

CPA SELF ASSESSMENT - V 0.2 27 Sept 2007

Introduction

Lancaster City Council is ambitious for the communities it serves. A unique combination of location, enviable quality of life and the diversity of our district make us a centre for employment, business development, education, health, shopping, leisure, tourism and culture.

We are a distinct place with a distinct sense of identity. Our communities may be diverse, but they exhibit a common trait; they expect a lot from public services and are not afraid to say what they think. So we were delighted that a recent survey told us 69% of local residents think the council is working hard to make our district a better place to live, work and visit.

Our Neighbourhood Management success tells us that people here identify strongly with the place they live, care about it passionately and want still more opportunities to shape the future of their communities. This provides us with a clear blueprint for the future direction of the council and lies at the heart of our ambitions.

Our CPA in November 2003 showed Lancaster City Council to be an authority at the beginning of an ambitious improvement programme. Whilst it was acknowledged that major positive changes had been put in place, it was difficult at that time to fully assess the impact they had made.

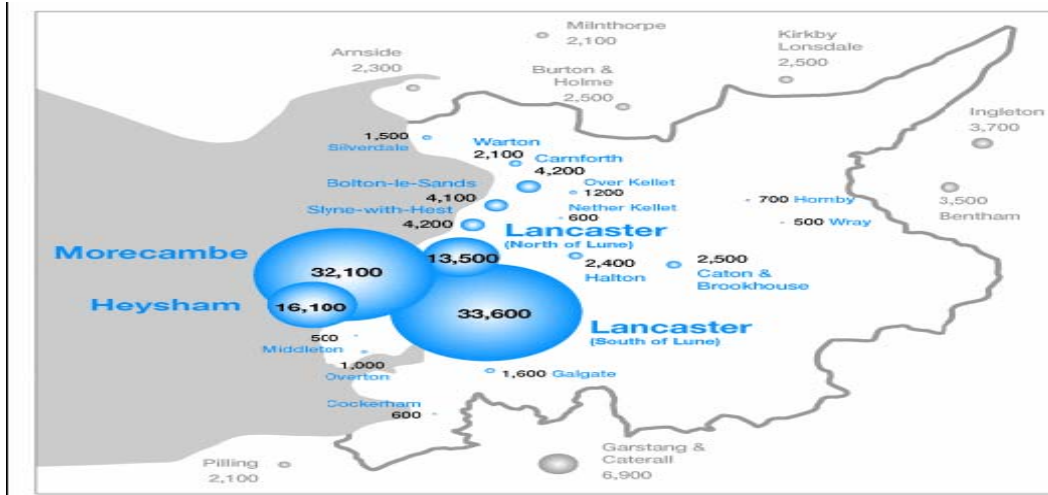
Since then, three positive Annual Audit letters have all evidenced that the Council has gone from strength to strength as an ambitious, confident organisation, with a skilled and motivated workforce, working in partnership to deliver very clear and focused priorities.

We are responding well to the very particular needs of our communities but we know that there is always more to do. As an open and learning authority, we welcome the external challenge this CPA inspection brings and will use the outcome constructively to further support our ambitious improvement programme.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

About our district



Our place within the region

Lancaster district sits at the northern edge of Lancashire linking Lancashire with South Cumbria. It brings together economic dynamism and environmental quality in a diverse and compelling mix of city, coast and countryside, making it the natural centre of the Morecambe Bay area.

This strategic location is reflected in the emerging North West Regional Spatial Strategy. Lancaster is placed in the North Lancashire and Cumbria Sub-Region recognising its unique position with linked transport networks, shopping and travel to work patterns, higher education links and shared responsibility for environmental assets such as Morecambe Bay and the Arnside/Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Our District and its people

Lancaster district comprises the City of Lancaster, which has played a significant role in the history of this country for more than a thousand years, the seaside town of Morecambe & Heysham, currently undergoing a renaissance, and the market town of Carnforth. These major centres of population are surrounded by an extensive rural area.

Our population of 146,000 contains a high proportion of students (15,000). There are significantly fewer people of non-white ethnic origin than national averages. Over the past three years we have seen significant numbers of economic migrant workers (Chinese and Polish) move into the district and recent estimates suggest they now make up 1% of our population.

The district is relatively self contained with 16% of working age residents commuting out and 13% of employees commuting in. Of around 54,000 jobs 85% are in service industries and only 7% in manufacturing. Average house prices in the district have risen by 120% over the past five years compared to a North West regional average of 96%.

We're a place of contrasts - in every way imaginable; we have areas of great affluence and beauty and others of extreme poverty and deprivation. Our district is ranked as the 17th most deprived in England but within that some 19% of our population are living within some of England's most disadvantaged areas.

Our Economy

Over the centuries, the district has been at the heart of national and international trade and today is home to service-based industry, major exporters and an emerging ICT market. This district delivers some truly outstanding economic performance, far in excess of regional and national averages; this district has the fastest growing economy in Lancashire and Cumbria, contributing £1.7 billion to the Lancashire economy alone.

Lancaster is the smallest city to have 2 universities. Lancaster University is one of the country's top-ten educational research establishments and a world class centre of excellence in many spheres including

IT, business and environmental sciences. Together with the University of Cumbria, it gives us a knowledge-based economy, with one of the most highly skilled workforces in the country.

About the council

Lancaster City Council's is ambitious for its communities. We are here to :

- Lead our communities to help the district address the major issues it faces;
- Ensure that the services that we are responsible for contribute to meeting people's needs.

We aim to ensure all our activities fit with this role and to that end, each of our policies, spending decisions and work programmes, as well as every course of action we take contributes to at least one of the following:

- Representing our communities' interests within the district, regionally, nationally and in Europe.
- Bringing communities and agencies together to work in partnership to address the major issues affecting the district.
- Providing a range of customer focused services, within the City Council's remit, that meet the needs of people who live, work and visit the district.
- Improving, on a continuing basis, the services that the Council provides.
- Putting our citizens, residents and users of our services at the heart of everything we do.

We currently employ around 920 staff and in the coming year, our net revenue budget is £22.5m and capital spending is estimated at £42m over the next 5 years. Lancaster City Council is comprised of 60 Councillors elected for a four-year term. Following the elections in May 2007 there continues to be no overall control and the current political complexion is:

Political Group	2007	2006	Political Group	2007	2006
Independent Group	16	12	Green	12	7
Labour	14	20	Liberal Democrats	5	8
Conservative	12	11	Other independent	1	2

Open and responsive democracy

Following a 2004 Audit Commission report into Democratic Renewal, the council has continually reviewed the effectiveness of its governance structures and introduced major changes since our last CPA inspection. At present, the governance arrangements are as follows:-

- **The Council**

Full Council meets monthly and considers strategic issues which are not within the agreed budget and policy framework. Routine and administrative matters are delegated to a Council Business Committee that also meets monthly. The Council has also appointed a Local Governance Committee with responsibility for considering the future governance arrangements for the district including unitary and enhanced two-tier working.

- **The Executive**

The Executive function is carried out by a Cabinet based on proportional representation. Cabinet members have cross cutting portfolios with individual decision making powers on non-key decisions within their portfolio area which have not been delegated to officers. The Council also has a series of Regulatory and Standing Committees which deal with issues outside of the Executive arrangements.

Using an all year round Star Chamber process, a Panel of Cabinet members consider on-going efficiency savings and prepare their budget proposals together with Chief Officers. The Cabinet has also adopted a system of Cabinet Liaison Groups to advise them on specific policy areas and liaise with particular representative groups such as the Chambers of Trade and University.

- Overview & Scrutiny

Our Overview and Scrutiny function, radically streamlined in 2004, is dynamic, inclusive, challenging and member led. There are two standing committees; the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which has responsibility for managing the Overview and Scrutiny process, dealing with pre-decision scrutiny and Call-in; and the Budget and Performance Panel which deals specifically with financial and performance issues.

A series of task and finish groups are in operation at any one time and provide the mechanism for in-depth review and ongoing challenge of policy direction.

INLCUDE LINK TO DIAGRAM OF POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Stronger together – working with our partners

In the 2006/07 BVPI survey, our residents told us that the things which most need improving in this district were:

- Transport
- Activities for teenagers
- Roads and pavements

These services are in the main, the responsibility of other service providers and this alone suggests that the services provided by the Lancaster City Council are meeting the needs of our communities.. However, we recognise that as a district council, we cannot work alone and that others are sometimes better placed to deliver key improvements. We work hard to influence local improvements through active leadership and participation in the Lancaster District Local Strategic Partnership, its seven thematic 'Building Blocks', and with partners in the community and voluntary sector, parish and town councils.

In common with all Lancashire district councils, geographical governance arrangements add a level of complexity to partnership working. There are 12 district councils, a county council, and 2 unitary authority authorities covering 1.2 million people. There is a lack of boundary co-terminosity among major partners such as the Police and Primary Care Trusts. In order to try and address these issues, the City Council is a member of a joint county/district working group that is co-ordinating the "Transforming Local Government" initiative in Lancashire to bring about more effective two tier working. We have declared our interest to the County Council in developing a joint 'Locality Plan' for our district and are particularly interested in developing proposals with regard to the efficiencies agenda, adult social care, the public realm and further development of the cultural offering within the district.

AMBITION - FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

KEY STRENGTHS – 2007	
▪ Long term realistic ambitions	▪ Strong engagement with partners and stakeholders
▪ Strong community leadership role together with partners	▪ Clear about role in sub-region
▪ Effectively led politically & managerially	▪ Strong awareness of balance between local and national agenda
▪ Active participant in regional and sub-regional initiatives and punches above its weight	▪ Neighbourhood Management achievement & ambition

1.1 Are there clear and challenging ambitions for the area and its communities?

As confidence builds, there is more appetite for change and the Council is becoming more ambitious in its aims for itself as an organisation, and for the future of its communities.

(Audit Commission).

Lancaster is ambitious for our communities and these ambitions are clearly expressed in our rolling three-year Corporate Plan ([hyperlink here](#)) which is refreshed annually in consultation with key partners and the community. It is aligned to the shared long-term vision for the district laid out in 2020 Vision - Lancaster District Community Strategy ([link here](#)), which is in turn linked to Ambition Lancashire, (the Lancashire Partnership's Community Strategy) and the Lancashire Local Area Agreement (LAA) signed last year.¹

Our Corporate Plan demonstrates a strong ambition to deliver national and local priorities, with a particular emphasis on maximising the opportunities presented by the recent Government White Paper. Over the last 4 years, the number of priorities included in the Corporate Plan have been reduced to six, and are now more focused and outcome driven to deliver improvements. The Corporate Plan is the focal point for directing resources and is supported by a 3 year Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Within two of the most deprived areas of the District (Poulton and the West End) the council has a well-developed over-arching strategic vision for the local community. Through involving, staff, partners and the community in deciding the priorities, we are clear that these ambitions are a true reflection of the needs and the area. ([link to West End Delivery Plan](#)). The council is determined to see the ground-breaking approach to neighbourhood management pioneered in Morecambe and detailed in our unitary proposal ([link here](#)) rolled out across the district.

We are currently developing a rural based neighbourhood management pilot with one of our parishes with the key aim of joining up services with a locality focus, initially involving the Police, City Council (Direct) Services, Cultural Services and County Council Highways and Transport Services.

We are pioneering the introduction of Local Development Frameworks. We submitted our Core Strategy to the Secretary of State on 4th May 2007, the first local authority in the northwest to have submitted a Development Plan Document under the new system. We have worked closely with the Local Strategic Partnership, consulted more than 400 bodies and organisations and have drawn on the Community Strategy and existing Parish Plans to develop a truly inclusive blueprint for the future development of the district, robustly aligned to local priorities and key strategies.

1.2 Are ambitions based on a shared understanding among the council and partner organisations to local needs?

Our Corporate Planning process has been comprehensively revised, aligning the ambitions of the Council with the ambitions of the community. Increasingly we have achieved clarity amongst our partners about how best to work with them to deliver the long- term vision articulated in the Lancaster District Community Strategy – 2020 Vision. Links with Town and Parish Councils have been reinforced with a Cabinet member with special responsibility taking the lead on rural issues.

The Corporate Planning cycle now better captures the views of citizens, members, partners and staff, and allows our limited resources to be targeted to where most community benefit can be achieved. For the last three years, Cabinet has consulted with all these groups on our priorities for the coming year.

¹ Both Community Strategies are currently under revision. Although we cannot yet know what those documents will contain, Lancaster City Council is clear that all future priorities will be set with regard to the needs of our communities and will be aligned with the district's Sustainable Community Strategy.

In a recent survey, 68% of all Council staff agreed strongly with the comment "*the vision, values and overall priorities of the Council are clear to me*".

Lancaster City Council Annual Communications Survey 2005)

Strong engagement with the LSP and its Building Blocks means that the Council's ambitions expressed in the Corporate Plan are widely shared across our partners and communities. The development of LSP building blocks to lead on key Community Strategy objectives ensures that partners are focused on how they each contribute to shared priority outcomes.

There are key linkages in particular with the county council's Strategic Partnership and the emergence of Local Area Agreements. Governance and performance monitoring arrangements for delivering these county wide targets are in place but are currently being reviewed as part of the routine refresh of both the County and Local Strategic Partnerships.

In partnership with the North West Development Agency and the Local Strategic Partnership, the Council has established a Vision Board of key local businesses and stakeholders. The Vision Board has developed an economic vision for the Lancaster district which is being used to guide NWDA regeneration funding to meet agreed priorities.

An initial allocation of funds of £3.4m has been approved by NWDA and negotiations are currently ongoing to draw in further funding from 2008 onwards. The Council provides programme management and project delivery support for the Vision.

Agencies working within the district share data on an ongoing basis. The council has developed data sharing protocols with our partners, particularly the police through the Community Safety Partnership and MADE (Multi Agency Data Exchange)

A State of the District Report ([link here](#)) has been produced to inform development of the district's Sustainable Community Strategy.

1.3 Does the council with its partners provide leadership across the community and ensure effective partnership working?

This council is a major influence in the region and sub-region with some £54m of externally funded programmes currently running in the district. This has only been achieved through strong leadership, local focus and proven ability to bring major partners to the table.

Support to the LSP and its building blocks is significant at both a political and managerial level. The Council has nominated representatives from both the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny to sit on all LSP building blocks. Until May 2007, the Council provided the Chair for the LSP Executive but this is currently being reviewed as part of the Community Strategy refresh exercise.

By choosing to reduce discretionary Council Tax discounts on second homes, this council was one of the first within the County in establishing a fund that could be used by the LSP to finance local initiatives designed to meet the priorities in the Community Strategy. Through the use of "second homes " income, we fund and host the LSP Manager and are currently leading the partnership through the production of its Sustainable Community Strategy. We also provide financial and managerial support to facilitate effective partnership working at the thematic Building Block level, promoting multi-agency working across the district footprint, ensuring that shared ambition, values and a spirit of collaboration drive service delivery and future development.

'It is to the Council's credit that it commits substantial resources to the Partnership. We were impressed by the engagement of City Council departments in the LSP structures.'
IDeA – LSP Peer Review - June 2007

An example of effective joint working and delivering shared priorities is the ‘Welcome to the District’ pack, a multi-agency LSP initiative, targeted to help our most numerous BME populations (polish and chinese) access key services and settle better in the community. www.lancaster.gov.uk/welcome

Other examples of close joint working include work with the County on benefits take up for the elderly and the “Parkwise” countywide initiative and more recently the development of a “Partnership Plus” agreement between the district, county, NCP and the police, whereby parking attendants act as “eyes and ears” for the police and in return offences against attendants are rigorously prosecuted.

The ‘50 Forward’ project aims to recognise, support and unlock the potential of older people and promote independence and choice. Led by Lancaster City Council, in partnership with the County Council, the Government, Signposts, Age Concern Lancashire and the Older People's Partnership, it is one of only eight such pilots in the country.

Its tailored, person centred approach aims to meet the needs of older people from the beginning of their 50th year, helping them to remain actively engaged in voluntary work or paid employment for as long as they want. It also provides information and advice on a wide range of services such as benefits or further education. An innovative Employment and Volunteering Bureau has found work and volunteering opportunities for many people, in particular groups traditionally excluded from work such as ex-prisoners and ex-drug users.

CASE STUDIES ABOUT POSITIVE IMPACT OF PROJECT TO FOLLOW

Our collaborative approach cuts across council boundaries and has a positive impact upon the sub-region. A key area of co-operation with both Lancashire and Cumbria County Councils is the management of the Arnsdale/Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is led by Lancaster City Council in partnership with South Lakeland District and Lancashire and Cumbria County Councils, Natural England, the National Trust, the RSPB, Country Land and Business Association and NFU as well as Parish Councils and Community Groups.

2. Prioritisation

KEY STRENGTHS 2007	
▪ Clear priorities, shared with our communities and partners	▪ Alignment with regional and national priorities
▪ Strong focus on local needs	▪ Priorities regularly tested with partners
▪ Ongoing challenge ensures resources follows priorities	▪ Robust framework to deliver priorities
▪ Strong (and improving) alignment of key strategies	▪ Clarity about non-priorities

2.1 Are there clear and robust priorities with the ambitions for the area?

The Council’s Vision, core values, and priorities are set out in our Corporate Plan which underpins the council’s contribution to delivering the Community Strategy..

Since 2003, a significant reduction in the number of the Council’s priorities has enabled us to maintain a clear focus on the things that matter most to our communities. The Council now has 6 medium term objectives which it plans to deliver over a three year period and these are set out below.

1. To deliver value for money, customer focused services
2. To make our district a cleaner and healthier place
3. To reduce crime and the fear of crime
4. To lead the regeneration of the district
5. To support sustainable communities
6. To continue to improve the Council

Corporate Plan priorities are tested annually with stakeholders through a public consultation exercise to ensure that it captures the ambitions of local people.

2.2 Is there a robust strategy to deliver priorities?

Our Performance Management Framework ([link out here](#)) ensures that the council delivers its priorities and maintains a sustained focus on the things that matter most. A simple 'golden thread' cascades through the council's hierarchy, translating our ambitions from strategic priority to operational delivery ensuring positive outcomes for our communities. Cabinet members have responsibility for performance within their portfolios and to ensure that the priorities set out within the Corporate Plan are delivered. The council has a similar approach to our joint working arrangements through the LAA and with other key partnerships. Consequently, all priority outcomes have been allocated to specific cabinet members and officers to provide a clear and open accountability for their delivery.

We work with our partners to ensure that all the needs and concerns of our communities are considered and that their strategies and plans are delivered, for example we have taken a leading role at district level with regard to Children's Trust arrangements in Lancashire and the development of children centres in Morecambe and Lancaster. We have developed strong joint working relationships with the primary care trust to address areas of concern such as alcohol harm, smoking and childhood obesity.

We provide a great deal of resources to support our key partnerships and wherever possible seek to share resources across partner organisations – a good example being the MAPS (Multi-Agency Problem Solving Team) The team comprises both officers from the police, city council and other agencies working together within shared office space to address community safety priorities at both a strategic and tactical level. This approach has already resulted in significant achievements which are referred to later.

Quarterly Performance Review Teams ensure that Cabinet Members and senior officers maintain a clear focus on delivering the council's key priorities (as expressed in the Corporate Plan). Their main role is to monitor delivery and challenge where appropriate to maintain a clear focus on delivering the priorities. Service Business Plans ensure that priorities are managed at an operational level. These are in turn allocated and tasks cascaded down to teams and individuals through our Employee Development Personal Appraisal (EDPA) process. This ensures that staff at all levels of the organisation are clear how they personally contribute to achieving corporate priorities.

Financial performance monitoring is also undertaken in the Performance Review Teams

Our West End Master Plan and Poulton Neighbourhood Management programmes all have delivery frameworks and delivery plans which are overseen by locally appointed Management Boards. The programmes have regard to LSP Building Block & CDRP targets, National Floor targets, National PSA targets, BVPI's and the Lancashire Local Area Agreement which are set and agreed with partners to ensure that they are challenging but realistic. In this way it ensures that the needs of all groups within the community, especially those at risk of disadvantage are addressed either within the boards or their sub-groups. For example, due to the increasing number of Polish workers in the area we have a representative of the Polish community on the West End Partnership.

2.3 Is robust action taken to deliver the strategy?

The council targets its resources on areas of priority, as set out in the Corporate Plan, through its annual corporate planning framework.

Our Performance Management Framework has a consistent focus on successfully delivering council priorities. Performance Review Teams receive information on a quarterly basis that highlight areas where performance in delivering priorities needs to improve. In these cases, the Teams produce action plans to take corrective action where appropriate, and, where additional resources are required, will seek

approval from the appropriate member(s). This may include making difficult choices about what we will stop doing to ensure that our priorities are delivered –

[Case Study Here - Closure of cash offices](#)

To deliver the Neighbourhood Management programme, the council has created its own officer Neighbourhood Task Team to assist the Neighbourhood Management Boards. In addition, various task groups have been created, eg Environment sub-group of the West End Partnership, to ensure that the targets for waste mgt, litter, and dog fouling are met. The Head of CC(D)S sits on this sub group.

Where high priority services perform below what we consider to be an acceptable level the council has a proven track record for delivering improvement. Our benefits service has been a consistent focus for a number of years and has been transformed into one of the top performers nationally with the majority of statutory indicators in the top quartile. The service scored an excellent score of 4 in the DWP Performance Standards and customer satisfaction with the service has improved radically.

[Link to benefits case study and planning delivery grant](#)

3.Capacity

KEY STRENGTHS 2007	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning from internal/external challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sharing knowledge – cross departmental learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Routinely evaluate the outcome of projects and training, and share outcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focuses resources on priorities and learns from mistakes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extensive, targeted training to support corporate priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear accountability and decision making (Scrutiny exemplar)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Builds capacity through partnership and joint working arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tackling underperformance

3.1 Is there clear accountability and decision making to support service delivery and continuous improvement?

Following an Audit Commission Democratic Renewal review in 2004, the Council has systematically improved its governance arrangements so that the mechanics of managing the authority do not inhibit our ability to focus on our priorities. Full Council, Executive, and Non Executive structures have all been streamlined to remove duplication and improve accountability. Routine, process-driven decisions are now delegated wherever possible.

Firm political and managerial leadership is setting a clear strategic direction. Decision-making processes are more streamlined and transparent A more consensual approach has led to better prioritisation of efforts and resources.
Audit Commission

Full council agree annually the Budget and Policy framework within which Cabinet will deliver the corporate priorities. Executive Cabinet portfolios responsibilities are linked to the corporate priorities. The officer Management Team is also aligned to these priorities providing a team approach of senior members and officers working together to deliver agreed priorities. Key decisions to be taken throughout the year are set out in an annual Forward Plan and allocated to Cabinet members. In this way it is clear when the item will be consider and who has responsibility for it. Key decisions can only be taken by cabinet, however individual Cabinet members do have delegated authority to take non key decisions within their portfolios. Cabinet meet in public and each meeting includes a public question time allowing

members of the public to ask cabinet members questions. Reports for all cabinet meetings clearly identify which member is responsible for the report and the minutes from all cabinet meeting clearly set out how members voted and the reasons to support the decision.

Regulatory and Standing Committees have been established for functions outside the remit of the Executive.

Scrutiny is well developed and considered best practice nationally at Lancaster City Council.

[Link to Scrutiny Exemplar](#)

The Constitution has been revised to create a new and easy to understand officer scheme of delegation that is arranged by post-holder to provide greater clarity and transparency of decision making. The constitution has a clear rationale for decision-making at the member level and includes an Member/Officer protocol that clearly sets out their responsibilities. As a result, members and officers work well together within clearly defined roles - in turn delivering accountability and sound decision making. Handbooks for Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny set out the decision making process in a clear and simple way, Training is provided as part of the induction process and on an ongoing basis for all members and officers. Guides have also been produced for officers on the report writing and decision making processes. Risk is an integral element of report writing and impact assessments are included in decision making reports.

Improvements in E govt technologies have brought efficiencies in decision-making. A computerised Committee Administration system, together with the introduction of notepad computers for Members, has rationalised the delivery and availability of information in the Council to allow access 24/7. This, coupled with the development of our much-improved website and intranet facilities, has transformed the availability of council information and presentation of key data like council priorities.

The Council was one of the first to invest heavily in new software and hardware to support the new Electoral Administration Act in terms of postal vote date of birth and signature verification which resulted in the Council being to maintain a 100% check at the recent elections and a low rate of rejection of postal votes.

Our approach to risk management has been transformed since 2003. Risk is well integrated and embedded into corporate arrangements and decision-making. The council's risk register now holds high quality, robust risk assessments. It is regularly updated to risk assess everything in the Council's Corporate Plan. Risk is identified at all stages of our corporate planning processes (corporate plan, business plan, task and PI level).

With the council increasingly looking to deliver priorities through partnership working, we regularly review the effectiveness of our key partnership and their capacity to deliver shared ambitions for the district. Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a clear remit to scrutinise those partnership arrangements including the provision to call to account members and officers who represent the council on its major partnerships. Our LSP has recently undertaken a comprehensive IDeA/Solace Enterprises Peer review and has developed an action plan to address the findings of that review which will ensure that further improvements are integrated into our partnership arrangements

The Council has in place an effective ethical framework. Codes of conduct for both members and officers have been regularly reviewed and updated and these are set out in the Constitution and included in our induction processes. The Council's Standards Committee meets regularly and has an independent Chairman. Registers for gifts and hospitality are also in place.

3.2 Does the council, with its partners, develop its capacity effectively to achieve change and deliver its ambitions and priorities?

The Council continues to develop its managerial and political leadership.

Member and officer development frameworks are in place to ensure that both are provided with capacity building opportunities to effectively meet their responsibilities and the challenge of change. The Senior Management structure has recently been streamlined to align better with our priorities.

Member training is a current priority with a significant intake of new members following the May 2007 election. Member induction has been well planned, comprehensive and supported by targeted training. In addition, all members have an individual assessment of their needs to enable them to undertake their roles within the council. This is worked up into the Member Development Programme.

Further management and leadership development at the highest level has been progressed through the Lancashire Leadership Programme, whilst a 150 of our senior managers have benefited through either the Lancaster University Management Development initiative or our 'Success Through People' programme.

Regular meetings between Directors and Cabinet members by way of Cabinet briefings, the revised Performance Management framework, and the introduction of Cabinet Liaison Groups, now ensure that all necessary information is readily available to decision makers.

Lancaster City Council is a reflective, self-aware organisation, with a strong history of learning from external challenge. Since 2003 the organisation has learned to share best practice internally and in the past years have formalised a mechanism for external challenge and shared learning – the Innovation Forum (IF).

The IF was established in July 2006. Developed in partnership with Lancaster University's Centre for Training and Development (CETAD), It is a multidisciplinary cross cutting informal group of officers brought together by a common interest in organisational development and reflective learning. The Innovation Forum makes a key contribution to the Council's capacity to initiate and deliver change and is formally recognised within the authority's performance management framework.

Building capacity in the organisation is not limited purely to senior officers and members. Our workforce plays an essential role in the delivery of high quality services to our community and in order to ensure that we have the workforce we need for the future, we have in place a people strategy and workforce development plan that underpins and helps us to deliver our priorities.

The Workforce Plan is a component in Lancaster City Council's approach to managing people and is a key element in its People Strategy. The Workforce Plan does not exist in isolation but links to and supports the delivery of the other elements of the People Strategy. These include the City Council's Corporate Plan, individual Service Plans and the HR Strategy and Business Plan. It also links into budgetary and financial planning and training plans.

During 2007-08 significant areas of the People Strategy are being addressed through the Workforce Development Plan include Fair Pay, Investors In People, Equality and Diversity, Building Capacity and Access to Services.

Training is timed and targeted to deliver the greatest benefit. All staff have a Learning and Development Plan which develops their capacity to deliver corporate objectives. Learning from training is routinely brought back into the organisation and shared through pre and post learning discussions within services.

Council-wide management of sickness absence is now embedded across the Council and the number of days lost to sickness continues to fall.

Our Employee Development and Performance Appraisal Scheme (EDPA) is supported by individual Development Action Plans, linked to service business plans, which ensure that training is targeted where it will benefit the Council most. We have carried out regular staff surveys (communications, stress, staff attitude) and have integrated them into a single staff survey to ensure that all staff have the opportunity to contribute to the future development of the organisation.

The Council does not have unlimited resources and consequently we have integrated into our corporate planning framework a medium term financial strategy (MTFS). This strategy clearly sets out the financial constraints that the council must work within to deliver its corporate objectives.

The MTFS sets out what the council expects to spend over the next 3 years in delivering its priorities and what resources it can expect to generate. The resultant gap in funding is then sourced through our Star Chamber process that drives our efficiency and savings programme. In this way, the council ensures that its priorities are fully resourced and services have a realistic chance of delivering their targets.

The process of matching resources to spending plans is effectively managed through the Cabinet's Star Chamber process. This all year round review, undertaken by a small Panel of Cabinet members, supported by senior officers, provides a challenge to existing service delivery methods and provides opportunities for redirecting resources to meet priorities. Using the council's Efficiency and Gershon strategies as a starting point, the group identifies opportunities for efficiencies and savings that can be recommended through Cabinet to full Council as part of the annual budget and policy framework process. The group considers service base budget spending and evidence that they provide value for money.

Recent redirecting of resources through Star Chamber has seen the council increase capacity in key service areas. In particular, significant investment has been made in key cross cutting posts in project management, procurement, sustainability and climate change, civil contingencies, consultation, children and young people, Police Community Support Officers, and domestic violence co-ordination.

Significant progress has been made in developing the Council's approach to Procurement. Investment in procurement professionals has seen immediate improvements in delivering our Procurement strategy and the generation of productivity efficiencies and cashable savings. In particular the use of corporate framework agreements and revised ways of working have more than met the cost of the investment in procurement.

Service specific investment has been made in both Revenues and Benefits, and Planning Services to bring about service delivery improvements. This investment has greatly increased service capacity and performance has significantly improved. [LINK TO CASE STUDIES](#)

Significant investment has also been included to meet the council's new approach to delivering front line improvements to Customer Services. The Access to Services project has already delivered key improvements and continues to implement its improvement programme to integrate all front line services into its customer service centres.

The Council has greatly improved its approach to achieving value for money using benchmarking and vfm profiles to challenge existing practices and has developed a 3 year service improvement plan to raise service deliver standards in line with top performers.

Services now routinely look outwards and seek to learn from top performing authorities through benchmarking. This is increasingly systematic and integrated into our Business Plans and Corporate Performance Plan. Re-structuring of our City Contract (Direct) Service was guided by our links with our family benchmarking group and a fact finding visit to Exeter City Council (an Excellent authority). The key benefits achieved from this exercise are set out below.

CCDS REORGANISATION

City Council (Direct) Services is the biggest service within the Council and has a key role in the delivery of the Corporate Objective of making our district a cleaner and healthier place. In order to deliver this objective it was recognised that there was a need to deliver services in a way that better met the needs of customers. As a result a reorganisation of the service has recently taken place. This reorganisation has been successful because its aims and objectives were clearly defined and agreed all stakeholders from the outset. Its success can be demonstrated by-

- Significant improvements in cleanliness (measured by BV199).
- Significant improvements in waste management .
- Improved management focus resulting in efficiencies that have led to improvements in service delivery.
- Clear lines of accountability for service delivery and financial performance.
- Improved levels of customer service and clear standards for service have been developed.
- Annual service savings of £100,000
- The service being recognised as an Investors in People Employer.

The Council continues to make improvements in its financial management arrangements. Our most recent Use Of Resources judgement scored a 3 out of 4. Our Efficiency Strategy supports our aim to increase that score and we recently undertook an IDeA Peer Challenge on our Asset Management Strategy. Our focus on economy and effectiveness has also seen the move to shared working arrangements with other authorities (eg County Council for Museums, Licensing in South Lakeland, and discussions entered into with Preston, Barrow, Carlisle & Chester) and our partners, and we have worked with the NW Centre of Excellence to improve our approach to asset management and procurement through an IDeA procurement challenge.

The Council's Efficiency Strategy identifies how the council integrates its other strategies to drive efficiencies and service improvements, in particular through its E govt agenda, corporate property and asset mgt plan, workforce planning, and its procurement strategy.

The Council has developed and resourced a 5 year IT systems replacement programme. This ensures that all the council's major IT systems are reviewed every 5 years and replaced when appropriate. A corporate CRM system has been implemented to support our Customer First Strategy and this year will see the replacement of the Financial Accounting systems and an improved corporate electronic document management system. Next year will see a new integrated HR and payroll system in place.

The council has also been proactive in utilising its asset base as a tool to attract investment. The City Centre extension in Lancaster and the Central promenade site in Morecambe have both been progressed through formal development agreements triggering multi million pound private sector investment within the district. A further example of this approach is well established in the West End of Morecambe where the Neighbourhood Task Force team and MAPS officers share premises and work with the police and Community Support Officers putting together a joint targeted approach to local problems.

The Council has an excellent record in attracting external capital finance to assist deliver of its 5 year capital programme. The existing programme includes a sum of £54m external financing secured by our proactive targeting of funds to meet our corporate priorities.

Maximising the impact of partnership working is an ambition shared with our key partners. County and district work effectively together to increase partnership capacity at a local level. Both councils provide grant funding via Service level Agreements to voluntary organisations in the district to deliver shared ambitions. In addition, groups can bid for funding from the Local Strategic partnerships "2nd homes funding". Projects must demonstrate how they contribute to delivery of community strategy objectives.

Furthermore , we are always looking to improve joint working with our key partners in particular with a county colleagues to improve 2 tier working.

4 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

KEY STRENGTHS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear policy and performance framework in place driven by ambition and priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Corporate Plan developed with community input - Business Plans developed in partnership with Members through PRT and Star Chamber
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong performance monitoring which continues to improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategic Risk Management well managed and consistently applied across the council and integrated with PM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LAMP methodology (Project Mgt) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clear service standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High profile of Performance Management – clear managerial and political priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Escendency Performance Management System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training and development of staff and members – high levels of competency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good financial management – Effective value for money challenge

4.1 Is there a consistent, rigorous and open approach to performance management?

The significant improvements we have made in our approaches to managing performance underpin all our other achievements. Since 2003, our Performance Management Framework has been completely restructured and streamlined with member and officer roles and responsibilities clearly understood. Members and officers have received training and the framework processes are now completely embedded throughout the council and used to monitor and improve performance. The Framework ensures that all strategic and operational priorities have delivery targets set and responsibilities allocated to both members and officers. These are then monitored and reported on through exception reports in the Performance Review Team process. The progress that the Council has made in implementing an effective Performance Mgt Framework has been confirmed in external assessments.

- *The key issue facing Lancaster is whether or not it wants to be more radical in its approach to improvement - if so championing and challenging the management of performance is central to success”*
I&DeA Peer Challenge 2003
- *The Council has made progress over the last few years..... priorities are clearer,..... members are more involved ...Council is becoming more focused on outcomes rather than processes”*
- *“The Council’s comparative improvement is above the average for Fair Councils the number of PI’s in the top quartile is better than many Excellent councils.....”*
Audit Commission 2006
- *The Performance Management Framework is helping the council to identify the factors that contribute to deteriorating performance or lack of progress and is using this to target remedial action*
Audit Commission June 2007

The Leader of the Council is responsible for Budget and Corporate Performance, mirrored on the officer side by the Corporate Director (Finance and Performance). Duplication in monitoring and documentation has been eliminated with all members receiving the same performance information in a timely manner. Quarterly Performance Review Teams (PRTs), led by Cabinet members, monitor corporate plan targets, the service position highlighting key and significant performance issues that need to be reported to the Cabinet member through an exceptions based traffic light reporting system. Agreed action plans from previous PRT’s are also monitored. Actions that require additional resources are then reported into Cabinet for decision.

Significant spending variations are reported into PRTs via a financial templates as is a value for money assessment, signed off and agreed by the Cabinet Member and Director.

Services routinely use performance management information to inform service delivery and bring forward opportunities for efficiencies through the Star Chamber process.

Information from individual PRT meetings are pulled together into a corporate PRT report that is considered by the Leader of the Council and presented quarterly by him to the Budget & Performance Panel. The Budget & Performance Panel has responsibility to challenge performance and call to account officers or members where performance is failing or not delivering value for money. In this way, the PRT process offers a vehicle for providing constructive challenge to the reporting of performance information.

[LINK TO PERFORMANCE MGT FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT](#)

The changes associated with these improvements require processes to manage it well. Our systems are robust, well embedded and consistently applied. We have introduced “Escendency”, a web based performance management tool, which provides a ‘picture’ of performance in relation to priorities in real time, highlighting both under and over performance and translating strategic priorities to operational delivery. We are able to see a single, real-time, top down picture of our success in delivering our vision

for the District. The Escendency system has also streamlined our reporting processes providing instantly available, high quality performance information to a wide (and expanding) audience.

Our performance mgt system has also been integrated into our Neighbourhood Mgt Boards and work is currently underway to implement it into our other major partnerships in particular the LSP.

[LINK TO LAMP DOCUMENTATION](#)

We now have a bespoke corporate project management methodology embedded across the council. We introduced Lancaster's Approach to Managing Projects (LAMP) in April 2007 and so far more than 150 officers have received LAMP training. Adoption of a standard method has developed a pool of trained and experienced project staff who can apply the method to any type or size of project proportionate to its significance to the success of the council, its complexity and degree of risk. Through LAMP we ensure that all intended project benefits are realised and that individual projects are delivered to time, cost and quality. A corporate Projects Officer post has been established to support all services in the consistent application of LAMP, sharing best practice and lessons learned. We're so proud of LAMP that we have taken steps to have it copyrighted!

Through these systems we identify where we are not achieving as highly as we can and identify additional resources or targeted support as appropriate.

The Council has in place a corporate complaints system. Further work is underway to incorporate this into our Customer First strategy by reporting complaints through the customer service centres CRM. A pilot project is underway in CC(D)S which will be rolled out to all services by 2008. This practice will complement the computerised system already in place for dealing with Freedom of Information requests and Ombudsman complaints.

Consistent, high-quality, timely and comprehensive information is vital to delivering improved service outcomes. The council's response to the emerging data quality agenda has been speedy and comprehensive. Much work has already been undertaken to provide relevant information for Members, managers and external audit, especially where concerns have already been identified. Members and officers have been trained to ensure the highest possible standards throughout the data collection process, from first principles and setting up indicators to the eventual publication of a robust set of performance data which is accurate and fit for external scrutiny. 'Information Custodians' have been established within each Service to provide a quality assurance role with regard to service data. The council has set a target to score Level 4 for data quality by 2008 and we are confident that the most recent audit will show the council has made great strides towards achieving this ambitious target.

Since 2004, Overview and Scrutiny has made significant contributions towards improving council performance and driving up standards of service for local people largely by the use of effective task groups. AQ Scrutiny Annual Report is now produced that contains an Appendix highlighting the extent to which topics reviewed by scrutiny during the year contribute to improving performance and achieving corporate objectives. This supplements the annual reports delivered to full council in April each year by all Cabinet members on their progress in achieving their portfolio priorities. Council also receives an Annual Report in June that pulls together all this information and combines it with the best value performance plan data. In this way the Council is transparent and open in its performance achievements each year.

[Link to Annual Scrutiny report / scrutiny case study](#)

4.2 Do the council and partner organisations use their knowledge about performance management to drive continuous improvement in outcomes

The council and its major partnerships receive routine performance management information to help them deliver their priorities. The council has worked closely, and continues to do so, with the LSP to provide help and advice in the development of their own performance management framework. Plans are in progress to roll out the use of escendency to the LSP to provide online real time performance data.

The Neighbourhood Mgt Boards in Poulton and the West End use the council's performance management framework to monitor delivery and inform future service improvements.

Our Community Safety Partnership has in place a rigorous framework that takes a pro-active shared approach to managing performance.

Having seen the December figures for crime performance in Lancaster this is a note to congratulate Lancaster for a tremendous effort in turning the position round in the last four months. The really good news is that there is much going on in Lancaster that will bring further improvements in the future.

Deputy Regional Director
GONW
Communities Group
January 2007

Performance monitoring arrangements are in place with the County LSP to monitor local progress in achieving targets in the Local Area Agreement.

Data sharing protocols are in place across partners ; the MADE (multi – agency data exchange) database is specific example of this that helps determine priorities and improvement planning.

The council invests a great deal in benchmarking, in particular through strong links with our family group, the Exeter Benchmarking Group, enabling exchange of knowledge and ideas to support many of the council's improvements. We are also a corporate member of the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) . Specific professional and county-wide officer groups also meet regularly to discuss performance and opportunities to share best practice and efficiency options.

Other practical examples of using comparative performance data include using the Audit Commission's VFM tool, Direction of Travel and CPA re-categorisation profiles, and visiting other councils to learn from best practice. These tools are used by services in both their PRT reports and also in the Star Chamber's annual vfm challenge. Value for money is now central to our performance management framework and continues to drive our efficiency agenda. This information has been instrumental in the development of a 3 year Service Improvement Plan designed to redirect resources into key services to achieve top quartile performance. [LINK TO SIP](#)

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of the work of developing our customer service centres to ensure equality of access to service delivery. In addition, a Community Leaders Group meets every three months to share knowledge and discuss issues of common interest and is proving a valuable resource in ensuring that council's ambition and future delivery plans take account of diversity and equality issues and the varied needs of our particular communities.

The Council's complaints and grievance policies form part of our performance mgt framework and are reported in the quarterly PRTs and also used to inform service delivery improvements. Information from customer feedback and satisfaction surveys are also used to inform service standards and delivery.

The Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and Performance are accredited IDeA peers. This provides an opportunity for learning from other councils and bringing back examples of best practice to the Council. The Council has also taken advantage of this facility to undertake Peer Challenges/ Healthchecks on its own Corporate Asset Mgt Strategy, Procurement arrangements, and the effectiveness of its LSP.

Within our Services we hold a number of quality awards but our culture is one that does not 'chase the badge'. We only use those which enable us to measure our progress and enable us to continuously improve.

Provide a list of awards here

5.Achievement – improving the things that matter

KEY STRENGTHS 2004	
▪ +ve direction of travel year on year	▪ Promising prospects for improvements in inspection reports
▪ Rising customer satisfaction	▪ Demonstrable achievements in priority areas
	• Neighbourhood Management

5.1 What level of quality has the council with its partners achieved in relation to its services, priority areas and impact upon local quality of life?

5.2 How much progress has the council made?

Over the past three years we believe our investments in priority areas have led to significant increases in performance, satisfaction and the quality of life for people in the district. Overall our most recent Annual Audit and Inspection letter confirms that we provide good services, value for money, and are moving forward and getting better all the time. Not only are we continuing to improve, but we are doing so at a considerably faster rate than comparable district councils.

Performance against target in both national and local priority areas is improving. Current performance levels are good with 42% of indicators in the top band compared with the district council average of around 30%.

In 2006/7, 63% of our statutory Best Value Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) improved on the previous year and 75% either improved or maintained performance at previous levels. Similarly, 68% of all local KPIs improved over the same period.

Customer satisfaction is becoming increasingly important as a measure of overall performance and we were delighted to see that overall satisfaction with the Council, as measured by our survey carried out last year bucked the national trend by increasing three percentage points in 2006 and that 69% of people believe we are working hard to make this district a better place to live. Equally pleasing was the dramatic rate of improvement in levels of satisfaction with delivery of our key priority services where additional resources had been invested.

- Over 80% of our council tenants said they were satisfied the overall service provided by the council as their landlord a dramatic improvement from 72% three years ago.
- Overall satisfaction with benefits performance has also improved radically to over 81% from 67%, reflecting consistent high performance against all measures brought about by major investment in this key service.
- Nearly 81% of people are satisfied with the waste collection service.
- Over 71% of people are very or fairly satisfied with local recycling provision, a figure we expect to rise when all households in the district have access to the 3 stream waste collection rounds.
- 98% satisfaction levels were expressed by those people contacting our customer contact centre

Our residents think that the top three factors which contribute to a good quality of life in an area are:

- 1. Levels of Crime** – within our district, levels of crime within the district continue to fall / PSA 1 targets on track to be achieved
- 2. Health Services** – within our district “ *Key health indicators suggest a gradual improvement in health in the Lancaster District* “

Public Health Profile of North Lancashire Primary Care Trust –January 2007

3. **Clean streets** - Improving street cleanliness was one of the council's highest priorities in 2006/07 so we are pleased to note that satisfaction with this service has steadily improved to 61.80%.

Our focus in achieving our ambitions and delivery of our priorities for all of our communities is expressed through our Corporate Plan and the priority outcomes identified within it

Priority 1. To deliver value for money customer focussed services

- 2007/08 saw the lowest council tax rise for eight years at 3.9%,
- Our Revenues and Benefits service is one of the top performers nationally with the majority of statutory indicators in the top quartile:
 - ❖ the average time for processing new benefits claims is now 19 days (top quartile figure 25 days)
 - ❖ The average time for processing change of circumstances is now 7 days (top quartile 8.5 days)
 - ❖ Overall satisfaction with benefits performance has also improved from 67.20% to 81.2%
 - ❖ An excellent score of 4 against DWP Performance Standards for 2006/7 evidences a clear strong focus on the overall customer experience.
- A Customer First Strategy has been approved that sets out the council's future approach for dealing with our customers. This has seen 2 customer service centres opened in Lancaster and Morecambe Town Halls
- Clear service standards have been developed for dealing with all our customers whether face to face, on the telephone, by letter or email.
- We have carried out a full Equality Impact Assessment as part of the work of developing our customer service centres to ensure equality of access to those services.
- In the year to April 2007 our website recorded over 1.5 million page hits. Each month around 140,000 users visit us online, and our monthly survey reveals that half of these visitors are able to find everything they need purely from that first point of contact.
- Our investment in CRM systems development within Customer Services is leading to outstanding performance. Over the past three months for example the telephone service dealing with streetscene issues, have answered 9994 calls with an abandoned rate of just 1.9 % (over 10% previously). General switchboard calls in the same period were 21,310 with an abandon rate of 0.86% (over 10% previously).
- A queue management system has been implemented in our new face to face customer contact centres to improve the customer experience.
- Visitors to our site can carry out an increasing number of self-service transactions, such as paying bills, reporting highway, streetlighting and litter problems, or finding their nearest health services, schools and public amenities 24/7.
- General complaints and Ombudsman requests are now logged using an electronic system which is improving our monitoring and response times. Ombudsman complaints reduced from 36 days to 20.
- Promoting public access, all planning applications can now be viewed online and Planning and Building Regulations applications can be submitted online. Local Development Framework documents can be viewed online and representations made online via the Limehouse consultation management system.

- Revenues and Benefits have pioneered the use of an electronic document management system which has delivered real benefits in capacity, efficiency and transparency. This is now being rolled out into our Council Housing and Planning services as our corporate strategy for information management develops.
- In an independent survey of our website carried out by SOCITM (Society of Information Technology Management) identified Lancaster City Council as one of only handful of UK councils to be commended for best practice in having clear and comprehensive contact details – enhancing the customer contact experience.
- Customers are able to submit and pay for planning applications online, to track current applications, to view applications and submit comments. Record levels of Planning Delivery Grant have been received which in turn have been ploughed back into service improvement so that Planning Service hit 100% of its performance targets for planning applications.
- Our City Council (Direct) Service and Customer Services have worked with a social enterprise organisation 'Furniture Matters' to set up the award winning 'Bulky Matters' project – reducing the amount of bulky household waste going to landfill from 100% to 40% thus saving many tonnes of landfill per year, at the same time improving the service to customers by introducing appointments and an in-house collection service and providing employment / training opportunities to local residents
- Performance levels of the Council's main switchboard greatly increased following its transfer into Customer Services. Percentage of phone calls answered has risen from 86% to 97%.

Priority 2 To make our district a cleaner and healthier place

- Lancaster was the only district amongst six 'Cycling Demonstration Towns' identified by the Department of Transport in October 2005. £1.5m is being spent over three years on network enhancements and promotion with the aim of achieving a significant increase in cycle use.
- Improvements to the local cycle network continue, with more links to designated cycle paths, additional signage and resurfacing works.
- Key projects within the Public Convenience improvement programme have been completed. New facilities are now in place at Promenade Clock Tower and the Arndale Shopping Centre car park. In 2007/8 plans for improvements in Happy Mount Park and Heysham Village are already underway.
- Partnership arrangement is in place with Smokefree Lancaster District to manage smoking prohibition on July 1, together the recruitment of dedicated officer to deal with publicity/enforcement.
- 150 targeted patrols for dog fouling have been undertaken this year with 7 fixed penalty notices issued for offences witnessed.
- 40,000 of households in District now have wheeled bins and boxes. Cabinet approved roll out to further 10,000 households in Sept 2007 and 7,000 households in Sept 2008. In addition plastics will be collected as a recyclable item from September 2007.
- Items of bulky waste now collected by partnership between Lancaster City Council / Furniture Matters called 'Bulky Matters'. Over 50% of all tonnage collected is reused or recycled and 100% of it was removed within our standard of 7 days.
- Trade waste collection service now offers a recycling service to schools
 - Street Cleanliness
 - ❖ 130 investigations into cleanliness related complaints have taken place
 - ❖ Over 2,200 warning letters have been sent out
 - ❖ 893 people were warned and made aware of the penalties for littering

- ❖ Over 1200 portable ashtrays have been distributed
 - ❖ 29 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued by Council staff and PCSOs for littering and dog fouling
 - ❖ 25 Fixed Penalty Notices have been issued by the Police for littering
- CC(D)S has worked with agencies on the clean sweep initiative in partnership with other Council services Police, Fire and Rescue Service.
 - Between April and December 2006 – 2662 incidents of fly tipping were recorded which is a 26% reduction on the same period during the previous year. By the third quarter of this year 81% of all fly tipping incidents reported to the customer service centre were responded to within one working day.
 - Our award winning Grounds Maintenance team have experienced further success, winning a coveted gold medal in the RHA Tatton Show and continue to support communities across the district through continued support of 'Britain in Bloom' entries.
 - They continue to work in partnership with Piccadilly Garden Centre to provide training opportunities for learning disabled adults at the nursery and with Job Centre Plus to provide work opportunities for 20 long term unemployed people during the summer months.
 - Our sports facilities, venues and programmes provided a service to one million customers in the year 2006/07
 - Our Salt Ayre Sports Centre is a nationally accredited Inclusive Fitness Centre
 - Our Body Mass Index (BMI) project, addressing childhood obesity and targeted at primary school children , measures BMI in a non intrusive way and provides each child with individual fitness charts
 - We have piloted with Social Services a referral system into leisure activities for young people aged 13-16 with significant disabilities

PRIORITY 3. To reduce crime and the fear of crime

- The Community Safety Partnership is on track to meeting its PSA1 target to reduce crime by 16-19% over a 3 year period. The priorities for Lancaster District are alcohol related violent crime and criminal damage.
- A Multi Agency Problem Solving (MAPS) team comprising staff from the City Council, Police, Youth and Community, Youth Offending Team and Victim Support has been established and work together at a tactical and strategic level within shared office space.
- Key projects developed by the Community safety partnership include SAL's (Safe at Last) Place and Lancaster District Womens Aid (a domestic violence one stop shop) and substance misuse such as XS, Tower and the Arrest Referral Scheme.
- SAL's Place – details to be included
- 20 new Police Community Support officers are at work within the district. Funded by the City Council Police and the CSP and West End Partnership they provide visible reassurance to residents and are targeted to tackle environmental abuses, anti-social behaviour and low level crime.
- Cycling Demonstration Town Project has funded eight new bikes for the Lancaster and Morecambe Neighbourhood Policing Teams to increase cycling patrols in the city centres and the districts extensive network of cycle paths.

- Lancaster's largest car park has been awarded 'Park Mark' accreditation (safe and secure environment for customers)
- Our Sports and Arts diversionary project has dramatically reduced juvenile nuisance
- All crime within the district is down by 6% compared to last year
- Burglary in dwellings has come down by a dramatic 18.5%
- Criminal damage is down 10.2%; violent crime has reduced by 4.6%

4. To lead the regeneration of our district

- The Lancaster & Morecambe Economic Development Zone (EDZ) is the largest externally funded regeneration programme ever undertaken by the City Council. The City Council will be able to draw down £8 million of European funding available to the EDZ by the end of 2008.
- The emerging Luneside East urban village project will replace contaminated and derelict land with a mixed development of 300+ housing units; 80,000 sq ft of modern office space, parkland and leisure facilities.
- A £2.7M state of the art office development in the heart of the city 'CityLab' were officially opened in August 2006.
- A £560,000 capital project to improve industrial access in the Port of Heysham expected to support 100 existing jobs and create a further 190 jobs by the end of 2008.
- In October 2006 funding secured for a £3.5 million scheme to create a Centre for Creative Industries in the Storey Institute, workspace as well as public galleries, a new auditorium/conference centre, a bar/café, and a new state of the art Tourist Information Centre.
-
- The City Council is working jointly with NWDA and Lancaster University on the development of a new science park at Bailrigg adjacent to Lancaster University. The Science Park is designated as one of the North West's Regional Strategic Sites where technological spin-out from academic research will provide an internationally significant contribution to the local economy.
- We have entered into a formal development agreement with potential developers Centros Miller for a retail led regeneration of the Canal Corridor North area in central Lancaster.
-
- Significant new office and leisure facilities have been completed on the Cottom's Farm industrial site. Further developments are now also underway for completion in 2007/8.
- Work began in 2006/7 on the renovation of the long time derelict Midland Hotel under a development partnership agreement with "Urban Splash".
- Promenade facilities in the West End of Morecambe are being improved, including community designed public art and play facilities.
- The Winter Gardens is now owned by a buildings preservation trust led by local volunteers who are bidding to secure the funds they need to refurbish the building.
- The value of tourism to the district rose from £216.99m in 2004 to £217.71m. The amount of people staying in serviced accommodation increased by 22%.
- The Council has led or supported a number of rural initiatives:

- £1m NWDA funding to support the development of Carnforth as a service centre for its wider rural hinterland.
- Carnforth Connect – working in partnership with County Council to deliver rural transport
- Fire Station site re-development – proposal to create a town centre retail and workspace Community Resource Centre

5. To support sustainable communities

- Outstanding track record in delivering neighbourhood management to the most deprived parts of our district.
- There has been a significant decrease in the proportion of local residents (in Poulton) who are unemployed or claiming Job Seekers Allowance (from 7% in 2003 to 3% in 2006).
- The proportion of people expressing dissatisfaction with Poulton as a place to live has decreased from 16% in 2003 to 11% in 2006. This is greater than the change seen across all Neighbourhood Management (NM) areas across the country.
- Feelings of neighbourliness have increased, with 59% of Poulton residents feeling that neighbours looked out for each other in 2006, compared to 50% in 2003.
- Compared to 2003, in 2006 fewer residents identified problems across a range of service areas, including rubbish collection, street lighting, local bus services and social and leisure facilities. Residents also perceived positive progress to have been made in crime-related areas such as drug dealing, burglary and violent crime.
- Satisfaction with family doctor/GP and general hospital services increased over the 2003-06 period, as did satisfaction with primary school and sixth form/FE college provision.
- Residents felt that most local services are easier to access than they were in 2003.
- Council's partnership with Adactus Housing Association has produced 13 remodeled properties in the West End, 10 in Poulton, with further 47 properties recently acquired there.
- The Exemplar scheme in the West End (Chatsworth Gardens) is at the final stages of developer selection. 38 properties have been acquired and a further 7 are near completion. Elsewhere in the District, Adactus have refurbished 3 properties in Lancaster and 8 (for shared ownership) in rural areas.
- We have for many years achieved and maintained Decent Homes Standards for all our council owned dwellings.
- Council homes among the most energy efficient in the country, the most recent HECA (Home Energy Conservation Act) return reported an annual improvement in district-wide energy efficiency of 2.32% -double the estimated target for the year.
- The average time taken to undertake all repairs is now just 11 days (against a target of 15 days) and all tenants are being offered fixed appointments by trade operatives to visit at their first point of contact to report a repair.
- Progress has been made in reducing the average re-let time taken to allocate council properties has reduced from 42.8 days to 38.3 days.
- 'Drop in' homelessness advice services have increased and there has been an overall reduction in the numbers of homeless applications and acceptances, bringing reductions in spend against the B&B budget. There has also been increased access to both temporary dispersed housing (RSL managed) and accommodation within the private rented sector.

- Council supporting the YMCA to re-open emergency accommodation in Portland Street. This will provide for 6 young people.
- Increase the amount of affordable/social housing in the district -provision of social rented units through S106 agreements - 11 units having been agreed at the Bulk Road site, Lancaster
- The Council has entered into a joint management arrangement with South Lakeland District Council to share the services of a cross-district Licensing Manager based in both Lancaster and Kendal.

6. To continue to improve the Council

- Sound financial management delivered the lowest council tax rise for eight years at 3.9%, whilst at the same time offering opportunities for growth-
 - ❖ two new face-to-face customer service centres based in Lancaster and Morecambe town halls
 - ❖ adjustments to our buildings that will help us respond to the challenge of climate change and provide better DDA compliant accommodation for our staff
- More council services than ever have achieved formal recognition for the quality of the services they provide.
 - ❖ Council Housing Services has successfully achieved two major quality accreditations. The Repair and Maintenance Section has obtained ISO 9002 Quality Accreditation which means that the whole of the service is now accredited and our sheltered housing team has received accreditation from the Centre for Sheltered Housing Studies.
 - ❖ City Contract (Direct) Services has successfully achieved Investors in People Employer accreditation.
 - ❖ Highways Maintenance section achieved ISO 9001, OHSAS accreditation
 - ❖ 90% of all building cleaning staff have been accredited with a national vocational qualification
 - ❖ Revenues and Benefits service awarded a Charter Mark
- Significant improvement against key BVPI's, and our customers are experiencing high quality service. Lancaster City Council is amongst the top performers in the country against many measures and improving at a faster rate than comparable district councils.
 - Customer Service Standards, together with enhanced an feedback and complaints procedures have been embedded with more to be introduced as further services are integrated into the Customer Service Centres.
- We have in place a Child Protection and Vulnerable Adults policy in place across the Council with designated child protection officers in every Service.
- Council has created a new post of Civil Contingencies Officer and now has in place a Corporate Business Continuity Plan supported by individual plans for all its services.
- The council's financial management arrangements continue to improve. The Council's scored a 3 out of 4 for its Use of Resources annual assessment by the audit commission. It also received an unqualified opinion on its annual accounts and was adjudged to be providing value for money services.

- Regular review of insurance claims, identifying trends and putting procedures in place to reduce the impact of insurable risks, has over the past year, resulted in an annual premium reduction of over £130,000.
- Strong HR procedures mean that managers increasingly have the confidence to tackle sickness and under-performance and this has resulted in reduced levels of sickness absence.

• Conclusion

Lancaster City Council is ambitious for its communities. We are an open, accountable, listening authority

- Delivering a comprehensive range of value-for-money services;
- Working closely with our communities to identify their needs and priorities;
- Focussing its own activities and those of other agencies on meeting those needs;
- Working to realize the potential of the North Lancashire area to deliver vibrant and active communities and a dynamic modern knowledge based economy.

Recent analysis shows that we are now close to joining the top performers in the country against many measures. The report, produced by the Audit Commission, also shows that we are improving at a considerably faster rate than comparable District Councils and in some instances, match our excellent rated colleagues.

Ambitious for our communities, we know that our proven ability to engage with communities in areas of priority need lies at the heart of those ambitions. The success of our work in areas of deprivation such as Poulton and West End areas of Morecambe is borne out with impressive improvements in satisfaction levels with local services and facilities in those areas.

While we are clear that there are areas of the district which may need our particular attention, our focus on improved outcomes for all our communities has seen a steady and solid improvement against the full range of our services since 2003.

Over the past three years we have taken a hard look at the way we manage our day to day business and have made many positive changes to our internal processes. However we are continually seeking ways to work more efficiently and provide better value for money.

We believe that the progress highlighted above makes a compelling case for the re-assessment of our CPA rating and ask that our many achievements over the past three years and the impressive improvements we have made since 2003 are recognised.