

**Legal and Democratic
Services Directorate**

To all Members of the Cabinet and Councillors Benefield,
Duggins, Mutton and Nellist

Chris Hinde, Solicitor
Director of Legal and
Democratic Services
Council House
Earl Street
Coventry CV1 5RR

For information, to Members of the Council
who are not Members of the Cabinet but
wish to continue to receive Cabinet papers

Telephone 024 7683 3333
DX 18868 COVENTRY 2
Minicom 024 7683 3029

FIRST CLASS POST

16th January, 2006
Our ref: C/LMK

**Please contact Lara Knight
Direct line 024 7683 3237
Fax 024 7683 3024
Lara.Knight@coventry.gov.uk**

Dear Councillor,

Meeting of the Cabinet tomorrow (17th January, 2005)

As you will be aware, a report on "Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Self-Assessment" is included at item 3 on the agenda for the meeting of the Cabinet tomorrow (17th January) at 2.00 p.m.

The same report is due to be considered by full Council that evening.

The report gives information about the forthcoming Corporate Assessment of the City Council, which will be conducted by the Audit Commission in March 2006, and includes an early draft of the Self-Assessment which the Council has to prepare beforehand.

The report indicated that a final draft of the self-assessment report would be sent to you on the 16th January and I am enclosing a copy with this letter.

You are asked, please, to bring this with you to the meeting.

Any inconvenience caused is regretted.

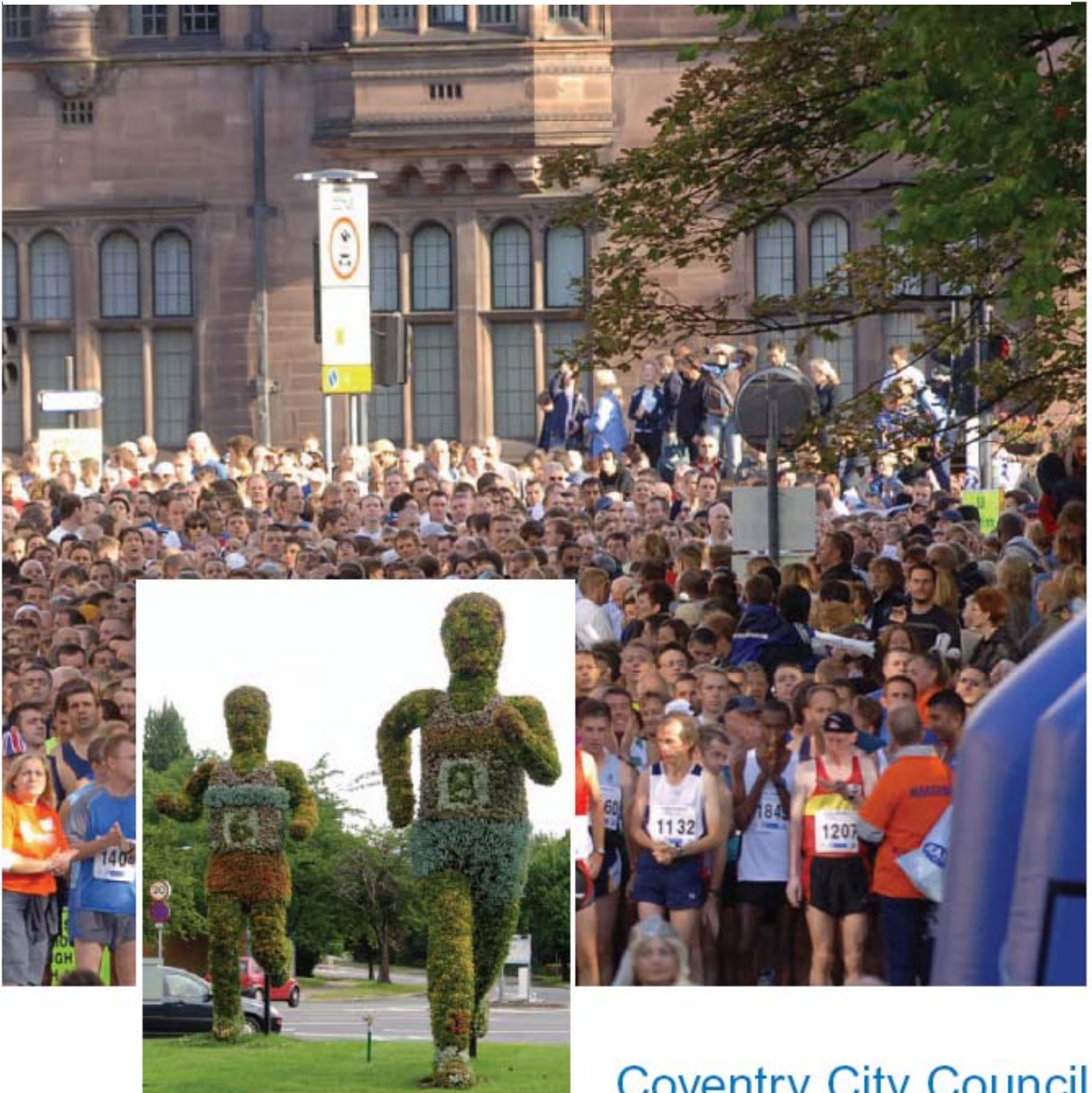
Yours sincerely,

Lara Knight,

Senior Committee Officer



Draft 16 January 2006



Coventry City Council
**Corporate Assessment
Self Assessment**

January 2006



Cover illustration: It's on your marks, get set and go for the Lady Godiva half marathon in September 2005, organised by the Council's Sports Development Team. More than 2,400 runners took part, bringing people of all ages and abilities together to get fit and have fun.

Inset: Council gardeners created these athletes to celebrate the International Children's Games held in Coventry in July 2005, the first time the games had been held in the UK. 1400 young athletes from around the world took part in the event which was organised by the Council in partnership with major organisations in the city.

1 - Context

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

- 1 This self assessment provides contextual and background information for the Corporate Assessment of Coventry City Council in March 2006. It was considered at a seminar for all elected Members on 16 January 2006 and approved by full Council on 17 January 2006. The reference numbers shown in square brackets e.g.[1] refer to supporting documents which can be found on the accompanying CD-ROM .
- 2 In the two years since our last Corporate Assessment the council has significantly improved its services and the way it works. We were one of the first authorities to become a Local Area Agreement pilot in 2004/05 and gained our second Beacon Council award in 2005. Our Social Care services, once our weak point, were awarded two stars in December 2004 and the Council was recognised as "Improving Well" in our recent Direction of Travel Statement.
- 3 We have a strong track record of improvement, a clear and ambitious vision for the future and a good understanding of the context in which we work. Our plans for the future are soundly based on the needs of the city. Clear leadership, strong partnerships and a sound performance management framework will ensure that we deliver them. Our strengths have been recognised in the 2006 LGC National Awards for Local Government where we are finalists for the Most Improved Council of the Year, the Human Resources Award and the Finance Award and our Social Services and Housing Directorate is a finalist for the Management Team Award [101].
- 4 We are not complacent and we know where we still need to improve. But we are convinced that the inspection team will find that we are performing well. Our self assessed scores are:

Ambition - 3	Capacity - 2	Achievement - 3
Prioritisation - 3	Performance management - 3	Overall score - 3

COVENTRY'S PEOPLE

- 5 Coventry is the centre of a sub region serving 550,000 people. Our population is growing and, with about 305,000 residents at present, we are the second largest city in the West Midlands. Population density averages 3,089 people per square kilometre.
- 6 Coventry's population is younger than average, with 24% of people under 18 years of age and 35% under 24. The high proportion of 18 to 24 year olds reflects the fact that two successful universities – Coventry University and the University of Warwick - are located in the city. 16% of our residents are over 65, which is a little below the national average. Our over 85 population, currently numbering about 5,200 people, is expected to grow by 17% by 2010.
- 7 We are proud of our international reputation for peace and reconciliation and have a strong sense of community cohesion. 21.7% of our population comes from minority ethnic communities, as compared to 13% for England as a whole. About a quarter of the pupils in our schools are from minority backgrounds and together they speak over 80 languages.
- 8 The city is home to an estimated 6,500 refugees and 1500 asylum seekers. With the accession of new EU member states, we have welcomed economic migrants from Poland, the Baltic States and Malta. 1319 people from 73 countries have been granted British citizenship in our Citizenship Ceremonies since April 2004.

THE LOCAL ECONOMY

- 9 For over two decades, the Council has led a successful programme of work with private and public sector partners to regenerate the city and restructure the local economy. We have attracted significant inward investment and external funding, using our land and capital assets to facilitate growth and development. Once known largely for manufacturing, the city has successfully diversified and 75% of the workforce is now employed in the service sectors.

1 - Context

- 10 Coventry's skills and excellent communications make it an ideal centre for business relocation and we are successfully attracting organisations from London and South East. The Lyons report on public sector relocation named Coventry as a prime location for government science and policy functions. "Growing Business" magazine has rated Coventry the third best city in England to do business and a report commissioned by Cable and Wireless identified Coventry as the city best placed to grow business over the next decade [102].
- 11 The city is currently undergoing a £6.5bn investment programme, 90% of which is private sector funded. This includes developments in private and social housing, business, distribution and science parks, shopping, sports and leisure, environmental enhancements and transport. With the support of £57m New Deal for Communities funding, we are working with partners to implement a £300m programme of social and economic investment in the north east of the city.
- 12 The 2001 Census showed that 32,000 Coventrians work outside Coventry, and 48,000 people commute into the city to work. The number of Coventry residents in work rose from 132,000 in February 2004 to 137,000 in May 2005. The number of people of working age (16 to 65) claiming benefits in Coventry fell from 29,700 in August 2004 to 28,800 in May 2005.
- 13 Average household income in Coventry has increased over the last year from 86.4% of the national figure to 89.3%. There is a significant contrast in the distribution of incomes across the city with the poorest 10% of households receiving under £7,121 p.a. compared to the richest 10% earning over £52,808.
- 14 We have improved our position on the Index of Deprivation from the fiftieth most deprived in 2000 to the sixty-fourth, using the new methodology introduced in 2004. However, we remain concerned about absolute deprivation levels and the differences between the more affluent and less well off neighbourhoods in the city. 33% of the population in Coventry reside in areas that are currently designated as being in the 20% most deprived areas in England.

HOUSING, HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- 15 There are about 128,000 dwellings in the city, of which approximately 19% are rented through Registered Social Landlords (RSL). The council transferred its own housing stock to an RSL in a large scale voluntary transfer in 2000. Although the demand for social rented housing currently exceeds the supply, our homelessness strategy has significantly reduced the number of homeless people in the city [103]. We usually have only 2 or 3 homeless families in emergency accommodation with an average length of stay of 2 weeks. There is a shortage of some specialist accommodation, such as for people with learning difficulties, physical disabilities or older people needing care and support, but we have clear plans to address this. For example we are about to conclude a major PFI scheme with a Registered Social Landlord to provide both housing with care and specialist dementia care for older people.
- 16 Housing development is taking place on an almost unprecedented scale and we anticipate that some 20,000 new homes will be built by housing developers in the city over the next ten years. Recent research shows that average house prices in Coventry are now about five times the average household income. Our Housing Strategy aims to meet the demand for affordable housing (either for rent or part ownership), which will encourage more young professionals to settle in the City [104].
- 17 Coventry is one of the 70 local authorities in the Spearhead Group tackling health inequalities. Life expectancy is 75.6 years for men (against a national average of 76.8) and 80.1 years for women, one year less than the national average. Over the last five years, Coventry has achieved a greater increase in male life expectancy than the other West Midlands metropolitan districts and is the only one of these to be closing the gap on the England average for both male and female life expectancy [105]. The latest published data shows that life expectancy has increased by approximately 3 years in all areas of the city but the difference in average age of death between electoral wards has remained at approximately 10 years. Smoking is the biggest single contributor to the differences in life expectancy between various parts of the city.[106]

1 - Context

18 As in other compact urban areas, there are pressures on the environment and the growing number of households has increased the city's use of natural resources. The Coventry Development Plan [107] and the developing Local Development Framework will guide work to enhance the physical environment and reduce the environmental impact of transport. Potential hotspots of poor air quality and contaminated land are being identified through strategies developed in line with national and European frameworks.

COUNCILLORS AND EMPLOYEES

19 Our 2005 Direction of Travel statement recognised that *"the council provides strong community leadership and contributes significantly to partnership working"* [108]. The Labour party was in power for many years until 2003, since when the Council has been under no overall control. The Conservative party has formed the administration since June 2004.

20 There are 54 elected Members, 69% of whom are male and 31% female. Five elected members including both the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor, come from visible minority communities. The current political composition is: Conservative - 27 seats; Labour - 20 seats; Liberal Democrat - 3 seats; Socialist - 2 seats; and Independent - 2 seats

21 The Council operates on the Leader and Cabinet model. There are nine Cabinet members, with specific portfolio responsibilities as follows:

- Policy, Leadership & Governance (held by the Leader)
- Finance & Equalities (held by the Deputy Leader)
- Adult Education, Libraries, Sport & Leisure
- Children's Services
- City Services
- Community Services
- Corporate & Customer Services
- Health & Housing
- Urban Regeneration & Regional Planning.

22 The Council is the largest employer in the City, with about 16000 employees, half of whom are part time. Women constitute about 78% of the total workforce and half of the top 5% of earners. Black and minority ethnic communities make up about 10% of the workforce and 5% of the top earners. Disabled people account for about 5% of the workforce and 6% of the top earners.[107]

23 The Chief Executive leads a Management Board made up of six Directors, three heads of service and the Communication and Media Relations Manager. The Board is supported by the Corporate Management Team of the council's 70 most senior managers. This meets quarterly to discuss and agree managerial priorities and to ensure coherent and consistent leadership across the council. We have built on our track record of area co-ordination and regeneration and adopted a new Neighbourhood Management structure to improve local public services and community involvement and to address issues of particular importance to residents, such as community safety and liveability [108].

FINANCE

24 The council's financial framework is set out in our Medium Term Financial Strategy. The net revenue budget for 2005/06 is £382m and we have a £124m capital programme. The Band D Council Tax for 2005/06 is £1,258. We have achieved our Gershon efficiencies for 2005/06 [109], but the need to reduce costs and make significant new efficiency savings in 2006/07 and 2007/08 is a major challenge.

25 Council tax increases have been consistently below average in recent years despite significant investment in priority services. This has been achieved through clear prioritisation, the identification of on-going efficiency savings, significant external income and successful lobbying for a fairer RSG allocation. Our 2004/05 Audit and Inspection Letter notes that *"the Council recognises the need to respond to predicted financial shortfalls proactively by managing and controlling future expenditure and ensuring that its balances are used effectively."* [110]

2 - Ambition

A COUNCIL WITH A VISION

- 1 We recognise that the Council has a key role to play in helping Coventry grow and develop in prosperity and to play its full part in regional and national affairs. At local level, we are determined to be a high performing Council that serves residents, businesses and visitors consistently well.
- 2 In March and April 2005, members of the Council's controlling group worked with the Improvement & Development Agency to develop a new statement of our Vision, Values and Corporate Objectives. These reflect the election pledges made by the group in 2004; the social, economic and environmental issues facing the city; the priorities expressed by local people; and the levels of satisfaction expressed on council services in the 2003 Best Value national survey.
- 3 The Council's vision is *"to make Coventry a growing accessible city where people choose to live, work and be educated and where businesses choose to invest."* We have adopted the following corporate objectives to ensure that we work towards this vision in a planned, prioritised and sustainable way:
 - to improve the quality and efficiency of services and make it easier to access them
 - to ensure the best quality education for all and that children and young people can achieve their maximum potential
 - to regenerate the city and ensure people have a good choice of jobs and housing
 - to promote health, independence and choice for all citizens
 - to create a city where people feel safe and confident and no-one is disadvantaged by the neighbourhood in which they live
 - to make the city clean and green
 - to actively promote equality so that people from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities.
- 4 These objectives closely reflect the central/local government shared priorities and complement the overarching aim of the current Coventry Community Plan to *"bring together resources, energy and creativity of key organisations, groups, communities and people to work to meet the economic, social and environmental needs of the City of Coventry and the health and well-being of its people."* [201] The council's determination to achieve these aims was rewarded by our successful application for Local Area Agreement pilot status in February 2005 [202] Work is currently underway to bring the Community Plan and the LAA into one revised document which will also incorporate our second Local Public Service Agreement [203].

A KEY REGIONAL PLAYER

- 5 We are working actively with our partners to develop the city and are taking a key role in regional affairs. The successful restructuring of the city's economy and our growing population is recognised in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy which notes that *"Coventry will continue to build upon its reputation as a forward looking city which, along with Solihull and Warwickshire, can help create an important growth engine for the Region with links to the growing part of the South-East and the East Midlands"* [204].
- 6 We believe that our location and developing applied knowledge economy provides scope for economic and population growth above that already planned in the Regional Spatial Strategy. We are working closely with the other West Midlands Metropolitan Districts and the ODPM to develop a central city region as a new national growth point.
- 7 We were founder members of the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Partnerships (CSWP), which brings together private, public, education and voluntary agencies to support economic development and promote the prosperity of the sub region. CSWP is managing the Coventry

2 - Ambition

and Nuneaton Regeneration Zone on behalf of Advantage West Midlands. It distributed £13m funding, assisting 187 businesses and creating or safeguarding 600 jobs, in 2004/05.

GETTING OUR MESSAGE ACROSS

- 8 Our communications strategy [205] recognises the importance of ensuring that Members and employees have a good understanding of the council's aims and objectives and the progress being made towards them. A monthly magazine "Insight" provides regular news and information and this is supplemented by weekly round-ups and one-off bulletins on key issues [206]. Our Intranet was relaunched in 2005 to provide a better source of information, data and news to all employees. A new communication strategy is in preparation which will introduce a formal and unified team briefing system across the council during 2006 [207]. Feedback from our employees, and focus groups held as part of our Use of Resources assessment and our last Corporate Assessment, [208] indicate a high degree of understanding of the council's objectives and those of its key partners.
- 9 Our quarterly residents' magazine - "Citivision" [209] - provides information about the council's priorities in an informative and entertaining way. An annual A to Z of Council Services is delivered to all homes in the city with their Council Tax bills. More detailed information about services, policies and performance is available on the Council's website, use of which has increased by over 400% in the last year with a total of 3.4m web pages viewed during 2005.
- 10 High profile campaigns, run jointly with the local newspaper, have shown that Coventry people clearly want their say on issues of key importance. For example, in March 2004, 6,000 people voted in a survey about smoking in public places, whilst 8,000 people took part in a consultation on priorities for a city wide clean up campaign in 2005.

MAKING GOOD USE OF INFORMATION

- 11 The Council and its partners recognise that accurate data and information is essential if we are to plan services appropriately, evaluate the effectiveness of actions and ensure good value for money. Information is shared across the Council and with key partners through the Coventry Partnership data sharing group. Our Coventry Statistics website will be relaunched in January 2006 to enable greater access to socio-economic and environmental information and to the latest progress on the targets in the Coventry Community Plan [211]. Cabinet has recognised the need for further co-ordination and a central research, data and consultation unit will be established in the Chief Executive's Directorate in 2006 [212].
- 12 An annual household survey conducted by the Coventry Partnership [213] identifies residents' views, needs and aspirations for their neighbourhood and helps to measure progress against targets in the Community Plan and Corporate Plan. This is currently supplemented by community profiles of seven of the city's priority areas [214] with a further study under way.
- 13 Our 2005 Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services notes that *"the authority is making good use of data to target the performance of underachieving groups and to improve attendance"*. It also highlights the *"good partnership working to prevent crime, including the introduction of an information sharing management system. As a result of one initiative, youth crime in school holidays was reduced substantially"* [215].

CONSULTING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

- 14 Extensive consultation ensures that our priorities match those of our customers [216]. Local views about the Wood End and Henley Green New Deal for Communities area have led to a major demolition and rebuilding programme aimed at improving housing, the environment and job prospects while keeping the community intact. An Environmental Health Business Forum provides commercial users with the chance to comment on our services and how they can be improved.
- 15 Our 2005 Performance Review Report for Adult Social Care notes that *"The council has continued its investment in and expansion of initiatives to consult and involve customers and*

2 - Ambition

carers in both service developments and the planning and delivery of their own care and support” [217]. Our Delivery and Improvement Statement demonstrates clear outcomes from this process [218]. Our Early Years Access and Inclusion officer acts as an advocate on behalf of hard to reach families. The Adult Education service holds an annual conference with adults with learning difficulties where learners put forward suggestions for new programmes. The Cabinet Member (Finance & Equalities) holds regular meetings with the Older People’s Advisory Panel and Disabled People’s Advisory Panel. A Black and Minority Ethnic Elders Forum and a Black and Minority Ethnic Carers Forum were both launched in October 2005. Our 2005 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) report says that “The council makes good arrangements to gather the views of children and young people and uses them to make improvements” [219].

LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- 16 External inspectorates have consistently praised the Council’s leadership and partnership working. Our last Corporate Assessment report noted that “Clear and consistent leadership is provided by senior councillors and managers”... “the council provides effective community leadership for the city” [220] Our 2003/04 Audit and Inspection Letter acknowledged that “The Council benefits from strong leadership and good partnership working arrangements and has articulated clear improvement priorities.”[221] The 2005 CSCI Performance Review Letter notes that “The council has good partnership arrangements to deliver services and to respond to government and local priorities”.. (There is) evidence that these have been and are being translated into action and outcomes for service users and carers on the ground.” [222].
- 17 The 2005 APA report notes that outcomes for “Enjoying and achieving” “are good with partnership working having a strong impact on improving them” [223] . “The 14-19 strategy is developing well and strong partnerships and federations are in place. The council is carrying out further partnership work with the Learning Skills Council to address the needs of those with learning difficulties and disabilities.” [224]
- 18 The Council is secretary to, and a very active partner in, the Coventry Partnership (the local strategic partnership). This is made up of 35 members from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. The Audit Commission Validation Review found that the Partnership’s performance management framework met the ODPM/NRU core requirements in all respects and that key players in the LSP are aware of and understand how it is used to drive improved delivery.[225] The Partnership was awarded a Green light by GOWM in 2003/04 and 2004/05 and the latest GOWM annual review noted that the Partnership’s plans are clear and focused and that good progress is being made.[226] Our Community Safety Partnership was rated Green in the Crime and Disorder Partnership Leadership Audit in August 2005 [227] and is currently the subject of research by Harvard University having been recommended as an example of national good practice by the Home Office.
- 19 Members of all parties have consistently supported the Council’s improvement agenda and the current administration has continued to pursue longstanding key priorities such as education, economic regeneration, health and social care and community safety.
- 20 The Council has also continued to demonstrate a willingness to take and defend difficult decisions to achieve its stated objectives for the city as a whole and achieve good value for money. Examples include action to: implement Single Status [228]; revise the threshold for eligibility for community care services to ensure that costs stay within control and we can meet the needs of those who need our services most [229]; press ahead with upgrading key bus routes in the city as part of a £42m development scheme [230]; pursue strategies to support asylum seekers and refugees and challenge popular misconceptions about them [231]; make changes to long standing day services for people with learning difficulties [232]; modernise special educational needs provision [233]; Our plans to close five residential care units and open three new extra care housing schemes initially resulted in some understandable concerns and opposition but older people and their relatives have now welcomed the changes which have been made. [232].

Section 3 – Prioritisation

IMPROVING WELL

- 1 We fully recognise the importance of effectively prioritising the use of our human, financial and other resources. Service and community priorities are therefore clearly set out in the Community Plan, Corporate Plan and Cabinet Member Strategic Plans [301].
- 2 The Community Plan has eight themes (currently being updated) which were developed as a result of extensive consultation:
 - Jobs & Our Local Economy
 - Health & Well being
 - Environment
 - Community Safety
 - Equalities & Communities
 - Learning & Training
 - Housing
 - Transport

The Council's Corporate Objectives closely reflect these themes, with a clear, shared emphasis on regeneration, education, training, community safety, the environment, health and housing underpinned by a commitment to equality. As such the Coventry Community Plan both influences – and is influenced by – the Council's Corporate Plan.

- 3 The Council also has clear priorities for improving the way we work. These management objectives are grouped under three headings – “Money”, “Improving the way we work” and “People” – as shown below :
 - *Money* - ensure sound management of the Council's resources; deliver value for money to meet the Council's priorities; maximise resources
 - *Improving the way we work* - improve the quality of our service delivery; improve access to the services we provide; improve the efficiency of the services we provide
 - *People* - ensure that Councillors are well trained and well supported; develop the skills, competencies and motivation of our workforce; build a representative workforce, fairly treated; maintain the health, safety and welfare of our workforce.

These management objectives combine with our corporate objectives to form a balanced scorecard which measures our overall progress [302].

- 4 The development of three year Strategic Plans for each Cabinet Portfolio - setting out how individual Cabinet Members plan to implement the Council's Corporate Objectives - has improved our ability to prioritise the use of available resources and identify areas of lower priority where savings can be made. Accordingly the 2005/06 budget provided for new investment of:
 - £7m to improve front line customer services
 - £3m to meet increasing demand in Social Services
 - £10m to improve highways, street lighting and the street scene
 - an additional £10m to improve standards of education
 - £1.4m to fund neighbourhood wardens and Police Community Support Officers
 - a £12m programme to increase the volume and choice of affordable housing across the city.
- 5 By 2008 the city will have benefited from £33m NRF funding. The use of this funding is agreed by a sub-group of the Coventry Partnership, with the Council undertaking performance management as the accountable body. The allocation of funds for 2006 onwards is being based on a review of progress on the Community Plan to identify areas of greatest need. [303]

SOME RECENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- 6 Our 2005 Direction of Travel statement recognised that “*Performance has continued to improve well in priority areas.*” For example, we are continuing to perform at the level of the best nationally on supporting people at home and delivering equipment quickly. The number of older people receiving Direct Payments more than doubled between April and October 2005.

Section 3 – Prioritisation

- 7 We were awarded Beacon Status for Effective Environmental Health in March 2005 – one of only two councils to do so. The award recognises that the Council can “*clearly demonstrate the positive impact of its environmental health activities on local citizens*”. [304] The recommendations to Ministers noted that “*there has been particularly good work in promoting health amongst minority groups and in working with the automobile industry on a long term basis to implement environmental management systems, thereby reducing pollution*” [305].
- 8 The Council appointed a Cabinet Member (Children’s Services) in 2004 and we have made it a priority to develop a new Children’s Directorate whilst maintaining and improving our existing service standards. Our Annual Performance Assessment (APA) letter notes that “*Plans for an integrated Children’s Service are well in hand and reflect the views of children and parents/carers*” [306]. School exclusions have reduced dramatically, taking us from bottom to top quartile and leading to the award of Pathfinder status by the DfES. Alternative tuition of 21 hours or more for excluded pupils has risen from 49% in 2003-04 to 100% in the first half of 2005/06. Our APA Letter acknowledges that “*the council’s performance on reviews and re-registrations of children on the child protection register is respectively good and very good*” [307].
- 9 Concerted efforts have led to greatly improved Council Tax collection levels. In year collection has risen from 91.7% in 2002/03 to 95.1% in 2004/05 and we are on target to achieve 96.5% for 2005/06. Whilst this is not yet where we want to be, the success of our strategy to date encourages us in our aim to achieve top quartile performance by 2007/08. Council Tax arrears reduced from £17.5m in 2002/03 to £11.2m at 31 March 2005, its lowest level for 6 years.
- 10 In the current year over 300,000m² of highway will be improved and about 1000 replacement lamp posts will be installed. Our library service, which had been condemned as Poor with uncertain prospects for improvement in 2001, now exceeds all the government’s Public Library Standards. We have opened or refurbished seven libraries since then, with 35% of library opening hours being in the evenings, Saturday and Sunday. Further examples of our recent achievements are shown in our 2005 Direction of Travel Self Assessment [308].

SERVING ALL OUR COMMUNITIES

- 11 The Council achieved Equality Standard Level 3 in March 2005. A new sexual orientation equality policy [309] and action plan was approved in 2005 and a Community Cohesion Strategy and Hate Crime Reduction Strategy are in preparation.
- 12 We have introduced a new service - “Healthy Horizons” - to help people with predominantly mental health problems to return to work. Launched in April 2005 and funded by the ESF and Jobcentre Plus it aims to place 480 people into secure employment over its 27 month cycle to 2007. Our Client Support Unit beat over 230 organisations across the country to win the “Positive Practice Award for Diversity” from the National Institute for Mental Health in England in November 2005.
- 13 We continue to co-ordinate work with refugees and asylum seekers in the city and to promote good relations in areas of the city where they live. We successfully rehoused 130 asylum seekers in late 2004, after the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) terminated the contracts of two large private sector accommodation providers. Integration of the new communities into the life of the city continues to be a key theme of our strategy and NASS has commented very positively on this aspect of our work. Our “Friends’ project, which combats isolation among refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants won the “Equality and Inclusion” category in the national Sure Start Partners in Excellence Awards in December 2005.
- 14 Our library service continues to place a high priority on meeting the needs of all the communities in the city. Our most recent inspection report highlighted good work to assist visually impaired users, minority ethnic communities” [310]. The 2004 Ofsted Inspection of the LEA rated support for raising achievement of minority ethnic pupils including gypsy and traveller children, strategy for social inclusion, services for pupils educated other than at school, support for behaviour and support for looked after children, as “highly satisfactory”[311]. Working with the Coroner we have

Section 3 – Prioritisation

launched an Out of Hours Bereavement Service, catering for faiths that require speedy burial and/or transportation of bodies abroad. [312]

- 15 Our 2004 report from the Adult Learning Inspectorate recognised that our adult education service was “one of the best in the country” and praised its “effective strategies to widen participation and tackle social inclusion”, “clear focus on recruiting learners who are usually hard to reach” and “learning programmes .. specifically designed to meet the needs of different groups such as those with mental health problems and asylum seekers” [313].
- 16 Our 2005 Performance Review Report for Adult Social Care notes that *“The council has clear fair access criteria aimed at focusing resources on those in greatest need. Performance on E47 (ethnicity of older people receiving an assessment) and E48 (ethnicity of older people receiving services after assessment) are both above plan figures for 04/05. The availability of a range of BME focused service provision is demonstrated in the DIS. Good work has been done to produce a range of documents for people with a learning disability in accessible formats.”* [314].

WORK IN PROGRESS

- 17 While these examples demonstrate the ability to turn priorities into good outcomes, we are aware that we are not making progress as quickly as we would like in two significant areas.
- 18 In our Benefits service, wide ranging changes to systems, structures and processes have enabled us to achieve significant improvements on the enablers set down by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate. The changes introduced have also had a positive impact on processing times which have fallen from 67 days for new claims in September 2005 to 45 days in December 2005. The time taken to process change in circumstances decreased from 29 days to 17 in the same period. However, we clearly still have some way to go and in the meantime this is holding back our CPA score. We are aware that our 2005 score for benefits placed us in the bottom 10% of councils nationally for this service and we will continue to make it a priority for improvement in 2006/07 and 2007/08.
- 19 We recognise that one of the main issues preventing us from achieving better performance is the need for an updated Benefits system. The software currently in use is outdated and does not integrate well with our Electronic Document Records Management and Workflow software. We are by far the largest user of this system, having a benefits caseload of approximately 34,500 claimants. However, despite work with the supplier and other users, it has proved impossible to make the improvements necessary. With financial support from the DWP, we will now be investing in a replacement system in the coming year in order to bring our performance up to an acceptable standard.
- 20 Sickness has been reducing each year since 2002/03, but absence levels remain a cause of concern. Average absence reduced from 14.17 days in 2003/04 to 13.32 days in 2004/5. Current projections show an average of 12.36 days lost in the current year, a welcome further improvement but well below our target of 10.32 days. This is extremely disappointing considering the extensive attention that has been paid to this issue, including a comprehensive Promoting Health at Work strategy [315], the provision of much improved management information, the employment of an Attendance Adviser to assist in areas of high absence and detailed attention by elected Members [316] the Chief Executive and Directorate management teams to the issue.
- 21 The sickness absence recording procedures have been simplified and improved and were recently re-launched with 1000 managers attending briefings and employee information sent with payslips and in “Insight”, the Council’s monthly employee magazine. [317] The Promoting Health at Work strategy reflects 16 of the 18 best practice recommendations on managing sickness absence made by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. The remaining recommendations relate to penalising absence or rewarding attendance and these are now being investigated. This work includes discussions with colleagues in West Midlands Police where a successful scheme (“Always There”) awards a benefit to employees who have had no sickness absence in a year.

Section 4 – Capacity

OUR BALANCED SCORECARD

- 1 Our balanced scorecard is helping ensure that we have the capacity to make sustainable progress towards our vision and corporate objectives. It is based on the recognition that our current and future success depends on our having trained and knowledgeable Members and employees, effective systems and processes and a sound financial base.

PEOPLE

- 2 Our last Corporate Assessment report noted that “*Clear and consistent leadership is provided by senior councillors and managers*” and that “*Councillors have also managed the transition to no overall political control in a responsible and effective way*” [401]. These strengths have helped the Council adjust to a change in administration in June 2004 and Member/Officer relationships remain very positive and productive.
- 3 The nine Cabinet Members have clearly defined portfolios and each produces a Strategic Plan [410] which sets out how the work of her/his portfolio will contribute to the achievement of the Corporate Plan. Actions from these plans cascade into Operational Plans and Team Plans which set out the responsibilities of managers and employees.
- 4 As the largest employer in the city we recognise that the effective delivery of services and the achievement of value for money are particularly dependant on maximising the use of our human resources. Over the last three years we have developed a completely new HR framework, based on a clear analysis of the skills we need, our knowledge of the local and regional labour market, and our desire to promote equality of opportunity and support the employment objectives of the Community Plan. The framework includes:
 - an Elected Member Development Strategy, a management development framework and a Training, Development & Learning Strategy to ensure our business needs can be met [402]
 - An Equality Strategy, covering both service delivery and employment issues, to help make our workforce representative of our local community [403]
 - A Recruitment Strategy to ensure a speedy and consistent approach across the organisation and to help address recruitment difficulties. A complementary diversity audit has been undertaken to identify potential barriers within the process [404]
 - A performance appraisal system, ensuring that all employees have the opportunity to discuss their work formally with their Manager, understand how their work fits into the delivery of the Council's objectives, review their progress and agree future development needs [405].

We are now consolidating this work with the production of a draft People Management framework, describing our longer-term strategy and how the human resources function will add value to the organisation [406].

- 5 About 73% of our employees are now covered by Investors in People accreditation. Our performance on the Best Value equality measures is relatively strong, but we still have work to do to build a truly representative workforce. We are shortly to sign a Partnership Accord with Job Centre Plus on a range of employment initiatives to address complementary targets. We are working with the Coventry Partnership on a “Local People for Local Jobs” initiative, using community based recruitment methods and a wider range of recruitment techniques, and with Remploy to develop access to employment opportunities for disabled people. We are also aiming to build capacity by providing training for the independent and voluntary sector through our NVQ training centre.
- 6 The Single Status agreement introduced in 2005, has implemented equal pay across the Council and fundamentally modernised the terms and conditions of employment. [407] However we are conscious of the damaging impact this has had on industrial relations and staff morale and of the need to re-establish a climate of trust, openness and involvement.

Section 4 – Capacity

IMPROVING THE WAY WE WORK

- 7 The Coventry Direct programme involves a fundamental review of business processes to identify and eliminate duplication and waste whilst adding value for customers. Targets have been set to meet Gershon efficiency expectations whilst reducing the cost of service delivery to repay the programme's set up costs. Service review processes have been standardised with the launch of a service redesign toolkit [408]. We aim to ensure that by 2008 the Council has a strong customer focused culture; offers services which are easily accessible to all citizens; consistently delivers high quality services; and works closely with partners to deliver them.
- 8 The programme is based on the development of a corporate contact centre, as a key enabler of improved customer services, and the phased introduction of one-stop shops. The contact centre and the first of the one-stop shops are now in use, the latter being a joint initiative with the Coventry Partnership [409]. Our BV157 target, making 100% of services available electronically, was achieved in December 2005. 22 of the 29 "required" targets and 20 of the 25 "good targets" for e-government had been achieved by December 2005 and the remaining targets will be achieved during the next 12 – 18 months.
- 9 Improvements to our website have placed us in the top 60 local government websites for availability, accessibility, number of errors or warnings and speed. We provide free access to ICT and the internet in all our libraries, with 260,000 hours of computer time now booked each year. We offer a highly effective 24/7 out-of-hours service for Housing and Social Care needs with initial contact through our own Emergency Services Unit.

Accountability and decision making

- 10 The Cabinet meets fortnightly and representatives of each of the Opposition groups are invited to attend and take part in discussion. Individual Cabinet Members take decisions relating to their portfolio at formal meetings held in public. The respective shadow Cabinet Member is invited to attend and give their views on the proposals under consideration. These arrangements ensure openness and accountability, while the opportunity for members of all parties to comment before decisions are taken means that only three decisions have been called in for scrutiny this year.
- 11 The Council has four Scrutiny Boards with work co-ordinated by a Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee. Management responsibility for support to the scrutiny function has recently transferred to the Chief Executive's Directorate with a view to closer integration with the forward planning and the improvement and value for money agendas. The Scrutiny Boards prepare an annual report on their work for full council so that all Members have a good understanding of their work and priorities. [410]
- 12 All reports to Cabinet, Cabinet Member and Scrutiny are considered in public, unless there are legal reasons which prevent this. In these cases, it is the practice for Members to receive two separate reports on the issue – one in public outlining the policy implications and one in private containing any confidential information, such as contract prices. All public reports and minutes are available on the Council website, as are the Council's constitution and scheme of delegation.
- 13 The Standards Committee has a majority of independent members (five out of seven) and the Chair is an independent member. It meets regularly, reviews the Constitution and has dealt successfully with referrals from the Standards Board. There are Codes of Conduct for both employees and Members. Registers of Members' Interests and Hospitality are available for inspection. The Coventry Partnership has adopted a partnership protocol and constitution [Document xxx] and other key partners, such as CV One Limited (the City Centre Company) have formal Codes of Best Practice [411].

Managing risk and projects

- 14 Our last Corporate Assessment report recognised that *"The council has effective arrangements for assessing risk as part of operational planning and has taken a more robust approach to assessing risks in planning major projects"* [412]. Detailed assessments of risk, using outside

Section 4 – Capacity

consultancy where necessary, are conducted for major schemes such as the recently opened Ricoh Arena, a £113m regeneration project. Our project management toolkit ensures that risks are properly assessed before schemes are approved and our Risk Management & Insurance Manual provides more detailed guidance [414]. The Council's claims reserves are externally assessed each year, with funding released for other purposes whenever possible, and our insurers will shortly be conducting an audit of risk relating to our major partnerships.

- 15 Risk registers are maintained at directorate and corporate level, with the latter being reported to Cabinet quarterly. Regular Risk Awareness Newsletters are produced to ensure employees are aware of how they can help to reduce risks in their everyday work [415]. We are currently bringing together our programme office and performance management functions to ensure effective planning and delivery.

MONEY

Financial management

- 16 Effective financial management is critical to our success and real progress has been made in ensuring that managers have the information and advice they need to manage their services. Our 2004/05 Audit and Inspection Letter acknowledges that *"improvements were seen in the quality and timeliness of the working papers provided to us in support of the financial statements"* and says that *"the Council should be commended for the quality of the working papers"* underpinning its group accounts [416]. We have used the CIPFA Financial Management model to identify where further improvements can be made to the service and an action plan is being developed. A comprehensive and up to date set of financial procedures, advice and information is available to assist budget holders on the "Finance Friend" section of the intranet.
- 17 The Council's financial framework is set out in its Medium Term Financial Strategy [417]. This was revised by Cabinet in December 2005 and will guide the budget setting process in February 2006. At the same time, Members received a review of progress on the Corporate Plan and Cabinet Member Strategic plans [417] and a report outlining the short and medium revenue and capital resources available to implement Council priorities.
- 18 The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council have since met a range of organisations, including the Coventry Partnership, the Chamber of Commerce, the Youth Council, voluntary and community sector representatives and the Council's trade unions to seek their views on our progress to date and priorities for the future. This information will be considered by Cabinet as part of the budget setting process.
- 19 Once the budget is approved, budgets are delegated to designated service managers. Budget holders regularly monitor their spending and income - most now have this information on-line - and take action to deal with variations. Corporate reports on budget monitoring are considered by the Management Board monthly and by Cabinet and Scrutiny quarterly.
- 20 The Council actively manages its reserves and regularly reviews commitments to ensure that best use is made of them. At 31 March 2005, the Council's reserves totalled £77m, the vast majority of which are committed to help pay for future developments. The uncommitted total (excluding the Working Balance) currently stands at £9m and the use of these resources will be considered at the annual budget setting meeting.

External finance

- 21 Our policy is to maximise the level of external grant income providing the grant supports Council policy, we can administer the grant adequately and there is a robust succession strategy if the project is likely to be of an ongoing nature. We have been consistently successful in securing external funding from European and other sources, working with partners and Advantage West Midlands to ensure that projects optimise resources available. Awards amounted to £24m in 2004/05 and are currently anticipated to be some £17.5m in 2005/06. In addition, the Council

Section 4 – Capacity

actively assists voluntary and other organisations to attract other grants, such as lottery funding. These benefited the city by about £9m in 2004/05.

Effective procurement

- 22 We have a comprehensive procurement strategy and a detailed procurement toolkit [418]. Member and officer training has taken place, led by the Public Private Partnerships Programme and IDeA, together with a training course for non-procurement experts. We are on target to achieve the milestones in the National Procurement Strategy and are currently reviewing our procurement structures. We are an active member of the Central Buying Consortium and of the West Midlands Forum. The latter has developed a common standard for contractors on race equality which has been recognised nationally as representing best practice.
- 23 We have invested in internet procurement software which is integrated with our financial information system. In the 9 month period since April 2005 we have placed over 27,000 orders electronically with a value of over £62m. We have now rolled out our electronic purchase order system to over 80% of our budget. A reverse auction for stationery and consumables, carried out on behalf of the Central Buying Consortium, delivered total savings of £1.8m over 4 years.
- 24 Services are outsourced when this has advantages for the Council, either in terms of cost or expertise. For example, IT provision is contracted to Serco and engineering services to Jacobs Babbie. An arms length company – CVOne – is responsible for managing the city centre and promoting the city, while a waste to energy company is operated as a joint venture with Solihull MBC. Over the last 3 years we have reviewed all our grants and contracts for social care with the voluntary and independent sector and put all arrangements on a firm footing. Our 2005 CSCI Performance Review Report notes *"Extensive work has been undertaken to manage the home care market in the city. An extensive re-tendering exercise has taken place and contracts awarded on a cost, volume and quality basis"* [419].
- 25 Joint commissioning and provision with the Primary Care Trust (tPCT) has improved the supply of equipment to vulnerable people and joint working with the tPCT and the acute trust has reduced bed blocking. We have joint commissioning strategies for services to people with learning disabilities and older people with mental health problems. We jointly commission drug treatment services and crime and disorder initiatives on behalf of the Community Safety Partnership. We are currently producing a Children's Services Directory with Warwickshire County Council saving a total of £50,000 between us.
- 26 There are formal partnership agreements with the tPCT under Section 31 of the Health Act 1999 to provide an integrated equipment service, develop learning disability services, and fund the management, commissioning and administration functions of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. This will be extended to the Partnership Boards for Older People, Learning Disability and Mental Health in April 2006.

Value for Money

- 27 Elected Members have made it clear that they expect to see continued and demonstrable improvements in economy, efficiency and effectiveness. We were therefore pleased that our 2005 Direction of Travel statement formally recognised that our work to date had led to *"clear improvement in value for money alongside quality of service provision"* [420].
- 28 Our overall approach to value for money is set out in our Value for Money Self Assessment [421]. We are aware that the Audit Commission Profiles show that some of our costs are above average. We also recognise the significant challenges in our medium term financial strategy and the cost pressures facing us in such critical areas as provision for looked after children. We are therefore investing in the creation of a small value for money unit in the Chief Executive's Directorate to improve our capacity and accelerate progress in this area. In addition, we are currently working directly with the Treasury and the Department of Health Efficiency Unit to develop more sophisticated ways of demonstrating value for money for our social care services.

Section 5 – Performance Management

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT IN PRACTICE

- 1 Good performance management has been key to all the improvements we have made to our services since our first Corporate Assessment in 2002. The impact is perhaps especially noticeable in our social care services where we improved from 0 stars to 2 stars in the space of two years with our adults services now having excellent capacity for improvement [501]. Our 2005 Performance Review report notes *"the council has demonstrated a clear and sustained improvement trend through services available and performance indicators. Plans and priorities are clearly articulated and are guiding services on the ground and those under development....Resources are in place to support the achievement of stated goals and management structures are supporting the delivery and development of services...(There is) continued effective use of corporate and departmental performance management processes to monitor, inform and improve services"*. [502]

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

- 2 We introduced a new Performance Management Framework in January 2004, but this was still in its infancy when our last corporate assessment was conducted. We were therefore very pleased to find our approach validated in our 2005 Direction of Travel statement which concludes that *"the council has a coherent planning framework and a recent track record of good performance management making it well placed to continue to deliver further Improvement."* [503]
- 3 The corporate performance management framework is based upon three levels of plans - the Corporate Plan, Cabinet Member Strategic Plans and Operational Plans. The Corporate Plan sets out how the Council will deliver its vision and objectives at a corporate level. It covers a three-year period, updated annually, and includes high level performance indicators and targets for each Corporate Objective and management objective in our balanced scorecard. A separate technical manual for managers sets out the methodology for calculating each performance indicator[504]. Progress on the Corporate Plan is formally reviewed twice a year by Cabinet [505] and is the principal guide to the corporate health of the organisation.
- 4 Cabinet Member Strategic Plans set out in more detail how individual Cabinet Members plan to implement the Council's Corporate Objectives over the coming three years. They review the previous year's performance, set milestones, targets and actions for the year of the plan and for the following two years. Cabinet considers formal reports on progress twice a year and agrees any remedial actions if progress is not on target [505]. Scrutiny Boards also receive the reports and may choose to keep issues of concern under review - for example Scrutiny Board 1 has been receiving progress reports on the Benefits Improvement Plan and sickness absence.
- 5 Our Operational Plans set out the actions that Directorates plan to take to put Council policy into effect [506]. They are produced by service areas and address a two-year period by reporting on the previous year's performance and planning for the year ahead. They are principally working documents to enable Heads of Service to allocate staff and other resources and to manage performance at officer level. Guidance on the production of the plans has been revised this year to improve the workforce planning element as part of the People Management Framework. Heads of Service and their management teams actively monitor and evaluate performance and amend the plans as necessary to ensure that targets are achieved and resources are used effectively and efficiently. Quarterly reviews are considered at Directorate Level and each Director presents a quarterly summary of key issues to the Management Board [507].
- 6 Each employee is allocated personal duties and targets to ensure that team and directorate objectives are achieved. These are reviewed as part of their annual performance appraisal.

TARGETS, STANDARDS AND PROGRESS

- 7 We have undertaken a range of training to improve employees' understanding of performance management and target setting [508]. Employees are kept informed of priorities, progress and

Section 5 – Performance Management

areas of concern through “Insight” and ad hoc “Insight Bulletins” are issued to provide immediate information about matters of key importance and to celebrate success.

- 8 Regular reporting ensures that any deterioration in performance is identified and acted on. For example our 2005 APA Letter notes that: *“The proportion of young people leaving care who entered education, employment or training dropped in 2004/05 from the very good performance level that had been established since 2001/02. The authority has done a case by case analysis of the reasons for this and has introduced tighter performance management and a new contract with its after-care service provider”* [509].
- 9 We produce an annual Performance Report for members and employees [510]. This complements the Corporate Plan and together the two documents form our Best Value Performance Plan. We use the documents to bring together a wider range of information than the statutory requirements including progress against our corporate and management objectives, the Performance Assessment Framework for social services and our Race Equality Scheme. More detailed reports on specific issues of importance are produced as necessary e.g. a one-off report on the detailed results of the last Best Value User Satisfaction Survey [511], a report on the performance of a key contractor [512] or progress reports on action plans adopted following external inspection [513].
- 10 Informal seminars are held for Members and senior managers in June each year when the Chief Executive and the Management Board present an overview of performance in their Directorate and the key challenges for the coming year [514]. A less detailed summary, setting out “What we promised and what we achieved” is circulated to all households in the Council’s magazine Citivision each March. We have published service standards for our street services, housing services and, jointly with the Primary Care Trust, social care services for adults [515]. Our Corporate Customer Care standards are currently being reviewed [516]
- 11 We have a formal complaints procedure and standards for response which are well publicised at service points and on the internet [517]. There are single Freepost and e-mail addresses and single telephone and textphone numbers for comments, compliments and complaints. The results are reported annually to Members and used to help improve services [512] Complaints about potholes, abandoned vehicles and street lighting can be made on line.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

- 12 We are keen both to learn from others and to contribute to the improvement of performance management. We commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to undertake a review of our performance management framework in late 2004. They concluded that *“the Council has made significant progress in implementing and improving Performance Management across the Council... There is a greater level of consistency and clarity in both the planning and reporting activity being undertaken, which should help the Council to retain focus on its priorities”*. Their full findings were included in our Annual Performance Report 2004/05 and reported separately to Scrutiny Board 1 [515].
- 13 A peer review was conducted of the Coventry Partnership in 2004 [516] and we are currently undergoing a peer review of corporate people management in order to evaluate our work to date and maximise the value of our new strategy [517]. The Coventry Direct Programme is being formally reviewed by the Public Private Partnerships Programme in January 2006.
- 14 We are currently piloting work with the Audit Commission on Area Profiles and on the development of Economic Regeneration Performance Indicators [518] We are using Sport England’s Towards an Excellent Service Toolkit to develop a robust approach to performance management in our sports services [518].
- 15 The latest audit of our Best Value Performance Plan produced an unqualified report with no statutory recommendations [519]. However, we believe that our current arrangements for data quality control can be further strengthened and we are working with our external Audit Manager to ensure we can learn from best practice in other authorities.

Section 6 – Achievement

CENTRAL/LOCAL GOVERNMENT SHARED PRIORITIES

- 1 Our last Corporate Assessment concluded that "*The council balances national and local priorities effectively. For example the council has consistently prioritised its education service, shown considerable community leadership in regenerating the local economy, and recognised the importance of promoting good health and improving local transport by making these tasks specific cabinet portfolios. National priorities in the areas of social services and the benefits service are now also reflected in local priorities*" [601].
- 2 This statement reflects the close synergy between the central/local government shared priorities, the aims of the Coventry Community Plan, the Council's Corporate Objectives and the objectives in our Cabinet Member Strategic Plans. The earlier sections of this document have already given many examples of what we have achieved to date and of how our plans and strategies link together. They have also shown how our core values are influencing everything we do, from our willingness to provide strong leadership for the city to our search for better value for money and our desire to promote community cohesion.
- 3 The more detailed information below supplements this and provides real evidence of a council with a strong sense of ambition, a clear set of priorities and a track record of achievement over many years. There are many clear examples of ways in which our actions are improving outcomes for the people we serve. Almost without exception these have been achieved as a result of the partnerships which we and other organisations in the city have worked hard to develop.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND TRANSPORT

The economy and the labour market

- 4 Coventry suffered more than most major cities from the economic recessions of the late 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, but the scale of economic turnaround, largely led and promoted by the council, has been equally dramatic. Economic growth, inward investment, business support and skills development have been clear priorities for the Council since the late 1980's and the economy is now hugely diversified. Flagship projects range from the development of the highly successful University of Warwick Science Park in 1984 to the new £113m Ricoh Arena which opened last year.
- 5 The exciting Swanswell Initiative, a 148 acre site with some £600m - £1billion of investment planned over 10 years is now under way. This will enable the city centre to expand beyond the inner ring road, transforming the local environment, creating new jobs, housing, transport, sports, leisure and health facilities, and a learning quarter which will include a new FE College, secondary school and better links with Coventry University.
- 6 City businesses showed their confidence in Coventry by voting overwhelmingly in favour of establishing the city centre as a Business Improvement District in February 2005, the first location outside London to do so. An early move has been an extensive new marketing campaign aimed at attracting inward investment and staving off strong new retail competition both locally and regionally.
- 7 Major improvements have regenerated the city centre. The council-led Phoenix development reached the final shortlist for the 2004 RIBA Stirling Prize and has now won a total of 16 separate awards. New investment at the Coventry Transport Museum has resulted in visitor numbers more than doubling and the service reaching the finals for the 2005 Gulbenkian Prize. The first stage of the £15m redevelopment of the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum opened in September.
- 8 Our work to promote the city, optimise land use, improve communications and develop our skills base has made Coventry a popular choice for relocation, with the NHS Institute for Learning Skills and Innovation and the Quality Improvement Agency being among the latest to relocate

Section 6 – Achievement

from London and the south east. We have nurtured many successful partnerships such as the Health and Medical Technologies Park at Ansty. At local level, we take great pride in the number of people, many from traditionally hard to reach groups, who have obtained work as a result of our efforts.

- 9 The Coventry Development Plan supports economic growth and competition by promoting a portfolio of different employment sites; seeking to encourage diversification in the economy; providing land for employment uses and permitting the change needed to keep pace with a developing economy. The Local Development Framework will further strengthen links between economic growth and planning policies and the new Fourth Block to our Local Area Agreement – Economic Development and Enterprise – will develop joint working and a common performance management framework across a range of key partners.
- 10 Over the last ten years the employment rate has increased at a faster rate in Coventry than nationally, rising from 66.1% of the working age population in 1995 to 76% in 2005. This compares favourably with the national figures of 71.3% to 74.9% respectively. Data for people aged over 50 also shows significant growth, rising from 19,000 in 1995 to 30,000 in 2005. Levels of worklessness (based on those claiming Job Seekers Allowance or sickness and disability benefits) have fallen at a faster rate in Coventry than nationally, dropping from 17.5% of the working age population in 1995 to 12.6% in 2005. This compares to the national rates of 14.3% in 1995 and 10.9% in 2005.
- 11 We take an integrated approach to regeneration, seeking to improve prosperity, the attractiveness of the city and the accessibility of jobs to all sectors of the community. The new Ricoh Arena has stimulated projects which have created over 2,500 new jobs in an area of high unemployment and relatively low economic activity. Approximately 80% of the jobs have been taken by local people and many more have taken advantage of opportunities provided for learning and training to help them return to work. Specifically, the Arena Employment Initiative has helped 538 local people to train, apply and obtain new jobs.
- 12 Partnership working has helped us develop our understanding of the needs of people in our most deprived neighbourhoods and to respond accordingly. For example, a Job Interview Guarantee Scheme worker is now in place in Canley, working with the local community and local companies. With the help of a £120,000 development grant, we have produced an ambitious bid for Local Enterprise Growth Initiative funding to promote enterprise and entrepreneurship in the most deprived areas of the city.
- 13 Our Contaminated Land Strategy [602] identifies priority sites across the city. As a result of earlier industrial development many of these sites are located in the north and north east of the city and remediation work supports other investment in priority neighbourhoods. We have worked successfully with local businesses, especially SMEs, to embed the principles of environmental management and improve the environmental awareness of employees. Reductions in energy use and waste have yielded sustainability benefits and reduced bottom-line costs, helping the business become more competitive.

Housing

- 14 The earlier sections of this document have demonstrated the importance we place on our strategic housing role. Our Housing Strategy [603] has been approved as “Fit for Purpose”. Our plans to turn 'Housing Strategy into Housing Reality' [604] and new Supplementary Planning Guidance [605] will help bring the mixed tenure housing development that the city needs, balancing the amount of new social housing and other forms of affordable housing with the amount of social housing already in the area.
- 15 We work closely with the Housing Associations and are satisfied that the 2010 Decent Homes target will be met. By making good use of Housing Association and private rented stock, we now need to make very little use of temporary accommodation, providing emergency accommodation for only 2 or 3 families at any one time and then only for 2-3 weeks. We are concluding our

Section 6 – Achievement

programme of reviews of Supporting People and will achieve the efficiency savings necessary to balance the budget.

- 16 We are part of the 'KickStart' scheme piloting equity release in the West Midlands and are conducting a house condition survey to ascertain the “decency” level of the private sector stock in the city. Our Housing Strategy, Home Energy and Fuel Poverty Strategy [606] are improving the quality of people’s homes and supporting our work on community safety and health inequalities. Our Older People's Housing Strategy [607] will provide the information and choice needed to help people remain in their own homes and preserve their independence as long as possible.
- 17 The development of Safer Estates meetings is helping to improve the quality of life across the city. A recent research report by the Coventry Consortium of Social Landlords concluded that *“feedback from participants in Safer Estates Groups was extremely positive with over three-quarters of respondents stating that since the group had been formed there was better partnership and team work between local agencies, improved information sharing which in turn had led to better co-ordination of preventative action as well as more effective use of enforcement action. At their most effective it was felt that Safer Estates Groups became catalysts for building neighbourhood capacity”* [608].

The local environment

- 18 We know that good environmental standards are really important to local people. Our Corporate Objective to *“Make the city clean and green”* has been supported by major new investment and enhanced through partnership work on Safer and Stronger Communities in our Local Area Agreement. Delivery of a £3.4m Liveability programme, based on local community priorities, is improving the street scene, parks and open spaces and renewing derelict properties and neighbourhood shopping centres. Work is currently under way on a £20m highways and street lighting programme including significant investment from the Council’s own resources and from the Local Transport Plan. Domestic waste collections have been reorganised to improve reliability.
- 19 A new emphasis on enforcement has led to significant reductions in fly posting, fly tipping, dog fouling and littering in our streets, parks and open spaces. We share information on flytipping with the Environment Agency through use of a joint protocol and link with our neighbouring authorities to tackle cross boundary issues. We provide an out of hours noise service seven days per week and seek to advise neighbours on the resolution of complaints and disputes without recourse to legal action.
- 20 Our kerbside recycling service is to begin a major expansion in March 2006, with paper collections expanding from the current 52% of the city to 100%, and garden waste collections expanding from the current 26% of the city to all practical areas of the city (approximately 85%) [609]. This will supplement our expanding network of bring sites across the city. We encourage interest in recycling through campaigns, information leaflets and school based activities and give practical help and support to community groups working to improve their local environment. We aim to practice what we preach, reusing kerbs, slabs, bollards and street furniture removed during repair and maintenance works, and using road planings for footway schemes and base layers for deeper reconstruction schemes.
- 21 We have a long-standing joint waste management partnership with Solihull MBC and the two authorities jointly procure approximately £10m worth of capacity in the Coventry waste to energy plant. As a result, our waste disposal costs are relatively low and performance on the amount of domestic waste sent to landfill is amongst the best in the country. We carry out continuous air quality monitoring at six locations across the city and have declared three localised Air Quality Management Areas A draft action plan for improvements in all areas has been completed in line with the National Air Quality Strategy.

Section 6 – Achievement

- 22 We are working to achieve Green Flag status for two major parks in the city in 2007. Increased investment in floral displays, adding a further 120 planters across the city has led to widespread praise from citizens and visitors. We won the silver gilt award in the 2005 Heart of England in Bloom competition and were winners in the category for cities with populations of 200,000-750,000 in the 2005 International Awards for Liveable Communities.

Transport

- 23 The Council's Transport strategy is an integral part of the West Midlands Local Transport Plan [610]. Major improvements to public transport are being implemented through the £42m PrimeLines bus project and vehicle access to the central bus station is being improved to increase use of public transport and ease of interchange.
- 24 We expect that congestion will increase in the West Midlands over the next decade and our strategies seek to address this. As a result of work led in Coventry, the West Midlands has become one of seven successful bidders from across the country to obtain a Transport Innovation Fund grant to develop innovative schemes for combating congestion and managing demand. We are actively promoting walking and cycling and play an active part in TravelWise to promote green travel and raise awareness of the links between transport and the environment.
- 25 Transport implications have been a major consideration in recent planning applications. For example, the Council recommended approval for the UK's first city centre based IKEA because this would reduce the need to travel. Travel plans submitted for the Ricoh Arena and for the new hospital development at Walsgrave emphasise the need to reduce single occupancy car trips to and from the sites. In conjunction with the opening of the Ricoh Arena the Council worked with operators to bring about significant improvements in regular bus services and developed a comprehensive plan to manage travel and prevent spectator parking in residential areas on match days.
- 26 Walking Bus schemes have been established at a number of schools. At Willenhall Primary School, the walking bus has made a significant contribution to improved levels of attendance and punctuality and led to improved SATs results. As part of its School Travel Plan, Westwood School has installed a state-of-the-art cycle compound with spaces for 120 bicycles, one of the largest such facilities at a school in the West Midlands region. The percentage of pupils cycling to school has since increased from 12% to 20%. Cannon Park Primary School has established the first Park & Stride scheme in Coventry, which has reduced congestion and pollution outside school and contributed to a 25% increase over two years in the number of pupils walking to school. The school has also doubled the capacity of its cycle parking to 40 bikes.
- 27 Additional funding for cycle training was introduced in November 2003 and a course developed in line with the new National Standard for training children to cycle safely on the road. The innovative Wheels to Work project is helping young people gain access to training and employment. The project targets 16-24 year olds facing journeys where no reasonable public transport exists and makes a moped, and training on how to ride it, available for their use for up to 12 months.

SAFER AND STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Crime and anti-social behaviour

- 28 Coventry's Community Safety Partnership was formed in September 2003 by merging the former Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership and the Drug & Alcohol Action Team. It includes senior representatives of the Council, police and tPCT and is currently chaired by our Chief Executive. Our Community Safety Team co-ordinates the development and delivery of the Partnership's plans and strategies, supported by a clear Information Sharing Protocol.
- 29 The Community Safety Strategy 2005/08 [611] brings together work on crime, disorder, drugs and alcohol. It sets out some challenging targets, particularly in relation to Home Office PSA1 and

Section 6 – Achievement

provides a specific focus on offender management, in line with the Prolific and Other Priority Offender Strategy and the Drug Intervention Programme. Our Local Area Agreement links this to work on the environment and community engagement.

- 30 The 2002-2005 strategy helped reduce domestic burglary in Coventry by 26.3% over the three year period, with vehicle crime dropping by 26.6% and robbery by 41.6%. During the first six months of the new strategy, domestic burglary reduced by a further 8.4% (103 fewer offences) compared to the period in 2004. Theft of a vehicle reduced by 13.4% (124 fewer offences) and theft from a vehicle reduced by 16.3% (264 fewer offences).
- 31 Our Hate Crime Reduction Partnership provides a co-ordinated multi-agency response to racial and other forms of harassment and abuse. A prominent “Everyone’s Different” campaign has featured bus advertising and the production of booklets in ten different languages explaining how to report hate crime [612]. A DVD called “Coventry’s Changing” was produced with young people exploring negative attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers. Leaflets have been produced for people with learning difficulties on how to report hate crime and we have recently launched a text campaign to encourage reporting of homophobic crimes and discrimination.
- 32 The Domestic Violence and Abuse Partnership provides a co-ordinated, multi-agency approach to tackling domestic violence and abuse and has adopted a three strategy (2005-08) [613]. Actions to date includes the provision of specialist support and accommodation services for African and African-Caribbean women; a perpetrators’ programme; increased targeted police enforcement patrols and the provision of additional domestic security equipment; specialist Domestic Violence Courts; a “Men against Violent Men” campaign; and an “Equality and Respect in Relationship” pack which is being piloted in primary and secondary schools.
- 33 Coventry has recently experienced an increase in violent crime of about 1% per year. This is recognised as a national issue and we became a pilot for the Home Office Tackling Violent Crime Programme in July 2005. Since then the Partnership has introduced a range of additional multi-agency actions including: Alcohol Misuse Enforcement Campaigns (AMEC), mainly in the City Centre at weekends; the provision of Taxi Marshalls during the Christmas Period to provide a safe environment for those leaving the City Centre late at night; production of a “Coventry NiteSafe” card giving information on personal safety, such as not leaving drinks unattended, drink driving, etc. These resulted in violent crime reducing by around 1% by December 2005 and a reduction of alcohol related incidents presenting to the Accident & Emergency service during the AMEC weekends. A “Best Bar None” scheme, encouraging licensed premises to improve standards, is currently being developed.
- 34 The Community Safety Partnership funds a dedicated Communications Officer to help address the fear of crime and promote public reassurance. Our Trading Standards service responds to information regarding travelling “doorstep criminals” by contacting the police, media and, where appropriate, leafleting an area apparently being targeted by criminals. We are one of forty areas taking part in the Home Office “Tackling Drugs, Changing Lives” campaign aimed at the local media but supporting work being undertaken nationally.
- 35 Our Self Help Gating Scheme, first established in 1998, continues to reduce opportunist burglaries and the anti-social use of entryways. 114 gates have been installed across the City so far this year. We part fund the Coventry & Warwickshire Community Safety Scheme which provides domestic security, free of charge, to older people, people on benefits or victims of crime. Over 5,400 properties were secured between 2002/03 and 2004/05. Local crime data is used to inform our street lighting replacement programme; we are now using white light for footpaths and garage areas and moving street lighting from the edge of highways to the back of footways to enhance lighting for pedestrians.
- 36 Coventry has been using an Active Intelligence Mapping System (AIMS), based on the police National Intelligence Model, since March 2005 This has led to more effective and targeted use of police, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), neighbourhood wardens and other street based staff in areas identified as hotspots for anti-social behaviour, crime and environmental

Section 6 – Achievement

crime. The process has been greatly assisted by the agreement of West Midlands Police and the Fire Service to realign their local boundaries to match our neighbourhood management areas.

- 37 We are a Home Office Action Area for anti-social behaviour (ASB). This has helped us focus additional work in schools; address the nuisance caused by Pee Wee Bikes; provide a family support programme; and introduce a 24 hour ASB reporting line. We provide a range of support services for the victims of ASB including the loan of surveillance equipment and mediation services. ASBOs and dispersal areas are used where appropriate. All known retailers of fireworks are visited before bonfire night to ensure that only legal fireworks are sold and that they are aware of the law relating to under-age sales and this is followed up by test purchases.
- 38 Our Youth Offending Service has developed a range of innovative and successful approaches to work with young people. This was recognised in its January 2005 inspection report which noted that *“we were particularly impressed by the way the YOS had been integrated into a broad range of services, delivered through multi-agency partnership arrangements”*. [614]. Our neighbourhood warden service, which tackles low level anti-social behaviour and environmental issues is providing public reassurance and has proved extremely popular with local residents. We have now mainstreamed funding for 75 wardens and also fund 12 dedicated anti-social behaviour PCSOs who are deployed to hotspots identified through the AIMS process.

Drugs and alcohol misuse

- 39 A wide range of treatment services is available in the city and a functional analysis undertaken within the Community Drugs Team has resulted in more effective working practices and increased capacity. We have a very strong Drug Interventions Programme and effective data management to track the progress of individuals through the criminal justice system. We have made significant progress in the local delivery of the National Drugs Strategy and this is reflected in the regular review meetings with the National Treatment Agency (NTA). In the half year review of the 2005/06 Adult Drug Treatment Plan, the NTA noted that *“the performance of the Drug Intervention Programme is encouraging and elements of the local system have been highlighted as regional good practice... Coventry remains in our view an effective Partnership supported by an able commissioning manager for adult treatment within an effective team”* [615]. We are currently on target to reach and exceed 2005/06 targets with 50% of the drug using population in treatment.
- 40 An Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy is being developed and this will bring together prevention, education and enforcement work. Designated Public Places Orders are in place and consultation is underway for a City-wide order. Joint late night inspections of licensed premises are undertaken with Police and Licensing Officers and test purchase programmes have resulted in prosecutions and associated publicity for under age sales.

Preventing accidents

- 41 We work closely with the Fire Service on a range of community safety initiatives, including our LPSA. The recent Corporate Assessment report for the West Midlands Fire Authority notes that it *“continues to demonstrate its commitment in preventing fire and other incidents through a range of community safety initiatives, and these are making a real difference to people living within its communities. It uses a range of data from partners to target its activities, for example, data sharing protocols have been agreed with Coventry City Council and West Midlands Police Authority.”* [616]
- 42 Our "Safe as Houses" Project provides and fits free stairgates, fireguards and smoke alarms for families on low income with young children. Many of the families are new to the UK and often speak little or no English and information is provided in a variety of languages and formats. The service was introduced in the 1980's when Coventry had one of the highest childhood accident rates in the home; it now has one of the lowest.

Section 6 – Achievement

- 43 Road traffic accidents involving personal injury casualties are reducing and the City Council is on track to meet the DfT's National Road Safety 2010 targets. Accident statistics are analysed in order to identify road safety engineering schemes which will ensure that casualties continue to reduce. Safety audits are carried out on all highway schemes to ensure that no dangers or hazards are built into the design and construction process. We also fund a programme of schemes at locations where local people perceive there to be a real danger, even if there have been few personal injury accidents. This work is complemented by road safety education, training and publicity.

Dealing with Emergency situations

- 44 The Council has a good track record of responding to a range of civil emergencies ranging from the fuel shortage of September 2000, the foot and mouth outbreak, flooding, relatively small scale evacuations and care of residents following fires, to the Coventry air crash in December 1994. We have a regularly updated Emergency Manual that outlines the procedures to be followed in the event of a serious incident or major emergency and a range of supporting plans covering the need for services such as temporary accommodation, welfare services or temporary mortuary provision. Our Local Community Risk Register was in place in November 2005.
- 45 We have led and participated in a number of emergency exercises, including Exercise Horizon (June 2004) at the NEC – the largest ever civil exercise – and a joint regional exercise on flooding with the Environment Agency. Extensive training arrangements are in place for key officers and members and 100 Head Teachers have so far attended the City Council's programme of training for schools.
- 46 The Council's Emergency Services Unit provides a 24/7 first point of contact, initial incident logging and communications hub. It also provides out of hours and first response services to other organisations including Solihull MBC and the WRVS. Extensive liaison arrangements are in place with key partners including the Police, Fire and Ambulance services, Environment Agency, NHS, utilities, voluntary sector, transport infrastructure, and neighbouring and regional local authorities.
- 47 A Business Continuity team has been established and a corporate business recovery strategy will be available for consultation by the end of January 2006. We have a Disaster Recovery contract in place with Serco, our IT supplier, covering all main servers. Further work is being undertaken to improve the resilience of the IT network and we are investigating the provision of a new data centre to reduce the concentration risk of having all our servers in the Council House. New Powers under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 will expand local authorities' responsibilities for the provision of advice on business continuity and preparations for this are underway.

Building stronger communities

- 48 Our new neighbourhood management structure has been designed to improve the involvement and engagement of communities across the city [617]. The Cabinet Member (Finance & Equalities) is responsible for the development of relationships with the voluntary and community sectors. We have a formal Compact in place [618] and enjoy very positive and businesslike relationships with the Coventry Voluntary Service Council and many individual organisations. Our guide to Grant Funding to External Organisations [619] was developed in consultation with voluntary sector representatives and ensures we maintain good practice whilst applying proportionate safeguards for public funds. The annual budget setting process includes formal consultation with the voluntary and community sectors.
- 49 The Coventry Partnership includes six voluntary sector representatives and five from our very active Community Empowerment Network (CEN). CEN plays a significant role in implementing work in our LAA to build stronger communities, particularly by encouraging neighbourhood level activity and building greater understanding of how community groups can contribute to progress on community safety and environmental issues.

Section 6 – Achievement

HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

- 50 We are a very active partner in the Health of Coventry Group which brings together representatives from the Council, NHS and voluntary bodies to form a theme group of the Coventry Partnership. The Group's priority is to tackle health inequalities, focusing on tackling smoking, drug and alcohol misuse, obesity and unplanned teenage pregnancies. Key plans are set out in "Reducing Health Inequalities in Coventry 2004-2007" [619] and a joint service plan between our Health Development Unit and the tPCT's Health Promotion Service [620].
- 51 Our Health Development Unit has been particularly successful in its work with hard to reach groups. An Asian women's sexual health project has improved access to health and social services, especially cervical screening, while we offer exercise referral and preventative programmes such as the community based "Let's walk" programme. A successful workplace based programme with Peugeot covers all major health risks for men.
- 52 The Community Nutrition Service works directly with individuals and families in their homes to develop and maintain lifeskills (e.g. planning, budgeting, shopping, preparing and storing food) and improve the access and availability of healthy food, particularly fresh fruit and vegetables. The service has been used to develop a model for national learning. We publish a Local Food Directory that includes information about healthy food, allotments etc. as well as listing local growers and suppliers [621]. Our Food Safety Team performs consistently well against national criteria and has high levels of customer satisfaction [622].
- 53 Our Health Scrutiny Board has taken a very active approach to its work, bringing a local democratic focus to a range of issues relating to local NHS services and to the national debate on smoking in the Health Bill. The Council has campaigned actively for a comprehensive ban on smoking in enclosed public places and work places and our Smoke Free Coventry Campaign was highly commended by the Chartered Institute of Public Relations. We have produced a local guide to smoke free pubs and restaurants [623] while our smoking cessation programmes target Council members and employees as well as local people.
- 54 Our APA Letter concludes that Being Healthy outcomes for children and young people are good. *"School participation in initiatives relating to sport, healthy eating and education about sex and relationships is high...The Youth Service has a good healthy lifestyles programme. The health of looked after children indicator has improved significantly since 2003/04 and is now very good and well above the England average. Looked after children have health plans, which form part of their statutory reviews. No problems are currently being experienced in meeting identified health needs, including for children placed out of the city. The teenage pregnancy service is robust but is not yet impacting on conception rates, which remain above the England average. Access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is variable. Further joint investment in CAMHS is planned for 2005/06 to bring the resourcing of the service nearer to the Institute of Public Finance (IPF) comparators and England averages"* [624].
- 55 SHADOW, a partnership initiative with the tPCT, works with young people on sexual health; teenage pregnancy; drugs; smoking and healthy lifestyles in a range of settings including schools, youth clubs, and other youth settings [624]. A Joint Mental Health Strategy for Older People has been developed through the Older People's Partnership [625].
- 56 We are developing integrated healthy and active lifestyle services for older people across the city. For example EXTEND, an exercise based programme for people who have fallen, is being targeted at older people more at risk of falling in residential care and extra care/sheltered accommodation; work is taking place with the tPCT an integrated approach to falls prevention and on flu campaigns uptake and medicines management reviews. In December 2005 our Healthy Homes Collaborative project, designed to cut the number of people in care homes needing hospital treatment, won the national Queen Mother's Award for the care of older people. The scheme is of particular importance since we support most older people in their own homes and those who do live in residential care have the greatest needs.

Section 6 – Achievement

OLDER PEOPLE

- 57 The Council was one of the initial Better Government for Older People pilot authorities in 1998 and has continued since then to place a strong emphasis on work to encourage health, independence and choice for older people. Within the Council, the Cabinet Member (Community Services) is our older people's champion but this is another area of work where strong partnership working has been key to our success.
- 58 A multi-agency Older People's Partnership was formed in November 2003, with a jointly funded Partnership Manager and members from various services within the Council, the tPCT, Acute Hospital, Pension Service, Police and Fire service, Voluntary sector and older people themselves as users and carers. We place considerable emphasis on ensuring that the older people's representatives are fully briefed so they can play a full part in discussion and decision making.
- 59 The Older People's strategy [626] takes a life stage approach and is focused around enabling older people to maintain their independence and live full and active lives within their communities. An action plan has been developed for 2005-6 and beyond with clear accountability across the partner agencies to deliver. A major Opportunity Age consultation event in May 2005, followed by a specific consultation exercise for Black and Minority Ethnic Elders, highlighted transport, lifelong learning, information, pensions and benefits, support for carers, and employment issues etc. as priorities for older people across the city. The Older People's Partnership has been asked to work with the DWP on Opportunity Age in view of the progress to date.
- 60 Our user involvement strategy for older people [627] identifies specific work with harder to reach groups within the city such as Black and minority ethnic elders, Irish people, housebound people, carers, people with mental health problems, Chinese Elders, and a newly emerging group of asylum seekers and refugees particularly from Eastern Europe. We also provide support for the independent Coventry Older People's Forum. Older people are reporting that they are feeling more involved and in control of their future. This is also borne out through the more active engagement with older people and clear commitment to feedback on progress on issues raised.
- 61 Projects to promote social inclusion for older people involve adult education, libraries services, IT training and a "Celebrating Coventry" poster campaign profiling ten older people and their life stories. The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum is supporting a project with older people to develop IT diaries. Work is under way with partners in Age Concern and the Libraries service to provide a comprehensive information directory for older people across the city in a number of different formats. We are working with key partners to develop a communication strategy for older people across the city, including minimum standards, a calendar of key events of interest to older people, and co-ordinated use of partners' newsletters, publications and websites.
- 62 The Older People's Champions network has identified practitioners in health and social care as well as other organisations who will promote the needs of older people. The Council funded Signposting project provides staff visiting older people at home with a simple checklist to identify possible referrals for targeted preventative work e.g. Fire safety, home safety and security, falls assessment, pensions and benefits checks, home care and repair etc.
- 63 The Council has a very proactive approach to promoting independence and supporting people to live in the community. This includes: Intermediate Care services which enable assessment of potential and avoids decisions about long term care being made in crisis on an acute hospital ward; the development of the domiciliary care market to enable people with more complex needs to live in their own homes; joint work with the tPCT on chronic disease management services and planned development of joint integrated health and social care locality teams; expansion of Direct Payments for older people; and the development of services which are sensitive to ethnic and cultural needs.
- 64 Close working with the Hospital Trust and tPCT has made our performance on delayed discharges one of the best in the country. This has been linked to the development of robust admission prevention services to enable people to stay in their own homes. Three locality

Section 6 – Achievement

resource centres across the city provide a rehabilitation base for intermediate care as well as tailored day centre interventions and a community resource for older people in the communities. We have taken the lead on the Single Assessment Process, working through the Coventry SAP partnership, and working towards integrated information systems to provide a single electronic record for patients/clients.

- 65 We have worked closely with the tPCT, voluntary agencies and community groups to reduce winter deaths and fuel poverty. Our partnership with the Pensions Service and advice services is supporting anLPSA target for increased benefits uptake. We are working with the tPCT and Hospital Trust to develop the use of assistive technology to help people with chronic disease, dementia or long term health and care needs to live independently.
- 66 Our 2005 Performance Review report notes that *"the council has a clear corporate vision that recognises the role that universal services have in helping all vulnerable adults live at home e.g. transport, as well as the role of specialist and targeted services, and is working to deliver this vision corporately and with partners. The range of services available to older people is excellent" The council has an excellent understanding, with partners, of national priorities and objectives for social care. Local strategic objectives are in place and reflect the diverse communities in Coventry. Work is well advanced with partners on National Service Frameworks (NSF), for example on strokes and falls... The council has a clear strategy to support people in their own homes. Performance across helped to live at home indicators is good or very good.* [628] We were very pleased to see this reflected in the formal CSCI judgement that we are serving most adults well with excellent capacity for improvement.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 67 Our last corporate assessment noted that *"There has been a continuation of the strong performance in education" and "closer working between education and social services to improve the education of looked after children..."* Since then, our progress has been impressive, with children and young people remaining a clear priority for the Council and its partners. This self assessment has highlighted just a few examples of the work which led to the recognition in the 2005 APA that our children's services consistently deliver above minimum requirements for users and that our overall capacity to improve them is good. [629]. Detailed information about our work with children is shown in our APA self assessment [630] and in our Joint Area Review self assessment currently in preparation.

CONCLUSION

- 68 It is almost two years since our last Corporate Assessment. At that time, the inspection team concluded that *"The pace of change in the organisation has been impressive. There is support throughout the organisation for the change process"* But they also said *"There is ..a recognition that there is still a long way to go before the council achieves the ambitious level of performance that it has set itself"* [631].
- 69 We believe that we have come a long way since then. We have maintained momentum and made significant improvements in our services and in the way we work. We have shown that we are "Improving Well".
- 70 The progress we have made is the result of much hard work and commitment by elected members, our employees and our partners. It is not possible to do justice to this in the space of this self assessment, so we welcome the fact that the Corporate Assessment Team is coming to see for itself. We believe you will be impressed.

If you need this information in another format or language please contact us.

Telephone: (024) 7683 1090

Minicom: (024) 7683 1093

Fax: (024) 7683 1106

e-mail: community-policy@coventry.gov.uk

