

Corporate Assessment Report

June 2008



Corporate Assessment

Bury Metropolitan Borough Council

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Introduction

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

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

- Ambition
- Prioritisation

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

- Capacity
- Performance management

What has been achieved?

- Achievement

Considered against the shared priorities of:

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

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

- 4 The JAR covers 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 The Council is performing well. The Council and its partners have established clear ambitions for Bury which are robustly articulated through the Local Strategic Partnership under the branding of Team Bury. Ambitions are translated into priorities, actions and targets through the community strategy, the local area agreement and the Council's strategic plan.
- 6 Partnership working is strong with committed involvement of partners, including health, police, and key voluntary groups within Team Bury. This has enabled them to respond to the needs of different groups at risk of disadvantage and has promoted good community relationships within the borough. Such close working with partners ensures clear linkages between the Council's priorities and that of its partners. The Council's financial planning framework is robust and ensures that resources follow priorities. Staff, councillors and partners are clear about priorities and how they contribute.
- 7 The Council is providing good leadership in and beyond Bury. Councillors and officers provide leadership at all levels in Team Bury structures. Senior officers and the Leader of the Council actively champion the needs of Bury and Greater Manchester in wider arenas. The capacity of councillors remains under-developed in key areas such as risk management.
- 8 The Council has a strong focus on value for money. There is a strategic approach to efficiency, supported by a programme of service reviews which has delivered financial savings and service improvements, and ensured that further resources are targeted at priorities. User focus is good as is access to services and the Council has a good grasp of diversity and equalities issues.
- 9 The corporate performance management framework ensures clear lines of reporting and monitoring and an open approach to challenging performance which includes councillors, staff and partners. Systems are in place to challenge performance within services, through service assessment and Star Chambers underpinned by service reviews. Staff are empowered to innovate as a means of improving services and learning is used effectively. The setting and cascading of targets is not effective in all areas as some of the Council's action plans are loosely framed and the coverage of appraisal is not comprehensive. The availability and use of information at team level varies, in particular, in parts of children's services.
- 10 Local people recognise the Council's effectiveness with improved levels of satisfaction. There has been an improvement in overall satisfaction with the Council and with most priority services such as waste collection, recycling, libraries, housing, parks and open spaces.

- 11 The Council is working well with partners to integrate the social, economic and environmental regeneration of the borough. Unemployment levels are generally low and as a result the Council provides targeted support to strengthen the local economy and to improve public transport links. The Council is taking successful steps to improve the quality and choice of housing within the borough, and has taken steps to address the issue of affordability. In addition it is improving the quality of the local environment and has embarked on a programme of physical regeneration to make Bury a more attractive place to live, study and work.
- 12 The Council contributes effectively to reducing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour. It takes a proactive approach to reducing crime and has focused on priority neighbourhoods with investment in lighting and facilities in parks. Approaches to domestic violence, hate crime and the night time economy are developing.
- 13 The Council is making an adequate contribution to promoting the health of local communities and in partnership is addressing health inequalities. The Council provides an adequate range of care and non-care services that promote independence and well-being for older people. A more joined up approach to addressing the needs of older people is developing. Health, care and attainment levels for most children and young people are good and as a result outcomes for most children and young people in Bury are good. For the more vulnerable groups, including looked after children, outcomes are adequate.

Areas for improvement

- 14 Although performance and outcomes have improved in the Council's priority areas, performance has deteriorated in other areas such as adult social care and support for vulnerable children. In order to maintain improvement the Council needs to ensure performance management is underpinned by:
 - greater clarity as to how corporate targets are cascaded into service plans and strategies. There are targets and actions which cannot easily be tracked into service plans and strategies. Coverage of individual appraisals is not comprehensive and without clear cascading of targets there is an over reliance on more informal lines of accountability; and
 - robust action planning. There are a number of strategies that either do not have action plans, or have action plans which are loosely framed. This is as a result of the Council's devolved approach to action planning which places a reliance on performance indicators to monitor progress. Targets and measures are not always clear and this weakens performance management.
- 15 The capacity of councillors is under-developed in some key areas. Some councillors are still growing into their roles and there is a need for greater clarity regarding their engagement in, for example, challenging policy development and risk management. The Council needs to continue to support councillors in embracing their new roles through more targeted support and responding to identified development needs.
- 16 The devolved approach to workforce planning has slowed the Council's overall strategic approach in this area. Some departmental workforce plans are still to be finalised, and they are not fully aligned with service plans or partnership strategies. The Council needs to finalise workforce planning in all services.

Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	3
	Prioritisation	3
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	2
	Performance management	2
What has been achieved?	Achievement	3
Overall corporate assessment score**		3
*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 five 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

- 17 Bury lies in the north of the Greater Manchester city region and is a mix of urban and rural landscapes. Approximately 57 per cent of the borough is open land. The borough contains six very different townships, with villages in the north around Ramsbottom and Tottington, the market town of Bury, the residential area of Radcliffe, and Prestwich and Whitefield in the south. Each township has different characteristics that local people are keen to preserve. It is an area of contrasts, encompassing areas of prosperity and pockets of deprivation, with 11 of the borough's 120 Super Output Areas (SOAs) within the 10 per cent most deprived nationally.
- 18 Bury is the fourth smallest metropolitan borough nationally, covering an area of 9,919 hectares. It is home to 182,900 people (mid 2006 estimate) and this number continues to grow. Some 6.1 per cent of the population are from ethnic minorities. The Pakistani community within Bury has doubled in size since 1991. The area has the seventh largest Jewish community in the country, and the largest in the North West. Projections show that Bury can expect to be home to 195,000 people by 2025 with more than 25 per cent of residents aged 60 plus (exceeding for the first time the number of children and young people).
- 19 Bury's proximity to Manchester and good road and rail links result in over 48 per cent of residents commuting to work out of the borough. At around 2 per cent, Bury has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Greater Manchester. Currently 83 per cent of the social housing stock meets the decent homes standard. Over 75 per cent of properties are owner occupied and average house prices are £155,000.
- 20 Despite the relative affluence of the Borough (it is the 122nd most deprived in England) there are pockets of deprivation and inequality. Worklessness, lower incomes, homelessness and long term health conditions are much higher than the borough average in areas such as East Bury and Radcliffe. Much of Bury's traditional textiles, paper making and machine manufacturing industries have been lost. In the local economy 50 per cent of people are employed in service industries and 25 per cent in manufacturing.
- 21 Deprivation is reflected in the health of local people. Life expectancy averages 75.8 years for men and 80.3 years for women (compared to 77.3 and 81.4 years nationally). Crime levels are low when compared to other Greater Manchester authorities but relatively high when compared to Bury's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) family where it ranks as tenth out of 15.

The Council

- 22 The Council has 51 councillors, of whom 23 are Conservatives, 20 are Labour and 8 are Liberal Democrats. The Council is ruled by a minority Conservative administration operating cabinet government with a Leader and nine Executive Members. Eight councillors in the cabinet (including the Leader) are from the ruling group and seven hold thematic portfolios whilst the leaders of the two opposition groups occupy the remaining seats and hold no specific portfolio. Executive portfolios cover community relations; children and young people; health and well-being; environment and transport; safe and secure communities; finance; and learning, skills and employment.
- 23 There are two regulatory committees (Planning Control committee and Licensing and Safety Panel); a Standards Committee and an Audit Committee. The Scrutiny Management Committee is supported by five scrutiny commissions covering: Economy, Environment and Transport; Healthier Communities; Children and Young People; Safe Strong and Confident Communities; and Resources and Performance.
- 24 At officer level, the Council is organised into four departments under the Chief Executive. There are approximately 8,600 staff. The departmental heads (the Deputy Chief Executive and three Executive Directors) come together with the Assistant Chief Executive, Director of Finance and E-Government, Director of Personnel and Director of Legal and Democratic Services to make up the Council's Management Board.
- 25 Services are predominantly provided through in-house arrangements. Housing management services are provided by an Arms Length Management Organisation, Six Towns Housing.
- 26 The Council's annual budget in 2007/08 is £124.4 million, with gross expenditure predicted to be £386.2 million. In 2007/08, council tax rose by 4.9 per cent and is approximately £1,124 for a band D property. Council tax levels are below average for metropolitan councils.
- 27 The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) operates under the branding of 'Team Bury'. The partnership is well established and has a vision to make Bury 'A great place to live, work, study and visit'. The vision has been translated into action through 2001 and 2005 community strategies. The current community strategy is being refreshed to develop the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). Team Bury operates through its Executive which is supported by a Public Service Board (PSB), Third Sector Partnership and eight thematic partnerships.
- 28 Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) replaced Area Boards in April 2007 and have been created to promote engagement and partnership at the local township level. There are six LAPs covering Bury East; Bury West; Prestwich; Radcliffe; Ramsbottom, Tottington and North Manor; and Whitefield and Unsworth.

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

Ambition

- 29 The Council is performing well in this area. The Council and its partners have established and articulated clear ambitions for Bury that focus on 'people' and 'place'. These ambitions are challenging, meet identified needs and are robustly articulated by the LSP (known as Team Bury) in the community strategy, the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the Council's own strategic plan (the Bury Plan). Partnership working is strong with committed involvement of partners, including health, police, and key voluntary groups within Bury.
- 30 Challenging ambitions are clear and articulated through Team Bury. The vision for Bury envisages 'a great place to live, work, study and visit'. Team Bury has established nine ambitions in pursuit of the vision which are: the place to live in Greater Manchester; an area where people feel safe and secure; the healthiest borough in the North West; a popular visitor destination; premier retail town in the north of Greater Manchester; centre of excellence for education in the North West; each township thriving and delivering their own ambitions; quality jobs for Bury people; and an area with first class services. Clear ambitions support a focus on people and place, aiming to ensure local needs and inequalities are addressed through creating sustainable communities in Bury's six townships.
- 31 Based on these challenging ambitions, the Council and its partners have agreed a range of outcomes and targets within the 2005/25 community strategy and other key plans. For example community safety strategy targets are set to reduce overall levels of crime by 27 per cent, against Greater Manchester reduction targets of around 21 per cent. Plans are outcome focused but have few explicit targets beyond 2010. The scale of change required to realise many of these ambitions makes them challenging given the baseline from which Bury is starting.
- 32 The Council and its partners in Team Bury are resolute in their pursuit of the ambitions for Bury. Clear joint ownership of the ambitions and strong partnership working delivers the actions needed. The branding of the LSP and its structures as Team Bury underlines a strong focus on partnership working in the borough. The annual forward planning event between the Council and its key partners plays a pivotal role in maintaining a focus. The annual community conference, involving much wider representation, engenders support and ownership for delivery of the ambitions within the six townships. The level of commitment to Team Bury and buy-in to the agreed ambitions is evident amongst staff at all levels within partner organisations and the Council, as well as among councillors from all political groups. Local people also demonstrate an understanding of the scale of ambition in Bury. Clear focus ensures effective prioritisation by partners.

- 33** Ambitions are based on the shared use of intelligence gathered from good quality data. The Council and its partners use intelligence to develop and focus their ambitions and plan to develop an integrated data observatory which will combine data from across the partnership. The 2007 joint strategic community needs assessment has provided a wealth of data on the health and well-being of the people of Bury. This intelligence has already informed strategic planning for older people, community safety and health, and enables partners to target resources in the borough's more deprived communities. The Council's ambitions to develop the Chamberhall site in Bury have been informed by an external employment assessment which identified the need to grow the knowledge management sector. This means that the Council makes decisions based on a clear understanding of the context in which it operates, and this shared understanding of local needs supports a clear focus on delivery.
- 34** Engagement with local community groups and partners is good and informs ambition. The Council meets with different parts of the community, for example different interest groups such as the Asian Women's Centre and the Jewish Federation. There are good examples of involving children and young people in setting ambition, including the review of child and adolescent mental health services. Recently established and still developing mechanisms such as 'Community Voice' (the citizens' panel) and the enhanced the role of area boards demonstrate the Council's commitment to continue to improve engagement. By recognising and engaging with its diverse communities the Council ensures they contribute to setting strategic direction.
- 35** The Council provides good community leadership through Team Bury. The Leader of the Council has recently taken the chair of the LSP Executive, the Chief Executive chairs the Public Service Board and the shadow Children's Trust, and the Deputy Chief Executive chairs the Health Partnership. The leadership provided by the Council and its partners clearly demonstrates the cross-cutting leadership ethos, empowerment and trust within Team Bury. The six LAPs are chaired by local councillors; membership now includes representatives from other agencies such as the police, fire and PCT. LAPs are starting to enhance community leadership and enabling local partners to engage with communities and share intelligence in developing local community plans.
- 36** The Council is providing good leadership in and beyond Bury and is an active contributor to the Greater Manchester and city region agenda. The Chief Executive and Leader of the Council both play active roles and provide leadership within the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA), including the Chief Executive taking a lead on the health leadership group. The Council leads on Connexions for Greater Manchester and plays a leading role in economic development and the development of the city region. As a result Bury has a clearer and more outward looking perspective on its role.

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- 37 The Council has taken difficult decisions in pursuit of its ambitions. For example, recognising that voluntary and community sector engagement was not effective the Council decided to stop funding the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) in early 2007 and use the resources to create an independent third sector development agency. This has begun to improve overall engagement with the voluntary and community sector.

Prioritisation

- 38 The Council is performing well in this area. Ambitions are translated into high-level strategic priorities which reflect the needs and aspirations of local people. Close working and planning with partners ensures clear linkages between the Council's priorities and those of its partners. The financial planning framework is robust and ensures that resources generally follow priorities. Staff, councillors and partners are clear about priorities and how they contribute. The Council and its partners have taken action to meet the needs of local people and groups at risk of disadvantage.
- 39 Priority setting is clear and robust. The Council has developed clear priorities with its partners. An annual forward planning event is attended by lead councillors, senior managers and key partners from Team Bury. This process ensures greater clarity and better alignment of priorities and resources within the Council and between the other public sector agencies. The community strategy, LAA and Bury Plan are well aligned and clearly reflect national and local policy frameworks. As a result community strategy ambitions are translated into a clear framework of short and medium term targets through the LAA and Bury Plan.
- 40 There is good understanding by councillors, partners and staff of the Council's priorities and their contribution to delivering them. The Council's eight priorities reflect what is important to local people. They are: better opportunities for children and young people; improved cultural and sporting opportunities; putting customers first; strengthening communities; choice of quality housing; cleaner safer greener; improving town centres and neighbourhoods; and promoting healthier living. The Council and partners deliver against priorities at a local level through good operational joint delivery by frontline staff in addressing, for example, anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods. Eighty-nine per cent of staff indicate they know how their job contributes to corporate objectives. Voluntary and community sector groups also have a clear understanding of the local priorities. Clarity around priorities supports a framework for effective joint delivery.

- 41 The Council's budget planning is robustly linked to the priorities. Its framework for delivering the priorities is underpinned by a strong medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) and budget planning process. Financial resources are allocated to priorities through the MTFS and the Priority Investment Reserve (PIR). The budget planning process identifies potential budget pressures by considering previous performance, service complexity and whether financial savings are available. Funding has followed priorities for children and young people such as looked after children and special educational needs. The Council ensures that grant funding to the community and voluntary sector is targeted to deliver corporate priorities by reviewing its approach and introducing commissioning arrangements through a third party. The PIR redirects £2 million of service efficiencies to its priorities each year. This additional investment includes £580,000 to bring payments to foster carers up to national minimum standards, £170,000 for recycling and £73,000 for climate change. This approach ensures there are sufficient resources to deliver against the priorities.
- 42 Action planning is responsive to the needs of all communities. The 2007 community conference used the key findings from Neighbourhood Intelligence Assessments (NIAs) to identify key issues for the LAPs to take forward. In Bury West this resulted in action to increase access to community facilities, preserve green areas and parks and to address traffic issues. Specific targets have been agreed to increase educational attainment of Pakistani heritage pupils and to reduce worklessness in identified areas of deprivation. Area based working in Bury's six townships, the LAPs and Area Tasking Teams, ensures resources are targeted towards locally-agreed priorities. Effective engagement and good intelligence have ensured a clear understanding of the aspirations of local people and identified the areas of greatest need.
- 43 The Council has a clear user focus and tailors services in response to user demands. Young people have been involved in selecting books for libraries and in designing a teenage room within Tottington library. Services have responded to the needs of the Jewish community so three libraries now operate Sunday opening hours. Community safety initiatives have been implemented in response to burglary increases around festivals. This approach ensures that local people can be confident their needs will be met.
- 44 The Council has remained focused on its priorities. Plans to close two high schools in Radcliffe and open a new 900 place school have been taken forward and further amended to reduce the capacity to 600. This decision was taken in light of anticipated changes in demand, despite local resistance to plans to scale down the development. The Council has maintained progress with the Townside Fields development in Bury town centre despite difficulties created by the changing financial market. It opted to reduce expenditure on street cleansing and to defer investment in recycling despite performance being below national average in these areas. Instead it has invested in improving the quality of parks and public open spaces, which has had a significant impact on people's perceptions of the borough and supported community cohesion. This demonstrates the Council's ability to remain focused on the priorities while ensuring that the conditions are right to achieve them.

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

Capacity

- 45 The Council is performing adequately in this area. The Council makes good use of its financial and human resource capacity, although workforce development is not fully co-ordinated. New cabinet members are growing into their roles following the recent change in political administration, but there is a lack of clarity about their roles in key areas such as risk and performance management. Managerial leadership is strong as is the focus on value for money. Access to services is good, and the Council has a clear grasp of diversity and equalities issues. The Council makes good use of procurement and partnership working to enhance its internal capacity.
- 46 Officers and members operate within a clear decision making framework. Decision making processes are well established and transparent, and councillors and officers treat each other with respect and have developed positive working relationships. There is an effective approach to risk management, involving officers and councillors, which influences decision making. This is being extended to incorporate partnership risks through Team Bury. Robust decision making supports progress towards achieving ambitions and priorities.
- 47 The capacity of councillors is under-developed in some key areas. Following the change in political administration in 2007, some councillors are still growing into their roles and there is a lack of clarity regarding the boundaries between portfolios and roles. For example the scope of some executive portfolios is very broad and not clearly understood. The role of councillors in challenging performance and policy development through the Scrutiny Commissions is not consistent. Some are not clear about their roles in risk management and are unclear about what are not priorities. This weakens the Council's capacity.

- 48 The Council is making good use of its human resources, though challenges remain in some areas. There are well established approaches to training and development for both councillors and officers. The Bury Manager programme, supported by a mentoring scheme for new managers, provides sound management development. This has fostered strong managerial leadership, which provides a clear direction and framework within which staff operate. The staff appraisal scheme provides an effective mechanism for identifying staff development needs, and the Council has a good track record in addressing them. Job satisfaction has increased and sickness absence, although high, has reduced. Vacant posts in areas such as children's services impact on capacity, and the Council is addressing recruitment and retention issues through, for example, a review of agency staff. The Council's efficient use of human resources means it can be confident of improving performance and value for money through its staff.
- 49 The Council has a clear understanding of the future challenges it faces, although plans to address them are not fully developed. Some departmental workforce plans are still to be finalised, and they are not fully aligned with service plans or partnership strategies. A lack of effective workforce planning hampers the Council's responsiveness to challenges.
- 50 The Council has the financial capacity to deliver its ambitions, with a clear focus on its priorities. It has a good record of managing costs within budget and the three-year MTFS ensures that potential funding gaps are identified and managed. Early progress has been made on developing a Team Bury financial strategy. This means that partners' resources, as well as those of the Council, are being aligned in pursuit of their shared ambitions for the borough.
- 51 Project management is effective. The Council has used project management skills to co-ordinate and manage key projects such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and regeneration schemes at Pimhole. A corporate approach ensures clear justification for projects and robust monitoring of progress. This is demonstrated in the support of key initiatives such as the Age of Opportunities programme, which promotes independence and choice among people over the age of 50. Effective project management has enabled the Council to progress a range of major projects to improve access to services and regenerate the built environment.
- 52 There are some weaknesses in the management of the capital programme. Funding of major schemes is not profiled across financial years, which makes it difficult to effectively manage progress. It is not possible to differentiate between genuine over/under spend and differences resulting from changes in work programmes. This makes it difficult for the Council to demonstrate that it is using its capital funding effectively.

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- 53** A strong corporate focus on cost and performance has ensured good value for money in many of the Council's services. It has developed an Efficiency Strategy, appointed efficiency 'champions', and strengthened service and financial planning and service review processes. All directorates are subjected to quarterly 'Star Chamber' reviews where costs and performance are challenged by leading councillors and senior managers. The process is based on a comprehensive range of benchmarked data and focuses on high cost services. This has reinforced links between resources and performance and has improved the value for money of services by ensuring that savings are delivered.
- 54** Effective use of procurement supports the drive for improved value for money. The Council has made significant financial savings through collaboration with councils in Greater Manchester which has maximised their buying power. It is also developing capacity in the local economy through support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and working with partners to develop the local market for home care services in line with plans to reconfigure the service. The Council has a good understanding of its procurement activity which enables it to target and prioritise action, but recognises the need to manage procurement projects more effectively and develop procurement skills across the authority. Options for alternative service delivery are being considered in a number of services, although final decisions on procurement options have yet to be made.
- 55** Access to services is good and enhanced by effective use of ICT. A number of disability groups were consulted on the redesign of the Council's website. The Council's CRM system has improved access to services and is starting to transform the way the Council does business. A range of initiatives has improved the Council's ability to respond to the needs of local people. A number of information centres have been established in libraries across the borough, providing members of the public with direct e-enabled access to a range of services without the need to travel into Bury. The creation of a corporate contact centre has increased satisfaction, improved call handling and improved the speed of response to services such as bulky refuse collection and pest control.
- 56** Diversity and human rights issues are reflected in service delivery across the Council. The Council routinely engages with minority groups. Their views are taken into account in developing and delivering services, and they have been engaged in initiatives to improve access to services. All Council contracts are assessed against a procurement equality framework to ensure contractors take account of diversity and human rights issues. The Council also plays a key role in delivering the regional Gateway Protection Programme for refugees, providing support to newly arrived families through access to education, training and employment and information about their new community. This approach ensures that the needs of all sectors of the community are taken into account.

- 57 The Council's workforce does not reflect the diversity of its community. The Council has achieved Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government and has created a number of staff forums to address diversity issues. However, staff with disabilities and those from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities remain under-represented. The Council has responded by providing support to people with disabilities applying for jobs; it also operates a work placement scheme for people with disabilities and those from BME communities. Through these initiatives the Council aims to achieve a workforce which is reflective of the community it serves but their impact has yet to be translated into changes in the Council's staffing profile.
- 58 Partnership working enhances capacity. Team Bury has well established working relationships with partners including the police and local health bodies, and the Council has collaborated with councils across Greater Manchester to improve service performance and efficiency. Positive working relationships have been developed with a number of private sector developers who are working with the Council to regenerate the borough, including creation of a joint venture company. At a local level, Area Tasking Teams include public and community sector partners in successfully addressing neighbourhood issues. Relationships with the third sector are adequate and the Council has put in place the investment and infrastructure to enable the third sector to play a significant role in achieving Team Bury's priorities but these relationships are still developing. Successful partnership working has increased the Council's capacity and is creating ownership of ambitions and the means to achieve them.

Performance management

- 59 The Council is performing adequately in this area. A well established corporate performance management framework includes clear lines of reporting and monitoring. The framework ensures an open approach to reporting and challenging performance which includes councillors, staff and partners. Systems are in place to challenge performance within services, supported by a programme of service reviews. Staff are empowered to innovate as a means of improving services and learning is used effectively. However, a lack of clarity in the setting and cascading of targets means management of performance in some areas relies too heavily on informal lines of accountability. There is inconsistent use of data in some services. Service improvements have been realised in priority areas but improvement against targets has not been consistent.

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- 60** Systems for monitoring performance are effective. The Council has a robust corporately driven performance management framework with systematic quarterly and risk based monitoring of performance indicators. This is based on the Council's Performance Information Management System (PIMS) and extends to partnership work across Team Bury. The PIMS web-based system enables the Council and its partners to easily access and update performance information for monitoring community strategy targets, the LAA, national and other local indicators. The system produces clear and comprehensive strategic reports which are traffic-lighted to show performance against targets and tailored to their audience. The PIMS system provides a consistent approach to performance monitoring.
- 61** The Council and its key partners effectively track and manage performance. Performance data is openly reported within the Council and Team Bury. An annual forward planning event enables the Council and its partners to review progress and focus on areas of underperformance. Team Bury, Burysafe and the Children's Trust all have a range of sub-groups which lead on performance management and report to the relevant board. These arrangements ensure a clear focus on performance is maintained in pursuit of Team Bury's ambitions.
- 62** The role of councillors in performance management is adequate. Councillors are involved through the Executive, their representation on the Children's Trust Board and portfolio-holders' involvement in departmental Star Chambers. There is effective scrutiny of corporate performance through the Performance and Resources Scrutiny Commission. The priority themed scrutiny commissions do not routinely monitor performance in their area of focus and this places an expectation on the members of the Performance and Resources Scrutiny Commission that it has the capacity to provide robust challenge to all services. As a result performance management does not benefit from the participation of all councillors.
- 63** The Council has good systems to embed performance management and drive service improvement. There is a comprehensive self-assessment process which is used to identify higher risk services for a Best Value Review (BVR). All services are subject to an assessment process against a range of criteria related to cost and performance. Scores below a threshold level may result in a BVR or the consideration of alternative options for delivery of the service. The process has been used effectively to drive improvement in areas such as homelessness services, benefits and homecare.
- 64** Staff are empowered to learn and innovate. Good use is made of opportunities for sharing of learning, both internally and with partners, as well as internal networking opportunities. There is a well-used shared learning website, performance management workshops are held several times a year and staff appraisals examine performance against individual objectives. Staff are encouraged to innovate to improve performance, supported by strong leadership from the senior management team. Examples include area tasking teams problem solving at neighbourhood level to reduce anti-social behaviour. This supports an effective performance culture.

- 65** Target setting is not always effective at service level. There is an over-reliance on a basket of performance indicators to monitor strategies and whilst there are high level linkages between the Bury Plan priorities and service plans there are weaknesses in the way targets are cascaded into service plans. For example targets to measure improvements in third sector engagement are not in the Chief Executive's service plan. Although linked at a strategic level, the children's services departmental action plan is not explicitly aligned to the priorities in either the Bury Plan or the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). There are a number of strategies that either do not have action plans, or have action plans which are loosely framed. This is as a result of the Council's devolved approach to action planning which places a reliance on performance indicators to monitor progress. Coverage of individual appraisals is not comprehensive. The lack of consistently effective target setting means the Council cannot be confident that it is setting and achieving the right targets to achieve against its priorities.
- 66** The availability and use of performance data at service level is inconsistent. Although information on performance against key indicators is widely available, the effective use of performance data at service level varies. For example information is not always used effectively to improve the performance of services for vulnerable children. Despite strong corporate systems, performance management in these operational areas is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure continuous improvement.
- 67** Service users contribute to performance review. There is a recently established citizen's panel, an annual resident's survey and LAPs are developing their role in involving local residents in reporting back on the performance of local services. The LAPs have representation from some local groups such as the Jewish community, older people, tenants and residents, children and young people and of BME groups. They are able to influence the work of area tasking teams to improve their local areas. Resident's groups are involved successfully in self-management of some facilities such as parks. The Council feeds back to residents how service requests, comments and complaints have informed changes through a format of 'you said, we did'. This demonstrates the Council's commitment to involving local people in the design of services.
- 68** The Council makes effective use of complaints information to drive improvement. It responded to low levels of satisfaction by complainants and reviewed its approach to handling complaints. Procedures and systems are in place to share learning from complaints handling and a follow-up process is being introduced to check whether people feel their complaint has been dealt with properly. Some service adjustments have been made, for example to refuse collection, but the Council is not yet able to demonstrate the impact of this on satisfaction with complaint handling.
- 69** External challenge is welcomed as an opportunity to learn and improve. The Council uses external evaluation, especially through quality standards such as Chartermark and Investors in People, to learn and make improvements. For example poor planning performance led to decisive action to improve the planning IT system, revise working practices and make applications accessible through the internet. Planning performance is now in the best 25 per cent.

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

- 70** The Council has focused successfully on improving outcomes in its priority areas but not across all services. Improvements have been driven through the performance management framework and there are demonstrable improvements in priority areas such as residents' satisfaction levels, planning and benefits, and outcomes including reductions in crime, and safer parks. However, not all areas are improving and performance has deteriorated in areas such as adult social care. The rate of improvement across all services is slower than the average rate of improvement nationally. This means that the Council is not using performance management robustly to drive improvement across all service areas.

What has been achieved?

- 71 The Council is performing well in this area. Bury's priorities support delivery of the community strategy ambitions and closely reflect the national shared priorities. The Council is making effective use of the LAA process to drive further improvement. With its partners, it has made noticeable improvements to residents' quality of life during the last three years. Improvements are strongest in those areas which matter the most to local people such as the quality of the local environment, housing and community safety. The Index of Multiple Deprivation published in December 2007 shows that Bury is now the 122nd most deprived borough nationally moving from a position of 97th out of 342 in 2004. This improvement means that Bury is now the third least deprived borough in Greater Manchester.
- 72 Local people recognise the Council's effectiveness with improved levels of satisfaction reflected in the 2006 best value survey. There has been an improvement in overall satisfaction with the Council. Satisfaction with most services has improved, including priority areas of waste collection, recycling, libraries, housing, parks and open spaces. Satisfaction amongst BME communities has risen 15 per cent. These improvements reflect the Council's continuing emphasis on meeting local residents' priorities.
- 73 The Council is part way through a major programme of regeneration which brings together the principles of sustainable development in a way which is designed to meet the needs of the local community. It seeks to make the borough an attractive place to live and improve the local economy whilst recognising the importance of good public transport links with Manchester. Bury town centre is being transformed by £480 million major developments at The Rock and Townside Fields which aim to reinvigorate the town centre, creating new job opportunities, leisure facilities, affordable housing, a hotel and improved health facilities. Plans for regeneration also extend to other parts of the borough. For example, the Reinventing Radcliffe strategy includes a new school, and construction is well advanced on a Primary Care Centre which will provide a range of treatments and support. The SUN Quarter (Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood) will bring together commercial and residential developments, again incorporating many features to minimise the impact on the environment.
- 74 The approach to partnership working is starting to improve people's health. Services for older people are expanding but these are relatively new. Crime levels have reduced significantly but remain relatively high when compared with areas outside of Greater Manchester. Outcomes for most children and young people are good. Strong partnership working means that the Council can demonstrate an integrated approach to improving outcomes. The focus on developing the six local townships has started to address the sustainable community and inequalities agendas.

Sustainable communities and transport

- 75 The Council is working well with partners to provide sustainable communities by integrating the social, economic and environmental regeneration of the borough. In an area where unemployment levels are generally low, the Council provides targeted support to the local economy and, recognising that a large proportion of residents work in Manchester, is working with partners to improve public transport links and is promoting the use of sustainable forms of transport. The Council is taking successful steps to improve the quality and choice of housing within the borough, and has recognised the need to step up its efforts to address the issue of affordability. It has improved the quality of the local environment and has embarked on a programme of physical regeneration to make Bury a more attractive place to live, study and work.
- 76 The Council is working well with partners to promote and support the local economy. It has focused on attracting knowledge based businesses to the borough as a means of addressing the current low-wage economy. This has resulted in the gap between the average rate of weekly pay of people working within the borough and the average rate of weekly pay of residents reducing from £39.10 in 2003 to £37.60 in 2007.
- 77 The Council has been successful in supporting small businesses. The £8.3 million 'Bury - The Place for Business' programme created 1,000 new jobs and delivered 37,000 square metres of workspace for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) between 2001 and 2006. The Council provides advice to small businesses on how to bid for public sector contracts. Seventeen per cent of Council suppliers are now local businesses. Local Economic Benefit Clauses have been introduced on Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) projects which are providing work for local businesses, and local labour is being used in the Pimhole redevelopment. Although there are still fewer VAT registered businesses in Bury than there were ten years ago, their rate of growth is the second highest in Greater Manchester and is above national and regional averages.
- 78 The Council has successfully targeted actions at residents who are most disadvantaged. The East Bury Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) initiative incorporated actions to improve employment opportunities in one of the borough's most deprived areas. The Council provides work placements for young people from priority neighbourhoods and works with partners to create employment for disadvantaged groups. In partnership with ADAB, a local community group providing support to minority communities, and projects such as the Routeways to Work programme, the Council has created employment for over 200 people from the most deprived areas and BME communities. Routeways to Work was also successful in improving GCSE results for a group of young people participating in the programme and began to break down some traditional barriers relating to employment opportunities for women from BME communities.

- 79** The Council and its partners have improved the quality and efficiency of transport links. The Metrolink system is reliable and well used and connects the borough with the city of Manchester. Thirteen miles of track between Bury and Manchester were recently replaced to improve the quality of the service and there are plans to increase the capacity of the system by providing additional trams. A funding bid has been submitted to connect the East Lancashire Railway, currently a tourism and leisure facility, to the network to ease traffic congestion in the north of the borough. The introduction of quality bus corridors and improved bus services between Bury and Manchester, supported by improved access to public transport information, has resulted in increased usage. Passenger numbers are up by 16 per cent and journey times have been cut by up to 6 per cent. A pilot community transport scheme has recently been introduced and has resulted in a significant demand for door-to-door transport for vulnerable residents, particularly in more rural areas. Traffic congestion has been contained at 1999 levels and some improvements in air quality have been achieved. Progress has been made on a number of initiatives designed to deliver further improvements. Facilities for cyclists have been improved and travel plans have been introduced at 51 out of 80 schools. These actions have contributed to a below average level of road casualties.
- 80** The Council is working well to meet increasing demand for housing in the borough. It has made good use of planning policies to deliver 1,500 new units since 2003/04. An above average proportion of these have been built on previously developed land. However, performance in meeting demand for affordable housing has been below average, with 163 units being completed over the same period. The Council has responded by strengthened its planning policies to increase the provision of affordable housing on new developments and is making good use of section 106 agreements to secure affordable housing. A further 249 units have full planning permission with 314 more having outline planning permission.
- 81** The Council has improved management of increasing demand for social rented housing, but challenges remain. A Choice Based Lettings scheme was introduced on a pilot basis in May 2006, and is being extended to all lettings from May 2008. The Council has improved the efficiency of the allocations process by increasing choice, which has resulted in people staying in their properties longer. During 2006/07, 61.58 per cent of choice based lettings were accepted, compared with 36.87 per cent of traditional lettings. The time taken to re-let properties is reducing but, at 52 days in 2006/07, performance remains in the worst 25 per cent.
- 82** The Council has effective mechanisms for dealing with pockets of low demand housing. It regularly reviews the housing portfolio to identify hard-to-let, expensive properties for release for alternative use. For example, Tulle Court in Prestwich has been transferred to a housing association for conversion into a mix of new and refurbished houses and apartments. In Pimhole, an area of low demand and low quality housing, a major programme of demolition and redevelopment is taking place to regenerate the area. The proportion of low demand housing has reduced significantly over the last four years, from 3.2 homes per thousand dwellings in 2004 to 0.7 homes per thousand dwellings in 2007.

- 83 Six Towns Housing has made good progress in improving the quality of the housing stock. With 83 per cent meeting the Decent Homes Standard in 2006/07, performance is above the national average. A programme is in place to achieve 100 per cent by 2010, supported by £27 million Government funding. Satisfaction with the housing service has improved significantly from 68 per cent to 79 per cent between 2003/04 and 2006/07, and is only just below top 25 per cent performance.
- 84 A programme of major schemes is beginning to transform the borough's built environment and deliver benefits for local communities. The Council has made good use of its planning powers to ensure that these developments provide social, economic and environmental benefits for the community in an integrated way. A £25 million retail development in Whitefield and a £175 million housing and commercial development in Prestwich were completed during 2006/07. Major developments in Bury town centre are situated near public transport links to reduce reliance on the car. They each have green travel plans, and include features to improve thermal performance, reduce water consumption, and contribute to improvements in air quality. Recycled building materials are being used in Pimhole Renewal Area and the new Police head quarters in Bury. These initiatives are beginning to provide benefits for local people whilst minimising the impact on the environment.
- 85 The Council is taking steps to reduce its own carbon footprint. It has begun to use 'green' energy for street lighting and is converting its vehicle fleet to bio-diesel and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). Energy efficiency measures have been introduced across the housing stock, schools and office accommodation, and the Council operates a show house to demonstrate energy saving measures to the public. The Council reduced its carbon emissions by 29 per cent between 1990 and 2000 and has set a target for a further 28 per cent reduction by 2010.
- 86 Significant investment has resulted in welcoming and safe parks, play areas and public spaces. Community clean up events, supported by area-based street scene teams, have resulted in significant improvements in the quality of public spaces. A budget decision to reduce resources in street cleansing resulted in a fall in standards, but local action is beginning to raise standards again. Green spaces have been refurbished, and floral features have been introduced in town centres and parks. Improvements have been made to the landscape, often supported by sponsorship from local businesses. This has resulted in the Council winning regional Britain in Bloom awards for four consecutive years. Eleven of the 12 parks within the district have Green Flag status. Public satisfaction with parks and open spaces has increased by 10 per cent since 2003/04 to 81 per cent in 2006/07 and is amongst the highest nationally.

- 87 The Council has made improvements in waste management in line with the requirements of the regional strategy. There has been a reduction in the increase in waste arising and the volume of waste recycled has increased from 9 per cent to 23 per cent between 2003/04 and 2006/07. Although this reflects performance in the worst 25 per cent nationally, it is adequate to meet the current needs of the regional waste management strategy. Recycling facilities have been extended further in 2007/08 and latest unaudited figures indicate that the rate of increase will be sufficient to meet targets for 2010.

Safer and stronger communities

- 88 The Council contributes effectively to reducing crime and tackling anti-social behaviour and it has prioritised these in the Bury Plan. It provides effective political and managerial leadership to the Burysafe partnership. It has taken a proactive approach to reducing crime and has focused on priority neighbourhoods with investment in lighting and facilities in parks. The Drug Action Team (DAT) is effective. The Council's approaches to domestic violence, hate crime and the night time economy are developing but not yet demonstrating impact. There is a comprehensive approach to emergency planning.
- 89 There is a strong community safety partnership, Burysafe, in place within Team Bury. There is good engagement by partners and there are staff secondments from the police and fire service to the community safety team based within the Council. The partnership uses the Greater Manchester Against Crime business cycle to ensure its community safety priorities are up to date strategically and tactically. There is good shared intelligence through the tactical partnership business group, the area tasking team and offender management group. There is also good cross boundary working on commercial robbery. As a result the partnership is robust and is responding well to the new national crime and disorder requirements.
- 90 With its partners the Council is achieving crime reduction targets in the Community Safety Strategy 2005/08. Overall crime has fallen in Bury by 28 per cent since 2003/04. After a slow start the pace of crime reduction has accelerated and has achieved the PSA1 stretch target of 27.8 per cent reduction. Reduced crime has improved quality of life in Bury's townships.
- 91 There are weaknesses in the partnership's approach to domestic violence. Since 2005 levels of domestic violence have not improved and repeat victimisation remains a serious problem. At the end of December 2006 only 59 per cent of applicants at risk from domestic violence who were homeless and applying for housing assistance had secured permanent accommodation. There have been some improvements at service level, but the Council and its partners recognise that they need to do more and a new domestic violence strategy is in draft. It provides a comprehensive review of the current national and local position but contains no action plan. The Council and its partners have adopted the 'White Ribbon Campaign' to raise the profile of domestic violence and have set stretch targets to reduce it. However, the campaign has had limited impact to date.

- 92 The approach to tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) is effective. There is an ASB strategy in place which sets out the Council's approach and clarifies how the Council and partners will deal with reports of ASB. A multi agency group provides policy direction and borough-wide co-ordination, and deals with more challenging incidents and perpetrators. The Council, schools, and young people have worked with Crimestoppers to produce posters and information to encourage young people to report ASB and crime anonymously. Multi-agency area tasking teams meet regularly and are empowered to tackle issues at neighbourhood level. Agencies work together well to prevent fires in empty property and to remove abandoned vehicles. Good use is made of the Burysafe website to ensure that the public are aware of people with anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) and this has led to a conviction for a breach of an ASBO. ASB has reduced from 14,050 incidents in 2006/07 to 13,573 in 2007/08.
- 93 The priority of making the town centre safe has not yet been achieved. The Local Government User Satisfaction Survey 2006 found that only 14 per cent of people feel safe after dark in Bury town centre. The partnership has taken steps to tackle this with the establishment of a multi-agency night time economy group chaired by the police and including local businesses who are involved in problem solving. There are multi-agency visits to businesses and action has been taken to shut premises causing concern. Over the Christmas period 2007 alcohol-related violent crime reduced by over 25 per cent compared with the same period in 2006. There is not yet evidence that the impact of these measures is being felt by local people. The impact target set by the partnership to increase the proportion of people feeling safe after dark in Bury town centre from 14 per cent in 2006 to 16.4 per cent in 2010 is not challenging.
- 94 The DAT is effective. The national treatment agency has awarded it 'green' status. Good relationships with community safety partners ensure effective pathways to treatment with retention rates of around 70 per cent.
- 95 The Council's approach to hate crime is adequate. Racial incidents account for the majority of Bury's hate crime with most of the incidents taking place in the most diverse communities of Bury East and Prestwich. Reporting centres with trained staff have been put in place to handle reports of incidents which are recorded on the police crime reporting system. Children's services and the police have dedicated hate crime staff in place. The third sector has been engaged to explore trust and confidence issues within the community. This is having an impact, with an 18 per cent increase in reported hate crime in 2006/07. The current detection rate is 35 per cent, which is above target. The partnership's approach to hate crime is being reviewed and strengthened through the hate crime action group. Prioritising hate crime has ensured resources are being targeted at vulnerable groups.

- 96** The Council's strategic approach to community cohesion is adequate. An approach is being developed which aims to enable the Council and its partners to build stronger communities. The Council helps to build stronger communities through for example events around Holocaust Day which is important to its significant Jewish population. It makes service adjustments to accommodate cultural differences such as refuse collection over the Jewish festival of Passover. It has recognised the need to improve the educational achievement of Pakistani heritage pupils in its LAA and 2007 results show that the gap is starting to narrow at all key stages. It works with local voluntary organisations in Bury East to help unemployed people from BME communities into work. There is an inter-agency group to tackle violent extremism, which is focusing on young Muslims. However, BME residents and those in East Bury, the most deprived community, are significantly less satisfied with the way the Council runs things although the trend is improving. Overall 61 per cent of residents feel that their local area is one where people from different backgrounds get on well together. But there are wide geographical variations with only 19 per cent agreeing in Bury East.
- 97** The approach to emergency planning is effective. The Council has a comprehensive up to date emergency plan and has trained staff to deliver it. The Council has tailored arrangements to assist vulnerable groups and individuals in an emergency. Plans are regularly tested through exercises - for example flooding - following which plans are reviewed and adjusted. The Council contributes effectively to joint multi-agency arrangements and to the local resilience forum. A fit for purpose corporate business continuity plan was recently agreed and departmental business continuity plans are being developed. The Council is well prepared to deal with emergency situations and to mitigate the impact on Bury and its communities.

Healthier communities

- 98** The Council is making an adequate contribution to promoting the health of local communities and in partnership is starting to focus on reducing health inequalities. Close working relationships with health services, in particular the Primary Care Trust (PCT), support a clear focus on addressing health inequalities. Initiatives are impacting on the health of local people through for example a targeted approach to addressing smoking and teenage pregnancies. Pockets of deprivation in Bury mean that health inequalities are still evident.
- 99** The Council, PCT and other partners have developed a close working relationship through Team Bury. The Director of Public Health is a joint appointment by the Council and the PCT. The Council's Deputy Chief Executive chairs Team Bury's health partnership. The Council, PCT, Pennine Acute Hospitals and Pennine Care NHS Trust have prepared a single strategic community needs assessment which is being used to set strategic direction and to reconfigure services to meet changing needs. Effective partnership working with the PCT and other health partners has ensured a co-ordinated approach to Team Bury's ambitions for being the healthiest borough in the north-west.

- 100** Joint initiatives with the PCT are having a positive impact on the health of local people. The 'Smokefree Bury' initiative has resulted in a rigorous set of targets aimed at reducing smoking and was delivered in advance of the national smoking ban in public places. Smoking prevalence is down by 2 per cent in Bury since 2006, although the death rate from smoking is still higher than the all England average. Teenage pregnancies have reduced overall by 12 per cent since 1998. Targeted work has achieved a further 4 per cent decrease in some areas. There has also been a 26 per cent reduction in under-16 conceptions with overall teenage pregnancy now being near the all England average. The Department of Health's Obesity National Support Team identified good practice in the delivery of services in Bury.
- 101** The Council is responding well to the major health challenges it faces over the next ten years. A draft Healthier Communities Strategy is out for consultation and its stated aims are to increase life expectancy, reduce major diseases, promote healthy lifestyles and to tackle the principal causes of current health inequalities. The Council through Team Bury is working with the PCT and Government Office in setting priorities and targets for the delivery of the second round of the LAAs and a suite of evidence has been used to set targets and establish priorities. Five key health priorities have been agreed by the Council and its partners; namely smoking cessation, reduction in road traffic accidents, reduction in alcohol misuse, reduction in teenage pregnancy, and an increase in life expectancy focusing on reducing the gap between the borough's most and least deprived areas.
- 102** Pockets of deprivation in Bury mean that health inequalities are still evident. For example despite more people being involved in physical activity (an increase of 3.3 per cent between 2003 and 2007) the increase is lower in more deprived areas of the borough. Inequalities are also evident in relation to obesity. The Council and its partners recognise the need to target initiatives at the most deprived areas as a way of narrowing health inequalities across the borough. The Council's affordable warmth strategy aims to reduce the 12.2 per cent of households estimated to be living in fuel poverty. A stakeholder event has been held to discuss fuel poverty together with a series of awareness raising events across the borough. Health promotion and prevention work has been carried out in some of the most deprived areas in the borough particularly around oral health, obesity and smoking cessation. A health inequalities action plan is being developed to support LAA targets to narrow the gap in mortality rates by reducing health inequalities. There has been an increase in life expectancy which is now 75.8 years for men and 80.3 years for women but the Council and its partners have not narrowed the gap sufficiently to raise life expectancy to the national average.
- 103** Access to services for more disadvantaged groups is adequate. Swimming classes and keep fit programmes have been developed for Asian girls and women with classes being put on at either free or reduced rates. The BME community has been targeted in smoking cessation initiatives with advice being given in different languages. Access to services is being improved with new health care facilities being developed across the borough and a new primary care resource centre is under construction.

- 104** Effective consultation with children and young people has been used to meet their needs. Consultation with children and young people around the kind of sporting facilities they wanted to use led to the Council refurbishing all 21 tennis courts in the borough to a high standard and obtaining additional funding from the Lawn Tennis Association to purchase equipment and fund a tennis coach. This has resulted in increased levels of physical activity.
- 105** The Council is working well with partners to deliver and improve mental health services. The Council and Pennine Care NHS Trust are working together to deliver improved outcomes for local people. Mental health services for older people are being combined with adult mental health services under a single service in partnership with Pennine MH Trust creating an ageless approach to these services. Adequate progress has been made to achieve a comprehensive child and adolescent mental health service.
- 106** The Council works well with partners to promote healthier lifestyles. Good partnership working takes place between Bury Football Club, its supporters association and the Council's sports development unit. The partnership has resulted in a number of successful projects including a holiday soccer camp for young people to help them learn new skills and a study support centre to help young people with fitness as well as Maths and English. Annually 14,000 young people have been involved in different projects organised by the partnership. As a result community sports outreach is directed to priority areas such as East Bury where deprivation is higher. The Council has introduced a credit card system for school dinners so that parents are able to find out what food their children are eating. At present 60 per cent of schools meet the National Healthy Schools Standard and this is targeted to increase to 97 per cent by 2010. Already in Bury 70 per cent fewer chips have been purchased in schools since 2005.

Older people

- 107** Services for older people are adequate. The Council provides a range of care and non-care services that promote independence and well-being for older people. Engagement with older people in general is effective and has influenced the shaping of services. A number of services are new but are well co-ordinated in terms of delivery and commissioning, going beyond traditional social care boundaries. Despite the commitment to meeting the needs of older people, resources and services are not comprehensive across the seven dimensions of independence and well-being.
- 108** There is a clear understanding of the need to pursue a broader and more strategic approach to this agenda by the Council and its partners. The strategic community needs assessment highlights the growing 65 plus age range in Bury. A clear vision for 50 plus, 'Positive Aging', was established in 2005 and is based on the seven dimensions of independence and well-being. Progress whilst encouraging has not been underpinned by a robust strategy for older people to achieve the vision.

- 109 Leadership of the older people agenda is effective. There is good councillor and officer leadership and governance structures have been improved. Recent developments include the appointment of a councillor as the older people's champion. The older people local implementation team and positive aging partnership have now been merged to form a single older people strategic partnership. The partnership is tasked with developing a strategy to support the delivery of the vision. Effective leadership has ensured a clearer focus on the borough's aging population.
- 110 The Council has made a clear financial commitment to expanding the range of services and benefits for older people. The availability of a council tax discount for all older people is evidence of this. In addition following an unsuccessful bid to the Department of Health's partnership for older people project (POPPS) the Council's has used its PIR to provide an additional £1.1 million over three years to provide and commission projects through its Age of Opportunities programme. This provides incentives for people aged 50 plus to become more active, safer and aware - promoting independence and choice. The programme has enabled the Council to deliver and commission leisure, education, library and health services. This has enabled new services to be provided to older people and some projects are beginning to have an impact. Specific promotional campaigns are run to address identified needs, such as 'Thirst 4 Life' which promotes the importance of drinking more water. This also includes the provision of training for staff on the signs to look for in older people who may be suffering from dehydration. Initiatives include intergenerational age to age mentoring, 'Lunch to Learn' taster sessions and learning vouchers redeemable against adult education courses. There is some early evidence that some services are being taken up by targeted groups and localities, such as the 50 to 60 age group.
- 111 Engagement with older people and carers is generally effective and supported by recognised forums, events and partnerships. Older people contribute to the service review process such as home care and are engaged through traditional forums such as the elders' forum. There remains a much more limited focus of engagement in relation to the 50 to 60 age group in Bury. A consultation strategy specifically for older people is in draft and plans for an older person citizens' panel are being developed. Older people have been involved in shaping service delivery. For example at the launch of 'Age of Opportunities' members of the public were asked for their views on the services currently provided and what they would like to see in the future. Social care users report that they feel they are listened to in the design of services.

- 112** Adequate provision is being made to enable vulnerable people to maintain their independence. Care services are going through a period of re-design and performance has dropped in some areas. For example in home care provision where the re-configuration of services in response to feedback about people wanting support to enable them to stay at home has impacted on performance. The Council has extended the provision of home care to cover the hours from 7am to 11pm, seven days a week. Changes have not impacted on the proportion of older people helped to live at home, which is well below targeted levels. Mental Health services are being combined with adult services under a single service in partnership with Pennine Mental Health Trust to create an ageless approach to services. Joint initiatives with partners such as the fire service ensure free fire safety checks are targeted at vulnerable older people and this has resulted in an increase in checks being undertaken.
- 113** Communication and access to services for older people is adequate. Initiatives such as an on-line 'Services Choices Directory' and a newsletter are supporting this. The use of libraries as a delivery mechanism for adult education has increased participation rates. The lunch and learn initiative has been successful with the enrolment target surpassed by over 100 per cent.

Children and young people

- 114** Outcomes for most children and young people in Bury are good. For the more vulnerable groups, including looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and some minority groups, outcomes are adequate. Health care and attainment levels for most children and young people are good and most feel safe and able to make a positive contribution and enjoy economic well-being.
- 115** Service management is adequate. The Council and its partners acknowledge that outcomes for vulnerable groups of children and young people are not consistently good enough and that the rate of progress and improvement in some key areas has been too slow. Partnership working is good but, due to a lack of management capacity, many joint strategies to deliver the change for children agenda are at a relatively early stage of implementation. Staff are well trained, committed and enjoy working in Bury. Joint workforce development and commissioning arrangements are at an early stage. Performance management is strong at corporate and partnership levels but systems for quality assurance at practice levels are less effective. The council and its partners currently provide adequate value for money for services for children and young people.

- 116 The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good overall. There are good examples of targeted health services including sexual health, CAMHS, looked after children and children and young people involved with the YOT. The immunisation programme for children within Bury is effective and the PCT has consistently achieved above the national rates for immunisations. Chlamydia screening has led to an increase in the number of young people who have accessed this service. Adequate progress is being made to achieve the 48-hour access to treatment targets. There has been good improvement in the provision of dental care from a low base and Bury now has the third highest rate nationally at 85.2 per cent for the percentage of children and young people accessing dental treatments.
- 117 Children and young people appear safe and this is reflected through the TellUS survey. The safeguarding children board is well led by an independent chairperson. Joint resources for the board have not been fully agreed. Effective action is being taken in response to domestic violence, and recruitment and vetting processes for staff working with children are robust. Clear joint policies and procedures are in place for the protection of vulnerable children. Criteria for access to services are clearly defined and understood but thresholds remain high. Preventative services are not yet fully developed and this reduces options for some groups of children and young people. The number of looked after children remains high. Care planning is adequate overall but quality is variable, with drift in some cases. The number of children killed or seriously injured in road accidents is above the baseline average. The pace of anti-bullying work in schools has been slow but this is now being actively addressed. Anti-social behaviour is reducing through good work between the YOT and police. Some young people in the YOT have not been effectively assessed for risk and communication between the YOT and social care has been inadequate. Active steps have been taken by the council to resolve this.
- 118 The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy and achieve is good. Most children and young people make good academic progress and in many respects performance is above national levels. Achievement for the more vulnerable groups is less strong but there the gap is reducing, including for black and minority ethnic pupils across all key stages and for looked after children. Overall performance at GCSE has improved and the percentage of looked after children achieving five or more A*–C grades at GCSE was above the national average and that of statistical neighbours in 2006 and 2007. The percentage of pupils with statements of special educational need in mainstream schools is higher than the national average. However, a significant proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are educated out of the immediate area because there is insufficient specialist support for children with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Headteachers report a lack of early intervention and provision for those that do not meet the criteria for specialist provision, leading to some children with challenging behaviour being excluded.

- 119** The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate. Opportunities for children and young people to have a voice have been extended, with good examples of participation and consultation arrangements including on the shadow Children's Trust. The engagement of the most vulnerable groups is less well developed. Children and young people have had some influence on service delivery but have yet to have demonstrable impact on strategies and priorities. Participation in case reviews for looked after children is not sufficiently developed. Good work is being undertaken to support young carers but accommodation for this group restricts disabled access. Levels of offending in the borough are lower than neighbouring areas.
- 120** The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to achieve economic well-being is good. The overall percentage of 16 to 18 year olds not in employment, education or training is above average at 8 per cent compared to 7.7 per cent nationally. Vulnerable young people such as looked after children and young people, teenage mothers and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are well targeted and supported. The National Vocational Qualification success rate for work-based learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and there has been a high increase in the numbers of young people completing their apprenticeships. Pathway plans for looked after children and young people are not consistently in place. There is a range of activities available to support the social development of care leavers and a high percentage of care leavers live in suitable accommodation. As a result the number of care leavers who are in employment, education and training is comparatively good.
- 121** The capacity of council services to improve is adequate. Performance in the recent past has been assessed as good but the track record of improvement in services has been relatively slow and the quality of services for some vulnerable groups is variable. There is effective joint planning in partnership and strong financial management as well as a willingness to invest scarce funds in children's services. However, gaps in senior management leadership and slow development of joint workforce planning and commissioning mean that the resources of the partnership are insufficient to develop preventative services while maintaining support for vulnerable children. Many plans and strategies are in draft form and progress on implementation has been delayed in some instances. Senior management has been strengthened but structures are still in development and many new initiatives are yet to demonstrate sustained improvement of outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. Scrutiny and corporate parenting functions are being strengthened but it is too early to judge the impact.

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 Bury Metropolitan Borough Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 28 January 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.