The Council's work with the LSP, to ensure that its priorities are understood and reflected in the wider community agenda, is highly effective. The new Sustainable Community Strategy includes a much stronger focus on sustainable development as a result of Council leadership on this issue. The Corporate Plan and Community Strategy are complementary and link to priorities shared across the partnership, for example economic development and tourism. Consultation resources such as the citizens' panel are made available to the wider community partnership and this is helping to inform the LSP's work.
- 43** The Council's priorities and programmes strongly reflect both national policy and local issues. They address the national shared priorities agreed between the LGA and the Government. For example, the Council has a strong focus on recycling, sustainable development and raising educational attainment. They also reflect the particular characteristics of Brighton and Hove communities and the big issues facing the locality. The priority to develop a sustainable economy that can deliver improved opportunities to disadvantaged local communities, the need to tackle crime, disorder and community cohesion issues (particularly in east Brighton) show that the Council is aiming to address local and national issues.
- 44** The Council is working proactively to develop its approach to engagement with those groups which are harder to reach. The Statement of Community Engagement on the LDF identifies 11 marginalised groups and the Council has eight community champions who are leading on engaging with them. The Council has set up a number of neighbourhood groups in deprived areas which are improving its ability to engage with local communities and develop neighbourhood plans to meet local needs. It engages with Brighton's LGBT community, for example on housing, community safety and cultural issues. But work with other minority groups, such as BME communities, is inconsistent. For example, although some good work is being undertaken by Children and Young People's services, the Council as a whole has not yet completed an assessment of BME needs in housing in preparation for its proposed BME housing strategy and is not fully addressing BME needs in its work with older people. This means that, although the Council has a good understanding of the diversity within its communities, their specific needs are not always fully recognised.

- 45 The Council's budget setting process could be improved to show a clearer link to its priorities. There are examples of money being proactively moved to support its priorities, such as in waste management and the Council has set up an annual £1 million fund to support priority growth items. However, most key decisions on the ranking of savings and growth items are initiated within departments. Moreover, although final recommendations to councillors are made by TMT these are largely driven by budget pressures rather than a strategic approach to reallocating resources to priorities. For example, additional resources have been allocated to meet ambitions in relation to children and young people but it is not clear if this is purely in response to financial pressures within the service rather than proactive strategic prioritisation. Expenditure in children's social care is planned to grow at twice the rate of environment expenditure and yet the Council has not declared this to be a higher priority. The councillor Budget Review Group is briefed on budget constraints and spending plans but it is not actively involved in prioritising resources. This means the budgetary process leads to movement of resources between services but the balance is primarily a bottom up reactive rather than a top down strategic approach.

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

### Capacity

- 46 The Council is performing adequately in this area. The Council has developed an effective project support system which ensures that appropriate capacity is allocated to major projects, particularly infrastructure ones and this is linked to a developed risk assessment approach. However, the Council is not consistently developing staff or councillors, has not addressed the challenges presented by implementing effective scrutiny and a significant level of harassment and bullying has been reported. Work on achieving value for money is only adequate and delays in the implementation of information technology projects have delayed some service improvements.
- 47 The Council ensures that service delivery is underpinned by clear accountability and decision-making with well defined roles for councillors and officers. It regularly reviews its constitution to ensure it is fit for purpose and work is undertaken in an atmosphere of mutual respect between councillors and officers. Ethical standards are good and there have been no serious breaches of the code to date.
- 48 The Council has taken action to ensure that it has the appropriate capacity to deliver its major infrastructure and regeneration projects which are key to delivering the Council's ambition for the City. The Council has set up Project Boards established by the Policy and Resources Committee on an apolitical basis with cross party representation and clear terms of reference. This facilitates councillor involvement in major projects. The delivery of the projects by services is effectively supported by a skilled senior corporate team which leads work on complex development schemes such as the Brighton Conference Centre redevelopment and private finance initiatives such as the Jubilee Library. Similarly major change projects are well managed by skilled teams using the Prince 2 methodology; led by corporate project managers and supported by specialist and front line officers. This enables the Council to ensure that the ambitious programme for regeneration and change is delivered.

- 49 The Council has implemented a risk management framework but it needs developing. The TMT regularly reviews strategic risks, particularly those which relate to major infrastructure projects and external challenge while departmental management teams review mostly operational risks. But whilst this overall approach to managing risks is good, councillors are not fully involved and action planning tends to focus on a small group of staff who are responsible for wide areas of work. In addition a number of major change project risks such as the formation of the Children's Trust and the weaknesses in the Council's human resources are not prioritised in the corporate risk register. This means that while the Council has an adequate risk management framework it does not use it to fully address all of the risks it is facing.
- 50 The Council makes good use of working in partnership which results in improved capacity to deliver services. Partners are committed to these arrangements and recognise the benefits, but sometimes feel the interface with the Council's Committee system and decision-making process presents challenges to effective working. An effective operational working relationship with the Police is delivering reductions in crime and disorder, while a partnership with the local bus company has resulted in real gains to the community. The Council has demonstrated its commitment through investment in real time information at bus stops and subsidy for non-commercial routes to areas with high levels of deprivation. Partnership work with the voluntary sector is the subject of a clear and concise Compact with a commitment to three-year funding regimes where possible. The Council is significantly increasing its capacity through partnership working.
- 51 The approach to Scrutiny is not effective. There are few examples of cross cutting reviews and robust challenge to performance that add value to the work of the Council. Scrutiny involvement with performance management is also limited and not providing significant challenge. The Councils' executive committee system, while demonstrating a number of strengths is viewed internally as negating the scrutiny role as councillors and officers believe sufficient challenge is given by executive committees. Therefore scrutiny committees limit themselves to periodic review of departments, informed by some performance management information as opposed to a programme reflecting the major challenges facing the Council. Not all lead councillors are actively engaged with scrutiny and risk assessment processes. There is a general perception that scrutiny 'is new here', with ineffective scrutiny contributing to a lack of challenge of Council performance.
- 52 The Council is failing to address councillors' development needs. Apart from initial induction and specialist training to assist councillors in specific areas, such as planning and financial management for senior councillors, there has been no systematic approach to providing support for councillor development. The Council is unaware of the overall skills or development needs of its councillors. This is particularly important given the challenges presented by the adoption of scrutiny and audit committees in a political structure which doesn't lend itself to them and the increasingly demanding decision-making environment due to the challenging ambitions of the Council.

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- 53** The Executive Committee system ensures that decisions are open and transparent, but the arrangements also tend to be cumbersome and time consuming, with a number of reports merely being noted by Committees. The system also requires a lot of time being spent by councillors and officers in briefings with some issues needing to be presented more than once to secure a decision in accordance with the Council's priorities. In addition, votes are taken on issues which are presented for information only. Arrangements for meetings are not always conducive to public engagement with limited access to the meeting venue for controversial planning decisions. This does not accord with best practice of modern local government.
- 54** The Council has been able to build a political consensus to take difficult decisions on a number of occasions. However political differences and a hung Council has made this more difficult and it is becoming increasingly so in the run up to whole Council elections in 2007. The Council has carried through unpopular school closures and mergers and implemented new refuse collection arrangements in the face of strong local opposition, which are now well regarded. It has also overcome objections to the regeneration of the railway station area in Brighton and granted planning permission for the recycling facility at Hollingdean. In contrast, it has been reluctant to face local objections and adopt sustainability measures such as reduced car parking and a park and ride scheme and has refused planning permission for key schemes in its own programme. This means the Council is not always able to maintain focus on delivering difficult decisions linked to its priorities.
- 55** The Human Resources function does not effectively support improved capacity and is not adequately developed. While there are examples of the Council making progress with its HR function, for example the staff survey and the work being undertaken within the children's trust, there is no overall picture of development or workforce needs. The Council has not completed any workforce planning exercises (the workforce and pay strategy is a future plan), training needs are not comprehensively recorded and the skills needs of staff are not linked to priorities or service plans. Most directorates still act on their own with regard to training and workforce planning. The Council is not in a position to know if it has an appropriate workforce with the appropriate skills.

- 56** Harassment and bullying is an issue within the Council. The latest statistics produced by HR (2005/06) show it is a problem with 34 formal cases and a further ten informal ones reported. Of these only nine have been found to be without grounds following investigation leading to a number of dismissals and resignations. In addition, staff at all levels within the organisation acknowledged during the inspection that there is an issue and the staff surveys have also highlighted its prevalence. In the 2005 staff survey over 21 per cent of staff stated that they had experienced harassment. This is a similar percentage to that which had been reported in the 2003 staff survey and is therefore not a direct response to recent changes in the Council's management of individual performance. When asked to identify the source of any witnessed or experienced harassment in the 2005 survey, 74 per cent of those who responded stated it was another Council employee. The Council is in the process of improving management training and has re-launched its harassment policy, however, neither have had an impact yet. This situation means that the Council's management capacity and performance management systems are compromised by examples of inappropriate behaviour.
- 57** The Council has developed an effective approach to procurement. It has made significant efficiency gains, through its Gershon programme, exceeding its targets to assist it balance its budget through improved purchasing arrangements such as stationery and the use of agency staff. Having made many of the more straightforward gains from improved practice, the Council is now developing its approach to framework contracts and more effective procurement in partnership with others. It has also started work with the voluntary sector to enhance its capacity to deliver local services. This means that procurement processes are improving the Council's capacity.
- 58** Work on value for money is developing but has to date been largely restricted to services the Council has designated as containing 'corporate critical budgets'. The cost drivers in respect of these have been analysed and the approach to service delivery reviewed by senior councillors and officers working together. This has led to these budgets being largely stabilised, for example in relation to external fostering placements for looked after children. However, this approach is not embedded across the Council and further work is needed to examine the relationship between cost and performance and exploit the potential to reduce costs or secure greater outputs from services for the same cost.

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

- 59** The Council has made mixed progress on implementing e-government. While there have been substantial investments in ICT it failed to meet all the Priority Outcomes within its own control, including the development of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) programme, within the time scale established by government. It did not prioritise CRM at an early stage but has now invested in a system for environment services which will go live in July 2006. The potential to join up services from a customer perspective has been delayed as a result. Similarly key ICT projects to support front line care services and the development of the Children's Trust are subject to delay due to capacity challenges. A major review of ICT priorities for each department is currently taking place to match workload to resources and develop a clear strategy for implementation. Delay in meeting the needs of front line care services is affecting the pace of change in these services.

## **Performance management**

- 60** The Council is performing adequately in this area. The Council has put in place an adequate performance management framework and many good features are being developed. However, the overall impact of performance management is limited because it is not fully embedded across all departments, the involvement of Councillors is inconsistent and there are weaknesses in the quality of data.
- 61** Performance management systems have not been fully embedded across the Council. It has successfully invested in and introduced a high level performance management reporting system based on a commercially available data presentation software system. This is operated centrally by the performance team which collects and collates performance information from across the Council. Data are collected from services which all run their own performance management systems and these are of varying quality from acknowledged strengths such as in older people services to less strong systems such as in cultural services. Information is then entered into the corporate system where it is manipulated and put into a committee or TMT report. While this currently works and a great deal of expertise lies within the performance team, the process has the impact of lessening the degree to which performance management is fully embedded across the Council, increases opportunity for error and is reliant on the quality of departmental systems and the extent of the information they pass on.

- 62 Performance is actively considered at senior level. Every four weeks, the TMT becomes a performance meeting. Reports are received on performance indicators, with service directors reporting and then being challenged on areas of under performance. The work of TMT has led to some significant areas of service improvement, for example in recycling and planning, but overall the approach does not sufficiently focus on areas of underperformance so that poor performance, such as was present with gas certification in the Council's housing stock is allowed to become a significant issue before detection. In addition, not all services have established performance measures by which they can be judged. For example, there are no corporate PIs reported for the key function of economic development. Whilst a rigorous reporting framework exists to inform funding partners the Council has not set any PIs for reporting to TMT or councillors, despite this being a key priority area.
- 63 Service planning is improving. The Council's performance management structure requires teams to produce team plans and directorate plans, using an in house template. These, while not yet completed by all services, have links to corporate priorities, directorate level goals and team action plans. They contain targets which are written in SMART format (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound). Plans are posted on a clear easily accessible database which allows all members of staff to view targets from all services. This system helps the Council maintain a link between service and Council performance.
- 64 The Council needs to improve the effectiveness of some performance systems. Impact assessments have also highlighted that some services do not have detailed information about their service users. For example the quality of data within children's social care is inconsistent. Managers acknowledge that systems do not currently produce accurate data and that its software option presents some difficulties with its use. Plans are in hand to improve the interface that staff have to use to enter data, but its introduction has been delayed to October 2006. Data quality issues are also present in the waste recycling operation of the council. This means the Council cannot measure improvement for all their communities and in some cases has difficulty obtaining external funding or managing external relationships due to inaccuracy of supporting data.
- 65 The Council's approach to the management of human resources is weak and does not support performance. The involvement of individual staff in the performance management framework is inconsistent across departments and not effectively monitored. The HR team collects a significant amount of information about its workforce but has not used this information to drive improvements. It also does not monitor or require information to be produced. For example fewer than 50 per cent of personal development plans were completed in the last year and they do not know how many team development plans have been produced. Staff members are also unsure as to the link between team plans and actual individual performance or targets. This means that members of staff, while being aware of the Council's ambitions and priorities do not have a clear view about their individual contribution to their achievement.

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

- 66 Not all councillors are clear about their role in monitoring and managing performance. There are differing views at all levels of the Council about performance information and how it should be used together with a general concern that current performance reports do not help councillors assess the Council's overall performance. Councillors feel that most information sharing is between committee chairs and their relevant director on an ad-hoc basis. An audit panel has been created to add rigour to the analysis of performance but it is too early to assess the impact this is having. This means that a number of Councillors feel the corporate performance management system is not helping them to assess the Council's performance.
- 67 The Council makes effective use of complaints from the public to improve performance. Complaints are analysed and reported to senior managers, an example being the Council's response to complaints about the effectiveness of its waste collection contract. While less use is made of internal staff feedback and grievances, the Council is developing its approach. The involvement of service users in service development is also being improved. This means that the Council is taking steps to increase the information it collects to drive improvement.
- 68 The Council is developing how it manages performance across its relationships with partners. The LSP and PSB do not currently have effective performance management arrangements and they do not share, collect or report performance easily. However, there are good examples of sharing data such as the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. Overall partners accept the need for a reporting framework and the LSP are working to develop a system that will ease the flow of information between partners. This work has already shown improvements within the children's trust where arrangements for joint reporting demonstrate some progress.
- 69 The Council's record on learning from others is mixed. A number of services are actively involved in benchmarking themselves against others and learning from these comparisons. In contrast, the Council has been slow to act on recommendations from previous inspections and performance work. There are outstanding actions from the Children's Services Joint Review of 2004, housing inspections and a number of the weaknesses identified in the corporate assessment of 2002 are still present. Learning from other regeneration schemes is not evident in that the eb4u scheme does not have a written exit strategy in place to wind down the organisation, yet this is an area emphasised by GOSE as a key component of successful schemes. This means that the Council is not making the most of learning from external sources to improve services to its residents.

## What has been achieved?

- 70 The Council is performing well in this area, consistently above minimum standards. Its priorities reflect local concerns about quality of life but also national priorities, such as affordable housing, recycling and educational attainment. It has helped build a robust partnership programme, built around the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and supported by partnership strategies. Joint working is advanced, for example in the formation of a children's trust. There is still work to be done to improve the Council's own capacity and to develop performance management, but its achievements have been influenced by both national and local priorities.
- 71 The Council is contributing to real improvements in local quality of life. It is making a positive impact on employment and housing opportunities. It is laying the foundations for a more sustainable city through new development proposals, sustainable transport alternatives and improved waste management. An effective crime and disorder reduction partnership is contributing to a safer City. Good partnership working is reducing anti-social behaviour and reducing opportunistic and drug related crime. Investment in the highway network is reducing serious accidents.
- 72 The Healthy City Partnership is implementing the City Health Development Plan and achieving good outcomes. It is improving intermediate care services for over 65s and achieving targets for smoking reduction, obesity and teenage pregnancy. As a result, life expectancy is improving, particularly in disadvantaged areas.
- 73 Good engagement and effective joint working between health, housing, social services and the voluntary sector is improving services for older people. The Council is improving older people's housing conditions and reducing fuel poverty. Mainstream services, such as refuse collection and leisure and sports are being tailored to meet their needs. This means that more older people are being helped to live independently and enjoy a higher quality of life.
- 74 The Council with its partners are providing a good overall service to children and young people. It is developing joint commissioning to allocate resources to areas of highest need and priority and has developed an adequate youth offending team. Most children are healthy and those at most risk are well protected. The Council is also providing good opportunities for children and young people to enjoy and achieve.
- 75 The Council is working to ensure that quality of life improvements are enjoyed by disadvantaged communities. The eb4u partnership is delivering successful economic, social and environmental programmes in east Brighton and mainstream programmes, such as in health and transport are also targeted at this area. However, while the Council is not always responsive to the needs of minority communities, for example in the delivery of older person's services, and the quality of its housing stock is poor, it is focusing its achievements at the most vulnerable sections of the community.

## Sustainable communities and transport

- 76 The Council is contributing effectively to a sustainable local economy. It leads an active economic and learning partnership which promotes employment growth and training. It works to improve local business infrastructure by bringing major sites forward for employment development. The Council has been successful in securing external funding to tackle local disadvantage since its creation in 1997, securing over £40 million in funding and leveraging in an additional £90 million to fund over 150 projects. Tourism is also promoted to support the economy. Tourist spend is increased through events, such as the 'Pride Festival', marketing and investment in Council owned facilities such as the Dome and Royal Pavilion, as well as major projects such as the Marina. Existing employment opportunities are also supported, for example through designation of parts of central Brighton as a Business Development Area and working with major employers to support employment growth. The Council's activity improves the local economy and opportunities for local people.
- 77 The Council has intervened to help secure a balanced housing market. More new dwellings have been developed per year than structure plan requirement (660 as opposed to 550) and all new units were on previously developed land. It has also facilitated the development of new affordable housing, both through the planning system and through the use of its own resources. Between April 2001 and March 2006, the Council has delivered 1,173 affordable homes, including homes for key workers. Planning policies are used to secure up to 40 per cent of affordable housing in new developments. It has an active programme of intervention with houses in multiple occupation and has brought 376 empty properties back into use between April 2001 and March 2005. Homelessness has also been reduced. This shows that it is using its resources and legal powers to meet an important local need.
- 78 The Council has not made sufficient progress in reaching the Decent Homes Standard for its own stock. Although the Council owned housing stock is energy efficient, it contains a high proportion of properties that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard. BHCC performance against the standard compares with that of the worst 25 per cent of Council's nationally. In addition, management costs are above average, re-let times are slow and the proportion of repairs carried out within government time limits was below average. The Council has failed to identify which parts of its stock can be made 'decent' at reasonable cost and put together a viable proposal for stock transfer to secure the necessary improvements. As a result conditions are not improving and the Government's target of 100 per cent decent homes by 2010 is unlikely to be met.

- 79 The Council is working well to improve its approach to sustainable waste management. It promotes waste reduction and recycling vigorously to the local community and provides wheeled bins and kerbside recycling for a variety of recyclables to 94,000 out of 120,000 properties. Recycling rates are above average and increasing but the Council has not met its Government recycling target of 30 per cent for 2005/06. This is partly because of the difficulty of providing recycling facilities for the large number of flats in the dwelling stock. It is addressing this issue by phased provision of communal bins for recycling and residual waste to 26,000 properties. Performance on street cleaning is still in the bottom 25 per cent of Councils but it is improving. It has reorganised street sweeping arrangements, introduced a street washing programme and has worked with small businesses to improve trade waste arrangements through a trade waste protocol. In this way it is achieving improvements in waste management.
- 80 The planning service is delivering good sustainable outcomes but its performance is slow. The Council has up to date policies to encourage sustainability and is ensuring that new development is generally well designed and offers high sustainability standards. It is improving quality of life through redevelopment and also through environmental improvement schemes, working in partnership with local residents. However, decision-making is slow. The Council was identified as a planning standards authority in 2002 and took steps to improve its efficiency, including additional staffing and refined procedures. It also improved customer access, with facilities to submit, review and comment on applications on-line. Performance improved significantly during 2002/03 and it is no longer a standards authority. However, since 2003, this rate of improvement has not been maintained. The Council is still below average compared to other councils with regard to the speed of its service and does not yet meet government targets for all types of application. This means that the Council is not yet offering a fully effective service for its planning customers.
- 81 The Council has a good quality transport plan which promotes sustainable transport and it is securing good sustainable transport outcomes. It has invested heavily in a quality bus partnership including dedicated bus lanes, higher bus frequencies, real time passenger information and accessibility improvements at key bus stops. At the same time it has strengthened parking controls to restrict private car use, is promoting cycling and has used its planning powers to introduce car clubs. As a result, it has achieved a marked and sustained increase in bus usage – increasing by 17 per cent over the five years since 2000/01 and currently increasing at 5 per cent per annum. This compares with a national target of 1 per cent per annum. Between 2001/02 and 2003/04, city centre car use has fallen by about 12 per cent.

- 82 There are nevertheless weaknesses in the delivery of a sustainable transport system. Although the Council has produced good sustainable transport outcomes, its progress against its local transport plan is assessed as only fair by GOSE. This is partly because of ambitious stretched targets, but also because of failure to deliver aspects of the planned programme. This has resulted in a reduction in government funding in the current year. In particular, planning problems have prevented implementation of a planned park and ride scheme, which was to have formed the basis of a bus based rapid transport system. This is a key piece of infrastructure designed to improve accessibility to employment and services. The loss of the park and ride is likely to mean delays while an alternative scheme is produced and funding secured.

## Safer and stronger communities

- 83 The Council leads an effective Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). The CDRP, following extensive public engagement, has developed a wide ranging strategy to combat current issues of concern to the community. It has an innovative approach to joint working and has co-located the CDRP support team at a prominent town centre location with frontline case workers on site, giving the opportunity to engage in a neutral setting with vulnerable adults - both victims and offenders - who might not otherwise engage with services. Engagement with the community is encouraged by this approach.
- 84 The Council is making a positive contribution to reduction in misuse of drugs by supporting the work of an effective DAAT. Wide ranging initiatives are being undertaken in partnership to control supply and demand within a combined support and enforcement regime. The Health Trust has provided 27 additional treatment places to ensure that people can receive rapid treatment for drug and alcohol related problems at the same time as suppliers are being tackled by the Police. The Council is targeting social care support at users to help prevent re-offending. Supply routes are being disrupted and demand reduced. As a consequence reductions in opportunistic and drug related street crime and burglary are now being reported.
- 85 The Council is undertaking effective steps to minimise the risk of accidents. This includes good quality initiatives to support older people such as the falls initiative in conjunction with the Sussex Ambulance service and safety training for large numbers of primary school children. The programme of safety works undertaken with LTP funding is achieving encouraging results with the number of children killed or seriously injured halved on average in recent years and a less dramatic reduction in overall road accidents of 13 per cent. This shows the Council with its partners is achieving an improvement in accident prevention.
- 86 The Council is well prepared for major civil emergencies. The Council works well with the Police in managing major events such as party political conferences. However it is at an early stage in developing a corporate approach to Business continuity although individual teams for example ICT have clear plans to maintain or recover services in the event of interruption. This means the Council has taken action to improve the way it would respond to a major emergency.

- 87 The Council is trying to address community cohesion issues and create a tolerant community. Progress has been made on engagement with the LGBT community but the Council recognises that following publication of the independent review, in 2005, it needs to improve relationships with the Racial Harassment Forum. The CDRP has held a refugee event to explore refugee issues and it works with a range of faith groups. The Council is preparing neighbourhood plans - for example in Turner Ward, which have a community cohesion focus. These include extensive community engagement to develop local plans and proposals. The Council aims to rebuild trust and confidence by these and other means and initial responses from community leaders are encouraging.

## Healthier communities

- 88 The Council is demonstrating good leadership and a strong commitment to working in partnership on public health issues. It is achieving some short-term improvements in the health of local people, as well as developing a longer term approach to tackling the causes of poor health and health inequality. The success of Brighton and Hove's strategic approach is illustrated through it gaining healthy city status from the World Health Organisation, which recognises its commitment to working with partners and taking a longer term view. Outcomes of this include the creation of the Healthy City Partnership (HCP) and the production of the City Health Development Plan (CHDP).
- 89 The approach to needs analysis is good. The Council and partners are knowledgeable about the area and have produced a comprehensive city health development plan. This contains a full analysis of need and makes good links between improving health and a broad range of other factors, including access to decent housing, transport, air quality, employment and deprivation. Each of these is analysed carefully and clear links are made to other strategies and areas of work across partners such as the CDRP. The plan also makes strong links to the Community Strategy and other important areas of strategic development such as the Local Development Framework. It also recognises very strongly the issues of health inequality in Brighton and Hove and the strategy in place to reduce this.
- 90 Strategies are beginning to have an impact. The Food Partnership's Spade to Spoon Strategy has a number of initiatives that are making a difference. These include: work with schools seeking healthy schools accreditation and the development of healthier breakfast clubs, tuck shops, vending machines, lunchboxes and improved dining room environment; increased take up of allotments by minority ethnic groups; and food awareness training. The Council is committed to reducing the impact of drug and alcohol misuse in the city. The National Drug strategy is being delivered through four strategy implementation groups for young people, communities, treatment and reducing/disrupting supply of illegal drugs. Drug related disorder has fallen and the number of people receiving drug misuse treatment is well above the national average.

- 91 In practice there is a great deal of activity by the Council and its partners to improve health outcomes, with some success. Examples of improvement to the broad range of health issue for local people include the fall in rates of teenage conceptions among under 16 year olds; smoking among pregnant women is declining; and life expectancy is improving - male life expectancy in 1997 was 73.9 years, which improved to 75.1 years in 2002 and for women it was 80.1 years in 1997, which increased to 80.9 years in 2002. Work to reduce fuel poverty has had an impact through the introduction of energy efficiency grants targeted at those most in need. Work is underway to establish baselines against which future health improvements for children and young people can be measured, for example in relation to body mass index data, which shows a reduction in obesity rates for under 11 year olds.
- 92 There have been significant improvements with regard to mortality rates from circulatory diseases, as well as cancer mortality. The number of people who reported that they smoked daily has reduced from 27 per cent in 1992 to 20 per cent in 2003, which is below the national average. Targeted work has also been successful in reducing the prevalence of smoking among manual groups. Improvements in intermediate care services have led to a reduction in the number of emergency bed days for the over 65s. The work of eb4u has clearly had a positive impact on the health and lifestyles of the communities it serves within east Brighton. Smoking rates, although still high, have fallen substantially in the last two years and concern about drug misuse has also fallen.
- 93 Notwithstanding the successful initiatives to date, there are areas where improvements are not happening. Smoking in some deprived areas remains as high as 50 per cent. There has been an increase in attendances at the sexually transmitted disease clinic, with a high number of people reporting with Chlamydia. Overall teenage pregnancy rates are increasing. The rate of mortality from suicide remains high and national targets are unlikely to be met. Housing conditions within the Council's housing stock are declining, although work is underway to enable the Council to access capital funding to bring its houses up to the decent homes standard.

## Older people

- 94 The Council has a good strategic approach to engagement with older people and considers how their needs now and in the future can be met. The Council has an older people's champion and supports an elected Older Peoples' Council which has contributed to the Sustainable Community Strategy, the LAA and the Corporate Plan. The Older People's council has been recognised as notable practice and gives this section of the community a strong forum to engage with the Council allowing it to respond to their needs.

- 95** The Council has also considered future housing needs for older people through a housing needs survey and is the UK lead on a European Community project (Welfare Housing Project for Older People) which seeks to promote independence and wellbeing through design of older peoples' housing. Older people will benefit from improved outcomes resulting from corporate ambitions that reflect their needs, and from improved living conditions that are better tailored to their needs.
- 96** Services are being provided outside the traditional social care remit. The Council supports older people through a number of leisure and sporting events, transportation information and advice and special arrangements to assist with waste disposal. The Council has also developed an active trading standards team that targets older and more vulnerable people to intervene in dealing with rogue traders. Older people will benefit by an improved quality of life as a result of the support provided to them.
- 97** Joint working with Social Services, Health and Department of Work and Pensions is promoting independence. Older people have improved access to welfare benefits more effective working between the Local Pension Service and the Housing Benefit Service. Joint working between agencies should help ensure that more older people receive maximum welfare benefits. The number of delayed transfers from hospital is also reducing as a result of joint working between the Council and partners. These combine to increase the independence and quality of life of older people.
- 98** Services are not well developed for older people from minority groups. Whilst the Council is engaging well with older people generally, there is no detailed assessment of the needs of older people from minority groups and how they are provided for. Unless capacity is increased to support older people from minority groups, services will not meet their needs and their quality of life will not improve as a result.

## Children and young people

- 99** Brighton and Hove City Council and its partners' performance in this area is good overall. The council's use of resources is generally effective and it is developing joint commissioning to allocate resources to areas of highest need and priority. The council's youth offending team is adequate. Most children are healthy and those at most risk are well protected.
- 100** The Children and Young Peoples Trust has produced a high quality CYPP and has set out clear and challenging ambitions for children's services. The council has merged its education and social care functions successfully and is about to integrate health provision with effect from October 2006. There is good political support and commitment to improve outcomes for children.
- 101** Management of the council's services for children and young people is good overall. The council and its partners have a good record of achievement on priority areas. The overall capacity of the council to meet its objectives is good.

- 102** The council has developed a strong and effective partnership and is jointly promoting focus and the prioritisation of children and young people's health education and preventative programmes. There is evidence of good multidisciplinary work to assure healthy outcomes for children and young people. There is some evidence that the joint approach of agencies is having positive impact on the reduction of teenage pregnancy. CAMHS are providing a good service and there are plans for further development.
- 103** Children and young people most at risk from abuse are well protected through good multi agency safeguarding arrangements. However, pressures of incoming referrals and the current arrangements to manage casework create cause for concern especially in view of the imminent reorganisation of children's social care into a three-area model. Although work is in hand to implement the Common Assessment Framework, an agreed matrix of multi agency thresholds for risk, need and service access and eligibility are still to be developed. The number of looked after children is high and a high percentage are not allocated to qualified social workers. Services for looked after children generally work well together. However, there is a need to improve placement choice and stability as well as the range of capacity of preventative services to improve diversion from care. For care leavers more needs to be done to improve capacity, the consistent allocation of key workers and the quality of the service.
- 104** The council contributes well toward a good strategy for childcare and early years' education. There are sufficient childcare places and the quality of nursery education is good. The overall quality of education provision is good and there is effective challenge and support for schools as well as effective support for pupil behaviour and attendance. Most children achieve well at school and attainment is improving though there is some variation across the area. The level of educational attainment of looked after children and young people and those with LDD is appropriate.
- 105** There is good support to help children and young people to take personal responsibility and to contribute to their communities. The council and its partners are successfully working together to reduce anti-social behaviour by young people and are beginning to reduce offending. Opportunities for children and young people's involvement in decision making on issues which affect them are developing well.

- 106** The work of all services to ensure the economic wellbeing of children and young people is good. However, the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is high. Qualification outcomes for young people are near the national average especially for the attainment of level 2 and 3 outcomes by 19 year olds. The proportion of looked after young people entering post 16 training education and employment has increased quickly and is now at the national average. Young people have access to good quality advice and support from Connexions and other agencies. The council is implementing a well researched 14-19 strategy but more progress is required. There is a shortage of suitable affordable accommodation for young people although there is good work to improve private sector housing and reduce youth homelessness. Regeneration initiatives are appropriately targeted to increase employment opportunities and the quality of life in most deprived areas.

## Appendix 1 - Framework for Corporate Assessment

- 1 This corporate assessment was carried out under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, under which the Audit Commission has power to inspect local authorities' arrangements for securing continuous improvement. The results of the corporate assessment contribute to the determination of the overall CPA category for an authority, which the Audit Commission is required to assess and report on under Section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2 The Council's self assessment provided a key resource in focusing the assessment activity which included consideration of:
  - key documentation, including the Council's improvement plan;
  - updated performance indicators and performance data; and
  - interviews and meetings attended.
- 3 The assessment for Brighton and Hove City Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 12 to 23 June 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.