

Corporate Assessment Report

February 2007



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Corporate Assessment

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

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Introduction

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

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

- Ambition
- Prioritisation

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

- Capacity
- Performance management

What has been achieved?

- Achievement

Considered against the shared priorities of:

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

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

- 4 The JAR covers all services for children and young people that are directly managed or commissioned by the Council, as well as health and youth justice services provided by other bodies. It focuses on the contributions made by services to improving outcomes. The separate JAR report covers the leadership and management of services for children and young people and, in particular, the way that such services work together to improve outcomes. The description and judgement in respect of children and young people in this report is summarised from the JAR report.

Executive summary

- 5 The Council is performing strongly and well above minimum requirements. Many aspects of the Council's work are outstanding. The Council is ambitious and sets itself and its partners challenging priorities which are appropriate for the borough, respond well to its needs and can be realistically achieved in the light of the Council's financial standing and capacity to deliver. The Council is clear about what it wants to achieve. It is a proactive and imaginative partner and brings strong but well judged leadership to partnership working across a wide range of initiatives in the borough. The voluntary and community sector value the contribution of the Council to their work and many sections of the community identify convincingly with the priorities of the Council and acknowledge the outcomes. Residents value, in particular, the partnership work to reduce crime and the fear of crime and the quality of waste management services which provide two refuse and recycling collections each week. The Council has achieved commendable outcomes in such areas.
- 6 There is an excellent culture of consultation throughout the Council, which is shared by partners. The 'Statement of Principles and Guidelines for Consulting the Public' promotes best practice standards for staff and partners undertaking consultation. An imaginative range of strategies is deployed to capture the views of the community. The Council has reached the advanced level of the Hear by Right standard which is now being extended to younger children. The results of consultation are shared widely, for example, via the Vital Messages database available on line to partners and the public. The quality and scope of the Council's consultation is outstanding.
- 7 Priorities respond well to national and local needs. Decisions on changes in priorities and specific savings and growth proposals are facilitated by the 'Imperatives and Opportunities' programme, part of the robust annual business and financial planning cycle. The Cabinet Business Plan 2006/07-2008/09 articulates the Council's vision and core values and these drive the way in which the Council delivers the priorities in the Community Strategy. The thread between the Community Strategy, service plans and the delivery of outcomes is strong.
- 8 The Council has the capacity to deliver its ambitions and priorities and partnership working is used effectively to further build capacity. The Council has agreed protocols to ensure effective joint working including compacts with the voluntary and community sectors and with people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. The Council knows how well it is performing. It has well-established performance management systems and processes and has a powerful, performance driven culture. The Audit Commission's performance data for 2005/06 shows the Council continues to perform strongly, with 82 per cent of performance indicators improving.

- 9 The Council provides outstanding community leadership which is making a difference. Evidence for this includes the Council's strong contribution to promoting good community relations which were shown to be resilient in the response to the terrorist attack on London of 7 July, 2005; the impact of the Safer and Surer board on the levels of crime and the fear of crime; representations on the London Plan; securing a jobcentre plus in the north of the borough and securing from Transport for London hard won concessions for certain residents from the forthcoming congestion charge. The Council has demonstrated community leadership in its support of Notting Hill Carnival as an important part of the cultural life in Kensington and Chelsea and this is highly valued by the carnival organisation and the community.
- 10 The Council's political and managerial leadership is excellent. There is a clearly evident culture of great civic pride in which councillors are committed to public service. Councillors and officers are of high calibre and senior managers share their tasks with good middle management and front line staff.
- 11 The Council performs strongly in user focus and diversity. There are good examples of where consultation has informed policy, for example, in the composition of the Community Strategy and the Play Strategy. The Kensington and Chelsea Partnership also fully embraces the consultation ethos. Responsibility for implementing the Council's Equality Scheme starts with a cabinet member and the chief executive, to demonstrate commitment. Members of minority groups feel consultation and engagement is meaningful and BME groups are positive about the Council's approach to diversity. There are practical initiatives to support BME workers and new arrivals in the borough with language and cultural issues, such as a non-language DVD providing guidance on health and safety for workers in the food and restaurant business. There is tailored service delivery for some hard to reach communities which has developed as a result of consultation.
- 12 The Council performs well in providing value for money. There is a culture of securing value for money throughout the organisation with strong leadership from councillors, senior officers and the overview and scrutiny function. The Council demonstrably strives for further improvement and is performing well on the efficiency agenda where it has exceeded targets. The Council has action in place to tackle the high cost of some services.
- 13 The Council is performing well in the achievement of its priorities, both national and local. There is real impact resulting from the priorities for children and young people - who are achieving some of the best results in the country, with further improvements at all key stages in summer 2006 - sustainable communities, community safety, health inequalities and older people. In many cases outcomes are outstanding. All these outcomes, which are important to local people, demonstrate the strengths of the Council's capacity to turn its ambition into achievement, through the robust delivery of priorities.

Areas for improvement

- 14 Workforce planning is under-developed and a more robust approach to is needed. This should include an analysis of current skills, future needs and plans to address gaps, as well as plans to ensure that the workforce is more representative of the local population.
- 15 Performance development reviews are not yet used consistently across the Council. Most front line staff and middle managers receive performance appraisals, but the council does not currently monitor the coverage of its performance reviews. To improve further the performance culture the Council needs to ensure performance reviews are comprehensive and systematically monitored.

Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	4
	Prioritisation	4
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	3
	Performance management	3
What has been achieved?	Achievement	3
Overall corporate assessment score**		4
*Key to scores		
1 – below minimum requirements – inadequate performance		
2 – at only minimum requirements – adequate performance		
3 – consistently above minimum requirements – performing well		
4 – well above minimum requirements – performing strongly		

**Rules for determining the overall corporate assessment score

Scores on 5 themes	Overall corporate assessment score
Two or more themes with a score of 4 None less than score of 3	4
Three or more themes with a score of 3 or more None less than score of 2	3
Three or more themes with a score of 2 or more	2
Any other combination	1

Context

The locality

- 16 The Council serves a diverse, inner London borough. Its neighbourhoods contrast significantly in deprivation, wealth, ethnicity and architecture. The borough, at 4.5 square miles, is the second smallest unitary council area in the country but has the highest density of population and dwellings in Britain with a population of 181,100. The average age of residents is 37 years. The largest proportion of the population, at 28 per cent, is aged 30 to 44; people aged from 60 to 75 plus comprise 16.6 per cent and young people aged below 16 years comprise 15.6 per cent of the population.
- 17 The ethnic minority population comprises 20 per cent of the total, 40 per cent were born outside the UK and the annual population turnover is over 20 per cent. Half of adults are graduates (the highest proportion in the UK) but more than one in ten have no qualifications. More than one hundred languages are spoken in the borough's schools and nearly half of the pupils speak English as an additional language. Schools have twice the national average number of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds but 50 per cent of resident children attend independent schools.
- 18 Kensington and Chelsea attracts more than seven million visitors a year to enjoy cultural experiences such as the world renowned museums in Exhibition Road, and the extensive retail facilities such as Portobello market, Kensington High Street and the Kings Road. There are 4,000 listed buildings and 70 per cent of the borough falls within one of 36 conservation areas. But development opportunities are limited and property and rental prices in the private sector are the highest in the country. Half the permanent lettings by registered social landlords are to homeless households. One thousand families live in temporary accommodation but none in bed and breakfast.
- 19 There are notable contrasts in deprivation and wealth. Some areas are among the 10 per cent most deprived in England, others in the 20 per cent least deprived. Average income is the highest in Britain. Health inequality is starkly evidenced by the difference of twelve years in average life expectancy for those living in the northernmost wards and those in the healthiest wards. The borough contains the lowest amount of public space per head of population in London.
- 20 The local economy is buoyant with nearly 60 per cent of jobs linked to leisure, tourism, wholesale and retail, real estate, renting and business activities. Levels of employment across the borough are generally high. Two per cent of the working age population was claiming Job Seekers Allowance in June 2006. More than 75,800 people travel into the borough for their work.

The Council

- 21 The Council has had a Conservative majority since the borough was formed in 1965. There are 54 councillors representing 18 wards, 9 of whom form the opposition Labour group and the remainder form the Conservative administration. Five Overview and Scrutiny Committees hold the Cabinet to account. Just over 4,100 staff work for the Council. The Leader and Chief Executive also play key roles outside of the Council, in the development of cross-London local government. The Leader is chair of London Councils, formerly the Association of London Government (ALG) and the Chief Executive is chair of Capital Ambition, a project set up by London boroughs and other authorities to drive up standards to ensure London is a better place in which to live.
- 22 The Council has forged a leadership role of the Kensington and Chelsea Partnership alongside the Metropolitan Police Service, the Primary Care Trust (PCT), voluntary and community groups and the business sector. The Council plays an active role in other key partnerships, including the Community Safety Programme Board, the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, the Joint Health Partnership Board and the London Central Partnership.
- 23 The Council's adjusted revenue budget in 2005/06 was £159 million and in 2006/07 it is £164.9 million. It charges the fourth lowest council tax in London and the fifth lowest nationally and has reserves of more than £170 million. The Council will invest £239 million over the next three years through its capital programme, the largest ever. The investment includes a new secondary school in Chelsea, for which the Government has very recently announced that the Council will be the first joint sponsor of an Academy school. Many of the Council's ambitions are encapsulated in 'Twenty one projects for the twenty first century', a challenging prospectus which underpins the Council's vision of 'renewing the legacy'.

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

Ambition

- 24** The Council is performing strongly in this area, well above minimum requirements. It has developed clear and challenging ambitions for the area and its communities. Its vision to create 'A Better City Life' reflects a shared understanding by the Council and partners of its diverse communities. The Council demonstrates outstanding community leadership and champions the needs of the area.
- 25** The vision for the area and its communities is clear and challenging. The Council's vision is driven by the ambitions for the borough set out by the Kensington and Chelsea Partnership (KCP) in the 'The Future of Our Community 2005-2015', the second Community Strategy for the area. The ambitions are challenging and appropriate for the borough reflecting well its varied and diverse needs. The eight goals of the Community Strategy, shared by all the partners, are: Environment and Transport; Safer Communities; Homes and Housing; Learning; Culture, Arts and Leisure; Health and Social Care; Work and Business; and Community, Equality and Inclusivity.
- 26** The ambitions in the Community Strategy draw on comprehensive consultation and needs analysis. In order to tackle the needs which emerged from this analysis, five crucial cross-cutting themes permeate the Community Strategy's eight shard goals. These are: promoting the quality of life through improving deprived neighbourhoods; promoting health and well-being; children and young people; equalities and inclusivity; and integrating economic, social and environmental well-being. Ambitions in the Community Strategy are effectively and securely supported by data and information and this also helps direct resources. For example, a companion document to the Community Strategy, 'A Picture of Our Community', presents a comprehensive range of key data, statistical information and indicators to provide an in-depth picture of the borough. The data and information are arranged in accordance with the eight goals in the strategy so that there is a well argued and transparent case underpinning the aims and targets. 'A Picture of Our Community' demonstrates the understanding by the Council and the KCP of the economic, environmental and social inclusion challenges which must be addressed.

- 27** The Community Strategy's cross-cutting themes, together with the eight shared goals, drive the Cabinet Business Plan and service plans in order to deliver the vision of a 'Better City Life'. The Council is clear about what it wants to achieve from partnership working and ambitions are well understood by staff and the local community. Often, such as in the case of waste collection and recycling, aims are greatly appreciated by local residents. One of the strengths of the Community Strategy is the extent of engagement with it by the voluntary sector.
- 28** The Council's vision, driven by the Community Strategy, is to create a 'Better City Life' and the three core values against which residents can judge achievement of the vision are set out in the Cabinet Business Plan for 2006-2009. These are: 'Really good services' which means being well led, well managed, ambitious and clear about goals; 'Responding to our residents' which means putting residents first, providing the information people need to understand the Council's work and being open with, listening to and responding to all residents, and championing their interests; and 'Renewing the Legacy' which means delivering high quality schools, housing, public art, parks and open spaces, improving the borough's infrastructure and streetscape, working with and lobbying partners on schemes that make the borough more attractive and using planning powers to protect and improve the appearance of the borough.
- 29** The strength of the vision is well illustrated by a number of the ambitions underpinning one of the three core values, 'Renewing the legacy'. In order to 'bequeath to future generations a pleasant and attractive borough in which to live' the Council has planned '21 projects for the 21st century', a series of Council and partner-led projects to keep the borough as one of the best places to live. The 21 projects include rebuilding Holland Park school as a state of the art school fit for the 21st century and the regeneration of Golborne Road, with the aim of building a confident and cohesive multi-ethnic community, developing the thriving market and retail venue to increase jobs and promote economic development and creating a safe, distinctive and exciting location near to Portobello Road.
- 30** The Council has challenging longer-term outcome targets which drive its ambition. For example, as part of delivering on the community strategy goal of improving inclusivity, the Council is redesigning Exhibition Road, a world class visitor attraction. By 2009, the locality will have a new standard of urban design and a more welcoming and stimulating environment with the aim of changing significantly the audience profile. The targets are: an additional 602 thousand visitors from BME communities, increasing the percentage of BME visitors from 22 to 28 per cent and 648 thousand additional visitors from socio-economic groups C2/DE.

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- 31** The Council's ambitions are based on imaginative consultation strategies and robust needs analysis. Consultation is outstanding. It is well planned and diverse in recognising the complexity of user need. A residents' panel of 1,291 people, discussion groups, forums, internet site, surveys, an eighty strong panel of mystery shoppers and engagement of children and young people's views through 'Hear by Right' help to produce a strong culture of consultation. As part of the consultation for the Community Strategy, the Council's 'Responding to Residents' budget supported a project to enable groups to determine their own way to make their views known. This was part of the strategy to get to the hardest to reach members of the community and there is significant work to make the Council itself easier to reach. Consultation is given a high priority in assessing the complex range of needs of the diverse communities. The Council's commitment to consulting with people from black and minority ethnic communities and disadvantaged groups is clearly evident and permeates the way people work.
- 32** There is excellent and systematic feedback which is able to demonstrate to residents and stakeholders that consultation makes an impact and can lead to change. The Council regularly publishes the 'Reviewers' Digest' which provides feedback on the activities of the resident reviewers' exercises such as the review of refuse collection in June, 2006. Customer and stakeholder satisfaction with the Council is high. The Council's commitment to feeding back consultation findings is contained in the excellent 'Statement of Public Consultation Principles' which promotes best practice standards for staff and partners undertaking consultation. Notable practice includes feedback summaries of key messages to be sent to consultees, posted on the web-site and published in the Council newspaper.
- 33** The Council's ambitions are challenging but its financial strength and capacity make these ambitions realistic and attainable. The Council will invest £239 million over the next three years in its capital programme, the largest ever, in order to tackle emerging needs. For example, by 2014, the Council expects that there will be an additional 1,000 children of secondary school age living in the borough. To tackle this, a major ambition is the building of Chelsea Academy, due to open in 2009. The Government has recently announced this project will make the Council the country's first joint sponsor of an Academy school. Other ambitions which comprise the '21 projects for the 21st century', such as Decent homes for all, which will be met two years ahead of schedule with £67 million worth of Council money for housing improvements, being invested over a three year period, illustrate well the challenge and substance behind the Council's vision of 'Renewing the legacy'. The Council has already successfully delivered on similar ambitions such as the re-design of Kensington High Street and the funding of 50 police community support officers (PCSOs) at a cost of £1.5 million in 2005/06.

- 34 The Council demonstrates outstanding community leadership, often in partnership, with a clear commitment to partnership working by councillors and staff. It has recently secured from the Mayor of London hard won concessions on congestion charging for residents in certain streets. Community leadership in partnership is also making a powerful difference. This is evidenced, for example, by the prompt and visible action of Council leaders and the police, in response to the terrorist attacks on London on 7 July, 2005; two of the terrorists lived on a local estate but good community relations and partnership working helped to maintain peace and calm. Other examples of community leadership include: the impact of the Safer and Surer Board which, in its prompt response to monthly crime trends data, introduced 'Operation Sabre', a knife strategy which resulted in fewer incidents involving knives. The Council has demonstrated community leadership in its support of Notting Hill Carnival as an important part of the cultural life in Kensington and Chelsea and this is highly valued by the carnival organisation and the community. Innovative partnership working with a neighbouring Council has led to the joint appointment of a Director of Transport to improve congestion and other transport issues.

Prioritisation

- 35 The Council is performing strongly in this area, well above minimum requirements. Priorities are driven by the Community Strategy and the Cabinet Business plan shows how these priorities are delivered through the service plans of the Council's five business groups. In delivering the priorities the Council is guided by its core values of: 'Really good services', 'Responding to our residents' and 'Renewing the legacy'. Resources are very efficiently shifted to support priorities.
- 36 Vision and ambitions are translated into specific short, medium and long term priorities. The mechanisms for prioritisation are the Business Group Service Delivery Plans (SDPs) and these link back into the eight shared goals of the Community Strategy. The Cabinet Business Plan, which is the result of the annual business and financial planning cycle, sets out the priorities for each SDP, demonstrates how they will be resourced through investment and budget plans and sets performance targets which will be used to monitor delivery. The targets are used to provide the challenge in the 'Vital Signs' monitoring reports presented to Cabinet twice each year. In addition, there is strong challenge to officers and members of the Cabinet, to ensure progress on priorities, provided by the Lead Member for Service Improvement. Decisions on changes in priorities and specific savings and growth proposals reflect the cabinet's aim to achieve a balance between national and local pressures, mandatory and discretionary initiatives and tax and spending levels.

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- 37** The Community Strategy drives service delivery and ambitions are effectively integrated into service plans. For example, the priorities of the Housing, Health and Adult Social Care business group include: develop options to meet housing needs, support independent living, invest in the frontline. Priorities for the Planning and Conservation business group include: provide and maintain a safe and healthy environment in and around buildings, balance the environmental impact of traffic against the needs of mobility and access, enhance the open spaces and townscape of the borough. Priorities are widely known and shared between officers and councillors at all levels within the Council and are recognised by residents as reflecting their own priorities. SDPs also pick up contributions to cross-cutting priorities, for example, Transport, Environment and Leisure Services collaborate with all schools on road safety education and school travel plans. There are clear and robust links between priorities and the local area agreement. For example, the '21 projects for the 21st century' link to the local area agreement and show how resources are targeted on delivery of the aims and objectives of 'Renewing the legacy'.
- 38** The Council is effective at keeping priorities under review and at having the flexibility to respond to new priorities. For example, an important part of the prioritisation process is the 'Imperatives and Opportunities' programme, a disciplined and robust annual business and financial planning cycle. During this cycle, staff review existing priorities and look for imperatives and opportunities, such as identifying options for savings. The Executive gives detailed consideration of priorities and savings and growth proposals and consults with external stakeholders and residents to gain their views on the balance between spending and service priorities. The impact of this is to give the Council flexibility to respond to national needs, keep council tax levels low and redirect resources to meet new needs and ambitions. Financial strategies are robustly linked to priorities. Being more efficient each year and making savings enables the Council to redirect resources from lower to higher priorities. For example, under-spending has been diverted to emerging priorities such as tackling knife crime and additional contributions to the capital programme.
- 39** The Council is very clear about what are its priorities and what are not, with good examples of choices appropriate to local context and circumstances. For example, in 2005/06 cabinet chose not to fund all growth items in the Municipal Waste Management Strategy for 2004/09 but rather to fund £97,000 for a local priority to improve child and mental health services in the south of the borough and £250,000 to meet additional costs of looking after unaccompanied asylum seekers. Similarly, recently Cabinet decided not to fund employment of a Director of Communications and more expensive leisure management and waste management contracts. In response to the need for more secondary school places, the Council is committing significant resources to the construction of an Academy school in west Chelsea. The extent of the Council's financial support and engagement has led the government to recognise it as the only co-sponsor of an Academy in the country. There is a strong match between priorities and national and local needs.

- 40 A thoughtfully developed culture of consultation, combined with robust data and information, ensure that the Council's priorities are closely aligned to what is important to local residents and neighbourhoods. Stakeholder views and demographic data are used expertly to undertake needs analysis and set priorities. The Council's responsiveness can be seen in, for example, community safety, where much energy and imaginative partnership working has successfully reduced the fear of crime and anxiety over drug misuse has been addressed by the near elimination of 'crack' houses. Residents feel their views are listened to and used to determine priorities and that the council delivers against those priorities.
- 41 The Council is effective at developing services that are relevant to the diverse communities it serves and enhancing community consultation at all levels but particularly among hard to reach groups. Members of minority groups feel consultation and engagement is meaningful and BME groups are positive about the Council's approach to diversity. Service provision for older people in BME communities has, for example, been tailored to respond to their complex needs identified through the consultation process including, for example, additional support for carers.
- 42 Good management enables the Council to be flexible and responsive to meet new challenges which occur during the year, using reserves or virement. For example, in 2005/06, £100,000 drawn from the community safety reserve was used to fund a burglary prevention campaign and Operation Sabre, a successful initiative to reduce knife crime in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service. The Council is funding two new posts to provide Safer Neighbourhood teams to improve community cohesion on estates. It also responds to partners' priorities so that, for example, the Council funds sufficient capacity in local hospitals to ensure a low rate of delayed discharges.
- 43 In its priority to address deprivation and to improve accessibility to services, particularly for BME communities, the Council has delivered two successful Single Regeneration Budget projects, City Challenge, four years of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding and two Sure Start projects. The borough no longer qualifies for grant funding but the Council has invested in a team of four tasked with delivering on crucial regeneration needs. Additionally, the Community Strategy for 2005-2015 recognises the obligation to respond to the needs and ambitions of all residents in one of the most diverse populations in London and does so through its cross-cutting themes such as 'deprived neighbourhoods', 'health and well-being', 'equalities and inclusivity' and 'economic, social and environmental well-being'. The strategy's timely new goal: 'Community, Equality and Inclusivity' aims to improve community cohesion, improve opportunities for disabled people and to improve access to services for all. Major reconstruction of part of the Town Hall, currently taking place, is designed to improve access to services so that any matter can be dealt with in a single location.

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- 44** There are many excellent outcomes resulting from the Council's prioritisation. Councillors, officers and partners are uncompromising in sustaining their focus on achieving priorities. The determination to maintain clean streets is recognised by residents who welcome the two refuse collections per week and the 'Safer Surer' Policy Board's work to secure safer communities has resulted in the borough achieving the lowest fear of crime in London. The Council has an impressive track record of securing year on year improvements, well above national averages, in educational outcomes for children and young people, at all key stages. Crucially, this improving achievement is also shared by more vulnerable children including those who are looked after and young people from black and minority ethnic communities.

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

Capacity

- 45 The Council is performing well in this area, consistently above minimum requirements. Councillors and officers are of a high calibre and provide effective leadership across the local strategic partnership. Financial management is particularly strong and has enhanced the capacity of the Council to deliver on its priorities. However, workforce planning is not sufficiently well developed.
- 46 The Council has an open culture and there is visible and strong leadership. Councillors and officers are clear about what they want to achieve and about their respective roles and responsibilities. There is mutual respect and a strong public service ethos. Decision making is transparent. The delegation scheme sets out a clear framework to ensure that councillors focus on strategic and policy issues. A wide range of information is available for the public which outlines how decisions are made and who is responsible. This helps local people to understand how the Council manages services.
- 47 Scrutiny arrangements are effective. When pre-decision scrutiny takes place it is proactive and makes a positive difference to service users, illustrated by the review of Home Care Charges which made effective use of consultation to inform policy decisions. However, pre-decision scrutiny is not easily facilitated except by the administration. There is no formal requirement for cabinet to respond to overview and scrutiny reports within a set period, or to use a set format. This lack of formalisation is not helpful to the scrutiny function.
- 48 The Council has responded effectively to the ethical agenda and has a well established Standards Committee which helps promote ethical standards and conduct. Guidance on the application of the Code of Conduct, of the declaration of interests and of other ethical matters is circulated to councillors and relevant officers on a regular basis. The Committee is also exploring ways to work with partner organisations, including advisory committees, to ensure high ethical standards are consistently applied and integrated into diversity policies.
- 49 The Council has strong risk management, which now forms an explicit part of service plans. Comprehensive guidance has been issued and training provided for over 100 senior managers, risk management champions and the Management Board. The Audit Committee oversees arrangements, assessing the management of both strategic and operational risks. Risks associated with major projects, for example, Holland Park School, are actively managed and reported separately to councillors which enables them to make well informed decisions.

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- 50** Financial management is strong. Financial capacity supports delivery of the priorities and resources are clearly linked to future investment plans. The Medium Term Financial Strategy is regularly updated and anticipates medium and long term financial pressures. Reserves link clearly to future investment priorities through the Capital Strategy and the Corporate Asset Management Plan and support the Council's medium term financial plan of sustained growth and stable Council Tax.
- 51** The Council provides good value for money and reduces areas of unintended high cost. Councillors take an active role in promoting service efficiency and have strengthened arrangements by introducing the 'Three E's working group' and the six monthly 'Vital Finance' performance digest. Council Tax is low, but unit costs are high in some service areas, including Housing Management, Environmental Health and Libraries. Detailed scrutiny reviews have helped the Council to understand the drivers of high costs and the actions required to reduce costs. Efficiency targets have been exceeded and further efficiency savings are being driven through the 'Imperatives and Opportunities' programme. The Council has actions in place to tackle the high cost of some services. It is well placed to achieve its ambitions.
- 52** The Council has strong procurement arrangements, which it is using effectively to drive service efficiency and deliver savings, already exceeding £3 million per annum. A three year forward plan of procurement seeks to drive efficiency through a range of measures including e-procurement, procurement cards and whole life costing. Major contracts are subject to regular review and a Procurement Toolkit provides guidance for staff, including on the application of equality and diversity targets to procurement. Significant savings have been delivered through procurement. For example, the procurement arrangements have driven the successful, targeted recruitment of social workers, providing the Council with a stable staff in this vital area and also improved arrangements for the recruitment of agency staff including a neutral vendor contract. Work on joint commissioning of services using section 31 powers is underway, but it is too soon for significant benefits to be realised.
- 53** There is excellent development and training for councillors and officers which impacts directly on the quality of leadership and management. Tailored and well received programmes of development for both councillors and officers are underpinned by a three year Learning and Development Strategy, which is well resourced. Recent initiatives, including the establishment of Management Development centres, run in conjunction with partners, are helping to build future capacity.
- 54** However, workforce planning is at an early stage. Business Groups are in the process of developing workforce plans including an analysis of current skills, future needs and plans to address gaps. However, without a comprehensive skills and gap analysis in place, the benefits of the development programme for officers will not be fully realised.

- 55 The Council responds well to the needs of its diverse communities in policy development, employment practices and service delivery, although staff composition is not reflective of the local community. Initiatives include: on-line diversity training, a drama-based programme performed to staff and partners and a non-language DVD providing guidance on health and safety issues in the restaurant trade for BME workers and new arrivals in the borough with language and cultural issues. There is targeted training for women and BME staff as part of the 'Springboard' and 'Navigator' staff development programmes, and the Council is currently at level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government – one of the best performances of any local authority. The Council is now working towards level 5.
- 56 The Council has a very good record in managing projects. A recent example is the redevelopment of Kensington High Street which was delivered on time and within budget to a demanding specification. The impact has been to provide a significantly improved streetscape which is more accessible and safer to use for people with disabilities. This is highly valued by visitors, residents and the business community.
- 57 Asset management is strong. There is a comprehensive asset management strategy which underpins the Council's capital programme. The Council uses its assets to support partnership working. For example, property has been made available on concessionary terms to a range of community organisations and the Council provides accommodation for twenty voluntary organisations at Canalside House. This is helping the Council and its partners to build and sustain capacity through better use of assets.
- 58 The Council has a robust ICT strategy and makes good use of electronic delivery to improve service access. One hundred per cent electronic service delivery was achieved during 2005 and one stop direct access for all services is now available via the web. The Council is working with partners to increase the level of internet use across the community, for example, by increasing the provision of free internet points in the north of the Borough. Plans to develop a new customer contact centre as part of the wider 'Here to Help' programme are well advanced and the Council is well placed to continue to improve access to services for users.

Performance management

- 59 The Council is performing well in this area, consistently above minimum requirements. It has sound, well-established performance management systems and processes and has a strong performance-driven culture. It makes good use of learning from other organisations and this learning is shared in a structured and constructive way. Knowledge about performance is being used to drive improvement. The Council has established arrangements to secure accountability and monitor performance with some of its key partners.

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- 60** The Council has robust and systematic performance monitoring systems in place. It has invested significantly and appropriately in improving its performance management processes, and has been particularly successful in improving its performance information for officers and councillors. The Council has a monitoring system with clear and appropriate reporting; most notably the Council's 'vital improvements', 'vital signs' and finance performance information. There is an effective performance database to track corporate and departmental performance. This is supported by comprehensive guidance and training for councillors and officers setting out the performance management processes. This means that the Council knows when it is on track to deliver its priorities.
- 61** There is a strong performance-driven culture within the Council. There is a clear understanding of the need to set informed stretch targets and to use challenge to drive improved service performance. Commitment to performance management among both councillors and senior officers is high. There is a lead member for service improvement who champions performance management and drives the council's improvement agenda. The Council has a strong performance management culture and there is a clear ownership and widespread understanding of performance management practices within the directorates. The Royal Borough Improvement Planning Group (RBIPG) led by the chief executive and the lead member for service improvement, targets service reviews at areas of underperformance in order to drive improvement.
- 62** The Council uses its knowledge about performance to solve performance challenges at an early stage. There have been some significant improvements in council services as a result of focussed performance management. For example, monitoring has led to intervention to correct underperformance within the youth service, recycling, planning, the placement management of looked after children, waste management and in highways and construction. Performance data for 2005/06 show that the council has improved in 82 per cent of PIs from 2004/05.
- 63** Councillors have a track record of focussed involvement in performance management through the executive and scrutiny. For example, scrutiny is providing rigour and challenge in relation to the budget and this has resulted in stronger action to drive down high cost services and secure value for money.
- 64** Benchmarking is used consistently to drive improvements. The Council uses comparative information internally and with some of its partners to understand its performance against other local authorities, and to explore key success factors and barriers to progress, most notably in libraries, environmental health and in the delivery of customer services. The Council is keen to learn and improve and understands where it can improve. It consistently reviews what the ingredients of relevant successes and failures are and shares these across services. There are a number of examples where it has visited other Councils to look at notable practice and implemented change as a result. For example, the implementation of the Sure Start home visiting model was introduced as a result of looking at what worked well elsewhere. It is making full use of learning from other organisations to understand what actions and approaches result in improved services.

- 65 Staff are clear about what is expected of them and what the key priorities of the Council are. There is a focus on performance at all levels and the Council has a robust performance appraisal for directors linked to performance related pay for its top 750 staff. Performance development reviews (Padres) are not used consistently across the Council and although the Council focuses on its performance as an integral part of its working it does not currently monitor comprehensively the coverage of its performance reviews.
- 66 There are sound planning frameworks in place corporately that integrate performance and resource management and support a sustained focus on priority issues but there is variability in the quality of plans in some services. The community strategy and Cabinet Business Plan contain targets, action plans and monitoring processes. Corporate guidelines on business and service planning are in place. Connections between service planning, financial management and corporate planning are becoming fully integrated. Service planning processes are well-established in the directorates, but inconsistencies remain in some service areas. The Council is aware of this and has recently introduced quality control checks on service planning within departments, to ensure consistency in content and standard.
- 67 The Council effectively uses standards, complaints and service user feedback to determine whether it is meeting its objectives, its users' expectations and to drive improvement. The Council has a corporate approach and system for monitoring complaints, and there are examples where the data has been used to deliver improvement. For example, a major review of housing management led to service improvements which have been recognised in an inspection finding in October, 2006, of a three-star service. A culture of valuing complaints is evident. There are service standards and these are monitored and communicated to service users. The council therefore uses complaints and feedback processes to improve service quality and design.
- 68 Performance management operates effectively in many established partnerships and is developing in others. Community safety partnerships and Local Area Agreements have established arrangements. Partners share performance data and reports and jointly plan action for improvement. The first community strategy was evaluated and findings helped inform the current community strategy. The Council has developed a performance management framework for the Kensington and Chelsea Partnership, effective from November, 2006, and performance and governance arrangements with some key partners jointly providing services to children and young people.

What has been achieved?

- 69 The Council is performing well in this area, consistently above minimum requirements. The Council has made good progress in delivering its priorities.
- 70 There are many excellent outcomes in priority areas resulting from the Council's focus on delivery. Audit Commission data for 2005/06 shows that the Council has improved in 82 per cent of performance indicators (PIs). In October, 2006, the Department of Work and Pensions judged the Benefits service provided by the Council to be 'excellent'. Other excellent outcomes include the reduction in crime rates, the lowest fear of crime in London, improvements in the health of the community through the highest reduction, nationally, in teenage pregnancy and improvement in the energy efficiency of housing stock.
- 71 The Council is successfully delivering services driven by a balance of national and local priorities which impact directly on residents and visitors. These include improvements in: the street scene, as exemplified by the re-design of Kensington High Street; community safety through the substantial investment in Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs); waste management; capital programme to fund, for example, the new Chelsea Academy school and the renovation of parks and open spaces. There are excellent outcomes for children and young people with children achieving some of the best results in the country. There were further improvements at all key stages in summer 2006. All these outcomes are important to local people and improve the quality of their lives.
- 72 Partnership working on priorities with both the voluntary sector and other statutory organisations is innovative and very effective. The Council has, for example, contributed significant resources to help its partners in the fight against crime. This has led to significant impact including substantial reductions in crime levels over the last three years and a 17 per cent reduction in the total number of offences between 2003/04 and 2005/06. The PCT is hit hard at the present time by a funding shortage which could impact on services so the Council is providing additional financial support of £800 thousand to bolster work to promote healthier communities and to lessen the impact on residents of any possible reduction in health provision.
- 73 Achievement is clearly the consequence of the robust delivery of priorities. The latter are well resourced and the Council's financial strength ensures the improvements in outcomes are sustainable. Local people acknowledge service improvements such as the twice weekly recycling and refuse collection and the impact of investment in PCSOs and other successful work to improve community safety has resulted in the lowest fear of crime in London.

- 74 The Council is continually making services more accessible through its customer services strategy and there are improved outcomes for those most at risk of disadvantage. Such outcomes include: the highest reduction, nationally, in teenage pregnancy, higher rates of breastfeeding and being on track to meet the Decent Homes Standard two years ahead of the Government's deadline. Furthermore, the educational achievement of looked after children has also significantly improved. These and the many other outcomes detailed in the following paragraphs impact positively on the Council's ambition to reduce social exclusion and promote community cohesion.

Sustainable communities and transport

- 75 The Council is outstanding in using its community leadership role to promote economic development, regeneration and to secure jobs and wealth. Outcomes are making a strongly positive impact on people's quality of life.
- 76 Through its vision of 'A Better City Life' and its '21 projects for the 21st century' the Council is achieving excellent outcomes in this shared priority. Through its investment in environmental and infrastructure improvements it has transformed the environment of Kensington High Street with an award-winning refurbishment and funded the Portobello Business Centre, to support the growth of local businesses and promote self-employment. It is creating new business space to help small and start-up businesses and supporting the creative industries as an engine of economic growth. The Council actively manages Portobello and Golborne Road markets and is investing £100,000 in establishing a Commission on Retail Conservation to promote retail. Employment levels across the borough are generally high but in order to tackle pockets of unemployment and skills deficit in north Kensington the Council has created three new posts to: tackle labour market issues, work with Jobcentre Plus and attract new external funding to the area.
- 77 The borough's housing requirements and needs are very effectively addressed. Productive partnerships between the Council's flagship Tenant Management Organisation (TMO), the only tenant-led management organisation, Registered Social Landlords and other stakeholders are in place. Excellent progress has been made in meeting the Decent Homes Standard and improving overall housing conditions so that the Standard is on schedule to be met two years in advance of the government target. The Council is proactive in preventing homelessness through the development of housing advice services and measures to reduce temporary accommodation. It is imaginative in increasing the supply of social housing. An Audit Commission inspection of the TMO, in October 2006, judged it to be providing an excellent three-star service with excellent prospects for improvement, one of the few in the country.

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- 78** The Council is delivering high quality services to improve the environment. Waste management and recycling have benefited from additional investment to meet local and regional targets. The Council is delivering sustainable waste management in accordance with good practice and it is the only Council in the country to provide a twice weekly door-step recycling service for all of its residents. This is its response to the challenge that over 83 per cent of the properties in the borough are flats and the Council has to work harder to increase the amount of household waste that is recycled. Household waste collection is in the top 25 per cent of national performance and is improving.
- 79** The Council has increased its investment in recycling in order to improve outcomes. The sustainability (green) agenda is evident across the Council, free recycling bags are provided to encourage recycling and there is positive feedback from residents about borough cleansing and recycling. The Council has an effective partnership with its waste management contractor, which is high performing and delivers a clean and well maintained street scene. Partly because over 80 per cent of households are flats whose residents cannot compost, the Council has not met the DEFRA target on recycling and composting, although performance is improving. However, the percentage of households served by a kerbside collection of recyclables is in the top 25 per cent of performance, nationally, and improving.
- 80** Investment in, and management of, parks and open spaces is excellent. The Council has a strong track record of providing attractive, welcoming and safe open spaces and parks, all of which are well maintained. The creation of the 'Holland Park Standard' and the borough aspiration to bring all of its parks up to the same standard demonstrates vision and ambition for its open spaces driving its priority for high quality, well designed and accessible public spaces. This priority is reflected in the '21 Projects for the 21st Century' and in the core values of 'Renewing the Legacy'. Evidence of this can be seen in the award winning redesign of Kensington High Street. The Council is successfully using the planning system to achieve high quality design in new developments, illustrated in the new Duke of York retail development at Sloane Square which has created sustainable jobs and attracted more business for local shops and other businesses.

- 81 The Council acts imaginatively to improve transport in the borough and works effectively in partnership to achieve improvements. Consultants have been asked by the Council to consider a third station on the West London line in addition to the two under construction to improve transport for residents in the north west of the borough. The Council has changed road markings to make it easier for buses to pull into stops with the purpose of helping passengers, especially the elderly and disabled, and to reduce traffic congestion. The Council was one of the first to promote car clubs or 'pay as you go' car hire to reduce residents' dependency on cars. Three hundred and sixty club members share eight cars. The scheme is expanding and soon all residents will have car club vehicles parked near their homes. Traffic levels in the borough have fallen in recent years in contrast with the increases elsewhere in London. The Council is involved in innovative work with a neighbouring borough: highways, transport, traffic and parking services in the two boroughs are managed by one director, sharing knowledge and securing efficiencies for residents.

Safer and stronger communities

- 82 The council is working very effectively with its partners to help create a safer and stronger community and is responsible for innovative and notable practice in promoting community safety.
- 83 Reported crime figures have reduced and burglary, theft and violence are below the London Borough average. Fear of crime has reduced and is the lowest in London. There is high satisfaction amongst residents with policing and the Council dealt visibly and impressively with the events during and subsequent to 7 July 2005.
- 84 The Council works well through a range of partnerships to achieve its priorities for Safer and Stronger communities. There is a good understanding of respective roles and responsibilities which helps ensure the agreement and delivery of shared priorities. The Community Safety Strategy is comprehensive and accessible and contains clear priorities and targets for the Council and its partners. This enables partners to respond swiftly and effectively to crime patterns as evidenced by the timely and successful campaign to reduce knife crime.
- 85 Engagement with the community is used effectively to inform decision making. Consultation in advance of the 2005 Community Safety Strategy included a survey of the Residents' panel, Community Safety Roadshows and Police and Community Consultative Groups which strongly endorsed the Council's approach. The Council has also consulted widely with hard to reach and vulnerable people and used the results to inform future spending decisions, for example, £2 million in 2006/07 for the funding of Community Safety Officers and extra funding to tackle knife crime. This has helped tackle crime in community safety 'hot spots' particularly in the north of the borough with, for example, the resulting reduction in the fear of racist behaviour, the lowest in London.

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- 86 The Council shows a commendable understanding of the way in which crime and fear of crime can be driven by environmental factors and is taking a joined up approach towards tackling crime and environmental issues. The Local Area Agreement identifies specific targets around the need to improve street cleanliness and the safety and attractiveness of social housing estates. The 'white light' programme has been focused on crime hotspot areas likely to benefit from improved street lighting. This is helping to reduce the fear of crime.
- 87 Tackling and reducing domestic violence is a key priority for the Council which it is tackling robustly. This includes: providing support for victims, identifying and focusing on repeat victimisation, use by the police of a 'positive arrest' strategy and working with schools to provide education on domestic violence, which helps young people to understand how and why domestic violence should be avoided.
- 88 The Council is effectively tackling drugs and alcohol misuse. Local priorities such as an emerging problem with heavy cannabis misuse have been identified by the DAT and used to inform detailed targets and action plans. An important impact of the Council's targeted programme of training and education is the reduction in the risk of long term dependency.
- 89 Innovative approaches have been used by the Council to tackle its most intransigent problems and good outcomes have been achieved. For example, measures successfully used to tackle entrenched street drinking under the Westway include physical changes to the area and the use of outreach staff with the result that the area has been cleared of street drinkers. An increase in crack dealing was tackled through a programme of rapid closure of crack houses followed by the use of section 222 of the Local Government Act 1972 to ban five drug dealers from the borough. This resulted in the successful elimination of crack houses from the borough from a situation when there were over 90.
- 90 The Council has worked effectively with the Police to assess the impact of the new licensing laws and to address risks of anti-social behaviour arising from binge drinking. Visits to late night premises and the monitoring of crime statistics including 999 calls help identify changes in behaviour and enable prompt action to deal with problems. The Council has also worked well with its partners to reduce accidents, notably through a targeted campaign of road safety awareness for children and young people. Performance data for 2002/04 shows a reduction in the borough of the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents and a reduction for the same period in the number of people slightly injured in road accidents, placing the Council in the top 25 per cent of performance, nationally.
- 91 Emergency Planning arrangements are in place including business continuity plans and arrangements for working with other agencies and partners during a crisis. However, the borough-wide risk assessment, which was prepared in 2002, has not been recently updated and does not comply with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The Council is taking action to strengthen arrangements, including the recruitment of two new members of staff, now in post, and a planned timetable to provide training for relevant staff and develop a borough-wide risk assessment by February 2007.

- 92 The Council has a sound knowledge of, and strong commitment towards, community cohesion. Close liaison with community groups is illustrated by successful joint working with the Forum of Faiths and the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre and by the instrumental role played by the Council in the success of the annual Notting Hill Carnival. The Council also responded well to the events of 7 July 2005 and its aftermath. Increased visibility of police and community safety officers allied to close working with the BME community ensured that relationships were maintained and reprisal attacks were dealt with swiftly.

Healthier communities

- 93 The Council is working very effectively with partners such as the Tenants Management Organisation (TMO) and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) to improve the health of local people and to reduce health inequalities. Excellent progress with completing the Decent Homes programme two years early is evidence of a significant contribution and there are robust links with the TMO to promote healthier communities. The well informed, authoritative members of the Health Scrutiny Committee represent a range of agencies and councillors who work to promote a healthier community. The Council is well represented on the board of the PCT. In 2004, the Health Scrutiny Committee reported on health inequalities in the borough which raised the profile of the issues across the Council and its partners. Health Scrutiny Committee plans, as a high priority in its 2006/07 work programme, to return to health inequalities to investigate what progress has been made.
- 94 The Council and its partners are achieving excellent outcomes in the reduction of health inequalities. Inequalities are being addressed in housing standards, access to health care, substance misuse and overall understanding of the communities served. The Council has made a commendable contribution to the significant reduction in teenage pregnancy and meets all of the criteria to be regarded as part of the success, including strong partnership with commitment at a senior level, provision of a comprehensive youth programme and taking the lead on teenage pregnancy among partners. The borough has achieved the largest reduction, nationally, in teenage pregnancy.
- 95 Health services for children, young people and families are outstanding, with effective partnership working and clear evidence of effective targeting of health services across the borough. This includes the targeting of the most vulnerable groups of children and young people. The general support given to parents and carers to keep their children healthy is excellent. Health provision for looked after children and children with disabilities is of high quality and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service has received 'beacon status' in identifying mental health needs and ensuring appropriate and timely responses.

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- 96 There has also been a positive impact on smoking cessation. The Council has taken innovative action to promote cessation: for example, the environmental health officer is working with pubs and restaurants in the borough to sign up to a smoking ban in advance of the enactment of legislation in 2007 with the aim of helping to promote the health of staff as well as of customers. This year's local smoking cessation targets have been met.
- 97 On average, residents live longer than anywhere else in England and there is a low infant mortality rate. But there is a continuing inequality in life expectancy with an average difference of 12 years between some residents in the borough. Reducing such a health inequality is a long-term priority but current action to achieve a change includes funding to improve adult fitness, for example, through the programme of activities in Holland Park and a wide range of activities and guidance promoted in the Council publication 'Active for Life.'
- 98 The Council is investing well in improving nutrition and food knowledge in deprived communities. For example, it supported the establishment of the Food Co-operative on the Delgano estate and its change into a social enterprise. It is investing in the healthy schools programme and in partnership working to reduce obesity. The Council provides benefits for staff to promote health such as bicycle grants, free swimming, health checks and reduced gym membership fees.
- 99 The Council is effective at improving access to services for those most at risk of disadvantage. Arabic parents and carers whose first language is not English are informed about access and availability to preventative services, for example, immunisation. The women are empowered to discuss the health and well-being of their children and the development of the service. An excellent level of support is provided to parents by health professionals and Arabic and Somali speaking staff are employed through Sure Start to provide enhanced maternity and health visiting support. These actions all contribute to the outstanding health outcomes for children and young people.
- 100 The Council is improving access to services for disabled people. Home computers are provided for disabled people and the Council provides weekly free use of swimming pools and transport to support disabled swimmers. There are specific home care, health promotion and carer services for BME communities. Access to services is also improving through innovative practice of placing the community assessment team and the health assessment team under one manager which provides more cohesive services and a new model of mental health day services has been developed to maximise social inclusion through use of mainstream community services. This has resulted in more people from BME communities accessing carer services and better care for mental health patients through, for example, direct payments to access physical exercise. Vulnerable people benefit from the services of the joint homelessness team, funded in partnership with a neighbouring council.

Older people

- 101** The Council is working well with its partners and residents to promote the independence and well-being of older people. Needs are diverse and expectations high in this borough and in response imaginative services and facilities are provided that go well beyond the core social and health care and ensure older people play a full part in life alongside other residents of all ages.
- 102** Effective consultation with older residents and the organisations Sixty Plus, Age Concern and Open Age provided a good starting point for the needs analysis leading to the borough's Older People's Strategy for 2007-2017. The Council has been particularly successful in engaging with groups whose voice is not always heard. The Migrant and Refugee Communities Forum facilitated the process of identifying and engaging with hard to reach groups so that, for example, the Eritrean Elders and the Ethiopian Women's group contributed directly to drafting the strategy which also took into account the needs of very small BME communities. Consequently, there is a shared and robust agreement on the priorities of the strategy and the outcomes needed.
- 103** Older people have prioritised their needs as a good quality of life and services for individuals where one size does not fit all. To promote delivery of this agenda, a councillor has been appointed as the older people's champion with plans to broaden the strategy to embrace the active aging-those aged 50 plus-and the wider service perspectives. Currently, the Council's social care services for older people are judged to be 'serving most people well, with excellent capacity for improvement'. This places Kensington and Chelsea as one of the top thirteen councils, nationally, in the provision of care services for older people.
- 104** The Council provides, with partners, a comprehensive offer of activities beyond the health and social care agenda which impact on the quality of life of older people aged from 50 plus. The offer includes: swimming, ICT training, exercise classes and a mobility scooter scheme for trips out. Older people are involved in discussions about broader issues affecting the community through voluntary groups, the citizens' panel and workshops. The Council achieved all of its LPSA targets relating to supporting healthy living and, in partnership with voluntary organisations, set up 67 leisure courses for older people and helped design personal training regimes for older people.
- 105** Work with the health sector to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions and avoid delayed discharges includes provision of a homecare enablement service, intermediate care beds and rehabilitation services. The Council funds a health promotion post to work with members of the Pepperpot Club for older people and supports the annual Pensioners' Health Fair at which residents can get health advice. These services have a positive impact on the independence and health of residents which is acknowledged in resident surveys.

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- 106** The Council and the older people's voluntary organisations run intergenerational projects such as IT training, buddying, mentoring, arts and theatre work and reminiscence projects with schools. For example, in the Pepperpot Club, Afro-Caribbean elders recently recounted their experiences of growing up in the Caribbean to primary school pupils. In the recent summer holidays, the police, the community safety team, older people and disadvantaged students from a local comprehensive school, produced a play which they performed at the Electric Cinema. Theatre is used to encourage older and younger people to explore their differing perceptions of each other. One impact of this increased understanding is to make older people feel safer on the streets and in their homes. The Council has won an award for its intergenerational work with older people.
- 107** The Council works hard to help older people retain their independence. For example, in 2005/06, ninety two older people purchased their own services through the direct payments scheme. The Council has been selected to pilot an 'Individual Budgets' scheme that will enable older people to make their own support arrangements. The community equipment store supplies 94.5 per cent of equipment to older people within seven working days and in partnership with the TMO the Council provides a community alarm service, supported by wardens, for vulnerable residents, particularly those with dementia or who are at risk of falling.
- 108** Imaginative housing options to meet the diverse needs of older people include adapted homes, sheltered housing, extra care housing and residential and nursing care. Advice and support is provided on housing repairs, tenancy relations, housing benefit and housing finance issues, saving energy and keeping warm. The Council works with the fire service to carry out fire safety checks and ensure electrical items such as electric blankets are safe.
- 109** As part of the Council's Equality Scheme, equality impact assessments are undertaken on older people assessment, commissioning, carers and protecting vulnerable adults. This impacts directly on the quality of service provision, generally, and on specific projects such as the redevelopment of Ellesmere residential home for older people where equality impact assessments are used to influence care standards. The Council has set up an outreach scheme for home care for people in BME communities and the Joint Carers Strategy seeks to underpin this work by supporting the work of carers.
- 110** The Council has a track record of helping residents to improve their incomes and funds four agencies which provide advice on benefit and entitlements. It funds the Citizens Advice Bureau at North Kensington Law Centre and the World's End to provide a care needs assessment in order to claim full benefit entitlement. In 2005/06 the service for older people claimed additional benefits to the value of £2 million per annum and the BME services raised £0.4 million per annum. A Scrutiny Committee review of benefit take-up has resulted in the increase in benefit take-up being set as a specific Local Area Agreement target.

- 111 Older people's issues are well integrated in the Community Strategy and include the dimensions of independence which are priorities in service plans such as the Adult and Community Learning Plan and the Community Safety Strategy. For example, designing out crime in houses of older people, street cleanliness, removing graffiti and the strong visibility of PCSOs in the streets has resulted in a marked reduction in the fear of crime by older people and the community overall.

Children and young people

- 112 The overall effectiveness of the council's children's services is outstanding. Most services for children and young people are excellent and impact positively on outcomes for children and young people in the borough. The council has an excellent record in the provision of children's services and continues to build on this to meet the challenges of more integrated ways of working. The council has formed effective partnerships to deliver integrated services across the borough, to meet the diverse needs in the borough and to respond quickly to changing demands. Priorities set are realistic and being achieved. Councillor commitment to strong services is excellent and underpinned by the effective use of resources.
- 113 Health services to children, young people and families are outstanding, despite the fact that the Trust has been operating with a financial deficit. The deficit is being reduced following a review of priorities and impact. This has led to strong partnership working and clear evidence of effective targeting of health services across the borough, including to the most vulnerable groups of children and young people. The general support given to parents and carers to keep their children healthy is excellent. The council, with health partners, has established very exciting projects to raise health awareness and facilitate the timely delivery of services. Health provision for looked after children and children with disabilities is of high quality. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service has received 'beacon status' and is operating well to provide excellent support to front line staff in identifying mental health needs and ensuring appropriate and timely responses. The integrated support for children and young people with disabilities is also very effective.
- 114 The overall contribution to keeping children and young people safe is outstanding. Children and young people who are most at risk are protected well through good inter-agency collaboration and well managed procedures. Professionals in key agencies work well together and share information. The recording systems in place are exemplary and enable managers to track the progress of work at every stage. Assessments are thorough and integrated with a clear focus on managing risk and ensuring the prompt delivery of appropriate services. The children and young peoples plan highlights the importance of the family in the community and this is being reflected in the development of strong local preventative services. All child protection and looked after children cases are allocated to qualified social workers who have good support and supervision coupled with an excellent training programme. Support for looked after children LAC is excellent. The council shows a strong commitment to road safety and can demonstrate that road accidents have reduced.

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- 115 Education services are outstanding. The Council knows well its own strengths and areas for development. The findings of this review closely match the authority's own analysis. Very good progress has been made in developing the quality of universal services and developing and implementing preventative services to reduce levels of vulnerability, for example for looked after children and those from BME communities who may be at greater risk of underachievement. There is very good support provided for pupils from a range of council services including the education welfare and educational psychology service. Schools place the highest value in the support that they receive from the council with 92 per cent felt to be very good and in the best 25 per cent nationally. Schools identified that 49 per cent of services from the Council had improved from the previous year. The capacity to build on these achievements and improve services further is good. The Council has an excellent focus on voluntary learning, recreation, sport and play provision in the area. As a result children and young people have much to do locally. They value highly the opportunities outside of school and benefit from them. For example, through the youth service many young people make significant gains in their personal and social development.
- 116 The overall contribution of services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is outstanding. Children and young people, including looked after children and children with disabilities are well supported to enable them to make a positive contribution to their communities and society as a whole. The Council, with partners, is committed to the involvement and participation of children and young people in planning services. Excellent examples of effective participation exist across the borough in a wide range of settings. The involvement of children and young people in decision making and in supporting the community is outstanding. The Borough was one of the first in the country, and the first in London, to achieve the Advanced Hear By Right standard. The high visibility of Police Community Support Officers has been identified by young people and some schools as being important in encouraging positive behaviour as do the close contacts at an operational level established between the police and individual schools. Schools are regularly involved in specific projects, such as Operation Sabre, a successful initiative developed in direct response to an increase in knife crime in the area. This has been effective in raising awareness amongst young people and the wider community as well as securing the surrender of in excess of 200 knives and reducing knife crime.
- 117 Opportunities for children and young people to achieve economic well-being and prepare for working life are good with some outstanding features. The Council and partners have robust arrangements in place to support families and young people's economic development. There is good language support for children and young people and the Council has particularly effective measures for people where English is a second language. The quality of post 16 education is either good or better. The Connexions service is excellent and works extensively with a wide range of agencies to support young people to achieve economic well-being. This service is highly valued and developing more ways to integrate its services with other agencies. Success rates for level 3 programmes are national and neighbour averages. Progression and participation to further and higher education is also very good.

- 118** The overall level two and three qualification profile for young people aged 19 living in the borough is satisfactory and generally in line with statistical neighbours. The borough recognises that there is a need for more quality secondary school places and is implementing imaginative plans for a new academy in the borough. The council provides or supports a wide range of community initiatives to promote the economic well-being of young people. Strategies for and the management of the housing service are excellent. This is particularly pertinent in the Royal Borough because of the extremely high cost of housing and non-availability of building land leading to an insufficient supply of low cost and supported accommodation for families and young people within the borough. The council provides excellent support for looked after children and children with disabilities to achieve economic well-being.
- 119** The management of council services is outstanding evidenced by the high performance in all key areas in the delivery of effective children's services. The children and young peoples plan is imaginative and fully supported by all partners in the borough. This sets challenging but achievable objectives for services which are being systematically achieved. The Children's Trust will be operational in Spring 2007 and will become the driving force for joint service commissioning. The safeguarding board is operational and proving to be an effective forum for the development of safeguarding initiatives. The culture for performance management and continuous improvement is robust and is suitably reinforced by scrutiny arrangements in children's services. The workforce in children's services is high calibre and supported through excellent supervision and training support. The council has an outstanding track record of creating capacity to deliver high quality services and there is political intent to maintain this impetus. Current management of resources and value for money at the council are excellent.

Appendix 1 - Framework for Corporate Assessment

- 1 This corporate assessment was carried out under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, under which the Audit Commission has power to inspect local authorities' arrangements for securing continuous improvement. The results of the corporate assessment contribute to the determination of the overall CPA category for an authority, which the Audit Commission is required to assess and report on under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2 The Council's self assessment provided a key resource in focusing the assessment activity which included consideration of:
 - key documentation, including the Council's improvement plan;
 - updated performance indicators and performance data; and
 - interviews and meetings attended.
- 3 The assessment for the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 9 to 20 October 2006.
- 4 This report has been discussed with the Council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission's assessment. This report will be used as the basis for improvement planning by the Council.