

Inspection report

January 2004



Comprehensive performance assessment

Fareham Borough Council

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Introduction

- 1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is part of the wider agenda set out in the Local Government White Paper *Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services*. The White Paper encourages greater focus on improved services for local people by freeing good councils from central government controls and restrictions, and providing poorer councils with more, and better focused, support for improvement. CPA is the first step in this process, that of making an overall judgement of where each council stands.
- 2 This report presents an analysis of the council's overall performance as well as two short diagnostic assessments which cover important areas of responsibility. It also includes an assessment of the council's benefit service by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate, and the appointed auditor's assessment of performance on each of the main elements of the code of audit practice. The appendices to this report set out further details on the findings of these assessments and the framework for CPA.
- 3 The official version of this report is also available on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk . The Audit Commission cannot verify the accuracy of and is not responsible for material contained in this report which has been reproduced by another organisation or individual.

Summary of Comprehensive Performance Assessment judgements

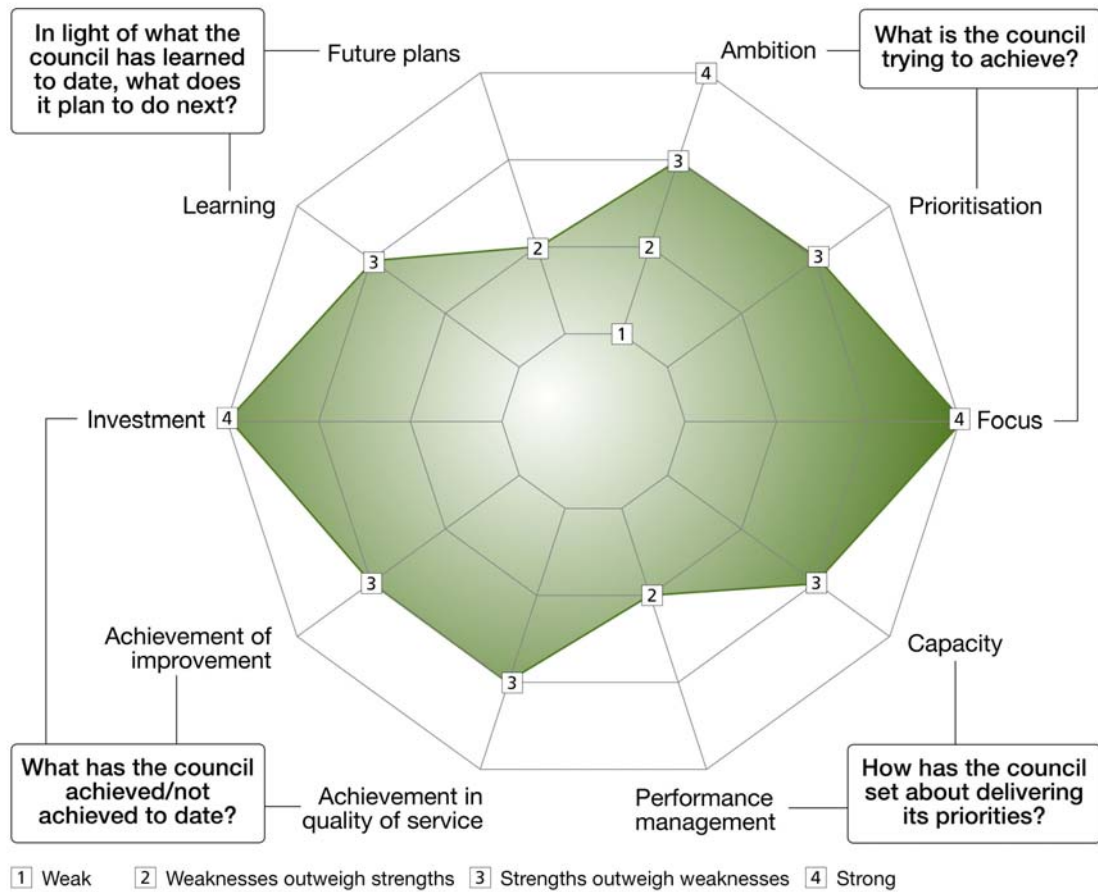
- 4 Fareham Borough Council is a good council and is improving. It is working to make the area a prosperous, safe and attractive place to live. Its longer-term ambitions relate to local expectations, and the council is aware of the priorities for improvement needed to meet them. There is a determination to succeed, demonstrated by a track record of sustained focus on issues that matter, such as town centre development and environmental improvement, although the council has yet to fully define what future success looks like.
- 5 Because of the absence of an agreed community strategy, the council has not yet secured the formal commitment from external partners to help deliver its own and shared ambitions, and the council needs to do more to define the sustainable longer-term benefits that local people will receive.
- 6 Strong leadership, together with effective, committed and focused councillors, managers and operational staff, are helping the council to deliver its ambitions and priorities. The council is aware of what it needs to do to improve services and is working with partners to help tackle issues such as waste management and community safety. The council has a prudent approach to financial management.
- 7 The council is providing good services to local people in a number of its priority areas, particularly environmental and planning services, and it is working to sustain recent improvements in performance in the longer term. Recent positive customer feedback reflects this. However, the council is aware that it still needs to improve in areas such as benefits, homelessness and affordable housing and is now working to address these.
- 8 The council is self-aware and is putting in place the right building blocks to improve services in the future. It is building on significant improvements it has made in the use of technology. It is using the e-government agenda to help change its culture and become more responsive and customer-focused. It is also consolidating its performance, risk management, scrutiny and procurement processes to support this change.
- 9 The council actively consults with local people to help shape priorities, plans and service delivery. The council is also applying the lessons it has learnt from its own experiences and from other councils.
- 10 Future plans and strategies support the delivery of corporate ambitions, although the council now needs to do more to enable the delivery of affordable housing to meet local needs. Action plans are financially secure and provide clarity over roles and responsibilities, but they are weakened by a lack of focus on outcomes for local people.

Summary of assessment scores

Top level question	Theme	Grade	Weighted score
What is the council trying to achieve?	Ambition	3	3
	Prioritisation	3	3
	Focus	4	4
How has the council set about delivering its priorities?	Capacity	3	3
	Performance management	2	2
What has the council achieved/not achieved to date?	Achievement in quality of service	3	9
	Achievement of improvement	3	9
	Investment	4	8
In light of what the council has learned to date, what does it plan to do next?	Learning	3	3
	Future plans	2	2
Weighted score			46
Corporate assessment category			Good

Diagram illustrating the themes and scores for Fareham Borough Council

Fareham Borough Council



Recommendations

- 11 It is recommended that the council:
- ◆ actively and promptly shares the findings of this assessment with the public, partner organisations, councillors and staff; and
 - ◆ uses the strengths and weaknesses identified in this report as the basis for its improvement planning.

Context

The locality

- 12 Fareham is on the south coast of England between Portsmouth and Southampton and covers an area of 74 square kilometres. The main access route is the M27 motorway, which runs the length of the borough. Fareham's location has led to rapid development over the past 50 years. The population has increased from 42,500 in 1951 to 108,000 in 2003.
- 13 Twenty per cent of the local population are aged under 16; 58 per cent are aged between 16 and 59, and 22 per cent are aged 60 and over. The proportion of the population from ethnic groups other than 'white British' is 1.7 per cent. This compares to 8.7 per cent for the South East, and 13.0 per cent for all England (2001 Census).
- 14 Fareham is an affluent area with higher average incomes than in the two neighbouring cities. Low levels of deprivation exist generally. None of the district's population live in the most deprived 25 per cent of areas of England. (ODPM Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2000). Unemployment in Fareham is low. In June 2003, there were 575 unemployed claimants in the borough, which is 0.9 per cent of the working population.
- 15 Forty-five per cent of jobs are within the technological sector. Between 1995 and 2001, there was a 54 per cent increase in high-tech manufacturing employment in Fareham. The new National Air Traffic Control Centre has recently become operational at Swanwick and has created over 750 jobs.
- 16 Fareham remains the largest town in the borough, but the 'western wards' (Locks Heath, Sarisbury, Park Gate, Warsash and Titchfield Common) are now almost as large. New industrial, commercial and office development over the past 20 years has been concentrated around Junction 9 of the M27.

The council

- 17 The Conservatives, who have 18 of the 31 councillors, control the council. The Liberal Democrats have 12 councillors, and there is 1 independent councillor.
- 18 In May 2002, the council changed to a new political structure with a leader and executive. The executive has five councillors in addition to the leader. The council has also set up six cross-party overview panels, two regulatory committees (Planning Development Control, and Licensing and Regulatory Affairs), and an appeals panel and a standards committee.
- 19 For 2003/04, the council's net revenue budget was set at £9.39 million, an increase of 1.1 per cent on 2002/03. With the money set aside for capital projects, the council has a total budget of approximately £22.87 million for 2003/04.

- 20 The peer challenge of the Fareham self-assessment took place in June 2003 and was carried out by SOLACE. Its main conclusions were that Fareham Borough Council has clear vision, and that there is shared commitment both within the organisation and with external partners to deliver. However, the enthusiasm of external partners has yet to be fully harnessed to ensure that their resources can be utilised to help deliver shared aims. The council has become more realistic and self-aware and has become a learning organisation. More work is needed to develop the scrutiny function. The council is performing in its priority areas, and there are recent signs of performance improvement, although the council recognises that more work is needed in areas such as benefits.

What is the council trying to achieve?

Ambition

- 21 Strengths outweigh weaknesses.
- 22 The council has defined its longer-term ambitions for Fareham for the next five years through its vision and corporate objectives. The corporate vision is to make Fareham 'a prosperous, safe and attractive place to be', and this is articulated through six corporate objectives:
- 'Protecting and enhancing our environment;
 - Maintaining and extending prosperity;
 - Safe and healthy place to live and work;
 - Leisure for health and fun;
 - Balance housing market; and
 - Dynamic, prudent, progressive and best practice council'.
- 23 The council's corporate objectives are realistic, as they support the community's ambitions. The council refined its vision and corporate objectives at the beginning of 2003, by building on previous corporate objectives and the results of extensive consultation carried out in 2002 for the local strategic partnership (LSP). Local community partners fully support the ambitions of the council, and the level of consultation with them by the council on this has been good.
- 24 Through its regular newsletter *Fareham Today*, the council has made local people aware of its vision and objectives. Recent consultation shows that these continue to reflect local need. Internally, councillors, managers and staff are actively involved in the development of the vision and corporate objectives and understand and support them. Realistic and inclusive ambitions will make delivery more achievable.
- 25 A community strategy setting out a vision for the area as a whole is scheduled to be completed in January 2004, two years after the LSP was first formed. This is relatively slow, but it reflects the work the council has done to help strengthen the membership of the LSP and make it more inclusive. LSP partners are happy with the support the council has been giving to the LSP.
- 26 The council has shown leadership by revising its ambitions in the interim and has introduced a process to review its ambitions and priorities every year, which is important to make sure its ambitions are consistent with those of the future community strategy. The council has also shown leadership by agreeing a set of values that outline how it should behave when dealing with the local community. There is an emphasis on leading, listening, responsiveness and dignity, which helps to promote cohesion, consultation and fair access while helping to eliminate discrimination.

- 27 Political and managerial leadership in the council is strong, and the future direction of the council is clear. The council has clear aims for key services – such as housing, environment, leisure and community safety – which staff fully understand. Councillors and managers have worked well to help shape and communicate the ambitions and secure the support of partners, staff and local people.
- 28 The council's ambitions are limited because they do not focus on long-term sustainable improvement outcomes. The council has not defined what success means in terms of the corporate objectives, which makes it more difficult for individual services to set and measure plans to achieve them. The council acknowledges this in its self-assessment and is now working to address this.

Prioritisation

- 29 Strengths outweigh weaknesses.
- 30 The council has clear priorities for improvement. It is also clear about what are not priorities. To support its vision and corporate objectives, the council has a corporate priority action plan setting out the priorities for improvement. This action plan states what the council is trying to do over the next five years. The council has agreed that it will no longer focus on arts development or tourism.
- 31 It is clear what the council's priorities are based on. As with the development of its vision and corporate objectives, a series of formal and informal consultation exercises including deputations from local people shaped the corporate priority action plan. In it, the council has set out high, medium and low priorities. After consultation with young people, the council raised the priority of neighbourhood facilities for young people. Local consultation also led to plans for a town centre cinema and swimming facilities in the western wards. The corporate priority action plan has the support of its external partners, and interim results from a recent customer satisfaction survey suggest that the current priorities reflect local views.
- 32 The council has differing priorities for performance improvement across different services. The council gives a high priority to the performance of streetscape, parks and open spaces, as it aims to provide these services to a level comparable with the best performing councils. The council aims to provide other services at only better than average performance and no more than the average cost. The council argues that these improvement differentials are based on the views of local people, who do not want an increase in local taxes to improve other services. Interim results of the 2003 customer satisfaction survey confirm this view. This shows that the council understands the priorities of local people.
- 33 The council has a track record of moving resources to better match its priorities. Over the last five years, the council has reduced certain revenue budgets, such as arts, parks, tourism and civic ceremonial, by about £750,000. It has re-invested this money in higher priority areas such as crime prevention and recycling. The council has also revised the capital programme following the development of its corporate objectives and has moved over £1million from uncommitted schemes to higher priority projects.

- 34 The council's priorities are in generally in line with regional and national ambitions. For example, it has highlighted the need to improve further its recycling performance through the county waste management partnership. The council has a good relationship with local partners and, despite the absence of a community strategy, ambitions for health and community safety match those of local partners.
- 35 However, there are areas where corporate priorities do not match the county council's, particularly youth services. The council's priority has been to provide local youth centres, but the county council is focusing on outreach workers, rather than providing youth workers to run the centres. This mismatch means that the opening hours for youth centres are restricted, and therefore they are not being fully used. The council is currently discussing possible solutions to this with the county council.
- 36 At the start of 2003, priorities in the priority action plan were clear and were shared with internal and external stakeholders through consultation, the website, and the CPA self-assessment. Recent changes to the priority action plan, following external challenge from the peer review, and the separate development of a CPA improvement plan, have confused the picture.
- 37 There is currently no single corporate action plan outlining all the initiatives required to achieve the corporate objectives. The council has set itself the challenge of providing streetscape, open spaces and parks services to a level comparable with the best performing councils, but it removed the relevant actions from the plan. It also removed plans to implement the crime and disorder strategy. This separation of corporate priority actions could dilute corporate focus.
- 38 The priority action plan does not fully support all of the corporate objectives. The 'balanced housing market' corporate objective introduced in January 2003 was not supported by clear actions within the priority action plan on meeting housing needs; for example, affordable housing. As part of the self-assessment process, the council recognised this, and the CPA improvement plan states the intention to address this. Until this work is complete, the council cannot be clear about what priority to give to housing when making decisions about investment.

Focus

- 39 Focus is very strong, with few weaknesses.
- 40 The council focuses on what matters to local people and has not been distracted. It has demonstrated this in a number of important areas which link to its priorities.
- 41 The council has kept a clear focus on town centre renewal over a long period. Applying a deliberately phased approach to the project has led to the development of a vibrant, attractive town centre with good retail facilities, which reduces the need for residents to travel to out-of-town facilities and the neighbouring cities.
- 42 Economic development is another area of long-term focus. The council took an opportunity to facilitate high bandwidth internet links that have attracted a number of hi-tech companies to the area over the last few years. The excellent telecommunications in the area have also improved the business environment for traditional industries; for example, boat building.

- 43 The council has sustained focus on maintaining and improving both its own housing stock and private sector housing. As a result, most council houses already meet the decent homes standard. There have been sustained improvements in the energy efficiency of both council homes and private sector housing. The council has also demonstrated focus by agreeing planning permission for a local refuge hostel in spite of local opposition. The council has sustained its focus on planning the long-term future of its housing stock, despite the rejection by tenants of the proposals for transfer to a housing association. The result of these improvements is sustainable housing, which contributes to preventing homelessness and ill-health.
- 44 The council has sustained focus on service areas that are not performing well. Development control was a struggling service until the council focused on changing systems and processes to improve performance. The development control service has improved and is now one of the best performing in the country. The council is now applying a similar level of focus to the benefits service.
- 45 The council has sustained focus on developing its approach to e-government and ICT over the last few years. This has resulted in staff using a modern ICT platform, together with a management information system and corporate filing system, which is reducing reliance on paper-intensive systems and is helping to generate efficiencies, such as in environmental health. The focus on e-government and development of the website has helped improve access to the council for local people.
- 46 Business planning is helping councillors, managers and staff focus on corporate objectives. Service and performance plans are shaped explicitly around their delivery. Councillor and management meetings are well managed and include discussions on how issues relate to the corporate objectives. The council has also developed a two-year forward programme ensuring that agendas remain focused on the corporate objectives. As a result, the executive and the senior management team clearly understand their roles and are focused on delivering their individual and combined responsibilities.
- 47 The council has changed its best value review programme to maintain focus. The review programme now focuses on one major cross-cutting review each year, based around one of the key corporate objectives. The council has set up a new overview panel following the 'clean and tidy borough' review, to help focus on the implementation of the improvement plan.
- 48 In the past, the council has had difficulties in using its project management systems to maintain focus. The self-assessment indicates that the council did not adopt a systematic approach to project management for the Henry Cort Millennium project in the town centre. In response to this, the council has now established a project management system to help manage all future major projects.

How has the council set about delivering its priorities?

Capacity

- 49 Strengths outweigh weaknesses.
- 50 The council has enough capable and skilled people to achieve change. Councillors, managers and staff are knowledgeable about corporate, service and local issues and understand what the organisation is trying to achieve.
- 51 The executive and the corporate management team are providing clear leadership during a period of internal change. The council has made significant investment in new technology. It has introduced a corporate filing system and embedded delivery of the e-government agenda in all services, which is changing the way the council operates and is providing more customer-focused and responsive service. The council is introducing further changes to its working practices, aimed at generating a 10 per cent reduction in employment costs over the next three years. Because of the way these changes are being managed, they are not adversely affecting morale or sickness levels. Staff understand and support the changes being made.
- 52 Officers and councillors are clear about what they are responsible and accountable for. There is a good working relationship between councillors and officers, based on mutual respect, professionalism and a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities. Councillors feel well supported by officers. There are good relationships between members of the executive and the overview panels, and between the various management teams. Councillor meetings are well managed, inclusive and allow local people to contribute to the debate. Officer meetings are also well managed and focused on the delivery of corporate objectives.
- 53 The council's code of corporate governance, and the introduction of a standards committee, supports its ethical framework. The effectiveness of the standards committee has yet to be tested, but the self-assessment highlighted the need for the proactive promotion of ethical standards to councillors and officers, to prevent ethical issues arising.
- 54 Partnerships to deliver local initiatives and to build capacity are effective. The council is a member of Project Integra, the county-wide waste management partnership. It is also involved in a number of other partnerships, including CCTV, building control and floating support services with Gosport Borough Council, legal services, and a number of a number of community safety initiatives. It is also contributing to the new Solent transport partnership looking at improving local transport congestion problems. Although there are differences of view with the county council over transportation issues, the council has been supportive of the county council's plans to develop a light rapid transport system between Fareham and Portsmouth, which aims to reduce the local congestion problems. Partnership arrangements with the voluntary sector are not always formalised, leading to a lack of clarity on respective roles and outcomes.
- 55 The council's self-assessment shows that overview panels are not fully effective in scrutinising council activities. There is overlap between the panels, involvement in best value reviews is limited, and some councillors feel that the panels could improve their effectiveness in holding the executive to account.

Performance management

- 56 Weaknesses outweigh strengths.
- 57 The performance management system in place across most of the council is not as effective as it could be. Councillors receive performance reports quarterly, focusing mainly on best value performance indicators. Reports are full of information, but they do not provide sufficient analysis on performance trends and the key issues that require councillor attention. The impact of this is that the performance of the benefit service has been historically weak, and that nearly half of the council's 2002/03 performance targets were not met in 2002/03.
- 58 Improvements are being made to improve the performance management system, but these are not yet fully embedded. The council is in the process of introducing online performance reports for a number of services direct from the council's management information system. This is an improvement, and the corporate management team has recently taken advantage of this. However, it has yet to be extended to councillors and all of the council's service units. The timescales for achieving this, together with the quality, quantity and timeliness of performance information that will be available at all levels of the organisation, are not yet clear.
- 59 Corporate objectives lack definite measures of success. The lack of up-to-date analysis of performance against measurable corporate outcomes means that managers, councillors and local people cannot readily judge how well the council is delivering against its objectives.
- 60 The council's business planning approach is not making clear links between financial inputs and service delivery. Service and business plans bring together the financial and service planning process to help decision makers understand and manage performance and budgets. However, the council is not consistently focusing these plans on service outcomes. Therefore, it is not always possible to determine the true impact spending is having on service delivery.
- 61 Feedback given to local people in publications such as the best value performance plan summary in *Fareham Today* lacks analysis on how well the council is delivering against best value indicators. This makes it difficult for local stakeholders to understand how the council is performing.
- 62 Although the council is in the process of introducing a new performance management framework, the current arrangements have, in the past, enabled the council to measure performance and helped improve services that were not performing well. Councillors and managers have received performance information, albeit lacking analysis, and the performance framework has been supported by the portfolio holder for service improvement and performance. A particular success has been the turnaround of the development control service, where processing times for planning applications were poor. In response, the council made a number of system and personnel changes, and now the service is performing in line with the best performing councils in the country. The benefits service is another example where the council recognised a need for improvement and recently produced a 'get well plan' in response. The performance management framework has now also identified the need to reduce the number of people in bed and breakfast accommodation.

- 63 Staff are kept informed, and there is a staff appraisal system in place; but this is not fully effective in linking individual performance to corporate objectives. The council communicates well with staff through the leader's presentations on vision and objectives, and through regular cascade team meetings. Staff appraisals, which set and monitor personal objectives, have been in operation throughout the organisation since 1994. The council received the Investors in People re-accreditation in 2003. However, in the self-assessment, the council has acknowledged that there is inconsistency in setting individual objectives, which has meant that not all staff have been set specific and measurable targets explicitly linked to corporate goals. This means that it is not always possible for staff to understand fully how they contribute to the overall performance of the council.
- 64 The executive and the corporate management team have assessed the risks faced at a corporate level, but risk management has yet to be fully embedded, as work is still going on to identify and manage operational and project risk. It has adopted a risk management system and has considered the major corporate risks, particularly ICT arrangements. Individual services are currently developing risk registers, which will help the council understand, manage and minimise risk.
- 65 Financial management is strong, and the council is prudent with money. It manages its finances well. It has received positive external auditor judgements, particularly on financial standing and standards of financial conduct.

What has the council achieved / not achieved to date?

Achievement in quality of service

- 66 Strengths outweigh weaknesses in this area.
- 67 The council's performance is average compared to other councils, based on national performance indicators. For 2001/02, 8 (14 per cent) of the comparable indicators were in the best 25 per cent nationally, including processing of planning applications, local tax collection rates, and property and vehicle crime. Above average performance was achieved in a further 18 (32 per cent). Of the remaining indicators, 15 (27 per cent) were in the worst 25 per cent. Notable areas of poor performance include homelessness, benefits and the amount of waste collected from households. The council's performance in 2002/03 against its own targets is mixed. Performance indicators show that the council met 55 per cent of targets, with 45 per cent not met.
- 68 The quality of service the council is currently providing in its priority areas is described in the following paragraphs.

Protecting and enhancing the environment

- 69 The council is performing well in a number of services that help to protect and enhance the local area. The council has also achieved Beacon Status through Project Integra in conjunction with other Hampshire districts and the county council. Its recycling performance is high, with 22 per cent of waste recycled in 2002/03, which exceeds its annual target of 18.5 per cent. The council knows it must significantly increase recycling, particularly green waste, to meet the statutory target of 40 per cent by 2005. The council is collecting too much household waste, and performance in 2001/02 was comparable with the worst performing councils. Performance in processing planning applications is good. The 2001/02 performance indicators show that 73 per cent of applications were processed within government targets. This performance matches that of the best performing councils nationally. The council has also exceeded all of its 2002/03 planning targets. Audit Commission inspections in 2001 judged that the council is delivering good refuse collection/recycling and planning services.
- 70 The council has done a number of things to enhance the environment and improve access, including treatment and regeneration of contaminated land into sport pitches, development of Hill Head foreshore, sponsored maintenance schemes for roundabouts to make the borough more attractive, and the creation five new parks, changing open spaces into recreational areas.
- 71 Fareham is a well-maintained and attractive area, and local people are happy with the council's performance in this area. Interim customer feedback indicates that 77 per cent of people are satisfied with the local parks and open spaces, 68 per cent believe the area is litter-free and 90 per cent are satisfied with the council's waste collection service. Fifty-nine per cent of users of the planning service are satisfied.

Maintaining and extending prosperity

- 72 The council supports the local economy. The town centre redevelopment, which so far has provided a covered shopping area with a good range of shops, public art in the high street and recreational facilities, is close to completion. Economic development has been mainly in the technological sector. Through its planning processes, the council facilitated the development of Cams Hall – a hi-tech business park – with the highest bandwidth internet connection available. This is providing excellent communication links that are supporting existing businesses and attracting new companies. The council provides accommodation for small businesses to develop and encourages business networking and is working in partnership with other councils to market and promote the area.
- 73 The benefits service is not fully supporting the maintaining and extending prosperity objective. The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate judged that the council was providing a ‘fair’ benefits service. It is currently taking the council over 50 days to process benefits claims, significantly longer than the government target of 36 days and the council’s own annual target of 40 days. This will have a negative effect on claimants and causes unnecessary hardship.

A safe and healthy place to live and work

- 74 The council is working to make Fareham a safer and healthier place. It promotes community safety through the local crime and disorder reduction partnership. Crime rates in 2001/02, particularly domestic burglaries and theft of vehicles, are comparable with the best performing partnerships, although the council did not meet its own crime targets in 2002/03. Over the last two years, the council has issued three antisocial behaviour orders and three acceptable behaviour contracts. It has introduced crime reduction initiatives, such as the CCTV partnership with Gosport Borough Council and installing door entry systems in flats with localised crime problems.
- 75 The council meets best practice on environmental health. It has introduced risk-based food and health and safety inspections and a 24-hour telephone and mobile phone picture texting reporting service. These have resulted in successful prosecutions. The council promotes energy efficiency, and 2,850 homes have benefited from this in the last three years.

Leisure for health and fun

- 76 The council supports leisure for local people. Its arts centre attracts 19,000 people each year and, in partnership with the county council, provides a local museum. In 2002/03, visitor targets were exceeded. By providing grants, the council has helped to enhance local woodland areas and has established a voluntary countryside maintenance service. Local play facilities are in good condition. Interim customer satisfaction with cultural and recreational facilities is good, with 69 per cent of local people satisfied and only 7 per cent not satisfied.

A balanced housing market

- 77 Performance in balancing the housing market is mixed. The council has provided enough new housing to meet structure plan housing allocations. Fareham has the highest proportion of owner-occupiers in Hampshire, and private sector housing is in a good condition. Council houses are also in relatively good condition, with over 72 per cent meeting the decent homes standard, which matches the target the council set itself. Satisfaction with the housing repairs service was 96 per cent in 2002. To develop the supporting people programme the council, in partnership with Gosport Borough Council, has introduced joint floating support services. This aims to help vulnerable people to stay in their tenancies, and to prevent repeat homelessness.
- 78 Performance on homelessness is weak. The waiting list for affordable housing is currently high, and the number of people living in all forms of temporary accommodation was 146 in July 2003. The average stay in bed and breakfast accommodation was 23 weeks in 2002/03, and the council has set a target to reduce this to 17 weeks in 2003/04. In September 2003, 31 homeless families in bed and breakfast were waiting to be re-housed; the government target is zero families in bed and breakfast by March 2004. Current performance has a detrimental impact on the lifestyle of the homelessness and represents poor value for money.

A dynamic, prudent, progressive and best practice council

- 79 The council is performing well on electronic access to services, with 60 per cent of services now available. The council's main website is user-friendly and provides easy access to council documents, together with an online payment facility. Tax collection rates are very good. The council's performance in 2001/02 was comparable with the best performing councils nationally, and the council has met its collection targets in 2002/03, with 99.9 per cent of business rates and 98.8 per cent of council tax collected. In 2001/02, the council paid 90 per cent of invoices on time, which compares with the average performance nationally; but in 2002/03, the council failed to meet its own target of 100 per cent. Complaints to the local government ombudsman about the council are relatively low. The council has a good equalities plan; it provides a language line and hearing loop, produces summary material in different languages, and has access to a translation service. However, the council does not consistently promote these facilities.

Achievement of improvement

- 80 Strengths outweigh weaknesses.
- 81 Between 2000/01 and 2001/02, the council's performance showed no clear trend of improvement against comparable national performance indicators. Thirteen (42 per cent) of these indicators showed an improvement in performance, including planning processing, local tax collection rates, and the accuracy of benefits processing. However, 18 (58 per cent) of indicators did not improve, including recycling, the amount of waste collected from households, and the time taken to process benefits claims.

- 82 Although there is no longer-term trend of improvement, there are now recent signs that performance is generally improving in priority areas. The 2002/03 performance indicators demonstrate that more have improved since 2001/02 than declined. Interim feedback from a 2003 customer survey indicates that service users are noticing improvements in individual services. The following paragraphs describe changes in performance within the council's priority areas.

Protecting and enhancing the environment

- 83 Performance indicators for 2002/03 show that waste recycling has increased from 15 per cent to 22 per cent in the last year, and the council is reducing the amount of waste collected from households by reducing the size of bins. Customer satisfaction with environmental services has increased from 63 per cent in 2000 to 77 per cent in 2003. Planning services are improving, with the percentage of planning applications processed within government targets increasing from 67 per cent in 2000/01 to 73 per cent in 2001/02. Recent improvements in customer satisfaction with the planning service reflect the progress made.

Maintaining and extending prosperity

- 84 The council has played a key role in facilitating economic development in the area, helping to increase employment opportunities.
- 85 There have been no real improvements in the processing of benefits claims and, in some cases, performance has deteriorated between 2001/02 and 2002/03, although there are some very recent signs of recovery. This is recognised by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate, who judged the council's capacity to improve as 'fair to good'.

Safe and healthy place to live and work

- 86 Most measures of crime show it is reducing. Cases of domestic burglaries and vehicle theft have reduced in the last year, although criminal damage is increasing. The council supports a number of initiatives to reduce crime including CCTV, partnership working with the police, promoting planning designs that help to reduce crime, improvements to car parks, inspections and door entry schemes. Fear of crime remains an important issue for local people, but customer feedback to assess whether these initiatives are helping reducing this fear in line with the council's target is not yet available.

Leisure for health and for fun

- 87 The council has enhanced leisure and community facilities in recent years. It has upgraded the arts centre, developed new community facilities, and provided 11 new play areas. The number of people visiting the museum has increased. The council has improved access to leisure facilities by providing free swimming and skateboarding during school holidays. It has also improved changing facilities in the leisure centre. Recent increases in customer satisfaction reflect the improvements made in cultural services.

A balanced housing market

- 88 The council has had mixed success in improving housing services and in meeting housing needs. It has improved energy efficiency in council houses, increased the amount of previously developed land used for housing, and has achieved densities of over 30 dwellings per hectare, which helps to maximise the use of land. The average in the South East for greenfield sites is 22 dwellings per hectare. Under the Government's sustainable communities plan, communities will be expected to achieve densities of at least 30 dwellings per hectare on larger sites.
- 89 Progress made towards meeting the decent homes standard has been good, with over 270 houses improved in the last two years. Examples of work completed include roof replacements, CCTV and door entry systems in flats. However, progress has slowed during 2003/04 due to delays in re-housing some tenants while their homes are improved, and a pilot partnering project to replace roofs has not started.
- 90 The council and its partners have provided 424 affordable homes from all sources in the last five years. However, the number of homes provided each year has declined during this period, and the council has not met its target of building 75 new build affordable houses each year in four of the five last years.
- 91 The provision of new housing for rent is well below assessed needs. The number of people in bed and breakfast accommodation has continued to rise, as have the number of people in temporary accommodation.

Dynamic, prudent, progressive and best practice council

- 92 Over the last two years, electronic access to services has improved from 19 per cent to 60 per cent. The council has also improved the efficiency of its collection and payment systems. The self-assessment describes customer complaints handling as an area of weakness. Recent customer satisfaction results show that the council has now overcome this problem.
- 93 The council has improved access to its buildings in response to the Disability Discrimination Act, although people with disabilities want to see further improvements to the main reception area in the civic centre.
- 94 There have been no real improvements in the level of overall customer satisfaction. In 2000, 68 per cent of local people were satisfied with the council. Interim results for 2003 indicate that 69 per cent are now satisfied.

Investment

- 95 This is an area of strength.
- 96 The council is putting in place the right building blocks to enhance its capacity to deliver against its priorities. Investments have been made that are already helping the council reduce costs, re-direct resources to priority spending areas, make processes more efficient, and help to focus service delivery on the customer.

- 97 The council is changing its culture and working practices through its organisational transformation strategy. The aim of the strategy is to make the council a responsive, technology- and customer-based organisation. The council has made clear progress in delivering tangible improvements on ICT. It has introduced a single corporate filing system, making document management more efficient. This will also help the council to respond to the future requirements of the Freedom of Information Act. It has extended the use of laptops and PCs to councillors who have fast and reliable access to the member filing system. The council is using modern software packages, and staff are computer-literate. The public are benefiting from this technological drive through the council's website, which is promoting community engagement.
- 98 The council has started to implement its three-year organisation transformation strategy, which is now in the process of helping to deliver a 10 per cent saving on employment costs. The council intends to re-invest these efficiency savings into other services. Councillors, managers and staff are fully committed to this and are identifying potential efficiency savings. Progress has already been made in changing the way individual services operate and deal with the public; for example, through multi-purpose environmental health inspections, and within planning and secretarial services.
- 99 Performance management is improving. The council has developed its management information system to provide performance information online, with a 'traffic light' system to identify problems early. The corporate management team has recently begun to use this approach, with the intention that it is extended across the council in the future. The council is also improving staff performance reviews to consistently identify and measure individual targets against corporate and service objectives.
- 100 Risk management is being embedded across the council. Following its investments in corporate risk management, the council is clear about the strategic risks that it faces, particularly on ICT. It is now using risk management software to develop and consolidate service risk action plans.
- 101 The council has a new procurement strategy in place that emphasises the principles of best value and maps out the expectations, processes and controls needed to secure effective procurement.
- 102 The council has recognised the deficiencies in its overview function and has agreed to a single scrutiny board to provide more challenge to the executive, as well as retaining flexibility to support policymaking.
- 103 The council recognises that measures of corporate success are not clear, and that it does not have action plans that focus on results and directly support corporate objectives. In response, it is close to defining measures of success to support the delivery of corporate objectives over the next 20 years.
- 104 The council has a track record of securing external resources. The council provided £7 million by renegotiating its lease with the Fareham Shopping Centre. The council's self-assessment indicates that it received over £1 million from property developers for parks, play areas and sports pitches over the last three years. In addition, the council's contribution to matched funding schemes of £1.9 million has helped facilitate projects with a total value of £8.3 million. The medium-term financial plan outlines how these resources will be distributed in line with the corporate priorities.

- 105 The council has responded positively to external challenge. It has re-focused best value reviews around corporate objectives in response to national and local advice, and they now include more involvement of outside stakeholders. A benefit from this new approach is the action plan from the 'clean and tidy borough' review, which is helping to improve the local streetscene. The council is making changes following the SOLACE pre-CPA peer challenge and its Investors in People assessment; for example, a review of priorities and of staff appraisals. It has improved its asset management plan and is working to improve its housing strategy following criticisms from the Government Office for the South East.
- 106 The council is currently working to strengthen its future plans. It has carried out extensive consultation with stakeholders and has made good progress towards producing a new housing strategy. With support from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Bed and Breakfast Unit, the council has developed a homelessness service action plan. This focuses on achieving the target to have no families in bed and breakfast, and on preventing people becoming homeless. The human resources and social inclusion strategies are close to completion, although work on the housing revenue account (HRA) business plan is at an early stage. The local plan expires in 2006 and, in response to changing legislation, the council is working to develop a draft local development framework by spring 2005 for adoption in 2006. These investments will help the council to deliver its ambitions in the future.
- 107 The council is currently discussing a number of innovative proposals to increase its recycling performance to meet the challenging 40 per cent government target. These include green waste collection, textile and glass 'bring' sites, schools and kerbside glass collections. These plans, together with the financial resources needed, are yet to be agreed. However, the council has agreed that recycling is a high priority on its reserve list of new capital action schemes, and this will be addressed when future funding becomes available.

In the light of what the council has learned to date, what does it plan to do next?

Learning

- 108 Strengths outweigh weaknesses.
- 109 The council is self-aware and has learned from its own experiences. It knows what it has done well and the problems it still faces. This is demonstrated by its organisational transformation strategy, which identifies 20 key areas for improvement in the way the council operates around issues such as working practices, performance management, procurement and information management.
- 110 The council has identified reasons that services or projects have not been successful and has responded accordingly. For example, the development control service was not performing well in dealing with planning proposals, but the council responded and is now processing planning applications relatively quickly. Through its development of the Henry Cort Millennium Project, the council realised it needed to strengthen its approach to project management. In response, it is adopting PRINCE2 project management principles across the council. These experiences will help the council to avoid problems in future projects.
- 111 The council actively learns from others in the private and public sector and makes changes as a result. It improved the development control service by comparing performance and processes with other councils and making the necessary changes to improve services. The council has shaped its approach to ICT and e-government, following discussions with high profile and successful private sector businesses. The council is also learning from other partners within Project Integra to develop proposals, such as green waste and glass kerbside collections, to help meet its future recycling targets.
- 112 The council has shown that it can learn from local people. It revised its plans for improvements to facilities for young people in the light of discussions with young people. It is also actively using feedback from tenants in implementing its decent homes programme, leading to improvements in design.
- 113 The council is willing to be self-critical and to involve others in challenging its performance. It involved external housing partners in developing its CPA balancing housing markets self-assessment. This is helping the council to strengthen its housing strategies in line with the new corporate objective on balanced housing markets. The council has also recently sought advice from the ODPM Bed and Breakfast Unit to help improve services for homeless people.
- 114 Learning is shared throughout the council. There are examples where different departments are supporting each other, such as development control and the benefits section on the implementation of the performance management framework, to avoid repeating mistakes. In addition, the programme officers group, which is there to help manage issues that cross service boundaries, also runs corporate topic groups for staff to share learning on issues such as ICT, procurement, risk management, and health and safety. Different services are learning from each other. The housing service is drawing on the experiences of other services as it enhances its ICT and management information provision. It is also learning from environmental services to help implement measures to increase recycling by council tenants in flats and maisonettes.

- 115 The employment of a training and development manager, and the availability of an open learning centre for councillors and staff, also support learning. The council is investing in councillor training; for example, workshops before councillor meetings on issues such as housing allocations and the role of the county council drug action team. Councillors are satisfied with the level of training and support they receive. However, the council knows it needs to introduce more personalised training plans for councillors to ensure that training focuses on specific needs.
- 116 The council is not actively learning from all of its service users. The self-assessment highlighted that the council needs to explore ways of introducing a more systematic process of external challenge from and structured dialogue with local people. It also recognises it needs to make better links with the black and ethnic population to ensure that it responds to the needs of the whole population. In addition, the council does not consistently provide feedback to consultees to explain how it has responded to their views. These issues are important because they ensure the council understands the needs of all service users, and that they in turn feel listened to and understand the reasons for the council's actions.

Future plans

- 117 Weaknesses outweigh strengths.
- 118 The LSP is still developing after two years and does not plan to finalise its community strategy until early 2004. Relationships with local partners are good, but until a community strategy and any subsequent action plans are agreed, the council cannot be confident that external partners can provide the commitment and resources required to help deliver corporate objectives.
- 119 The council faces significant challenges in building sufficient new affordable housing. It is not clear how it is planning to achieve its target of 50 affordable homes per year over the next five years. National changes to housing finance and a lack of schemes with planning permission have limited the council's ability to generate money to invest in affordable housing.
- 120 Until recently, the council and its partners have received significant funding from the Housing Corporation. However, this fell to £155,000 in 2003/04, and the council made no bids under the transitional arrangements for local authority social housing grant. In 2003/04, it set a capital budget of £2.1 million for enabling housing; but rather than spend this now, the council is first evaluating the impact of housing finance changes and assessing how to make best use of its resources.
- 121 The council has not strengthened its own planning policies, through supplementary planning guidance, to enable more affordable housing on smaller urban sites. This follows the change in emphasis nationally towards building on previously developed land. The impact of not planning for affordable housing is likely to be an increase in the number of people living in temporary accommodation. However in 2004, the council intends to update its affordable housing strategy and carry out a best value review on the 'balanced housing market' corporate objective. There are no plans in place to increase the supply of affordable housing in the short term.

- 122 The council's plans to achieve the government targets on recycling by 2005 are unclear. Although the council is currently in the process of assessing ways to achieve this challenging target through green waste and glass kerbside collection, no clear action plans, together with the associated financial commitment, have been agreed.
- 123 Action planning within the council is not fully effective. Many plans focus on inputs, including the corporate priority action plan, but they do not always state what the desired result will be in terms of outcomes for local people. This is because the council has not fully defined what success looks like at a corporate level, and therefore it is difficult to plan to deliver results that the council has yet to define. Action plans include relevant responsibilities, accountabilities and milestones, but do not always identify the opportunity costs in terms of staff time. This means that the council cannot fully recognise the capacity implications of its future plans and, even with additional financial resources, may not have the necessary staff to deliver.
- 124 External assessment of the council's strategies by the Government Office for the South East is mixed. The capital strategy and asset management plan have both been assessed as 'good', but the housing strategy and housing revenue account business plan are rated as 'average'.
- 125 The council has a range of other strategies that support the corporate objectives. These include the economic development strategy, youth strategy, capital strategy, finance strategy, and implementing electronic government strategy. These are good. The corporate priority action plan addresses many current issues and, together with the CPA improvement plan, identifies the projects needed to deliver corporate objectives.
- 126 Local stakeholders are engaged in developing the council's plans. Staff are involved in service and business planning processes. Local people are encouraged to express their views, and this has led to changes in the council's direction on leisure and youth issues. A very high response rate to the recent consultation exercise, over 50 per cent, suggests that local people are keen to engage with the council.
- 127 The council is prudent and only commits to priorities for improvement that are fully financed. Its medium-term financial strategy projects a current shortfall of £4.3 million between the finances needed to deliver the long-term priority action plan in totality and those that are currently available. This assessment is based on known, rather than estimated resources. The council has identified longer-term additional sources of finance but will not commit to spending this money until it is formally secured. The approach the council is adopting is sensible and avoids it committing to plans it cannot ultimately deliver.
- 128 The council has made clear its commitment to equalities. It produced a policy statement in 2001, and it updated this in 2003 by producing a corporate equalities plan and race equality statement. This is supported by a comprehensive action plan, requiring services to monitor the ethnicity of users, and to record racial incidents. The council has set a target to meet level 5 of the equalities standard for local government by 2005/06.

Summary of theme scores and strengths / weaknesses

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Ambition	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realistic five-year corporate objectives, supporting community ambitions Corporate objectives informed by local consultation. Political and managerial leadership Councillors, staff, external partners and local people support corporate objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate objectives not defined in terms of clear and measurable outcomes to local people
Prioritisation	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priorities for improvements generally supporting corporate objectives. Basis for priorities clear Non-priority areas identified Corporate objectives generally in line with local, regional and national priorities Effective communication of priorities Resources shifted to match priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent revisions to corporate priority action plan not fully reflecting the stated priorities Provision of services to young people not aligned with county council Priorities for affordable housing not clear
Focus	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long- and short-term focus has been demonstrated – town centre redevelopment, economic development, e-government Mechanisms in place support focus – performance management, best value, service planning, agendas and meetings 	
Capacity	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skilled and motivated councillors and staff in place Effective councillor and management meetings Executive and managers providing leadership Ethical framework in place Partnerships building capacity and delivering local initiatives Working practices streamlined through e-government and ICT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview panels not providing effective scrutiny Partnerships with the voluntary sector not formalised
Performance management	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of struggling services – benefits and previously development control High-level corporate risk management in place Staff appraisal system in place Strong financial management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance reports lack analysis, are not timely and are not linked to corporate outcomes New performance management system in operation across only part of the council Performance targets not consistently being met SMART objectives not universally set for staff Business plans not focused on service outcomes Performance reports to local people not clear

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Achievement in quality of service	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good level of service delivery in many corporate priorities: recycling, planning, economic development • Locality well maintained • Low crime rates • Positive customer satisfaction in many services • Housing allocations met • Good quality of housing stock • Electronic working embedded • Efficient collection and payment systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2001/02 performance indicators are average in comparison with other councils nationally • Benefits performance in processing claims is poor • High housing waiting lists and levels of homelessness.
Achievement of improvement	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recent performance indicators show a trend of improvement in priority areas • Improvements in service user satisfaction levels • Recycling rates improving • Planning service improving • Crime is reducing • Improvements in electronic service provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sustained improvement in overall customer satisfaction • No tangible improvement in processing benefits claims • Delivery of affordable housing declining • Homelessness and use of temporary accommodation are increasing
Investment	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key building blocks for improvement in place – risk and performance management, scrutiny, measures of success, working practices, improving plans • Resources being generated – from efficiency savings, revisions to spending programmes, Section 106 agreements, matched funding schemes • Responding to external challenge from government office, IIP, peer challenge 	
Learning	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-aware of improvements and investments needed • Actively learning from others • Learning shared across the council • Learning is leading to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured dialogue with service user groups is not consistent
Future plans	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive approach to future planning • Good capital strategy and asset management plan • Prudent approach to financial planning • Milestones, accountabilities and financial resources identified in plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of certainty about ability to implement corporate plans in advance of community strategy • Ability to resource affordable housing plans are unclear • Action planning not focused on outcomes and opportunity costs not explicit • Formal commitment of external partners not yet secure • Average housing strategy and HRA business plan • Important plans not fully developed or agreed; housing strategy, plans to meet recycling targets

Scoring key:

1 - Weak

2 - Weaknesses outweigh strengths

3 - Strengths outweigh weaknesses

4 - Strong

Appendix 1 - Decent homes standard (DHS) diagnostic assessment

What is the council trying to achieve in relation to the standard? Does the council know the condition of their housing stock and their compliance with the decent homes standard?

- 129 The council is clear about what it is trying to achieve, and it has explored the options available to meet the decent homes standard. However, there are weaknesses in information about stock condition and database systems. Strengths outweigh weaknesses.
- 130 The council has clear aims for its housing stock. One of the council's six corporate objectives is 'We will aim to create a balanced housing market that provides good quality housing with a range of dwelling types to meet local needs'. The HRA business plan priorities include 'delivering a decent home to every tenant', 'clearing our backlog of outstanding repairs', and 'increasing tenant involvement in the service'. The housing strategy clearly links to the priorities set out in the *South East Regional Housing Statement 2002-2005*. The housing service has taken account of the council's aims on community safety, recycling and maintaining open space to a high standard. As a result, managers are clear about their role in ensuring that they meet these wider goals.
- 131 The council's approach demonstrates ambition. It aims to meet the decent homes standard by 2010, but it is also developing a 'decent homes plus' standard. This includes improvements to security measures, energy efficiency, and recycling facilities. This is appropriate because most of the council's housing already meets the standard and is in high demand. This demonstrates that the council is planning improvements for tenants and leaseholders that go beyond meeting the decent homes standard, and which support the council's wider goals.
- 132 There is good information about demand for housing and unmet needs. The council worked with neighbouring councils to produce an updated housing needs study covering Portsmouth, Gosport, Havant and Fareham. This was published in 2003 and provides strong evidence of high and increasing demand for general needs housing. The council has weaker information about the need for sheltered housing. It predicts that numbers of older people will increase, but it has not fully assessed whether the council's existing sheltered housing will meet future needs.
- 133 The council is working to improve its housing strategies and plans. The Government Office for the South East rated the housing strategy and HRA business plan for 2002/03 as 'average'. The council accepts the need to strengthen these strategies, in particular by including specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) resourced action plans. The council is working to develop a new housing strategy and revised HRA business plan that will include clearer links to corporate priorities, more evidence of achievements, response to tenant feedback, and the rationale for resource decisions. It has carried out extensive consultation with stakeholders and has made good progress towards producing the new housing strategy. However, it still needs to make the action plan SMART and to assess the resources needed. Work on the new HRA business plan is at an early stage.

- 134 The council has explored the options available for future investment in its housing stock. In 2001, it proposed transferring its stock to a housing association. However, a ballot of tenants narrowly rejected the transfer. The council has since commissioned work from consultants to examine the options available. These include transfer, retaining the stock, the creation of an arms length management organisation, and use of the private finance initiative. It has now revised its plans to reflect the government requirement to carry out a full options appraisal by 2006. The council has learned from its previous attempt at transfer, and it recognises in its corporate self-assessment that it will need to involve users more effectively from the start of the options appraisal. The result of the council's approach is that it has a good understanding of the options available and has been able to remain focused on planning the future of its housing stock.
- 135 The council has evaluated options for components of its decent homes programme. It needs to replace unpopular bedsits in both general needs and sheltered housing, which do not meet the decent homes standard. It has evaluated two options for converting these into one-bedroom flats. Tenants were invited to view a completed conversion and give feedback. The effect of this approach is to replace unsuitable and unpopular housing with more desirable accommodation, for which there is high demand.
- 136 The council has assessed the resources needed to achieve the decent homes standard. Its HRA capital programme for 2003/04 is £2.4 million, of which £2.2 million comes from the major repairs allowance from the Government and capital contributions from housing revenue. The capital programme covers work required to meet the decent homes standard and extra work needed to meet the council's 'decent homes plus' standard. The council plans to achieve these without making use of capital receipts such as 'right to buy' sales. It will use these receipts to enable affordable housing and to improve private sector housing. This approach means that the council is able to meet the decent homes standard and make additional improvements without diverting resources from other priorities.
- 137 The council has analysed the impact of changes in its assumptions. The HRA business plan assesses the effect of changes to management and maintenance allowances, rent restructuring, and the impact of council house sales. The council has assessed that its plans are unaffected by recent changes to the housing subsidy regime. It has concluded that it will be able to meet the decent homes standard by 2010 while retaining its stock, but it faces a shortfall in capital investment beyond 2012.
- 138 The council has improved access to its services. It provides textphone, interpreting services and facilities for making information accessible in large print and audiotape. However, accessible information is not consistently advertised. As part of the council's corporate equality plan, the housing service has developed a detailed action plan. This includes improving monitoring use of services, staff training on disability awareness, and improving the response to racial harassment and domestic violence.

- 139 Partners, tenants and the public are involved in developing aims for housing. Staff, partners and other stakeholders have taken part in developing the new housing strategy and the proposed 'decent homes plus' standard. The council involves tenants through borough and area panels, and through a specific group for leaseholders. A focus group of tenants and leaseholders told us that they want the council to improve the standard of repairs and cleaning, maintain the whole environment in estates, and improve communication and customer service. These priorities are reflected in the council's corporate objectives and its improvement plans for housing. This demonstrates that the council is focusing its plans on issues that are important for users.
- 140 The council needs to communicate more clearly how it is acting on users' views and concerns. It provides clear information for tenants and leaseholders through regular newsletters and through its magazine *Fareham Today*, both of which provide information about the council's performance and user satisfaction. While there is high overall satisfaction with tenant participation, people involved in tenant and leaseholder panels told us that they want the council to do more to show how it is listening and responding. Key documents such as the housing strategy and HRA business plan do not make explicit how the council is responding to the views of users. The council's self-assessment for decent homes recognises that it needs to meaningfully involve tenants and leaseholders in developing its future plans. The council needs to address this in order to ensure tenants actively take part in its planned option appraisal.
- 141 The council does not have full and up-to-date information about the condition of its housing. It completed its stock condition survey in November 2000, before the introduction of the decent homes standard. The survey followed government guidance and provided detailed information about the condition of the council's housing, and associated buildings, fencing and parking areas. It included all housing types, and it assessed the external condition of all flats and maisonettes. However, the survey had three weaknesses:
- ◆ The survey sampled 15 per cent of houses, and the internal condition of 15 per cent of flats and maisonettes. This sample is sufficient to give an estimate of the overall state of the housing stock, but it is too small to predict accurately which homes do not meet the standard.
 - ◆ There was no survey of asbestos. The need for major work to remove asbestos is low, as the council has previously carried out a removal programme. It has recently carried out an asbestos survey of 10 per cent of its homes, which found no high-risk asbestos. The council is planning a detailed survey that will enable it to produce an asbestos register.
 - ◆ The survey did not identify homes likely to become non-decent in the future. This is a significant risk as the council is not yet able to assess what it will need to spend on these homes, and how its capital programme may be affected.

- 142 The council's decent homes database is not fully fit for purpose. It identifies which elements do not meet the standard, and it is updated to reflect all planned maintenance work and information from voids inspections. However, it does not take account of responsive repairs. The database does not allow the council to model scenarios, such as the timing of major investment works. Reporting information is limited. This affects the council's ability to plan future work effectively and to assess how much it will cost. The council plans to replace its decent homes database by 2004.
- 143 The council's self-assessment recognises the limitations of its stock condition information and database. The council inspects homes that become vacant against the decent homes standard. So far, it has not found significant numbers of unidentified non-decent homes, indicating that the overall estimate produced by the survey was accurate. The council intends to carry out a new stock condition survey during 2004/05, as part of the option appraisal of the future of the housing stock. This will identify homes likely to become non-decent, and those that will fail under the new housing health and safety rating system. The council should then be able to re-assess its plans and the resources needed to meet the decent homes standard by 2010. However, this will only leave five years to plan, finance and complete any additional work identified by the survey. The relatively small size and good condition of the council's housing stock limits the risks posed by the weaknesses in its information.

Is the council delivering its plans to meet the decent homes standard?

- 144 The council has made good progress towards meeting the decent homes standard, although this has slowed recently. Strengths outweigh weaknesses.
- 145 The council has developed a clear programme for housing investment to meet the decent homes standard. The programme is costed and shows what work will be done and when. It is supported by a more detailed annual plan. This includes carrying out work to empty homes to bring them up to the standard. The programme provides a clear framework for planning the work. However, it does not include contingencies for slippage in programmes.
- 146 The council is working to maximise revenue income from housing; for example, through reducing former tenant rent arrears and reducing the time taken to return empty homes to use. It has increased its HRA balances, which are available to meet contingencies. The council plans to switch spending from responsive repairs to planned maintenance, as recommended by the Audit Commission. It also plans to make efficiency savings in housing management costs.
- 147 The council is improving its use of IT in the housing service. It will replace the decent homes database, which made use of existing software, with a fit-for-purpose decent homes software package during 2003. The housing service will implement the corporate filing system and introduce a new works management system for housing repairs. The council intends to provide better diagnosis and tracking of repairs, enable tenants to request repairs through the council's website, and reduce housing management costs. The system will also enable staff across the council to deal with enquiries in support of the council's aim to provide a one-stop approach. The changes form part of the council's organisational transformation strategy, and they demonstrate that the council is taking a corporate approach to improvement.

- 148 The council has already made significant progress towards meeting the decent homes standard. The housing stock is relatively modern and in good condition as a result of past investment and maintenance. For example, all homes already have double glazing. In 2001, based on the council's stock condition survey, an estimated 37 per cent of the council's homes did not meet the standard. By March 2003, this had reduced to 27 per cent. The work completed includes major items such as replacing flat roofs, kitchen replacements, and rewiring. The council's approach is an example of a sustained focus over time on improving its housing.
- 149 The council has taken account of sustainability issues in carrying out the programme. The council has a good track record on energy efficiency of its homes. This was above average in 2001/02 and has continued to improve. Housing managers worked with environmental services colleagues to design improved bin stores for maisonettes, and to provide shared recycling facilities for flats, with the aim of improving recycling rates. The council uses lifetime costings with the aim of using better quality, longer lasting materials. It uses timber from renewable sources.
- 150 The council has made progress with other improvements beyond the requirements of the decent homes standard. Flats have been given improved security through door entry systems and provision of CCTV, and the council has worked with the police to tackle problems caused by drug dealing on one estate. Estates are generally well maintained, with a low level of vandalism and graffiti, although tenants remain concerned about these issues. The council removes racist and other offensive graffiti within 24 hours. These improvements demonstrate that the council is making progress towards its wider goals.
- 151 There is limited information available to make judgements on the quality of completed works and tenant satisfaction. The council does not currently carry out satisfaction surveys following planned maintenance work, although it has sought feedback through its tenants and leaseholder panels.
- 152 The council has involved tenants in the delivery of the programme. Tenants have choices over some elements. For example, central heating is not installed if the tenant does not want it. There are examples where the council has consulted individual tenants and made changes to detailed design as a result.
- 153 Use of partnering in housing procurement is at an early stage. The council is piloting partnering for gas servicing, boiler replacements and roof renewals, as part of a corporate programme. If successful, it will extend partnering to other elements of the decent homes programme. Partnering is expected to improve the quality of work delivered and reduce disruption for customers. It is too early to quantify cost savings. The council did not introduce partnering at an early stage of the decent homes programme, and it did not look at the scope for planning and delivering the whole programme through a partnering approach. A significant proportion of the programme will be completed before partnering is widely in place. This approach means that the potential for cost savings and quality improvements is reduced, and as a result the council may not achieve the full benefits.

- 154 Progress in committing the 2003/04 HRA capital budget has been slower than planned. By September 2003, just under half was committed, less than expected. Between April and September 2003, a net 14 homes had become decent, towards a target of 152 by March 2004. The percentage of non-decent homes is 27 per cent, the same as in March. This is due to delays in putting in place partnering arrangements, and in moving tenants affected by conversions of bedsits to flats. Right to buy sales of decent homes have reduced the net total made decent. The council expects to finalise the partnering agreement by November, allowing work to begin on roof replacements in January. It intends to make up delays by bringing forward other work. It remains confident it will achieve its target of 21 per cent non-decent homes by March 2004.

How well does the council monitor its progress and how effectively does this feed into future strategies and plans?

- 155 The council monitors overall progress towards the decent homes standard, but it reports limited information on quality, satisfaction, and slippage of programmes. It is learning from other councils and from tenants. Strengths outweigh weaknesses.
- 156 Learning is a strength in the housing service. The council has made use of feedback from tenant and leaseholder panels to improve performance. Examples include improvements to decoration in bedsit conversions, and to stairwells in flats. The council has carried out visits to several councils and registered social landlords to help it develop its approach to asbestos and sheltered housing. As a result, it is now examining ways to diversify its use of sheltered housing and extend support services to people living in their own homes. It has used benchmarking with other Hampshire councils and advice from the Government to refocus its homelessness service on prevention. The housing service is applying learning from other parts of the council on performance management, IT and document management. The council is making positive use of feedback from the Government Office for the South East to improve its plans and strategies. The council has used the CPA self-assessment process to learn. The self-assessment for decent homes identifies the weaknesses in the council's stock condition information and decent homes database, together with the need to improve tenant involvement. The council's decent homes improvement plan responds to these issues. This shows the council's commitment to learning as a means to improve.
- 157 The council is improving its performance monitoring systems for housing. The housing service plans to link its IT system to the corporate management information system. This will enable more timely reporting of performance indicators, currently available only quarterly. It will provide a traffic light system to make clear which indicators are meeting targets, and to highlight trends.
- 158 Tracking of progress, costs and results of capital schemes is also improving. The council does not currently report progress, satisfaction or outcomes for individual elements of the programme. The new partnering arrangements will have open book accounting, and this will enable the council to compare current costs with historic costs. The council intends to monitor customer satisfaction with completed work.

- 159 The council is able to monitor its overall progress towards meeting the decent homes standard. The decent homes performance management system reports progress since 2001 against targets.
- 160 Monitoring the money spent does not tell the council if it is delivering its capital programme on time and on budget. The council monitors spending and commitments for the housing programme against the total programme budget for the year. However, no targets are set within the year. As a result, the information does not make clear whether the overall programme is on track, and if not, which elements of the programme are slipping. The information also does not distinguish between items that have slipped and those that have been completed but have varied from budget.
- 161 Performance reports to councillors and tenants are not easy to interpret. The *Key Issues* newsletter highlights aspects of performance relevant to users, such as satisfaction with repairs. However, the information given is raw data and is not compared with targets or past performance. This is also the case for performance reports to councillors, which contain a large volume of raw data but no analysis. The information is not translated into local performance indicators, which could identify the most important data and could be linked to targets. The only local performance indicators for housing are discontinued national indicators. As a result, councillors could miss important trends in performance.
- 162 The council accepts in its corporate self-assessment that it does not yet consistently set SMART objectives in strategies, service plans and for individual staff. It intends to include SMART action plans in the new housing strategy and HRA business plan. It is intends to include measurable objectives in new service plans for 2004/05.

Summary of decent homes standard diagnostic judgements and strengths / weaknesses

Area of focus	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>What is the council trying to achieve in relation to the standard? Does the council know the condition of their housing stock and their compliance with the decent homes standard?</p>	<p>b</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear aims reflect and link to local and national priorities • Decent homes plus standard being developed • Housing needs information • Corporate priority given to full option appraisal for housing stock • Resources identified • Access to information and services improved • Partners, users and councillors involved in setting aims • High satisfaction with tenant participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating response to users' views • Stock condition survey needs updating • Homes that will become non-decent not identified • Decent homes database not fit for purpose
<p>Is the council delivering its plans to meet the decent homes standard?</p>	<p>b</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment programme in place • Plans to improve income collection • Improving ratio of planned:responsive maintenance • Plans to improve IT • Good progress towards the DHS in first two years • Sustainability issues considered • Improvements in energy efficiency, security and estate management • Partnering being piloted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slower progress towards the DHS in 2003/04 • Slippage in the capital programme
<p>How well does the council monitor its progress and how effectively does this feed into future strategies and plans?</p>	<p>b</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examples of learning from others and from within • Plans to improve performance monitoring systems • Plans to improve monitoring of capital works through partnering • Overall monitoring of progress towards decent homes • Improving housing strategies and plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak monitoring of capital spend • Performance reports not easy to interpret • Action plans not yet SMART
<p>Decent homes standard diagnostic assessment judgement</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">B</p>	

Scoring key:

For each of the key areas looked at within the diagnostic assessments **the need for improvement**, based on the risk of service failure and poor outcomes, is identified using the following scale.

- a = very low
- b = low
- c = high
- d = very high

Appendix 2 - Public space diagnostic assessment

How well does the council contribute to the management of the physical environment?

- 163 Strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses, and there is a very low need for service improvement.
- 164 The council has a clear understanding of local environmental needs and priorities and recognises that economic, environmental and social issues need to be integrated to achieve sustainable development. The local plan review reinforces this as it states that, in considering whether to permit development, the council will be protective towards the environment and amenity and will be consistent with the principles of sustainable development.
- 165 The council has helped meet these requirements, through its contribution to local economic development. For example, the Fareham town centre redevelopment and Camms Hall hi-tech business park enhance economic and social needs but also help to address environment priorities. The air traffic control centre developed at Swanwick also includes a community nature reserve. New developments in the western wards provide for a day centre, supermarket, doctors' surgery and family centre and will provide leisure facilities and a new high street fast food chain. These developments will help to address the local economic and environmental needs, which have grown significantly in the last 30 years.
- 166 Section 106 Agreements (S106) have been used effectively to enhance the environment and address community priorities. They were used to provide a nature reserve and improve the surrounding road network as part of the Swanwick development. Leisure facilities and improved open spaces were also provided through the Seafield Park development, and developments in Whitely have secured a bus route to support sustainable transport, have improved open spaces, and have led to a range of community facilities. Other developments have secured community buildings.
- 167 The council works in partnership to enhance the physical environment. It works with businesses and attracts sponsorships for the provision of flowers on roundabouts and in hanging baskets. 'The Flowers in Bloom' initiative is important to local people and enhances the attractiveness of the area. The council also uses partnerships to help protect areas of special protection; for example, Fareham Lake. This is important as it increases capacity and is more effective in safeguarding areas in the borough.
- 168 The council recognises the importance of air quality management, noise and other nuisances. The council has an air quality strategy, and the ODPM have accepted the council's stage three air quality review, describing it as well structured, and they have confirmed that issues raised have been dealt with satisfactorily. In addition, the environmental health service has an out-of-hours service for people to report public nuisances. The council is actively engaged in reducing noise pollution, by facilitating 'noise action days', although their effectiveness is not being assessed.

- 169 The council is using supplementary planning guidance notes (SPGs) to help add environmental value to the local plan and provide more detailed guidance. Some SPGs contribute to the management of the physical environment and impact on new build and maintenance work. For example, one offers guidance to developers on sites affected by contamination; another, crime reduction through design, was commended by the Home Office. The SPGs offer clarity and help decision making.
- 170 The council's performance in processing planning applications is good, with 73 per cent of applications processed within government targets in 2001/02. This is among the best performers nationally and improved from the previous year.
- 171 The council has made progress to improve access to services for people with disabilities. Managers have worked with people with disabilities to make improvements in council services, and to train staff on disability awareness. The council has assessed that its main buildings comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, although sports pavilions are not accessible. The council has also worked with partners and businesses to improve access in the town centre and in commercial services. However, the council needs to promote more widely the availability of information in large print and on tape. People with disabilities would like to see further improvements to staff training and reception areas.

Does the council help keep the locality clean?

- 172 Strengths outweigh weaknesses, and consequently there is a low need for service improvement.
- 173 The council works in partnership to help provide a long-term solution to waste management in Hampshire. It is a member of the Project Integra partnership – including all the district councils as well as the county and two unitary councils – which discusses waste minimisation and recycling solutions. Waste collection arrangements vary locally across Hampshire. The council also recognises that there is scope for collaboration with the voluntary and charity sector over waste management issues, to enhance capacity.
- 174 Waste management is a corporate priority, and performance in recycling waste is good. In 2002/03, the council recycled 22 per cent of its waste (un-audited performance information). This has improved from 15 per cent in 2001/02. The amount of household waste collected per head of population is relatively high and matched the performance of the worse performing councils nationally in 2001/02, although this has improved in 2002/03.
- 175 The Audit Commission has inspected the recycling and refuse collection services and found these to be good. There are high satisfaction levels with refuse and recycling collection services. The council provides recycling bring sites that accept a range of materials, and a kerbside collection of recyclable material for almost all residents. The council is also working with others to reclaim goods for use; for example, with 'skillploy' to reclaim household and electrical goods, thereby reducing the amount of refuse going to landfill.

- 176 Although the council is meeting its own recycling targets, the statutory target has been set at 40 per cent by 2005. To help meet this challenge, the council has a number of innovative proposals. These include diverting more waste through 'bring banks', increasing the effectiveness of kerbside collections, and introducing textile and glass bring sites at schools. The council is also proposing to reduce the amount of green waste. It currently promotes and supports re-use and composting schemes, but it has recognised that it could provide green waste collections, that its own services could buy more recycled products, and that green materials from its grounds maintenance could be re-used. Research undertaken by the Open University for Project Integra helped to inform these proposals.
- 177 The council recognises that the funding arrangements for these proposals still need to be agreed. The waste management strategy identifies that in 2005/06, the council needs capital expenditure of £300,000 and revenue expenditure of £200,000 to implement a chargeable kerbside collection of green garden waste. It is not yet clear whether the resources to deliver this are available. However, the achievement of a 40 per cent recycling target has been identified as a high priority on the reserve list of new capital action schemes, and the council is confident that the required resources will become available.
- 178 The council has implemented a number of positive initiatives to tackle vandalism, abandoned cars and graffiti, which are important issues for local people. The council has launched a new mobile phone text number for local people to report any problems in the community. It also offers cash rewards to residents for information on vandalism. Both encourage residents to report problems. The council also urges its own staff to report these maintenance issues. These reporting mechanisms help the council to respond quickly to these issues. To support this, the council has set up a dedicated team responsible for cleanliness and maintenance in local areas. As a result, the local area is generally clean and tidy.
- 179 The council works with owners of problem areas to tackle litter. The council found that litter dropping had been a problem at the railway station and the bus station. By working with the relevant transport organisations, the problem has been alleviated. The council intends to include stronger enforcement requirements in the bus station lease when it is renewed. It also works with local businesses, such as fast food outlets, to highlight their responsibilities in the collection and minimisation of litter dropping. This means that an area where the council has no ownership is maintained to a satisfactory level, and that hotspots are addressed.
- 180 The council has used enforcement to increase cleanliness in the borough. There have been a number of prosecutions and on-the-spot fines for dog owners. After targeting resources to play areas, recreational grounds and 'hotspots', the council is receiving fewer complaints about dog mess.

Does the council work with partners to improve community safety?

- 181 The council's work on community safety is effective. Strengths significantly outweigh weaknesses, and consequently there is a very low need for service improvement.
- 182 Community safety is a corporate priority for the council. It recognises that although the actual crime figures in the borough are low, the fear of crime among residents is high, and consultation shows that the community view crime reduction as an important issue.
- 183 The crime and disorder reduction partnership (CDRP), of which the council is a member, is focused on addressing national and local concerns. The community safety strategy identifies six priorities, including the supply and abuse of alcohol and drugs, antisocial behaviour, vandalism, fear of crime, vulnerable victims (domestic abuse, racially motivated and homophobic crime and disorder), and national targets (burglary, violent crime and vehicle crime). These priorities have been developed from crime audits and through consultation, including a survey of residents, discussions with young people, a partnership day with over 50 staff from a variety of organisations, and a survey of Neighbourhood Watch members. Consequently, the partnership is working on issues that are important to local people as well as issues that the Government has identified as important nationally.
- 184 The performance of the partnership in helping to meet these priorities is good. Burglary and vehicle theft offences have been decreasing in Fareham, and these are among the worst 25 per cent nationally. However, criminal damage has been increasing. The CDRP is monitoring performance information to help reduce crime in certain areas. Although crime rates are low, performance information has identified that crime is rising in some areas, and the CDRP has used this to target initiatives.
- 185 The CDRP's pooled budget is increasing the capacity to deliver crime reduction initiatives in the borough. The partnership has secured funding to enhance services; for example, for a community worker and a domestic violence worker. One initiative, the provision of 21-speed bikes for community police officers, has increased police visibility in the borough, which helps to alleviate the fear of crime and deters would-be criminals.
- 186 Partners feel that the council makes a significant contribution to community safety. The council is responsive to local issues such as vandalism, and it works to tackle these issues quickly. For example, it has worked with the police to provide additional CCTV in Portchester after a spate of car vandalism. This has helped to reassure residents. It has also provided finance and staffing resources for the very popular SNAP Discos (Say No and Phone, an initiative for young people on drugs and alcohol). The council works with the drugs action team (DAT) on drugs issues, and with the Trading Standards Service in Hampshire County Council and the local primary care trust on alcohol use. In addition, the council tries to address fear of crime by placing articles in its magazine *Fareham Today* to provide reassurance to residents. Articles and information regularly appear in the community newspaper to ensure residents are up-to-date with and can take advantage of current initiatives.

- 187 The council has effectively mainstreamed community safety across its services. The council has a review process whereby all departments are required to explain their contribution to community safety. One example is the planning service, which provides guidance on how the appropriate design and layout of new developments within the borough can help reduce crime and the fear of crime and lessen antisocial behaviour.
- 188 In addition to its role within the CDRP, the council is making an effective contribution to the community safety agenda through a number of initiatives – for example:
- ◆ the ‘Homecheck’ programme – where officers advise, inspect and provide a service for security, safety and energy conservation;
 - ◆ IDEAS home exhibition – which covers safety issues;
 - ◆ a junior citizen safety week;
 - ◆ car seat safety campaigns;
 - ◆ issuing three antisocial behaviour orders and three acceptable behaviour contracts;
 - ◆ road safety and cycling safety campaigns; and
 - ◆ health safety initiatives.
- 189 The council is also working in partnership with Gosport Borough Council to help reduce crime in the area. Both councils have set up a CCTV partnership, with cameras in operation in the town centre. Additional cameras have been placed in Portchester, and there is CCTV on the door entry systems on sheltered schemes and blocks of flats. The use of the cameras is being extended to include the provision of road traffic information, to cover open spaces, as a deterrent to antisocial behaviour, and to help alleviate fear of crime.

Does the council contribute to activities to positively engage children and young people?

- 190 The council’s provision of activities for young people is good. Strengths outweigh weaknesses, and consequently there is a low need for service improvement.
- 191 The council listens to what young people want and responds accordingly. The youth strategy has been developed following feedback from a survey of young people and a youth conference and workshops, which help the council understand young people’s needs. The council has also reviewed its priorities in light of local consultation. The priority for providing facilities to young people has moved from low to medium following representation from young people requesting a skateboard park. This demonstrates that the council is focusing on local needs.

- 192 The council is aware of the needs of the local community. Local people currently have access to a wide range of sports, arts, leisure and community provision. However, the council acknowledges that some areas of the borough have more facilities than others and it has, through consultation, identified a number of future investments. These include another swimming pool in the western wards, more leisure facilities in Fareham town centre, and a cinema. The council recognises that it needs to do more to increase accessibility of community centres for young people.
- 193 The council works in partnership to provide youth centres, but these facilities are not being utilised effectively. There are conflicting expectations between partners, and consequently the centres are not always open or staffed at times that match young people's needs. The council is aware of these problems and is currently in discussion with the county council to address them.
- 194 To encourage a range of activities, the council provides financial support to local organisations to develop quality, affordable and accessible activities for young people. The funding scheme for young people considers projects that: actively involve young people in their planning, seek to address a locally identified need or shortfall in existing provision, are developed in partnership with others, and can demonstrate some evidence of fundraising and local support.
- 195 The council has been proactive in encouraging young people to participate in leisure-based activities. It works in partnership with other councils and the local bus company to improve accessibility of services for young people. The council has responded to suggestions made by young people about accessibility and consequently set up the 'Funky Fish' initiative, which provides unlimited travel at reduced bus fares and free entry to swimming facilities during the summer months. It has extended limited free entry to skating after representation from young people, and it is working with Portsmouth City Council to deliver this. This means that more young people can participate in more activities during the summer months.
- 196 The council also actively supports a wide range of other non-leisure issues that impact on young people, including health, housing and work and training issues. For example, the Portsmouth HealthCare NHS Trust has been supporting young people in Fareham by providing specific health services. In addition, the council supports and works with Fareham Youth Concern.
- 197 The council's promotion of the local services available to young people is not fully effective. Many young people remain unaware of the full range of services available, and the youth website designed to help address this is not yet fully developed.
- 198 The council does not have a child protection policy. Although the council follows the requirements for potential employees to be checked by the criminal records bureau, staff are not fully aware of child protection issues, which may expose the council, staff and young people to potential risk.

Summary of public space diagnostic assessment judgements and strengths / weaknesses

Area of focus	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
How well does the council contribute to the management of the physical environment?	a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity on local environmental needs • Promotion of sustainable developments • S106 agreements used to generate environmental enhancements • Good partnerships to improve environment • SPGs support environmental planning • Access improvements made to council buildings • Good performance of planning service 	
Does the council help keep the locality clean?	b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership to enhance waste management • High and improving recycling rates • Developing proposals to meet statutory waste targets • Working with private landowners to reduce litter • Addressing vandalism, abandoned cars, graffiti and dog fouling • High satisfaction levels for recycling and refuse collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of household waste collected is high • Future plans to increase recycling and the associated financial implications have yet to be agreed
Does the council work with partners to improve community safety?	a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate priority matches national and community ambitions • Crime is reducing • Effective contribution to the CDRP • Mainstreaming community safety within other services • Introduced a number of community safety initiatives 	
Does the council contribute to activities to positively engage children and young people?	b	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active consultation with young people • Responsive to community needs • Wide range of facilities available for young people • Investments being made in new facilities • Participation of young people encouraged • Effective partnership working • Provides support to local groups to develop activities for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are sometimes unaware of services available • No child protection policy • Conflicting expectations with county council on youth centres • Young persons website not yet developed
Public space diagnostic assessment judgement			B

Scoring key:

For each of the key areas looked at within the diagnostic assessments **the need for improvement**, based on the risk of service failure and poor outcomes, is identified using the following scale.

a = very low

b = low

c = high

d = very high

Appendix 3 - Appointed auditor assessment

199 Appointed auditors are asked to score five areas which relate to the statutory code of audit practice. When scoring each area a range of issues are taken into account. These issues and the score that has been given in each area are set out in the table below.

Area for auditor judgement	Grade	Issues included in this area
Financial standing	4	Setting a balanced budget Setting a capital programme Financial monitoring and reporting Meeting financial targets Financial reserves
Systems of internal financial control	3	Monitoring of financial systems An adequate internal audit function is maintained Risk identification and management
Standards of financial conduct and the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption	4	Ethical framework Governance arrangements Treasury management Prevention and detection of fraud and corruption
Financial statements	3	Timeliness Quality Supporting records
Legality of significant financial transactions	4	Roles and responsibilities Consideration of legality of significant financial transactions New legislation

Scoring key:

1 = inadequate

2 = adequate overall, but some weaknesses that need to be addressed

3 = adequate

4 = good

Appendix 4 - Benefit Fraud Inspectorate assessment

200 The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) has undertaken the assessment in this appendix as part of the CPA process. The assessment covers two aspects, the current level of performance and the council's proven capacity to improve. Each assessment is measured on a five-point scale (poor, fair, fair to good, good and excellent).

Current performance

Scoring guidelines

- 201 Overall, we found that Fareham Borough Council's Benefits service is currently providing a fair performance. Fareham Borough Council's current performance demonstrates a number of strengths. These include:
- ◆ commitment to service delivery by senior managers;
 - ◆ good operational planning to achieve medium term service targets;
 - ◆ opening hours for drop-in callers, appointments and telephone contact that exceed Performance Standards targets;
 - ◆ provision of individual services to claimants with disabilities;
 - ◆ compliance with the Verification Framework;
 - ◆ high levels of pre-notification quality checking; and
 - ◆ achievement of targets set for cautions, administrative penalties and prosecutions.
- 202 However, there are some areas where Fareham Borough Council needs to develop further to fully meet the BFI and Department for Work and Pensions' (the Department's) Performance Standards framework. These include:
- ◆ procedural guidance covering all aspects of benefits operations;
 - ◆ business continuity and IT system recovery plans;
 - ◆ strategy to maximise benefit take-up;
 - ◆ monitoring of incoming telephone calls for compliance with customer service aims;
 - ◆ improvement of processing times for new and renewal claims and change of circumstances;
 - ◆ no consideration of payments on account;
 - ◆ lack of management checking of requests for reconsideration and appeals referrals; and
 - ◆ no business plans against which counter-fraud and overpayment recovery activity is monitored.
- Proven capacity to improve**

203 We assessed Fareham Borough Council's proven capacity to improve as fair towards good. Fareham Borough Council was able to demonstrate the following positive aspects:

- ◆ investment in new technology with a view to improving capacity;
- ◆ dedicated operational plans to clear backlogs;
- ◆ recent development and implementation of a performance management strategy, and the recruitment of a monitoring role;
- ◆ development of a continuously updated management information report to facilitate performance monitoring;
- ◆ ability of senior managers to obtain budgetary approval from Members for service improvements; and
- ◆ establishing a partnership with Winchester City Council for additional resources in the recovery of overpayments.

204 However, the following areas led us to question the extent to which Fareham Borough Council was able to prove its capacity to improve:

- ◆ limited analysis of management information to identify operational issues and trends;
- ◆ lack of specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound targets for staff and managers;
- ◆ lack of formal monitoring of performance targets established in the service level agreements;
- ◆ short to medium term departmental work plans (covering the period 2003 to 2007) that do not have Members engaged as stakeholders; and
- ◆ no immediate plans to improve on Best Value Performance Indicators across the board.

205 We would like to thank Fareham Borough Council staff, particularly the Director of Finance and Revenues, the Head of Revenues and Exchequer, and the Benefits manager for their assistance and co-operation with the assessment process.

206 This report has been produced pursuant to powers contained in sections 10 and 11 of the Local Government Act 1999.

Appendix 5 - Framework for Comprehensive Performance Assessment

- 207 This comprehensive performance assessment was carried out under the Local Government Act 1999. Local councils have a general duty under Section 3 of this Act to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. Section 10 gives the Audit Commission the power to inspect councils' performance of the general duty of improvement.
- 208 The main elements of the assessment were:
- ◆ a self-assessment completed by the council;
 - ◆ accredited peer challenge to inform the council's self-assessment;
 - ◆ a corporate assessment of the council's overall effectiveness in supporting services to deliver improvements;
 - ◆ an assessment of the council's service delivery performance through two diagnostic assessments on:
 - ◆ management of public space;
 - ◆ progress in meeting the decent homes standard;
 - ◆ Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) assessment of benefit services;
 - ◆ appointed auditor assessments of performance on each of the main elements of the code of audit practice; and
 - ◆ audited performance indicators, inspection reports and plan assessments.
- 209 The assessment for Fareham Borough Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 29 September to 3 October 2003.
- 210 This report has been discussed with the council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission's assessment. This report will be used as the basis for improvement planning by the council.