Part 4
The functions of a London borough
(illustrated using the example of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)

Although only the Corporation of London is smaller geographically, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is the most densely-populated local authority in Britain. In mid-2005 it had a population estimated at 184,000 and it covers 1,238 hectares. Property prices and the cost of private rented accommodation are among the highest in the country. Forty-four per cent of residential property is owner-occupied, 30 per cent is in the private rented sector and 26 per cent is in the hands of social landlords who provide properties at below market rents.

It is a culturally and ethnically diverse community. Almost three quarters of the residents have some form of religious identification: 62 per cent Christian, 8.4 per cent Muslim and 2.2 per cent Jewish. A further 15.3 per cent of the population have no religion.

The Royal Borough is ethnically diverse. Seventy-eight per cent of the population are white. While 50 per cent of the borough describe themselves as White British, a further 28 per cent are from other white ethnic groups of American, European or Middle Eastern descent. Seven per cent of the population are black, five per cent are Asian, four per cent are mixed race and 1.6 per cent are Chinese. Forty-five per cent of Royal Borough residents were born outside the UK. The white population is concentrated in the south of the borough while the black and mixed race residents are more likely to live in the north. The Asian population is uniformly spread throughout the borough. More than 100 languages are spoken in the borough’s schools.

Average household income in Kensington and Chelsea is £42,272 – higher than in any other authority in Britain and more than 40 per cent higher than the average household income in England.

There is a wide spread of income and wealth in the borough. More than 23 per cent of households have incomes below £20,000 and two of the Royal Borough’s northern electoral wards are scored as being among the ten per cent most deprived wards in England. The extent of deprivation is illustrated by the proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. In the Royal Borough’s primary schools more that 40 per cent are entitled to free school meals compared to 17 per cent in England as a whole.

The Council spends around £485 million a year and employs 4,140 people – 1,188 of them in the borough’s schools.
The Council has consistently been judged an *excellent* authority under the Government’s Comprehensive Performance Assessment since its introduction in 2002. The Royal Borough is one of only two London boroughs and five authorities in England to have been judged as a *four star* authority (the new top band) in the new performance framework introduced in 2005.

**The politics of Kensington and Chelsea**

The Council is made up of 54 Councillors elected to represent 18 territorial wards, each with five to six thousand voters and each choosing three Councillors. Elections take place every four years on the first Thursday in May. Since 1965, when the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea was formed from a merger of the Metropolitan Borough of Chelsea and the Royal Borough of Kensington, the Council has been controlled by the Conservative Party. A Labour minority opposition has consistently been elected over the past 40 years. At present there are 45 Conservative and nine Labour Councillors. Independent Councillors have been elected at various times, and a Liberal Democrat Councillor has sat as an opposition Councillor having been elected as a Conservative.

Its political culture has been a distinctive feature of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Councillors elected from both parties have been distinguished by their commitment to the welfare of their local community and to public service in the interest of the Royal Borough’s residents as a whole.

The distinctive character, approach and policies of the Royal Borough reflect consistent and strong local political leadership from a succession of long-serving and formidable council leaders. Sir Malby Crofton Bt, Nicholas Freeman OBE and Baroness Hanham CBE each led the Council for more than ten years and made a distinguished contribution to local government in London.

The present Leader, Merrick Cockell, was elected by the Conservative Party in 2000 and continues to make a contribution to the broader politics and public life of London.

The politics of the Conservative Group are most accurately summarised as robustly Tory by instinct while being practical and empirical in their application. Three things have distinguished the Council since 1965: firstly that it should act within the law, ever mindful that, as Nicholas Freeman put it, “Local authorities are creatures of statute”; the second guiding principle has been financial caution and prudence and an acute sense of the need for financial efficiency and strict budgetary control; and the third has been a desire to serve the whole community with efficient and properly-resourced public services.
Sir Malby Crofton took the lead in building good community relations and addressing the acute deprivation of north Kensington in the 1960s.

Nicholas Freeman campaigned for the abolition of the GLC and the ILEA and for the Royal Borough to become a Local Education Authority. During a period of radical instability in local authority finance he exploited the central Government’s grant regime to the maximum advantage of the residents and in 1986 cut local property taxes by a third.

Baroness Hanham built up both the borough’s education and social services, ensuring that they were generously resourced and delivered not just efficiently but with imagination and flair. A continued thread has been the progressive work to improve the physical environment and social capital of the deprived parts of the borough, particularly in the northern wards, Earl’s Court and certain parts of Chelsea.

Education
Local authorities’ responsibilities for education have changed and diminished over the years. The most significant piece of legislation was the 1944 Education Act, which required local authorities to make provision for school education for their residents. In London, this responsibility was discharged through the London County Council and then the Inner London Education Authority. These had the advantage of being able to treat London as one entity without internal boundaries that were often irrelevant in terms of education provision and allowed for more coherent planning. The disadvantage of such a large scale authority covering disparate areas was that, in the eyes of many, insufficient attention was paid to the detail and the quality of what was provided and local needs and aspirations were not seen to trigger change. Standards were low and improvements in educational performance hard to find despite high levels of expenditure.

In 1990, responsibility for education was transferred from the Inner London Education Authority to the inner London boroughs, each taking responsibility for the education provided within its boundaries. With the outer London boroughs continuing to have responsibility for education in their areas, 32 London boroughs and the Corporation of London were now delivering everything from nursery to further education in the city.

In 1993, responsibility for further education was taken away from local authorities. Colleges were independently incorporated and made responsible for making appropriate provision within their area, although this did not necessarily mean that they had to provide comprehensively for the needs of a particular geographical environment. Adult education remained the responsibility of local authorities, although as a result of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 the amount that each authority spent on adult education was taken out of its Rate Support Grant and given to the newly formed Learning and Skills Council.
The Learning and Skills Council funds the local authority to deliver adult and community learning, as it is now known, in accordance with Government priorities. Higher education has never been the responsibility of local authorities and the academic independence of the higher education sector – and in particular, the universities – has been much prized in London as elsewhere in the country.

The creation of the new inner London education authorities has been followed by a great improvement in the standards and quality of education. In 2004 the standards achieved at GCSE level in London exceeded the national average for the first time, and education in London is improving at a faster rate than anywhere in the country. There are many causes for this improvement, among them the fact that some London authorities are focussing more clearly on making education service providers much more accountable locally.

The Royal Borough has been exceptionally successful in transforming education since it took responsibility for the service in 1990.

It has established its primary schools as among the most successful in the country. Despite higher than average levels of deprivation and other factors normally associated with low academic achievement, its Key Stage 2 results (which measure the achievement of eleven-year-olds) are amongst the best in the country. In terms of the ‘value added’ (the progress children make from starting school to the end of their education) the Royal Borough is the top performing council.

Progress at secondary schools has presented different challenges. The pioneering comprehensive school at Holland Park, while remaining a beacon for those who believe in comprehensive education, has begun to achieve academic performance levels similar to those achieved in primary schools in the Royal Borough. Cardinal Vaughan, a boys’ Catholic secondary school, has achieved well above the national standard, confounding expectations of poor performance both by boys and in comprehensive schools.

The fact that the Royal Borough’s four secondary schools are very different from one another makes it difficult to transfer effective practice between them. Despite this the Royal Borough’s secondary schools together achieve well above average, making Kensington and Chelsea one of the highest-performing authorities in London for secondary schools.

Royal Borough success can be attributed to a number of factors. It was prepared to act radically and to spend substantial amounts of money when it took on responsibility for education, in order to solve long-standing problems in schools. There were large-scale changes in management and substantial improvements to schools premises.
Since the Royal Borough is one of the most densely populated areas in Europe, space within schools is generally short, but adequate capital resources have allowed schools to make the best use of what is available and ensure that pupils and staff have been given positive learning environments.

There has been a very clear focus on teaching and learning as the core of improvement. The Royal Borough has a very well regarded professional development centre for teaching and other school staff and this makes a huge contribution to the quality of work in the classroom. The Royal Borough has put education as a top priority and has never shirked from taking necessary action to secure high and improving standards.

The Royal Borough is looking at how to develop its role so that it can ensure that it has the most appropriate relationship with increasingly autonomous schools. Schools are moving away from the old tendency to be dependent on both officers and Councillors of the Royal Borough and are now addressing their own problems. This is not just a political desire but a financial necessity, as school finances have been separated from those of the local authority. While schools’ funding is being increased at a guaranteed rate, the funding available to the local authority for its education functions has been pegged. To increase it would mean a double cost to council tax payers who have been asked to pay more in the past to enable the Council to raise the money it needed to improve its schools.

Recent Governments have been upfront in the way they have reduced the power of local authorities over education. Some of the responsibilities have been transferred to the national stage – the establishment of the national curriculum, which prescribes in general terms what should be taught in schools, for instance – while others have been given to the schools themselves, which now have much greater autonomy over their own destinies.

The idea behind these shift in power is that those who are most closely engaged in providing education – the schools – are likely to be able to effect improvements, while central Government can lever change through grant funding and external assessment regimes. This has seen the role of local authorities fall between the major national frameworks and the autonomy of schools and become one of influencing schools and maintaining their attention on achieving high and improving standards of education.

There is irony in the fact that the more local authorities are able to demonstrate their effectiveness in improving standards of education, the more Governments of all political hues seem to want to reduce this influence.
For adult and community learning, the local authority is funded by the Learning and Skills Council to deliver Government priorities. While funding for adult learning is reducing in order to finance the growth in 16-19 provision, clear priorities have been set for basic literacy and numeracy skills and for courses leading to accreditation at Levels 2 and 3 (equivalent to GCSE and ‘A’ level respectively). This means adults who want to learn for recreation or for personal development are likely to experience higher fees and a reduction in the range and extent of courses available as Government funding for these purposes diminishes and even disappears.

One of the implications of dividing education provision across the inner London boroughs was that the way in which schools of different types are located now bears little relationship to the pattern of need within each authority. Kensington and Chelsea is probably the most marked in this regard. There are, for example, only four secondary schools in the Royal Borough, and three of them are Catholic schools. This means that the majority of parents have to look for places for their children in schools outside the Royal Borough, while a large number of children from Catholic families travel from their homes in other boroughs to our Catholic schools each day.

The Royal Borough is a very small education authority. It has four nursery schools, two of which are on schedule to become children’s centres. These are multi-purpose facilities for the youngest children and their families which provide a one-stop service for health, education and social services.

The four secondary schools in the Royal Borough are Holland Park, a mixed intake community school of 1,200 pupils, and three smaller Catholic schools (one for boys from 11 to 18 and two for pupils from 11 to 16, one mixed and one for girls).

There are 26 primary schools, of which seven are voluntary-aided Church of England schools and seven are voluntary-aided Catholic schools. The lack of a Church of England secondary school has prompted the Royal Borough to promote, at great cost, the development of a new secondary school in Chelsea. Although this will be a Church of England school, only half of its pupils will be admitted on the basis of any religious belief or affiliation.

The Royal Borough’s primary schools tend to be small, one-form entry schools simply because there is not enough space for them to expand. This means that they have relatively high costs per pupil. One way of tackling this could be to federate schools under single governing bodies and heads but, as yet, no schools have been bold enough to take this step.
The Royal Borough has two special schools, one of which is a very successful hospital school providing education for children in Chelsea and Westminster and Brompton hospitals. The Royal Borough has made hospital education a priority and has been supported in doing so by residents.

The Royal Borough’s only ‘real’ special school is a residential school for children with severe and profound learning difficulties. This school is in Swanley in Kent, a situation that was inherited from the Inner London Education Authority, which maintained several special schools beyond its own borders that were apportioned between the inner London boroughs in a fairly ad hoc way. Only two of the 70 pupils at the school are Royal Borough children.

There is a Pupil Referral Unit for children who have been permanently excluded from their schools, usually because of their behaviour. The unit is very successful and can enable such pupils to continue to achieve reasonably well academically and to return to full-time education. The pressure on secondary school places within the Royal Borough, though, usually means that those who are able to return will not get a place at another school within Kensington and Chelsea; older pupils may in fact receive the remainder of their statutory education at the pupil referral unit.

The Royal Borough does not directly deliver any adult and community learning, instead commissioning courses from the local further education college and from 13 voluntary organisations. This helps to bring learning opportunities to individuals and groups that would otherwise be hard to reach through a variety of community settings.

All the schools in Kensington and Chelsea, as elsewhere, are looking to extend their roles and hours of operation to become ‘extended schools’ offering a range of services to local children – whether or not they attend the school – and their parents.

The most active primary schools are working together in a small consortium to provide services across a wider geographical area than they could individually. The girls’ Catholic school is already termed a full-service extended school and is developing a wide range of services to its range of communities. As a Catholic school it does not take its pupils from its immediate area, although it does see its immediate locality as being part of its community.

Social Services
Modern social services departments have their origins in the statutory duties that local authorities were given in 1948. This was the year in which they were given duties to appoint Children’s Officers, along with the powers to set up and manage residential care homes contained in the 1948 National Assistance Act.
The landmark event for social services was the 1968 report of Lord Seebohm’s committee on *Local Authority and Allied Personal Social Services*. The Seebohm report rejected the assumption behind legislation in the 1940s that catering for the needs of the elderly on the one hand and children on the other were fundamentally different tasks needing organisationally distinct structures. The Seebohm committee recommended the creation of a new local authority department providing a community-based and family-oriented department available to everyone.

This philosophy was embodied in the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 that led to personal social services being drawn together and delivered mainly through local authority social services departments.

The Act provided for the unification, under one committee and one officer, of social services responsibilities that had previously been divided between children’s, welfare and health services. The major recommendation in the Seebohm report was the creation of a unified social services department with generic social workers helped both children and adults.

In terms of the self-confident delivery of personal social services through the expertise of social workers, the Seebohm report and the integrated social services departments it led to is often seen as a high point. In contrast, the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s saw a succession of childcare tragedies that transformed the public climate and was very much the low point for social services. Terry Bamford, the former Director of Housing and Social Services in Kensington and Chelsea, wrote in his 1990 publication *The Future of Social Work* that these tragedies brought in their wake “a tax on the values and philosophy of social work practice and its ineffectiveness”.

The tragic murder of eight-year-old Maria Colwell by her stepfather in 1973 provoked what the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Widgery, described as a “highly emotional public reaction”. It seemed to demonstrate that social services failed to protect children in danger, and yet from a different prospective the law could seem to be unfair to parents who were at risk of having their children taken away from them.

In Terry Bamford’s judgement: “The Maria Colwell case marked the end of the honeymoon period when the effectiveness of social work as a means of changing human behaviour had been taken as axiomatic… The scars left by the Colwell case on the collective psyche of social work have never fully healed, as each year has brought a further reminder that social work decisions are rarely clear-cut and that social workers are brokers in shades of grey, often seeking the lesser of two evils for those with whom they work.”
Evolving care models, identifying priorities and constrained budgets

While social services departments may have been launched at a time of rapid growth in local authority expenditure, they soon had to learn to live within a more restrained financial environment. Tony Crosland, the Secretary of State for the Environment, famously called in 1975 for “an end to the untrammelled expansion of local authority expenditure”, pointing out that that in the world of local government expenditure the ‘party’ was over. The Department of Health and Social Services White Paper Priorities for Health and Personal Social Services explicitly recognised in 1976 that future developments in social services would have to identify priorities, manage within limited resources and effect change by switching resources within existing budgets.

The 1980 White Paper Care in Action continued to emphasise the need for identifying priorities. The priorities identified by Conservative ministers in the early 1980s were elderly people, the mentally ill and people with learning difficulties and visual and sensory disabilities. The name of the game since 1975 has been concentrating resources on identified priority groups, limiting access to services for people whose needs fall outside these priorities and charging those who receive services if they can afford to pay.

Social services is a good example of the way that national Government sets the policy framework for services that are delivered through local authorities. National Government departments determine the direction of travel, the preferred models of care and the principal priorities, all set out in policy guidance for local government to follow.

This policy framework has seen important changes in models of social care and perceived best practice. Public policy has emphasised the development of community care both for mentally ill people and for elderly people. A significant driver behind this policy has been a robust determination on the part of central Government to cap the public’s access to services that are free at the point of use, because they are provided by the Health Service, and to limit the access that local authorities have to the social security budget through income support and housing benefit.

Care in the Community

This policy culminated in the passing of the National Health Service Community Care Act 1990. This gave effect to the recommendations of Sir Roy Griffiths relating to the need to end the incentive that encouraged local authorities to place older and disabled people in a residential care setting, regardless of whether or not it was appropriate in terms of that person’s specific care needs.

This perverse incentive had resulted from the complexities of social
security law. Until 1993, when a local authority placed someone in a residential care home run by a voluntary organisation or a private company, the fees (if they could not pay themselves) would be met from the Government’s social security budget. If, however, the local authority provided that person with a place in one of their own residential homes, or gave them a home help and a place at a day centre (allowing them to retain some independence), the local authority had to foot the bill itself.

By transferring to local authorities the money that had been spent through the social security budget on residential care, and giving them the responsibility of only offering care to people assessed as being in priority need, the Government not only gave a fillip to care in the community but effectively capped spending on social care.

A similar result has been achieved through the supported housing initiative, which has in practice capped spending on disabled and mentally ill people in hostel accommodation. The framework of priorities, the way needs are assessed and critical aspects of policy, such as the amount of money that a local authority should pay for a place in a residential home, are set out in policy guidance given to local authority departments by the Department of Health.

The issue at the heart of much of the debate about the care of disabled and older people in England is who should pay for it and how well the state should resource the services that it provides for people without charge. In 1948 the National Health Service was set up to provide medical care that was free at the point of delivery. Like education, health is essentially a free and universal service. In the same year, the Treasury insisted in the 1948 National Assistance Act that personal social care would only be provided on a means-tested basis; while it would be free for low income households, everybody else would have to pay.

In practice today this means that an elderly person who is admitted to the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital after suffering a stroke is freely treated. If, however, they then have to go in to residential care after leaving the hospital, they will be charged the full cost unless they meet the means-testing criteria for state assistance. Much of the controversy that surrounds community care in England stems from this central issue.

Children’s services

The fact is that a minister who relies on a departmental brief is going to have a very dull exposition of his Bill. However, even when my whole mind and emotions were geared up to my debut at the dispatch box as a Cabinet
Minister I had to concentrate on one of those dreary subjects which come up and harass a Minister. In this case it was the future of the children’s service of the LCC when the GLC takes over.

*The Diaries Of A Cabinet Minister Richard Crossman*

18 November 1964

In the second half of the 20th century, one of the most emotionally charged and contentious areas of public policy has been the protection and care of vulnerable children. This concern can be traced back to worries about the treatment of children evacuated during the Second World War and the quality of care that was provided by local authorities under their antiquated Poor Law responsibilities.

In September 1939 a large number of children of all ages were suddenly taken from their homes in London and the other great cities in England and sent to live with strangers in country towns and villages. Susan Isaacs, a psychiatrist at London University’s Institute of Education, has described this as the biggest disturbance to family life in British history. The wartime evacuation of children presented a huge challenge to those responsible for dealing with children in need and transformed the climate of public opinion towards vulnerable children.

Things came to a head in 1945. Dennis O’Neill was a 12-year-old boy in local authority care who had been boarded out with foster parents in Shropshire. A coroner’s jury recorded that he had died from acute cardiac failure following violence applied to the front of his chest and after being beaten with a stick.

The jury led a public outcry and added a rider to its verdict that there had been a serious lack of supervision by the local authority involved. An official committee chaired by Dame Myra Curtis that was already looking into provision for children who had lost their parents or who had no homes to return to, drew heavily on the dreadful circumstances of Dennis O’Neill’s death when making its conclusions and recommendations. Dr. Stephen Cretney QC commented in his book *Family Law in the Twentieth Century* that Dennis O’Neill “can fairly be described as the victim whose death put reform on the urgent agenda of practical politics”.

The recommendations of the Curtis report in August 1946 led to the Children Act 1948. This gave statutory recognition to the principle that the state had a duty to provide for all children in need, not merely for children who were destitute. The Act created the administrative machinery to allow care to be delivered by professional social workers, and since the 1940s childcare practice has increasingly been seen as a matter for professional expertise.
The report recommended that a single Government department should be responsible, and after a bitter Whitehall battle the Home Office took on this role in March 1947. Local Authorities were given responsibility for taking care of children who were not just destitute but vulnerable and for appointing Children’s Officers to ensure that children’s welfare was secured. It was the start of an approach that led to childcare being seen increasingly as a specialised and professional service. The ambitions of the Act were illustrated by the Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan, who told Parliament the bill would mean that local authorities would bring “warmth and humanity” to caring for needy children.

The tragedy of Dennis O’Neill’s death set a pattern for the future evolution of childcare services. The shocking abuse and murder of a child, a public outcry, a request to an individual or committee already looking into some aspect of children’s services to learn the lessons of this particular tragedy, followed by recommendations for further administrative change. Such an evolution has meant that over the past 60 years England has developed one of the most comprehensive and systematic legal frameworks for child protection, culminating in the 1989 Children Act.

At the heart of this legal framework is a duty to put the best interests of the child ahead of the interests of any other interested party, including the parents and other relatives. A measure of the scale and comprehensiveness of the legislation is given by the fact that it is accompanied by 11 volumes of policy guidance.

Stephen Cretney has described the 1989 Children Act as “a superb piece of legal machinery” but has questioned how much it has truly improved the lives of children in need. While, as he has put it, “no-one could reasonably have believed that the problem of child abuse would go away”, a particularly disturbing element was “the increasing evidence that children who were supposedly under the protection of the State were still being abused and were even at a special risk of abuse”.

This concern about abuse within children’s homes led to a major review, conducted by former Director of Social Services in Kensington and Chelsea Sir William Utting, who later became Head of the Social Services Inspectorate and who produced an important report, People Like Us, in 1997. Sir William’s work led to a review of children in care and to the present Government’s Quality Protects initiative. This was a Government programme to improve child protection and the care of looked-after children. It was accompanied by specific grants, and among other things it involved asking Councillors to answer for themselves some 20 detailed questions about the quality of the care that their authorities provided.
The murder of Victoria Climbié in February 2000 resulted in a further high-profile enquiry carried out by Lord Laming. His recommendations following her tragic death mean children’s services are undergoing a further instalment of radical administrative change.

Responsibility for children’s services, moved in 1971 from the Home Office to the Department of Health, has now been moved again, this time to the Department of Education. The essence of Lord Laming's report was that the legal framework for child protection in England was appropriate but needed to be given better administrative effect by the public bodies involved, principally the local authorities. Following a consultative Green Paper, Government legislation in 2004 required local authorities to set up integrated children’s services to undertake every function, from child protection and looking after vulnerable children to providing schools and youth services. These changes to children’s services represent a fundamental change in the way that the delivery of personal social services has been organised in English local government over the past 35 years.

The paramount theme is the central importance of putting the child’s interest above all interests. The intention is to address the needs of all children in the context of a universal service where the particular needs of individual children are identified. In practice, two very different services based on separate statutory policy agendas are being brought together and there are likely to be tensions between them.

As a local education authority, the Royal Borough educates 11,000 children at an average unit cost of £7,000 a year. In contrast the borough looks after some 270 children in children’s homes or in foster families at an average unit cost of £50,000 a year. These differences highlight the fact that education and social services for vulnerable children have traditionally been radically different public services.

**Adult Social Care**
Social care is one of the Royal Borough’s major public services and describes a wide range of support that helps a wide range of people – particularly older people – to lead more satisfactory daily lives.

These services include:

- Help for people with mental health needs
- Care services for the elderly
- Support for people with learning and physical disabilities
- Support for people with problems caused by drug and alcohol use
- support for people with long term health conditions including HIV and AIDS
The key objectives of these services are to:

- Promote independence by helping people to achieve and sustain the maximum level of independence consistent with their needs and safety
- Protect vulnerable people from harm and maltreatment

Until recently these services were largely delivered by local authority social services departments, but the Children Act 2004 means that councils, including the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, are restructuring to create separate services for adults and children.

These changes are the latest in a series of developments since the creation of social services departments in the 1970s. The key themes in this field of social policy include:

- A continued shift away from institutional and residential provision
- An increased emphasis on listening to the views of service users and of carers
- The development of a ‘mixed economy’ of care
- A push towards greater partnership between social care and health services
- A steady retreat from the Seebohm vision of generic social services, reflected in increased specialisation
- A far more rigorous inspection and performance management regime

The shift away from institutional provision begun by the closure of long stay psychiatric and ‘mental handicap’ hospitals has continued. This has been driven both by a desire to provide personalised services that maximise the independence and dignity of individuals and by efficiency considerations. The latest White Paper on health and social care – *Our Health, Our Care, Our Say* – aims to build on this by introducing ever greater choice via individual budgets for vulnerable people.

Linked to the development of more community based services has been an increased emphasis on listening to users and carers, both in developing services and in individual cases. People increasingly expect to be treated as active consumers of services rather than passive recipients of ‘one size fits all’ responses.

A significant proportion of care – particularly residential care – has always been provided by the private and voluntary sectors. Government policy since the 1980s, though, has sought to encourage a mixed economy of care by separating purchasers and providers, encouraging competitive tendering and more recently through the *Best Value* regime and the efficiency agenda. Much domiciliary care is now also delivered by the private sector, with the state acting as purchaser and enforcer of standards.
There has been a strong emphasis on partnerships between health and social care, along with legislation to encourage integration via pooled budgets, care trusts and joint services. This agenda is partly about efficiency but is also shaped by a desire to simplify processes from the point of view of the user by, for example, avoiding the duplication of assessments. It is possible, though, that the rhetoric of partnership has so far exceeded the reality. This reflects the complexities involved in integrating services but has also been caused by organisational and financial instability within the health service, which has acted as a significant barrier to the development of partnerships. There are also concerns about the accountability of pooled budgets.

As legislation and social care services have become more complex, the original concept of a generic social services department has been gradually eroded. The Mental Health Act 1983, Children Act 1989 and Community Care Act 1990 were particularly responsible for giving an impetus to the increasing specialisation of services, especially those provided by social workers. This trend has now culminated in the functional separation of adults’ and children’s services.

The present Government has introduced a much more elaborate, independent and extensive system of inspection, regulation and performance management for social care. This has included establishing new national inspectorates to replace the previous system of local authority inspection units with responsibility for inspecting individual residential homes, together with the introduction of a national system of performance indicators and star ratings.

The National Care Standards Commission was established following the Care Standards Act 2000 and was soon merged with the Social Services Inspectorate to create the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in April 2004.

In 1985 the Department of Health established the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) to inspect local authorities and work with them to encourage best practice. Responsibility for inspecting individual residential homes rested with local authority Inspection Units until 2002.

Social care services currently provided for adults include:

- Assessment and social work support
- Information and advice
- Support and advice to carers
- Home care services
- Home meals
- Day services
- Community rehabilitation services
- Residential and nursing homes
Some of these services are provided directly by the Council, while others are provided by private sector providers or through grants to voluntary agencies. Many services are delivered in partnership with the health service.

Some people now receive Direct Payments so that they can purchase their own services such as personal assistants. Kensington and Chelsea has been chosen to pilot the ‘individual budgets’ described above; these aim to give a wider range of users increased autonomy and choice.

**Health**

In 1948 Britain’s National Health Service was created to provide health care that is free at the point of delivery and rationed on the basis of medical need.

The National Health Service is a centrally controlled, administered and planned agency of national Government. It is financed through general taxation as part of current public expenditure rather than through any form of social insurance.

Historically, local authorities played a large part in the provision of health care. They pioneered the appointment of officers of public health and developed voluntary hospitals that provided health services to low-income households. In the first half of the 20th century local authorities were proud of their role in developing such health care services.

In 1945, the Minister of Health Aneurin Bevan proposed as part of the establishment of the National Health Service that the NHS should take over local authority hospitals. In his memorandum to the Cabinet on the future of the hospital services he said: “The first fundamental from now on is to picture, plan and provide a hospital service on a broad national scale and get rid once and for all of any purely historical impediments to doing so, such as local authority run hospitals.” As Aneurin Bevan’s biographer John Campbell put it: “Major local authorities like the London County Council did not see themselves as ‘historical impediments’.” The Lord President of the Council and a former Leader of the London County Council, Herbert Morrison, retorted: “We should be cautious about any step which will weaken local government” and warned about the “potentially serious consequences of slicing off one of its most cherished functions”. Morrison went on presciently to comment that appointed regional hospital boards “subject to Ministers’ directions on all questions of policy, finance and so on, will be mere creatures of the Ministry of Health, with little vitality of their own”.

Local authorities were represented on local health authorities until the 1980s, when it was decided that Councillors should no longer be appointed to them, largely because their local priorities could not be
relied on to coincide with those of the Secretary of State for Health. Community Health Councils were established in 1974 to ensure that local patients had a voice in the development of local health services, but these, too, were perceived as unhelpful and were abolished in 2003.

Local authorities have now been given a new responsibility to scrutinise the work of local health authorities – now called Primary Care Trusts and local hospital trusts. In addition, Patient and Public Involvement Forums scrutinise the work of each individual trust and represent the interests of patients and public in their work. In the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea this means that the Council scrutinises the work of the Kensington and Chelsea Primary Care Trust, the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, the Royal Marsden Hospital and the Central and North West London Mental Health Trust.

In London one of the recurring problems is deciding the appropriate local area that health authorities should cover. This is essentially because the natural catchment areas for hospitals do not neatly reflect local borough boundaries. Hospitals in central London draw patients from across local borough boundaries, while the boroughs provide the social services that often also make a significant contribution to a patient’s overall health and wellbeing.

**Housing**

In the United Kingdom, public housing (rented housing for households who are not able to afford either home ownership or private sector rent levels) is often referred to as ‘council housing’. This reflects the historical role of district and borough councils in managing public housing on an almost monopoly basis. In recent years, though, semi-independent and not-for-profit housing associations or trusts, otherwise known as Registered Social Landlords, have become increasingly prevalent within the public housing sector. As a consequence, housing provided by councils and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) is now collectively known as ‘social housing’.

The Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890, which encouraged local authorities to improve the housing in their area, saw the first tentative steps towards the creation of council housing. It was, though, the enactment of The Housing and Town Planning Act 1919 which led to the real creation of large-scale council housing in the UK. Councils were provided with subsidies to enable them to build homes in areas of high housing need.

This was followed by The Housing Act 1930, which encouraged mass slum clearance. Councils were encouraged to demolish poor quality housing and build new homes for the people living locally.
The 1942 Beveridge Report laid the foundations for a truly comprehensive welfare state. Mass programmes of social housing building led to the expansion of inner city estates.

In an effort to address the massive housing shortage caused by the Second World War, many councils built pre-fabricated blocks of houses and flats, usually in inner cities where the population was growing rapidly. This practice continued into the 1960s, although it has been criticised for creating poor quality, badly built housing and high-density estates.

After the 1970s, councils built increasingly fewer homes, concentrating instead on repairing their ageing housing stock. The introduction of the Right to Buy under the Housing Act 1980 led to many of the better quality council properties being purchased by sitting tenants and this, together with a lack of investment in social housing during the 1980s, caused a declining availability of decent council housing.

The Housing and Planning Act 1986 gave councils the option of transferring all, or part, of their housing stock to another landlord such as an RSL. This power has been widely used, with the result that the 1990s has seen the number of RSL-owned properties increase and the number of council-owned properties decline.

In the UK, the social rented sector now makes up around 20 per cent of the housing stock. In recent years, as the economy has grown and the importance of social rented housing in meeting housing shortages has diminished, the UK has placed much more importance on using social housing as a safety net for vulnerable households. The UK is one of the few countries in the world where specified groups, such as the homeless, have a legally enforceable right to housing.

Most council tenants have secure tenancies. This means that they have a number of rights, such as the right to buy their home, the right to take on the management of their home, and the right to be consulted about important changes in the way their homes are managed. They also have security of tenure, which means that they can stay in their home indefinitely provided that they keep to the terms of their tenancy agreement.

Bomb damage to the Metropolitan Borough of Chelsea during the Second World War was comparatively heavy for such a small borough. This led the Council to carry out a substantial re-building and re-housing programme in the years after the war in order to re-house people bombed out of their homes and to attempt to reduce the amount of poor housing such as that on the World's End site.

When the Metropolitan Borough of Chelsea amalgamated with the Royal
Borough of Kensington in 1965 to form the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, it created a stark contrast between the wealthy, southern part of the borough and the poorer, more run-down, area of north Kensington. This polarisation between the very rich owner-occupiers and very poor council tenants – with middle income households driven out – continues to this day.

The role of local housing authorities

Over the past two decades, many councils have sold all their housing stock to one or more RSLs through a process known as stock transfer, with the result that a quarter of local housing authorities are no longer landlords. Although these councils do not have the specific responsibilities of a landlord, for example in terms of rent collection or repairs and maintenance, they remain the local housing authority in law and continue to have associated responsibilities. Most notable amongst these responsibilities is the requirement to provide a strategic housing and community leadership role within their area.

This strategic and leadership role in Kensington and Chelsea is provided by the Council’s Housing and Strategic Development (HSD) Department. HSD plays an enabling role, which means it is responsible for the production of all relevant strategies, including those dealing with housing and homelessness, and for commissioning relevant services. It does this, for example, through the Supporting People Programme that aims to deliver a range of housing support services that promote people’s independence. HSD is also responsible for providing community and housing services, including dealing with homelessness and improving access to private sector housing.

The Royal Borough has been a strong supporter of the Housing Association movement since the 1960s. By the 1990s the Council had enabled the building of more RSL homes than it had in its own housing stock. Local tenants, though, exhibited a marked reluctance to see their homes transferred to the local RSLs and were able to express this view through the long-standing Tenants’ Consultative Committee.

This led to the Royal Borough adopting a different strategy, accepted by tenants, under which, in April 1996, the Council established the country’s first borough-wide Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) and gave it responsibility for the day-to-day management of its entire housing stock. While the TMO manages the housing stock on the Royal Borough’s behalf, the Council still owns the housing and has overall responsibility for strategic housing policies and homeless households.

The relationship between the TMO and the Council is governed by a management agreement that covers all aspects of the landlord function.
In 2002, the TMO became the first tenant/leaseholder-led ‘arm’s length management organisation’ (ALMO) in the country and took on the additional responsibility for carrying out major capital works to the housing stock.

**Housing in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea**

Kensington and Chelsea is a small, densely-populated borough in West London situated between the City of Westminster and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. The Royal Borough contains great disparities of wealth and income between the richest areas (mostly situated in the south of the borough) and the poorest (towards the north).

The borough has the smallest percentage of local authority housing stock in inner London. The Kensington and Chelsea TMO manages about 9,500 homes on behalf of the Council. Around 2,500 of these properties have been bought under the Right to Buy scheme, leaving around 7,000 homes for rented social housing. The 50 Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) operating in the borough own a further 12,000 properties for letting. There are an estimated 29,000 dwellings in the private rented sector. Figures from the 2001 Census showed that there were 34,600 owner occupied properties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure type</th>
<th>Kensington and Chelsea</th>
<th>London</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied total</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>68.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social rented total</td>
<td>26.0%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rented from local authority</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rented from RSL</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Private rented total</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rented other</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data taken from the *2001 Census*

The Royal Borough’s housing market, while sharing many of the characteristics of inner city areas, poses particular challenges. The 2001 Census recorded a population of 184,000, which represents the highest population density in the country. The Royal Borough is ranked third highest of all local authorities in England and Wales (behind Westminster and the City of London) for the proportion of households living in private rented accommodation, and ranked fourth out of all local authorities in
England and Wales for the proportion of households that are deemed to be overcrowded.²

The Royal Borough is well known for its high quality environment and 70 per cent of the borough is designated as being within conservation areas. Accordingly, the Royal Borough has the highest residential property prices in the country. The average property price is more than £700,000, four times the average price in England and Wales and well beyond the means of those on moderate incomes.

In April 2005 there were 9,436 Kensington and Chelsea households waiting to be re-housed by the Council through the Common Housing Register. This contrasts with approximately 700 properties that become available for re-letting annually. Each year the Council accepts its statutory duty to re-house approximately 550 people because they are homeless, and in April 2005 there were 1,198 homeless households in temporary accommodation waiting to be found permanent homes.

**Regulation and finance**

Council housing services are regulated by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and monitored by the Audit Commission’s Housing Inspectorate. The Council also employs external and internal auditors who regularly check the integrity of financial transactions and internal financial systems.

All revenue expenditure on managing the Council’s housing is paid out of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The Royal Borough’s total annual HRA budget is approximately £30 million, money that is ‘ring fenced’ from other Council expenditure, which means the Council cannot take money out of the HRA and use it to pay for non-housing services. It also means the Council cannot subsidise or make up deficits in the HRA from its other revenue streams. The sources of HRA income are rents, service charges, some miscellaneous charges (such as garage rents), and Government subsidy.

**Library service**

Public libraries in Britain grew out of the massive changes that took place in the 19th century, when industrialisation saw people moving in large numbers from the countryside to towns and cities. As the century moved on, there was increasing recognition that workers needed to be educated, not least to contain social unrest and to assist social reforms.

Libraries grew from a number of providers; these included coffee houses, churches, commercial organisations and mechanics’ institutes, with the latter designed particularly to cater for the uneducated working classes.

² Data taken from the 2001 Census
A number of Public Library Acts from 1850 onwards allowed for public libraries to be provided from public funds if a majority of local ratepayers voted for it. In 1887, both Kensington and Chelsea, then separate authorities, adopted the Acts, and by the end of 1891 there was a basic network of libraries across what is now the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

The library service today is governed by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. This made it a duty for all upper tier councils (in London the 33 local authorities) to provide a “comprehensive and efficient library service”. The service must be available to anyone who lives, works or studies within the authority’s area.

Kensington and Chelsea’s library service is today rated as excellent by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It achieves good satisfaction ratings from users and has a Charter Mark for excellence in public service.

Six libraries serve Kensington and Chelsea residents and other users, with the flagship being Kensington Central Library, amongst the busiest in London.

The building is listed as Grade 2* for the quality of its architecture and it houses major collections of lending materials, including an 80,000 volume collection of biographies and one of London’s foremost collection of musical scores. It also has one of London’s most extensive reference and information collections, including a local studies collection that records the history of Kensington and Chelsea.

There is on-line access to an array of newspapers, journals, directories and other materials and knowledgeable and helpful staff to point users in the right direction. Information about the Council, local organisations, clubs or societies is also available from the First Stop Information Service which also houses the Community Plus database which contains more than 1,800 records on the Council’s services and community organisations. Questions about the Royal Borough and about any other topic can also be submitted on-line.

The five other libraries in the borough each focus on local needs and interests. Chelsea Library also has major collections, while Brompton, North Kensington, Notting Hill Gate and Kensal Libraries cater for their local communities.

Children are well catered for at all the libraries, with events and activities to attract young users. Newer services include The People’s Network – computers that are available for public use in every library in the country. There are more than 100 public access terminals in Kensington and Chelsea alone, providing information on books and other materials.
available as well as giving access to on-line dictionaries, directories and newspapers and the internet.

Three centres provide help with computer skills and access to *learndirect* courses. The Boost centre at Kensal Library helps people develop a wide range of life skills.

The library service also reaches out into local communities, working with children and young people, ethnic communities, elderly people and others. There are home services for users who cannot physically get to the library and a Ride and Read scheme that brings more mobile people in to the library. There is even a Books on Prescription scheme that allows local doctors in north Kensington to prescribe reading that helps address their patients’ health problems.

Local libraries also act as a gateway, not just to all the others in the Royal Borough but also to libraries up and down the country and all over the world through the inter-lending scheme. This means that users can arrange to borrow practically anything that is available for loan from public libraries anywhere.

The Royal Borough’s libraries:
- Have a total stock of more than 510,000 items
- Welcome more than 1.3 million visitors in a year
- Lend more than a million books to readers each year
- Provide public access to computers more than 143,000 times a year

While traditional services are still well used, libraries are developing new roles as providers of on-line information and reading services. These services, along with access to newspapers, periodicals and a great deal of reference material, are available to users not just in the library but also via their computers at home or work.

Libraries actively promote reading and a love of literature across the whole age spectrum. More children than ever took part in the most recent *Summer Reading Challenge*, a nationwide scheme designed to help children keep reading during the summer holidays. *Bookstart* packs go out from libraries via health visitors and clinics to babies and toddlers at three different stages in their development. Libraries host a variety of reading groups to encourage those who want to share their interest in books and the Royal Borough works with libraries right across London to encourage reading, often focussing on books and authors that many people might not normally read.

Services are also provided for people with literacy and basic skills needs. Along with providing a range of suitable materials, libraries work with adult education providers to offer access to classes.
Libraries have moved a long way since the 19th century and there are undoubtedly tensions in balancing the varied needs and expectations of their many users. Staff now need a much broader range of skills, including a good understanding of ICT and the ability to work in the community, outside libraries. Resources are stretched to meet demand. Users want longer opening hours and more computers, but they also want more books to borrow.

There is a need to ensure that library buildings remain attractive in a modern world where users’ expectations are conditioned by bright and welcoming shops and other commercial premises. Younger people, in particular, can find libraries old-fashioned and off-putting.

Like other services, libraries are set more and more targets by central Government, some of which can be at odds with local priorities. It is the role of library managers and Councillors to look at all these demands and seek to provide the best possible services in the most attractive surroundings so that the whole community can make use of the undoubted array of resources which libraries have to offer.

The Royal Borough has agreed a strategy for its libraries that sets out the challenges they face and the solutions that are proposed. The Royal Borough has planned refurbishments that include adding new ICT facilities for disabled users and adding wireless access to the internet (WiFi) to three libraries. Opening hours are due to be extended and there are plans to develop more services in conjunction with our users, such as a special space for young people that meets the needs they tell us they have.

More and more services will be available to library members from their own PCs at home and there are likely to be more shared services provided alongside other libraries across London and the country as a whole. The Council also intends to develop library access points in community buildings so that people can benefit from library services where it suits them.

**Community relations**

The Notting Hill area was popular with immigrants who started arriving in large numbers for the first time in the 1950s. They were mainly Afro-Caribbean people from Britain’s colonial territories, but unemployment and poor housing conditions in the area led to racial tensions.

The first Notting Hill riots occurred in 1958 and lasted for four days. They were among the first riots of their kind in modern Britain, and in response the mayor of the time set up the Co-ordinating Committee on Race Relations to examine how this aspect of life in the Royal Borough could be improved. Through this committee the Royal Borough appointed a part-time Community Relations Advisor in 1967.
The Borough Integration Committee that was formed in 1975 subsequently became the Borough Community Relations Committee (BCRC). Following changes in the structure of local government governance in 2000, the BCRC was renamed the Borough Community Relations Advisory Group (BCRAG).

In 1993, aware that it had suffered one of the earliest race riots in Britain but had since become a more mature and settled community that had, since 1979, avoided the electoral attentions of the county’s more xenophobic and extremist groups, the North Kensington City Challenge regeneration bid included “creating London’s first successful multi-cultural community” amongst its objectives.

The Community Relations Section’s work is informed through policy discussions at the BCRAG, which meets three times a year.

The state of the community
The Royal Borough has a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-faith population. More than 100 different languages are spoken within the Royal Borough. The 2001 Census, which detailed the numbers of people within 65 different categories of countries, showed that the Royal Borough had residents from within every category, making it one of the most diverse and cosmopolitan parts of London.

The diversity of the Royal Borough is represented in the range of nationalities of the people living and working in it. These include communities originally from Morocco, Spain, Portugal, the Caribbean, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Iran, Egypt, Australia, Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia and many other African, European and Middle Eastern countries.

The Royal Borough is also home to a transient community of people who are posted to London for professional or business reasons. In part this reflects the importance of the City of London’s financial markets within the London economy. There are, for example, many American and European international bankers and lawyers who make their homes in Kensington and Chelsea. Expatriate Americans are the Royal Borough’s largest single national minority.

The expansion of the European Union to include ten more countries in May 2004 has further added to the diversity of the population of the Royal Borough.

The Community Relations Section (CRS)
The section, established in 1967, was probably the first agency of its kind in London and possibly the country. During its 39-year history, the section has provided a range of services to a variety of different voluntary, public and private sector bodies. It has assisted in establishing a number of
different organisations that, with its continued practical support, have
gone on to flourish and thrive.

The Community Relations Section has been recognised for its work many
times during its existence. It has won the Local Authority Race Award, been
commended as Community Initiative of the Year by the Local Government
Chronicle and cited over the years as good practice in various local and
central Government publications.

In 1997 the Section celebrated its 30th anniversary with a series of high
profile events. The year also marked the beginning of a new way of
working, with the section introducing a more streamlined approach to
the way in which it offers its services to other Council departments and
the local community, together with a shift towards a more proactive style
of working.

Special consideration has been given to achieving things that really make
a difference in the community. The section has consulted the groups it
sets out to help in formulating its current three-year business plan, which
runs until March 2007, the year of the section’s 40th anniversary.

Making progress in community relations
Given the history of the settlement of the Royal Borough’s minority
communities and the changing demographics of those settlements, the
Community Relations Section believes that Kensington and Chelsea is
best described as ‘a community of communities’.

Such a community encompasses a wide range of ethnic backgrounds,
races, faiths, beliefs and languages – and that is the source of the
challenge posed by community relations in the Royal Borough. In our
globalised world, an event or war in a near or faraway place can – and
often does – have an impact on the lives of people in our community of
communities.

Good community relations entail a huge spirit of generosity in the way
people accommodate different, divergent, or even, in a few instances,
antagonistic viewpoints. Fortunately for those of us who live or work in
the Royal Borough, for much of the time and for most of the people,
Kensington and Chelsea is a vibrant, relatively peaceful and friendly
environment in which to carry on our daily lives.

As events since the London bombings on 7 July 2005 have shown, the
various communities in the Royal Borough have rallied round
magnificently to express their united determination to foster a more
cohesive and integrated community of communities and promote much
better community relations.
Such community relations work is underpinned by long and painstaking work over the years to establish and build communities of hope and renewal. These are communities where equality, co-operation and shared decision making become the goals, and where structures are evolved that foster creativity and facilitate inclusion.

The kernel of good community relations lies in treating all human beings with dignity, respect and compassion, and that is the Royal Borough’s aim as it sets out to contribute towards even brighter and more positive community relations for all in the years to come.

**The Royal Borough and community safety**

Of all the issues that concern local residents, crime and the fear of crime regularly feature at the top the list. In London, unlike many US cities, the police have no formal accountability to local authorities, but in recent years the partnership between the two organisations has grown as they have each realised the benefit they can obtain from the experience and knowledge of the other.

This partnership working has been formalised in Kensington and Chelsea’s Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), which regularly brings together senior Council and police officers as well as the probation service and other agencies involved in initiatives to cut crime.

Although Kensington and Chelsea has seen a substantial fall in reported crimes over the past three years, this has not lessened the concern that residents have about those incidents that do occur. There have been particular concerns over street attacks, residential burglaries and damage to property, including vehicles. This has been compounded by instances of antisocial behaviour in one of the country’s most built-up areas.

Street drinking, pavement cycling, noisy parties, graffiti and littering can quickly destroy the quality of life in a residential neighbourhood. On some occasions it is thoughtlessness, rather than a deliberate intention to cause misery and offence, which lies at the root of the problem. On other occasions the lack of respect for the neighbourhood represented by antisocial acts can be seen as the forerunner of more serious criminal acts. Tackling antisocial behaviour firmly sends a strong signal to those who run the risk of sliding into a life of crime.

The Council and the police continue to be at the forefront of driving out drug dealers and have been particularly active in closing down ‘crack houses’ across the borough. Again working in partnership, the Royal Borough pioneered the use of section 222 of the Local Government Act to exclude known drug dealers from the borough. Police and the Council also work closely together, alongside the Tenant Management Organisation, to ensure that Antisocial Behaviour Orders are effectively
enforced once they are granted by the courts.

Experienced police officers are seconded to work with the Youth Offending and Community Safety Teams. Police and Council officers also work closely together to deal with regular young offenders, drug users, street drinkers, those who perpetrate acts of violence in the home and people who commit antisocial acts. Specialist support is provided for those working with young people and running drug rehabilitation programmes.

A key recognition of the value of partnership has been the decision by the Council to invest heavily in paying for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

The Council is supplementing the allocation given to all boroughs under the Safer Neighbourhoods scheme and intends to invest enough to provide up to ten PCSOs in every ward in the borough. By March 2006 we will have more than 90 PCSOs patrolling our streets – and the intention is to double this number. We also intend that these officers will work closely with the Council’s own enforcement staff, including those dealing with illegally placed waste, parking offences and noise nuisance. The intention is to create a seamless team of people who can be the ‘eyes and ears’ on the borough’s streets.

Police Community Safety Officers have a range of powers, including the ability to detain suspects for up to half an hour, to require names and addresses and to issue fixed penalty notices. Most importantly they are building links with residents, shopkeepers, teachers and others in the neighbourhoods they are patrolling. This provides reassurance as well as additional intelligence to support mainstream police teams.

Every month a meeting at senior level reviews crime and community safety issues across the borough. This team is also overseeing the roll-out of the PCSO programme that the Council believes to be the most significant commitment to fighting crime and anti-social behaviour it has ever undertaken.

This Safer Surer Board is attended by the Borough Police Commander, the Council’s Town Clerk and Chief Executive and the chairman of the Police Community Consultative Group that represents residents. Unusually, it is chaired by an elected Councillor, the Cabinet Member for Community Safety. This reflects the seriousness with which the Council is seeking to respond to public concerns about safety.

**Regeneration in Kensington and Chelsea**
Kensington and Chelsea has always been a borough of great contrasts in terms of wealth and poverty. The Royal Borough is home to some of the
wealthiest people in Britain, but also contains some of the most deprived
neighbourhoods in the country. The Council's reputation as a successful
urban manager is in part judged, both by our residents and by external
regulators and commentateurs, on the extent to which it addresses the
problems experienced in the borough's most deprived areas.

There is a great deal the Council can do. Simply providing first-rate front-
line services – in education, economic development, housing
management, social services, benefit payments, street cleaning and waste
collection – makes a huge difference to the look and feel of local
communities and to the prospects of the people who live in them.
Working with partners allows the Royal Borough to do even more in
terms of reducing poverty, tackling the crimes that are prevalent in
deprived areas and improving residents’ health and wellbeing.

The Council is proud of its 40-year record of activity to regenerate
deprived parts of the borough. Examples include the creation of what is
now the Westway Development Trust, which in the 1970s transformed
the derelict area under and adjacent to the A40 flyover and now provides
valuable property, sport, education and social facilities and activities in
that part of the borough.

The North Kensington City Challenge initiative in the 1990s was a £35
million boost that the Council used to lever in a further £165 million of
other, external support – making a total of £200 million that had a major
impact in north Kensington. Not only did it assist with the establishment
of the Muslim Cultural Heritage Centre, but it also paved the way for the
Rootes estate and provided funding for the Westway Sports Centre and for
estate refurbishments in areas including Wornington Green and Sutton.

The creation of Westbourne Studios, Barley Shotts and Baseline Business
Units to provide premises for small businesses and bring employment to
the north of the borough has been another success, as has the Council’s
role in setting up the Portobello Business Centre, now one of the
foremost business advice and enterprise agencies in London. The Council
has also successfully lobbied the Department of Work and Pensions to
establish a Job Centre Plus office in the north of the borough, something
for which is has been campaigning vigorously for many years.

These efforts, coupled with the delivery of very good mainstream services
and special programmes such as three Single Regeneration Budget
projects and two Sure Start initiatives, are felt to have made a real
difference, although there is a shortage of reliable indicators to measure
SRB impacts.

Specific campaigns run by the Council, such as those to increase benefits
take up and to tackle environmental blight, have also had a beneficial
effect. Twenty years ago parts of north Kensington (All Saints Road, for instance, then one of the premier roads for buying drugs) were a no-go area where residents experienced high levels of fear of crime. These same areas are now thriving and have become a destination point for visitors to London.

Partly as a result of the success of Council initiatives, much of the north of the borough is no longer included in the Government’s definition of the country’s most deprived areas, although some would argue that changes in the way the indicators are calculated has overstated progress in inner city areas. Ironically, perhaps, the Council’s efforts mean that the borough is now far less likely than it used to be to receive further special funding from Government, although it is clear that deprived areas still exist.

Based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004, much of the north of the borough remains among the 20 per cent most deprived areas in England; some small areas are within the worst 10 per cent. The principal problems confronting these areas are low incomes, unemployment, high crime levels and poor health.

Golborne, for example, has an unemployment rate of 12.3 per cent, compared to a Royal Borough average of four per cent (based on Job Seeker’s Allowance claimants.) The Department of Work and Pensions has identified three wards in the Royal Borough – Golborne, Notting Barns and St. Charles – as having the “poorest initial labour market position”, recognising that they face the most acute employment problems.

Golborne shows high claimant rates for Income Support, Disability Living Allowance and Incapacity Benefit/Severe Disability Living Allowance. The claimant rate for Income Support as a proportion of people aged 16 to 59 in this ward was 20.3 per cent, compared to the Royal Borough average of 6.7 per cent. In 2003-04, the majority of emergency 999 calls were in the north of the borough (Golborne, Notting Barns and Colville), while Notting Barns and Golborne experienced the highest levels of youth crime. Golborne, St. Charles and Notting Barns wards consistently demonstrate high levels of poor health across a wide range of indicators in comparison to elsewhere in London, and evidence suggests that the gap between the healthiest and least healthy areas of the Royal Borough is growing.

Although the Council has not needed to undertake the kind of major renewal of the physical environment seen in some other London boroughs, housing estates such as Wornington Green are now looking tired and were built in ways that have not worked successfully in housing, social or environmental terms.

The irony, then, is that while areas of the borough remain deprived,
special funding from Government to help tackle the problems, most recently Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, is likely to be stopped.

It is well known that the various elements of deprivation – poor health, poor housing, low levels of educational attainment, employment and income, high crime rates and a degraded environment – are inter-related. Working successfully with partners is vital in order to tackle the multiple facets of deprivation in a sustained and coordinated way.

There are well-established relationships with the police and the Primary Care Trust and with other public agencies such as the Connexions Service, the London Development Agency and the Learning and Skills Council. Some of our local voluntary organisations have made a valuable contribution to our efforts to provide assistance to people in deprived areas. Links with Job Centre Plus will flourish now that a local office is to be opened in Kensal Road. We have had some success in engaging local businesses, notably through our Cleaner-Greener initiative, but more can be done.

In the absence of specific Government funding, the Council and its partners will need to target resources in areas where problems are most acute, work more closely together to plan and deliver joint projects and vigorously pursue other forms of external funding. The Council is confident that by doing these things it will be able to build on its record of success in improving the borough’s deprived neighbourhoods.

Refuse, street cleansing and recycling
The Council has records dating back to 1856 of the proceedings of the Paving, Lighting, Cleansing, and Watering Committee of St Mary Abbots Parish, Kensington – early evidence of local civic commitment to a clean environment. It was not until 1875, though, that the Public Health Act placed a duty on local authorities to collect and remove waste. The Act also ruled for the first time that residents must keep their rubbish in a dustbin which the local authority had to empty at least once a week. In practice, household waste – which was then mostly ash, glass and metals – was normally collected more frequently than once a week and a large proportion of it salvaged for re-use or for building materials.

The nature of household waste has changed radically since then. Central heating has displaced open fires and has taken large amounts of paper out of the grate and put it in the dustbin. The widespread use of plastics has created a particularly difficult new type of waste. Personal consumption has increased enormously over the past century and this, along with the short design life of so many products, means there is now much more to throw out – and less to recycle – than there was in 1875.

Although the nature and quantity of waste itself has changed completely
over the past hundred years, the duty placed upon the Council to collect it remains the same. Like all other local authorities in the UK, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea provides a universal waste collection service to all residents. The service is funded by the Council; residents only pay to have very heavy items collected. Unlike any other local authority in the UK, though, the Royal Borough maintains a tradition of collecting both waste and recyclables twice-weekly from all its households. This commitment to a uniquely high level of service stems not just from a desire to give residents what they repeatedly say they want from their Council, but also reflects the unusual character of the housing stock in the borough.

Kensington and Chelsea is not just the most densely-populated local authority area in the UK, but only about 13 per cent of properties in the borough are houses; most residents live in flats. There is very little outside storage space for residents’ waste and the historic character of so much of the borough makes it impossible to design new external waste storage that would be in keeping with the fine residential frontages seen in so many local streets. These facts make a twice-weekly collection of waste almost essential – the alternative would be to ask many residents to keep rotting food waste inside their homes for up to a week. Regrettably even this twice-a-week collection does not appear to be enough for some residents, and the Council has a huge task clearing small bags of waste dumped casually on the streets – and fining the perpetrators if they can be traced.

The Council provides this service to around 90,000 households – which means a total of more than nine million collections a year. It also offers more than 3,000 of the Royal Borough’s businesses a trade waste collection and recycling service. Unlike residents, businesses have to pay directly for their waste to be collected, but they have the option of up to three collections a day, seven days a week, if their business needs it. The Council’s trade waste service puts a heavy emphasis on recycling; the collection system is designed to make recycling as easy as possible and to make it cheaper for a business to recycle than to simply throw waste away.

The borough’s household and trade waste together amounts to about 95,000 tonnes a year, of which around 20 per cent is recycled (the recycling rate is rising steadily every year). The Council does not dispose of the waste it collects. That job is done by Western Riverside Waste Authority, which is based just over the river in Wandsworth. Western Riverside takes the borough’s waste, along with that from three other neighbouring local authorities, and ships it down the river by barge to a landfill site in the east of London. Using the river for waste transport saves many thousands of lorry journeys every year and is part of a sustainable waste management system that will soon include the construction of the UK’s largest materials reclamation facility, designed to cope with increasing
amounts of recyclable material, together with a new energy from waste plant down river that will deal with waste that cannot be recycled.

One of the reasons for the unusual twice-weekly refuse collection in Kensington and Chelsea is the Council’s determination to keep the borough’s streets as clear of rubbish and litter as possible. There are nearly 300 miles of pavement in the borough, and the Council’s aim is to keep them all completely clean and uncluttered so that residents can find in the public realm the same standards they create for themselves in their private domain.

For this reason the Council has developed a service specification that requires its street cleansing contractor, SITA UK Ltd, to put right very quickly any reported shortfall against the very high standards of cleanliness it is contracted to achieve. This generally means sorting out any problems within one or two hours at most. Many of the borough’s principal shopping streets are swept continuously throughout the year – the service specification given to contractors requires a minimum of 63 sweeps a week on its busiest streets.

The Council requires its contractor to use sweepers with barrows and brooms, believing that while mechanical methods may be cheap, they are ineffective on their own, noisy when used at night and a nuisance to pedestrians. Extra sweepers have to be drafted in twice a year to deal with the blossom and leaf fall seasons – the latter depositing hundreds of tonnes of additional material on the streets.

The Council’s aspirations for perfect cleanliness are continually frustrated, not least by the extraordinary spattering of chewing gum over its busiest pavements. Gum presents a formidable challenge. Removing it used to be done by high-pressure hoses – until that started to destroy the paving slabs themselves. The latest weapon against gum entails small machines using soft copper brushes and chemicals – but the process is painfully slow and very expensive.

Gum is not the only material to deface the pavement. Too many of the borough’s hotels, restaurants and cafes are still careless about putting liquid and greasy waste out in flimsy plastic bags. The leakage seeps into York stone paving, leaving ugly black stains when the bags are cleared. Combating carelessness of this kind requires a huge investment by the Council in enforcement and in providing advice to the many catering businesses in the borough about how they can play their part in keeping the streets clean.

Despite these difficulties the borough’s streets are kept exceptionally clean, even though they come under intense pressure from tourists, residents, commuters and shoppers. Refuse collection and street cleansing
to the Royal Borough’s standards requires the dedication of hundreds of staff working throughout the day and night. The services are consequently expensive, but they are essential to maintaining the Council’s reputation with its residents.

**Parking**
The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea first introduced parking restrictions in 1968 in response to increasing congestion, the difficulties residents faced in parking and concerns about road accidents. Over the years, increasing car ownership and use has meant that parking restrictions and their enforcement have become vitally important to the quality of life for everyone visiting or living in the borough.

The Council believes that parking controls play a key role in traffic management and transport strategies and influence the overall pattern of travel. Parking restrictions are designed to:

- Assist the safe and swift movement of traffic
- Give priority to residents wishing to park
- Encourage a turnover of visitor parking

These objectives are particularly important in the Royal Borough, where severe parking stress means parking capacity on some roads is near saturation point.

The Royal Borough is the only borough, with the exception of the City of London, with a borough-wide controlled parking zone that allows resident permit holders to park in any residents’ parking bay throughout the area. There are currently around 40,000 residents’ parking permits and 2,500 disabled permits issued in relation to approximately 28,000 parking spaces. In addition there are about 6,000 pay and display bays, more than 170 personalised disabled bays and more than 160 general blue badge disabled bays.

The principal parking controls allow residents with permits to park in designated bays that are not available to non-residents during controlled hours. There is, at the same time, a significant number of pay and display bays available for visitors who must obtain a ticket allowing them to park for their chosen period. The rules for parking are generally displayed on signs adjacent to parking bays and on pay and display machines and anyone parking in the borough needs to check the rules applying to the location they wish to park in.

The Council has an option for residents or tradespeople to apply for parking bays (either residents’ bays or pay and display) to be suspended. The idea is that a specified area can be set aside for a limited duration in order to allow it to be used by, perhaps, a removal vehicle, or for the delivery or collection of building materials or waste.
The Council enforces parking restrictions through a contractor. The contractor employs around 100 uniformed parking attendants who undertake continuous patrols throughout the borough. When they come across a parking offence they issue a ticket, or Penalty Charge Notice. If this ticket is paid within 14 days the penalty is discounted to £50. If not the full penalty of £100 applies.

In addition to issuing PCNs, the contractor may also clamp vehicles or take them to the Council's car pound where they will be held until all outstanding penalties are settled. The charge for removing a clamp is £65, while removal to the car pound incurs a charge of £150 plus a charge of £25 per day storage. These charges are in addition to the original Penalty Charge Notice.

If a motorist feels that a Penalty Charge Notice has been issued incorrectly, there is an appeal process that begins with an informal challenge to the Council itself. It is essential that this happens as soon as the motorist discovers that a ticket has been issued wrongly. If the informal challenge is unsuccessful, a formal representation can be made to the Council after the registered keeper has received a formal Notice to Owner. If the offence is still upheld, the motorist can appeal to the Parking and Traffic Appeals Service, details of which will be included with the rejection letter following the representation to the Council.

In 2004-05, 291,588 Penalty Charge Notices were issued and 14,972 vehicles clamped. A further 8,869 vehicles were removed.

The surplus income the Council collects is used for a variety of improvements, relating particularly to the quality of roads, footways, street lighting, road safety and other environmental issues. It has also been used to provide Taxicards that allow disabled people to make taxi journeys, the Freedom Pass scheme that allows older people (60+) and the disabled to use free public transport across London and transport for groups such as day care centres, young people, schools and people with special needs.

These services provide vital help to many people throughout the borough and are a reminder that, although parking enforcement generates surplus income, it is used for the benefit of all who live in, work in or visit the Royal Borough.

**Licensing**

The Royal Borough is the statutory authority for considering applications for licences – and regulating those premises that are granted licences – for a number of activities. These include public entertainment, the provision of alcohol and late night hot food and drink, beauty parlours, body piercing, pet shops and horse riding establishments.
In the past, the licensing of premises providing public entertainment such as nightclubs and late bars has been the main focus for the Council. These premises have also been the most contentious for residents, particularly in relation to noise and disturbance caused, in the main, by customers.

In 2005 the introduction of the Licensing Act 2003 effectively brought together seven different sets of legislation. The Act now governs the licensing of the provision of alcohol, music and dancing, plays, films, indoor sporting events, late night hot food and drink and boxing and wrestling.

While licensing the provision of alcohol used to be dealt with by the Licensing Justices at the magistrates’ court, this function has now been transferred to local authorities, which had already been dealing with the other activities for a number of years. Until this new Act became effective, all of the different activities referred to above had to be licensed separately; now they can all be dealt with under one ‘premises licence’. In 2007 the Royal Borough and other local authorities will also take over from the courts the responsibility for licensing gambling premises such as betting shops and casinos.

While the major reason for licensing these activities is to ensure public safety, it is also designed to minimise the risk of public nuisance, prevent crime and disorder and protect children from harm. The new Licensing Act specifically addresses all these points but does not give any one of them priority above the others, instead stating that all four matters must be equally promoted.

Within the Royal Borough there are 965 premises licensed under the Licensing Act 2003, with the vast majority having the sale or supply of alcohol as their main activity. There are also about 135 premises licensed to provide certain beauty treatments, massage, tattoos and body piercing.

Applications for licences need to be advertised, and in most cases residents can raise an objection if they have any concerns. If objections are lodged the application has to go before a committee of Councillors, specially trained in licensing issues, who will listen to all the parties involved, ask whatever questions they feel are necessary and decide the matter.

Where an application for a premises licence has been granted under the Licensing Act 2003, the licence will remain in existence for the lifetime of the business unless it is revoked by the Council or given up by the licence holder. If, however, the business is not operating satisfactorily, residents have the power to apply to the Council to review the licence in its
entirety. This could result in the hours of operation being reduced, restrictions being placed on some or all of the licensed activities (provision of alcohol, hot food after 11pm and regulated entertainment such as music and dancing, films etc.), additional conditions being placed on the licence and/or suspension or revocation of the licence.

Other licences issued by the Council are subject to an annual renewal and can be contested if the premises have not been operating responsibly.

In order to deliver an efficient, effective licensing service, the Council has a team of 14 officers. The team is basically divided into two, with one half dealing with administration, reports for the Licensing Committee and enquiries from residents, applicants, lawyers and Councillors, and the other dealing with inspections, complaints and enforcement.

The Licensing Team also formulates responses to central Government consultation documents relating to proposed changes in legislation or guidance relating to licensing. This has resulted in the Royal Borough’s officers sitting on central Government advisory committees and giving evidence relating to the effect of new licensing legislation before Parliamentary Select Committees.

Planning
Local authorities have been responsible for town planning since 1947, and the UK now has one of the most developed planning systems of any advanced OECD economy. There is a complex framework of planning rules that controls development and land use. In principle development can take place provided it is consistent with national, regional and local plans and does not disproportionately damage the interests of other property owners.

Local residential communities are in general anxious to have as much autonomy over planning as possible and place an emphasis on preserving an attractive residential environment. This has led to a debate about the long-term economic consequences of what, in practice, is perceived to be a restrictive planning system.

Among these consequences is a constrained housing market in which builders find it difficult to respond to the demand for new homes, which has implications for the relative price of houses. The planning system is also perceived as constraining the rate of productivity growth in the UK economy compared to other countries. Productivity in the retail sector is low compared to the US and is responsible for about a fifth of the productivity gap between the UK and the USA.

The Competition Commission and the McKinsey Global Institute have identified the planning system as playing a significant role in the lower
level of UK productivity. In response to these concerns about the economic impact of the planning system, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Deputy Prime Minister have asked a member of the Bank of England’s Monetary Policy Committee, Kate Barker, to undertake a review. The purpose of the review will be to see “how, in the context of globalisation, planning policy and procedures can better deliver economic growth and prosperity alongside other sustainable goals”. In the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, planning policy is an extremely sensitive matter of great concern and interest to the borough’s residents.

Kensington and Chelsea extends from Chelsea Embankment in the south through Kensington, Notting Hill and Ladbroke Grove up to Kensal Green. Careful planning has preserved much of its residential character and 72 per cent of the borough is protected by Conservation Areas.

While the borough is home to 184,000 residents, thousands more people come into Kensington and Chelsea each day to work and visit. Knightsbridge, the King’s Road and Kensington High Street draw shoppers from all over London and have international reputations. Along with the South Kensington museums, Holland Park and the Royal Palace in Kensington Gardens, these areas are major tourist attractions throughout the year.

Although the area is already intensively built up, it continues to be subject to pressures for further development. The responsibility for the control of the physical and built environment rests with the Planning and Conservation Business Group.

The main aims of the business group are to protect the existing heritage of buildings, spaces and streets, to ensure that the quality of new buildings and spaces is appropriate for this architecturally distinguished area and to provide a responsive and effective service for the borough’s residents, Councillors and the business community.

The Planning Information Office
The Planning Information Office provides an advisory service to the public and encourages participation in the system by providing access to plans, applications and the publications produced by the Directorate of Planning and Conservation. Its main purpose is to keep residents informed of current planning applications and policies and to provide a point of reference for those needing planning advice.

Copies of all current planning applications and drawings are kept in the office for inspection. Any member of the public can view these and can make comments on the proposals before the Planning Services Committee makes a decision.
Publications produced by the directorate may be viewed and purchased in the Planning Information Office. The office produces a weekly list of all registered planning applications. Subscriptions to the list are welcomed; details of the current charges are available on request. Subscribers are sent draft agendas before Planning Services Committee meetings and a record of the committee’s decisions after each meeting. This list is also published on the Council’s internet site.

Residents can also receive the weekly list of planning applications electronically by subscribing to the Council’s email notification service, which tells subscribers about a number of Council services.

The Planning Information Office is open Monday to Friday from 9am until 5pm. Staff welcome enquiries and appointments are not necessary to discuss proposals or seek advice about planning legislation or policy matters. Residents who would like to talk to a particular officer about a particular case or planning issue should telephone to arrange an appointment.

The planning framework
Town and country planning is undertaken at three levels: Government, London and in the London boroughs.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is responsible to Parliament for implementing all planning law, for approving strategic planning guidance, for issuing planning advice and for making decisions on planning appeals. The Deputy Prime Minister has the power to ‘call in’ planning applications of major importance and make decisions on them himself.

Planning in London also needs to take account of matters that have a London-wide dimension. Issues such as employment growth, housing provision and location, and the development of the transport system are addressed jointly by the London boroughs, the Mayor of London and the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Government Office for London (GOL).

The Mayor of London has prepared a spatial development strategy that was the subject of an Examination in Public in 2003. The London Plan was adopted in February 2004 and replaced the former Regional Planning Guidance for London.

The London Plan is the strategic plan that sets out an integrated social, economic and environmental framework for the future development of London and looks forward 15 to 20 years. It integrates the physical and geographic dimensions of the mayor’s other strategies, includes broad locations for change, and provides a framework for managing and developing land.
The Government has decided on radical changes to the planning system and Parliament has passed legislation that will change the way development plans are drawn up across England. The relevant provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act came into force at the end of September 2004 and a review of the Royal Borough’s Unitary Development Plan is being undertaken in accordance with the new system.

The Act requires the Council to prepare a Local Development Framework (LDF), made up of Local Development Documents (LDDs), by September 2007. The LDF will replace the Council’s Unitary Development Plan at that point. The UDP is ‘saved’ during those three years.

The Local Development Framework will include several Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs). The Development Plan Documents, along with the London Plan, will form the Royal Borough’s Development Plan and will be the basis upon which all planning decisions are made. LDFs are intended to give residents greater input into the planning process; statements of resident involvement will show how this has happened.

Conservation areas
It seems appropriate that since about 75 per cent of the Royal Borough is covered by conservation areas, it contains what could be called the birthplace of the conservation movement – West House, Glebe Place. It was here in 1877 that William Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

Within the past 20 years people have been increasingly concerned about protecting the familiar and cherished local scene, and conservation legislation has expanded to reflect those feelings.

A large part of the borough derives its character and townscape value from its heritage of 18th and 19th century buildings. Since 1967 the Council has designated 36 conservation areas; these are centred on the major estates, such as Thurloe and Smith’s Charity, and on many of the garden squares. They vary in character and their appeal often depends on subtle aspects of the local scene.

Conservation areas – a definition
Conservation areas are “of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance”. This does not imply a complete embargo on new development, simply that changes should be carefully controlled to ensure the highest possible environmental standards. It is the Council’s policy to prevent the unnecessary demolition of buildings and to ensure that all new buildings are of a good design.
In general terms, no buildings in a conservation area may be demolished without prior consent. Similar controls prevent the lopping or felling of trees.

**Listed Buildings**
There are some 4,000 Listed Buildings – buildings that are historically important – in the borough. The lists are drawn up by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and just over 1,000 buildings were added when a new list was produced at the end of 1984.

The criteria for listing are complex, but generally the following applies: All buildings built before 1700 that survive in anything approaching their original form are listed. Most buildings built between 1700 and 1840 are listed, although they have to be selected. Between 1840 and 1914, only buildings of definite quality and character are listed, and the selection is designed to include the principal works of major architects. Some post-1914 buildings are listed and a very few post-World War II buildings of exceptional quality have been included. Buildings are classified to show their relative importance: Grade I (the highest listing), Grade II* or Grade II.

**Protecting listed buildings**
Having a building ‘listed’ does not mean it must remain unaltered forever and in all circumstances. There is a general presumption against demolition, either in whole or in part, and against the removal of features of architectural importance. Any alteration must preserve the character of the building.

Anyone wishing to demolish a Listed Building or alter one in any way that affects its interior or exterior character must first obtain Listed Building Consent. The procedures are similar to those for obtaining planning permission. It is an offence to alter or demolish a Listed Building without consent and can result in a heavy fine being imposed.

Any alterations must as far as possible preserve the character of the building. Applications are examined rigorously by the Council and by the London Region of English Heritage, whose representatives pay particular regard to the need to preserve any special features. The Council now takes sole responsibility for the majority of applications affecting Grade II buildings.

**Tree heritage**
There are more than 8,000 trees lining the borough’s streets, all falling within the jurisdiction of the Council. There are a large number of London Planes, including some fine specimens in Cheyne Walk and along Holland Park Avenue. Other large trees planted widely across the borough are Common Limes, False Acacias and Sycamores. Flowering Cherries, noted for their display of spring blossoms, are also widely distributed throughout
the borough. Like other living organisms, trees grow but also suffer
disease and decay and may then become a hazard. To minimise this risk
the borough’s street trees are regularly inspected and maintained as
necessary.

It is the Council’s aim to protect and improve the amenity of all the
borough’s tree-lined streets. The Council will increase the number of
street trees where it would be appropriate within the streetscape. On
certain occasions it may be appropriate to remove one or more trees that
have been poorly sited in the past.

**Maintenance – the tree warden scheme**
The Council has successfully established a pioneering urban tree warden
scheme that continues to thrive. Tree wardens are encouraged to assist
the Council’s arboriculturists by taking an active interest in trees in
their area.

**Protecting trees**
There are some 10,000 trees in the borough protected by 350 Tree
Preservation Orders (TPOs). Before carrying out any work on trees in the
borough, residents should check whether or not the tree in question is
the subject of a TPO or sited in a conservation area. If the tree is the
subject of a TPO the Council must give consent in writing before any
work is carried out. Anyone who wishes to fell or prune a tree in a
conservation area (other than those already covered by a TPO) must give
the Council six weeks’ written notice. It is an offence to do any work
without the consent of the Council.

**Penalties for unauthorised works/damage**
If, in contravention of a Tree Preservation Order, a tree is cut down,
uprooted or wilfully destroyed, topped or lopped in a manner likely to
destroy it, the person responsible may be fined up to £20,000 or twice
the value of the tree. If a tree is removed or destroyed, the owner of the
land will also be required to plant a replacement. Similar penalties exist
regarding unauthorised works to trees in conservation areas. While the
Council may grant consent for works to trees, such consent does not
automatically allow the applicant to carry out work over other people’s
property and residents are advised to obtain written consent from their
neighbours.

**Other functions and services**
London boroughs carry out many additional functions. This taxonomy of
borough services does not pretend to be complete or exhaustive, but
concentrates on identifying the principal public services such as
education, housing and social services, and on the most controversial
local government functions in terms of national policy and politics.
Among these other functions are parks, leisure, museums, environmental
health, health and safety, food safety, trading standards, noise and
nuisance and environmental pollution services.

Historically, some local authorities in England played an important part in
providing utilities such as gas and electricity. The City of Hull was famous
for many years for having its own telephone company. In England,
however, these responsibilities were removed from local authorities many
years ago. In the first instance they were placed in the hands of
government-controlled nationalised industries. Today they are the
responsibility of privatised utility companies that are regulated by
national regulators.

Finance
Local authority finance in England is complex, technical and opaque.
When local authorities began to be given responsibility for modern
public services such as education, they did not have the revenue to pay
for them and were reliant on revenue income from a tax on property
called rates. This was not as buoyant a source of revenue as the income
tax that HM Treasury had reintroduced in 1842, with the result that
while central Government had a steadily rising source of tax revenue as
the economy expanded, local government had an inelastic tax base.

Because of this, the Government nationally gave local authorities grants
so that they could provide services such as schools and housing. The
underlying difficulty facing an authority that spends money that it cannot
raise itself was recognised as long ago as 1868, when George Goschen
raised the possibility of dividing the revenue from income tax between
central and local government. Goschen’s inquiry into local government
finance was the start of a long succession of inquiries that continue to go
over more or less the same ground.

The subordination of the local government system through
the tax structure has been virtually unchanged since
Goschen’s ill-fated experiment. Throughout the twentieth
century the debate revolves around the grant system, its
revision, distribution and amount.

A Victorian Drama: The Fiscal Subordination of British Local
Government
Douglas Ashford in Financing Urban Government in the
The only way to sustain a vital local democracy is to enlarge the share of local taxation in total local revenue and thereby make councillors more directly accountable to local electorates for their expenditure and taxation decisions. On balance, we consider that the administrative cost involved in introducing a local income tax for this purpose would be justified. After many decades of uncertainty in the realm of local government finance the time has come for a choice on the issue of responsibility.

*Local Government Finance; Report of the Committee of Enquiry.*
Chaired by Frank Layfield Q.C., May 1976

The main debate on local authority finance normally revolves around the grant system, its revision, the amount that is distributed and how it is shared among local authorities.

The system is complex because the Government distributes grant with two general objectives. The first is to guarantee equality of access to public services through England; the second is to take into account variations in both social need in local authorities and the extent to which different local authorities can raise revenue from their tax base.

In recent history only a very few local authorities with unusually large sources of revenue from business rates, principally authorities in central London, could finance their statutory requirement to provide services such as education, housing and personal social services from their own local tax base. If the national scheme for pooling business rates were ended, even Kensington and Chelsea would probably not be in a position to carry out its statutory responsibilities without assistance from central Government.

While total local authority expenditure in the UK is £135,600 million, local authorities only finance £25,171 million of this expenditure through their own locally-controlled tax base, the council tax. In 2005-06, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea planned to spend £467 million on services. Government grant covers £298 million of this expenditure, customer and client charges and investment and other income covers a further £98 million and the remaining £71 million is financed from the local council tax.

The character of central Government grants to local authorities is a matter for intensive scrutiny and debate within local government. In general, local authorities prefer to receive a general grant that they can use in any way they feel is appropriate for their local community.

Until 1958, a large proportion of the grants given to local authorities was
hypothesized to specific purposes. Since then local authorities have been
given a general block grant, but over the past 15 years the situation has
gone into reverse as central Government departments have started
providing local authorities with increasing numbers of specific grants for
care in the community, child protection services and schools.

The Government also reimburses councils through specific grants when
they pay for Housing and Council Tax Benefit for low-income households.
The proportion of Kensington and Chelsea's budget coming from specific
grants has doubled from 20 per cent in 1995 to more than 43 per cent in
2005-06.

The lion's share of the Council's budget is spent on the two big services,
education and housing and social services, which respectively account for
29 per cent and 32 per cent of the budget requirement. A distinctive
feature of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and other
London authorities is that much of the spending on highways and
reduced fares comes from money collected from parking meters and
enforcement and from residents' parking permits.

A significant proportion of the budget is spent on contracting with
private and independent providers such as SITA. In some areas of service
provision, such as Social Services, it can be as much as half of the budget.

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Gross 2005-06 Budget

- **Corporate Services (includes benefits payments)**: 35%
- **Education, Libraries and Arts**: 22%
- **Environmental Services**: 14%
- **Planning and Conservation**: 2%
- **Housing and Social Services**: 24%
- **Other**: 3%

**Local taxation**

Before 1990 local authorities were able to raise their own taxation
through rates, levied on both businesses and households and based on
property rental values. Rates, though, were contentious and the
combination of a narrow tax base and high inflation led to calls for
reform. Business rates became a national tax, set by Government, and the
community charge (better known as the poll tax) was introduced to
replace domestic rates. This was a flat rate tax on individuals that proved
unpopular, particularly because of its impact on people with lower
incomes. It was quickly abandoned and replaced by its successor, council
tax, which was introduced in 1993.
Council tax
The council tax is a tax based on the capital value of property but with a range of discounts and exemptions that are related to personal circumstances. As an example, people living alone are entitled to a 25 per cent reduction. Each residential property has been placed into one of eight valuation bands by the Government’s Valuation Office Agency, based on capital values as at April 1991. A revaluation scheduled to be in place by 2007-08 has been delayed.

Each local authority sets a council tax each year and collects the amount due from residents. The Royal Borough has around 85,000 residential properties and a council tax in 2005-06 of £982 for a home in the standard Band D. This was the fourth lowest council tax in London and the fifth lowest in England. The collection rate for the council tax is high for inner London, at around 96 per cent. The Royal Borough also collects the tax set by the Greater London Authority (GLA) on its behalf.

Business rates
Businesses have continued to pay rates as a contribution to local authority services. Business rates are based on commercial rental value. Annual increases are set in line with inflation by central Government, but the rates are collected by the local authorities. The rates collected are pooled nationally and re-distributed back to local authorities on the basis of a population formula. In this way the formula reallocates resources from councils with a big business base to those that can generate less income.

In 2005-06 the Royal Borough collected £165 million in business rates and received £58 million back from Government as part of its grant to support local services.

Debt, reserves and assets
Traditionally, English local authorities issued long-term debt securities in their own name. They tended to be bought by prudent, risk averse people because they were high quality bonds in terms of credit rating that yielded slightly more than British Government bonds generally, known since the 18th century as gilt-edged securities.

In the mid-1970s, as part of the Government’s attempts to maintain control over the public sector borrowing requirement, a framework of rules and controls were introduced that effectively ended the practice of local authorities issuing bonds in their own name. Instead, local authorities were given access to the Public Works Loan Board. The great advantage for local authorities was that they could borrow at a similar low level of interest as the Government and the gilt-edged market. The difficulty for local authorities was that the Government limited the amount that they were allowed to borrow through a system of credits or ‘permissions to borrow’.
In 2003-04 the Government implemented changes to this technical area of local authority finance, so that in principle it now allows local authorities to borrow over and above Government allocations based on a system of prudential planning.

Given past restrictions and the fact that borrowing obligations are legally backed across all the revenues of the Council, very few English local authorities have sought their own credit rating. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is therefore unusual in having a Triple A credit rating from Standard and Poor’s. Amongst other factors, this Triple A credit rating reflects the strength of the Royal Borough’s balance sheet and the level of the Council’s cash reserves.

Debt
The Council’s average debt in 2004-05 was £202 million. The average interest rate on the Council’s debt in 2004-05 was 8.2 per cent; the Council spent £16.6 million in interest. The total amount of debt represents less than 25 per cent of a cautious valuation of the Council’s assets. This low level of borrowing – or ‘gearing’ – reflects the historic restraints on local authority borrowing imposed by central Government and the fact that capital assets may be directly financed from current revenue expenditure, from reserves accumulated out of current revenue budgets and from income raised by selling capital assets.

Reserves
The Council maintains a number of earmarked reserve accounts. These are held for specific purposes and are used to finance current and capital spending in future financial years. Reserves are also held to meet future liabilities, or as a contingency against a possible need to incur expenditure at a future date that would otherwise have to be met from the budget that year. In the Royal Borough, total reserves and balances were £147 million in 2005, which represented about 30 per cent of the borough’s annual current spending. The Council has, in recent years, decided to accumulate reserves for a number of important capital investment projects. These include the proposed new school in Chelsea that would specialise in the teaching of science, refurbishing Kensington library and renewing the borough’s paving using York stone. There is also a large annual programme of asset renewal for parks, schools, roads, social services premises and office accommodation.

Assets
The Council owns a variety of substantial capital assets. At the end of March 2005 the Royal Borough’s capital assets were valued at £815 million. The stock of council houses was valued at £419 million, various operational assets such as the Town Hall £303 million, non-operational assets £55 million and infrastructure assets £23 million. These valuations are based on current use and, if anything, under-estimate the open
market value of the Council’s property and land. An open market valuation of the council housing stock alone might add a further £1 billion to the valuations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Royal Borough Assets (value March 2005)</th>
<th>£m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council dwellings</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational assets</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non operational assets</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure assets</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>814</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of assets by type (March 2005)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cemeteries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial units rented out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council dwellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day nurseries and family centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depots and sub-depots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure centres and pools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museums and galleries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-street car parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and recreation grounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public conveniences (inc. Autoloos)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil referral units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuse transfer site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Town Halls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth centres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth training centre</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pension fund
Local authorities in England participate in a national pension scheme. Employees pay six per cent of their salary in pension contributions and can retire at 65 (or 60 in some cases). They receive an annual pension income that depends on how many years of service they accumulate, up to a maximum of half their final salary. They receive a tax-free lump sum and pensions are indexed to price inflation.

The average pension paid by the Royal Borough to former employees of the Council is close to £4,700. Each local council is responsible for administrating their pensions and accumulates investments to finance these pension liabilities. These assets are built up from the employee and employer contributions and from investment income. The Council has an obligation to pay the pensions, if necessary from council tax revenue, regardless of the condition of its investment funds. The Royal Borough’s pension fund investments in March 2005 were worth £287 million.

Looking forward
This brief introduction to the complex world of local government in London shows that London’s boroughs have seen many changes in their role since their inception – and there are few signs that the future will be any less interesting.

This steady evolution has seen functions regularly added or removed, even within a long period of government by one party, let alone following a change in the balance of power at Westminster.

An enduring feature of London local government, though, has been how resilient the boroughs have been in responding to new statutory duties and even to major changes in the governance of the capital. One of their major attributes has been that, by and large, they are of a scale that keeps them close to their communities and neighbourhoods, and they are often at their best in providing local leadership and efficient services when they draw strongly on this closeness.

The abiding support among the public for the work of the London boroughs is probably the reason Mayor of London Ken Livingstone’s proposal for a reorganisation of London into just five ‘super boroughs’ on the New York model has so far gathered little support in the real world.

One thing is clear; whatever the future holds for London local government, the boroughs – or whatever they become – will continue to serve the people of the capital with efficiency, innovation, professionalism and care.
Sources
In preparing this description of local government in London I have relied heavily on the work of historians and political scientists with specialist interests in local government and London. The section setting out a narrative history of the evolution of London is based on the articles published in the London Journal and History Today.

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