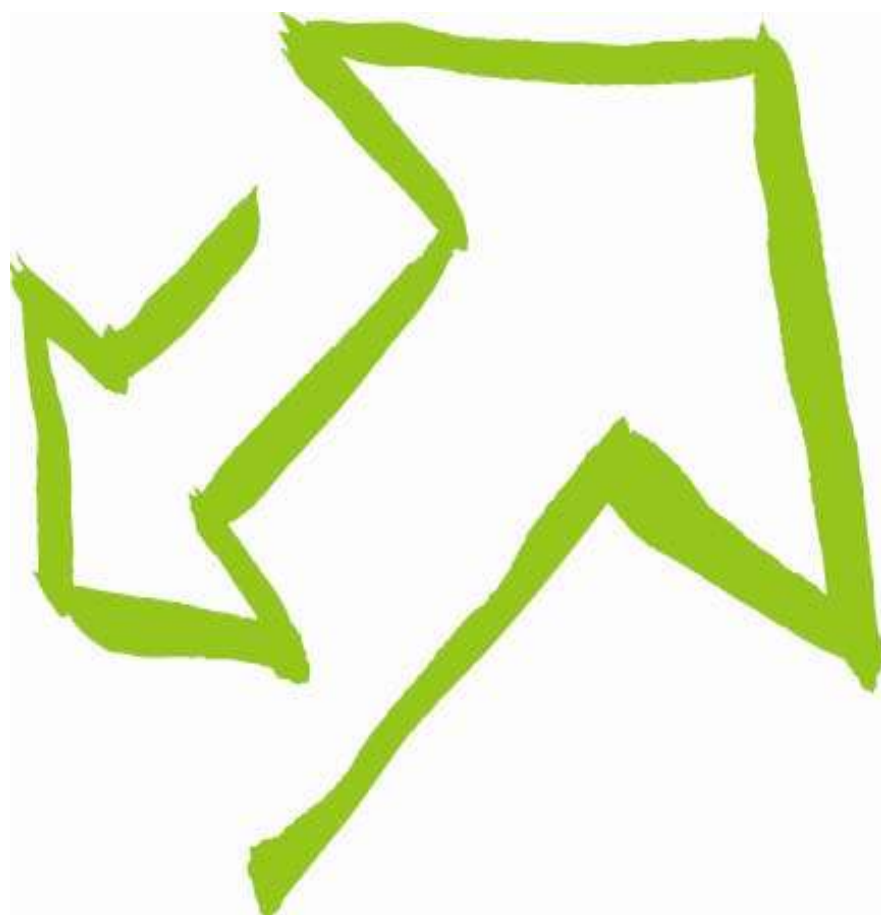


Corporate Assessment

London Borough of Lambeth

January 2009



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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 Lambeth Council is performing well. Together with its partners, the Council pursues clear, well focused and challenging ambitions centred on tackling worklessness. This includes enabling more people in the borough to get into work, creating more local jobs, raising the aspirations of young people and supporting them to achieve better qualifications. Priorities include strengthening community cohesion and making Lambeth a safer borough. These ambitions and priorities respond well to local needs and concerns. The Council and its partners have developed a good understanding of the economic, environmental and crime problems faced by their communities and of the range of needs of those communities, including the most vulnerable and those at risk of disadvantage.
- 6 Managerial and political leadership is good. The political and managerial leadership of the Council is driving improvement and creating a culture which values openness, respect and learning. The Leader is providing clear direction and impetus and the Chief Executive is leading cultural change. Together, they are further establishing a positive reputation for the Council. The capacity of the Council to deliver the ambitions is adequate. Scrutiny contributes to service improvement. Risk management, contract management and asset management are not consistently robust. Workforce development is not keeping pace with the capacity needed to deliver senior management's aspirations for high performing services.
- 7 The Council's senior councillors and officers provide visible and active community leadership. The Council works well in partnership with business such as the South Bank Employers Group and has prioritised work with the police and other partners to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. The Council demonstrates leadership in its drive to build cohesion in a diverse community which experiences deprivation and disadvantage. There is good work to strengthen ties with minority groups through, for example, the effective relationships that have been built with all the Mosques in Lambeth, creating positive dialogue, constructive relationships and contributing to improved community cohesion.
- 8 The Council performs well in meeting the needs of its diverse communities and diversity permeates the work of the Council. It has a good understanding of local needs which is used to inform service planning and delivery. The diversity of councillors themselves helps to inform this understanding. The Council engages with the community it serves through a workforce that reflects the diversity of its customers. Members of the black and minority ethnic communities and women are well represented in senior posts. Residents are generally well informed about what the Council and its partners are doing through the fortnightly publication of 'Lambeth Life.' Information about performance is widely available but because service standards are only available on the internet not all residents are clear about what quality of service to expect.

- 9 Councillors and senior officers demonstrate a strong commitment to securing value for money. The administration has prioritised a focus on quality and value for money which permeates throughout the Council and training in the subject is provided for staff and councillors. Some high unit costs have been driven down and savings have included £1.8 million a year for three years from preventative investment in public spaces such as pavements to avoid insurance claims.
- 10 Performance management is good. Focused attention on managing performance by councillors and officers has improved most key services. A culture of actively managing performance permeates most of the Council and its key partnerships. Service users influence target setting and service review. The Council is a learning organisation although the use of complaints to enhance learning is variable.
- 11 Achievement is good and the Council has delivered a number of improvements in performance during the past three years. There are good outcomes in priority areas such as improving economic activity, children and young people and making communities safer but there are fewer outcomes for older people and improving the health of the local community. Seventy one per cent of performance indicators (PIs) have improved during the past 12 months and 72 per cent during the past three years, both figures being above the average for single tier authorities. Twenty seven per cent of PIs were in the best quartile in 2007/08, below the national average of 30 per cent.

Areas for improvement

- 12 The Council should focus on workforce development in general and middle management development in particular in order to ensure that there is sufficient capacity to deliver the priorities and aspirations for high performing services which are at the centre of the drive for improvement by the Executive and senior management.
- 13 The Council should take steps to increase the availability of information about service standards so that all members of the public are aware of the standards they can expect to receive.
- 14 The Council should build on its work to reduce the number of complaints and move to a broader use of complaints, comments and compliments which are fully analysed corporately and used to inform and improve services across the Council.
- 15 The Council should prioritise the development and delivery of a coordinated range of services to promote healthier communities and support the well being of older people.

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	3
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		

Summary of assessment scores

** 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 a score of 3	4
Three or more with a score of 3 or more None less than a score of 2	3
Three or more themes with a score of 2 or more	2
Any other combination	1

Context

The locality

- 16 Lambeth is a vibrant place with a diverse community. The borough stretches from the centre of London on the south bank of the Thames, opposite Parliament, to Norwood in the south. The borough is home to the Royal Festival Hall, the National Theatre, the National Film Theatre, the Old Vic and the Oval cricket ground. The borough is also home to London's first cinema, the Ritzy, and the country's first road with electric lighting, Electric Avenue.
- 17 The borough has the second highest population in London and is the fourth most densely populated in the country. Thirty eight per cent of the 272,000 residents are from black and minority ethnic communities and more than 130 languages are spoken. Well established African and Afro-Caribbean communities blend with newer communities from Somalia and Portugal and an emerging Afghan community. A 20 per cent turnover of population takes place each year. There are proportionately more children and fewer older people in Lambeth compared with the rest of London.
- 18 Lambeth's diversity shapes its challenges. It is the 19th most deprived borough in the UK. Eleven Super Output Areas in the borough are in the most deprived 5 per cent for England. The employment rate is 68.5 per cent and 21.3 per cent of residents have no qualifications, against 13.9 per cent of people in London as a whole. However, 40 per cent of residents are educated to NVQ level 4 or above compared with 35 per cent in London. The Council and its partners have identified worklessness as a key issue and a root cause of crime and poverty.
- 19 Although poverty and social exclusion are high, the most prevalent household type is young educated people in professional roles with high salaries. The average household price is £330,000. This is beyond the means of many people, especially the 27 per cent of people living in social housing and the 2,111 households in temporary accommodation.
- 20 Lambeth has a 24 hour culture and is a popular night time destination. Seventy five per cent of businesses based in the borough have fewer than five employees and 99.65 per cent are small and medium enterprises. In the north of the borough can be found major international enterprises such as Shell and BP. The Council itself and the Primary Care Trust are the borough's largest employers.

The Council

- 21** Lambeth Council has seen a change of political control at each of the last three local elections, the most recent in May 2006. The Council's 63 councillors represent 21 wards and consist of 38 Labour, 18 Liberal Democrat, 6 Conservatives and 1 Green party member. The Council operates with a Leader and Cabinet and a Youth Mayor is built into the constitution. Decision making is assisted by an overview and scrutiny committee with five scrutiny sub-committees.
- 22** The Chief Executive started work in March 2006, but was appointed the previous autumn. He oversees Policy, Equalities and Performance, Campaigns and Communications, and HR. Four Executive Directors lead the Council's main services: Adults and Community services, Children and Young People's services, Housing, Regeneration and Environment, and Finance and Resources. The staff of approximately 4,000 people plus 4,300 school staff reflect the composition of the community.
- 23** The Council has an annual turnover in excess of £1.2 billion and general fund balances of £17 million at March 2008. The Council's most recent Use of Resources score from the Audit Commission was for three stars. In 2008/09 the Council Tax for a band 'D' property is £1,235.11. In 2007/08 it was £1,187.23.
- 24** The Council has been on a journey, overcoming a history and reputation of being unable to rise to its challenges. Following a period of gradual but sustained transformation, the Council is the most improved in London with a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) three star rating and a direction of travel rated 'improving strongly'.
- 25** The Administration is committed to 'delivering quality and tackling inequality' as well as service improvement and place shaping. The Sustainable Community Strategy and the Corporate Plan give shape to the Council's ambitions which include: promoting community cohesion, raising educational attainment, tackling poverty by reducing levels of worklessness, strengthening enterprise, promoting healthier lifestyles and developing personalised care services.

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

Ambition

- 26 The Council is performing well in this area. With its partners the Council has identified challenging but realistic ambitions for the 2008/20 sustainable community strategy, 'Our 2020 Vision,' which are rooted in community needs and based on effective consultation and engagement. Partnership working in the borough has improved and is now good. The Council's corporate and business plans seek to address the differing needs of the communities. Data sharing between partners is not consistently well developed.
- 27 The Council, together with its partners on Lambeth First (the local strategic partnership) has developed a coherent and challenging overarching approach for the borough in 'Our 2020 Vision'. Based on the relatively new focus of tackling worklessness, the strategy brings together a number of themes and outlines the partnership approach to tackling the economic, social and environmental issues that underlie worklessness. The strategy is reflected within the Council's corporate plans and the agreed local area agreement (LAA) targets through to 2011 are clearly linked to the defined outcomes of the vision. Although the strategy has only recently been agreed by Lambeth First, partners fully support the vision and are taking an active role in its delivery. As a result, the South Bank Employers Group, a Lambeth First partner, is supportive of the drive on worklessness and helps local businesses to recruit local people and local people to develop their CVs and interview techniques. Approximately 200 people per year are recruited to this one locality.
- 28 'Our 2020 Vision' is based on robust evidence and was subject to extensive consultation in the borough. The Council consults well with, for example, minority ethnic communities, young people and businesses. A comprehensive State of the Borough Report, 'All Together Better' outlines the key demographic and economic data and trends. By tackling worklessness through increasing employment it is believed that health improvement, poverty reduction and an increase in living standards, improved community cohesion and lower crime, better access to skills and education, and better family support will result. The community's concerns, particularly around crime and safety, as evidenced by the recent Residents Survey, are reflected in the strategy.

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

- 29** The strategy is effective at identifying and addressing the diversity of the borough. Lambeth is traditionally diverse and has emerging 'new' communities, for example Afghan and Polish. The ambition and priorities are well linked because by increasing employment in Lambeth the Council believes that poverty will be reduced, people will live healthier lives, crime will fall and community cohesion will strengthen. The Council's priorities focus on key themes which help deliver the ambition such as building a safer Lambeth with strong communities and developing more opportunities for children and young people. The Council's corporate and business plans address the differing needs of the communities. As a result, for example, the 'Young and Safe in Lambeth' strategy against violent youth crime has extended the opening hours in all youth centres, introduced a new youth outreach team, targeted action against gang members and an additional £1.7 million will be invested in the youth service over the next three years.
- 30** Consultation and engagement with residents is good. The Council has implemented a comprehensive Framework for Community Engagement to extend and improve participation and consultation with communities and to focus on those groups who are under-represented during consultation. In developing 'Our 2020 Vision' and the LAA more than 4000 residents, partners and businesses were consulted through kiosks, online, workbooks and public workshops. Focus groups were held with young people, the lesbian and gay community, Muslim women, workless residents and older people.
- 31** The Council has developed a notable network of over a hundred Community Advocates, recruited from across the borough. Through workshops and training, these residents undertake street interviews and run workshops within their own communities. The advocates are represented on the partnership board ensuring a direct community voice in its deliberations. However, public awareness of the advocates is at present limited.
- 32** Engagement with a wide range of partners has improved during the past two years and is now good. Lambeth First is a maturing and developing partnership where the process of agreeing the recent LAA served to provide a focus for shared understanding of the roles of each organisation. The Council has developed an effective mechanism for coordination of public sector investment in the borough through Lambeth First's Investment Board. As a result, with its partners Transport for London (TfL) and Design for London, the Council is improving safety and leisure provision in locations such as Brixton Central Square, Tate Gardens and Windrush Square. The Lambeth Economic Development Strategy links support for local business growth with support for local people to develop their skills to increase their employability. The Council aims to create 7,000 jobs through its engagement with private and public sector partners.
- 33** Consultation has been enhanced by the second annual Budget Consultation which enabled local residents to give their views on the spending priorities of the Council. Residents questioned, for example, the promptness of the Council's response to noise nuisance and, as a result, resources for this service were increased in order to improve the response to users.

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

- 34** The Council demonstrates good community leadership. For example, through the use of taskforces, which focus practical action on areas of significant challenge, an Executive Commission on young people and violent crime developed cross-cutting programmes which have received national recognition and are being implemented across the borough. The Council has recently implemented a 'credit crunch' task force, bringing together financial industry, voluntary sector and policy developers to focus on practical actions to help alleviate the impact of economic downturn and financial market uncertainty on residents. The Council has also shown community leadership by taking the lead nationally on preventing violent extremism. This is demonstrated through the effective relationships that have been built with all the Mosques in Lambeth, creating positive dialogue and constructive relationships. This has contributed to improved community cohesion.
- 35** The Leader demonstrated good leadership in clearly communicating to councillors, staff and stakeholders what the Council had to focus on in his open letter to the Chief Executive, issued when the administration was formed in May 2006. Serving residents better, joining up services so that they met residents' needs and providing superb customer care were to be at the core of the Council's work. The Leader tasked the Chief Executive with developing the corporate business plan to implement these values. All Council services were expected to play a role in improving equalities, community safety and economic regeneration. As a result, there is a good understanding across the Council that tackling inequality and social exclusion in an area as diverse as Lambeth and with the massive inequalities in wealth and life chances that exist, are essential values and expectations.
- 36** The Council and its partners have a well developed and clear vision of the role of Lambeth First in delivering the ambition for the area and maintain a focus on strengthening the partnership by reforming its delivery structures and working practices. As a result, relationships with statutory and voluntary sector organisations have improved and there is better partnership working resulting in much greater involvement and enthusiasm by the partner organisations. For example, the Council has developed strong and positive links with the major employers of the borough with improved participation and a willingness to work together to attract investment into the borough, delivering environmental improvements and neighbourhood management into the South Bank.
- 37** Data sharing is effective across partnerships. Data sharing around children and young people issues and with the police around criminal activity of tenants is in place. In support of the key ambition of the partnership, arrangements with Job Centre Plus are being further strengthened by way of a memorandum, the first of its kind in the country. The neighbourhood management pilots are working to build data sharing at high levels of granularity but neighbourhood level data sharing is work in progress. At present a picture of the state of a ward can be produced but closer detail of parts of a ward are not available which reduces the potential for targeted work.

Prioritisation

- 38** The Council is performing well in this area. The Council consults widely and imaginatively to understand the breadth of need in a very diverse community. Effective liaison with partners such as registered social landlords, the police and the Learning and Skills Council contributes to the Lambeth First partnership agreement on ambition and priorities. Planning for improvement is strengthened by targets that are SMART and outcome based and resources are linked to priorities. The LAA is well supported by partnership activity and it has clear and agreed targets for improvement which are outcome based.
- 39** The Council has built effective links between national and local priorities. Its priorities are to: build a safer Lambeth with strong communities, develop more opportunities for children and young people, provide better housing and flourishing local economies, grow respect for the environment, develop personalised care services and serve customers well. These priorities underpin the ambition in 'Our 2020 Vision'.
- 40** The Council has a broadly based and effective approach to consultation. It is trialling new forms of citizen engagement through the Lambeth Together Strategy and it has developed a toolkit for consultation which provides guidance for staff on, for example, how to consult with minority ethnic communities, young people and businesses and how to evaluate consultation such as the latest residents' survey data, budget expectations and the People First Expo, but is not yet fully in use. However, the Council's Homelessness strategy was developed out of the homeless forum, young people are involved in strategic planning for services and the Youth Opportunity Fund Panel of young people contributed to the Youth Commissioning Strategy.
- 41** Priorities show a good understanding of the needs of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities and groups at risk of disadvantage and the Council addresses these needs through its action plans. For example, the Children and Young People's plan contains a clear commitment to equality and diversity including a commitment to tackling hate crime. The experience of black boys has been prioritised as an area for increased focus in 2008/9 as well as narrowing the achievement gap for some disadvantaged groups such as white working class boys and some specific communities such as Portuguese, Somali and Black Caribbean children. All service plans contain references to the needs of BME, disadvantaged and at risk groups.
- 42** Internal and external stakeholders are well involved in action planning. Staff and other stakeholders are encouraged to contribute to action planning at both corporate and service levels. As a result, for example, officers of the Council's Regeneration and Housing service worked in partnership with a key registered social landlord to develop Lambeth's first low carbon development at the Vale Depot site. Here the Council reduced land value cost to balance higher sustainability standards.

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

- 43 There is good ownership of the ambition and priorities among partners. Partners are able to contribute to, and influence, direction at both strategic and theme group levels and partners such as the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) particularly identify with worklessness. As a result, the LSC works closely with Council services, local colleges and Job Centre Plus to achieve outcomes. Similarly, the Fire service works with the Council on reducing crime, improving community safety, through, for example, the Freshview project and reducing accidental dwelling fires.
- 44 Service plans, the corporate plan and the sustainable community strategy are well aligned and supported by team plans and individual targets. For example, there are ambitious improvement priorities for Cultural Services which have clear accountability, defined outcomes, activities and targets along with identified risks for delivery. They are aligned to the sustainable community strategy. This means that there is a coherent framework of service plans to deliver the priorities.
- 45 A good link has been articulated between the strategic Local Development Framework (LDF) objectives and the sustainable community strategy (SCS). Each outcome is mapped to relevant development priorities. As a result, the LDF aims to ensure that physical development taking place in Lambeth will support the focus on tackling worklessness and the related outcomes.
- 46 The Council has integrated finance and performance planning well and resources are linked to priorities. The Finance and Resources Service Plan spells out these links and shows that its priorities support those in the corporate plan. Service plans are developed at the time of budget planning and officers are expected to explain their savings and growth bids according to the priorities of the corporate and community plans. Resources are allocated to key priorities. The prioritisation of worklessness and safer communities is demonstrated, for example, by funding directed to the multi-agency Sentinel project, led by the Council, to tackle issues of community safety and the environment. As a result, resources are well deployed to ensure the delivery of many local priorities.
- 47 Planning for improvement is well underpinned by targets that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound (SMART) and outcome based. Specific areas for service improvement for each year identify clear accountability at appropriate senior councillor and officer levels. Each area for improvement is clearly linked to planned outcomes in the SCS and to specific improvement targets for relevant local area agreement (LAA) indicators. Almost all service plans have targets for improvement which are SMART and outcome based but some do not such as some children's services plans. The Quality and Performance Framework, revised to reflect the new national performance framework, is being used to support target setting throughout the Council. As a result, there is good support to maintain consistency and challenge in delivering service improvements.

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

- 48 The Council is committed to partnership working and has robust governance arrangements which are logical and clear, supported by strong executive delivery groups. Good links with Lambeth First and the themed partnerships ensure close alignment between the SCS ambition and service priorities. Each themed partnership has a lead and the leads meet to ensure that relevant connections are made across the partnerships. Whilst partnerships with the police, the RSLs, the LSC and PCT are good, the Council does not always use the potential and resources of the Fire and Rescue service to the full and the housing contract is not fully addressing the needs of care leavers or families with disabled children.
- 49 The LAA is well under-pinned by partnership activity. It has clear and agreed targets for improvement which are outcome based. The Economic Development and Enterprise Theme Partnership has a clear action plan which addresses the ambition of the LSP's Economic Development Strategy and the LAA. It identifies resources and includes SMART targets although a significant number of the PIs are to be confirmed because the national indicator set baselines have not been determined. In Children and Young People, the performance management process allows for a shared understanding of the priorities governing each partner's work. Resources allocated between partners are managed and reviewed by the Executive Delivery group and reported on to the LSP Board. As a result, each of the themed partnerships collates performance management information for its own partnership and also for the LSP and contributes to the delivery of the SCS and the LAA.
- 50 Awareness by senior officers, middle managers and many front line staff of the Council's priorities is good. Corporate and service priorities are communicated through newsletters and the website. Individual staff members are set targets at their appraisals that are linked to service and corporate priorities. The monitoring of targets at monthly reviews and half yearly and annual appraisal reinforces front line staff understanding of both corporate and service priorities. The 2008 staff survey shows that many staff have a good understanding of the Council's priorities.

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

Capacity

- 51** The Council is performing adequately in this area. The political and managerial leadership of the Council is focused on driving improvement and outcomes for residents. Scrutiny contributes to service improvement but training and development for councillors is not meeting the full range of needs. Workforce development is not sufficiently effective to keep pace with the ambition of the organisation. The focus by councillors and officers on value for money is good and procurement is effective but risk management and contract management are not consistently robust. The Council ensures that diversity and equalities permeate the way in which it works.
- 52** The political and managerial leadership of the Council is highly effective. Together, the Leader and Chief Executive drive improvement and are focused on outcomes for residents. They are ably supported by the Cabinet and by the Senior Leadership Board comprising the four executive directors who provide good leadership across the Council's services. The Council is representative of the community, with good numbers of women and BME staff at all levels and amongst councillors.
- 53** There is a good understanding and clarity between councillors and officers with regards to their respective roles and responsibilities for policy and operational matters. The political and managerial leadership is creating a culture of respect and support between councillors and officers and there is openness to learning. As a result, councillors and officers work well together and Lambeth is a learning organisation.
- 54** Decision making is efficient, timely and transparent. There is good use of ICT and intelligence and data to support decision making. Consideration of key issues at the Senior Leadership Board, consisting of the chief executive and the four executive directors, is reflective and mature. Scrutiny contributes to service improvement. For example, a review of section 106 agreements resulted in a more inclusive process and protocols around consulting the community on how to spend 106 funds. The Children and Young People scrutiny questioned the scoring system for deciding which schools were priorities for investment in the proposed primary capital programme. This work led to greater weight being given to schools with the potential to expand and take additional pupils which was important because of a lack of capacity for school places within Lambeth.

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

- 55 Operational management of risks and contracts is not consistently robust. The Council has taken steps to develop a risk management culture across the organisation and there have been considerable improvements in contract management with regards to the work of the majority of contractors. However, the Council's review of the overspend of £6 million on the temporary accommodation budget, which became apparent during the closure of the 2007/08 accounts, identified a number of flaws. Ineffective management of the operational risks failed to recognise the likelihood and impact of the reduction in subsidy levels and the number and mix of clients. Additionally, ineffective operational management of the contract with the external contractor led to significant property management difficulties with financial consequences. As a result a considerable burden has been placed on the Council's finances.
- 56 There are good standards of ethical behaviour. The Standards Committee has an independent chair, promotes ethical standards and has a good profile in the Council. There are four other independent members on the committee and membership also includes the party whips. The Standards committee is the first committee in Lambeth to make an annual report to Council which is presented by the independent chair. No issues of concern have been referred to the committee in the past four years. Training on standards takes place in group meetings. There is good public access to documents relating to standards signposted on the Council website and the public may submit a complaint about a councillor through this route. This means the public can raise ethical issues of concern in a straight forward way.
- 57 Councillors and senior officers focus strongly on value for money. Securing value for money is regarded as essential and it permeates the Council's work. Training in value for money is provided for middle managers and councillors received training during the induction of new members in which 58 out of 63 members participated. The 'strategic compass' is a tool used for improving the focus on price and quality. Learning about value for money in other councils is regarded as important and officers visit other organisations or receive visits. As a result, some high unit costs have been driven down. For example, as part of the invest and save scheme, the Council identified and repaired badly maintained pavements as a preventative measure to reducing claims for accidents. Work by claims inspectors to identify the source of claims has saved £1.8 million a year for three years. Additionally, the under-performance of the invoice payments service has been reversed, reducing costs and speeding up the processing of invoice payment which is also good for the local economy.
- 58 Workforce development is insufficiently developed. The Council has undertaken focused work to reduce absenteeism and training is now provided for managers to help them reduce absenteeism but sickness absence deteriorated between 2006/07 and 2007/08. Workforce development in collaboration with partners is underway in children and young people's services. The 2008 staff survey shows that many staff feel positive about working for the Council and have high levels of confidence in senior managers. However, some partners and stakeholders such as business and tenants report that there are inconsistencies in the quality of delivery of some priorities by middle managers. The Council's Investors in People assessment in 2007 noted that there were some inconsistencies in the quality of middle management development. This means that it is difficult for the Council to ensure that the whole organisation is keeping pace with its ambition and aspirations for service delivery.

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

- 59 Councillor training and development is not meeting the full range of member needs. There is no systematic individual needs assessment although a review in March 2008 of councillors' views on training did identify some development needs. There is a risk that any councillor not in a formalised group falls outside the formal programme of training. Training is not systematically evaluated in order to inform and improve the experience.
- 60 The Council's procurement function is effective and has driven efficiencies and delivered significant savings. There is a good strategic approach to developing procurement skills: training in procurement is mandatory for anyone involved with the activity and basic procurement is part of officer induction. Recent training for the Senior Leadership Board highlighted changes and future challenges in procurement. As a result of this broad approach, outcomes include a 17 per cent reduction in carbon fuels used and a reduction in the use of paper by 7 million sheets saving £700,000 a year. Procurement skills are shared with partners. For example, a consultancy was employed to develop procurement skills with 12 schools and this has led to savings of £370,000 in those schools over five years. The Highways service has identified savings of £1 million and better procurement of the managed service provider has delivered £680,000.
- 61 Overall, the Council's financial management is good and there has been marked improvement in the reserves available to support priorities. The Council has improved its contract management capacity and has driven notable efficiencies through its skilled partnership working with a wide range of contractors.
- 62 Asset management is not well developed. There are examples of effective practice, such as Building Schools for the Future and the Future Clapham programme. However, the Council is only just starting to take a strategic view of how its assets as a corporate land owner can be used to improve, for example, service delivery. Amongst the initiatives currently under development is a proposal for an asset based delivery vehicle to help drive regeneration and utilise assets more effectively.
- 63 Good account is taken of diversity and tackling inequality, both of which are being integrated into service planning. Effective use is made of equality impact assessments (EIAs). For example, a weights room was retained at Brixton recreation centre after the EIA panel identified that the proposal to remove it from a refurbished centre would adversely affect and displace young black males. The Council is at level 3 of the Equalities Standard. The Council has invested in its focus on users by improving the customer experience with two new customer service centres which feature integrated facilities for GPs and other health workers. Local people like the borough's diversity. Eighty three per cent of residents agree their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together and 70 per cent of residents are satisfied with their area as a place to live.

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

Performance management

- 64 The Council is performing well in this area. Focused attention by councillors and officers, supported by a robust performance management framework, has improved most but not all key services. There is now a good culture of performance across most of the organisation and all its key partnerships. Service users influence service delivery but use of complaints is varied and service standards not universally accessible to the public.
- 65 The Council has a robust and comprehensive performance management framework. This includes an annual planning and review cycle applied at all levels. Quarterly and monthly performance digests integrate performance and financial reports. The digests include traffic light indicators and trend arrows to show whether performance is on target or moving in the right direction. Proposed remedial actions for under-performance are mandatory. The quarterly digest, aimed at Cabinet and senior managers, also includes an update on the progress of the transformational programme and any projects that may be delayed. The monthly performance digest is reviewed by Senior Leadership Board and a group of senior managers and in departments to enable swifter adjustments. Consequently the Council has the mechanisms to ensure that it remains on track to deliver its corporate and departmental priorities.
- 66 Councillors and senior officers are well focused on improving performance. The Leader set the tone in his letter to the Chief Executive, following the administration's election, stating that the Council must focus on serving residents better, ensuring a strong performance management culture, joining up services so that they meet residents' needs rather than the Council's organisational convenience, and providing superb customer care. Under-performance is the focus of joint SLB and Cabinet challenge meetings where officers are held to account and remedial actions are tracked. Portfolio holders have monthly performance meetings with the respective executive directors. This means that the Council can take action quickly to keep performance and finance on track.
- 67 Scrutiny makes an effective contribution to service improvement. Examples include the development of a strategy to protect carers and successful challenge of executive proposals about priority schools for investment in the primary capital programme.
- 68 The developing culture of performance management is contributing to improvements in many services but not all. Performance management by middle managers is variable. Services review performance in departmental management meetings and surgeries. Focused attention with weekly monitoring has improved the planning service from being among the worst 25 per cent of councils to among the best 25 per cent for the timely handling of planning applications. However, some service plans, such as public realm, have insufficiently specific performance indicators and some performance has deteriorated, such as housing repairs and the speed of re-letting. Consequently, some services are not improving as quickly as they could.
- 69 Performance management of staff is adequate. While most staff understand the link between corporate, service and team plans, only 73 per cent of the Council's staff who should have had an annual appraisal have done so. This means that the Council does not have a full picture of the effectiveness or development needs of its staff.

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

- 70** The Council produces regular, robust and balanced data about performance. The quarterly performance digest includes information about progress against corporate objectives including whether on time, to budget and the level of risk of successful delivery. It also includes customer satisfaction data which is used to understand needs. For example, a survey on parks identified that older people and disabled people use parks less often than other groups and further work is taking place to identify reasons.
- 71** Performance management in partnerships is well developed. The Council and its partners share data well in the key partnerships. There is good data sharing in the children and young people's partnership, the community safety partnership, and the worklessness delivery group. Lambeth First actively manages performance using an LAA dashboard with traffic light indicators and graphs to show progress against targets and trends. Theme partnership boards review performance and hold performance workshops to scrutinise under performance in detail. This means that agencies work well together to deliver services.
- 72** Performance management of contracted or commissioned services is generally good. For example, tight oversight has led to fewer missed collections of domestic refuse and the award of the contract for removal of abandoned vehicles to a different contractor. However, this is not consistently robust as the management of the contract for lettings for temporary accommodation has demonstrated.
- 73** Service users are widely involved in setting targets and reviewing services. For example, service users' input on the Learning Disability Board led to an increase in advocacy services and employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities. The Council publishes performance information in a range of ways including hard copy and electronic. However there is a perception among some members of the public that the Council uses its newspaper 'Lambeth Life' to promote good news stories rather than present a balanced picture. Service standards are only available on the internet. This means that although information about performance is widely available, many people are not fully informed about the quality of service they can expect to receive.
- 74** Complaints are used to make some service improvements but not consistently. Recently, the Council has successfully focused on improving its previously poor quality and speed of response to complaints which has also led to service improvements. For example, complaints about the street cleansing service led to a change of contractor. However, complaints are not systematically analysed in a single corporate report, used as a means of understanding users' views across services or to improve services universally.
- 75** The Council learns well from external review, its own successes and benchmarking to improve its performance. Improvements in adult social care and children's services followed external inspections. Managers who improved performance in housing benefits processing are being used to help improve rent collection rates. Comparative costs on residential care have informed contract negotiations with providers. Consequently, a culture of continuous improvement is being established.

What has been achieved?

- 76** The Council is performing well in this area. The Council has been on a journey, overcoming a history and reputation of being unable to rise to its challenges. Following a period of gradual but sustained transformation, the Council is the most improved in London with a three star rating and a direction of travel rated 'improving strongly'. Eighty three per cent of residents agree their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together and 70 per cent of residents are satisfied with their area as a place to live.
- 77** The Council invests well in both resources and capacity in order to deliver the shared priorities and there have been good improvements in overall performance in recent years. There is a strong drive on improvement by the senior political and management teams with an emphasis on outcomes. Improvements include performance in the Planning service where there is a better understanding of the importance of the planning function to the delivery of ambitions. An effective programme for encouraging small and medium enterprises in the borough includes the use of specific SME events, public sector procurement workshops, information bulletins and the formation of an Enterprise Board within Lambeth First. This directly contributes to the Council's ambition to tackle worklessness.
- 78** There has been a sustained reduction in most crime levels since 2003/04. Whilst Lambeth is a high crime area with serious crime and offending above the national average, British Crime Survey Comparator Crime has reduced by 30 per cent in 2007/08 compared with 2003/04, which is the 3rd best performance in London.
- 79** Health outcomes in Lambeth remain variable but there is improvement in some areas of health inequality. People eat more healthily and are more physically active, according to national data, and there are fewer obese adults than nationally. There have been improvements in life expectancy, with lower cardiovascular disease and improved smoking cessation. Teenage pregnancy has reduced but remains high and infant mortality is declining. More people in Lambeth feel they are in good health than the average in London. However, life expectancy remains lower for both men and women. The incidence of mental ill health and drug misuse are both higher than national performance.
- 80** Councillors and senior officers provide a robust focus on improving performance. As a result, a strong performance management culture is being established, services are better joined up to meet residents' needs and there is a drive to improve the customer experience. Under-performance is the focus of a joint SLB and Cabinet challenge meeting where officers are held to account and remedial actions are tracked. Portfolio holders have monthly performance meetings with the respective executive directors. In the last three years, 72 per cent of PIs have improved which is above the average range for all single tier authorities and places Lambeth 45th out of 388 councils. Seventy one per cent of PIs have improved since last year which is above the average range for all single tier authorities and places Lambeth 30th out of 388 councils. Twenty seven per cent of PIs are in the best quartile, below the average of 30 per cent for all single tier authorities.

Sustainable communities and transport

- 81** The Council has given priority to the development of a sustainable borough with better housing, flourishing local economies and respect for the environment.
- 82** The Council has made good progress on meeting these commitments. The Council created a climate change commission during 2006/07, has appointed 90 environmental champions within the borough, holds an annual climate change conference and is working with partner organisations on carbon reduction across the partnership. The appointment of a deputy cabinet member with oversight of sustainability across the Council, alongside a Sustainability Board, underlines the Council's commitment to this priority. As a result, the Council has reduced its carbon footprint by 17 per cent - against a 2012 target of a 20 per cent reduction against baseline.
- 83** A well developed and comprehensive Regeneration Strategy is in place. The Council has begun coordinating capital investment plans from locally based public sector bodies. For example, the development of the 'Employment and Training Hub' scheme in Coldharbour, brings together the police, department of Work and Pensions, Lambeth College and the Council to focus interventions and streamline access to services. As a result, the scheme delivers joint services specifically tailored to the most disadvantaged and those at risk of re-offending.
- 84** The Economic Development Strategy has clear and strategic objectives, high level actions and targets. Use is made of relevant data to support the objectives, outline the challenges faced and set the economic context of Lambeth. The strategy forms the work programme of the Enterprise Board and the new Economic Development Partnership Board. As a result, the Council focuses on those activities which have the greatest impact on supporting economic activity and employment creation in the borough.
- 85** An effective programme of support encourages the development of small and medium enterprises in the borough. This includes the use of specific SME events, public sector procurement workshops, information bulletins and the formation of an Enterprise Board within the LSP. The Council has established 'Made in Brixton,' promoting ten creative industries in Brixton and has held procurement events including one on the 2012 Olympics which attracted nearly 200 local small businesses and engaged with 800 small Black owned businesses. The Council's 'Supply Lambeth' event in 2007 generated £600,000 in new business for the small local business sector. The Council has made changes to procurement practice with the aim of supporting local business but the volume of actual procurement from small and medium sized enterprises is small at present.
- 86** The Council's planning service has improved significantly and is now good. This is both in terms of performance and in the better management of planning committee meetings. The Council understands the importance of the planning function to the delivery of its ambitions. The responsible cabinet member reviews major applications on a regular basis and has instigated an improved 'plain English' model for consultation with residents. There is, however, recognition that the involvement with local residents could be further improved.

What has been achieved?

- 87** The Council is not responding to the full range of housing needs. Housing is a priority for the Council with a growing need for affordable housing. The Council is developing a revised Housing Strategy and Lambeth Living, the second arms length management organisation (ALMO) in the borough, has recently been established. This is seen by the Council as providing a fresh start for housing - an opportunity for continuing improvement in housing management and the achievement of the decent homes standard. However, the decent homes standard is not likely to be met before 2015 and will be dependent on the performance of Lambeth Living and many tenants are dissatisfied with the standard of service received from the Housing service.
- 88** The working relationship between the Council and registered social landlords (RSLs) has improved and is now good. The sector is regularly consulted and RSLs have representation on Lambeth First and participate actively. The Council effectively supports its sustainability policies as implemented by RSLs in the borough, and has the country's first housing scheme development meeting the Code for Sustainable Homes. As a result, level 4 standard of the Code has been developed at Vale Street, with the Council's support for sustainability delivered through provision of land at lower cost. Furthermore, over the past two years over 1,300 new affordable dwellings have been developed by RSLs within the borough, the highest number since 1998.
- 89** There has not been sufficient focus on the condition of housing in the private rented sector. Lambeth has around one-quarter of its housing in this sector, one tenth of which is in poor condition. The Council, whilst having developed working programmes using licensing and accreditation of landlords, has not implemented a comprehensive programme to maximise the availability of rented accommodation that is of a suitable standard and so the full potential of this sector is not exploited.
- 90** The response to the housing needs of vulnerable people is inconsistent. There has been a reduction in the number of homeless presentations per annum from 1,651 to 735 over the last five years but support for care leavers moving into tenancies within the borough is variable. The Council has established a number of partnerships to identify and tackle the causes including a strong basis for joint working across the statutory and volunteer sector to reduce rough sleeping. This has included cross-departmental working between Children and Young People's services, Adult and Community services, the Drugs and Alcohol Team, and the Street population Coordinator. There is a significant level of homelessness amongst 16 and 17-year olds, with 104 in temporary accommodation. There is some level of failure for care-leaver tenants despite working between the CYPS and housing officers. The Council has now identified that there is a need for specialist providers with enhanced support for care-leaving tenants.

- 91** The Council is succeeding in increasing recycling and improving street cleansing. It looks for good practice from other boroughs which can be used to improve its performance and is developing plans to extend its service to additional areas, for example kitchen waste. The Council understands the financial and performance challenges in waste disposal that they face with a projected increase in cost from £7.8 to £12.4 million by 2009/10. As a result, resident satisfaction with the standard of street cleansing is increasing with a 12 per cent improvement seen in the last year. This has been achieved through a combination of contractor change and improved contract performance management. Waste production for 2006/07 was the third lowest compared with nearest neighbours.
- 92** The Council has developed a comprehensive and coherent approach to improving sustainable transport in the borough. It has successfully promoted alternatives to car use. The Council encourages walking and cycling and has increased by 50 per cent the number of people trained in safe cycling on the roads. An effective travel plan has helped reduce the carbon impact of the authority. Staff use of cars has reduced and bus use has increased. The Council's contractors have been mandated to use low-emission vehicles in their operations in the borough although the engagement with businesses on transport plan development and waste management is not consistent. Whilst some major local employers have been supported and encouraged to review staff travel and its impact, others have not. The overall result, however, is that 85.5 per cent of schools have a school travel plan leading to a 9 per cent increase in walking to school, cycling has increased by 7 per cent and car driving reduced by 7 per cent. Having implemented an emission-based parking charge scheme for residents, linked to promotion of car clubs in the borough, there has been a reduction in the number of car journeys by residents.

Safer and stronger communities

- 93** The Council is strongly committed to developing safer and stronger communities and with its partners is working effectively to deliver significant achievements in this area. Partnership strategies such as the Sustainable Community Strategy, the Safer Lambeth Partnership Plan and the Council's corporate plan promote priorities for a safer Lambeth with strong communities and reducing fear of crime.
- 94** The Council and its partners build on sustained reductions in crime levels and are focused on addressing specific challenges such as violent crime and youth offending and some of the key drivers for these such as alcohol, drugs and anti social behaviour. Supported by a wide range of preventative and enforcement strategies and additional investment, the Council and its partners are well placed to achieve the outcomes they are striving for in this area.

What has been achieved?

- 95 Effective partnership working has led to a sustained reduction in most crime levels since 2003/04. Whilst Lambeth is a high crime area with serious crime and offending above the national average, British Crime Survey Comparator Crime has reduced by 30 per cent in 2007/08 compared with 2003/04, which is the third best performance in London. Crime is now at the level of the most similar areas. The Partnership met its PSA1 crime reduction target a year early but its own targets to reduce fear of crime and perceptions about anti social behaviour have not been met although action is being taken to address this. It continues to face challenges in reducing the levels of violent crime and youth offending but is implementing a range of actions to tackle these issues.
- 96 An innovative approach has been developed to tackle violent crime and gang activity amongst young people. An Executive Commission interviewed a range of people including current and former gang members. It identified that socio economic factors play a significant role in young people falling into gang and violent crime activity and proposed a series of recommendations which the partnership has adopted. This has resulted in the development and funding of a five-year 'Young and Safe Strategic Action Plan' which includes diverting those at risk of involvement in gang related activities onto pathways that lead to educational success and employment. The Council's X-it project helps young people move out of gangs and reduce offending. External evaluation showed that 72 per cent of participants stopped offending during their involvement with the programme. Targeted work by the Youth Offending Service (YOS) is also contributing to a reduction in the number of first time offenders by 20 per cent and a reduction in re offending rates by 5.8 per cent in 2007. Lambeth is a member of the five borough gang initiative tackling cross border issues relating to gang activity. Effective and innovative initiatives targeted at young people are delivering positive outcomes.
- 97 As well as tackling crime, the Council is working effectively with partners to identify and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB). Dedicated resources such as the ASB Unit comprise staff from housing and noise abatement teams working together with the police to regularly share information using joint police and Council intelligence. Multi agency local solutions use a range of strategies from early intervention to enforcement. This is leading to positive outcomes. Increased deployment of staff in hotspots at the end of the summer term led to no reported incidence of anti social behaviour. Focused work on estates which have high levels of anti social behaviour have led, on one ward, to 58 home visits carried out, 57 ASB letters and 48 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) issued. The problem solving approach to local issues is addressing anti social behaviour, however, the Council's approach to multi disciplinary neighbourhood working is in the process of development and the potential benefits from this approach are not yet being maximised.
- 98 The Council has a good understanding of how drugs and alcohol misuse can trigger anti social behaviour and has a range of measures in place to tackle these issues. In terms of alcohol misuse, education for young people, alongside test purchasing schemes, is targeted at preventing under age drinking. Health promotion poster campaigns such as 'What is Your Poison' and reward schemes with licensed premises through the Safer Socialising partnership are encouraging the management of responsible drinking amongst adults.

- 99** Good partnership working is tackling drug misuse using a comprehensive range of approaches. In addition to a drugs market disruption strategy to tackle drug trafficking, targeted interventions include environmental changes to estates with high levels of drug trafficking which include: increased use of CCTV, tracking persistent drug misusers through multi agency case review panels and increasing the number of drug users receiving treatment, with entry into treatment targets being met. The use of dispersal zones in certain wards has also led to reduced levels of visible drug trafficking and alcohol misuse. These measures are helping to reduce the impact of drug misuse on individuals and local communities.
- 100** The Council has comprehensive emergency and business continuity plans, including risk registers, in place with its partners for a range of emergencies. Its active involvement in joint multi agency forums also ensures that plans are up to date and responsive to emerging trends. It has developed a useful information card, distributed through libraries and at public events, that gives guidance about how to prepare for an emergency. When an incident occurs, the public are kept informed through a 24 hour live update on the website. These arrangements have been tested on a number of occasions and found to be robust. Examples include: responding to the attempted bombing at the Oval; the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes at Stockwell tube station; and responding to a gas cylinder leak which closed a railway station and required the evacuation of three tower blocks. Active usage of plans has enabled the Council to demonstrate its effectiveness at responding to emergency situations.
- 101** The Council and its partners are active in promoting community cohesion. Proactive engagement with local communities has resulted in a good understanding of local community issues including factors that contribute to community tensions. Six weekly meetings take place with some of the newer communities such as the Somali and Polish communities and have been used to tackle specific issues such as Khat usage and street drinking. Dedicated work has also taken place with the Muslim communities to ease tensions following the murder of a member of the Afghan community in January 2008. The Council has also recently developed a community tensions monitor using both hard and soft information from a range of sources including the local media, to identify emerging issues. In addition, community engagement events such as the Expo held in three parts of the borough in January 2008 and annual events such as the Peace Month, which bring together different communities through the provision of richly diverse cultural activities, are helping to increase awareness and understanding between people from different communities.
- 102** The Council is working well with its partners to reduce accidental death and injury. Partnership work with the Fire Authority provides preventative advice and support to both children and older people against the risk of fire accidents. Twelve hundred children a year take part in the Junior Citizens event run by the Fire service and there is work with TfL on safe travel on buses and the Tube. Effective measures are also in place to reduce the number of injuries and accidents on the roads such as restricted speed zones and road safety training for older citizens, those with disabilities, and children. As a result of these measures the numbers of road fatalities are reducing in line with targets. Amongst children, accidents are reducing: over a ten-year period there has been a 69 per cent reduction in serious child road traffic accidents surpassing government (50 per cent) and Mayor of London (60 per cent) targets.

Healthier communities

- 103** The Council has a good understanding of the issues that contribute to health inequalities but progress towards a coherent range of initiatives linked to clear outcomes is underdeveloped. The Sustainable Communities Strategy identifies relevant issues such as high density housing, high levels of deprivation, crime, unemployment, poor mental health, drugs and substance misuse and recognises the impact of these factors on health and life expectancy. Links are made between worklessness and its impact on the broader determinants of health. There has been progress with the Health and Well Being Partnership Board in determining the strategic approach to health and well being, and there has been a joint Director for Public Health funded by both the PCT and the Council for seven years. There are plans to use the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to determine not only health priorities but broader well being. However, the activities to tackle health inequalities and to promote healthier communities have been less well coordinated.
- 104** Health outcomes in Lambeth remain variable but there is improvement in some areas of health inequality. People eat more healthily and are more physically active, according to national data, and there are fewer obese adults than nationally. There have been improvements in life expectancy, with lower cardiovascular disease and improved smoking cessation. Teenage pregnancy has reduced but remains high and infant mortality is declining. More people in Lambeth feel they are in good health than the average in London. However, life expectancy remains lower for both men and women. The incidence of mental ill health and drug misuse are both higher than national performance.
- 105** In response to these factors there are some effective initiatives in place to improve the health of groups at risk of poor health. Examples include, active walks in parks, concessionary leisure centre provision for people over the age of 60 and free swimming for all Freedom Pass holders. An eight week exercise on referral programme for adults at risk of particular health conditions such as strokes and cardiovascular disease, commissioned by the PCT is provided by the Council. This programme resulted in an 80 per cent completion rate and of these 90 per cent of participants had reduced blood pressure and BMI and 96 per cent of completers judged the programme as effective.
- 106** The Council and its partners have delivered some positive short term programmes to improve health outcomes amongst disadvantaged groups in the community. Neighbourhood renewal funds were used to develop the Men's Health project targeting men in low paid employment to provide health promotion advice on a range of issues such as smoking, healthy eating, and physical activity. Six hundred men working in the postal service and in Transport for London were contacted. The work uncovered other issues such as insomnia and social isolation. It is less clear what impact this initiative has had on promoting health as on-going follow up has not taken place.

- 107** Effective partnership work has led to some good outcomes in tackling smoking cessation. The work of the Tobacco Alliance with key employers such as the bus garage has been an effective way of providing work based advice. This alongside targeted health promotion with the PCT has led to over 3,500 smoking quitters with 1,000 still not smoking four weeks later between April and December 2007.
- 108** Successful partnership work with health is delivering improved outcomes for children and young people through a wide range of activities. Targeted work is taking place to tackle the high levels of teenage conceptions in Lambeth. Initiatives include media advertising and greater access for young people to contraceptives, an expansion in specialist sexual health services, as well as sex and relationship education programmes in schools. As a result of targeted intervention, teenage pregnancy rates have been falling every year for the last three to four years. However, teenage pregnancy rates in Lambeth are still the highest in the country. Targeted activities with teenage mothers and looked after children are improving the access of those at risk of disadvantage. Surestart Plus provides support for pregnant teenagers and young parents and Room at The Top, a full time education provision, works well to reintegrate young mothers back into education. Twelve young mothers attended during 2006/07 and a further 12 mothers over school age are using the drop-in scheme.
- 109** The Council is also making good progress in promoting healthier lifestyles amongst children. Effective engagement with schools has led to 96 per cent of schools participating in the Healthy Schools programme with 58 per cent having achieved Healthy Schools status. In addition all schools have signed up to the Schools Sports Partnership programme with 86 per cent of children and young people accessing at least five hours sport per week. Thirty eight schools take part in the Walk on Wednesday programme. Measures are also in place to deter smoking such as the Smoke Free schools programme and test purchasing schemes to reduce the sale of tobacco to children.

Older people

- 110** The Council is at an early stage in developing a strategic approach that addresses the wider independence and well being needs of older people. This is acknowledged in the initial draft discussion paper on developing an Older Person's strategy which recognises that the wider needs of older people are not specifically addressed in relevant strategies and the work of the Council. It also identifies a need to improve joint working between different departments. Historically the focus has been on developing quality core social care services hence recent plans to develop an older people's strategy. However once developed, it is intended that the proposed strategy will be a key mechanism for raising the profile of older people.

What has been achieved?

- 111** The Council has been slow to appoint an older person's champion, other than as part of the brief of an Executive member. A new Councillor was selected as the Executive's older person's champion in summer 2008. At the same time the Council appointed a community champion. This person, who is an active member of the voluntary sector, was selected as she has been campaigning on behalf of older people in the community for some years. Both have been involved in discussions on the development of the Older Person's strategy. Whilst appointing a community champion is positive and both champions are starting to have an impact, the absence of a non-executive champion for two years has meant that the profile of older people has not had the level of attention needed at a political level.
- 112** The Council focuses well on promoting the independence of older people requiring social care support. Supporting older people to live independently using personalised social care services is a key priority within the Corporate Plan. This builds on the successes in maintaining a high number of older people at home. Social care performance has improved and the Council now has one of the best rates in performance in London for reducing delayed discharges from hospital through increased use of intermediate care and Telecare. This includes devices such as sensors and alarms enabling people to live independently at home because they provide automatic and remote monitoring to manage the risks associated with independent living.
- 113** Council departments are providing some services to meet the wider needs of older people. Examples include: dedicated road safety measures such as providing high visibility shopping bags to older people, via sheltered housing units and day centres; and Welfare Benefit support to maximise income for older people called 'Every Pound Counts'. Leisure provision includes free swimming for all Freedom pass holders, 'Silver Surfer' provision in libraries and a monthly tea dance at Stockwell community centre.
- 114** The Council commissions a range of preventative services for older people through the voluntary sector but the level of provision is variable across the borough. Larger voluntary sector organisations such as Age Concern provide information and advice services, day centre projects and mental health support for people with Alzheimer's disease. Smaller voluntary sector provision varies across the borough. Further development of the sector, and preventative services, is planned as part of the commissioning process.
- 115** The Council is committed to consulting with older people but does not always engage with all sections of the community. The main forum for consulting with older people is through the Older People's Partnership Board comprising statutory agencies, the voluntary sector and older people. This group meets bi monthly, but has a predominantly health and social care focus. In addition, the Chair of the Lambeth Pensioners Action Group (LAMPAG) meets with the Executive Director for Adults and Community Care quarterly and is effective at representing the views of this group. Various targeted consultation activities with older people are arranged on specific issues such as the SCS, the Older People's strategy and the eligibility criteria for accessing adult social care. Whilst these mechanisms have been effective in eliciting the views of some older people, the absence of a regular vehicle for engaging with a wide range of older people means that the Council cannot be certain that it routinely reaches all sections of the older population in Lambeth.

- 116** The Council makes good use of the voluntary sector to elicit the views of some traditionally harder to reach groups of older people. Age Concern has been provided with funding to develop a lay assessor scheme and lay assessors have since been used to consult older people in their homes on home care services. As part of the 'Have your Say' initiative, a number of older people have been trained to interview other older people in their homes. A training session has also been provided by the Alzheimer's disease society to engage with older people with this condition. Views from this consultation with older people have been used to influence the commissioning of some social care provision.
- 117** The annual Celebrating Age Festival is an effective mechanism to engage and provide information to older people. Part funded by the Council but organised by Age Concern and LAMPAG, this festival provides a wide range of activities and events for older people and is valued by older people. This is evidenced by the high turnout. In 2007 over 3,200 residents attended events.
- 118** The availability and distribution of information for older people is variable. The Council uses its fortnightly residents' newspaper 'Lambeth Life' to promote activities for older people. Recent articles have included information about The Carers strategy and issues about sheltered housing. A Directory of Services, commissioned from Age Concern, provides information on services, but this is not sufficiently widely circulated. As a result some older people, particularly those who are socially isolated, do not know what services are available.

Children and young people

- 119** This section of the report is provided by OFSTED. Since the Joint Area Review of children and young people was undertaken, a new 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) is now available on OFSTED's website.
- 120** Outcomes for children and young people in Lambeth are at least satisfactory and nearly all are improving. Health outcomes are mostly good, for example the percentage of women who smoke during pregnancy is below the national average and the infant mortality rate has reduced well and is in line with similar authorities. Although reducing, teenage conception rates remain very high. Nearly all safeguarding outcomes are similar to or better than comparators. Children make good progress in school. Standards have improved rapidly and attainment is broadly in line with the national average at Key Stage 4. Numbers of children and young people who are involved in crime, both as perpetrators and victims, are reducing well overall but remain high. The proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 who are not in education, employment or training is above the national average, but has reduced faster than in similar authorities and nationally. While levels of achievement at levels 2 and 3 at 19 years are improving well, they are below the national average, as are levels of successful and timely completion of work-based learning and apprenticeships.

What has been achieved?

- 121** This inspection concurs with the 2007 APA judgements in that the management of services for children and young people and the capacity of council services to improve are good and that the council delivers a good level of children's services overall. Outstanding multi-agency partnerships based on excellent shared ambition prioritise clearly the needs of children and young people well, including those from many diverse communities. Capacity to respond to Lambeth's many challenges is good despite difficulties in staffing some key posts. Performance management is also good across the partnership, although hindered at times by targets and milestones that are not always sufficiently specific. A coherently planned shift to early intervention and preventive services supported by redirected resources has resulted in highly effective provision, including use of the CAF and TAC.
- 122** The 2007 APA judged the combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people as adequate. Significant progress has been achieved since in the two identified areas of weakness: access to CAMHS has improved with a good focus on prevention, early intervention, multi-agency working and addressing waiting times; and effective partnership work and innovative provision has achieved a very good, sustained reduction of 23 per cent in the rate of teenage conceptions from 2003 to 2006, although considerable further reduction is needed to meet government targets. Good progress is being made in achieving Healthy Schools status. The health needs of children who are looked after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met well.
- 123** This inspection concurs with the 2007 APA judgement that children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are good. An effective LSCB provides strong leadership and a good multi-agency focus. Effective systems identify and support children in need and child protection processes are sound with good quality assurance. Shortages of social work staff affect the timeliness and continuity of support for some families and some children who are looked after. Further improvement is needed in the numbers of children achieving timely permanency through adoption or special guardianship orders. Arrangements for identifying children who are missing and the safe recruitment of staff are secure.
- 124** The 2007 APA judged the impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well as good. Despite the challenges of high pupil mobility, the partnership is working successfully with schools to raise standards and to further close the gap in attainment for children and young people from vulnerable groups, including looked after children. Good provision is made for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, exclusions for this group of pupils and others remain too high. Effective support for learning in the Foundation Stage has significantly improved outcomes.

- 125** The 2007 APA judged the impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society as good. Good progress has been made in addressing the identified area of weakness, in that outstanding partnership work, effective and inter-related multi-agency strategies, an effective YOS and a broad range of innovative projects are reducing the rate of offending among young people and improving behaviour, although the proportion of young people entering the criminal justice system who are Black remains high. Corporate parenting arrangements are outstanding. Extensive engagement with children and young people, including those from vulnerable groups, strongly influences strategic planning and service delivery.
- 126** The 2007 APA judged the impact of all local services in helping children and young people to achieve economic well-being as good. Tackling worklessness for all age groups is a priority for the partnership. Continuing good progress is being made in improving attainment post-16 and reducing the overall number of young people who are not in education, employment or training, with some particularly successful initiatives for vulnerable groups including teenage mothers, care leavers and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Homelessness for young people is mostly tackled well. Transition arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have improved significantly and are generally good.

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 London Borough of Lambeth was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 15 to 26 September 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.

The Audit Commission

The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.

Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, auditing the £200 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

As a force for improvement, we work in partnership to assess local public services and make practical recommendations for promoting a better quality of life for local people.

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