

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

Chorley Borough Council

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Contents

Introduction	4
Executive summary	5
Areas for improvement	7
Summary of assessment scores	8
Context	9
The locality	9
The Council	10
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	11
Ambition	11
Prioritisation	14
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	17
Capacity	17
Performance management	21
What has been achieved?	23
Achievement and Improvement	23
Appendix 1 - Framework for Corporate Assessment	29

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 and Improvement

Executive summary

- 3 Chorley Borough Council is excellent. Corporate assessment in 2004 judged the Council to be fair because, although it provided some good quality services it was unclear about its longer-term ambitions, its role as community leader, and what it was trying to achieve for local people. It lacked strategic approaches to human resources and procurement, did not always use partnership capacity to best effect, and did not engage effectively with all sectors of the community. Since then, the Council has worked extremely hard to address the problems it faced and can now demonstrate considerable progress. Its current performance is excellent and it is performing strongly in most areas.
- 4 The Council is ambitious for Chorley and works to good effect within the Borough and the sub-region to achieve its ambitions. The clear vision for the Borough is underpinned by ambitious aims and the Council has developed clear priorities and plans to deliver its future agenda.
- 5 Strategic and community leadership is strong, consistent and visible. Restructuring has enabled management capacity to be strengthened whilst at the same time achieving efficiencies. Cabinet members are clear and enthusiastic about their roles. Throughout the Council there is a shared commitment to working together to improve quality of life for local people.
- 6 There is sufficient capacity to deliver the Council's ambitions and priorities. Financial management is strong and the Council has a robust approach to achieving value for money. Human resources policies and practices support the achievement of priorities. Councillors and staff receive the development they need to be effective in their roles. Scrutiny is not yet fully effective, although further improvements are being put in place. The Council has increased the capacity of the LSP, and measures are in place to improve this further.
- 7 There is a culture of performance improvement and a clear focus on customers throughout the Council. Performance management arrangements are delivering improvements across services. There is a sustained focus on priority issues that is reflected in strong and improving performance against key indicators. Poor performance is robustly addressed. Performance management within key partnerships is effective. The Council learns from feedback, its own experience, and from external challenge.
- 8 The Council is contributing to a broad range of initiatives across the Borough that are delivering improvements for local people in line with priorities. Resident satisfaction with the Council overall has increased. Cleanliness of public open space in the Borough has improved. Recycling levels are high, and continue to rise. These improvements are reflected in increased resident satisfaction. The Council has introduced a number of measures to reduce its carbon footprint. Crime continues to decrease. Local people are positive about improvements to the town centre. Improvements in customer contact services are reflected in high levels of satisfaction with these services. However, the Council is significantly under-performing against its targets for affordable housing, and resident satisfaction with waste collection is low.

- 9 The Council has constructive and proactive relationships with its key strategic partners, whose view of the Council is extremely positive. Partnership working is delivering improvements for local people in line with priorities. Targeted work with community safety partners has achieved significant and sustained reduction in crime since 2004. Work with health partners and schools has reduced the number of unplanned teenage pregnancies. Initiatives currently being put in place aim to further improve services for the Borough's most vulnerable residents, through a multi-agency approach delivering joined-up services from one point of contact. The Council works proactively with regional and sub-regional partners on approaches to sustainable economic development.
- 10 The approach to equality and diversity is strategic and integrated. The Council is clearly committed to equality. Robust organisational structures and effective engagement with the Borough's diverse communities support the Council's approach. It has achieved level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, with plans in place to achieve level 3 by March 2009. It has achieved a workforce that is more reflective of the local population, and has put in place measures to further improve employment of disabled people and young people. Its approach to equality and diversity has been enhanced to embrace the concept of 'rurality' taking into account access issues faced by residents in more remote areas of the Borough.

Areas for improvement

- 11 In exploring options for addressing affordable housing, the Council needs to ensure that the measures it puts in place are under-pinned by an updated housing strategy and informed by a new housing needs survey. The Council should appraise targets identified in the corporate strategy and the interim affordable housing framework in the light of changing circumstances, and ensure that its long-term approach is flexible enough to anticipate and respond to future changes.
- 12 Scrutiny is not yet fully effective, which undermines its role in challenging the executive and holding it to account. In implementing improvements to the scrutiny function the Council needs to ensure that:
 - all scrutiny members are clear about what is required in the role, and are given any necessary development to enhance their contribution; and
 - participation in all scrutiny activity - including task-and-finish groups - follows good practice in seeking to achieve political balance in its membership.

Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*	Weighted score
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	4	8
	Prioritisation	4	8
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	3	6
	Performance management	4	8
What has been achieved?	Achievement and Improvement	3	21
weighted score			51
CPA category			Excellent
*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			

**Banding thresholds for determining CPA category

Category	Required score
Excellent	45-60
Good	36-44
Fair	28-35
Weak	21-27
Poor	20 or less

Context

The locality

- 13** The Borough of Chorley is one of 12 districts in the county of Lancashire in North West England. It lies in the centre of the county, southeast of Preston, and covers an area of around 80 square miles, 72 per cent of which is designated as green belt. The east and west of the Borough are more sparsely populated than its central spine which contains the market town of Chorley and settlements close to the major roads that run through the Borough. The M6, M61 and A6 all run through the Borough, there are good rail connections to major North West cities, and airports in Liverpool and Manchester are easily accessible. Public transport to rural areas is less well developed.
- 14** The population of 103,700 is projected to rise to 115,700 by 2020, with a 6.5 per cent increase in people aged 60 and above. Around 25 per cent of residents live in rural areas within the Borough. In 2001, the black and minority ethnic (BME) population was 3.6 per cent, compared with 5.3 per cent for Lancashire as a whole. Mid-census estimates suggest that the BME population in Chorley is now around 5 per cent. There is a greater concentration of people from BME communities in the Borough's more deprived areas, where they make up 6.6 per cent of the population. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of migrant workers in the Borough, mainly from Eastern Europe.
- 15** The area ranks as the 188th most deprived district out of 354 nationally. However, there is deprivation at local level, with eight localities in the 20 per cent most deprived nationally. People living in the Borough's more deprived localities are less likely to be in work, more likely to have low incomes, and more likely to suffer health inequalities. Chorley has the 2nd highest rate in all of Lancashire for alcohol-related harm. Life expectancy for both men and women has improved and at 76.7 years and 80.8 years respectively is above the northwest average. But life expectancy remains below the national average, and the gap between the most and least affluent areas is over 7 years.
- 16** Employment levels are above both regional and national averages. Around half of the working population works outside Chorley, often in higher-paid jobs than those based in the Borough. Average household income is higher than that for Lancashire as a whole, although it remains below the national average. A higher than average proportion of young people are in full-time education or employment. More people than average have formal qualifications, but only a quarter of the workforce is qualified to NVQ Level 4.

- 17 Home ownership in Chorley is relatively high at 79 per cent; at £172,919 the average price of a house (March 2008) was higher than the regional average, and the 4th highest in Lancashire. Provision of housing by registered social landlords at 13.7 per cent is higher than regional and national averages, reflecting the fact that the Council transferred its housing stock to Chorley Community Housing in 2006 through a large scale voluntary transfer. High house prices mean that affordable housing is an issue within the Borough.
- 18 Compared with similar areas, Chorley is a Borough with relatively low levels of recorded crime. This continues to decrease, as does fear of crime.

The Council

- 19 Until 2006 the Council was led by a Labour administration. Since then the Conservatives have been in power and now hold 28 seats. Labour holds 14 seats, the Liberal Democrats hold 3, and 2 are in the Independent Group.
- 20 The Council operates on a cabinet and leader model, known as the 'executive' or 'executive cabinet' and 'executive leader'. Six councillors form the executive cabinet, including the executive leader. Executive councillors lead on individual portfolios linked to council ambitions and activities. As well as regulatory and governance committees, there is an overview and scrutiny committee supported by task-and-finish groups. There are 23 parish councils in Chorley. The Council is introducing neighbourhood working across the Borough, with the aim of improving community engagement and working with other agencies to co-ordinate responses to issues that affect local people's quality of life.
- 21 The senior management team comprises the chief executive, two assistant chief executives, and six directors who also operate as the Strategy Group.
- 22 The Council employs 381 staff. Its revenue budget for 2008/09 is £14 million. There is a planned capital programme of £23.9 million between 2007/08 and 2010/11. In 2008/09, council tax for a band D property in Chorley is £1428.66.
- 23 The local strategic partnership (LSP) is the Chorley Partnership, the Executive of which is chaired by the Executive Leader of the Council. The Council also works in partnership with neighbouring councils in central Lancashire, and with the county council. The Council has outsourced a number of its services to private sector contractors; currently these arrangements are in place for property services, leisure services and golf, and waste collection.

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

Ambition

- 24 The Council performs strongly in this area. It has a clear, shared vision for the Borough set out in the sustainable community strategy developed by the Chorley partnership. The vision is underpinned by ambitious aims, targets and strategies. Effective engagement means ambitions are informed by sound understanding of the Borough's diverse communities and their needs. The Council demonstrates effective community leadership and works constructively with partners to achieve a vision that is widely shared and agreed. It is a robust champion for the area, working within and beyond the Borough in support of its ambitions.
- 25 Working with its partners, the Council has developed an overarching vision for the area based on a shared understanding of local needs. The Council's headline ambition is for Chorley to become *one of the most attractive, caring and vibrant places in the North West to live, to work, to invest and to visit*. This reflects the vision in the Sustainable Community Strategy 2007-2025 developed by the LSP, aligned to the county-wide 'Ambition Lancashire' community strategy and the local area agreement (LAA) agreed in June 2008. The vision imagines Chorley in 2025 as: *somewhere that is leading the way on safe, clean and sustainable neighbourhoods, where everyone has equal opportunity to access public services, good jobs and decent homes*. It will be *the place other towns aspire to*.
- 26 Ambitions are supported by a range of targets and strategies. There are robust links between the Corporate Strategy and the Sustainable Community Strategy themes, with clear and challenging targets for performance. Ambitions are well reflected in other plans and strategies, including those relating to housing, economic development, community cohesion, and environmental sustainability. The medium-term financial strategy supports delivery of the Council's priorities until 2011. This means that the Council has in place the measures it needs to deliver on its ambitions for the local area and its people.
- 27 Ambitions for the area are clear and challenging, promoting the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area. They set out an overall vision for the area, make clear what local people can expect in their neighbourhoods and from public services, and articulate a commitment to achieving improvements that will benefit all local people. Well-defined targets aim to improve economic prosperity, health inequalities, community safety and environmental impact. The Council shares these ambitions with partners, developing joint strategies where appropriate, and agreeing challenging targets that require effective partnership working to be achieved. For example, in support of aims to increase the level of household recycling to 50 per cent by 2010, the Council regularly reviews the range of materials it recycles, it has introduced better containers for recycled materials, it works proactively with schools to promote recycling, and it has ensured that waste partners are fully signed-up to ambitions around recycling.

12 Comprehensive Performance Assessment | What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- 28** Ambitions for the area are consistent with those of county-wide partners. The Council has been instrumental in improving working relationships between district councils and the county council, with the Executive Leader and Chief Executive playing key roles in improving communications and joint working across the county. The county council has a partnership officer based at Chorley, and together the two councils work effectively on issues such as highways, social care, and children and young people. Lancashire County Council undertakes twice weekly surgeries in Chorley's one stop shop, meaning that local people can access all local government services in one place. Chorley is an enthusiastic contributor to county-wide working and was one of the first district councils in the county to establish a locality plan, setting out what the county council and district council aim to achieve for the Borough in the year ahead. This means that the Council is working effectively and at the right level to achieve its ambitions for the Borough.
- 29** The Council effectively communicates decisions about its ambitions to councillors, staff, local communities and other stakeholders. Councillors are clear about their own roles and those of officers, are enthusiastic about achieving the overall ambitions that have been set, and emphasise the importance of achieving outcomes for local people and continuing to increase satisfaction with the Council and its services. Managers and staff are clear about their roles and are enthusiastic about the part they play in delivering the ambitions for the area. Employee surveys show that 80 per cent of staff feel they understand what the Council is trying to achieve, and their contribution to this. Partners and stakeholders agree that the Council keeps its service users, local communities and partners in touch with what it is doing for the area.
- 30** The Council has determined what longer-term sustainable outcomes it can achieve, together with its partners. This includes work across authority boundaries around improving outcomes for children and young people, tackling alcohol-related harm, improved working with the voluntary and community sectors, addressing community safety, and agreeing a shared vision for the Central Lancashire region as the county's economic driver. In support of economic ambitions the Council and its partners, both local and regional, have established a Strategic Regional Site that is already delivering against its targets of 2,000 houses, up to 5,900 jobs, two employment areas, and a number of community facilities. This demonstrates that the Council is putting in place the necessary measures to achieve longer-term ambitions, and that its approach is bringing benefits to the Borough.

- 31** Ambitions are based on a thorough assessment of needs, demographic trends, statistical analysis, consultation and research. Deprivation mapping, health profiles and a range of geographical, customer and community profiles supplement this assessment, to enhance shared understanding of local issues and to ensure that efforts are focused on the right areas. This intelligence confirms the challenges of environmental sustainability, affordable housing, economic prosperity and the impact of deprivation on the Borough's most disadvantaged communities. Ambitions have been translated into a number of community-focused partnership projects, seeking to make a real difference to local people. These include initiatives to improve health outcomes, to work more effectively with vulnerable families, and to engage local people in improving the physical environment in the Borough's most deprived areas.
- 32** Councillors and officers have a good understanding of the economic, social and environmental challenges the area and the wider region faces, including those relating to deprivation and diversity. As well as addressing deprivation in its urban areas, the Council takes into account challenges faced by residents in more remote rural areas, particularly around affordable housing and access to services. Stakeholders agree that the Council has a good understanding of all its local communities, the locality and the challenges facing it.
- 33** Engagement with local people is excellent. The Council's Consultation and Participation Strategy and toolkit provide an effective framework for engaging with the Borough's diverse communities. Keen to understand the views and aspirations of local people, the Council consults through a range of mechanisms. These include: the citizens' panel (*Making Chorley Smile*); roadshows at community venues; consultation with Parish Councils; feedback from customers; and telephone satisfaction surveys. To ensure that it is taking into account the views of residents whose voices might otherwise not be heard, the Council regularly engages with local groups of disabled people, ethnic minorities, older people, and people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). Effective engagement means the Council can be confident that its ambitions are informed by comprehensive understanding of all its local communities.
- 34** The Council champions the needs of the area and its communities, working in partnership across all sectors in support of its ambitions for the area. It has led on improving the structure and effectiveness of the LSP. It is widely recognised by stakeholders as providing effective and proactive community leadership. It has played an active role in shaping the county council's LAA, lobbying successfully for the inclusion of 19 indicators reflective of Chorley's priorities. This includes the measurement of young people's participation in positive activities, which originally was not part of the LAA. The Council lobbied successfully for a children's trust at district level, and secured funding to develop its *Active Generation* project aimed at increasing physical activity in people over the age of 50. It has successfully negotiated with the police service and with Chorley Community Housing, so that their area boundaries will match those of new neighbourhood structures being introduced by the Council. This demonstrates an approach to partnership working that is bringing benefits to the Borough.

14 Comprehensive Performance Assessment | What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- 35 Councillors and managers are willing to take and stick to difficult decisions. In December 2007 the Council decided to suspend negotiations with a developer due to redevelop part of the town centre, whose offer for the site was reduced in light of changed economic conditions. Despite ambitions to revitalise the town centre, and expectations of local people and traders, the Council realised that the revised offer would not represent value for money and that a better long-term financial solution was necessary. This demonstrates the Council's ability to strike a balance between competing demands and expectations.
- 36 The Council works effectively within and beyond the wider region and sub-region in support of ambitions for the area. It is continually at the heart of countywide working, seeking to lead and influence others in support of improved approaches and outcomes. It led on behalf of other Lancashire authorities in the development of enhanced two-tier working. It plays a leading role in *Team Lancashire*, part of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership that brings together all 15 councils in Lancashire. Through this the Council has been instrumental in setting up a range of joint working initiatives, obtaining £3.5 million of government funding to get efficiency schemes started, and establishing a procurement hub through which savings of £1.1 million are anticipated. It plays an active part in *Lancashire Locals*, a joint decision-making forum of Borough and county councillors. It is represented on a number of national forums including the LGA's National Improvement Board, and DCLG's Innovation, Capacity and Efficiency Board. The chief executive chairs the National Board on Customer Insight, reflecting the Council's commitment to promoting effective customer service in local government. This involvement ensures that the Council has opportunities to influence decision making at county, regional and national level.

Prioritisation

- 37 Performance in this area is strong. The Council is clear about what are and are not priorities, it remains resolutely focused on its priority areas, and ensures that all activity is driven by the need to achieve against priorities. Priorities are based on local need, are regularly reviewed, and reflect engagement with the Borough's diverse communities. A robust framework of strategies and plans supports delivery of the priorities, which are widely understood by councillors, staff and other stakeholders. The Council successfully balances national, regional and local priorities, and moves resources to priority areas.
- 38 The Council is clear about what are and are not priorities. Its priorities are based on the findings of needs assessment and emerging issues, and link to those in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Priorities are translated into specific targeted work and are updated through robust annual corporate planning consultation informed by citizen feedback. The Council's six priorities are grouped into four broad themes as follows.
- Prosperity: *Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region.*
 - People: *Improving equality of opportunity and life chances and Involving people in their local communities.*

- Place: *Develop local solutions to climate change and Develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live.*
 - Performance: *Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organisation.*
- 39 The Council effectively translates its overall priorities into more immediate areas of focus and activity, based on a clear understanding of what needs to be tackled to achieve longer-term ambitions. Current focus is on developing the town centre and markets; tackling affordable housing; ensuring provision of high quality leisure facilities and parks; maintaining excellent performance in street cleansing and waste management; and tackling crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.
- 40 Consultation with local people is effective, takes place in a variety of ways and is used to inform priorities. Consultation carried out as part of the 2008/09 corporate planning process demonstrated local people's concerns about lack of activities for young people, and their support for neighbourhood working. As a result, the Council put additional investment into these areas - £250,000 for neighbourhood working, and an extra £30,000 for activities for young people through 'Get up and go!'. This robust approach to consultation means that the Council knows what matters most to local people and neighbourhoods. It concentrates its efforts accordingly and is able to put less effort into areas that have emerged as non-priorities, including direct provision of services such as leisure, and financial support for some heritage and conservation projects.
- 41 Priorities address the needs of vulnerable groups and people at risk of disadvantage. Involvement of target communities in service design, delivery and evaluation includes involving disabled people when making improvements to the council website, working with people from the Muslim community to introduce Muslim burials at the local cemetery, and linking with people from the Polish community to produce a welcome pack for migrant workers from Eastern Europe. This engagement with diverse groups means the Council can be confident that its priorities address the range of needs within the Borough.
- 42 The vision and ambitions are translated into specific short, medium and long-term priorities. These are reflected in service plans, performance targets, and key strategies such as the Corporate Strategy, the Economic Regeneration Strategy and other cross-cutting plans. Work with partners and other stakeholders ensures that wider plans reflect the Council's priorities for the area; this is reflected in the county council's Children and Young People's Plan, and in the county-wide LAA. Priorities are underpinned by specific, measurable targets, with clear accountability for delivery. This approach ensures that the priorities inform all the Council's activities.
- 43 Councillors and senior managers understand national, regional and county-wide priorities, and balance these with the priorities of local communities and service users. This is reflected in the approach to waste, which takes into account national priorities around waste minimisation and recycling, county-wide issues such as lack of landfill sites and the development of a facility for recycling plastics, and local people's demand for an efficient service that meets their needs. This means that the Council is responding effectively to wider issues at the same time as pursuing local priorities.

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

- 44 Priorities are well understood. Councillors, staff and other stakeholders are clear about the priorities and their own role in relation to them. Stakeholders agree that priorities focus on things that matter to local people, that the Council listens to local communities when setting priorities and planning services, and that priorities and plans balance the needs of all sections of the community.
- 45 There is shared understanding between the Council and its partners of the priorities and duties governing each other's work. Partners understand their roles and responsibilities, there are clear lines of accountability, allocated resources are effectively managed and reviewed, and the Council's robust approach to managing performance means that all parties can be clear about how they are contributing to priorities.
- 46 Corporate, service and financial strategies are linked within a deliverable framework. The Council has strengthened its business planning processes to provide a clearer focus on improvement, workforce, equality, customer focus, value for money, and efficiency. Actions and targets relating to the priorities are cascaded into business improvement plans together with financial implications and actions arising from equality impact assessment. These are then reflected right through to objectives and targets at individual level. This means there is an effective framework in place to deliver against the priorities.
- 47 The Council effectively balances its priorities. It is clear that direct delivery of services by the Council is not a priority where this does not represent the most efficient and effective use of resources. On this basis the Council opted to outsource its golf and leisure services, enabling investment of £2.5 million in leisure facilities between 2005 and 2020. Usage of leisure facilities has increased, as has customer satisfaction with them. This demonstrates that the Council acts appropriately in pursuit of its priorities.
- 48 The Council targets resources on priorities and shifts resources from non-priority areas. Its review of committee structures led to new arrangements, freeing up staff time from committee support that has been redirected to supporting new neighbourhood arrangements. Transferring its housing stock to a registered social landlord has enabled investment in the improvement of social housing. It also removed a significant financial burden from the Council, which had previously had to deal with major reductions in income as a result of residents taking up their right to buy their council houses. Other examples of targeting resources to priorities include £1 million over three years towards the cost of 22 Police and Community Support Officers (PCSOs), whose presence has helped to reduce crime in the Borough.
- 49 Service users, staff and other stakeholders are encouraged to contribute to action planning. Employees feel they have regular opportunities to engage in the process, and that the Council is genuinely interested in their views. Disabled people have been involved in plans for the refurbishment of the covered market, and market traders are part of a steering group exploring how the markets can be developed to ensure sustainability and growth. This demonstrates that action plans reflect a range of needs, including those of residents at risk of disadvantage.

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 well in this area, and has addressed previous shortcomings relating to partnership working and the approach to managing human resources. Political and managerial leadership are strong, as are financial management and the approach to achieving value for money. The approach to equality and diversity is strategic and integrated. Scrutiny is not yet fully effective, although further improvements are being put in place. The Council has increased the capacity of the LSP, and measures are in place to improve this further.
- 51 There is a culture of openness and respect within the Council. Officers and councillors have clearly defined roles and know what they are responsible for. The leadership sets the tone by creating a climate of openness, support and respect, and there is the appropriate level of debate and challenge between councillors and senior managers. The Council engages with staff through a range of communication and consultation mechanisms, and managers and staff feel that the leadership is approachable and genuinely interested in their views. Council successes - such as achieving Investors in People (IiP) in 2007 and Beacon status for Transforming Services through Citizen Engagement and Empowerment in 2008 - are celebrated as an achievement for everyone in the Council, encouraging people to give of their best.
- 52 Managerial and political leadership are strong, consistent and visible. Since 2006 management capacity has been strengthened through restructuring, which has resulted in a more streamlined organisation and efficiency savings of £100,000 on staffing. The Council has strengthened the capacity of managers and councillors through targeted development. The Council's cross-party approach to councillor development focuses on all aspects of training, development and support. All councillors have personal development plans, and feel that they receive the development they need to be effective in their roles. This means that the Council has in place measures to ensure that leadership strength is maintained and improved.
- 53 Councillors and officers work effectively within the ethical framework. The Council has clear codes of conduct in place for both officers and councillors, regularly reviews its ethical standards and governance, and has robust systems to promote high standards of conduct. Councillors are proactive in seeking advice about conflicts of interest.

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

- 54 Decision-making is robust, timely, and supports achievement of priorities. Clear lines of communication among and between councillors and officers mean that potentially challenging issues are identified and debated, and options explored, in time for action to be taken to address priorities. For example, early recognition of a significant increase in the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless families prompted the Council to take its housing partner to task and set out its requirements for improvement. In the absence of such improvement, the Council decided to bring the homelessness function back in-house. As a result, the approach to homelessness improved, costs reduced dramatically, and use of bed and breakfast accommodation ceased. This demonstrates the quality and accountability of decision-making within the Council. Stakeholders agree that the Council makes clear and timely decisions about its plans and priorities.
- 55 Risk management is comprehensive and coherent; the Council is risk-aware but not risk-averse. Risk management is robustly applied to key corporate and strategic planning and is reflected in emergency and business continuity planning. It is integral to major decisions such as establishing shared financial services with South Ribble Borough Council, including ensuring full ownership of the merger, robust project planning and good communications with staff and the trades unions. This means the Council can be confident that its approach to risk supports its business objectives.
- 56 Overview and scrutiny (O&S) has improved but is not yet fully effective. Since 2004 the function has been strengthened considerably through external support. It has contributed to service and policy improvements, such as better access at the One Stop Shop, and the move to neighbourhood working. However the scrutiny function does not consistently challenge the Council; councillors involved do not all understand the different roles of scrutiny; and task-and-finish groups set up by O&S committee rely on interested councillors getting involved but political groups do not seek to achieve political balance in the membership of task-and-finish groups. The Council is in the process of implementing the outcomes of a review to achieve further improvements but current shortcomings undermine scrutiny's role in holding the executive to account.
- 57 Financial management is excellent. The Council's robust strategic approach drives allocation of funding in line with priorities. It maintains adequate reserves to respond to issues such as equal pay and costs relating to concessionary travel. This means that the Council has sufficient financial capacity to deliver its priorities.
- 58 The Council is performing strongly against its commitment to achieve value for money (VFM). In the Audit Commission's 2007 Use of Resources assessment, the Council achieved the highest possible score for its approach to value for money. Its clear and sustained focus on VFM is driven by a comprehensive VFM strategy and supported by a programme of VFM and business transformation reviews. As a result of these approaches the Council achieved efficiency savings of almost £3 million between 2004/05 and 2007/08, of which £1 million has been redirected into priority areas and frontline services.

- 59 The Council is successful in attracting external capital funding from both the public and private sectors to resource its priorities. Of the £23.9 million three-year capital programme to 2010/11, £4 million is funded from external sources including lottery funding, government grants and funds obtained through planning gain. This will fund improvements in leisure, cultural and green space facilities, making it possible for the Council to allocate other funding to priority areas such as town centre improvements and housing.
- 60 The Council's approach to managing its workforce is effective. It has systematically addressed the shortcomings in its human resources function identified in 2004. As a result of implementing strategies around staffing, the Council has achieved a workforce that is more reflective of the local population, reduced sickness absence from 10.3 days to an average of 7.8 days a year for each employee, introduced employee recognition initiatives, and ensured the smooth handling of job evaluation. Staff appreciate these efforts and in 2007 the Council was placed tenth in the Times' list of best councils to work for - a result entirely based on employee feedback.
- 61 There is a systematic approach to planning for future workforce needs. The workforce development plan introduced in May 2008 brings together the Council's approaches to recruiting, developing and retaining the staff it needs. The Council aims to be an employer of choice and has introduced a number of initiatives to achieve this, including career grades and modern apprenticeships. As part of succession planning staff are proactively developed for their next move - this works particularly well in customer services, enabling staff to gain promotion and the service to retain their expertise. Staff are encouraged to be innovative - a cross-section of staff from across the organisation developed the Council's values. At 92 per cent, coverage of appraisal is high, a robust competency framework is in place, and staff get the development they need to be effective. This means the right measures are in place to ensure that the Council has the staff it needs, with the right skills, to deliver against its priorities.
- 62 The Council uses ICT and e-government effectively in support of its priorities. Its ICT transformation programme has enabled implementation of a web-based workforce system and improvements to the Council's intranet. The Council's website now includes facilities to view, submit and pay for planning applications online, and for residents to view their council tax accounts. These improvements make it easier for customers to access services.
- 63 Procurement is robust, and takes full advantage of electronic solutions. The Council has systematically built capacity in its procurement function and has invested in ICT to centralise and modernise procurement. It collaborates with other councils to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of procurement, setting up an 'electronic marketplace' allowing access to a wide range of suppliers and achieving economies by joint procurement with others. The Council has also developed its own capacity to manage contracts, reflecting its move from directly delivering services to commissioning others to provide them. In 2007/08 at least 80 per cent of 'procure to pay' transactions were electronic and 99 per cent of invoices were processed within 30 days. This means that the Council has appropriate measures in place to procure and pay for goods and services.

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

- 64 The Council has addressed previous shortcomings and now works effectively in partnership. Its framework for partnership working sets out minimum performance standards for all partnerships and ensures that partnership objectives are in line with those of the Council. It uses long-term partnerships and joint working with other authorities to deliver and improve services in line with its priorities. This includes working with health sector partners and other councils - including pooling budgets - to improve the health of local people and address health inequalities. Working in partnership with South Ribble Borough Council, the Council is targeting work to support vulnerable families through a multi-agency approach. It has recognised the potential for developing capacity in local service delivery through relationships with community and voluntary sector bodies, and this is reflected in the Compact. Stakeholders agree that the Council makes effective use of partners in the private, public and voluntary sectors to deliver its outcomes and priorities for local people, and that there are clear roles and responsibilities between the Council and its partners for delivering outcomes.
- 65 The Council has enhanced the capacity of the LSP. Since 2006 it has improved leadership of the partnership, its structures and its membership. It provided funding for the partnership in 2006/07 to launch six key multi-agency projects through LSP theme groups. Partners have since contributed their own funding, and resources for future years have been agreed on a matched funding basis. The Council has led on performance management and governance arrangements for the LSP, invited an external review of the partnership and is putting in place further initiatives to ensure that the LSP continues to improve. This means that the necessary measures are being put in place to increase the capacity of the LSP to deliver against priorities for the area.
- 66 Customer focus is well understood and is a central driver of the organisational culture. Underpinning all the Council's activities are the principles of providing high quality and continuously improving customer-focused services while achieving excellent value for money. Communication and working across departments have improved, motivated by the desire to better co-ordinate services to local people. Staff are encouraged to identify areas where further improvements can be made. Customers recognise this excellent customer service provided by friendly and helpful staff.
- 67 The approach to equality and diversity is strategic and integrated. The Council is clearly committed to equality, and robust organisational structures support its approach. It has achieved level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, with plans in place to achieve level 3 by March 2009. It has achieved a workforce that is more reflective of the local population, and has put in place measures to further improve employment of disabled people and young people. Its has enhanced its approach to equality and diversity to embrace the concept of 'rurality' taking into account access issues faced by residents in more remote areas of the Borough. Gypsy and traveller communities have little presence in the Borough, but the Council works with the county council to offer support as appropriate. This demonstrates the Council's commitment to equality and diversity, its willingness to instigate change in line with its strategies in this area, and its ability to work with others in support of its aims in this area.

Performance management

- 68 Performance is strong in this area. There is a culture of performance improvement and a clear focus on customers throughout the Council. Most services are performing well, and under-performance is robustly addressed. Effective work with key strategic partners to challenge and review performance leads to improvement. The Council seeks out external challenge and can demonstrate that this has led to improved outcomes.
- 69 Strong focus on performance management and systematic monitoring and review ensure that performance stays on track. Improvements in performance management since 2004 have led to better reporting, more consistent action planning, better data quality, and more meaningful involvement of councillors. Every three months the Strategy Group, executive cabinet and O&S monitor the delivery of key projects and performance against targets, indicators and delivery of the LAA. Performance round tables challenge under-performance. The strong focus on performance management is reflected in improved performance against key indicators and targets. Between 2003/04 and 2006/07 performance against 62 per cent of indicators improved. The Council achieved 73 per cent of targets in its 2006/07 corporate strategy.
- 70 The Council has an open approach to performance management. There is a culture of performance management throughout the organisation and the Council can demonstrate significant improvement in priority outcomes through effective management of performance. For example there has been a 26 per cent reduction in crime between 2005 and 2008.
- 71 The level of involvement of councillors in performance management is consistent with their roles and responsibilities in maintaining focus on priorities. Councillors contribute to effective performance management through monitoring and review, and through scrutiny. Overview and scrutiny has been instrumental in the adoption of 'rurality' as a diversity theme, and in driving improvement in sickness absence rates where there has been a 24.5 per cent reduction between 2006/07 and 2007/08. This demonstrates that councillors contribute effectively to performance management.
- 72 Performance management is integrated with the management of resources. This has enabled the Council to maintain and/or improve service delivery while reducing overall costs, through efficiency savings and better targeting of resources. For example, a significant increase in minor planning applications in 2007/08 threatened to affect the speed at which the Council could process them. Additional planning officer support reversed the decline in performance and achieved a five per cent improvement over six months.
- 73 Poor performance is robustly addressed. In 2005/06 processing of invoices was well below target, with only 84.42 per cent being processed within 30 days. The Council improved its monitoring of performance in this area, executive councillors championed the need for improvement, and barriers to better performance were systematically addressed. As a result, performance improved to 91.92 per cent in 2006/07, and unaudited figures for 2007/08 demonstrate further improvement to 96.17 per cent.

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

- 74 The Council works effectively with key strategic partners to challenge and review performance, to share information, and to act on this information to promote further improvement. It has worked closely with the LSP to develop and embed a performance management framework for delivery against the sustainable community strategy. Rigorous monitoring of key delivery partnerships for leisure, waste, property services and housing has led to improved levels of recycling, and better VFM through more effective approaches to planned and responsive maintenance of council buildings. Effective information sharing with community safety partners through MATAC (Multi Agency Task and Co-ordination) ensures that all partners are aware of the latest information, and enables more effective partnership working in tackling crime. This has contributed to a sustained decrease in all categories of crime since 2004.
- 75 The Council makes good use of opportunities to learn from its own experience and that of others, and from external challenge and review. Shared learning promotes good practice in a number of areas, including procurement. The Council has learned from the success of South Ribble's initiative around vulnerable households, and is adopting a similar approach. It has implemented the outcomes of external reviews, including those around the LSP and scrutiny, with the aim of improving performance. This demonstrates that the Council is open to learning and to initiatives with the potential to help it achieve its ambitions and priorities.
- 76 The Council makes effective use of feedback and complaints from local people to inform service development. Between 2005/06 and 2006/07 such feedback influenced a number of service areas including: freezing the rate of council tax, introducing 22 PCSOs, and expanding the range of activities available for young people in the Borough. Learning from customer complaints about waste collection has led to improvements in the assisted collection scheme, and better monitoring and management of waste collection. It has also informed the new waste management contract, to ensure that further improvements are achieved.
- 77 In a limited number of services the Council has good information about the level of importance and satisfaction that different sections of the community attach to its activities. Customer profiling linked to service requests and households provides information about residents using the customer service function, and the Council recognises the potential of extending this approach. Engagement with people from minority communities, and surveys specifically targeted at these groups enhance this understanding. The Council uses this information to influence its performance management, for example by setting targets to increase the number of people from BME communities participating in sport.
- 78 The Council reports information about its performance in a coherent and accessible way. In its annual report, for example, it sets out how it has responded to user feedback in a *You said, We did* format that makes it clear how such feedback has influenced its services. This means that local people have clear information on which to judge the Council's performance. Stakeholders agree that the Council reports transparently about levels of performance, and that it keeps service users, local communities and partners in touch with what it is doing.

What has been achieved?

Achievement and Improvement

- 79** The Council is performing well in this area. It is improving outcomes for local people, and can demonstrate that it is achieving high quality in almost all services and most of its priority areas. Performance trends against both national indicators and local priorities are generally being sustained or improved, performance against the Council's own targets is good, and public satisfaction continues to increase. In 2006/07, performance against 29 per cent of national indicators reflected top 25 per cent performance; this was below the district council average of 33 per cent. Between 2003/04 and 2006/07, performance improved against 62 per cent of national indicators, which was better than the average for district councils. Unaudited figures for 2007/08 demonstrate a further acceleration in the rate of improvement.
- 80** The Council's vision is underpinned by four thematic objectives: prosperity, people, place, and performance. Achievement is measured against these objectives below.

Prosperity

- 81** The Council has worked effectively with its partners to create conditions for business and employment growth. Its economic development structures align with those of the Central Lancashire sub-regional economy. Employment growth in Chorley significantly outperforms that in surrounding areas, and in 2007 average workplace earnings rose to 1.4 per cent above those of the county. The business density rate is higher than the county average, the number of businesses being established continues to increase, and the level of VAT registration is higher than regional and national levels.
- 82** There are real improved outcomes that can be seen and experienced by local people. Town centre improvements include the development of a new transport interchange and better lighting in that part of the town. Part of the markets area has been improved, with the site of the former bus station being redeveloped by a regional supermarket at no cost to the Council. Although there is widespread acknowledgement of the need for further improvement in the town centre, work completed so far has contributed to an increase in the number of town centre shops being occupied, and a 12 per cent increase in visitors between 2005/06 and 2006/07.

- 83 The Council is investing in its priority area of economic development. It is making good progress against targets in the Local Development Framework (LDF) for sustainable communities based on a sound economy. The Council's role in developing its strategic regional site at Buckshaw is a major achievement, all the more so given the small size of the Council. This flagship project has required collaboration across council boundaries, close work with developers to decontaminate the former Royal Ordnance site, and representation to rail providers to gain agreement for the opening of a new railway station within the site. Developers are working to establish up to 2,000 homes and nearly 6,000 jobs by 2016, as well as a number of community facilities. In supporting the development, the Council aims to reduce unemployment, increase wage levels, and reduce the number of people travelling out of the Borough for work. The site provided nearly 95 per cent of the 48,903 square metres of employment floor space created in 2006/07. It is recognised as an example of best practice by the North West Development Agency, and was shortlisted by the Association of Public Service Excellence in 2006 for 'best housing and regeneration initiative'.

People

- 84 Effective working with partners is improving outcomes for local people, including the Borough's most vulnerable residents. Stakeholders agree that the Council works effectively to support the independence of older people and to improve the safety and well-being of children and young people, and that its services are accessible to service users and all sections of the community.
- 85 The Council is investing and putting in place the right building blocks to enable future improvement for local people. This includes initiatives already underway as follows.
- Work in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies to address the needs of vulnerable families through a multi-agency approach, building on the success of a similar initiative in South Ribble.
 - Initiatives to promote community cohesion, including a partnership approach supported by a robust strategy, and work with people from the Polish community to produce a welcome pack for migrant workers from Eastern Europe.
 - The inclusion of 'rurality' as a theme in approaches to diversity and equality, to address the needs of residents living in rural areas without easy access to facilities, public transport and affordable housing.

It also includes initiatives that are either more recent or yet to take effect as follows.

- Establishment of an equality forum at partnership level, to extend the range of diverse groups and individuals who are engaged with the Council and partners and enable them to shape service design and delivery.
- Development of a performance management framework for neighbourhood working, which seeks to achieve a closer alignment of needs and priorities at neighbourhood level.

- Further improvements to the website, including investment in software that will enable the Council to analyse the profile of those using it.
 - Exploration of options to address affordable housing, in the light of under-performance against targets and the impact of the economic downturn on house building in the Borough. This includes increasing the proportion of social rented housing, shared ownership and discounted open market value properties.
 - The *Circle of Need* project which aims to offer services tailored to the needs of individuals, particularly those who are most disadvantaged, by joining up related services through a robust understanding of customer needs, reducing inefficiency and duplication.
- 86 Outcomes have improved for young people. Responding to young people's assertion that there was nothing for them to do in Chorley, the Children and Young People group on the LSP negotiated with a local nightclub to host a young persons' night, up to 10 pm, with no alcohol served. This has been well-received. The Council has secured external funding for a range of posts including play rangers and sports coaches. Working with its partners, the Council offers a wide range of initiatives aimed at improving life chances for young people as well as reducing their involvement in anti-social behaviour. The *Get up and go!* scheme provides physical and cultural activities for young people - 160 of whom have gained recognised coaching qualifications as a result.
- 87 The Council works well with partners to improve outcomes for older people. Through the LSP's partnership board for older people, external funding was secured to develop the *Active Generation* project, and further funding is being sought to extend this initiative. There has been an increase in the number of people over the age of 50 using leisure facilities as part of the *Activity for Life* scheme.
- 88 There are improved health outcomes that can be recognised by users and the community. Joint working, including better advice on sexual health, has resulted in fewer unplanned teenage pregnancies - a reduction of over 10 per cent between 2006/07 and 2007/08. The Council promotes the health of its staff through a number of 'healthy workplace' initiatives. Stakeholders agree that the Council works effectively to improve and support the health of the community.
- 89 The Council works well in partnership to tackle the harm caused by alcohol misuse. Its long-term aim is to reduce illness and death caused by alcohol misuse, and it has in place a number of measures to contribute to this aim. Partnership initiatives such as *Operation Cherub* address drinking by young people. Joint operations with the police and the county council target illegal alcohol sales, and support retailers to eliminate such sales. The Council is also investing and putting in place building blocks for further improvement. Working with the Primary Care Trust (PCT), it is researching the effects of alcohol on older people, and is about to launch a joint initiative with the PCT and two neighbouring councils to publicise the consequences of supplying alcohol irresponsibly.

- 90 Improvements in health contribute to achieving outcomes for partners, but lack of capacity among health partners means it is difficult to gauge the extent of improvement. Refurbishment of leisure facilities has boosted participation in sport and leisure - more people overall are now involved, and participation rates have increased among disabled people and Asian residents. Most participants referred by their doctor to exercise facilities report increased feelings of well-being, and continue to visit leisure facilities once their involvement in the scheme has ended, but the impact of the scheme has not yet been evaluated with health partners. This undermines the Council's efforts.
- 91 Access to services has improved. The rate of abandoned calls to the one stop shop and contact centre is low and continues to reduce. Partners, including those from the county council, the voluntary sector and the Asian Women's Forum provide outreach at the one stop shop, increasing the range of services available there for local people. Customers feel they receive excellent service, and satisfaction levels of people contacting the Council range from 97 to 100 per cent.
- 92 Performance on housing is inconsistent. The Council has successfully addressed problems in the homelessness service and social housing in the Borough which is on target to meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. It has successfully delivered a number of supported housing schemes aimed at vulnerable young people and ex-offenders. But performance on affordable housing is poor. Despite meeting its targets for house building location and density in 2006/07, the Council significantly underachieved against its affordable housing target for that year - achieving 9 units, less than 15 per cent of its target and a much greater decrease than the regional average. Key housing developments did not start when anticipated and considerable opposition to affordable housing in the Borough's rural areas caused delays in planning. At the same time the priority of the Housing Corporation - one of the main funders of affordable housing - was to deliver supported housing for vulnerable people, rather than social rented housing for general needs. The Council is confident that the measures it is putting in place will deliver 175 new affordable homes between 2008/09 and 2009/10; however in 2007/08 the total was only 17. Although 54 per cent of stakeholders agree that the Council works effectively to address the area's housing requirements, this rating puts the Council's performance below the average of other councils in similar stakeholder surveys.

Place

- 93 There are real improved outcomes that can be recognised by local people. The Chorley 'brand' is recognised and effective. Improvements to public areas and open spaces have been well-received, and enhancements such as planting and flower displays increase the local 'feelgood factor'. As a result of such improvements, litter and vandalism have decreased and residents are taking more pride in their local area. The Council is supporting and building on this with its civic pride initiative, *Chorley Smile*. This sets out a number of pledges from the Council, invites residents to play an active part in improving the Borough, and recognises the positive contribution of local people. *Weeks of Action* successfully engage partners in improving the local environment and tackling community safety issues.

- 94 The Council is actively empowering local people. Two community centres have been transferred into community management, and the Council is working towards the transfer of a further three existing centres as well as one new one. This demonstrates the Council's commitment to community empowerment.
- 95 The Council is taking effective action to reduce its carbon footprint, while seeking to provide wider community benefit from its procurement practices. Initiatives include:
- minimising emission levels from council vehicles;
 - purchasing 100 per cent 'green' electricity for council buildings;
 - using recycled paper and other products;
 - re-using and/or refurbishing where possible - for example, it used recycled footpath material in Yarrow Park, and it refurbishes litter bins and street signs rather than replacing them;
 - procuring occupational health services from a local hospital, reducing travel by staff; and
 - increasing the amount of transactions processed electronically.
- 96 The Council is making good progress against LDF targets for sustainability. Residents of 80 per cent of all the new homes built in 2006/07 will be able to access key amenities (schools, health services, employment and retail facilities) by public transport within 30 minutes. This means that the Council is considering the environmental impact of building activity.
- 97 Recycling rates are excellent, and continue to improve. In 2006/07, 44 per cent of waste was recycled, which reflected performance in the top 25 per cent of councils. Unaudited data for 2007/08 shows further improvement. Satisfaction with recycling is high, customers are keen to recycle and the Council takes into account their feedback when expanding the range of materials it can recycle. Cleanliness of the Borough's streets has improved and, although it remains relatively low, so has satisfaction with street cleanliness. Stakeholders agree that the Council works effectively to promote the quality of the local environment.
- 98 Satisfaction with waste collection is low and in 2006/07 reflected performance in the worst 25 per cent of councils. Customers and social housing partners feel that refuse collection does not consistently take into account the diverse needs of residents. The Council has targeted this area for improvement, setting up a taskforce from across the organisation to examine the issue and identify service improvements. As a result, satisfaction improved by 9 per cent in one year. The Council has used the learning from this experience to inform the new waste contract, building in penalties for under-performance.
- 99 There are real improved outcomes that can be seen and experienced by local people. The presence of PCSOs has contributed to a reduction in local people's fear of crime, as have physical improvements and better lighting in the town centre, and reductions in crime. As a result people feel more positive, which is reflected in the fact that some areas of the Borough that were previously unpopular now have waiting lists of people wanting to live there.

- 100 Consistently good progress has been made in reducing crime - the incidence of all categories of crime continues to reduce, and there has been a 26 per cent reduction in overall crime since 2003/04. Against all relevant national indicators, performance reflects that of the best 25 per cent, and continues to improve. Stakeholders agree that the Council works effectively to make the community safer. Working with its partners, the Council is putting in place measures to improve recording of alcohol-related crime, this currently stands at 15 per cent of all crimes, but its recording by the police is inconsistent. Community safety partners value the Council's positive approach to partnership working, and its role in reducing crime. This includes contributing to the funding of 22 PCSOs, an initiative valued by the police service as enhancing capacity around enforcement but also providing reassurance, engagement and visibility. Initiatives aimed at young people have contributed to a 3.2 per cent reduction in anti-social behaviour between 2006/07 and 2007/08.
- 101 The Council is contributing to the achievement and outcomes of its partners. Since March 2008 it has provided a minibus and PCSO support for *Operation Cherub*, which collects young people who are drunk and/or in possession of alcohol and returns them home to their parents, who are shown videos of their children's behaviour. It is too soon to demonstrate the full impact of this initiative, but initial indications are positive. Anti-social behaviour is not being displaced to other areas; parents and carers are co-operating with the initiative; there is positive feedback from neighbourhood Police and Communities Together (PACT) meetings; and the number of children picked up through the operation each night reduced from 20 to 5 in the 8 weeks to 20 June 2008.

Performance

- 102 Service users and communities recognise the high quality of service delivery they receive, and satisfaction has increased. Overall satisfaction with the Council increased considerably between 2006 and 2007 - from 50 to 63.2 per cent - reversing a downward trend. Satisfaction levels that were already relatively high - for complaints handling, and sport and leisure - increased further between 2006 and 2007. In the same time period satisfaction levels that were relatively low - for street cleansing and waste collection - also increased.
- 103 High quality performance is recognised by a range of external accreditations including Chartermark, Green Flag, and Beacon status for *Transforming services: citizen engagement and empowerment*. The Council's performance is highly rated by agencies such as GONW, the North West Improvement Network, the North West Centre of Excellence, and IDeA.
- 104 The Council is putting in place measures to further improve its performance. It is developing processes to further improve VFM in internal and frontline services, making use of employees' skills in procurement, process analysis, IT and organisational development to support service directorates in reviewing and reshaping the way they work. This is informing the Council's plans to eliminate inefficiencies in its move towards neighbourhood working.

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 Chorley Borough Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 16 to 20 June 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.