

Corporate Assessment Report

October 2006



# Corporate Assessment

**Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council**

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

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

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

[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)

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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 The Council is performing adequately at present but is ambitious for itself and for the area. With its partners it has set out a realistic medium term vision for the borough. The vision is supported by a strategy that includes ambitions that are specific to Doncaster and are based on extensive consultation with partners and local communities. The strategy sets out specific targets to improve the quality of life for local people. The development of the strategy has been supported by the adoption of a local area agreement by the Council and its partners. Partnerships are strong in Doncaster and the Mayor has a high profile in providing strong community leadership, with determination, passion and the drive to take things forward. However, some groups including representatives of the local Black and Minority Ethnic community would like earlier involvement in helping to shape the future direction for the area.
- 6 The Council is in the process of significant change. The leaders of the organisation have analysed the issues that the Council faces and designed a radical plan to make the organisation fit for that purpose. Not only have existing directorates been removed and new ones created, but a new method of organising service delivery - through the neighbourhood management model - has also been implemented. Simultaneously, previously devolved functions have been brought together centrally. These changes have caused some temporary disruption but have been undertaken in order to create the conditions for improved service delivery. The changes were largely implemented during 2005 and it is therefore too early to see the impact of these changes on services through audited performance indicators.
- 7 A major ambition reflected in the Mayor's manifesto is the commitment to improve the way in which the Council treats people from black or ethnic minority communities. The commitment is clear and the strategy addressing the issue is in place as are the staff to implement it. There are examples of good practice in work with the gypsy and traveller community. There has been concern within the black and minority ethnic (BME) communities about their involvement in helping to shape the future direction for the area and the pace of change, but more recent improvements have been reported.
- 8 The Council now has a Corporate Plan under its new arrangements and a range of strategies and plans in place to deliver the ambitions in the Borough Strategy. However, although developing, it has still to establish medium term financial planning to underpin these plans. This means that the Council has prioritised and determined actions, but has not comprehensively developed these with a clear link to resources.

- 9 There is clear accountability and effective ethical governance, and leadership is strong. Officers have a high level of delegation to manage the organisation of the Council and deliver services. The Mayor and his cabinet do not have an overall majority on the Council but there is general support for the main direction of travel in terms of the overall ambition and the major managerial restructuring currently being implemented. The strategic approach to procurement has been developing more recently. The Council is developing good approaches to human resources and management development to address the challenges it faces.
- 10 The Council has a good track record of financial management but during the restructure in 2005 aspects of the more detailed budgetary control arrangements were not in place. This was as a result of changed internal reporting lines and the need to appoint staff to posts. At a corporate level however, budgetary control was exercised. The Council entered the 2005/06 financial year with a requirement to achieve £9.5 million savings from revenue budgets. By November 2005 the council was predicting a £4.5 million overspend -1.5 per cent of general fund expenditure. Strong action - such as vacancy management - has been taken to prevent an overspend, but a significant part of the required savings were still reflected in targets rather than corresponding detailed action plans in November. The financial position however was on an improving trend. Looking ahead the Council has recognised the need to introduce enhanced medium to longer term financial planning and as part of this greater clarity over planning for future savings will be required.
- 11 The Council has elements of a corporate drive to achieving value for money - such as the business process re-engineering programme - but has not had a comprehensive strategic approach. A large amount of cost information is also held within the Council, but it is not comprehensively used to drive value for money. The Council's progress is positive, but the approach is not yet a routine and embedded corporate regime. It does however have plans to improve further with the strengthening of the Council's efficiency group.
- 12 Performance management has been in transition at the Council. More recently the Council has invested in new arrangements linked to the neighbourhood model and extending to 'super-output' areas. Staff who previously worked in different directorates on performance and improvement issues have been brought together into one central team in the Policy, Partnerships and Governance Directorate. There is a clearer link now with the corporate plan, a more challenging approach taken by the central team, and there is an increased focus on performance information at Overview & Scrutiny. This is all to the authority's credit but it is also fairly recent.

- 13 Overall the Council's achievement in relation to the shared priorities is adequate. The Council has set out its ambitions for the area in the Borough Strategy using a framework which mirrors closely the shared priorities. The Council and its partners have been successful in delivering an improved economic performance locally. This is presenting some new challenges for transport and housing. Some advances have been made in addressing housing and transport issues although much remains to be done. The Council is however planning ahead effectively with plans to improve for example transport issues being reflected in physical works already such as the Frenchgate interchange. The Council has performed well in environmental management, where recycling rates have improved significantly and continue to do so, and levels of cleanliness of streets are generally high. The Council is actively addressing high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour and is having some impact but Doncaster still has some serious problems which it recognises. The Council's youth service is excellent and its youth offending service is good.
- 14 The performance of the council in meeting the needs of adults as a group and older people specifically is adequate. The Council with its partners has made some progress in reducing health inequalities. The Council is aware of the wider issues concerning health inequalities and the position of older people but has not completed work on comprehensive clear strategies and action plans to progress these issues. There is some work to be done before the contribution which can be made by service areas outside social care is identified and fully developed. The new area based management and delivery arrangements are designed to address these issues. There are generally positive outcomes for children and young people. However provision for vulnerable groups amongst children and young people is inconsistent.

## Areas for improvement

- 15 Doncaster Council is delivering a managed change programme designed to develop more effective user focussed services which are more responsive to local needs and which will deliver improvement at lower cost. It has in place plans and initiatives to address a range of issues that it faces, and the main focus of its development as an organisation should be pursuing those plans and initiatives and implementing necessary changes. In particular:
- develop the detailed plans to link economic growth and the local population;
  - ensure that as part of strategy development greater consideration is given to how the views of BME representatives could be incorporated at an earlier stage in the process;
  - progress its work to link priorities and resources over the medium to longer term including the development of proposals to achieve efficiencies over future years;
  - conduct, in late 2006, a review to assess whether or not implemented changes to organisational arrangements are resulting in the desired service improvements. By this time the council will also have had the opportunity to assess the need for revised governance arrangements for the new neighbourhood model at councillor level; and
  - the success of more recent developments in corporate arrangements for performance management, procurement and achieving VFM should also be assessed as part of a process of improvement.

The Council also needs to take forward work to develop effective and detailed strategies and robust action plans in conjunction with partners to jointly address health inequalities effectively and to improve the quality of life, level of independence and involvement of older people in the local community.

## Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	3
	Prioritisation	2
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	2
<b>Overall corporate assessment score**</b>		<b>2</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

- 16 Doncaster is a metropolitan borough council in the Yorkshire and Humberside region which has a population of 289,000. At the centre of the borough is the town of Doncaster itself which, with its suburbs, accounts for about one quarter of the total population. Until the 1980s the area was a major centre for coal mining and manufacturing, with a number of large working collieries located in the rural area surrounding Doncaster itself. The closure of these collieries has had a significant effect on the local communities. The type of employment in the area is now similar to the region as a whole with 26 per cent of residents working in manufacturing and construction, 32 per cent in distribution and transport and 25 per cent in public services. The area has good transport links. It is close to north-to-south and east-to-west motorways and is on the east coast rail link between Scotland and London. Robin Hood International Airport, to the south of the town, commenced commercial operation on 28 April 2005.
- 17 The age structure of the population is very similar to the national profile. The borough has high levels of deprivation, with over 40 per cent of the population living in wards which are in the bottom 10 per cent of the wards in the country. Household incomes are low, with 27 per cent of children living in low income families compared to 18 per cent nationally. Unemployment is still in excess of national and regional averages, at 3 per cent of the economically active population, but has fallen substantially over the last ten years. A relatively high proportion of residents of working age are dependent on incapacity benefits.
- 18 The area has a black and minority ethnic population which accounts for 3.5 per cent of the population compared to a national figure of 13 per cent. The gypsy and traveller population is estimated to account for over 4,000 residents, and there are approximately 1,000 asylum seekers in the borough.
- 19 Between 1991 and 2001 the population in Doncaster fell, as in many northern towns, but more recently the population has been growing as employment levels have been improving. These changes are giving rise to some problems which are new to the area such as growing demand for housing and rapidly rising house prices.

## The Council

- 20 The Council adopted the mayoral system of governance in 2002. The Mayor of Doncaster was elected for a second term in May 2005. The Mayor, who was the official Labour candidate, chose the cabinet which currently consists of nine councillors from the Labour group. Labour accounts for 28 of the 63 councillors. The other groups on the Council consist of 12 Liberal Democrats, nine Conservatives, nine Alliance of Independent members, and five from the Community Group. The last elections to the Council were in May 2004 when Labour lost its overall majority for the first time.
- 21 Cabinet members each hold a portfolio of responsibilities and are accountable with the Mayor for the delivery of his manifesto pledges which relate to the general areas they cover. The portfolio areas are policy and strategy development (covered by the Deputy Mayor who is also the lead member for children and young people), crime and public safety, older people, public health, human rights and equalities, schools and children, neighbourhoods, transport and connectivity and business and commerce.
- 22 The Council has just completed a major reorganisation which involved a complete review of the top four tiers of management. There are now five directorates, one of which, neighbourhoods, communities and children's services, is responsible for the delivery of most services provided directly by the Council through fifteen neighbourhood based teams. As a consequence of this reorganisation most of the senior and middle managers are new to their posts and in some cases new to Doncaster.
- 23 The Doncaster Strategic Partnership completed a review of the community strategy (the Borough Strategy) earlier this year and published a new strategy for 2005-2010 in July 2005. This comprehensive document, Shaping our Future, sets out the ambitions for the area under the five main areas which reflect national shared priorities. The partnership itself consists of the overarching strategic partnership and nine key strategic partnerships (KSPs) which cover the main themes of the Borough Strategy. Doncaster has a pilot Local Area Agreement that is closely aligned with the Borough Strategy.
- 24 In 2005/06 the Council had a net revenue budget of £341.8 million and a capital programme of £143.4 million. Council tax is below the national average. External funding in addition to the revenue support grant plays an important part in funding Doncaster's programmes. For example, between 2001 and 2006 Doncaster was allocated £37.4 million of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and £23.7 million of Single Regeneration Budget funding. In addition Doncaster has benefited from £24.3 million of Objective 1 funding specifically for Doncaster projects.

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

### Ambition

- 25 The Council's performance in this area is consistently above minimum requirements. The Council is ambitious for itself and for the area and with its partners, has set out a realistic vision for the borough.
- 26 The vision for the area is ambitious and challenging, and it is relevant to local circumstances. It was first set out in the Borough Strategy in 2002, and has been built on more recently in an updated Strategy. The Council agreed with the Doncaster Strategic Partnership (DSP) a medium and longer term vision. The longer term vision is for Doncaster to become a city of European significance. The vision in the medium term is that:
- 'By 2010 Doncaster will be a major contributor to regional and national prosperity. The Borough will enjoy a high growth economy, supported by a substantial increase in educational attainment, the consolidation of commercial strength and widespread improvements in quality of life. Our communities will be vibrant and sustainable and Doncaster will be able to offer everyone living and working here the opportunity to achieve their full potential.'*
- 27 The revised Borough Strategy contains challenging specific ambitions that support the partnership's medium term vision. These ambitions are set out in the context of the shared national priorities. These ambitions are realistic, cover a broader range of quality of life issues and are reflected in specific detailed measurable targets in the strategy statement itself. They build on the earlier aspirational goals from the previous strategy. The targets are reflected in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) which is the key mechanism the Council and its partners are pursuing to secure their ambitions. This means partners are clear about their shared ambitions for the area.
- 28 The Council has based its ambitions on a widely shared and comprehensive understanding of the needs of the area. The Borough Strategy was the subject of widespread consultation with a range of groups, including hard to reach groups such as young people and some ethnic minorities. It is based on shared information about the needs of the area to develop a common understanding of local circumstances. For example, in health, information is being used to understand the factors which lie behind health inequalities. This means ownership of the broad ambitions of the partnership is strong among the key partners.

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- 29** The Council's role in achieving the borough's broader ambitions is effectively and clearly set out in the newly adopted Corporate Plan. This is supported by a set of plans which set out the Council's actions. There is still however scope to develop ambitions further. For example, the plans to link economic development to local people in the form of improved employment opportunities are still in development.
- 30** The Council has been successful in leading the community and developing the partnerships and models of service delivery needed to shape and deliver ambitions. The Doncaster Strategic Partnership (DSP) and most of the sub groups are chaired by the partners and not the Council, with the Mayor having taken the deliberate decision not to chair the DSP in order to reduce the central role of the Council and encourage broader participation. The Council has an ambitious vision to significantly improve the quality of services by focusing delivery on a neighbourhood basis. This ambition is widely shared by staff, councillors and partners. These features provide a wider sense of partnership working and increase the effective resources available to the partnership as a whole.
- 31** The Mayor uses effective mechanisms to consult on his policy proposals. The Mayor's system of green and white papers to consult widely on outline and specific proposals - for example on housing - has significant support from stakeholders. In addition, the Council consults extensively in developing other strategies and plans. However, there is scope to increase the extent to which some stakeholders are involved in policy development. For example, some BME communities are not consistently engaged in the early development of policy. Overall this means there are clear contributions from the area which help to develop the Council's policies.

## Prioritisation

- 32** The Council's performance in this area is adequate. While the council has prioritised, has a range of strategies in place, and determined actions to deliver the ambitions it has not comprehensively developed these with a clear link to resources and targets.
- 33** The Council has adopted a Corporate Plan to guide its contribution to the achievement of the Borough Strategy under its new neighbourhood model. The Corporate Plan describes the Council's values and the five theme areas which are as follows.
- Children & Young People - integrated neighbourhood based children's services that place the child at the heart of service delivery.
  - Safer & Stronger Communities - actively involving communities in making neighbourhoods safer, cleaner & greener.
  - Healthier Communities and Supporting Vulnerable People, - targeting resources at those most in need across the Borough.

- Sustainable communities - making Doncaster an attractive place to live, work and visit.
  - A Winning Council - an absolute focus on customers and excellence in delivery.
- 34** The Council's Corporate Plan action plans broadly direct the Council's effort to priorities. Elements of this action planning however are still in development. The Corporate Plan covering the period 2005-2009 develops the five theme areas into separate actions, supported by sub-action points. These are a combination of targeted action points, for example 'bring a further 1,274 properties up to a decent standard by March 2006' - and broader intentions, for example, 'continue the development of Doncaster's new University'. At a corporate level the Corporate Plan is supported by the Corporate Plan Outline Action Plan which develops separate action points into further detail and increases the precision surrounding these. However, a number of these sub-actions are described in broad terms and some resourcing details are not included. This means it is less clear what the actions listed are intended to achieve and by when, making resource allocation decisions more difficult.
- 35** The Council has not established a comprehensive medium term approach to linking resources to priorities. However, it has recognised it needs to make progress in this area. The 2005/06 budget directed resources towards areas of high priority, including neighbourhood services and waste management and schools. The Council acknowledges that its current three year financial plan is not well linked to its service strategies and is working toward achieving a much more robust link between detailed proposals for delivering priorities and a medium term plan which identifies the resourcing basis for these. Its current plan has operated at a high level, with less detail for years beyond 2005/06. This would facilitate a greater link to services where performance is not at the required level. The Council's capital programme has been clearly linked in large part to the transformational projects in the borough.
- 36** National priorities are well represented in the Council's priorities. The Council has detailed strategies relating to waste management and to the delivery of national and local transport targets for example. Educational achievement is a national priority and remains a local challenge. Additional resources have been allocated and some improved educational outcomes achieved which have been recognised by government, although some more vulnerable groups have done less well. The LAA also provides an indication of the agreed priorities, and partnership working is used, through for example the DSP, to work towards achieving priorities. The importance of education and linked economic development is apparent in the council's planning and the priorities relate to the stated ambition.

**16 Corporate Assessment | What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?**

- 37** There is some robust action planning at the Council with good links to the key strategies, although this is not universal. The Council has many strategies that relate to its own priorities and to national priorities and some of these contain detailed and rigorous action plans: these include for example the waste management plan and the education development plan. There are examples of action planning involving service users; for example the involvement of children and young people in the development of the young people's substance misuse plan. However, there are elements of the Corporate Plan Action Plan which are yet to be completed. For example, the financial requirements are not specified in a number of places. The detail within the commissioning strategy for older people (which is one aspect of planning services for older people) is also not as clear as in other plans, and the Council has not yet developed an effective comprehensive strategy for older people with clear ambitions and targets relating to overall quality of life and the involvement of older people in the community. A positive recent development in planning at the Council has been the production of a more coherent council wide template for service planning. This should help ensure that managers can identify their key priorities.

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

### Capacity

- 38 The Council's performance in this area is consistently above minimum requirements. There is strong leadership and effective partnership working with a clear focus on improving services. Difficult decisions have been taken to reorganise the council's resources and move to a neighbourhood model of service delivery. Whilst this has caused some disruption the changes are supported by partners.
- 39 Partnership working is strong across a range of partners. The Council commissions external support to improve capacity and address key targets. For example, it has worked with Leeds City Council to share expertise and develop its approach to equalities. Other examples of good progress being made in developing effective partnerships include the provision of some services for children and young people. The strategic partnership brings together mainstream agencies and the voluntary and community sectors to develop and deliver services. The openness in working with partners is evidenced by the willingness to share responsibility. This means the council is well placed to meet its ambitions.
- 40 The Council is radically reorganising service delivery with the aim of increasing its capacity to offer more customer focussed services. There are early signs this is focusing the work of partners and the Council's work at a local level. The Council has decentralised frontline services into areas with neighbourhood teams under one strategic director. The corporate centre has also been reorganised by centralising policy, support and administrative functions. The implementation process is inevitably creating anxiety and some disruption for staff, councillors and partners. It is based on considerable planning and a clear vision that it will lead to improvements in services and value for money. However, the full range of changes are not in place until the end of 2005 and therefore the full impact cannot yet be assessed.
- 41 There is clear accountability and decision-making within the Council. The constitution clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of councillors and officers. The mayoral system has led to more rapid decision-making, improved accountability and allowed greater managed risk taking. Leading members are responsible for specific Mayoral pledges – for example the school building programme and the early introduction of the initiative to provide school children with fruit everyday. The programme of performance review meetings with the Mayor, Managing Director, Cabinet Members and Strategic Directors illustrates the close working relationship. This helps focus capacity on the delivery of priorities.

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

- 42** There is strong leadership from the Mayor, senior councillors and the Managing Director. For example, the mayor has developed the policy on the neighbourhood model of service delivery in consultation through the green and white paper initiative. Each cabinet member has areas of specific focus, whilst taking collective responsibility for strategic decision-making. The cabinet is focussed on strategic matters with officers having a high level of delegation to determine arrangements for service delivery. This positions the council well to align its capacity to deliver effectively on its ambitions.
- 43** Scrutiny is working effectively to review service activity provided with partners. There has been less of a focus on internal performance management by scrutiny but this is now increasing. The Council's scrutiny function has worked effectively employing a non partisan approach. It is making a significant contribution to, the four externally facing Corporate Plan themes. For example, through its work on highways and on childhood obesity. It has been less focused on performance management such as resource allocation. The Council is now starting to address this issue. This means the council has used scrutiny to improve some services and is working to strengthen its capacity to develop policy and review the Council's performance, both in partnership and in its own services.
- 44** The Council has effective ethical governance arrangements. The Standards Committee, with an independent chair and a majority of independent members, provides a strong lead on ethical governance. There is a clear ethical framework set out for councillors and officers who have worked together effectively on a range of issues. Decision records for council, cabinet, the Mayor and portfolio holders are clear and up-to-date.
- 45** There are clear processes to review risks as a strand of planning and reviewing services. Risk assessment forms a distinct element of the approach to major changes. Reports presented to councillors contain a section on the risks associated with the decision and risk assessment is now built into the service planning. The Council has recognised the need to refresh its strategic risk register and strategy and strengthen the role of councillors in risk management.
- 46** The financial capacity of the organisation to deliver its priorities is adequate. The Council set a budget for 2005/06 which incorporated no Council Tax increase for 2005/06, the funding of the 2.95 per cent pay award (£3.3 million) from vacancy management and required further savings of £9.5 million to be met. This was managed with a view to minimising disruption to the provision of priorities by for example active consideration of vacancies that arose. The financial position of the Council has improved during the year and by November 2005 the projected overspend on the general fund is £4.5 million (or approximately 1.5 per cent of revenue expenditure). It has sufficient reserves to cover this gap if savings are not identified during the year and the financial capacity of the organisation is satisfactory in the short term.

- 47 The Council has a record of sound financial management but the major reorganisation of structures and budgets caused some disruption during 2005. This meant budget monitoring at more detailed level was disrupted. Other aspects of the Council's financial management such as the Housing Revenue Account and the Capital have continued to be well managed. The Council identified during 2005 that its reserves had been managed in a fragmented way. In June 2005 the Council acted to consolidate its reserves and manage them more strategically.
- 48 The Council has adequate arrangements for achieving value for money. Business process re-engineering has featured significantly in the Council's more recent plans to improve efficiency as has the strengthening of the efficiency group. This places the Council well in improving the value for money it provides.
- 49 The Council has a strong track record of securing external funding, often in partnership with others. Significant levels of external funding have been achieved, estimated at £30 million for 2005/06. This has been used to support Council priorities by funding new initiatives which then go on to become funded through mainstream budgets. For example the Safer Neighbourhood Teams are now part of the mainstream budgets within both the Council and the local police. These teams are having an important impact on the ability of local neighbourhood teams to respond effectively to anti-social behaviour and low level crime.
- 50 The Council has an adequate strategic approach to procurement. The Council has recognised the need to increase the drive for efficiency and service improvement. Advice is available to staff on procurement issues. For example, the new stationery contract has saved approximately £200,000. This means the council is using procurement to improve value for money.
- 51 Project planning and project management on major projects is strong and effective. The delivery of the neighbourhood management reorganisation has been overseen through effective project management arrangements including good practice methods. It has generally proved successful in terms of delivering key milestones within a reasonable timescale.
- 52 The council's approach to the use of ICT in supporting its capacity to deliver services is adequate although the Council has not been meeting its targets on e-government. In 2004/05 the level of e-government transactions was at 62 per cent compared with the 100 per cent target. However, the Council has recognised the need to progress the improvements to ICT rapidly, and has set up an E-Delivery board with Director level involvement and a member champion. The Council has been developing its geographic information system to help plan services more locally. The Council has also secured Government funding for the development of a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and is planning to improve customer service delivery through enhanced customer service centres in libraries.

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- 53** Workplace planning effectively supports delivery of the priorities. The Council is currently at level 2 on the equality standard. Performance on the number of women in senior management posts and on the employment of black and minority ethnic staff is good. The Council performs well in staff recruitment, retention and development activities, and a recent survey of staff showed that they understand what is expected of them in their job and they felt good ideas were welcomed. It also works with partners to align staffing to priorities – for example the community wardens operating alongside the police. A management competency framework was used in the recent reorganisation process, and training for members in for leadership skills has seen good take up. However, the Council's capacity is reduced by relatively high levels of sickness absence although it is addressing this problem with for example the incorporation of targets into strategic directors' performance appraisals.
- 54** The Council has good arrangements to engage with local people and this has had an impact on service delivery. For example, the council has worked alongside low income groups to reduce deprivation by improving benefits take up. Communicating service standards, for example those relating to the planning service, also provides a link to communities by describing what can be expected. This means the council is working alongside its diverse communities to ensure its services are designed to meet their needs.

## **Performance management**

- 55** The Council's performance in this area is adequate. The Council has a performance monitoring framework and there are examples where information has been used to inform actions but this is not comprehensive. The Council's culture and focus on corporate performance management to drive service improvement is developing but is at an early stage. Recently performance management has been in transition at the Council. It has invested in new arrangements linked to the neighbourhood model of service delivery and there is a clearer link with the corporate plan, and increased satisfaction with performance information received by Overview & Scrutiny.
- 56** The Council has an adequate performance monitoring system in place. Quarterly monitoring reports are produced for senior management, cabinet and overview and scrutiny. These include progress against Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs), Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets and Mayor's commitments and corporate or directorate issues. However a comprehensive corporate performance management culture has not been in place. For example, the quality of the explanations for progress or lack of progress in performance monitoring reports has been variable. The issues identified, for example the need for remedial action, have not been clearly signposted. Reflecting the need for the more recent improvement, overview and scrutiny committee for example has made limited use of this information to hold the executive to account for performance.

- 57 Action has been taken to address poor performance but there is not a clear corporate approach to addressing under-performance where this has been identified through the monitoring system. There are examples of effective operational use of performance information to assist in the management of services or identified problem areas. For example, sickness absence has been targeted for action. Also, Operation Flytipper created a league table of flytipping locations, collated statistics and indicators on the hotspots and used these to allocate resources to deal with removal and enforcement. The Council's new performance management reporting cycle includes challenge sessions to strengthen the performance management culture and the potential of the new arrangements to drill down into areas of weaker performance is considerable.
- 58 The Doncaster Strategic Partnership has implemented an effective performance management framework to monitor progress and challenge performance. This is undertaken on a quarterly basis through a risk assessment of progress and reported back to the Doncaster Strategic Partnership's executive. Areas of poor performance are discussed, options considered, and planned actions agreed. This process is supported by Council officers. The performance management framework has received positive external validation from the Government Office. There are annual reports which provide a public update on performance against target. However, the strategic partnership has not had consistent information on the impact of its work on priority vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and this was identified in its external assessment as an area in need of further development.
- 59 Information about resource management, both financial and staff, is not fully integrated with performance monitoring. The Council's MTFS, as acknowledged by the Council, is not yet fully linked to its internal service strategies and it operates at a high level. Development of this will increase the ability of the Council to link resources to under performing areas in a sustained manner.
- 60 The Council has not used its staff appraisal system consistently or effectively to manage performance, with 40 per cent of staff not receiving an appraisal in the last 12 months, but the system is being strengthened. Performance related pay is being introduced down to fourth tier managers, linked to appraisals. The performance of portfolio holders is monitored by the Mayor. The Mayor holds monthly one to one meetings with portfolio holders to track progress against the Mayor's priorities and there is also a system of 'two to twos' where the Mayor and portfolio holder discuss performance with the Managing Director and the strategic directors concerned.

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

- 61** The Council has adequate arrangements for producing reliable data to support the BVPIs. An internal performance indicator guide was revised in May 2005, training was provided for PI compilers and Doncaster Audit Services carried out validation of the Local Public Service Agreement indicators. Information is regularly produced on a range of indicators and for finances. As identified by local audit work, the Council has however had difficulty producing consistently reliable data across the Council and not all indicators have been owned by relevant managers. As a result of the reorganisation there was some temporary disruption to the provision of information. In addition ICT has not fully supported the provision of robust data such as sickness absence. For example in last year's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter the Council's external auditor reported reservations in relation to some cultural services indicators. This acts against the effective management of performance.

## What has been achieved?

- 62 The Council's performance in this area is adequate, meeting minimum requirements.
- 63 The Council has set out its ambitions for the area in the Borough Strategy using a framework which mirrors closely the shared priorities. There are five themes: sustainable communities, transport, safer and stronger communities, healthier communities and children and young people. This framework is cascaded down to the corporate plan and is reflected in the Council's new managerial structure. A new framework for reporting performance is organised around the key themes and hence the shared priorities. All of these arrangements are relatively new given the timing of the restructure and have not been tested thoroughly in practice. The Council's overall performance on national indicators is building from a low base with 29 per cent in the worst quartile.
- 64 The Council has performed well in supporting the growth of the local economy and in improving outcomes on waste management and the general appearance and cleanliness of the borough. Outcomes are more mixed in relation to community safety, housing and transport. On healthy communities and outcomes for older people although there have been some significant improvements the Council with partners still need to develop coherent strategies to drive future improvement.

## Sustainable communities and transport

- 65 The Borough Strategy includes the development of a prosperous economy as a key target. The Council and its partners have achieved considerable progress in the drive to encourage and support the growth of the local economy. Total private and public sector investment in the Borough has been rising since 2001 and the growth in new businesses is higher than in the region and nationally. The growth of the local economy has had an impact on employment levels and on the size of the population. From 1998 to 2005 the gap between Doncaster and national unemployment rates from the labour force survey narrowed from 4.1 to 0.3 percentage points.
- 66 The benefits of economic growth have had a positive impact on the more disadvantaged groups within the population. Whilst the Council has not monitored whether the gap between deprived wards and the rest of the area is narrowing significantly, it is taking a more focused view now using performance monitoring linked to the Geographic Information System to allow analysis down to the 88 individual communities in the DMBC area, and supports the neighbourhood delivery model. Population growth since 2001, reversing previous trends, has been recognised within the emerging regional spatial strategy through an increase in the housing allocation for the area.

- 67 The Council has worked effectively with partners to improve the economic prospects of local residents. Doncaster's locational advantages, including the opening of the new airport in April 2005 have been a major factor in this success and the Council and its partners have played a significant role. The Council had a dedicated team to ensure its contribution to the airport development succeeded. Overall it has prioritised support for the economy, it has used partnership working with the private sector to bring in additional capacity and it has developed productive relationships with the local private sector to support smaller businesses. External funding has been an important factor; since 2001 Doncaster has received £61 million from Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Single Regeneration Budget sources and a further £24.3 million from Objective 1.
- 68 This rate of development has occurred in spite of the fact that the performance of the Council's planning function has been weak. The speed with which the Council deals with development applications has been below the median for all categories of application since 2003. The current development plan has been in place since 1998 and is out of date. Preparations for the new local development framework are under way and the first key report will be considered in December. The Council recognised this as an issue and is now successfully addressing the speed with which it deals with planning applications with latest unaudited figures showing improvements across all types of application.
- 69 The Council has only recently developed significant proposals designed to ensure that the jobs created by this economic growth actually benefit Doncaster residents, and those who are most vulnerable in particular, and these plans will need to be developed further. However the analysis of the needs of new businesses has been used by the Council and trends in employment rates for older workers and workers with fewer qualifications are positive and stronger than in other areas. The gap between the most deprived and the least deprived wards in the Borough is not a key target in terms of the stated outcome measures even though the removal of deprivation was a key transformational goal in the first Borough Strategy. It is also noted that the Council has had a weak record on the promptness of its payments which will be important in an area where economic development is vital. The Council has recognised this as an area for improvement and is carrying out a Business Process Re-engineering review.
- 70 Improving quality and housing choice is a key outcome target in the Borough Strategy. Private sector housing has been historically poor with high proportions of vacancies and high levels of unfit housing. Population growth and an improving economy have placed increased pressure on the local market; vacancy levels in the private sector have reduced significantly; and house prices, whilst still 25 per cent below the regional average are rising rapidly. The Council with partners also faces the challenge of the accommodation requirements of the homeless. The Council has identified and is responding to these emerging challenges with some improvements in outcomes for local residents. Public sector housing decency standards are above average.

- 71 As at November 2005 the Council did not have an agreed current housing strategy but an interim strategy was produced in June 2005 with the aim of producing a final strategy in February 2006. The interim strategy links housing strategy to the ambitions set out in the Borough Strategy and it reflects the changes to the local housing market. The strategy has been prepared in partnership with other stakeholders and is based on a clear understanding of the current issues facing the town.
- 72 Performance in the management of the public sector housing stock has been mixed although more recently it has started to improve. The Council transferred its stock to an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) in September 2005 in order to secure for its tenants the resources needed to bring the quality of the housing up to current standards. Tenant satisfaction with housing management was low in 2003 but plans are in place to improve performance. Non-urgent repairs performance and performance in time taken to relet voids was in the bottom quartile in 2004/05 but repairs performance improved from June onwards. Rent collection and management of arrears is highly effective however. The proportion of non-decent homes has started to fall significantly as the rate of improvement in Doncaster is higher than elsewhere. There is an agreed investment strategy to address the issue of non-decent homes in the public sector in the medium term but it is dependent on the Council's ability to secure additional investment funds through the ALMO following the programmed inspection in September 2006.
- 73 The Council has been active in the management of the private sector, with high and increasing levels of poor quality private housing being improved or demolished. There are some notable examples - including properties in Edlington - where action has been taken to deal with poor quality housing and its related social problems. Similarly the action and proposals to improve the six streets area of Doncaster town centre is evidence that Council is taking action. The Council has developed a joint bid for regional housing board funding to regenerate the housing markets in the former coalfield areas.
- 74 The Council is aware of the growing demand for accommodation from the homeless and is developing an effective response, although there has been an increase in the numbers of households in temporary accommodation. The Council is playing a significant role in addressing the accommodation needs of asylum seekers in the area but the needs of other vulnerable groups are not being met. There is insufficient supportive housing for vulnerable young people for example care leavers who have the most complex needs. The Council understands the factors which lie behind the rising trend in homelessness. It has a comprehensive strategy to address the issue and it is developing specific responses, including increasing temporary accommodation and reducing waiting times for void properties through working with the ALMO.

- 75 The Borough Strategy has targets relating to the protection of the environment and the Council has made good progress in relation to maintaining and improving the quality of the local environment. In particular, the Council:
- met the Government's recycling target in 2004/05, improving the level of recycling from well below average in 2002/03 to average in 2004/05 and performance continues to improve;
  - has provided 99 per cent of households with kerbside collection of recyclables; and
  - performed well on standards of cleanliness, which is reflected in high levels of satisfaction among local people.
- 76 The Council is making good progress in the achievement of the key aims of its ambitious waste strategy although the total amount of waste collected has been rising. The strategy, developed following extensive consultation, includes key targets for the medium and long term including levels of recycling and the reuse of recyclables although there are no specific targets for the overall amount of waste collected. A key feature of the strategy is to link the collection and recycling of waste to encouragement for local community enterprise and the achievement of economic regeneration goals.
- 77 The Council is addressing issues of flytipping, graffiti and litter effectively. This is being achieved through FLAG teams (Fighting litter, abandoned cars and graffiti), set up in 2002 as part of the community first initiative providing locally based teams to tackle issues of litter and rubbish on a responsive basis. They are regarded by officers, councillors and local people as successful and responsive. The most recent comparative performance information supports this assessment.
- 78 Borough Strategy targets for transport include improving accessibility to the town centre and to existing and proposed major new developments, and targets relating to public transport usage and levels of congestion. Doncaster has robust plans to address key road transport issues facing the area. Of the two more immediate key projects aimed at encouraging public transport use, one (the Frenchgate Interchange) is almost complete, but the other (the Quality Bus Corridor) has not yet commenced - although is at a detailed planning stage. There is mixed performance in relation to road safety and road condition issues.
- 79 Doncaster makes effective use of its position on the national road and rail networks. The town is uniquely well placed in relation to these networks, benefiting from close proximity to both north to south and east to west motorways. A main stop on the east coast main line is within walking distance of the town centre which is pedestrianised. The Council is working to improve accessibility to the remaining important parts of the town, such as the Minster and the new education centre, which are outside the inner ring road.

- 80 The relevant transport plan - the South Yorkshire Local Transport Plan which is being updated - reflects national and local priorities, has been prepared with other local authorities and operators, following extensive consultation, and has robust targets. There are concerns about the arrangements for monitoring the delivery of outcomes with authorities focusing on the delivery of specific schemes rather than the LTP objectives as a whole.
- 81 The Council actively monitors transport activity, has identified key concerns and is taking significant steps in partnership with others to address key issues. These plans have not had impact yet. The Council recognises, for example, that there are congestion hotspots in the town related to peak hours on radial routes. The Council is responding to these issues through two major initiatives; the Transport Interchange development which is almost completed and the bid for funding to create a Quality Bus Corridor. Both these projects have involved extensive partnership working and consultation, represent significant investment from the public and private sectors and address local and national objectives to shift usage toward public transport.
- 82 Since 2001 the Council has been successful in reducing the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on the roads in Doncaster although a longer term perspective would show that current levels are above those between 1994 and 1998 and so performance on the standard measure compared to other authorities is poor. There was an unusual peak in deaths and serious injuries as a result of road accidents in 2001 and numbers have fallen since then following a number of key initiatives taken by the Council in 2002 and 2003.
- 83 The condition of the road network itself is mixed with principal roads being in good condition, the condition of non-principal roads has now improved to just below the median. The condition of unclassified roads remains in the lowest quartile. The Council has recently introduced a new approach to the allocation of resources and prioritisation, but this has not had the time to have a significant impact on outcomes, and there are concerns within the Council about the extent to which current budget levels will be adequate to maintain levels of maintenance in the future.

## **Safer and stronger communities**

- 84 The achievement of safer and stronger local communities is a core theme of the Borough Strategy and has a high profile for the Council. More recently the Council with its partners has introduced substantial new approaches to addressing issues. Whilst these changes are starting to deliver real improvements for local people, this is against a backdrop of the local area still having high levels of recorded crime and residents see levels of anti-social behaviour as significant. However levels of domestic burglary have reduced relative to national figures through focussed activity. There have been significant reductions in crime by young people and anti-social behaviour is now better managed.

- 85 The Council has developed its Community Safety Strategy in conjunction with all the relevant partners and it is based on a shared information base. The strategy was recently approved and followed the completion of a crime and disorder reduction audit which comprehensively covered the key issues facing the town. Activity on crime and disorder reduction is monitored through the relevant Key Strategic Partnership which is chaired by the Mayor.
- 86 The Council has used its effective partnership arrangements with the police to introduce successful joint community safety neighbourhood teams comprising police and street wardens with a geographic focus supported by police intelligence and CCTV. New teams are to be rolled out into all the neighbourhood areas. These neighbourhood teams are effective in responding to anti-social behaviour (ASB) and low level crime. The community safety neighbourhood teams are an integral part of the Council's service delivery arrangements at local level.
- 87 The Council has effectively targetted anti-social behaviour and this change to its approach over a period of time is now starting to have an impact. Until 2004 the Council's approach was uncoordinated and unstructured. A more strategic approach to tackling ASB through effective partnership working has been developed. There is a shared protocol with the police covering the important areas of informing the public; providing a helpline; providing targeted support for victims and witnesses; and sharing information among appropriate agencies. The protocol contains no detailed action plan in which responsibilities and resources are allocated. A partnership approach to managing a part of the year when problems with ASB are usually high has led to a reduced number of incidents this year.
- 88 The Council's youth offending service is highly effective and has achieved significant reductions in youth court sentences, detected offences involving young people and in the number of new entrants to the youth justice system. Statutory and voluntary organisations also work well together to help tackle anti-social behaviour and the voices of young people are heard by the Council in planning its services. For example the Mayor meets regularly with representatives of the Youth Council. In addition the Council's Youth Service has created safe havens for local young people to allow them to meet in safety away from known danger spots.
- 89 The Council has effectively implemented a Community Safety and Drugs Strategy. The strategy was developed following extensive consultation with partners, the community and vulnerable groups. The Council and its partners are addressing all four strands of the national drugs strategy and elements of this were reflected in their LPSA targets for 2004/05.

- 90 The Council's response to alcohol related problems in the town centre and other areas has been a weakness. The Council is now addressing this weakness through making effective use of its neighbourhood teams and the latest relevant legislation. It has also recently been successful in securing additional external funding to support actions to reduce alcohol related problems in the city centre. These developments are recent and have had only limited impact. The Council is reviewing its night-time economy strategy, taking into account the new licensing arrangements, as part of its approach. A new Town Centre manager has been appointed and now heads up an evening economy working group which will oversee the updating of the original strategy. The town centre safer neighbourhood team is making use of the wider range of powers now available and dispersal orders have been used to deal with night time disturbances.
- 91 The Council and its partners are working effectively to ensure they are well prepared for emergency situations. The Borough Strategy identifies the key risks and the strategy sets out actions required to manage this threat. The Council with its partners has developed a risk register and detailed plans to respond to the principal civil contingencies risk, flooding. There are regular regional meetings in South Yorkshire and the Council has prepared and shared a specific response to flooding in Doncaster. The Council is well prepared for a major incident minimising the risks to its communities.
- 92 The Council has an up to date emergency plan and regularly tests its effectiveness. A policy for business continuity is in place. The Council is working with key partners across South Yorkshire to improve the co-ordination of responses to major incidents.

## Healthier communities

- 93 The Council has strong partnership links around work on improving the health of local communities and there has been some impact on outcomes. There is not yet however a comprehensive published strategy which brings together the work of all partners and although progress has been made, there is still considerable scope for improvement.

- 94 Strong partnership working in health has supported agreement over a range of key outcome targets in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and in the Borough Strategy. The Council and its partners have worked together to produce a detailed and comprehensive strategic assessment of the health issues facing the borough, and have developed approaches involving significant data sharing among partners to analyse the factors which lie behind health inequalities in Doncaster. This provides a firm basis for focused action and an early target for the LAA is to use this shared information base to produce a health development plan for the borough. As at November 2005 such a comprehensive strategy had not been published, although work has been underway to produce one. In particular a health action plan containing a range of measures necessary to implement a strategic approach has been prepared more recently. This plan needs to develop further however before the Council with partners has a comprehensive strategy for improving the health of local communities - including addressing health inequalities which the Council highlights as a priority.
- 95 These partnerships are delivering positive outcomes for children and young people and there has been some improvement in mortality rates relative to national averages. Immunisation rates and the levels of child health assessments are above average and the incidence of whooping cough, although above the national average, is declining. Death rates amongst new born babies are lower than average. The infection rate for sexually transmitted diseases is higher than average and Doncaster has very high rates of teenage pregnancy. Current levels of teenage pregnancies are higher than in 1999 or 2001 and the reduction achieved since the baseline of 1998 is below the average. Although life expectancy has improved, the Council remains in the lowest quartile with the rate of improvement being similar to that of other areas.
- 96 There are a large number of examples of positive initiatives which have been undertaken jointly to address the health issues facing local residents. These include effective projects aimed at discouraging children and young people from smoking. All schools are engaged in some aspects of healthy eating and physical exercise campaigns. The Mayor's commitment to ensuring local school children have fruit each day has been popular and featured as a commitment in his campaign for a second term in office. Health promotion has been supported by strong multi-agency provision. The Council also has an active recreation unit which has been successful in encouraging more involvement in active leisure by disadvantaged groups, mainly of young people.
- 97 Vulnerable groups have also been targeted for action with initiatives such as the 'Borough Treasures' pass due for implementation during 2006 aimed at offering free admission to a range of leisure and tourism sites in the borough. The Council also has plans to develop a fuel poverty strategy - currently in draft. There is a leisure referral scheme under which over 90 per cent of GP practices are able and indeed do refer patients to the Council to involve them in active leisure classes and activity. The scheme has had positive health impacts on the people involved although it has not met its targets.

- 98 Progress on targets is monitored regularly by the Key Strategic Partnership which involves the primary care trusts and relevant parts of the voluntary sector. There has been no detailed review of the relative impact of the range of initiatives in meeting key outcome targets. The Council have also acknowledged the absence of information on the impact of health initiatives on BME communities and vulnerable groups. In some key areas, such as participation in exercise, there is no baseline information from which progress can be measured.

## Older people

- 99 The Council does not have a strategic approach to this issue that incorporates effectively the contribution of all partners and the council services apart from the social care services. Although there are initiatives to tackle more broadly the issues faced by older people - significantly the neighbourhood model, focus has however historically been on the provision of social care services. Some positive outcomes have been delivered but further improvement is needed in important areas - such as the proportion of older people helped to live at home.
- 100 The Borough Strategy and the LAA include targets aimed at improving the quality of life and independence of vulnerable people. The targets and associated actions themselves relate significantly to the provision of social care services, but the LAA articulates the need to have an approach to older people that goes beyond health and social care.
- 101 The Council serves some people well in partnership with relevant health organisations and the voluntary and community sector in delivering adult care services but there are important areas where improvements are needed. The Council is using the pilot LAA to establish priorities and further promote partnership working. Performance has been particularly good in its approach to consultation, a low level of delayed discharges, development of an integrated strokes service, and improvements to acceptable waiting times for assessments. A new integrated shared equipment store contract using health act flexibilities was opened in January 2005. However, weaknesses remain. For example further improvements need to be made to the speed of provision of social services from the date of assessment. Similarly, performance in the proportion of older people helped to live at home needs to be improved.

- 102 The Council has started the process of looking beyond the confines of health and social care and the creation of a Director role with responsibilities across service areas is significant. There has been extensive consultation with the relevant community, but progress is still needed including the broader ownership - beyond what was social care - of the issues faced by older people. Recent changes bode well but the impact will have to be assessed in the future. The best value review improvement plan (2003) for older people services does not have many specific measurable targets which involve the work of council departments outside social care. One major recommendation for the setting up of an older people's parliament has not been delivered. Progress on implementing other recommendations is less clear. A joint commissioning strategy for older people's services has also been published but it focuses on health and social care. The associated action plan lacks some detail and therefore is not as robust as it could be in providing a basis to take matters forward.

## Children and young people

- 103 Strong political commitment and good multi-agency partnerships, including with the voluntary and community sector, result in generally positive outcomes. However, provision for vulnerable groups is inconsistent. The Council's youth service is excellent and its youth offending service is good. Services are provided at a cost comparable with similar authorities. Use of resources and value for money are both adequate overall.
- 104 The Mayor's manifesto and strategic, corporate and community plans clearly put children and young people at the centre of economic regeneration. The priority placed on the integration of services to improve outcomes for children and young people is reflected in the restructuring of the Council. Provision has been reshaped and structures are now in place for the co-ordinated delivery of services in local neighbourhoods. The Children and Young People's Plan is embryonic but existing plans provide a firm basis upon which to move forward. Budgets for children and young people have been integrated. Financial management is adequate, but there is no formalised framework for monitoring and improving value for money. Performance management is adequate. Senior officers and senior councillors are well-informed and enthusiastically committed to improving services, but the knowledge of some elected members is under-developed, for instance over their responsibilities for corporate parenting and in ensuring value for money.
- 105 A range of actions are addressing priorities; but some are not yet fully implemented and others too recent to have improved outcomes. In addition, there are some long standing unresolved concerns, such as the level of sickness absence. There is a mixed track record on achieving priorities. Whilst positive outcomes include improvements in educational attainment, the Council fails to meet requirements for education in respect of children excluded from school. Not all schools accept collective responsibility for the admission of looked after children and hard to place pupils. There are inconsistencies within services in planning and provision for individual children and young people.

- 106** The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Health promotion is supported by comprehensive and well co-ordinated multi-agency services that are reducing long-standing health inequalities.
- 107** The combined work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate. Agencies work well together to protect children and young people most at risk but arrangements for establishing the whereabouts of vulnerable young people do not extend to all groups. The quality of analysis and planning for individuals is inconsistent. Disabled children and their families are generally positive about the support they can access from a good range of family support services. There is a lack of supportive or safe accommodation for careleavers who have the most complex needs and other vulnerable groups.
- 108** The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is adequate. The Council contributes well to a good integrated strategy for childcare and early years' education. In recent years, education services have had a positive impact on raising standards, but young people in secondary schools still do not make the same progress or achieve as well as young people of the same age nationally. Schools' capacity to improve behaviour has strengthened but there continues to be more permanent and temporary exclusions than found elsewhere. Not all excluded pupils receive sufficient time in education. The Council is committed to promoting inclusive practice but as yet, services are not co-ordinated well enough to ensure the needs of more vulnerable groups are met consistently.
- 109** The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. There are many opportunities for young people to take part in making decisions about local services and these have led to many changes in what is available. Consultation with young people of all ages from diverse backgrounds and vulnerable groups is systematic, but young people are not always aware of how they can take part in this or of the outcomes.
- 110** The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Strong mayoral and political determination drives improvements. The Council has been particularly successful in encouraging a wide range of partners to contribute to the planning and development of a coherent 14-19 curriculum. The proportion of young people continuing in education and training beyond the age of 16 has improved significantly in recent years and success rates are also improving. Provision for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities is adequate for those with low level needs, but less well established for those with complex or profound needs. Young people leaving the youth justice system and those leaving care are less likely to take up education, employment or training than their peers.

## 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 Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 7 to 18 November.
- 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.