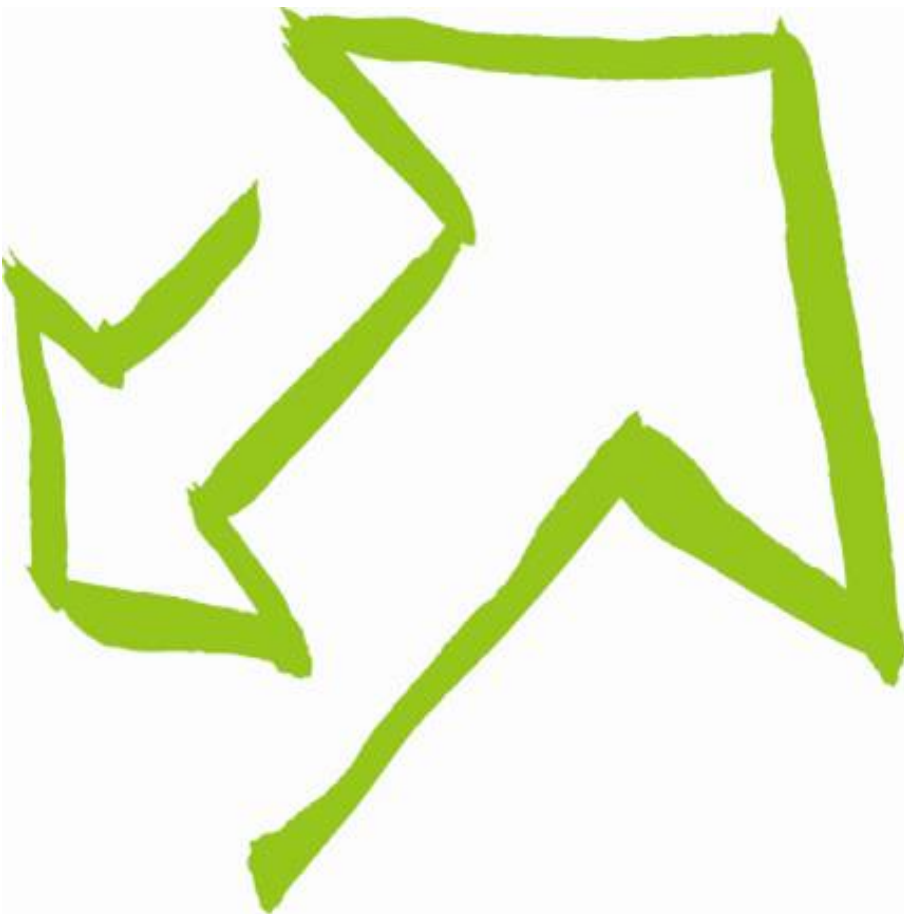


Corporate Assessment

Portsmouth City Council
November 2008



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Introduction

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

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

- Ambition
- Prioritisation

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

- Capacity
- Performance management

What has been achieved?

- Achievement

Considered against the shared priorities of:

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

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

- 4 The JAR covers specific services for children and young people that are directly managed or commissioned by the Council, as well as relevant health and youth justice services provided by other bodies. It focuses on the contributions made by services to improving outcomes especially concerning safeguarding; services for looked after children; and services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The separate JAR report also covers the leadership and management of services for children and young people and, in particular, the way that such services work together to improve outcomes. The description and judgement in respect of children and young people in this report is summarised from the JAR report and the most recently published Annual Performance Assessment from Ofsted which covers all of the Council's children services.

Executive summary

- 5 Portsmouth City Council is performing well. It is improving the local area and the quality of life of local people, and this is giving a sense of confidence in the future.
- 6 The Council has a clear vision and good ambitions to improve the city. It is a good partner, building relationships and sharing its vision. With its partners, it has involved local stakeholders and its community in shaping ambitions so that it knows what people want. It has analysed and discussed a range of data: the ten-year vision for Portsmouth is shared and understood, and based on sound analysis of what needs to improve. The ambition to be 'the premier waterfront city' is supported by challenging targets in the local area agreement and an innovative multi area agreement for the sub-region of urban south Hampshire. These plans enable a strong focus on regeneration sustained by improved educational attainment and skills development.
- 7 The Council supports its ambition with strong community leadership. It has been outward looking in its work in the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire to develop a 20 year vision for increasing prosperity through improving the performance of the local economy in the sub-region. When there was a risk of closure of the Naval Base in 2007, the Council worked proactively - and successfully - to present the case for retention of the base. The visible and active role of the Leader in the community and individual councillors in their wards supports leadership and enhances the economic prospects of the city.
- 8 The Council manages its priorities well. There is a broad political consensus on what needs to be delivered for the community and the Council has successfully translated shared local ambitions into a clear and challenging set of priorities for the Council. They effectively address local problems such as deprivation as well as national policy drivers. It has robust plans for delivering its priorities and resources are targeted on priorities. Priorities are communicated well and shared with partners and local people.
- 9 The Council's capacity to take forward its ambitions is adequate. It is being enhanced and developed by effective managerial leadership which is enabling stronger corporate focus and cross-departmental working. Work is in progress to improve corporate infrastructure in managing risk, projects and assets. The Council's workforce strategy meets current requirements but does not address longer term needs. The Council does not have a managed programme for modernising and improving the way it operates.

- 10** The Council frequently shows a very good focus on users, but it has been slow to manage this strategically. There are some strong examples of the Council's focus on users: for instance in the work of community improvement partnerships and in the housing service. Community engagement is good overall and the Council is proactive in seeking feedback and views of vulnerable groups. It was a government pathfinder for involving the voluntary sector in public service delivery and proactively supports volunteering. Access to services is generally good - for instance, the city help desk is Charter Mark accredited - and an accessibility framework has been developed. However, only 21 per cent of Council buildings are accessible to people with disabilities. The Council has been slow to develop a strategic approach to diversity and equalities, and though much progress has been made in the last year, it has only attained level one of the equality standard for local government. Most unitary authorities have reached level two and above. Greater impact will be achieved through stronger strategic management of these areas.
- 11** The Council's approach to managing and achieving Value for money (VFM) is adequate. The Council has successfully delivered and exceeded savings targets over the last three years. VFM is commonly discussed in both performance and resource planning and the Council is integrating the reporting of these to support decision making. There are a number of good examples of VFM being delivered through specific projects - for instance the Milton Village Scheme - and through effective procurement. A new cross departmental efficiency group is being established to achieve future savings and shows that VFM is a growing part of the Council's culture.
- 12** The quality of political leadership enables consensus in support of ambitions, although the capability and capacity of councillors is not fully used or developed. The Leader is proactive in local and sub-regional partnerships and has enabled a broad political agreement on local ambitions - particularly on regeneration. Cross party working is often good. However, the style of some debates in the council chamber inhibits participation - this attracts negative publicity and damages the reputation of the Council. Councillors have a clear strength in their focus on the needs of local people but frequently do not have a strong understanding of their strategic roles in decision making, performance management and scrutiny. Training and development is provided for councillors, but take-up is not good and some councillors take limited responsibility for their own development. There is no clear or shared plan to address this.
- 13** Performance management is adequate and improving. Changes in process in the last few years are developing a culture of performance improvement understood by most staff. There has also been some impact - the most recent unaudited data, shows that 68 per cent of performance indicators improved between 2005/06 and 2007/08. Poorer performing services such as planning and benefits have picked up following focused attention. Regular reporting supports a focus on performance but some targets are not specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART). The work of overview and scrutiny panels has been limited in impact and changes are now being implemented.

- 14** The Council actively promotes and develops the local economy and this is benefiting the local community. There have been visible achievements in regenerating the local area, most obviously in the development of Gunwharf Quays and the Spinnaker Tower - a landmark building developed by the Council, now a major visitor attraction with around 35,000 visitors each month. There are some significant achievements in deprived areas - such as in the multi-use community provision at the John Pounds Centre. The Council's action to support business and address worklessness has contributed to the reduction in unemployment in the deprived central area of Portsmouth by half between 1999 and 2006. The city was recently identified as the tenth highest in economic growth nationally; it is second out of the top 28 English urban areas in achieving annual growth in employment. There has been an improvement in the overall level of deprivation of the city and the prospects for future economic development are good.
- 15** With its partners, the Council is delivering well on shared priorities. It is beginning to address environmental issues through its sustainability strategy and is successfully minimising waste and diverting from landfill. Public space is clean and roads are improving following investment in a private finance initiative contract. Crime, the top priority for local people, is falling although there remain problems with alcohol-related and violent crime. Adult social care is focused on the most vulnerable but the Council does not have a strategic approach to managing services for people over 50. Good partnership working has resulted in increased life expectancy, particularly for women, and the Council has improved educational attainment in some key stages by investing in its schools.
- 16** The Council acts innovatively and decisively to deliver its ambitions. There are several examples of this, but two recent events stand out. The Council has introduced a city-wide 20mph limit in all residential areas. This is newly completed but has been well received and is a vigorous demonstration of commitment to tackle safety and congestion. The Council also took action to protect local jobs by purchasing a shipping company which might otherwise have ceased trading. These actions demonstrate a striking commitment to deliver on promises for local people.

Areas for improvement

- 17** The Council must prioritise and accelerate its planned improvement in the corporate management of access and the delivery of its strategy for diversity and equalities. This should build on the recent progress it has made in delivering on its planned actions to address equalities and diversity and drive forward work on the access framework. The combined effect of this work should aim to improve access to services for all local people, but to ensure that the needs of vulnerable people and minority groups at risk of exclusion are adequately considered and addressed. By sharing good practice widely in the Council, a consistent focus on users will be encouraged.
- 18** The Council should develop its strategic approach to older people - considering issues beyond those of social care and focusing on local people who are over 50. While the Council notes that this group is smaller in Portsmouth than in other areas, it should develop a greater understanding of current and future needs - and how those needs are met by all the services the Council and its partners provide. In undertaking this work, the Council needs to develop an effective approach to consulting with this age group. The Council should carry out a scrutiny review of the breadth of issues, including strategy and leadership, and having regard to the recently published national report 'Don't Stop Me Now - preparing for an ageing population'. In doing so, it may also consider the sub-regional issues in conjunction with its partners in PUSH.
- 19** The Council needs to maximise the capability and capacity of its councillors so that they are more able to support the delivery of the strategic priorities of the Council. Councillors should be clearer about their role in the improvement and development of the organisation and its services. They need to have a wider understanding of strategic issues and the importance of performance management, where the strengths of some members can be used to develop others. There is a particular need for cabinet members and scrutiny committee members to understand and exercise their respective roles in these areas. While councillors need to take responsibility for their own development, officers need to respond effectively to their individual needs identified in personal development plans. To be successful, this should be an agenda for improvement shared by Councillors and managers.
- 20** The Council should develop a managed programme of modernisation. Much work is being done to develop the capacity of the organisation and its infrastructure. The Chief Executive and the strategic directors now need to have a clear shape for this programme and, in particular, effective processes for the management and review of strategies and projects. There are some strategies, particularly concerned with the development of the organisation, which are out of date or in development. For instance, there is currently no council wide workforce strategy to address long-term needs or shared with key partners. There needs to be a clear programme for having these in place and for overseeing supporting projects. By meshing this with the improvement plan already in place, councillors and officers will have a better understanding of how and when the Council will modernise itself.

Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners trying to achieve?	Ambition	3
	Prioritisation	3
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	2
	Performance Management	2
What has been achieved?	Achievement	3
Overall Corporate Assessment Score **		3
* Key to scores		
1 – Below minimum requirements – inadequate performance.		
2 – At only minimum requirements – adequate performance.		
3 – Consistently above minimum requirements – performing well.		
4 – Well above minimum requirements – performing strongly.		

**** Rules for determining the overall Corporate Assessment score**

Scores on five themes	Overall Corporate Assessment score
Two or more themes with a score of 4 None less than a score of 3	4
Three or more with a score of 3 or more None less than a score of 2	3
Three or more themes with a score of 2 or more	2
Any other combination	1

Context

The locality

- 21** Portsmouth is a waterfront city and port on the south coast of England. It is renowned for its maritime heritage and for being the home of the Royal Navy for over 500 years. The Spinnaker Tower opened in 2005 and has since become a major visitor destination. The Gunwharf Quays retail development nearby, has also helped transform the waterfront. Further regeneration envisages redevelopment of the City Centre with Southsea as the third major retail centre in the city.
- 22** The port operates freight services and passenger ferries to France and Spain as well as local destinations including the Isle of Wight. The Council owns the commercial port and recently purchased a shipping company, MMD, in order to protect the port's income. There are good road connections to other parts of the south coast via the M27, and to London via the A3. There is a direct rail link to London.
- 23** Portsmouth's population of 196,400 resides within 15.5 square miles. It is the most densely populated area in the United Kingdom outside London with 7.8 per cent of households living in overcrowded homes. Average house prices are comparatively low. The Council retains its own stock of social housing - around 15,000 dwellings.
- 24** There is significant deprivation in the city. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007 identifies that Portsmouth is the 93rd most deprived of 354 councils in England. This has improved from 44th most deprived in 1996 - but there remain pockets of severe deprivation: five super output areas in the city are in the worst three per cent nationally. Deprivation is most concentrated in a ring of medium and high rise estates around the City Centre, plus Paulsgrove and Wymering north of the M27. These areas have the highest levels of unemployment, lower educational attainment and skills, poorer health and higher crime levels.
- 25** Indicators of health for people living in Portsmouth are generally worse than the England average. Life expectancy for men is lower than average and early death rates from cancer, heart disease and stroke are higher. More than 300 deaths a year are caused by smoking. At least 1,140 people are problem drug users. The rate of alcohol related hospital stays and violent crime rates are high. There are health inequalities within Portsmouth. For example, life expectancy is eight years lower for men from the most deprived areas and four years lower for women compared to the least deprived areas. 8,500 children live in poverty and the proportion of children who are 'not in good health' is higher than average. GCSE achievement is lower than the England average, though improving; teenage pregnancy rates are high, though reducing.
- 26** The population is mainly white British - 88 per cent estimated in 2005. This is higher than the regional and national averages. The largest minority ethnic groups are Chinese, Indian and Bangladeshi. New economic migrants, particularly Kurds and Angolans, have increased the population by an estimated 7,000 between 2002 and 2006. Over 70 languages are spoken in the city.

- 27** Portsmouth has a higher than average percentage of its population of working age. Under 16s and those of pensionable age both represent lower than average proportions of the population. The average weekly wage (£401) is notably lower than the regional average (£502). Employment levels are marginally below the south east average. The city has experienced a transition in employment over the past two decades following the scaling down of the Royal Navy and of the Dockyard - though this is still the city's largest employer. More jobs are now connected to the service sector, with a significant increase in the number supported by tourism.
- 28** Portsmouth University is popular - applications have increased by fifty per cent in the last three years. It hosts around 20,000 students, 3,000 of whom are from outside the EU. There are also two further education colleges in the city. Portsmouth Football Club is a premier league football club - and is an important part of the local culture.

The Council

- 29** The Council has 42 councillors in 14 wards. Elections take place in thirds in three out of every four years. In the elections in May 2008, there were 19 Liberal Democrats, 19 Conservative, 2 Labour and 2 Independents. A Liberal Democrat/Independent coalition is currently in control. No single party has held a majority of seats in the Council since 1999 and there have been a series of minority and coalition administrations since then. However, the Council has had the same Liberal Democrat Leader since 2004.
- 30** The Council uses the Leader and Cabinet model of decision making, with eight cabinet members leading individual portfolios. It has made recent changes to strengthen its Standards Committee and a Governance and Audit Committee was introduced in 2007. A policy and review panel oversees the scrutiny function, though the operation of scrutiny is currently being revised.
- 31** The professional management of the Council is provided by the Chief Executive who has been in post since early 2007. He is supported by five strategic directors responsible for corporate and strategic themes. Operational service delivery is managed by 24 heads of service.
- 32** The local strategic partnership (LSP) for Portsmouth developed its first community strategy for the period 2004 to 2009. This has now been updated with the Vision for Portsmouth 2008 to 2018, which is the sustainable community strategy for the area. It identifies ten priority outcomes as follows.
- Improve opportunity and achievement in education, skills and lifelong learning.
 - Make Portsmouth an accessible city, with sustainable and integrated transport.
 - Develop Portsmouth as a city of innovation and enterprise, with a strong economy and employment opportunities for all.
 - Make Portsmouth a city where everyone feels safe and is safe.
 - Make Portsmouth an attractive and sustainable city.
 - Deliver affordable, quality housing where people want to live.

- Encourage and enable healthy choices for all and provide appropriate access to health care and support.
 - Enhance Portsmouth's reputation as a city of culture, energy and passion, offering access for all to arts, sports and leisure.
 - Celebrate the many diverse and different communities within Portsmouth and work together to create an inclusive city for everyone.
 - Protect and support our more vulnerable residents by shaping public services to meet their needs.
- 33** The delivery of the outcomes will be measured by the Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets recently agreed. In addition, through its work in Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) and Transport for South Hampshire, the Council is party to a Multi Area Agreement (MAA) covering the south Hampshire area and focused on improving economic growth in the area.
- 34** The Council employs approximately 8,500 staff across all services, including those working in schools. It has a net budget for 2008/09 of £149 million. The capital programme for 2008/09 is £78 million. Major capital schemes include the redevelopment of the Mountbatten Centre - a major sports facility - and Building Schools for the Future. The average council tax per band D equivalent is £1,226, a rise of 4 per cent from the previous year. The Government considered capping but instead required the Council to deduct 45 pence from the average council tax bill in 2009/10.

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

Ambition

- 35** The Council is performing well in this area. It has developed a strong vision for the city which addresses local needs and considers the views of local people. The Council works well with partners and engages effectively with the community. Its ambitions have been communicated well and are widely shared. It champions the needs of the city and takes decisive action to protect and enhance its development for the benefit of its residents.
- 36** With its partners, the Council has agreed a strong and challenging strategic vision for Portsmouth. The sustainable community strategy has a clear overall vision - for the city to be 'the premier waterfront city, with unrivalled maritime heritage - a great place to live, work and visit'. This is supported by ten shared priority outcomes. These are challenging aspirations for change and improvement, envisaging a modernised Portsmouth in 2018. One of the shared priorities is 'to develop Portsmouth as a city of innovation and enterprise, with a strong economy and employment opportunities for all'. It is translated into a vision for 2018 where there is an emphasis on creating jobs that pay enough for young people to continue to live here' and 'there are minimal numbers of people on unemployment related benefits' where 'all organisations work together tirelessly to reduce inequality and deprivation'. The sustainable community strategy and related documents express a powerful vision for the place which is a strong basis for supporting plans.
- 37** The Council's ambitions are based on a good understanding of needs. The Story of Portsmouth is an accessible summary of key issues in Portsmouth and was a development document for the sustainable community strategy and LAA. In preparing this, the Council drew on the Portsmouth Profile, the gathering together of a good range of data sources and analyses to highlight key local issues. Data on public health highlights lower than average life expectancy, and identifies health inequalities which mean that it is lower in the most deprived wards in the city. The incidence of smoking and obesity in these areas is correspondingly high. These issues are addressed in the shared priority to 'encourage and enable healthy choices for all and provide appropriate access to health care and support', with challenging aspirations to improve health by empowerment and prevention. Specific targets for improvement in life expectancy and reducing health inequalities are included in the LAA.

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- 38** The Council has communicated its ambitions well. Partners are well informed and engaged with the vision for Portsmouth. This is particularly true of partners in the local strategic partnership (LSP) - who know their specific roles in delivery - but extends beyond that to business and the voluntary sector. With its partners, the Council held conferences on the vision and priorities in 2007/08 attended by 200 to 300 representatives of local interest groups. Staff and local people are also well informed. Fifty-four per cent of Portsmouth residents in 2007 said that the Council kept them well informed about things going on in the city. The Flagship magazine is delivered to all households and the Link magazine keeps staff well informed. The ambitions are well supported.
- 39** The Council has a good approach to community engagement, though some vulnerable groups are not always satisfied that their views are acted upon. The Council has a range of opportunities for participation including neighbourhood forums, community boards, resident participation service for tenants and local people employed as links with local public services. One example of this is in the Council's neighbourhood management work in a more deprived part of the city, responding to local people's needs by employing residents' liaison officers. In planning, the Council used a process called 'Creative Thinker' to engage people and organisations to shape the future cultural aspirations of the city and the vision for Portsmouth. It has engaged with diverse groups in the city, such as the Portsmouth Race Equality Network and the Portsmouth Disability Forum, although consultation is focused on a few well known groups and is not always followed up with feedback and action. Overall, effective engagement is heightening the Council's understanding of its community.
- 40** The Council champions the needs of its community well. This is particularly demonstrated by its work on regeneration. It has looked outside its own area and recognised the importance of a sub-regional approach to economic development. It has worked proactively with other local authorities in PUSH to develop a 20-year vision for increasing prosperity through improving the performance of the local economy. The vision is supported by clear and needs based objectives which have been developed in the MAA, now agreed with government. When there was a risk of closure of the naval base in 2007, the Council worked well with a wide range of business and statutory partners to build a clear and successful case to support its retention. It has also shown good local leadership, for instance in its support for volunteering in the city and the visible role which councillors play in their wards. This kind of leadership builds communities and enhances the economic prospects of the city.
- 41** The Council has effectively tackled difficult local issues to drive forward its ambition. For instance, in supporting local economic regeneration, the Council has purchased MMD shipping company which was due to close in order to protect the income to the port and to safeguard 200 local jobs. In addressing the safety of local roads and to improve congestion, the Council has implemented 20mph speed limits in all residential areas. These and other actions demonstrate a Council which is prepared to take innovative action in support of its aims.

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

42 The Council leads and encourages good strategic partnership working. Key statutory partners are fully engaged, while the Council nurtures effective relationships with influential stakeholders such as Portsmouth University, the Royal Navy and Portsmouth Football Club. The Council is a leading member in the LSP without dominating it. The partnership is inclusive, for instance by specifying that 6 of its 16 members are drawn from the Community Network of the voluntary and community sector. One member represents the local business community, although some business groups highlighted their desire to be more fully involved in economic and skills development locally. The LSP is strengthened by the use of a partnership agreement which highlights a shared commitment to deliver on its objectives. Thematic partnerships, such as the Safer Portsmouth Partnership, are highly regarded, and the Council's senior level commitment to this has been assessed as exceptionally good. Local partners share ambitions and this improves the prospects of delivery.

Prioritisation

43 The Council is performing well in this area. It has successfully translated shared local ambitions into a clear and challenging set of priorities for the Council. A good understanding of need has helped it ensure that its priorities address local problems such as deprivation and related issues of obesity and health inequalities - as well as national policy drivers. The Council consults thoroughly to inform and test its priorities and communicates them well. It has a sound framework for delivering its priorities and robust plans which are acted upon. It maintains a good focus and targets resources on priorities while maintaining flexibility to respond to shorter term issues.

44 Ambitions for the area have been translated into clear priorities which are consistently applied in key strategies and plans. The Council's overall aim is to:

'...make Portsmouth a premier waterfront city, so that now and in the future it is a place where people want to live, work and play, are safe and healthy, have high aspirations, and can fulfil their potential'.

It is closely aligned with the aim in the sustainable community strategy. Corporate plan priorities have a common thread with the strategy and the Council measures its performance using the shared LAA targets. It has mapped its priorities noting where they feature and how they will be developed and delivered through the implementation of specific plans. This provides a clear statement and framework for staff, stakeholders and local people.

45 The Council and its partners have agreed challenging targets which meet national priorities and address local needs. As an example, in order to support regeneration, the LSP has a priority to improve education, skills and lifelong learning, particularly focused on the attainment of younger people. Targets in this area specifically focus on skills development to support local regeneration over and above national targets for attainment:

- the LAA includes many targets to improve educational attainment and targets a reduction of children not in education, employment or training;

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- the MAA focuses on skills by targeting increases in attainment of level 2 and 3 NVQs by 2011; and
- the corporate plan has a key delivery target to increase the percentage of young people leaving school with five or more GCSEs - with specific targets for 2008 and 2009.

Complementary targeting in this case drives regeneration in ways which will benefit young people locally.

- 46** The Council has a good framework to deliver priorities now and over time. The sustainable community strategy sets a good long-term vision and long-term development issues are identified in the PUSH delivery plan and in the flagship issues in the LAA. Medium-term priorities are articulated in the LAA 2008 to 2011, the corporate plan and service business plans which cover the same timeframe. These plans are supported by a medium-term resource plan and specific development frameworks such as that for customer access. In the short-term, priorities are implemented through the LAA action plan and the key delivery targets in the corporate plan. For instance, in addressing the need for affordable, quality housing, the Council has a long-term vision in the sustainable community strategy to increase housing supply by 14,700 over 20 years. For the medium-term, the LAA targets new housing supply of 735 per year, 330 of which should be affordable, and the community housing business plan aims to balance the housing market with a target of 500 affordable rented by 2010 - a key delivery target for the administration. In the short-term, the community housing business plan has short-term targets and milestones to develop that strategy. Clarity of plans and timetables for achievement increases the potential for effective delivery.
- 47** Priorities are based on a good understanding of local needs. With its partners, the Council has identified some specific local priorities which reflect local needs and which are considered so important that they are labelled 'flagship issues'. These issues - obesity, violence, employability of young people and innovation and enterprise are presented in the LAA. Each is supported by a short but focused description of why it is a problem locally, why it needs specific action and a description of success factors. In the case of obesity, for instance, shared data highlights the problem of obesity in children (18 per cent of reception and year six children in schools) and the incidence of obesity in adults in deprived wards in the city - corresponding with lower life expectancy. The LAA emphasises that this is 'a national problem but a local disaster' and sets specific targets to reduce childhood obesity and promote healthier lifestyles.

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- 48** The Council uses consultation well to inform prioritisation. In addition to consultation events linked to the recent development of the sustainable community strategy and corporate plan, the Council routinely uses a MORI survey to understand the primary concerns of residents. In the 2008/09 budget-setting process, the Council used consultation to test priorities against views of local people. This found a good alignment of community views with the Council's proposals and identified some areas for further development. For instance, it led to the extension of the national concessionary fare scheme. In consulting in key development areas like Somerstown and Tipner, the Council has taken steps to ensure that local people, particularly those in need, will benefit from regeneration - for instance, in the use of local labour schemes.
- 49** Priorities have been communicated well. The Council has taken steps to ensure that councillors, staff and partners understand its strategic objectives. It has developed a range of communication materials to make this happen, including a video developed in partnership with Portsmouth University, the staff magazine, and Flagship - the council publication distributed to 86,000 households and 3,000 businesses in the city five times a year. As a consequence, staff, partners and local people are well informed about priorities and feel ownership of them.
- 50** Action plans to deliver priorities are robust. Priorities are cascaded from the sustainable community strategy and the corporate plan to specific strategies and service plans. Key delivery targets in the corporate plan are supported by detailed descriptions of outcomes, milestones and measurement. Key strategies, such as the Housing Strategy, the Sustainability Strategy, the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and the City Growth Strategy are clear and have targets aligned to the priorities of the Council. There is a good framework for service business plans and heads of service are using them effectively to manage their services. The CYPP is a good example of the way in which supporting strategies take forward priorities with clear allocation of resources, responsibility and identified measures of success, driving actions in area and team plans. The quality of action plans enhances the likelihood of delivery of priorities.
- 51** The Council effectively targets resources on priority areas. The medium-term resource strategy (MTRS) provides a robust framework with identified short-, medium- and long-term priorities which are risk-based and linked to the corporate plan and community strategy. The budget process uses a bidding process linked to priorities and guided by the MTRS. Over five years, this has enabled a shift of resources from lower priorities to higher ones. For instance, spending on culture and leisure and corporate services has reduced while that on social care has increased, by as much as ten per cent in some years. The Council also works well with partners to agree resource priorities. Area based grant has been allocated for 2008/09 based on the agreed priorities of the LSP. The management of budgets and spending enables delivery of priorities.

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52 The Council maintains a good focus on priorities. Heads of service monitor the delivery of outcomes and spending in relation to priorities and discuss these monthly with finance staff. This focused management of resources enables the Council to respond to issues of urgency such as the recent salary increase for social work staff. The Council also shows a good ability to manage short-term decisions while maintaining focus on its longer-term priorities. The Council has been criticised by some for its decision to close and then re-open the Pyramids leisure centre. However, the Council has a longer term strategy for leisure and has maintained its focus on this while having regard to practical issues in managing the centre. Consistent focus is enabling delivery.

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

Capacity

- 53** The Council's performance in this area is adequate. Managerial leadership is enabling a greater corporate focus and cross-departmental working. The Council is making necessary improvements in managing risk, projects and assets. Although there is no overall programme for improvement and modernisation, other areas which have previously been underdeveloped are now beginning to improve, including the management of equalities and diversity and customer access. Tackling sickness absence and the development of a council wide workforce strategy to provide for the long-term needs of the organisation remains a challenge for the Council. The management of value for money is adequate and is supported by procurement which is achieving good results. Governance and decision making have improved, although the skills and capacity of councillors are not fully utilised or developed.
- 54** Managerial leadership is effective and strategic management has been strengthened. The Chief Executive has an open style of management which is empowering managers and staff. He has re-configured the senior management structure in the organisation to encourage a greater strategic role for directors and an overview by the Strategic Directors' Board (SDB). This is enabling a stronger focus on strategic priorities and more cross-departmental working. There are good examples of this in community safety and housing, and in themed groups that encourage sharing of ideas to support corporate themes such as asset management and procurement. Managerial leadership is starting to modernise the culture of the organisation, though there is no overall work programme to achieve this.

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

- 55** Governance and decision making processes are adequate. There are constructive relationships between councillors and officers, and more clearly defined responsibilities are building trust. A Governance and Audit Committee has been established, and the constitution revised to provide clearer delegation and accountability. The Standards Committee is independently chaired and has a work programme that reviews key governance issues. The Council's scrutiny panels have achieved some positive impact from reviewing service delivery, for instance in the recent review of emergency planning, though they have not been fully effective in policy development or holding the administration to account. While there are many good examples of effective cross party working, the style of some debates, particularly in the Council chamber, inhibit participation and attract negative press coverage. This can be detrimental to the Council's reputation and to the community's perception of how the Council works.
- 56** The capability and capacity of councillors is not maximised. Councillors have a clear focus on their role in representing their communities but do not always understand or take responsibility for strategic management. This may mean, for instance, that a councillor will operate effectively in working on behalf of one constituent, but without identifying needs for wider service improvement or development. Some councillors in strategic roles, whether as cabinet members or scrutiny chairs, also fail to use their roles to challenge and develop services and policy. There are good development opportunities for councillors, and some work has been undertaken to develop individual development plans, but the take up of training by councillors is poor. At the time of the inspection, only half of new councillors had attended induction courses provided for them. Councillors are not contributing fully to the development of the organisation and its services.
- 57** The Council's workforce planning and management are adequate for current needs. Staff are enthused by the Council's ambition and are positive about benefits like flexible working arrangements. Opportunities for staff training are good and development arrangements are being shaped in a 'Developing the Learning Organisation' strategy. Recruitment processes have been revised to reflect customer requirements using systems thinking methodology. The Council has a flexible approach to filling high risk vacancies such as frontline jobs associated with care and safety of children, and has agreed market supplements where necessary. There continue to be high levels of vacancies in some key services such as the Family Intervention Project and Parenting Initiative, but this is not preventing statutory provision. In considering its future workforce needs, the Council's local pay review has been delayed and this has prevented the implementation of new pay structures aimed at providing more effectively for the future staffing needs of the organisation.
- 58** Staff sickness absence is high. In 2006/07, average staff sickness absence was 11.3 days, which placed the Council among the worst performing councils nationally. It has taken some specific action to address this including training managers in absence management and investing in a new occupational health service. It also has an action plan to improve the health and well being of its own staff and to promote this within other local organisations. It is too early to measure the full impact of these actions, though in 2007/08, the Council reports a slight improvement in average absence to 11.2 days. Absence at this level reduces capacity and places pressure on staff and services.

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

- 59** Financial capacity is stretched, though financial management shows strengths and delivers adequate value for money (VFM). The budget for 2008/09 addressed cost pressures of £19 million. In addition to increasing council tax by 4 per cent, the shortfall was met from a combination of efficiencies and service reductions and an increase in the use of general reserves. In addressing these challenges, the medium-term resource strategy is sound: it is clearly focused on the need to achieve continuing efficiencies and the VFM implications of proposed spending decisions. The Council has exceeded its efficiency targets for the last three-year period and service plans now place greater emphasis on delivering VFM. There are examples of invest to save projects, such as Milton Village, an accommodation scheme for older people, that currently or will deliver improved VFM. However, a VFM culture is not fully embedded across the organisation with a varying understanding among councillors and staff of the links between costs and outcomes. A new cross-departmental efficiency group has been established which has the potential to build increased focus and understanding of this area.
- 60** The Council has a good approach to procurement which is enhancing capacity by delivering efficiency and quality. Procurement practice has regard to national standards and local priorities, and is developing through a focus on improving procurement skills. The Council uses good practice approaches and shares learning across the organisation. There are a number of positive examples of procurement success. The private finance initiative (PFI) contract for highway maintenance is a well regarded example. Savings have been achieved through more effective procurement of recruitment advertising and clothing and uniforms. Housing repairs and maintenance has seen a reduction in contractors employed and a sharper focus on quality standards in the contract, linked to the customer orientation through systems thinking. Further development of partnerships and consortia is in progress.
- 61** The Council is improving its key management processes. It has developed its risk management so that corporate and service risk registers are linked to priorities and identify both internal and partnership risks. Business continuity plans are now in place but are new and have been subject to significant delay. The Council's approach to asset management is weak and is being fundamentally reviewed following an external audit review. It is improving project management by implementing the recommendations of consultants. These initiatives are helping to develop a more modern organisation.
- 62** The Council works well in partnership with others. For example, the Safer Portsmouth Partnership is professional in operation and has strong senior executive commitment from the key partners including the Council. Partnership governance arrangements are effective with solid frameworks in place for key partnerships. There are joint commissioning arrangements with the PCT covering a wide range of health and social care needs. These include, for example, joint posts covering learning disabilities, older people and mental health. The Council builds good partnership with the voluntary and community sector. It has been a government pathfinder in this area and produced an action plan for further improvement. It is building further capacity by promoting volunteering.

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

- 63** Access to services is adequate. The Council has an access framework in place and is developing a strategy to provide the longer-term vision for the service. The help desk, which takes most incoming calls, is Charter Mark accredited and has been highlighted as an exemplar in the Contact Councils' best practice guidance. The Council has also recently re-launched its customer charter and encouraged feedback through the high profile 'Tell Us 2 Things' campaign. Information and communications technology (ICT) is delivering a number of good services for the community. Opportunities remain to more fully realise the full benefits of e-government, for example by improving the functionality of the website. Only 21 per cent of Council buildings are accessible to people with disabilities and the main civic office has ramp access for wheel chair users that is not considered satisfactory by users with disabilities. Access is good for most people but less so for people with disabilities.
- 64** The Council was slow to develop a strategic approach to diversity and equalities but action has accelerated in the last year. The Council has only attained level one of the equality standard for local government - most unitary authorities have reached level two or above. However, it has made significant progress in the last year to deliver on its equality strategy through the implementation of an action plan and equality impact assessments. The Council offers its staff a range of good quality awareness training and 1,700 staff are reported to have attended these in the last three years. In addition, there are examples of positive operational work which has a strong focus on diverse communities. The Council has used data effectively to ensure that children and young people from black and minority ethnic and other disadvantaged groups improve their educational attainment. It has redirected resources to areas of greatest need and this has begun to have an impact, for instance on immunisation rates. A stronger strategic approach will enable impact of this kind across the Council's services.

Performance management

- 65** Performance management is adequate. A performance management culture is developing, and is understood by most managers and some councillors. Systems are in place for reporting which focuses on improvement - and this has had some impact in improving performance, including in weaker areas. The Council uses feedback from users and the findings of internal and external review are used to improve services, but not all targets are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART), and the work of overview and scrutiny panels has been limited in impact.
- 66** Performance management has resulted in improvements, including in weaker performing areas. Between 2005/06 and 2007/08, based on the most recent unaudited data, the Council improved its performance against 68 per cent of a selection of indicators used by the Audit Commission. It has recently taken action to improve some poorer performing services, including housing benefits where processing times are now faster, take-up of benefits is better and the service was rated as 3 out of 4 by the Benefits Fraud Inspectorate in 2006/07. The Council is improving its previously poor planning service performance by restructuring the service, working differently with developers and monitoring targets on a weekly basis. Data for 2007/08 indicates that national targets are now being met.

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

- 67** The Council has a developing performance management culture which is understood by most staff and some councillors. The approach to performance management is open and transparent and is set out in a strategy for the organisation. Most staff are well informed and demonstrate an understanding of how it is used to manage performance through individual targets and improve service outcomes. Senior officers use performance information well, for instance at strategic directors' board. Not all the Council's cabinet members manage performance well. Some demonstrate a clear focus on this, for instance in children and young people's services. Others show less awareness and do not adopt systematic approaches likely to deliver results.
- 68** The Council uses performance reporting adequately and focuses on relevant indicators to monitor and improve. A monthly report informs an initial review by service or directorate management teams, and most performance issues are addressed at this level. Quarterly reports go to the Strategic Directors' Board on an exceptions basis and they will review any remedial plans if monthly actions have not had a positive impact on performance. Areas of underperformance are subjected to increased reporting - sometimes weekly - with actions for improvement and a clear escalations policy. Proposed actions are agreed and reported to Cabinet for decision. A corporate scorecard uses traffic light reporting and the Council has improved the presentation of financial and performance data together in the last year. However, some reports do not focus on action. For instance, the annual report of human resources data to cabinet does not adequately draw out the issues or focus on the solutions, particularly for the problem area of sickness absence. Reporting structures generally support a focus on improvement.
- 69** The performance management of partnerships is good and ensures focus on shared priorities. The LSP and Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board in particular have robust reporting mechanisms which ensure transparent monitoring of performance. There is clear evidence of monitoring and challenge. One example is in the management of the alcohol strategy. It has clear actions and targets and identified accountability. This has enabled focused monitoring and improved performance - reducing the very high level of alcohol related crime in the city. Performance management keeps partners on track and delivers improvement.
- 70** The Council's use of targets to drive improvement is inconsistent. The corporate plan and service business plans contain targets which are challenging but not always SMART and this may inhibit delivery in some areas. The Council uses its data collection and analysis effectively to focus targets on the needs of vulnerable groups. For example, the Council has used detailed data on educational achievement broken down by sex, age, school, BME and free school meals to target interventions that have led to improvement in outcomes for young people. Knowledge regarding satisfaction levels of diverse communities is routinely captured and in some cases shared to inform improvement priorities. This means that some anticipated improvements may not be delivered.

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

- 71** The Council makes effective use of performance information in its resource planning. The scorecard aligns indicators with individual budget headings and supports joint reporting of finance and performance data to key decision makers. It enables the Council to assess potential impacts of spending decisions. In-year monitoring focuses on over and under performance and financially sensitive indicators. Although this process is centrally driven rather than service led, it allows spending decisions to be informed by performance and enhances the likelihood of achieving VFM.
- 72** Overview and scrutiny has had a limited focus on performance. Some scrutiny reviews have had a positive effect on services, for instance in the review of looked after children and the review of emergency planning. However, scrutiny committees have not been specifically focused on services and have not considered service performance in a routine way, though the Policy and Review Panel has had an overview of Council performance. Scrutiny reviews have not been driven by Council priorities or performance. Changes are now being implemented to address this and to sharpen their focus.
- 73** The Council makes adequate use of feedback from users in managing performance. Business planning guidance enables a focus on users and there is frequent evidence of user satisfaction data being used in service planning. Some services have particular regard to the needs of users. For instance, in housing, action was taken to address issues raised by service users even though indicator performance was good. The Council has improved repairs and maintenance and waiting list management by having a strong user focus; for instance, the service does not now use an application form or have fixed notice periods for tenancies in response to user needs. There are some examples of services learning from user complaints though there is no systematic process to monitor them corporately. The public response to 'Tell Us 2 Things' has been good, and there is a developing system for reporting findings and driving action.
- 74** The Council uses internal and external review well to develop and learn. It responds positively to external audit. It has initiated an improvement plan, annually reviewed and updated, to address the recommendations of audit and assessment. It has made a number of beacon applications in recent years, and these have helped to focus on improvement needs. For instance, the assessment of the beacon application for community engagement and the subsequent best value review has led to a sharper focus on customer insight which will develop work in this area. Work to develop asset management shows good examples of learning - first from external review and then from benchmarking with beacon councils. This type of open and learning culture supports future improvement.

What has been achieved?

- 75** The Council is performing well in this area. With its partners, it clearly understands local issues, many of which are significant and long-term. It has achieved impact in regenerating the city and improving quality of life - visibly in the redevelopment of the waterfront and more fundamentally in improved deprivation levels in Portsmouth. Attainment in schools is improving and there is a focus on skills for jobs in the MAA. The Council is beginning to address environmental issues - it is minimising waste and diverting from landfill, public space is clean and roads are improving with PFI investment. Crime, the top priority for local people, is falling - though specific problems with alcohol related and violent crime remain. Adult social care is well regarded, though the Council does not have strategic approach for people over 50. Good partnership working has improved the comparative life expectancy of women, although long-term challenges to improving public health remain. Overall, the Council has demonstrated a balanced approach to addressing important local issues alongside national priorities.
- 76** The Council manages the city with confidence and has taken some bold actions to address local issues. The Spinnaker Tower is a good example. In addition, the Council has taken action to preserve and improve quality of life. For instance, it worked well to secure the continued location of the naval base and the purchase of MMD has better ensured the economic viability of the port. The introduction of city-wide 20mph speed limits in residential areas is another example of a Council prepared to act and innovate to achieve for local people. This is building confidence for the future.
- 77** Measured against national performance indicators, the Council's performance is adequate and improving. In 2006/07, 22 per cent of indicators were on a par with the best performing councils nationally. This performance showed improvement on the previous year and over three years but was below average for single tier councils. According to unaudited data, the Council improved its performance in 72 per cent of national performance indicators in 2007/08, which is a good achievement. Areas of previously poor performance - for instance planning and housing benefits, have improved markedly.
- 78** The Council offers local services which encourage access and improve quality of life for residents. Neighbourhood management and other community based schemes, like the John Pounds Centre, show that the Council wants to involve local people in developments which aim to benefit them. Activities are available for all age groups and this is having good impact, for instance by reducing anti-social behaviour in the local area. A systematic focus on users is transforming housing services, improving provision and increasing user satisfaction.

Sustainable communities and transport

- 79** The Council has acted positively to promote the local economy. In addition to regenerating the waterfront area, where the Spinnaker Tower now attracts around 35,000 visitors each month, it has invested in town centre management and business support innovation centres, including in deprived areas. It has actively promoted regeneration by bringing forward plans for key sites in the city: the Northern Quarter development aims to deliver a major retail facility, 4,000 jobs during construction and 2,300 new jobs when complete; plans and developers are in place for the difficult entry site to Portsmouth at Tipner and this will link with the Mountbatten leisure centre currently being constructed. The Council sets a high standard for the quality of development and the public realm through its policies and planning briefs. It promotes the city and builds confidence through high profile events, such as being the starting point for major sea racing events. This increases the prospects of economic growth.
- 80** In its development of the local economy, the Council has improved quality of life for local people. Its regeneration work has targeted worklessness, with an emphasis on skill development and recognition. This reduced unemployment in the deprived central area of Portsmouth by half between 1999 and 2006. Economic development has supported growth: the city was recently identified as the tenth highest in economic growth nationally; it is ranked second out of the top 28 English urban areas in the country in achieving annual growth in employment. This has seen a 3 per cent growth in employment each year between 1995 and 2005 - 54,100 jobs. Action to retain the naval base and to purchase MMD shipping has saved over 6,000 local jobs and secured related employment for up to 35,000. There has been an improvement in the overall level of deprivation of the city with ranking moving from the 44th most deprived of 354 councils in England in 1996 to 93rd most deprived in 2007.
- 81** The Council's performance in addressing local housing needs is good. It has adopted a sub-regional approach to housing needs through the PUSH partnership and the MAA. The Council met its target for provision of affordable homes over the last three years - delivering 950 homes. This placed it among the best Councils nationally in 2006/07. It expects to meet the target of 2,000 affordable homes by 2011. As a result of spending £40 million in the last four years, the Council is ahead of its schedule for improving its own housing stock and meeting the decent homes standard in 2010 - by June 2008, it had reduced its non decent stock to 31 per cent. The quality of the housing service is good and service satisfaction is high. The Council makes appropriate interventions in private sector housing, particularly in bringing empty homes back in to use and in supporting improvements for vulnerable tenants.

- 82** The Council shows leadership on environmental issues and has acted to improve its own performance. It has agreed a sustainability strategy and has established a sustainability partnership with representation from local businesses, universities and colleges, and environmental groups. The Council has worked well with the PCT to communicate sustainability issues to all residents. It has taken action to improve the sustainability of its own operation: it has improved its own waste recycling, reduced water waste and reduced energy consumption. Some action has been taken on 13 local air quality hot spots. This shows a positive start to concerted activity to address environmental issues.
- 83** The Council manages waste well and public areas are clean and well maintained. It achieves a low level of waste collected per head of population - this was among the best councils nationally in 2006/07 and improved further in 2007/08, according to unaudited figures. Once collected, the Council successfully diverts 85 per cent of waste from landfill. The Council is failing to meet recycling targets at 24.5 per cent in 2007/8 though participation in recycling is high at 77 per cent of people. The city has clean and well maintained public spaces and its parks and open spaces are well used. The cleanliness of public spaces has improved in 2007/08: the level of unacceptable littering has fallen by over half to 5.1 per cent, according to unaudited data. This is half the level in 2006/07 when performance was above the national average. There is a high level of satisfaction with this.
- 84** The Council has improved roads and transport. It has put in place a PFI contract for highway maintenance. Local people and businesses comment widely upon and welcome the positive impact this has had on road condition. The Council has focused on improving congestion by introducing a 20mph zone starting in all residential areas - 1,200 streets. Work was completed in March 2008 and it is therefore too early to judge impact. The Council is planning transport strategically with its partners in South Hampshire - with a focus on economic development and socially excluded people. It offers a range of measures to encourage and support alternatives to car use: for instance, it spends over £600,000 each year to run evening and Sunday buses which are well used. This is not yet changing people's transport use, though the Council is starting to set an example with its own green travel plan which has reduced single occupancy car use for the journey to work and use of cars for business travel.

Safer and stronger communities

- 85** The Council and its partners have a good framework in place for improving community safety. In July 2008, the Safer Portsmouth Partnership (SPP) was reviewed by the Partnership Support Programme (PSP), a Home Office funded assessment which provides external review of crime and disorder reduction partnerships and makes recommendations for improvement. It assessed the partnership as good and effective with excellent commitment to crime and disorder and delivering the National Drug Strategy. There is strong evidence that the Council considers community safety across all services. As a result, crime is falling - all crime fell by 12 per cent in the year to March 2008 and there were falls in the priority area of violent crime. Fear of crime is below regional and national averages.

TTTWhat has been achieved?

- 86** The Council's approach to preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour is effective. The Council has introduced a dedicated single non-emergency reporting line for anti-social behaviour. It was awarded beacon status for its work in this area in 2007. The award recognised many strengths, for instance in support to victims, and good practice including community engagement and approaches to diversity and equality. The beacon award highlights one particular example of successful partnership working to tackle anti-social behaviour: residents of Somerstown report a dramatic improvement in the quality of their lives as a result.
- 87** The youth offending team is effective. Youth offending in Portsmouth has reduced from a total of 927 young people committing at least one offence in 2003/04 to 670 in 2006/07. The number of first-time entrants into the criminal justice system has reduced from 442 in 2003/04 to 357 in 2006/07.
- 88** The Council has delivered good outcomes around domestic violence. A specialist domestic abuse court heard its first case in April 2007 to establish multi-agency action to share information, protect victims and prevent further violence. The Council offers a service called Cookie Crew for children suffering the effects of domestic abuse. These initiatives have contributed to increased reporting of incidences of domestic violence and significantly reduced rates of repeat victimisation - the number of repeat referrals to the police for domestic violence has dropped from 85 per cent in 2005/06 to 30 per cent in 2007/08.
- 89** Action to tackle drug and alcohol misuse is effective. The City has a drugs intervention project which has increased already high numbers in treatment by 15 per cent in the year to February 2008. Partnership funding for alcohol services targets the local priority to reduce the above average levels of violent crime related to alcohol. The Trading Standards service has a comprehensive approach to deterring underage sales of alcohol, including targeted test sales and the use of fixed penalties. Media campaigns to reduce drink fuelled violence have been delivered through SPP. It is also supporting a multi-agency approach to managing the evening and night time economy to reduce alcohol related incidents including domestic violence.
- 90** The Council is effective in promoting community cohesion. It has facilitated a number of projects that have resulted in stronger communities. The neighbourhood management trial in Landport and Buckland has engaged local people in decision making and encouraged two deprived communities to work more closely. The project funds four community wardens who are part of the highly regarded and effective city wide community warden team. The development of the John Pounds Centre has led to a successful community involvement programme including the development of social enterprises. The Council works with Portsmouth Football Club to influence behaviour, particularly that of children, through its Respect campaign. These initiatives are encouraging involvement and volunteering and helping to build cohesive communities - for instance, 54 per cent of residents surveyed in 2007 felt that the local area was a place where people of different backgrounds got on well together; only 13 per cent disagreed.

- 91** Road safety is improving. The Council and its partners have had a strong focus on this theme and have implemented a number of initiatives including enforcement and education. The introduction of the 20mph speed limit in residential areas also aims to have an impact on safety. The number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents is below the national average and has fallen every year since the baseline of 1994/98. The number of children killed or seriously injured has reduced by 40 per cent. Unaudited performance information for 2007/08 shows further reduction overall.
- 92** Emergency planning arrangements are inadequate. A Council scrutiny report in May 2008 found significant weaknesses in emergency planning arrangements including failure to passport all government funding to the service. In addition, it judged that under-resourcing of the service had had a detrimental impact on the Council's ability to fulfil its related duties and in particular update and test its emergency plans. The Council is now taking action to address the weaknesses, but emergency arrangements for flooding have not been adequately considered and did not specifically form part of the scrutiny review.

Healthier communities

- 93** The Council and its partners provide good services that improve the health of local residents. The baseline for this is challenging: the health of the majority of Portsmouth residents is below the national average and early death rates for cancer, heart disease and stroke are high. Partnership working has delivered some success: overall life expectancy has improved and the gaps between best and worst wards in the city have reduced; life expectancy for women is now above the national average, though inequalities among women in the city are greater. In a complex area, partnership provision is having some impact.
- 94** Partnership working with the local health community is good. There is a jointly appointed Director of Public Health who helps ensure that there is agreement on shared priorities, maximises joint working and minimises duplication. The Council and the PCT promote alignment of budgets and services through their planning and financial cycles. With the PCT, the Council has undertaken an in depth strategic needs analysis which informs the joint commissioning strategy. There are specific targets in the LAA and some impact already achieved: 70 per cent of schools have achieved healthy schools status and offer enhanced services to tackle obesity and other issues. Teenage conceptions, though still high, have fallen by 21 per cent since 1998. There is good data sharing and these initiatives are improving the health of those most at risk of disadvantage. In addition, the Council has shown community leadership in achieving the Hallmark status that demonstrates improved health support for its own staff.

TTTWhat has been achieved?

- 95** Targeted activities promote good health and wellbeing for vulnerable groups. Using ward level data, the Council's and the PCT target resources and areas for improvement at those in greatest need or where they can have most impact. For example, a health equity audit is being used to target smoking cessation services where they are most needed. The partnership with Portsmouth Football Club aims to increase the number of teenagers giving up smoking. Young people's health needs have been assessed and training has been targeted to meet their needs. Over 1,000 young people have been surveyed about their health through a pilot initiative advertised through schools and community settings, drop-ins have been co-located with other young people's services and staff have been trained on sex and relationships, substance misuse and emotional wellbeing, as well as specialist commissioning for particular needs. Over 93 per cent of looked after children have annual health and dental checks which is above the national average. They are supported to access sport and other leisure activities. Work to reduce teenage pregnancy is also achieving success.
- 96** Services for adults are enhanced through a community development approach. Staff work to identify individuals and small groups then help support them into activities. This includes walking for fitness groups as well as meeting the needs of specific groups such as the Bangladeshi women's swimming group. Once established the staff move on to support new activities. This shows how the Council maximises impact and value for money.
- 97** The Council has improved services for people with mental health issues and learning disabilities so that these people are better served within the community rather than in care. Services have been re-configured to maximise community services wherever possible. Working with voluntary sector partners, people with mental health needs are supported to maintain their employment or are directed into other work or training. For example, Solent MIND is actively supporting over 80 people into education, training or work or helping them retain their employment following a period of mental ill health. This helps people to remain in the community rather than move into differing forms of care. Children and young people are also involved in designing and promoting services such as 'Being You' which supports positive mental health.

Older people

- 98** The Council and its partners do not have a comprehensive strategic approach that specifically promotes and supports the independence and well being of those people who are over 50 years old. The Council's priority is to offer care for vulnerable people, and provision for older people therefore focuses on health and social care. There is good needs and trend information which is used in some service areas, for example to aid planning for the future. There is an older people's champion on the cabinet although this role has had limited impact to ensure that older people's needs are addressed across all services.

- 99** The Council and its partners provide an adequate range of services which support independent living. Action is undertaken to support independence of older people although this is service led rather than a corporate response - the range of services across departments has only recently been mapped. The focus is on needs rather than age. The Council and its partners do not have a formalised response to the seven dimensions of maximising independence for older people although there is an agreed joint commissioning strategy for the over 65 years and some services, such as the health improvement development service does have a range of provision used by older people such as walking for fitness.
- 100** The Council provides good adult social care services and has increased the take up of welfare benefits by older people. The Council's adult social care service was assessed by the Commission for Social Care Inspection through its star ratings assessment as two stars (good) with promising capacity to improve in 2007. It has taken action to update its accommodation provision to meet current and future needs: it has closed some care homes while enhancing services in the community and increasing extra care beds. Working with the Department of Work and Pensions older people who receive adult social care have obtained increased pension credit or benefit allowances. This totalled an additional £44,474 per week in benefit payments to over 60s in 2007/08.
- 101** The Council does not have a consistent approach to engaging with older people. There is no agreed approach to consulting with older people. There is some consultation targeted at older people - for example through the Pompey Pensioners - though consultation often takes place around specific services or neighbourhoods rather than overall needs. There are some positive examples of this: the community engagement with the planning, design and service delivery of the John Pounds Centre involved the whole community and led to some specific activities aimed at the over 50s. The lack of formal engagement means the Council and its partners cannot be confident that the needs and aspirations of older people are being met.

Children and young people

- 102** Outcomes for children and young people in Portsmouth are generally adequate and good improvements have been made in a number of key areas. There are though some areas where outcomes remain challenging to improve. The 2007 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) states 'the Council provides a service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users. Its overall effectiveness continues to be good. This is the case for most areas of the Council's work.' The joint area review generally endorses these findings.

TTTWhat has been achieved?

- 103** Service management is good. Ambitions for children and young people in Portsmouth are good. The Council and its partners have high aspirations and children and young people and are a key Council priority. The priorities for children and young people are clearly specified and reflect well both local needs and the national agenda. The current capacity of the local partnership is adequate. Vacancy rates for front line social care teams have increased and are now above the national average. Long-term workforce plans within the Council and joint workforce planning with partners, are in place. Performance management is good. There are good systems in place at all levels in Children and Families services for the regular reporting and management of performance.
- 104** The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. The rates of immunisation at both second and fifth birthdays are both above national averages. All schools participate in the Healthy Schools scheme and 70 per cent have achieved the Healthy Schools status. There has been a 21 per cent decrease in teenage conception rates since 1998. This compares well with statistical neighbours with only two out of 11 achieving a better rate. Since 2004, there is a clear downward trend and recent local data confirms this decline. The percentage of children in reception classified as obese is high. Whilst oral health is poor across the City health provision for looked after children is good with a high proportion receiving regular health and dental checks. They receive fast-track access to specialist mental health services and to other specialist provision. The provision of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.
- 105** Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are adequate. Agencies work well together to provide early intervention aimed at reducing family crisis. There is a good range of early support services for children and families. The Council recently achieved beacon status for its work in relation to anti-social behaviour. Good action is taken to enable parents to keep their children safe in the home and the community. Responses to domestic violence are generally good. The percentage of initial case conferences held within 15 days of an investigation starting is 36.2 per cent. This is an improvement from 12.5 per cent last year when it was identified as an area for improvement in the APA. Current performance is slightly above last year's national average. The quality of work with children who are subject to child protection plans or who have high levels of need is hampered by the current capacity of the social care teams to undertake that work.

- 106** The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is good. Many of the strengths identified in the 2007 APA remain. Although attainment is often below national averages the rate of improvement is normally greater than that found nationally and amongst statistical neighbours. Attendance at school continues to improve and fixed-term exclusions, though higher than those found nationally continues to reduce. The achievement of children and young people who are looked after is variable but there is a generally improving picture. Fisher Family Trust data identifies that looked after children are reaching their expected attainment levels at Key Stage 4. A good proportion achieve five A*-G grades at GCSE. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in primary schools and in the secondary sector they make satisfactory progress. Special schools are of high quality and in these settings children and young people make good and sometimes excellent progress.
- 107** The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. There is a strong commitment to involving children and young people in issues that affect them and in service development. Consultation with children and young people is good and the City-wide Council of Pupils is representative of the local population. They have influenced the development of the CYPP and an additional priority 'things to do and places to go' has been included as a result of their views. Looked after children feel confident that their views and feelings are accounted for. A high proportion participate in their reviews. The level of offences that occur in children's homes has reduced. However, the offending rate of looked after children remains significantly higher than that in similar authorities. Trained advocates are provided to support young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities through transition and ensure that their views, wishes and aspiration are fully represented and are central to the planning process.
- 108** The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. The proportion of 19 year olds achieving a Level 2 qualification by age 19 continues to improve and though below the national average is higher than statistical neighbours. Achievement at Level 3 remained the same between 2005/06 and 2006/07 and is above statistical neighbours but is below the national average. All care leavers have an allocated worker and Pathway Plans, which are regularly reviewed. Strong links exist with housing providers and a range of supported accommodation is on offer to meet the different needs of young people. For young people with learning disabilities and/or difficulties success rates are good and post-16 providers are collaborating effectively. The proportion of those who are not in education, employment or training is good and below both statistical neighbours and national averages. Transition to adult services is good and parent's report that they feel very well supported throughout this process.
- 109** The capacity of the Council to improve further is good. There is a good track record of improvement in areas where there are long standing difficult issues, for example reductions in teenage pregnancy and improvements in educational attainment. Partnership working across Council services, with the PCT and the voluntary sector is underpinned by a clear, shared strategic vision for the future and is supported by good strategic leadership.

Appendix 1 – Framework for Corporate Assessment

- 1 This corporate assessment was carried out under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, under which the Audit Commission has power to inspect local authorities' arrangements for securing continuous improvement. The results of the corporate assessment contribute to the determination of the overall CPA category for an authority, which the Audit Commission is required to assess and report on under Section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2 The Council's self-assessment provided a key resource in focusing the assessment activity which included consideration of:
 - key documentation, including the Council's improvement plan;
 - updated performance indicators and performance data; and
 - interviews and meetings attended.
- 3 The assessment for Portsmouth City Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 30 June to 11 July 2008.
- 4 This report has been discussed with the Council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission's assessment. This report will be used as the basis for improvement planning by the Council.

The Audit Commission

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

Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, covering the £180 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

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