

Corporate Assessment Report

June 2008



Corporate Assessment

City of Bradford Metropolitan District 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

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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 specific services for children and young people that are directly managed or commissioned by the Council, as well as relevant health and youth justice services provided by other bodies. It focuses on the contributions made by services to improving outcomes especially concerning safeguarding; services for looked after children; and services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The separate JAR report also 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 and the most recently published Annual Performance Assessment from Ofsted which covers all of the Council's children services.

Executive summary

- 5 Bradford Council is performing adequately. Effective leadership, good partnership working and a culture of challenge is now providing a positive focus and direction of travel to deliver improved outcomes for the whole of the district after a period of uncertainty and transition.
- 6 Community leadership is a developing strength. Bradford Council has undergone significant change over the last few years and the focus and direction now being provided by the Council has built a good level of trust, confidence and credibility amongst partners. The local strategic partnership is now well supported by the Council, and is being given a clearer focus and direction on delivering the partnership's current plans and building upon the opportunities arising from a fast growing population and the positive strength of the diversity of Bradford's community. The Council has clearly articulated that the transformation of the local economy is at the heart of its prioritised ambitions for the district with a strong emphasis on regeneration, skills and improving educational attainment, and plans have been developed to ensure that these ambitions are effectively delivered.
- 7 The Council and its partners are targeting the right things as they have a good knowledge of Bradford. Regular consultation with residents is undertaken on their own priorities and this is supported by data and research which is being brought into a more coherent format so that the Council and its partners can continually measure progress against what they set out to achieve. Plans have been developed to meet priorities in respect of crime, environment, transport, housing, economy and for children and young people. The Council is reviewing its priorities and strengthening their links to delivery at a service level.
- 8 User focus is good. The Council recognises that there are disparities across the district on matters such as health, crime and education and plans are in place to address these. There is a strong track record of engaging all communities across the district and the Council is planning to improve these arrangements further. Neighbourhood Forums and Area Committees are grounded in seeking the views of communities which are taken forward in action for delivery, thus ensuring a good degree of accountability at a local level. The Council takes account of the diverse needs of its communities such as addressing rural isolation as well the needs of Bradford's large black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. Ensuring that Bradford continues to strive to be a cohesive and inclusive district is central to plans and strategies.

- 9 Political and managerial leadership is good. The Council has set out its own ambition to be one of the best performing councils in the country in five years' time and has taken action to ensure services focus more effectively on delivering better outcomes for local people. The Council's senior management tier, which has changed significantly over the last two years, is providing a clear direction and focus to achieve this. Relationships between councillors and officers are good; they work effectively together in a culture of trust and respect. However, councillor development has been limited to date which in some cases has meant that councillors are not fully able to fulfil their roles. There is an adequate degree of political consensus around the ambitions, priorities and future direction which is important given the lack of overall control of the Council by any one political party. As a result employees have confidence that the changes taking place within the Council are the right things to do.
- 10 Capacity to meet the Council's ambitions is adequate. Financial capacity is sufficient to meet current priorities and there are good arrangements in place to improve capacity with partners. Increased capital receipts are being targeted to meet the transformational ambitions of Bradford. The Council has begun to improve its arrangements in areas such as project management and having more robust mechanisms in place to manage externally provided services. Capacity has been put in place at a senior management level but effective human resource management throughout the organisation is still being developed.
- 11 Value for money is adequate. Spending is focussed on current priorities and whilst there are some good examples of the Council achieving value for money, some performance does not compare well against similar councils. Whilst the Council has achieved its efficiency targets, there is no clear approach to ensure future efficiencies are clearly focused on achieving priorities.
- 12 Performance management is adequate. The Council's arrangements at an organisational and partnership level are good, with a focus on priority or underperforming areas. However this is yet to realise consistent improvements across all service areas. The effectiveness of scrutiny to hold services to account has been limited. There are good examples in place where the Council has responded positively to customer views and improved services as a result of this.
- 13 The Council's current service delivery and partnership activity is achieving positive results. Resident satisfaction with the Council has improved compared to a fall nationally. Economic activity is helping to create new business and get local people into jobs. There are still challenges in the provision of housing to be addressed as well as the impact of transport on climate change where progress has been slow. Bradford is becoming a cleaner city. Crime levels are falling with a notable reduction in burglary. Work to reduce tensions across communities is effective. There is a good track record of meeting the needs of older people. Activity has been undertaken to reduce health inequalities, including good scrutiny in some areas, but joint plans have not been developed and health problems persist.

- 14 Outcomes for children and young people are adequate overall. Infant mortality in Bradford is much worse than the national average, primarily because of deprivation factors. The teenage pregnancy rate is high, but until a recent reverse, had been declining steadily. Most children appear safe, and the number looked after by the Council has been declining. Whilst educational attainments at all stages are still well below national averages, the rate of improvement at key stage 2 and key stage 4 has been greater than nationally, but performance at key stage 1 is declining. Youth offending rates are high but improving faster than nationally, whilst the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training has also improved rapidly and is now close to the national average.

Areas for improvement

- 15 The Council is developing a Big Plan (its sustainable community strategy) with partners, which aims to improve the quality of life for local people. There are also a range of other plans and strategies that have recently been developed. The Council needs to be more explicit in the process of redirecting resources (for example those achieved through efficiencies) to meet corporate and service priorities to achieve these aims.
- 16 The Bradford District Transport Strategy 2006-2021 concentrates on developing road transport to enhance access to jobs and reduce congestion, but does not give sufficient emphasis to addressing sustainability. The Council needs to more effectively address sustainability issues through transport, which will better enable it to address the risks to global climate change that is one of its key considerations in delivering the ambitions for the district.
- 17 Despite improvements in some areas of health, the health inequalities gap with England as a whole remains. Working with its partners, the Council should develop a joint plan to achieve a faster improvement in the health of local people. It should maintain its focus on areas such as reducing infant mortality, tackling obesity, and improving overall life expectancy by ensuring that it concentrates its efforts on those activities that have the greatest impact on health.
- 18 Councillors have shown good community leadership at a local level for example through neighbourhood forums. However councillor development is not systematic and this risks limiting their capacity to fulfil their strategic and community leadership roles. The Council should ensure that training and development plans are in place for all councillors, linked to the delivery of their different roles and responsibilities. Developing councillors to better fulfil their roles will help the Council more effectively challenge and recognise progress being made against the agreed ambitions and priorities.
- 19 There have been improvements in performance management and scrutiny arrangements. However at the current rate of improvement in services the ambition to be a best performing council in five years time will not be achieved. Both councillors and officers need to ensure that performance management is sufficiently robust across all its services including a clearer emphasis on managing and improving value for money.
- 20 There has been good progress in re-structuring the Council's management at a senior level. However human resource management progress has been slow in particular on workforce planning and development and single status. The Council needs to increase the pace of change to more effectively address human resource matters.

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	2
	Performance management	2
What has been achieved?	Achievement	3
Overall corporate assessment score**		2
*Key to scores		
1 – below minimum requirements – inadequate performance		
2 – at only minimum requirements – adequate performance		
3 – consistently above minimum requirements – performing well		
4 – well above minimum requirements – performing strongly		

**Rules for determining the overall corporate assessment score

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

Context

The locality

- 21 Bradford Metropolitan District is in West Yorkshire and with a population of 493,000 is the fourth largest metropolitan district in England. It has a mix of densely populated urban centres with more rural and semi-rural areas to the west and north of the district. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 ranked Bradford as the 32nd most deprived local authority area in England; however there are neighbourhoods across the district with significantly higher levels of deprivation.
- 22 Transport links are good regionally with the M62 to the south of the district, direct rail links to London and other cities, and Leeds/Bradford Airport close by. Bradford is within the Leeds City Region area for the purposes of economic development. Housing stock in Bradford stood at 202,800 in 2007, a rise of 3.5 per cent since 2003, with private sector stock making up 83 per cent of the total. In 2005 around 8 per cent of private sector dwellings were deemed 'unfit', with above average levels of property (4,800) empty for six months or more. Average house prices in 2005 stood at £134,000 which was below the regional average of £151,000. Some 80 per cent of Bradford Community Housing Trust (former Council properties) are now meeting decency standards. It is estimated that an additional 54,000 homes will need to be built in Bradford over the next 20 years, which will mean a doubling of the current target of 1,390 each year. This challenge is coupled with a current total annual shortfall in affordable housing units in the district of 1,100.
- 23 Bradford's economy was historically based upon manufacturing. Like many areas in the North of England, as manufacturing declined service sector employment became more prominent, though manufacturing still accounts for 16.2 per cent of jobs, higher than the regional and national average. Around 60 per cent of people of working age have NVQ level 2 qualifications or above, which is lower than both regional and national averages. This is coupled with a high proportion (22 per cent) of people without a qualification. Unemployment levels remain higher in Bradford at 6.4 per cent compared to the regional average (5.4 per cent) and that for England (5.6 per cent). The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training continues to fall and now stands at 9.8 per cent of 16 to 18 year olds. The Gross Value Added per head of population in Bradford continues to grow but is still below regional and national averages.
- 24 In 2006 educational attainment results were comparatively poor with the proportion of children and young people achieving grades in all categories at key stage 2, key stage 3 and GCSE in the worst 25 per cent of single-tier and county councils. For most of these performance improved in 2007, in some cases more than nationally, though at key stage 1 it worsened. Bradford has experienced a narrowing of the gap in educational attainment when compared to other areas, which has been helped by a faster rate of improvement by children of Pakistani heritage.

- 25 Bradford is the fastest growing metropolitan area outside of London. The increasing population is particularly as a result of rates of increased childbirth and immigration. Official figures for 2005/06 indicate that some 5 to 7,000 migrants moved to Bradford, half of whom came from new European Union countries. Twenty four per cent of the population are from minority ethnic communities of whom 85 per cent are of Asian heritage. Young people make up 23 per cent of the population compared to 19 per cent nationally. With the population expected to rise by a further 100,000 over the next 20 years and an increasingly older population, this is putting pressures on the demand for services such as health, social care and business growth.
- 26 Life expectancy at birth of 74.9 years for men and 79.5 years for women is about one and a half years below the national average. There are above average mortality rates from smoking, cancer and cardiovascular diseases and an above average proportion of residents with diabetes. There is also an eight-year gap in male life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas in the district. Bradford has high levels of infant mortality that have shown an upward trend in the last ten years and above average incidence of disabilities and complex health needs amongst children.
- 27 Levels of crime in Bradford are variable when compared with similar demographic areas. In 2006/07 the rates of burglary and theft from motor vehicles were worse than other areas, robbery and the theft of motor vehicles about average but violent crime was better than average. Youth offending and changes in re-offending were both worse than average.

The Council

- 28 Since 2000 no party has had overall control in Bradford. The Executive is led by a minority Conservative administration that currently draws on the Liberal Democrat Group for support around budget and leadership positions. Labour holds 39 seats, the Conservatives 32, the Liberal Democrats 14, the Green Party 3 and the British National Party 2. The Executive consists of seven portfolios including the Leader of the Council. There are seven Improvement Committees in place which carry out the overview and scrutiny function and are co-ordinated through the Corporate Improvement Committee. There are also five Area Committees covering the five parliamentary constituencies in the district.

- 29** The Council's management structure has experienced major changes over the last two years. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) comprises the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Public Health (joint appointment with the PCT) and seven strategic directors. This is the third chief executive to be employed by the Council in the last three years. Below this level a new tier of management has been introduced which resulted in the deletion of 51 heads of service posts and now comprises 30 assistant directors (or equivalent). The top two tiers of management posts have only recently been completely filled. The Council employs around 21,000 people, including teachers. Amongst the best paid 5 per cent of staff, there are above-average proportions of women, disabled people and people of BME origin; the proportion for higher-paid disabled staff places the Council in the best 25 per cent in England. In the whole workforce, the representation of people of BME origin is better than average, while for disabled people it is worse than average. The Council delivers some services through external providers for example Education Bradford (for a full range of education services).
- 30** In 2007/08, the Council's gross revenue expenditure is £1 billion. The planned capital programme is £105 million. In 2007/08, the band D property council tax charge was £1,040 compared with an average for this type of authority of £1,124.

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

Ambition

- 31 The Council is performing well in this area. It is providing strong, visible leadership of partnerships, particularly to raise the district's aspirations in terms of regeneration, skills and education. Ambitions are based upon good information about Bradford's current and future context. Engagement with Bradford's diverse communities is good and the Council has taken a leading role in ensuring that Bradford is a cohesive community. A Sustainable Community Strategy is being developed, building upon Bradford's well established 2020 Vision.
- 32 Ambitions for the district are clear and challenging. Since 2000, the Council and its partners have been working to their community strategy (2020 Vision) with the aim that 'Bradford District will be a vibrant, prosperous, creative, peaceful, diverse, inclusive place where people are proud of their shared values'. This has consistently been used to inform partnership plans.
- 33 Ambitions are grounded in good intelligence and information. Overall intelligence and data has been used by partners and clearly outlines the challenges Bradford faces in terms of housing, health, economic activity, education, environment and community safety. The Council is alert to the challenge of continuing to close the gap between its most and least deprived communities and neighbourhoods. This information is translated into priorities and actions for example, to improve access to jobs and housing, taking into account the diverse needs of the district's communities.
- 34 The Council is providing clear and visible leadership of partnership working. Leadership of the local strategic partnership provided by the Council's Leader and Chief Executive is now strong and dynamic. The Council provides an effective leadership role on the delivery of ambitions and priorities in the current community strategy. This work is based upon a culture of respect, trust and constructive challenge amongst all partners. Partners recognise the step change the Council has made over the last 18 months to strengthen partnership working, in particular raising the district's aspirations and feelings of pride as well as the ambitions for the economic development of the district. There is high level Council representation across all the 'family of partnerships' by cabinet portfolio-holders and officers. The Council does not dominate partnership working and ensures that partners play a full and effective role, for example enabling the business community in Bradford to develop the economic strategy for the district. This leadership role has been pivotal in Bradford securing inward investment in manufacturing and retail developments, to act as a catalyst to improve the local economy.

- 35 The Council's commitment to meaningful engagement with its diverse communities is a particular strength. Councillors provide good leadership within their communities through effective ongoing consultation, for example through well-established area committees and neighbourhood forums, which also engage with Bradford's rural communities. Ongoing engagement with specific groups has informed a range of priorities for specific plans and strategies. For example the Children and Young People's Plan includes a stronger focus on anti-bullying work as a direct result of the input of children and young people.
- 36 Ambitions take into account the changing local and global context. In partnership with others the Council is effectively reviewing and refining the ambitions for Bradford through its Sustainable Community Strategy (The Big Plan). This builds upon the well-established 2020 Vision. The Big Plan ambition is centred upon transformational change in the economy through regenerating the district, and improving education outcomes and skills levels. This has been set in the context of Bradford's increasing population and the need for the economy to be strengthened, balanced with issues of equality, inclusion and cohesion whilst at the same time dealing with threats from global climate change. Big Plan ambitions take into account national and regional policy frameworks and reflect the Council's expressed commitment in its agreed Corporate Plan for 2008/09 that educational attainment and regeneration should be at the centre of its partnership working. At the time of our review, Big Plan ambitions had not been translated into long term outcome measures and targets but these are in the process of being developed. The development of the Big Plan will enable the Council and its partners to meet the current and future priorities of the district more effectively.
- 37 Ambitions now outlined in the Big Plan have been informed by effective consultation. Since early 2007, the Council has been engaging partners and the public against ten themes that outline the current context and challenges for Bradford. The themes included the economy, education, housing, transport and crime. Different methods of consultation were used such as the 'Speak Out' Survey, open events, neighbourhood forums and focus groups targeting people from low income families, BME groups and disabled people. This engagement informed the approach being undertaken in the Big Plan - for example a clearer articulation that the impacts on sustainability and cohesion should be considered in all the priorities being developed.
- 38 Good leadership provided by the Council helps ensure that communities in Bradford are cohesive. The Leader of the Council takes political responsibility for cohesion. For a number of years, the Council has undertaken a range of actions with its partners and the community to foster a sense of pride in Bradford and provide opportunities for people from different communities to understand and respect differences as well as share common understanding and values. The Council's ambitions are strongly influenced by its commitment to ensuring that all parts of the community benefit from developments such as access to skills, jobs, education and housing.

- 39 The Council is providing wider community leadership by taking a more proactive approach to regional working. It is basing its rationale for regional working on a number of key strategic issues: transportation with a particular emphasis on the Leeds/Bradford corridor; local and regional housing needs; and economic development. The Council Leader is Chairman of the Leeds City Region skills and labour market panel, which is particularly important given the comparatively lower levels of skills in Bradford. This enables the Council focus its efforts to ensure regional work reflects the ambitions of Bradford.
- 40 The Council also has its own clear and challenging internal ambitions, linked to the delivery of the district's ambitions, to make itself a more efficient and effective organisation. Employees and councillors are clear and articulate about the Council's ambitions and priorities and speak enthusiastically of how their role contributes to their achievement. The Council is clear that becoming more efficient and effective will enable it to deliver better services to local people, and is taking action to achieve this. An example of this has been stronger working with Education Bradford to help ensure that there is a joint sustained focus to more effectively improve the lives of children and young people. This is particularly important considering that educational attainment has been put at the centre of delivering the ambitions for the district. All this enables the Council to focus on its role in delivering the ambitions of the district as well as making itself more efficient and effective.

Prioritisation

- 41 The Council is performing adequately in this area. Plans developed in partnership with other organisations to address the ambitions of Bradford are being finalised, with the Big Plan providing the mechanism to bring all the plans into a coherent framework. The Council is revising its priorities to ensure that it can clearly identify its contribution to achieving the Big Plan and there is a track record of deploying resources to priorities. Neighbourhood working is well embedded and plans are being developed to enhance this work further. The Council can take difficult decisions and stick to them which is positive considering the political balance of the Council.
- 42 The Council's corporate plan clearly identifies seven priority themes for the period 2007/08. These are: educating and supporting children; creating a more prosperous district; safer and stronger communities; improving the environment; healthier communities and choice for vulnerable adults and older people; improving customer services; and being an efficient and effective council. These themes are supported by a range of actions and performance measures, informed by wider ambitions for the district and designed to demonstrate whether council services are improving and if better value for money is being achieved.

- 43 A range of good plans have been developed and put in place. An economic strategy has been developed which highlights the critical role of education for the long-term prosperity and competitiveness of Bradford with the coordination of regeneration plans being developed from this. The economic strategy is notable in that it was developed in conjunction with businesses in Bradford. A good Children and Young People's Plan was revised in 2007 (which is in advance of national requirements) and reflects the importance of improving educational attainment as a transformational priority for Bradford. A revised Older Peoples Partnership Strategy has been agreed which has been influenced by the views of older people. Previously there have been no joint plans to address health inequalities - this is being developed through the Big Plan. Work has already started on implementing each of the currently agreed plans enabling partners to help meet the ambitions for Bradford.
- 44 A good approach to cohesion has been developed through the Shared Futures plan. Eight outcomes have been agreed: 'opportunities to meet with or connect with people from different communities; strong leadership which can articulate our aspirations for our shared future; services, policies and practices that can build a shared future for the district; all young people contributing to and shaping our shared future; community tensions that are dealt with appropriately; inappropriate behaviours being consistently and effectively challenged; funding and resource allocation processes that are transparent and fair; and all residents and all communities across the district having a mechanism through which they can be heard'. The approach to cohesion builds upon a range of actions that are already in place for example enabling young people from different communities to participate in sports activity, schools linking project, mediation services and establishing faith forums.
- 45 The Council works flexibly to ensure it can meet its priorities for the medium to long term. It is developing a coherent approach to transport, housing, waste management, and building healthier communities. Many of these issues have been developed into more detailed plans as a result of reviews: for example a transport strategy for Bradford was agreed in April 2007, a strategic housing review has been completed and a waste procurement strategy is being developed. As the Big Plan is currently being finalised, the Council has determined that its own priorities will be reviewed for the period 2008 onwards to more clearly articulate the Council's contribution to the delivery of priorities for the district, for example addressing skills issues by increasing the rate of improvement in educational attainment. In addition to this, the Council is strengthening the translation of corporate priorities into service plans as the practice of this has been limited. This demonstrates a clear understanding of the key challenges that the Council needs to address if its ambitions for Bradford are to be realised and if its own role in delivering against priorities is to be most effective.

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- 46** The Council has clear plans to build upon its strengths of neighbourhood engagement and working. Neighbourhood and area planning arrangements are being used to engage the Council and its partners at a local level and deliver work to meet local priorities within communities such as tackling environmental concern. As part of enhancing its ambitions for the district, the Council is ensuring its processes and structures are more robust. For example it is putting in place a stronger neighbourhood management and neighbourhood team approach in partnership with other organisations such as the police. This is ensuring that ambitions and priorities are translated into action at a local level.
- 47** There is good working between the Council and its partners to ensure that the resourcing of priorities is sustainable and to identify those priorities that require an increased rate of improvement. For example the current Local Area Agreement (LAA) reflects current priorities for the district and the new LAA is being influenced by the Big Plan. A range of plans is currently being implemented to achieve the physical regeneration of Bradford such as Masterplans for Bradford City Centre, Airedale and Manningham, while a Masterplan for the Canal Road area is also being progressed. The Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) is being implemented and has produced some good achievements already. The implementation of these plans is important as they help to improve further the education and skills attainment of local people to ensure that they benefit from the expansion of the local and regional economy.
- 48** The Council's deployment of resources to meet priorities is adequate overall. The medium term financial strategy (MTFS) identifies links between corporate priorities, as set out in the Corporate Plan and the community strategy. There has been some limited redirecting of revenue resources to meet current priorities such as additional investment of £1.5 million in education in 2007/08. The use of the capital receipt of £51.5 million from the sale of the Council's share of Leeds Bradford International Airport demonstrates the Council's commitment to spending on the transformational priorities of education and regeneration. This demonstrates that the Council does use resources to meet its priorities as they become available.
- 49** The Council has shown it can take difficult decisions. Examples of this include the establishment of children's homes across the district, the re-structure of the Council's management arrangements as well as dealing with possible redundancies. These decisions are more notable as the current minority administration has no overall control and is meeting opposition from residents in some cases.

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

Capacity

- 50 The Council is performing adequately in this area. Councillors and employees generally understand their roles and responsibilities well. Financial capacity is sufficient to meet priorities. There are good arrangements in place to improve capacity with partners, and the Council has improved its management of externally provided services. Risk management arrangements are sound. However, in human resource management and councillor development progress has been limited. The Council has a good track record of addressing historical weaknesses such as project management and plans are being progressed to ensure that it improves.
- 51 Roles and responsibilities within the Council are clear and generally well understood by councillors and employees. The Council's constitution grants executive authority to the cabinet collectively, which is effective within Bradford's current political context, with full Council being retained as the ultimate decision-making body. Councillors and officers work well together within an appropriate ethical framework, although the political balance of the Council makes this more challenging. There is a good relationship between scrutiny and the executive. Proper processes are in place for transparency and challenge, reflecting the way that Bradford Council operates as an organisation.
- 52 Management of the Council is good. The Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) provides strong leadership and focuses upon the right key issues such as performance and policy development. Corporate working is also being enhanced by regular assistant director events to discuss key organisational issues for current and future years. Cabinet lead councillors meet frequently with the respective CMT officers to discuss policy proposals to be considered by the Council. Good arrangements are in place for ensuring all political parties are aware of policy developments and future challenges; these are valued by councillors. This means that senior managers and councillors understand what the Council is trying to achieve and how it is ensuring capacity is deployed to the right priorities.
- 53 The Council's arrangements for managing its business risks are performing well. They are becoming more embedded with a sound infrastructure in place to ensure that all strategic and service risks are identified and considered and actions put in place to mitigate them. There have also been improvements in considering risks in partnership working. The approach is becoming more systematically embedded; for example, it was used effectively in considering new waste procurement arrangements. This is improving the capacity of the Council to manage its risks more effectively.

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- 54** Scrutiny arrangements are good. Four of the seven Improvement Committees are chaired by opposition councillors, which is good practice. Clear work plans are agreed at the beginning of each year. Scrutiny has been used to more effectively challenge areas such as Supporting People and addressing worklessness.
- 55** Councillor development has been limited to date. There has been inconsistent support for some councillors in discharging their roles for example around executive and scrutiny. The Council also does not have a systematic and progressive approach to councillor development. This risks limiting the ability of councillors to undertake some of their roles fully and effectively.
- 56** Human resource management is under-developed. There is no systematic whole organisation assessment of the training and development needs required to ensure the council has the capacity, skills and capability to ensure it achieves its priorities. The implementation of single status has been slow and is yet to be concluded. Action has been taken to address sickness absence; this is showing improvement but absence levels remain high. There are some areas which the Council is good at such as internal communication with employees which has shown an improvement between 2003 and 2006. Whilst employees have concerns regarding reductions in workforce levels, they understand the rationale for the changes taking place and have a commitment to it. There are examples of employees being encouraged to be innovative but this is not systematic. The Council recognises these areas for improvement and is beginning to address them. A Pay and Workforce Strategy for 2008-2011 was agreed in January 2008 and relations with the Trade Unions are improving. This overall slow progress on human resource management risks the ability of the Council to ensure consistent improvements in the delivery of its services.
- 57** The Council uses its own budgets and is prepared to commit additional resources to improve capacity to meet priorities through partnership working. Examples of this include work with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to promote healthier lifestyles, joint activity with the police and housing providers to tackle anti-social behaviour, and with other organisations to ensure there is sufficient child care in the community. A good commissioning framework for procured services has been in place for several years and is used effectively to ensure initiatives meet priorities. An example of using capacity more effectively was the decision to make Bradford Vision (a limited company that provided the support function to the LSP) part of the Council's structure, rather than remaining as a separate organisation. This was to ensure that the contribution of partnership working was more clearly directed to deliver the district's ambitions and priorities and to address shortcomings in partnership working resulting from numerous changes within the Council over the past few years. Effective working with partners enhances capacity.

- 58 The Council is making improvements to address some previous weaknesses. Project management has improved and is being overseen by a project management board. Approaches to procurement are being developed to ensure it is more focussed on contributing to corporate priorities and to build upon good practice in particular services. An asset management strategy is being developed covering nine key areas including disposal of surplus assets, development of estate strategy and capital investment and improvements in facilities management. Client management arrangements have been strengthened to help ensure that key services that have been externalised are delivering to agreed performance and milestones: for example, to deliver improved educational outcomes through Education Bradford.
- 59 Adequate progress has been made on equalities. Until recently the Council had been in breach of its duty to promote race equality as it failed to update and revise its Race Equality Scheme for the period 2002-2005. The Corporate Equality and Diversity Strategy, written in December 2007 for the period up to 2010, draws on what has already been achieved and outlines how the Council will develop and promote equality and diversity within the Council and across the district. Service plans are being revised to more clearly articulate the approach and arrangements in place for monitoring and review of progress around equality and diversity. There is a range of activity already to address equalities: for example, the Leader of the Council chairs the district wide Equalities Forum and recently the Council has refreshed its equality impact assessments across all of its services. This enables the Council to ensure the development and promotion of diversity is more effectively embedded.
- 60 The Council manages its resources well but challenges remain. There are two areas of financial pressure, in Adult Services and Corporate Services, where there were overspends in 2006/07. These have been managed within the overall budget for 2006/07, offset by underspends elsewhere, and have been subject to constant monitoring and review in 2007/08. Levels of reserves are allocated on a risk basis. Budget-setting processes have been brought forward to better inform decision-making but the timing of the Big Plan means that budget and planning cycles are not yet aligned. The Council has adequate arrangements for delivering value for money (VfM). The Council systematically assesses opportunities for achieving efficiencies with a requirement in each service to achieve a level of efficiency savings, but it does not clearly articulate how these efficiencies will be used to meet future priorities. It has improved the way it reviews costs and performance but arrangements to improve VfM, including councillor involvement, remain under-developed. This means the Council risks under-achieving against its priority of being 'an efficient and effective council'.

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- 61** The Council uses ICT effectively to meet its priorities. Significant investment through Bradford i has been used to improve a range of systems including payroll, land charges, and revenues and benefits, although the benefits to the Council in terms of reduced staffing costs and improved back office processes are yet to be fully realised. B Direct provides a contact centre, a multi-agency one-stop shop in Bradford city centre and other one stop shops in areas such as Keighley and Manningham. These deliver good quality services and have resulted in improved customer experience. For example the multi-agency one-stop shop includes Job Centre Plus, council tax, Housing benefits and Citizens Advice Bureau, enabling residents to deal with a range of employment and financial issues in a single visit. There has been significant improvement in the way complaints are dealt with following the creation of a corporate complaints team and satisfaction with handling complaints has increased. This demonstrates the Council's commitment to improving customer services.

Performance management

- 62** The Council performs adequately in this area. A revised performance management framework has recently been developed, building upon good arrangements already in place within the Council, but is not yet embedded to consistently improve delivery across all service areas. Councillor involvement in performance management is under-developed. Performance management at a partnership level is good, with plans in place for further improvement. The Council responds well to review and challenge including from customers and can show improvements in services as a result of this.
- 63** Performance management is adequate. The corporate performance clinic focuses on a range of indicators that are either of high importance or that reflect areas where there has been poor performance. Well-established service performance clinics help service management teams concentrate efforts on improving services, including the development of local performance indicators. Actions at a corporate and service level have achieved improvement in some areas such as sickness absence, educational attainment at key stages 2 and 4, satisfaction with waste removal, improved telephony performance in benefits, improved star rating for children's social care services and a significant increase in requests for library services. The Council has effectively used benchmarking with others: the council tax collection rate has been improved after benchmarking with a better performing council, whose officers carried out a peer review of Bradford's practices. Weaknesses remain, however. The integration of performance, finance and risk management is still at an early stage. Despite improvements at other school examination stages, a steady decline in attainment at key stage 1 has only recently been picked up and acted upon. The Council's rate of performance improvement fell slightly in 2006/07 compared to the previous year; performance improved in some areas but improvement is neither consistent nor sustained across all services.

- 64 The Council is clearly committed to improving its approach to performance management. A comprehensive performance framework was approved in November 2007, focusing on the key principles of achieving outcomes, transparency, accountability, accuracy and timeliness of data, and pursuit of continuous improvement. The framework explicitly recognises the need for a culture of performance management, and reflects a commitment to enhance the skills of all those involved in performance management. The new approach builds on activities already in place, such as performance clinics at service and corporate level. It clarifies responsibilities and mechanisms, though it does not make clear how Improvement Committees relate to the Executive. The new framework provides a good foundation for further improvement in performance management, but as yet it is too soon to assess its impact.
- 65 Councillor involvement in performance management is under-developed. Portfolio leads meet regularly with strategic directors to maintain an overview of performance improvement. Whilst there have been improvements to reports that go to scrutiny and executive these do not meet the needs of councillors, although some councillors are clear about who is responsible for performance management, there is confusion amongst others. Councillor involvement in target setting is limited. Recently meetings have been established for the Leader of the Council to challenge individual portfolio-holders (supported by the relevant strategic director) on performance within their area. The current arrangements mean that councillors are unable to play their full role in performance management.
- 66 The Council is keen to learn from and act upon internal and external challenge. In light of previous weaknesses, the Council has invited external organisations to review areas such as project management and procurement. It has responded positively to these reviews, incorporating the findings into a comprehensive and integrated improvement plan. There is also good internal challenge through the Service Improvement Team which carries out improvement reviews, reported to the relevant Improvement Committee. In 2007 reviews were completed on efficiency, housing strategy and the local transport strategy; action plans have been put in place to address recommendations from the reviews.
- 67 Performance management at partnership level is good. The performance management framework for the local strategic partnership provides regular intelligence and information about performance across the partnership; this is outcome based and robust. A good overview (called a 'dashboard') covers performance progress, explanations on variances, resources used and actions to be addressed. This is complemented by more detailed information on progress achieved against specific measures. The Council and its partners are continually strengthening approaches to performance management as the governance arrangements for the local strategic partnership are revised as a result of the Big Plan. These arrangements have led to positive improvements in outcomes for local people.

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- 68** The Council is committed to improving the demographic and performance information it uses with its partners to manage and improve performance. With this in mind it is developing the Bradford Observatory, a portal where council-specific performance and joint activity with partners can be tracked against the achievement of outcomes. It will allow the Council and its partners to see, for example, if the gap has closed between the more deprived communities and neighbourhoods and the rest of the district. This development has the potential to provide the Council and its partners with a better understanding of the impact of activity on achievement of outcomes and the extent to which value for money is being achieved.
- 69** The approach to improving the customer experience is good. The Council has established a new Council-wide complaints system and takes seriously the need to respond to grievances about service delivery at all levels of the organisation. Service users are involved in reviewing performance, for example as lay assessors visiting care homes, 'mystery shopping' services by disabled people, and audits of service delivery in the Youth Service conducted by young people. This has resulted in improvements in service delivery.

What has been achieved?

- 70 Overall the Council is performing well in this area. The current community strategy, area-based development frameworks and council plans provide a coherent set of mechanisms through which local and national priorities are delivered. Satisfaction with council services overall rose from 42 per cent in 2003 to 52 per cent in 2006, while nationally there was a small decrease in satisfaction. In 2006/07, 21 per cent of nearly 100 performance indicators (PIs) were amongst the best-performing (top 25 per cent) of all single tier councils. Over the last three years the proportion of PIs that improved was similar to that in other single-tier councils, but the proportion that improved in the period 2005/06 to 2006/07 was below average.
- 71 There has been mixed progress on developing sustainable communities. Economic regeneration initiatives have had a positive impact upon Bradford's economy. Key plans have been implemented to improve the housing offer in Bradford but challenges in housing provision persist. There has been an improvement in the cleanliness of the district, which is recognised by the community. Recycling has increased and resident satisfaction has continued to improve. The Council is effectively developing its transport infrastructure to aid the economy, but its focus on reducing car use and the impact of transport on the climate change is weaker.
- 72 Effective working between the Council and its partners is making Bradford safer and stronger. Crime levels continue to fall and residents feel safer in their communities. The approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and dealing with substance misuse has developed well. Responses to emergency situations have been effective and well-established arrangements for dealing with tensions between communities have prevented problems from escalating.
- 73 The Council works well with partners to improve the health of Bradford's residents. Whilst life expectancy has improved, health problems persist in the district. Good initiatives have been put in place to encourage residents to adopt healthier lifestyles but a clear plan to address this is still to be developed. There has been some notable scrutiny undertaken to understand how factors impact upon people's health with actions being implemented to address this.
- 74 There is a well established approach to meeting the needs of older people beyond social care activities. A range of effective mechanisms are in place to engage with older people; older people's views have influenced service delivery. There has been good work undertaken by the Council to ensure that its plans for older people meet the needs of its diverse communities.

- 75 Work to improve the lives of children and young people is having positive results. Improvement in educational attainment at key stage 2 and key stage 4 has been faster than nationally, but performance at key stage 1 has declined. Teenage pregnancy rates have until recently been declining steadily. Preventive work means the number of children looked after by the Council has been declining. Youth offending rates are improving faster than nationally. The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training has also improved rapidly.

Sustainable communities and transport

- 76 There has been steady progress on implementing key economic plans. Phase one of the Manningham Masterplan has been implemented involving a major building development at Lister's Mill which is located in a deprived inner city community and provides high quality housing and community facilities. The City Centre Masterplan is being implemented with the building of two major residential developments. Although progress has been slow on other key developments (eg Westfield), the Council has been pivotal in recently ensuring that the pace of development increased.
- 77 There have been positive improvements in the regeneration of Bradford. Resources such as the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative have been effectively used to help promote business and enterprise in the district. This has contributed to 356 new businesses being established and 1,570 people assisted into employment. The Council has invested over £1.8 million in its Skills for Work team, which is working with over 2,100 employed and unemployed people to raise skill levels and employment, including 55 people with a disability who are employed in Industrial Services Group. The Jobs@ Team works across the district providing services for people seeking employment and with employers looking to recruit staff. Jobs@ moved 578 Bradford residents into jobs in 2006/07. These are made up of people from all areas including claimants, non-claimants, disabled people, and residents of BME communities. All of this activity has helped contribute to an increases in land values, rateable values and the Gross Value Added of Bradford's economy.
- 78 There has also been a positive approach to combining regeneration activity with housing improvements. Regen 2000 (a £28 million Single Regeneration Budget programme) has delivered environmental improvements on Leeds Road, improved some 600 private sector dwellings and helped over 420 residents into jobs. Bradford Trident - a £50 million New Deal for Communities scheme in one of the most deprived areas of Bradford - has successfully delivered against a range of priorities, including the creation of over 860 jobs and 1,856 private sector properties improved.

- 79 The Council and its partners make effective use of the District's cultural heritage and assets, to help with economic regeneration. The Council has encouraged the growth of creative industries, by securing funding and skills development. The Council delivers a successful programme of major events and exhibitions which engages communities from right across the district. These include events and festivals such as the annual Bradford Mela Festival which in 2006 attracted 350,000 visitors and generated £6 million of economic activity.
- 80 Progress on the Council's strategic housing approach has been mixed. The Council and its partners face significant challenges to meet projected future housing needs, given the district's growing population. Activity to ensure that social housing is up to decency standards has resulted in an increase in such properties meeting these standards from 40 per cent in 2003 to 85 per cent in 2007. However a review in 2007 identified a range of service improvements required including better client management for homelessness services and shortening of waiting times for adaptations to homes for disabled or elderly clients. The Supporting People re-inspection in 2007 also labelled Bradford's housing for vulnerable people as poor, with poor prospects for improvement. The housing strategy is currently being updated by the Bradford Housing Partnership. The Council has now put in place a clear action plan to address the weaknesses identified for its housing function and has brought in new management to help drive it forward.
- 81 The Council has improved Bradford's environment. It has delivered a coordinated response to environmental issues involving other organisations, for example enforcement activity against environmental nuisance such as fly-tipping. The refurbishment of parks has been impressive and four now hold Green Flag status. There has been proactive work with communities on reducing waste and improving recycling. This has resulted in marked improvements in cleanliness and satisfaction, particularly in the most deprived areas of the district. Recycling performance increased from 17 per cent in 2004/05 to 24.7 per cent in 2007/08 which is coupled with an increase in satisfaction the availability of local recycling facilities.

- 82 The current approach to transport undermines the Council's commitment to environmental sustainability. The Council works collaboratively with its partners in West Yorkshire and the Leeds City Region to develop strategies for integrated transport and to boost the economy. It has supplemented the sub-regional Local Transport Plan 2 with the Bradford District Transport Strategy 2006-2021. However, the strategy concentrates on developing road transport to enhance access to jobs and reduce congestion, at the expense of sustainability. There have been improvements to the transport interchanges in Bradford and Keighley which have contributed to the high satisfaction residents express with both local bus services and information about those services – on both measures Bradford is amongst the 25 per cent best-performing areas. Despite this, bus patronage in Bradford continues to decline as it does elsewhere in the country, apart from journeys encouraged by free travel passes for older people. There has been some action to encourage people out of their cars, such as travel plans for schools and a car-share scheme, but more significant actions, such as increased parking charges, or creation of lanes for cars with at least two occupants, have been postponed to 2011-2016. This means there is a risk that car use, and its environmental impact, will continue to increase.
- 83 The Council is making steady progress on sustainability. The tonnage of household waste sent to landfill is reducing and carbon dioxide emissions from the Council's own activities fell by 2.4 per cent between 2005/06 and 2006/07. The Council has committed to the Nottingham Declaration on climate change and is currently developing a climate change strategy for the next eight years. It is also demonstrating community leadership by co-sponsoring the Eco-City campaign to encourage local businesses and public bodies to reduce their impact on the environment.

Safer and stronger communities

- 84 There have been positive achievements in making Bradford a safer and stronger district. The Safer Communities Bradford partnership is effective and jointly led by the Council and Police and is a good example of community leadership. There are a range of performance measures and actions in place and the Council and partners have reviewed structures and governance with partnerships being extended to tackle specific areas such as acquisitive and violent crime. Links between strategic working and delivery at a neighbourhood level are being strengthened. There is a good understanding of crime and anti-social behaviour across Bradford. This is reflected in a reduction over the last three years in the number of people stating they were fearful of becoming a victim of crimes such as burglary, car crime and robbery.
- 85 Crime levels are reducing. Since 2004 overall crime has reduced by almost 28 per cent and continues to fall. Most notably, burglary levels fell by almost 20 per cent in 2007, helping Bradford to become a safer district.

- 86** There have been positive developments in tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB). Following on from agreeing an ASB strategy, a full multi-agency review of ASB policies, structures and procedures took place during 2007. Partners recognised that more effective case management and performance/outcome monitoring was required, including more interventions at an earlier stage. This has been reflected in work such as issuing a range of 'red' and 'yellow' warning letters thus enabling the Council to focus on prevention and having to resort less to punitive measures such as seeking anti-social behaviour orders. Negative perceptions regarding ASB amongst those residents surveyed fell from 50 per cent in 2004 to 30 per cent in 2007.
- 87** There has been steady progress in tackling substance misuse. The Council has been pivotal in the development of the drugs and alcohol strategy, which is incorporated into the Safer Communities strategy. Good intelligence and information has been gathered to understand the scale of the problem of drug misuse and this has informed plans developed by the Council with its partners. The Council ensures that appropriate services are in place for drug users which has helped Bradford achieve an increase in the number of drug users in receiving treatment and an improvement to 80 per cent of people staying in treatment services. An alcohol strategy was agreed in December 2007 and builds upon good practice already in existence in Bradford. For example, joint operations with the Police to check upon licensed premises to ensure they are not in breach of licence conditions.
- 88** Achievements in respect of road safety are mixed. A multi-agency road safety partnership deploys a range of initiatives to address road safety. The number of people killed or seriously injured on roads fell by 12 per cent between 1998 and 2005, but this improvement was smaller than in other areas and 2006 and 2007 showed a worsening. In 2005 the Council met the government target for a 50 per cent reduction by 2010 in the number of children killed or seriously injured, but in subsequent years performance has been worse. A plan has been developed to help address the recent deterioration in performance.
- 89** Emergency planning is good. A business continuity framework for the Council has recently been developed, focusing initially on business critical systems. This can be updated electronically, enabling services to keep it up to date. The Council's emergency planning is particularly good, with a clear approach in terms of responsibility and resource availability. The effectiveness of this approach has been demonstrated when parts of the district have been subject to flooding, with clear processes in place to learn lessons from the experience and to improve the response in the future.

- 90 Community tensions are dealt with effectively. A partnership approach is well established with weekly meetings complemented by monthly multi-agency 'tension' meetings. Actions undertaken include identifying and highlighting possible threats to community relations, community mediation services and training for service providers and community volunteers, collecting and sharing information and data on demographics and monitoring. The effectiveness of this approach was well demonstrated after a specific incident and the well-established partnership approach taken meant that there were no negative repercussions. This systematic approach to cohesion is also reflective of a reduction in the proportion of people who had concerns about being victim of racial harassment or attack. There has also been an increase in the number of hate crime incidents reported, which is in line with the Council's targets contained in the Safer Communities Strategy.
- 91 Work with the voluntary and community sectors is fair. The previous compact had little or no impact in terms of changes in work with the voluntary and community sectors. A revised compact has been developed with the involvement of the voluntary and community sectors, and aims, objectives, implementation and review arrangements agreed. Improvement in this area is crucial to ensuring effective working between the Council and the voluntary and community sectors, and to enabling partners in these sectors to contribute effectively to achievement against priorities for the district.

Healthier communities

- 92 There has been steady progress towards improving the health of local communities. Life expectancy is rising in Bradford - between 2003 and 2006 mortality rates in Bradford's most deprived areas improved at more than twice the rate of those in the least deprived areas, demonstrating the impact of targeted action. However, the gap between the England average and Bradford as a whole has not narrowed since 2003.
- 93 A Strategic Health Improvement Partnership has been established with good engagement between the Council and health partners, the appointment of the Director of Public Health jointly with the PCT, as well as improved co-ordination of activities and services. The Council and its partners have used the recent reorganisation of health from four PCTs into one as an opportunity to provide increased capacity and to co-ordinate detailed local knowledge and local understanding of health needs. They have undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the needs of the district which has been used to inform the shaping of the new LAA. The Council and PCT have merged budgets to create a Healthy Communities Fund of around £2.7 million. It has been used to fund 70 projects in the third sector and infrastructure support for integrated working between the Council and the PCT. These activities are now being embedded in the emerging Health and Wellbeing Board and in improved joint commissioning processes that are bringing core budgets together with the aim of reducing health inequalities.

- 94 However, there is no overall plan in place for health improvement. This is being addressed through the Big Plan which aims to plan interventions more effectively. The Big Plan identifies six key issues to improve the health and wellbeing of the district. These are: obesity and nutrition; sexual health; alcohol, tobacco and substance misuse; mental health; infant mortality; and children's health. The Big Plan also acknowledges that other areas will contribute to reducing health inequalities such as housing, transport, education, employment and environment. As a result of this work the PCT, through its Commissioning for Health Strategy, has prioritised work to address these issues.
- 95 Scrutiny is helping to improve approaches to health. The Council co-sponsored an Infant Mortality Commission to understand better the reasons for the high infant mortality rates in Bradford compared to other areas, the results of which were published in 2006. In 2005 it also undertook work to understand the levels of, and reasons for, obesity in the district. In both cases action was undertaken with partners and has resulted in new joint services being developed, for example, the Council/PCT work on diet and exercise.
- 96 The Council and its partners have successfully promoted the uptake of healthier lifestyles. A range of services developed and promoted across the district is having a positive impact. These include: work between the Council and PCT on programmes to increase participation in physical activity (such as B Active); a tobacco reduction group; activity through the healthy schools initiative; and workplace initiatives. There has been a reduction in smoking (including amongst pregnant women) and increased physical activity amongst children, adults and older people. This activity has contributed to a reduction in the standardised mortality rate (the ratio of local death rate to the national average) for cardio-vascular disease from 117.6 in 2004/05 to 110.5 in 2006/07, a decrease faster than the rate in England. The result of this has also contributed to a reduction in the rates for people under 75 years dying from heart disease and stroke (or related diseases) and cancer.
- 97 Approaches to tackling health inequality have been tailored to meet the needs of Bradford's diverse communities: for example, initiatives to reduce smoking rates among Asian men. In addition, Project Trident targets one of Bradford's most deprived communities. Activity included recruiting local people as health outreach trainers to work with local communities on improving health outcomes, with a particular emphasis on targeting people who are more likely to be excluded. Between 2002 and 2006 work in the Bradford Trident area contributed to reduced smoking rates, increased healthy eating, increased participation in exercise, and an improvement in residents' perceptions of their general health.
- 98 There has been a limited approach to tackling fuel poverty. The benefits service provides data to assist targeted fuel poverty activity. The service supports the Warm Front initiative by supplying details of customers on Housing and Council Tax benefit. In 2007 18,000 letters were sent to those who may qualify for energy efficiency grants; however, the take up is still to be identified.

Older people

- 99 There is an effective approach to meeting the needs of older people, with the Council having a portfolio lead and 'champion' whose role is to hold the executive to account. There is a well-established Older People's Partnership which has a remit wider than social care issues. Sub-groups have been established involving older people to address issues such as transport, housing and community support, healthier communities, employment and learning. The previous older people's strategy helped to bring stakeholders together and raised the profile of the needs of older people. Activity includes: 1,000 referrals for fire safety; initiatives to get older people into jobs; maximising benefits take-up (resulting in an increase of £297,000 per year in housing and council tax benefit claimed in 2006/07); improved access to leisure facilities such as swimming (for example 43,700 people aged 50 or over participated in targeted swimming sessions of at least 30 minutes in 2006/07, exceeding the LAA target set); and an A to Z guide of services specifically targeted at older people. A revised older people's strategy was agreed in December 2007. This has been developed in consultation with older people and builds upon the successes of the previous strategy. This demonstrates that the Council and its partners seek to improve the quality of life of older people.
- 100 The Council has a well-established mechanism for consulting older people and it has made progress in its consultation efforts with BME older people. The Bradford Older People's Alliance has around 70 affiliated groups which oversee the implementation of the older people's strategy. Work with other organisations such as housing associations has helped to identify and implement a model of diversity and develop a relationship with BME community groups. This has resulted in the Council acquiring better quality information and breaking down barriers to communication with BME older people. Opportunities to become involved in service design are positively viewed by the community. It has also helped to inform development of services such as Meri Yaadain, focusing on meeting the needs of people within the South Asian community suffering from dementia, which so far has helped 68 individuals and their families.
- 101 Social care services for older people have shown one of the strongest rates of improvement and have delivered good outcomes through innovation and preventative services. The Council is improving health and emotional wellbeing by providing good information and avoiding delays in discharging people from hospital. It is improving quality of life by enabling more people to live at home (90.5 per thousand population over 65 in 2006/07, compared with 86.2 in 2004/05) and reducing their need for higher level support. Choice and control is increasing with prompt assessment of services (in 2006/07 80 per cent of assessments were carried out within the target waiting time, compared with 69 per cent in 2004/05). Delivery of services also improved, with 86 per cent delivered within seven days in 2006/07 compared with 76 per cent in 2004/05. Within the same time period, fewer people needing admission to residential and nursing care.

Children and young people

- 102** The overall effectiveness of children's services is good.
- 103** Outcomes for children and young people in Bradford are adequate. There are higher than average rates of low birth weight and infant mortality. Rates of dental decay are the highest in the country. There are 51 conceptions per 1,000 15 to 17 year-olds, a rate similar to comparable areas, but above the national average of 41 per 1,000. Injuries to, and deaths of, children in road traffic accidents have reduced significantly. There are fewer children on the child protection register than the national average and than in demographically similar areas. The number of looked after children is similar to comparable areas, but greater than the national average. Most children and young people say that they feel safe. Educational attainment is improving in almost all key stages and particularly quickly at key stages 2 and 4. Almost 51 per cent now achieve five or more high-grades at GCSE. Results are similar to comparable areas, but still well below national averages. Attainment is declining, however, at key stage 1. The number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system is higher than the average of similar areas and nationally. The number of 16 to 18 year-olds not in education, employment or training in 2006 was 9.8 per cent and reducing at a rate much greater than that seen nationally. Sixty one per cent of young people reach Level 2 qualifications by age 19 and 38 per cent reach level 3. Both these figures show significant improvement in recent years and are similar to comparable areas, but below the national averages.
- 104** Service management in Bradford is good. Service plans focus appropriately on raising educational attainment and delivering preventative services. The quality of action plans to deliver the priorities is adequate overall. The Children and Young People's Plan is based on a very extensive needs analysis. There is good involvement of children and young people in the governance of children's services. Performance management is good. It is particularly well-embedded in social care and the youth service.
- 105** The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate. Services are combining well to meet the health needs of looked after children with every child having an allocated nurse and a dedicated nurse for care leavers. Nurses are effective in arranging dental care and fast tracking services. The proportion of looked after children with up to date immunisations is high and the proportion receiving an annual health assessment is very good. The child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) gives priority to looked after children, resulting in short waiting times. Health provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate. Recent local data indicates a reduction in conceptions amongst 15 to 17 year-olds, but also an increase in the under-16 age group. There are fewer terminations in Bradford than elsewhere, resulting in a significantly high level of births conceived to under-18s in some wards and very low levels in others. This pattern reflects and perpetuates wider health inequalities in the city.

- 106** Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are good. Most children and young people feel safe at school and in their local community. Arrangements to identify missing children and prevent child sexual exploitation are especially strong. The number of children on the child protection register is lower than in similar areas, despite a recent rise. The number of children looked after is reducing each year. There is good communication between carers and professionals working with looked after children.
- 107** The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is adequate. There are good features in the support for young children and their families from the early years and childcare service, and effective support and challenge to underperforming primary schools. These results meant that Bradford was the seventh most improved authority in 2007 in England at key stage 4 and fourth most improved at key stage 2. Although results are still below national standards and those of statistical neighbours, the gap has steadily reduced over the last three years.
- 108** Agencies ensure that looked after children have education placements that reflect their needs. Educational providers are well informed about the particular needs and circumstances of looked after children. Most looked after children have clear personal education plans reviewed twice yearly as a minimum. Their attainment is improving, but from a low base. At key stage 4 the rate of improvement of this group is less than the rate for all pupils in Bradford and as a result the gap in attainment has widened. Looked after children participate in a wide range of cultural and leisure activities. Access to leisure facilities is available for this group free or at reduced cost.
- 109** The educational achievement of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate. Their attainment is improving and the gap with that of their peers is narrowing. Children and young people have access to specialist recreation and leisure facilities and to a more limited mainstream offer. The youth service and the extended schools programmes ensure that their services are fully inclusive of these children, but their access to parks and community facilities is more limited.
- 110** The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is excellent. Effective action is being taken to support and guide looked after young people who are offending or at risk of offending and as a result the number offending is reducing. Participation opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families in the shaping of services are limited.
- 111** The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Over the past two years there has been a significant improvement in the proportion of care leavers staying in education, training or employment and the ratio is now better than average. The number of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not in education, employment or training has reduced to 11.4 per cent.

- 112** The capacity of council services to improve is good. The track record of partners in securing improvement is good overall. Rates of youth offending and of those not in education, employment or training have both improved much faster than nationally. Social care has improved. Educational attainment has improved at key stage 2 and significantly at key stage 4, where the gap to the national average has narrowed.

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 City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 25 January 2008 to 8 February 2008.
- 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.