

Inspection report

June 2004



Transport Services Inspection

London Borough of Hackney

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Summary

- 1 The London Borough of Hackney is an inner London borough. It has a population of 203,400, of which 40.6 per cent¹ are from black or minority ethnic (BME) communities. Over 80 languages are spoken in the borough.
- 2 Hackney is the second most deprived area in England. Prior to the recent ward boundary changes, all 23 wards were ranked in the most deprived ten per cent². Unemployment stands at 6.1 per cent, compared with the London average of 3.7 per cent³.
- 3 The council is Labour led, with 45 of the 57 seats. The council employed 5,227 staff in June 2002⁴. The council's net revenue expenditure budget for 2003/04 is £346 million.
- 4 The transport inspection covered:
 - ◆ maintenance of highways and footways (including winter maintenance), bridges, street lighting, street furniture, and the highway drainage system;
 - ◆ parking policy and provision, including enforcement of on and off-street parking restrictions, issue of parking dispensations, issue and renewal of residents' and business parking permits, and operation and maintenance of public car parks;
 - ◆ traffic management and local road safety schemes, management and operation of school crossing patrols, and road safety education and awareness;
 - ◆ sustainable transport schemes, for example cycle route provision; and
 - ◆ highways licensing, for example, the issue of skip permits.
- 5 The planning and transportation division is responsible for delivering the majority of these services. There is a mixed economy of service provision and the overall service budget was approximately £11.52 million for 2003/04, representing an increase of approximately 300 per cent from the previous year.

¹ ONS Census 2001

² DTLR index of multiple deprivation 2000.

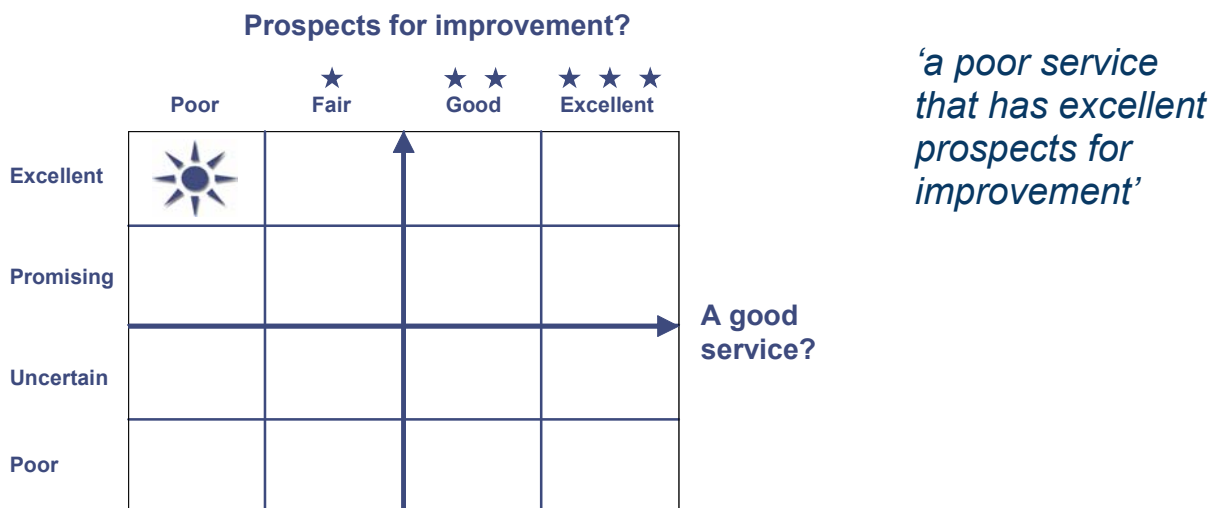
³ ONS labour market statistics 2003.

⁴ Employers Organisation Local Government employment survey 2002.

Scoring the service

- 6 We have assessed the council as providing a 'poor' no-star service that has excellent prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Scoring chart⁵: London Borough of Hackney - Transport Services Inspection



- 7 The service provided is poor because:

- ◆ there is currently no overarching transport strategy linking plans, priorities and actions for developing a transportation system that is accessible, safe, efficient and sustainable. A number of key plans informing this are also still being developed;
- ◆ sustainable transport initiatives such as cycling and walking programmes are under-developed. Hackney’s local cycle network is deteriorating;
- ◆ there is no evidence of any work having had an impact on car travellers changing to other transport means such as rail, bus, cycling or walking, or reducing congestion, other than improved bus route performance as detailed below;
- ◆ there are no active travel plans in Hackney, for the council, schools, or developers;
- ◆ performance on road accident casualties is comparatively poor, albeit that 43 per cent of accidents occur on the Transport for London (TfL) road network;
- ◆ there is no overall impact analysis of safety engineering measures on Hackney’s accident totals, and trends are not assessed;
- ◆ there is very little road safety education, training and publicity;
- ◆ there is a lack of robust data to guide parking management decision making;
- ◆ the balance between the needs of road and footway capital renewal and maintenance programmes has not been assessed. As a result, it is difficult to

⁵ The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a service that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent service (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

gauge whether current programmes are having maximum impact in delivering the council's targets;

- ◆ there are approximately £2 million of outstanding highway insurance claims. Although there is awareness of the impact of insurance claims on overall financial performance, data is not well co-ordinated and an effective inspection regime is not yet in place;
- ◆ the council demonstrates comparatively poor performance (London 3rd quartile) for condition of all roads;
- ◆ there are no binding contract standards for highway maintenance and street lighting, and therefore no mechanism to redress poor performance. Contract standards for reactive maintenance are not being met but the volume of work has escalated enormously so that it no longer resembles the originally identified needs of the council;
- ◆ there are currently no inventories for unlit signs or gullies;
- ◆ telephone access to highway maintenance services is problematical;
- ◆ very few outcome measures or targets are used to manage the whole service; and
- ◆ apart from parking services and street lighting, there is a lack of published standards informing local people of the standards of service they can expect.

8 However, we did find some positive aspects:

- ◆ the council has set clear and ambitious short term aims to improve the condition of roads, footways and street lighting;
- ◆ there is fair overall accessibility to parking services including permit renewal by phone and on-line availability of standard forms. The penalty charge notice (PCN) recovery rate is 52 per cent, The service is customer-focused and is generating surpluses that are being used to support transport priorities;
- ◆ the council has worked with London Transport to secure 16 new bus services and a further ten peak period services on the North London train line;
- ◆ bus routes in the borough demonstrate the same performance and reliability as the inner London average, and this reflects user satisfaction which has increased significantly in the last two years;
- ◆ the council demonstrates London top quartile performance for footway condition and road accident casualties are on track to meet 2010 targets; and
- ◆ a good programme of safety engineering work is in place. This is targeted to locations where there are most accidents.

9 We think the prospects for improvement are excellent because:

- ◆ Hackney mayor's priorities reflect user concerns;
- ◆ there is commitment by both councillors and officers to delivering the Hackney mayor's priorities. This is reflected in five year strategies for highway and street lighting improvements and agreed funding levels for the next three years;
- ◆ there is a significant track record of improvement in priority areas, for example, parking services, and street lighting where 12 per cent of the lighting stock has been replaced and street lights out have been reduced from 13 per cent to between 3 and 4 per cent in the last year;
- ◆ improvements to bus reliability have been secured through joint measures with TfL;

- ◆ a joint lobbying strategy has been agreed with TfL in respect of the rail improvements required to achieve longer term community aims to reduce inequality and improve transport to and from the borough;
- ◆ current estimates indicate that road safety targets (reduction in total number of people killed or seriously injured) are likely to be met;
- ◆ a new methodology for refining the prioritisation of the carriageway, footway and street lighting capital programmes has recently been agreed. This will ensure that:
 - assets in poorest condition are improved first,
 - the order of works is cost effective.
- ◆ consultation is being strengthened to engage with more hard to reach groups, by, for example, introduction of door step sampling and the availability of translation services if required;
- ◆ a number of initiatives are underway to further increase accessibility of services and/or address user concerns, for example:
 - changes to controlled parking zones in response to representations;
 - introduction of an automated telephone payment system to allow 24 hour access to the parking service, as well as web-based payment of PCNs.
- ◆ the new parking enforcement contract is based upon best practice, has flexibility to meet changing local needs, and incorporates continuous improvement targets;
- ◆ the new highways maintenance and street lighting contract will contain appropriate mechanisms to manage contractor performance and allow the council to explore future partnering options;
- ◆ a number of benchmarking/comparison exercises with excellent authorities have/are being undertaken to challenge the current pattern of service delivery and inform plans for improvement;
- ◆ the service planning framework is being aligned with the local mayoral 'key deliverables';
- ◆ external consultants are providing additional capacity to prepare strategies and plans to address the current gaps. Some of these plans are well developed and are shortly to be formally adopted (for example, the parking and enforcement plan and public realm design guide); others are on target to be delivered within specified deadlines, and will inform the council's developing transport strategy; and
- ◆ organisational restructuring makes provision for an additional road safety post, and funding granted by TfL makes provision for a school travel plan coordinator.

10 However:

- ◆ there is limited strategic transport planning capacity in order to co-ordinate and manage implementation, once the necessary strategies are in place;
- ◆ service plans lack explicit outcome measures; and
- ◆ we were not made aware of any plans to address responsiveness of the reactive highway maintenance service.

Recommendations

11 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. In this context, the inspection team makes the following recommendations:

- ◆ Ensure that critical strategy and policy documents are completed and adopted as quickly as possible, and explicitly linked to the council's developing community strategy and planning framework.
- ◆ Refocus measurement of targets and activity to give greater emphasis to the use of outcome measures which can be compared with the best authorities, including:
 - modal shift (car travellers changing to other transport means such as rail, bus, cycling or walking or not making a journey);
 - effectiveness of safety engineering;
 - parking management;
 - capital and revenue maintenance programmes; and
 - street lighting.
- ◆ Improve highway maintenance by:
 - reviewing the balance between reactive maintenance and renewal programmes to ensure that the desired outcomes will be achieved;
 - ensuring that for the remaining life of the existing contract, resources are allocated to ensuring that the contractor completes work to agreed timescales;
 - improving and formalising advice to highway inspectors about levels of defects, action to be taken, and expected speed of response; and
 - ensuring that insurance data presents a clear picture of trends and areas for improved action.
- ◆ Improve ways that the public are informed about and can contact the service, and consider ways to improve joint working between service areas (for example, skip licenses in parking bays).
- ◆ Publicise service standards for transport services to help manage public expectation.

- 12 We would like to thank the staff of Hackney council, particularly Martin Peckitt, Steve Gittens and Sonia Walters, who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

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Report

Context

- 13 This report has been prepared by the Audit Commission ('the Commission') following an inspection under Section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, and issued in accordance with its duty under Section 13 of the 1999 Act.

The locality

- 14 Hackney is an inner-London borough to the north and east of the City of London. The borough has a rising population of 203,400, living in 84,000 households⁶, with 40.6 per cent⁷ of the population are from black or minority ethnic (BME) communities, with 69 per cent⁸ of schoolchildren of BME origin. Over 80 languages are spoken in the borough.
- 15 Hackney has the second highest level of deprivation among English local authorities and, prior to the recent ward boundary changes, all 23 wards were ranked in the most deprived ten per cent nationally⁹. Unemployment stands at 6.1 per cent, compared with the London average of 3.7 per cent.¹⁰

The council

- 16 The council comprises 57 councillors. The Labour Party has control with 45 seats. The Conservatives have nine seats and Liberal Democrats three. A leader and cabinet model of governance has operated since May 2002 and a mayor was elected in October 2002. The council employed 5,227 staff in June 2002, one of the smallest workforces in London¹¹.
- 17 A series of critical reports culminated in Hackney being issued with a set of 'statutory directions' by government in 2001. In 2002 the council received a comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) rating of 'poor', within which environmental services were also scored in the lowest category. The council submitted a recovery plan to the Secretary of State in April 2003, which is subject to ongoing engagement with the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister.
- 18 Additional government funding of £25 million was secured in 2002/03. The council's net revenue expenditure budget for 2003/04 is £346 million. Council Tax Band D is £1,158 in 2003/04, a 13 per cent rise from the previous year.
- 19 Local priorities have been agreed by the Hackney strategic partnership and reflected in the Hackney 2020 Vision. These are:
- ◆ making Hackney a good place to live;
 - ◆ a confident and safe community;

⁶ 2001 mid-year estimates, ONS.

⁷ ONS Census 2001

⁸ DfES Schools in England 2002

⁹ DTLR index of multiple deprivation 2000.

¹⁰ ONS labour market statistics 2003.

¹¹ Employers Organisation LG employment survey 2002.

- ◆ a thriving healthy and inclusive community;
 - ◆ a place to enjoy yourself;
 - ◆ a good place to work and do business;
 - ◆ a good place to get around; and
 - ◆ a place where you want your children to be educated.
- 20 This vision has now been further refined within the key themes of the borough's draft community strategy 2004-2014, which are:
- ◆ a cohesive social and community infrastructure;
 - ◆ housing for a mixed and balanced community;
 - ◆ a safe, high quality public realm;
 - ◆ economy, enterprise and employment;
 - ◆ better transport;
 - ◆ better life chances for all our children; and
 - ◆ tackling health inequalities.
- 21 The draft strategy was issued in February 2004 and is currently subject to extensive public consultation.

Transport services in Hackney

- 22 The council is responsible for maintaining 248.9km of borough roads including 17.9km of principal (A class) roads. A further 15.1km of principal roads (red routes) are maintained by TfL including the A10, which runs north to south across the borough. 43 per cent of road accidents in Hackney currently occur on the TfL road network.
- 23 Forty four per cent of households own a car, which is comparatively lower than other inner London boroughs¹². Walking and cycling account for approximately 45 per cent of trips by residents.¹³ A recent London Cycling Campaign UK comparison of journeys to work by cycle shows Hackney as having the highest growth rate nationally with a 70 per cent increase over the last ten years. Currently 6.83 per cent of journeys to work are by bike and this figure is increasing.
- 24 There is heavy demand on local transport systems as 60 per cent of jobs within the borough are filled by non-residents and 60 per cent of resident workers travel to outside jobs. The best public transport services are concentrated in the limited number of corridors that enjoy both bus and rail services. Many deprived areas lie either beyond reasonable walking distance of these main services or face interchange and other problems that reduce travel options.
- 25 The borough is served by 6 of the 27 London Bus Initiative¹⁴ (LBI) routes. Hackney has 41 high-frequency daytime bus routes, only 8 of which do not enter the Central

¹² Source: ONS Census 2001

¹³ Source: ONS Census 2001

¹⁴ London Bus Initiative - The London Bus Initiative (LBI) / BusPlus programme is a partnership of the London Boroughs, Transport for London, bus operators, the Metropolitan Police, and the London Bus Priority Network (LBPN) which aims to deliver bus priority measures and enhanced quality of bus services across London.

London congestion-charging zone, and three low-frequency routes none of which enter the zone.

- 26 There are currently eleven controlled parking zones in operation, focused around main town centres, main rail stations, and the city fringe area bordering the congestion-charging zone. These cover approximately half the borough. Large parts of north and east remain uncontrolled.
- 27 Local evening and night time economies are expanding, notably in Shoreditch, Hoxton and the Hackney cultural quarter. This adds to on-street parking conflicts between local residents and visitors.
- 28 The transport inspection covered:
- ◆ maintenance of highways and footways (including winter maintenance), bridges, street lighting, street furniture, and the highway drainage system;
 - ◆ parking policy and provision, including enforcement of on and off-street parking restrictions, issue of parking dispensations, issue and renewal of residents' and business parking permits, and operation and maintenance of public car parks;
 - ◆ traffic management and local road safety schemes, management and operation of school crossing patrols, and road safety education and training;
 - ◆ sustainable transport schemes, for example cycle route provision; and
 - ◆ highways licensing, for example, the issue of skip permits.
- 29 The planning and transportation division is responsible for delivering the majority of these services and there is currently a mixed economy of service provision. The service budget from all sources (including TfL and NRF) was approximately £11.52 million for 2003/04, an increase of about 300 per cent from the previous year.

Transport services - national context

- 30 The Highways Act 1980 imposes a duty on local authorities to maintain the highway. Councils provide, manage and maintain over 96 per cent of roads nationally – the exceptions are trunk roads and motorways, (maintained by the Highways Agency) and the main road network in London which is managed on behalf of the London Mayor by TfL. There is a further duty, by virtue of the Road Traffic Regulations 1984, to secure the 'expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic', and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities both on and off roads.
- 31 The Government has a ten-year plan – Transport 2010 - to deliver a quicker, safer, more punctual and environmentally friendly transport system. The key themes of Government policy are:
- ◆ reducing the need for mobility;
 - ◆ making best use of the transport infrastructure;
 - ◆ modal shift to public transport – especially through integrated transport;
 - ◆ reducing congestion, traffic volume and accidents;
 - ◆ equity and social inclusion including the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act; and
 - ◆ environmental sustainability, healthy lifestyles and quality of life for local people.

- 32 Key targets are a 40 per cent reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents, a 50 per cent reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured, an 8 per cent fall in traffic congestion and a 12 per cent increase in the use of public transport.
- 33 In London national policy is translated into Interim Local Implementation Plans (ILIPs) which present the borough's long term vision for transport, set in the context of the London Mayor's strategy for London and guidance produced by TfL. ILIPs are not statutory documents but will be required to be from 2005. In addition London boroughs are required to bid for capital funds for highway projects; these bids are set out in annual Borough Spending Plans (BSPs).
- 34 The Audit Commission report 'Going Places'¹⁵ identified that a lack of frequent transport contributes to social exclusion. A further report 'All Aboard'¹⁶ describes the contribution made by public transport social, economic and environmental goals:

'Good public transport helps to meet social objectives such as tackling social exclusion, by ensuring that disadvantaged groups – principally those on low incomes, people with disabilities and the elderly - have access to affordable bus and train services'

¹⁵ Going Places - Taking People to and from Education, Social Services and Health Care (2001)

¹⁶ All Aboard – Support for Local Transport and Travel in Urban Areas outside London (1999)

How good is the service?

Are the aims clear and challenging?

- 35 Inspectors look to see how a council has agreed the key aims for the service being inspected, how clear these aims are to the people that receive the service and whether these reflect the corporate aims of the organisation as a whole.
- 36 Aims need to be challenging, address local needs and support national objectives. This requires the council to consider and demonstrate how a service contributes to its wider corporate aims and community plans.
- 37 The council has set clear, ambitious short term aims to quickly and noticeably improve the condition of roads, footways and street lighting. Longer term transport aims are clearly focused on new and improved rail links with the rest of London as these are seen as key to meeting longer term community priorities to reduce inequality and increase accessibility to and from the borough. However, although there are several documents which indicate a direction for transport in Hackney, there is not yet an overarching local transport strategy linking plans, priorities and actions for developing a transportation system that is accessible, safe, efficient and sustainable. In addition, there are few published service standards informing the public what level of service they can expect.
- 38 There is clear short term priority to improve the condition of the roads, footways, and street lighting. This is supported by the council's own MORI polls that say these issues are very important to local people. These early priorities are set out in the Hackney mayor's key priorities and 'key deliverables', which were first detailed in the council's recovery plan.
- 39 In total there are 34 'key deliverables' for 2004/05, each with defined outputs or outcomes. Of these, four are of particular relevance to the highways and transport services:
- ◆ Key deliverable 11 – 'To maximise the beneficial outcomes for Hackney's communities from the master plans for the Olympics and Lower Lea Valley and wider Thames Gateway proposals', including an improved public transport infrastructure;
 - ◆ Key deliverable 19 – 'By 2005, to have through the adoption of a street scene strategy and an ongoing investment programme, improved management and infrastructure of the street environment within Hackney'. This is underpinned by a number of challenging targets including:
 - percentage of street lights not working to be no more than 3 per cent by March 2005 – a significant challenge to the council as this was running at 13.4 per cent in April 2002;
 - 22 per cent of the lighting stock to be replaced by 2005; and
 - delivery of the streetscene capital programme by March 2005.
 - ◆ Key deliverable 20 – 'By 2005, to provide the effective regulation of the environment, so as to ensure the health, safety and welfare of residents, businesses, and visitors'. Targets underpinning this include:
 - implementation of the new parking enforcement contract by September 2004;
 - meeting an improved target (59 per cent) for parking income recovery by end 2004/05;
 - adoption of the parking and enforcement plan by July 2004, and development of an overarching enforcement strategy by August 2004.

- ◆ Key deliverable 34 – ‘By 2005, to have in place a transportation strategy for Hackney that aids the improvement of the environment, the regeneration of the borough and improves safety on Hackney’s roads by 2010’.
- 40 Key deliverable 34 is about to receive higher priority, but requires development of a number of associated plans and strategies. These include a road safety plan, parking and enforcement plan (as detailed above), council travel plan, and air quality action plan. As a result there is not yet an overarching framework linking plans, priorities and actions for developing a transportation system that is accessible, safe, efficient and sustainable.
- 41 Quite deliberately the development of a streetscene strategy has been allowed to wait while highway improvements have been taking place. Similarly, sustainable transport initiatives have not been a top priority although the council follows the London mayor’s transport priorities. The policy context is set out within the ILIP and bids are made to TfL via the BSP process for funds for maintenance of principal roads and bridges, bus priority, safety engineering, walking and cycle routes and several other issues.
- 42 The council’s long-term 2020 vision (1999) seeks a thriving, healthy and inclusive community and identifies seven broad desired outcomes for the borough. Four of these have direct relevance to transport services:
- ◆ a good place to get around;
 - ◆ a thriving healthy and inclusive community;
 - ◆ a good place to work and do business; and
 - ◆ a confident and safe community.
- 43 Although out of the council’s direct control, the transport element of this vision is clearly focused on the continued campaign for new and improved rail links with the rest of London as these are seen as key to meeting longer term community priorities to reduce inequality and increase accessibility to and from the borough.
- 44 The draft community strategy is now being consulted on and clearly identifies ‘better transport’ as one of its seven themes, and links closely with the 2020 transport vision.
- 45 The unitary development plan was produced in 1996 and is now out of date. It does not fully reflect recent government guidance on sustainable development and sustainable transport. Work on a Local Development Framework (LDF) is under way and could take three years to complete. It is expected that the new document will reflect the revised parking space standards which will first appear in the new parking and enforcement plan, and seek to maximise development at transport interchanges in areas of high transport accessibility, promote and encourage car restraint policies, and promote and require contributions to new public transport infrastructure.
- 46 There are few published service standards. Other than the parking services charter the only one of these available to the public is the promise to repair street lights within five working days.

Does the service meet these aims?

- 47 Having considered the aims that the council has set for the service, inspectors make an assessment of how well the council is meeting these aims. This includes an assessment of performance against specific service standards and targets and the council’s approach to measuring whether it is actually delivering what it set out to do.

Improving access to jobs, services and other facilities (including public transport)

- 48 The council, with support from TfL, continues to lobby for rail improvements to meet its longer term transport aims. It has performed well in influencing additional and improved bus services and additional peak services on the north London line. There is fair overall accessibility to parking services including permit renewal by phone and on-line availability of standard forms. The service is customer-focused and is generating surpluses that are being used to support transport priorities. However, many aspects of work require targets and are not well monitored in terms of their outcomes. For example, there is no evidence of any work having had an impact on car travellers changing to other transport means such as rail, bus, cycling or walking, or it reducing traffic congestion or intrusion. There is a lack of robust data to guide parking management decision-making. Cycling and walking sustainable transport initiatives are underdeveloped. Further improvements are required to provide better access to transport interchanges for those with mobility difficulties, and the local cycle network which is currently in need of improvement.
- 49 As detailed in paragraph 43, access to and from other parts of London is an important issue for Hackney, although it is one over which the council has little control. There are no tube stations in the borough and despite good bus services, Hackney has the largest area of inner London boroughs without public transport within 10 minutes or 800 metres walk. The council is campaigning and lobbying strongly for improvements to passenger services on the north London line, and is supported in this by TfL. The east London line extension would result in three new tube stations in the borough and is making slow progress, but again there is active lobbying on this and support from TfL.
- 50 The council is making some progress in improving access to transport interchanges to meet the diverse needs of those with disabilities. A good example of this is that in partnership with the rail authorities and NRF, a wheelchair access ramp is being provided to one platform at Hackney Wick station; the other side is already fully accessible. However, more work is required at other Hackney stations to improve access for those with mobility difficulties.
- 51 Bus priority schemes in Hackney are driven by the London Bus Initiative (LBI) which is part of TfL, but the council is an active partner, carrying out final design and implementation for all the projects off the TfL network. The council has performed well in influencing bus service improvements and key LBI routes in the borough now have sharply improved performance and reliability, bringing them up to the inner London average for the first time.
- 52 The council's latest MORI poll shows public satisfaction with various aspects of public transport information to have improved a little and satisfaction with bus service frequency, reliability and overall performance to have improved markedly. Net overall satisfaction in Hackney is now 47 per cent compared with only 8 per cent two years ago.
- 53 In addition to the main LBI programme of route improvements, the borough is carrying out a useful programme of small works to improve the accessibility of main bus stops; these include access by both vehicles and passengers to the stop area.
- 54 Additionally the council has worked with London Transport to secure 16 new bus services and a further 10 peak period services on the north London train line.
- 55 Apart from parking management, most of the sustainable transport programme, for example, projects to encourage cycling and walking, as well as improvements to the bus network in the borough, are dependant on TfL funding, bid for through the BSP. TfL provides regular feedback on all of the council's bids and future proposals

but there is no single nominated Hackney officer whose role it is to liaise with TfL and develop future direction. This should be addressed.

- 56 The London cycle network in Hackney has been complete for some time but some of it now needs maintenance and improvement. Cycling growth in Hackney has been recognised and a study of what needs to be done to improve this network is currently being carried out by consultants to inform future BSP bids. Hackney's local cycle network has not received investment for over 5 years and is in a poor condition with faded pavement markings, vandalised signs, and rough surfacing¹⁷. Although there is an officer whose responsibilities include the role of 'cycling officer' and promoting cycling projects, other schemes designed in the department are not tested or audited for their 'cycle-friendliness' and this causes concern to local cycling groups.
- 57 'Safe routes to school' projects (see also paragraph 92) are implemented, though there is no measurement of the impact of these schemes on increasing walking, cycling and use of public transport by children attending local schools.
- 58 There are no active travel plans in Hackney, either for the council, its schools, nor developers and so the council is unable to demonstrate leadership around this issue, although two-year bursary funding for a school travel plan co-ordinator has been secured recently.
- 59 Restructuring of the parking service was carried out in the summer of 2003 and recruitment is now nearly complete. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, are customer-focused, and enthusiastic about the training they receive and their ability to influence and improve service issues.
- 60 Compared with two years ago there has been a significant improvement of parking services in terms of income recovery, contract performance and change of focus towards the customer. A number of clear performance measures and targets are in place and the service can demonstrate a number of the improvements:
- ◆ all PCN appeals are now dealt with in about 5 days, compared with 8-12 weeks in 2002;
 - ◆ large amounts of outstanding debt are being recovered by use of bailiff action (£862,000 latest figure for 2003/04, compared with approximately £36,000 in 2002/03);
 - ◆ the PCN recovery rate has increased by 3 per cent, to 52 per cent, in the last year and is now better than all but one of the adjoining London boroughs, although still falls below levels being achieved by top performing inner London authorities, some of which are achieving a 70 per cent plus recovery rate; and
 - ◆ the parking income budget has increased from less than £4million in 2002 to nearly £12 million for 2003/04. The percentage of PCNs having to be cancelled has fallen by 5-10 per cent over the last two years, also contributing to improved income.
- 61 Surpluses generated have been used to fund improvements to the highway infrastructure or public transport initiatives, for example:
- ◆ new Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ);
 - ◆ new/replacement street lighting and street furniture;
 - ◆ traffic management schemes; and

¹⁷ source: BSP 2004-05

- ◆ provide contributions to the concessionary fares scheme
- 62 Customer focused measures have been introduced, with standard forms now available on-line, and permits can be renewed by post, in the parking shop or by phone using debit/credit cards. Telephone response rates have improved dramatically. Customer service has also been improved by scanning of all correspondence so that call centre staff have up to date information on each case. A guide detailing parking arrangements is provided to users within all new CPZ areas. This provides a clear explanation of parking objectives and makes suitable provision in community languages. A published service charter is also available detailing the standards of service users can expect, for example:
- ◆ users will be dealt with within ten minutes in the parking shop;
 - ◆ telephone calls will be answered within five rings;
 - ◆ permits will be issued within five working days; and
 - ◆ parking appeals will be dealt with within five working days.
- 63 Strong client management has been required to work with the contractor to improve the service to present levels. This has been supplemented by IT improvements which have enabled all 308 pay and display machines to be connected to the parking service in order to minimise fraud. However, the service was not geared up to deal with the sharp rise in PCNs issued (from 110,000 a year to 160,000) as a result of introduction of 4 new CPZs within an 8 week period in 2002/03 to coincide with introduction of the congestion charging scheme. Consequently careful monitoring and more active management were needed and have been given, supported by a new staff structure, a new call centre and better planning. Monthly management reports contain large amounts of data and show trends across a range of indicators, but lack some key targets that may highlight areas for attention. For example, data shows appeals logged rather than the percentage refused by either the council or the parking appeals service. Such indicators would provide a better reflection of service quality in terms of the quality of PCN issue or on-street controls (signs and lines) being adequately maintained.
- 64 In 2003/04 six changes to CPZs were introduced in response to representations from local residents that kerbside space be allocated for local needs. Consultation has resulted in amended proposals or in some cases a decision that proposals will not be pursued.
- 65 At present parking control probably has the greatest potential for reducing traffic intrusion and management of congestion in the borough, though this impact is neither explicitly sought nor measured.
- 66 There is also a lack of robust data to guide parking management decision making, for example there is no data to monitor the use of both on-street and publicly available parking so there is limited data on supply and demand. This has been identified as a priority task for 2004/05.
- 67 New protocols for consulting the public on projects have been developed and are being used to bring more consistency to this work. All schemes have individual consultation plans and particular effort is made to get information to 'hard to reach' groups.
- 68 The council holds quarterly neighbourhood committees in each of four areas; each meeting receives a themed presentation on a current topic as well as dealing with a range of other specific topics. However although there used to be regular (quarterly) liaison with representative groups so that transport issues as well as individual highways projects could be discussed, these have ceased. Groups we met expressed the opinion that these meetings had been useful in providing them

with an opportunity to present their agenda, rather than what happens now whereby they are consulted on numerous individual schemes which stretches their organisational capacity to respond.

- 69 The highways development control team has started to offer comments on planning applications, based on UDP policies which have been updated, where possible, with a layer of supplementary planning guidance. Until two years ago the council did not comment at all on highway issues in planning applications, but now respond to 70 per cent of proposals for more than 10 units. This has resulted in positive action to support transport in Hackney, such as seeking travel plans, (none yet in place), improved footways and pedestrian facilities in the area, cycle parking, a few public transport improvements and some 'no-car' developments, for example, in the Shoreditch area. However, the total benefits to the highway network of this work are not documented.

Providing safe, convenient and well-maintained roads and footways

- 70 Improving the condition of roads, footways and lighting is a clear priority for Hackney's mayor and the council has responded to this by embarking on very large capital and revenue programmes for replacement and maintenance. The balance between the needs of these respective areas of work is not specifically addressed. Improvements to street lighting are already evident, but are less apparent for roads and footways. There is awareness of the impact of insurance claims on overall financial performance but data is not well co-ordinated and an effective inspection regime is not yet in place. A good programme of road safety engineering work has been implemented, though the overall impact of this on Hackney's accident totals and trends is not assessed. There is extremely limited road safety education, training and publicity.
- 71 In 2001/02 the borough's total budget for highway maintenance was small (about £150,000) and inadequate. However, there are now very large programmes for renewal of lighting, roads and footways, with a capital budget in 2003/04 of over £7 million.
- 72 A street lighting condition survey was carried out two years ago and an inventory compiled which includes lighted signs. The survey showed that 70 per cent of the stock needed replacement within 5 years. The potential for using PFI to renew all aging stock was examined. However the council decided that this approach would not result in savings and that the cost of preparing a bid, linked to the uncertainty of success rendered the PFI route unsuitable for Hackney. Instead, the council took a more ambitious approach and has increased considerably its own capital programme for lighting (over £3 million per annum) and has a clear programme to replace 85 per cent of all street lighting within 5 years.
- 73 The replacement programme is now starting its second year. One thousand four hundred new columns were installed during the first year representing 12 per cent of the lighting stock. Consistent lighting standards have been specified and used throughout and a standard colour for columns has been adopted. Work is prioritised according to the condition survey, with an overlay of crime 'hot-spots'. When work is carried out it is co-ordinated with other planned highway improvements and also opportunities are taken to reduce sign clutter.
- 74 Street lighting performance has improved significantly. Eighteen months ago nearly 15 per cent of the council's streetlights were not working. The council now carries out scouting for lighting defects fortnightly, has improved funding for this work and has included it in the council's term maintenance contract. There is a clear output measure for this work, lights not lit, which currently stands at 3.21 per cent, and exceeds the council's target of 5 per cent. However, performance does not yet match levels achieved by best performing authorities that are currently achieving a

figure of less than 0.5 per cent. The councils own data also shows that although the average attendance time has improved to between 6 and 10 days, this does not yet match the response time promised on the council website (5 days). This should be addressed.

- 75 The large programme of capital footway and road works is being targeted at 'worst first', based on condition surveys, which are now complete. Twenty Four per cent of non-principal and 18 per cent of unclassified roads currently need major renewal, both representing comparatively poor performance (3rd quartile) when comparing Hackney's road condition to other London boroughs and metropolitan authorities in 2002/03. 6.6 per cent of footways also need major renewal, though this compares favourably with the same grouping, representing top quartile performance for the same period. In 2003/04 the worst 50 carriageways, worst 50 footways and up to 300 gullies were renewed, all based on measured condition, plus consideration of insurance claim issues.
- 76 The overall condition of roads and pavements is not strikingly poor although there are examples of potholes; damaged or missing signs, lines, guard rails and, notably, 'rocky' paving units. However, the council's own MORI survey in late 2003 showed that although 17 per cent of residents thought that road and pavement repairs were better, 49 per cent thought they were worse.
- 77 Although it is clear that the intention of the borough's large capital programme is to improve the highway asset, the balance between the needs of road and footway capital renewal and maintenance programmes has not been assessed. As a result, it is difficult to gauge whether current programmes are having maximum impact in delivering the council's targets or will result in the noticeable improvement to highway condition and to public opinion that is being sought.
- 78 To manage reactive maintenance work, an increased revenue budget has been allocated. Over £1 million per annum will now be spent on repairing street lights, pruning street trees, improved responses to highway and footway defects, emptying gullies and several other important activities which were not carried out at all two years ago. This follows a big push to fill highway potholes during 2003, with 5600 being completed. There are proposals to increase staff numbers to manage this work and based on local benchmarking the need for eight highway inspectors has been identified, compared with two the previous year. Inspection staff are in place but are not all permanent appointments yet.
- 79 The public report 20-30 highway defects each day and systems are in place to log these reports as well as those noted by inspectors (which were 50 per week but are now rising to 50 per day). However the system does not easily identify repeat reports or log the action planned by the contractor.
- 80 There is an easy-to-use web-based system for reporting highway defects. Telephone access is not so clear, as although many operational contact numbers are available in 'Hackney Today', (the council's 2-weekly newspaper for all residents), a contact number for reporting highway problems is not included. This may contribute to user confusion about which sections deal with various highway activities. For example:
- ◆ fly-tips on the pavement are reported to highways rather than the enforcement team;
 - ◆ requests for skip permits are phoned in to highways rather than the licensing team; and
 - ◆ road accidents are reported to highways rather than street cleansing.
- 81 In addition, requests to phone-back with information about the reported defect are not always followed up.

- 82 Standards are set for the contractor to carry out repairs according to priority allocated by inspectors. However it did appear that the contractor was failing to meet these standards (over 50 per cent of defects took more than 10 days) and that progress of outstanding works orders was not adequately chased. Similarly, programmed dates for the contractor's highway and footway resurfacing work showed consistent slippage.
- 83 Conversely, however, reports of blocked gullies are now dealt with much more quickly, and about 80 per cent are cleared within the target of five working days. A target of 75 per cent had been set.
- 84 All highway maintenance work is carried out by one contractor who has been in place since January 2002; since then the volume of work has escalated enormously in volume and content so that it no longer resembles the originally identified needs of the council. Several sub-contractors are used to add capacity to the workforce.
- 85 Clear plans are in place to re-tender the contract for this work in September 2004, and these plans are rigorously vetted, by the corporate 'Gateway' process (see also paragraphs 170-171).
- 86 There are currently no inventories for unlit street furniture or gullies and no periodic audits or checks on their quality. As a consequence, there are no planned maintenance programmes.
- 87 The number and value of insurance claims is high and had increased sharply as routine inspection of the highway network was progressively curtailed up to 2001. In 2001 the value of insurance claims was greater than the total of all other highway maintenance expenditure. Since then there have been large recent programmes of pothole filling and footway repair but there is still little evidence of proactive management of the insurance problem and consistent comparative figures which can be used to demonstrate progress in managing this issue are absent.
- 88 Until now inspection has been insufficiently frequent to offer a reasonable defence when insurance claims are received. Inspectors visit the claim site to ensure that emergency work can be carried out to avoid repeat incidents. The improved inspection regime, which is being put in place now, will eventually work into the system of claims rebuttals by ensuring that evidence is available to demonstrate a regular and effective inspection of all areas. However, at present inspectors work only on the basis of verbal training as to what constitutes a hazard and what priority should be given to each type of defect and there is not a more formal system of documented instructions and standards that they can carry with them.
- 89 A range of performance data is reported to senior manager meetings. These indicate trends in dealing with member enquiries, detail highway claims, and highway defect information. This monitoring would be more useful if it contained more outcome-based performance targets, such as that for street lighting where the target is to have 95 per cent of street lights working. The data is currently of limited use in identifying success or areas which require further improvement. However, there is good practice where senior managers meet regularly with the lead member for environment and transport to review progress and discuss emerging issues; the notes of these meetings are available to the public.
- 90 Licences for leaving skips, materials, containers etc. on the road, are issued by environmental services staff, agreed by environment enforcement officers and then enforced by that section despite there also being a large body of highways inspection staff now in place. There is a target for issuing permits of three days, and most are issued the day following the original request. However, where a skip would be placed in a parking area two permits would be required (one to place on

the highway, the other to suspend parking limits), and they must be applied for separately rather than dealt with by one office.

- 91 There is a good programme of local safety schemes (14 in 2003/04), which are targeted at the lengths or locations of the borough's network where there are most accidents. Most of the funding for this programme of work on borough roads is bid for from TfL via the BSP. Each scheme has an expected casualty saving and measure of expected effectiveness based on anticipated casualties 'saved'. TfL recently commented that some of the anticipated savings are 'optimistic'. Although individual projects are reviewed two or three years after implementation to assess individual benefits/ accidents saved, the results of each annual overall programme are not reviewed formally and so overall effectiveness is not known. In addition, 43 per cent of road accidents in Hackney are on the TfL network and therefore are not treatable by the council.
- 92 A large programme of traffic calming has been carried out and is now being complemented by 20 mph zones, which are funded from the borough's NRF and should link together several areas which are already traffic-calmed. 'Safe routes to school' projects are carried out, though not all schools see the need for this or wish to participate. Prioritisation of all these projects is somewhat ad-hoc but also involves consideration of casualty numbers. Expected outcomes in terms of accident reduction are specified when the funding is bid for.
- 93 The council is also taking action to improve existing zebra crossings. A large programme of work has been identified and bid for against NRF. The measurable outcomes are in terms of casualty reduction.
- 94 Deprivation is not taken account of in promoting solutions or setting priorities, despite clear awareness of the significance of this factor in the frequency of accidents. However, software has been ordered which would allow analysis of accident patterns to seek this type of factor.
- 95 However, in other areas of work there are clear attempts to meet the diverse needs of those with disabilities and there are programmes to improve facilities at crossings, as far as these are in the council's responsibilities.
- 96 There is extremely limited road safety education, training and publicity, and activities are not targeted. There is only one member of staff employed to deal with these aspects of the service. The need for this individual also to manage 30-40 school crossing patrols means that little time is left to target the main activity of this post. Some distribution of national road safety publicity campaign posters etc. is done, and material suitable for incorporating road safety issues into the school curriculum is made available to schools on demand. Although children's traffic club materials are available free to children across London via TfL funding, there is little capacity to promote this material. However, the council's overview and scrutiny board has set up a road safety scrutiny panel to examine a wide range of safety related issues and made clear recommendations for future service improvements.

Reducing the environmental impact of traffic and highways

- 97 There is evidence of adequate response to air quality issues in the borough through the declaration of air quality management areas and a draft improvement plan. The council is making attempts to improve the standard of streetscene by implementing its design guide. However, there is currently little consistency in the standards of street furniture. Recycling of highway maintenance materials is not routinely sought.
- 98 Air quality management areas have been declared on the basis of exceedences for fine particulates and for nitrogen dioxide and these cover the whole borough. Traffic

emissions are the main source of air quality pollutants, although domestic gas heating also contributes.

- 99 An action plan with clear proposals has been produced but not yet adopted by the council. Given the source of the pollutants, the majority of proposals for action are about improving the council's vehicle fleet (and its main contractors) to use greener, less polluting fuels or vehicles, the council adopting a travel plan and also to continue to monitor and publicise the issues involved. Whilst these measures are unlikely to have anything more than a very small impact on total emissions in the borough, they will demonstrate leadership to others on a difficult topic.
- 100 Air quality issues are taken account of in commenting on development proposals, particularly where they would increase traffic in the borough. Residents' parking permits in the borough are free for electric vehicles.
- 101 There are currently a number of different types of street furniture and pavement surfaces in use that are in varying condition (see also paragraph 76). This adds to the poor overall visual appearance of the streets. Major routes such as Mare Street, which is used by many local residents as well as people travelling to and from the borough, also show these characteristics and could have a bearing on overall public perception of the highway condition. Improving the quality of the transport infrastructure is given priority and a new design guide (the public realm design guide) has been produced which sets out the style and standard of street furniture to be used as part of new projects.
- 102 New capital projects (renewing lighting, footways, or roads) aim to reduce clutter of street furniture but recycling of highway maintenance materials is not routinely sought as part of improvement schemes and there is no re-cycling policy for these.

How does the performance compare?

- 103 In order to judge the quality of a service, it is important to compare the performance of that service against other suppliers across a range of sectors. The aim is not exact comparison, but an exploration of how similar services (or elements of services) perform in order to identify significant differences, the reasons for them, and the extent to which improvements are required.
- 104 We have also compared the council with the best and worst performing 25 per cent of London boroughs for that indicator.
- 105 Hackneys BVPIs show a mainly poor picture but, because of historic problems, there is no track record for these measures. The influence of TfL makes it difficult to comment on several indicators. The council is on-course to meet its 2010 casualty reduction targets and there is evidence from many areas that benchmarking (formal and informal) is being used to direct service change.
- 106 There was little data available about BVPIs in Hackney until 2002/03 when full surveys were carried out. Performance against national indicators, BVPIs for 2002/03 was as follows:

Table showing performance of LB Hackney against key transport performance indicators

2002/03 indicator reference	Description	Authority data	London quartile position	London top quartile
BVPI 96	Condition of principal roads	11.36%	3 rd	3.3%
BVPI 97a	Condition of non-principal classified roads	23.64%	3 rd	9.4%
BVPI 97b	Condition of unclassified roads	18%	3 rd	10.5%
BVPI 99	Casualties per 100,000 pop			
	a) killed/serious			
	pedestrians	44.7	Worst	16
	cyclists	10.8	Worst	4
	2 wheel motor users	28.5	Worst	12
	car users	27	3 rd	21
	other vehicles	8.9	Worst	4
	b) slight injuries			
	pedestrians	107	Worst	59
	cyclists	55	Worst	21
2 wheel motor users	99.8	3 rd	54	
car users	273.8	3 rd	207	
other vehicles	63	Worst	35	
BVPI 100	Days traffic controls in place	0.3	2 nd	0.2
BVPI 103*	% all respondents satisfied with public transport information	43%	Worst	51%
BVPI 104*	% all respondents satisfied with local bus services	45%	Worst	53%
BVPI 165	Crossings with disabled facilities	87%	3 rd	98%
BVPI 186a	Ratio of the percentage of principal roads not needing repair to average expenditure per km on principal roads over the last 3 years	25.3	Worst	69
BVPI 186b	Ratio of the percentage of non-principal roads not needing repair to average expenditure per km on non-principal roads over the last 3 years	276.9	Top	233
BVPI 187	Condition of footways	9.2%	Top	10%

* Indicates 2000/01 BVPI user satisfaction survey

- 107 Some BVPIs (96, 99, 103, 104, 165, and 186a) are much dependant on measures put in place by TfL as these performance indicators include the TfL road network as well as the council's. Road safety targets for 2010 (reduction in total number of people killed or seriously injured, number of children killed or seriously injured) are all on track to be met, and trends for individual categories of road users are showing positive downward trends, except in the case of riders of powered two wheelers.
- 108 The above table shows the latest audited data with regard to user satisfaction with public transport information and local bus services. This data was derived from surveys undertaken during 2000/01. Latest unaudited data from surveys carried out in November 2003 (as detailed within paragraph 52) reveal improvements in these indicators.
- 109 Interim data for 2003/2004 suggests that the council's performance against some BVPIs is improving, for example, those for road casualties and condition of unclassified roads. But it is not clear that this improvement will change quartile positions for the areas over which the council has most influence.
- 110 There is clear evidence that benchmarking against other highway authorities in respect of parking will inform the new contract now being developed and other benchmarking has been carried out, particularly to establish best practice for staffing numbers where the establishment is being increased.

Summary

- 111 The quantity and quality of highway and transport services in Hackney are improving from an extremely low base. Parking management is now cost effective and responsive to customers but there is a lack of robust data to inform decision making. Large capital programmes to improve the condition of lighting, footways and roads are underway but these are yet to impact upon comparative performance levels. Measures are in place which should result in a more responsive maintenance service, which with improved management and information should stabilise the growing number of insurance claims.
- 112 Many key strategic and policy documents are absent and management of performance is mainly focussed around inputs and outputs, rather than outcomes. There is an absence of clear targets. At present the public believe the condition of roads to be getting worse rather than better, and although on target for the national casualty reduction target, performance against several other national indicators needs to be improved.
- 113 On balance, the highways and transport provision is currently a poor, no star service.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

114 Inspectors use the following four building blocks to judge the service's prospects for improvement:

- ◆ ownership of problems and willingness to change.
- ◆ a sustained focus on what matters.
- ◆ capacity and systems to deliver performance and improvement.
- ◆ integration of continuous improvement into day-to-day management.

Ownership of problems and willingness to change

115 In good and excellent councils, senior managers and councillors are committed to continuous improvement. They are willing to tackle difficult problems, take difficult decisions and stick to them. They are open about their performance and problems and welcome internal and external challenge.

116 The council has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of its transport services and is committed to addressing 'basic' highway infrastructure improvements in the short to medium term, as these are a key concern for local people. The political commitment to deliver this is reflected in Hackney mayor's priorities and supported by a five year improvement programmes and a three year funding plan. The service welcomes both internal and external challenge and is actively using the results to drive service improvement. However, there are still limited published service standards informing the public of the standards they can expect.

117 Until 2002/03, the council's financial position had been so poor that investment in the highway infrastructure had virtually ceased. The financial management of the council has improved significantly since this time. The council has responded positively to government directions and the finance directions have now been lifted. Rigorous financial control mechanisms are in place allowing the council to balance its budget, put reserves in place, reduce historic debt levels, and make financial provision to support local priorities. At service level, parking services were a priority for review and improvements made in the last 18 months have contributed towards the improved financial position.

118 As part of the recovery process, services are being rebuilt from the bottom up to support delivery of Hackney mayor's priorities. The improving financial position enabled the mayor and chief executive to initially allocate £800,000 to deal with the substantial backlog of pothole repairs on the carriageway in February/March 2003. They subsequently agreed a streetscene action plan in summer 2003 and this has resulted in the phased release of approximately £10 million capital funding as well as over £1 million revenue funding to improve the condition of carriageways and footpaths, start the street lighting renewal programme, and provide funding for six additional highway inspectors to provide a proactive inspection regime and enable better defence against insurance claims.

119 The council has now committed to five-year strategies for both street lighting and highway maintenance improvements and has made provision within its three-year medium term financial strategy. The capital sums approved for the next three years are:

- ◆ Highways and Carriageways – A minimum of £4.2 million per annum.
- ◆ Street Lighting – A minimum of £3.4 million per annum.
- ◆ Zebra Crossings - £600,000 per annum.

- 120 A second tranche of funding, in addition to the above, is available for the service to bid against in 2004/05 and this could further increase spend on this area. A bid has already been made to seek funding to prepare the necessary inventories of gullies and unlighted street furniture but the outcome of this is still awaited.
- 121 Sums included within the medium term financial strategy exclude funding secured from TfL through the BSP bidding process.
- 122 Hackney's mayor and chief executive take a strong lead in the recovery process, receiving monthly reports on key priorities and bi-annual and quarterly progress reports across all services (see also paragraph 157).
- 123 Sustainable transport initiatives are not considered an immediate priority for the council, and follow the London mayor's transport priorities through the BSP bidding process. Therefore plans in this respect remain under-developed.
- 124 Positive steps are being taken to address the gap in road safety education through the organisational restructuring process. This makes provision for an assistant road safety manager to manage school crossing patrols in order to allow the road safety manager to focus on road safety education and training. An appointment has not yet been made and the division is yet to engage with the Learning Trust to assess how the service will be rolled out to schools.
- 125 In addition, the council has secured funding for two years commencing April 2004 for a school travel plan coordinator. This resource will be used to assist schools in developing school travel plans and monitoring the impact of plans.
- 126 The planning and transportation division has faced a number of considerable internal challenges over the past two years. These include:
- ◆ moving from a position of having a skeleton workforce with virtually no service budgets to delivering major capital and revenue programmes; and
 - ◆ the organisational restructuring and associated cultural change in moving to a performance culture (see also paragraphs 162 - 164). This has resulted in the need to effectively manage a number of staff out of the organisation in recent times.
- 127 These have been managed with some success. We also found service managers to be open to ideas for improvement and a number of benchmarking/comparison exercises with both excellent and other London authorities have/are being undertaken to challenge the current pattern of service delivery and inform plans for improvement. For example:
- ◆ Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea has been engaged regarding preparation of the council's transport strategy (see also paragraph 147);
 - ◆ London Borough of Camden has been engaged regarding CCTV enforcement of bus lanes and road safety plan preparation;
 - ◆ the draft parking and enforcement plan has been benchmarked against most other London boroughs;
 - ◆ some parking key performance indicators to be used in the new parking enforcement contract (see paragraphs 165 - 168) have been drawn from those used in Westminster;
 - ◆ the council will be following London Borough of Tower Hamlets methods for tackling fraudulent abuse of blue badges for people with disabilities. The number issued in Hackney (5,526 plus 1,003 duplicates) is the highest number issued in London. The council has completed an audit of this problem and has a clear strategy for reducing abuse and the car crime which accompanies it. Parking attendants' hand-held data loggers will also allow direct access to the

database of blue badge permits, enabling vehicles which are abusing the system to be identified; and

- ◆ the council is working closely with adjacent councils to combat problems caused by persistent parking offenders (11,000 vehicles responsible for 73,000 parking tickets in Hackney) and with one neighbour on a bus-back advertising campaign.

- 128 We also found evidence of the division learning from its mistakes, for example the need to allow for adequate consultation periods for introducing new CPZs, and having the necessary parking enforcement infrastructure in place to deal with increased PCN issue. This followed implementation of four new schemes in an eight-week period in 2002/03 to coincide with introduction of the congestion-charging scheme.
- 129 The council is addressing weaknesses in its procurement processes identified by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2002. The 'gateway' review process now provides a robust framework for challenging procurement proposals for contracts over £100,000 in value and involves rigorous options appraisal, risk assessment and management. The highways and street lighting, and parking enforcement contracts are currently being managed through this process and proposals for the former have been revised following intervention by the new director of environment. A two-year contract will now be let (see also paragraphs 169 - 171) so that future partnering options can be explored over this period. This is based on his contract experience, particularly in Camden.
- 130 As highlighted in paragraph 37, apart from parking services and street lighting, there is a lack of published performance standards covering transport services. It is therefore difficult for the public to understand the standards they can expect and for the council to manage public expectation. This should be addressed as a priority.

A sustained focus on what matters

- 131 In high performing councils, senior managers and councillors know what matters to local people and use this information to set clear and consistent priorities. They focus on achieving impact in priority areas and concentrate effort and resources in proportion to priority.
- 132 The council's immediate priorities clearly address user concerns and are supported by the necessary resources to deliver them. There have been significant improvements in parking services, street lighting and bus service reliability over the last year. The council continues to campaign for improved rail links with the rest of London, as these are key to meeting longer term community priorities to reduce inequality and increase accessibility to and from the borough. The need for appropriate strategies has been clearly identified and progress is under way for many, with final production expected in the next 6 – 12 months, (mostly as part of key deliverable 34). There has already been consultation and political guidance as part of a careful programme to produce strategies that complement each other and meet future needs.
- 133 We found the council's focus for service improvement to be based upon the 'headline' MORI user satisfaction surveys. Highway condition and both the accessibility and reliability of buses have been key areas of concern, hence the immediate priority to improve the highway infrastructure, and continued bidding for bus priority initiatives.
- 134 A new methodology for refining the prioritisation of the carriageway, footway and street lighting capital programmes has recently been agreed in principle with Hackney's mayor. This will ensure:

- ◆ that assets in poorest condition are improved first;
 - ◆ the order in which they are carried out takes account of their impact on society for example, deprivation of the area, proximity to schools/hospitals/ transport links, town centre locations, night time crime and accident hotspots; and
 - ◆ that the order of works is cost effective.
- 135 A similar process is to be adopted for traffic management and safety schemes where new software will also allow for better analysis of accident trends.
- 136 The council is now coordinating consultation activity centrally and has strengthened the communications team to help deliver best practice consultation and engage with more hard to reach groups. To address the poor response rate to controlled parking zone consultation and raise community awareness of ongoing consultation exercises, future consultations will involve 20 per cent doorstep sampling and include the availability of translation services if required.
- 137 A number of initiatives are underway to improve accessibility of services, and address user concerns. For example:
- ◆ changes to controlled parking zones in response to representations (see paragraph 64); and
 - ◆ the parking service is seeking to introduce an automated telephone payment system that will allow 24 hour access to the service, as well as web-based payment of PCNs.
- 138 The council's track record of improvements on priorities to date has been impressive. There has been a significant improvement to street lighting as detailed within paragraphs 73 and 74. This programme has been largely delivered to deadlines despite the sudden increase in volume of work placed through the contract.
- 139 Accepting that a number of new CPZs have been introduced thereby contributing to increased income, reviews of operational practices and restructuring of Parking Services have resulted in significant improvements as detailed within paragraphs 60 - 63.
- 140 The parking call centre performance has also improved during the last year. Approximately 80 per cent of calls are answered within the target response time. There has been a substantial drop in the volume of calls received as the backlog of appeals has been cleared. While this is a significant improvement, current performance still falls short of the council's response target of 90 per cent calls to be answered within five rings. This should be addressed.
- 141 There has been a marked improvement in user satisfaction with local bus services¹⁸. This indicates that joint measures put in place with TfL are having a positive effect on bus reliability, and journey times. Further enhancements are well underway with CCTV enforcement of strategic LBI bus network routes¹⁹ due to commence in May 2004.
- 142 Latest figures suggest that there has been a significant reduction in road accident casualties during 2003/04 indicating that local safety schemes are having a positive impact in contributing to achievement of the council's accident reduction targets.

¹⁸ Source: MORI BVPI user satisfaction survey November 2003

¹⁹ cameras to be placed in Mare Street, Lower Clapton Road, Amhurst Road, Graham Road and Lea Bridge Road

- 143 However, there is not yet a marked improvement in reactive highway maintenance performance and we were not made aware of any plans to address responsiveness of the service (as detailed in paragraph 79) prior to the new contract being let later this year (see paragraphs 169 - 171).
- 144 In addition to the local mayoral priorities, transport aspirations have been heightened with current and proposed local transport developments, notably bus service improvements, the Stratford city regeneration project and the London Olympics bid. The Olympics bid supports the council's proposals for improved transport links, particularly north London line improvements and the east London line extension.
- 145 Both the proposed east London line extension (ELLX) which would bring with it access to the underground system, and North London Line improvements, are out of the council's direct control but are key to the council's long term aims to reduce inequality and increase accessibility to and from the borough. A joint lobbying strategy has now been agreed with TfL to push for the North London line improvements to proceed regardless of whether the Olympics bid is successful, and TfL are supportive of the council's commitment to lobby the government over the funding uncertainty surrounding the ELLX.
- 146 The council has also lobbied TfL about casualty reduction targets in the borough, particularly for accidents on the TfL principal road network over which it has no direct control.
- 147 Approximately £3.67 million has been secured from TfL via the BSP bid for 2003/04; this is some £1.8 million more than the previous year and included over £100,000 for congestion charging related traffic management schemes, over £1 million to implement controlled parking schemes, and over £500,000 to implement London bus initiative schemes. The 2004/05 settlement again sees a further increase, to £3.99 million. TfL's appraisal of the bid was that it was 'reasonable in terms of structure and content'. TfL's appraisal reflects the council's assessment and our view of where weaknesses exist due to current priorities and limited staff capacity available within the traffic and transportation section.
- 148 Officers have recognised that there is no local transport strategy to sit alongside the London mayor's strategy and have appointed consultants to develop one. This will need to be developed to inform the emerging local development framework (UDP review) and the council's first local implementation plan.
- 149 A number of other strategies and plans are at various stages of development and will also inform the transport strategy:
- ◆ a public realm design guide is to be adopted in April 2004. This specifies the standards for street design, with a view to reducing the amount of street clutter, and enabling better coordination of works. New street lights already conform with the proposed standards.
 - ◆ the draft parking and enforcement plan will replace the previous borough parking plan and is due to be adopted in April 2004. Positive aspects include:
 - ◆ a clear prioritization of parking needs, such as the needs of people with disabilities, local residents and local businesses, giving priority to non-car modes such as cycles and powered two-wheel vehicles;
 - ◆ provision of a clear framework for possible expansion of controlled parking zones;
 - ◆ the plan reflects the objectives of the London mayor's transport strategy and supports strategic objectives for sustainable development.

- ◆ promotion of sustainable transport, for example, free residents permits for electric vehicles, charging policy driven by vehicle emissions, and higher charges for 2nd or 3rd permits for households;
- ◆ changes in parking demand will be assessed through a rolling review of existing CPZs every three years, and new CPZs will be reviewed one year after implementation;
- ◆ linkages with streetscene services in targeting abandoned and untaxed vehicles;
- ◆ The lack of robust data to guide parking management decision making has been recognised as a weakness and identified as a priority task for 2004/05. Data obtained will form the basis for many of the further planned review activities.
- ◆ a revised road safety plan is being developed in-house; and
- ◆ enforcement, streetscene, and highway maintenance strategies and a council travel plan are still to be developed.

150 The council needs to ensure that these projects are kept on target and the plans properly integrated. It also needs to strengthen its strategic transport planning capacity in order to co-ordinate and manage implementation.

Capacity and systems to deliver performance and improvement

151 Successful councils have sound performance management systems and effective financial management including flexibility to move money and people to tackle the most important problems. They have clear lines of accountability for action and have the skills to build effective partnerships to help bring about improvements.

152 The council has continued the process of building capacity in staffing levels and financial planning, representing a major cornerstone in the overall improvement process. Limited internal capacity in some areas has been supplemented by engagement of external consultants. Contract performance issues are being addressed through current procurement exercises. Internal performance and financial monitoring mechanisms are robust. Sickness absence is being actively addressed but remains high. Service plans are being aligned to the 'key deliverables' although these lack explicit outcome measures in many cases.

153 A new divisional management structure is in place with all third tier service heads now in post. This includes the recent appointment of head of street scene to drive street scene improvements and the street scene strategy. As detailed previously, staff capacity beneath this level is being increased with restructuring to support delivery of mayoral priorities, for example the additional inspection resources that will help to contest future highways claims.

154 External consultants and agency staff have been employed to add capacity to assist procurement exercises (for example, the new parking enforcement contract, and contract for CCTV equipment for bus lane enforcement), preparation of strategies (such as the public realm design guide, streetscene strategy, transport strategy, parking and enforcement plan, and the council's travel plan), and within the traffic and transportation section, to enable permanent staff to get the basics right and meet key deliverable targets. While the council's ability to recruit has improved, agency staff levels remain high.

155 As detailed previously, rigorous budget monitoring systems are now in place. Strict budgetary control is typified in service terms by the parking service where robust systems have helped support improved performance.

- 156 The management of sickness continues to be a major focus for managers within the planning and transportation division. Recent changes as a result of restructuring exercises within parking services and the divisional support and development service areas have led to some increases among staff on '90 day notices of termination of employment'. There are also a number of disciplinary cases in progress that have increased sickness among the affected staff. Twenty seven cases have been referred for an occupational health review, taken through a stage 1 or stage 2 sickness review, or resulted in staff having their employment terminated between September 2003 and February 2004.
- 157 A quarterly and bi-annual performance report has been established at departmental and divisional levels in 2003/04. This gives senior management and councillors an opportunity to review service provision and to assess the achievement of more focused targets against key corporate indicators. The reports are published on the council's web site as a means to inform local people of service performance. We think this is notable practice.
- 158 A weekly progress meeting is conducted by the lead cabinet member for environment, transport and planning with the director of environment and his assistant directors. This is supplemented by a weekly meeting involving the lead cabinet member and the assistant director (planning and transportation) together with one of the service heads to drill down into operational issues.
- 159 Progress on the streetscene recovery plan is reported quarterly. Key milestones have been defined for 2003/4 and 2004/5. A number of 2003/04 targets have been achieved. These include:
- ◆ Full lighting and highway condition surveys undertaken to provide investment programmes until 2008. Prioritised five year plans devised in accord with the new capital programme methodology although formal approval is still required;
 - ◆ Introduction of a street lighting scouting regime; and
 - ◆ First year street lighting investment programme close to completion
- 160 However, a number of 2003/04 targets have not been met, including targets to reduce insurance claims and preparation of street lighting and highways policies. Work on the two policies has been suspended while the five year plans for street lighting and highways are finalised and key staff are appointed.
- 161 We consider that any targets for reducing insurance claims will be unrealistic until the inspection regime has been in place and operating effectively for at least 12 months and the new maintenance programme comes into effect. Target setting would therefore be more appropriate from 2005/06 onwards.
- 162 The council has developed a new performance management framework based on a single set of 'key deliverables' for 2004/05. This provides the framework for councillor level monitoring of the corporate plan and translates into key service deliverables for service divisions, teams and individuals through the service planning, target setting and appraisal process.
- 163 Service specific key deliverables for the planning and transportation division are currently being cascaded through service and team plans, and ultimately into individual targets. Many of the team plans are yet to be fully developed. Plans we reviewed tended to focus on input and output measures rather than explicit outcomes. We accept that this is partly due to the timing of service planning following emergence of the corporate plan, but consider that much greater emphasis should be given to defining suitable outcome measures such as that which exists for street lighting. We also think that the service planning framework should be further simplified for 2005/06 to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

- 164 A performance culture is developing. Appraisal, supervision and training are being carried out more regularly, with the current round timetabled for April/May for most members of staff. Staff are being fully engaged in developing service plans and the staff we spoke to were clear about organisational priorities and lines of accountability, and felt that their training needs were being addressed in order to support delivery of service objectives. This is no doubt reflected in the recent IIP accreditation for the environment directorate.
- 165 Strong investigative processes have been used to rectify under-performance in the parking enforcement contract. The requirement to let new contracts for both parking enforcement and highways maintenance and street lighting has also enabled the council to secure some performance improvement from the existing contractors in the run up to the contract re-let process. The existing contracts have limited or no system of redress for poor performance. Incentives to improve, such as for parking enforcement, relate to higher PCN issue rather than the quality of service. The council is addressing these issues through the new contracts.
- 166 As detailed earlier, both of these procurements are being managed through the council's new procurement framework, the 'Gateway' review process. The parking enforcement contract will cover both on-street and off-street areas in the borough and include clamping and removal. The new contract is to be based on the British Parking Association model contract²⁰ for provision of decriminalised parking and traffic enforcement and will be based on a partnering approach with an open book accounting system. Payment will be linked to clear outcome targets and performance measures with inbuilt improvement targets over the contract term²¹. The council has engaged the market on the outline specification and will be the first authority to use the contract.
- 167 The contract builds in flexibility to accommodate changing demands, for example, CPZ and CCTV expansion, plus the clamping and removals operation on housing estates. It will also support local priorities by:
- ◆ targeting problem areas by prescribing increased frequency of visits in these places;
 - ◆ requiring adherence to protocols agreed with the police;
 - ◆ allowing removal of vehicles belonging to persistent evaders (those with three or more unpaid PCNs);
 - ◆ making provision for application of IT such as handheld computers with in-built digital cameras and global positioning system to support quality PCN issue leading to a reduction of appeals; and
 - ◆ requiring parking attendants to report defective/missing signs and lines as well as faulty pay and display machines, and potential abandoned and untaxed vehicles.
- 168 Risks have been assessed and control measures put in place including £200,000 contingency provision for the mobilisation period. The council will award two contracts, the second acting as a safeguard if there is failure by first contractor.

²⁰ British Parking Association was engaged to develop a contract based upon best practice. The initiative has been supported by the Association of London Government (ALG), Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA) and the Department of Transport (DoT)

²¹ Parking enforcement contract to be five to seven years with option to extend year on year for a further 2 years

An external consultant has been commissioned to assist with contract specification and the procurement exercise.

- 169 Although a partnering contract has been let for the replacement of Temple Mills bridge, the council has limited experience so far of managing partnering contracts in this area of its business and so is planning to let one (or possibly two geographically based) contracts for two years for all its highway maintenance and construction work in the first instance. A working group has been set up to study the benefits and demands of full partnering for subsequent contracts.
- 170 As stated in paragraph 129, the proposed two-year contract for highways maintenance and street lighting will give the council time to explore future partnering options rather than tying it into a long term framework agreement set against a schedule of rates with no commitment to place any orders for works. It will give an indication to the market that the council now has a stable budget position and intends to make longer term investment in a future contract. The existing contract has been extended until October 2004 to facilitate this process.
- 171 The new contract will build in key performance indicators and penalties for poor performance, thus addressing some of the failings of the existing contract. Although the council has made good progress, we are concerned that there is still a lack of clarity as to whether street lighting scouting, highways inspection and other present client side activities have been reviewed to consider whether they should be within the contract scope.
- 172 The council has a well developed Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The planning and transportation division is actively involved in two of the thematic sub-partnerships that correspond with the 2020 vision priorities and has successfully secured neighbourhood renewal funding to support delivery of key service priorities. For example:
- ◆ The 'Good Place to Live' sub-partnership involves cross directorate working with the environment division and the housing directorate. Six hundred and ten thousand pounds has been secured able to carry out much more proactive work on improving street lighting and streetscene, including the initial condition surveys.
 - ◆ The 'A Good Place to Get Around' transport sub-partnership has funded the public realm design guide, and development of the transport strategy, and the council's green travel plan.
- 173 As the council moves forward there is a need to ensure that the spending bids are more strategically focussed on shared objectives.

Integration of continuous improvement into day-to-day management

- 174 Continuous improvement should be seen as part of the day job, with best value integrated with other council performance management processes, not treated as an add-on.
- 175 There is evidence that the council is learning from excellent authorities to inform its service development. There is a continuing drive to improve consultation practice so that there is a greater understanding of local needs, particularly amongst hard to reach groups. Service planning and performance management are being embedded within the division but need further refinement and more explicit outcome measures.
- 176 The council has focused its resources in line with priorities and has improved performance in a number of key areas such as parking services and street

lighting. It has also started to address longstanding highway maintenance problems.

- 177 Limited improvements can be achieved from existing contracts, as they generally have no system of redress for poor performance. Incentives to improve, such as for parking enforcement, relate to higher PCN issue rather than the quality of service. The council will address these issues through letting the new parking enforcement and highway maintenance and street lighting contracts.
- 178 The council is making rapid progress in a number of areas including plan preparation to inform future priorities and actions. We think that the council should now put in place a system for sharing good practice being developed, for example in parking services, and for reviewing learning from other organisations.

Summary

- 179 In conclusion we welcome the steps taken by the council to improve transport services in Hackney and can see an established track record of delivering improvement based on current priorities. The council is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and generally has robust plans in place to address the latter.
- 180 We conclude that the service has excellent prospects for improvement.

Appendices

The purpose of a best value inspection is to make two judgements. The first is how good is the service being inspected? The second is what are the prospects for improvement? We carried out a range of activities to enable us to reach our judgements.

Documents reviewed

Before going on site and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that the council provided for us. These included:

- ◆ 'The future of Hackney' - draft community strategy 2004-2014
- ◆ Best Value Performance Plan 2003/04
- ◆ Draft procurement strategy and delivery plan 2004/07
- ◆ Environment directorate procurement service plan Feb. 2004/07
- ◆ Draft Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy
- ◆ Planned bridge maintenance works 2004 onwards
- ◆ Recovery plan actions – streetscene
- ◆ Key Deliverables 2004/05
- ◆ Street lighting 5 year replacement plan – draft - April 2004-March 2009
- ◆ Skip Licensing procedure
- ◆ Community and Environment directorate service plan 2003/04
- ◆ Environment directorate service plan 2004/07
- ◆ Planning and Transportation divisional plan 2004/07
- ◆ Traffic and Transportation Team service plan 2003/04
- ◆ Highways and Engineering Service Plan 2003/04
- ◆ Performance data
- ◆ Interim Local implementation Plan 2002/03
- ◆ BSP 2003/04 & 2004/05
- ◆ Draft public realm design guide
- ◆ Draft parking and enforcement plan 2004/07
- ◆ Contract documentation

Reality checks undertaken

When we went on site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. We also followed up on issues relating to the management of the review and the improvements flowing from it. Our reality checks included:

- ◆ visits and assessment of road condition in various parts of the borough and reporting highway defects;
- ◆ a tour around the borough with council officers;
- ◆ telephone interviews with residents; and
- ◆ focus groups with transport user groups

List of people interviewed

Seamus Adams	Head of Parking
Mirsad Bakllvic	Team leader, parking
Roger Blake	Team leader, Transportation
Peter Boddy	Interim programmes manager
Max Caller	Chief Executive
Eileen Cook	Highways development control officer
Andy Cunningham	Head of Streetscene
Nicki Docherty	Renaisi
Joe Figurdo	Bridge maintenance team
Steve Gittens	Head of support and development
John Jacobs	Senior highways inspector
John Judah	Director of Environment
Roger Kite	Road safety officer
Ian McConnel	Air quality
Tom McCourt	Assistant director, Planning & Transportation
Ron Newman	Disability in Hackney
Chuks Nwaodume	Principal engineer, Traffic & Transportation

Trevor Parsons	London Cycling Campaign
Martin Peckitt	Project and performance manager
Peter Quinn	Environment directorate procurement manager
Trevor Rawson	Highways and engineering manager
Mike Smith	Senior licensing officer
Councillor Vincent Stops	Cabinet member, Environment, Transport & Planning
Melvin Tagg	Team leader, major projects
Robin Thurairajasingham	Team leader, Inspection & Maintenance
Sonia Utah	Senior insurance services officer
Steve Walker	Traffic and transportation manager
Mark Earle, Barry Hemings, Quaysoor Miah, Nazreen Essack, John McNicholas	Focus group – Highways and engineering staff
Kasy Duku, Kristina Roberts, Ruth Johnson, Ashok Vencatasamy	Focus group – Parking front-line staff
Dee & Joyce	Focus group – Parking attendants
Derek Williams, Steve Wilkie, Mirsad Bakllvic, Bryn Panther, Seline S., Kathryn Adedeji,	Focus group – Parking managers

Improving public services

The Government has placed a duty upon local councils to deliver services to clear standards – of cost and quality – by the most economic, efficient and effective means available.²² Best value is a challenging framework that is designed to improve local services. Councils are required to assess their own performance and put in place measures to ensure continuous improvement in all of their services.

Councils must show that they have applied the 4Cs of best value:

- ◆ **challenging** why and how a service is being provided;
- ◆ **comparing** their performance with others' (including organisations in the private and voluntary sectors);
- ◆ embracing fair **competition** as a means of securing efficient and effective services; and
- ◆ **consulting** local **taxpayers**, customers and the wider business community.

The Government has decided that each council should be scrutinised by an independent inspectorate. The Audit Commission performs this role.

The purpose of the inspection, and of this report, is to:

- ◆ enable the public to see whether best value is being delivered;
- ◆ enable the council to see how well it is doing;
- ◆ enable the Government to see how well its policies are working in practice;
- ◆ identify failing services where remedial action may be necessary; and
- ◆ identify and disseminate best practice.

²² This report has been prepared by the Audit Commission ('the Commission') following an inspection under Section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, and issued in accordance with its duty under Section 13 of the 1999 Act.