



How we're building pride in Cumbria

Self assessment 2006/07

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Section 1: Context and summary

Revitalised Cumbria shows growing confidence, leadership and capacity to improve services:

1.1 Cumbria County Council is an ambitious, self-confident and self-aware organisation. We have made tremendous progress since the 2002 'Fair' CPA. In particular:

- We can clearly evidence a positive direction of travel and show that we are improving well in all priority areas. We have action plans, with resources in place, to drive change in key improvement areas such as waste (with our district councils); highways (with Amey); ICT (with Agilisys); and human resources (with Capita).
- We know what our priorities are, have clearly communicated them to staff and stakeholders through our "Building Pride in Cumbria" Council Plan, and have strong and increasingly integrated service and financial planning frameworks to ensure delivery.
- Our partnership working has been strengthened and continues to improve, particularly through our county wide LSP, Cumbria Strategic Partnership, and five Local Strategic Partnerships (Carlisle, Eden, West Cumbria, Furness and South Lakeland); but also in key priority areas for Cumbria, such as regeneration (by jointly establishing Cumbria Vision with the North West Development Agency) and children and young people.
- We have dramatically improved capacity to deliver, through our new corporate management team, commercial partnerships and strengthened working between Members and Officers.
- We are showing positive and assertive community leadership, lobbying successfully with partners for additional European Funding, a single PCT for Cumbria and a University for Cumbria; and leading a study of the benefits of World Heritage Site status for the Lake District National Park.
- We are taking a lead in tackling race and diversity issues in Cumbria through the Cumbria Race and Equality Diversity Partnership; we have a ground-breaking and innovative approach to rural proofing; we have embarked an ambitious customer access initiative to ensure improved user focus and accessibility of services; and we are extending our nationally recognised and innovative approaches to locality working to better deliver services in tune with all our communities within the rich and diverse geography and demography of Cumbria.

Delivering results by understanding strengths and areas for improvement

1.2 In a growing number of fields including partnerships, rural

and urban regeneration, localism, libraries and culture, and support for gifted and talented children we are in the national vanguard of innovation and willingness to think creatively about solutions which fit our unique context. Our strategic planning and performance management arrangements are also identified by our auditors as areas of developing strength.

1.3 In other areas such as our leadership of complex, cross-cutting issues like healthy and cohesive communities and promotion of more sustainable lifestyles, our approach is evolving, based on the firm foundations in place for effective multi-agency partnerships. Decisive leadership of partnerships will not always make us popular with organisations whose remit we are seeking to influence.

1.4 We are committed to sustained improvement in performance, especially in those areas of our service delivery which still lag behind national comparators. Our success in turning around previously failing children's social care and securing the recovery of youth services, and our influence in securing an upturn in performance on waste management through a partnership with districts are examples of this commitment to work in progress, and the extent to which it is now delivering results.

Clear signs of improvement:

1.5 We recognise that this improvement in performance of key services is particularly significant given where we are in our improvement journey. In 2004, a series of major service reviews - Current Performance Improvement Assessments - were carried out in areas of identified concern. Those for waste management, road safety, highways maintenance and procurement have resulted in important increases in capacity to manage relationships with external organisations, recognising the Council's historically weak client side for those functions now delivered through commercial strategic partnerships.

1.6 One outcome of this has been the recent inspection of transport services resulting in a judgement of Fair with 'promising prospects for improvement'. The 2005 audit letter also confirmed positive direction of travel reports in other previous problem areas including recycling and composting rates, and numbers of people killed and seriously injured on our roads. The Cumbria Waste Partnership has dramatically turned around performance on waste generated and recycled and, through the county's leadership, is about to take major decisions about future waste management, demonstrating our renewed commitment to tackling issues in partnership.

1.7 A major programme of transformational leadership has successfully taken Children's Social Care services out of zero star status with capacity to improve further. This has made best use of external support, and also increased capacity within the organisation, undertaking a root and branch review of performance management, financial and business systems.

We have also focused in the past two years on establishing successful, influential Children's Services and Adult Social Care directorates, both taking a stewardship role of county wide partnership activity. In Children's Services we secured extra capacity for modernisation from partners through a Change for Children programme led by a seconded Chief Executive from Connexions. Likewise the Youth Work in Cumbria Partnership have tackled issues arising from the poor inspection in 2005. The Council has developed a county wide network of youth provision increasing resources from £1.8m to £3.2m over the last 4 years.

Cumbria County Council - our organisation

1.8 The Council is made up of 84 members comprising 39 Labour, 32 Conservative and 11 Liberal Democrats with 2 Independent Councillors. A Conservative - Liberal Democrat administration has controlled the Council since 2001 through a Cabinet of 10 portfolios (including Leader and Deputy Leader), deliberately cross-cutting in remit and linked to the Council Plan themes. These portfolios have been subject to regular review to ensure they continue to provide effective leadership.

1.9 To reflect the diverse geography and population of Cumbria, an element of delegated executive responsibility is shared with 6 Local Committees. These models of good practice operate unparalleled levels of financial delegation and responsibility for budget management in specific service areas such as highways maintenance, local grants and youth and early years service provision. At a still more local level, 63 Neighbourhood Forums, recently revamped through a Local Public Service Agreement targeted approach, put communities directly in touch with local elected members and representatives from other key agencies such as health, the police and district councils.

1.10 Overview and Scrutiny activity is coordinated through Scrutiny Management Board (SMB) and 7 Scrutiny Panels whose remit correlates with the Council Plan themes. An innovative system of Tripartite meetings brings together relevant Cabinet portfolio holders, chief officers and scrutiny chairs to consider upcoming policy issues. Through this approach scrutiny activity can be targeted on the improvement priorities of the Council without compromising its independence. These collaborative arrangements resulted from a searching internal review and study of best national practice.

1.11 A new Chief Executive was recruited in 2004. He immediately progressed the reorganisation of the Authority to address cultural and efficiency weaknesses. Five new chief officers were recruited and a new management team was fully established in November 2005 - the first time a full team was in place for three years. To help drive a new culture in the organisation, the Chief Officer Group has been remodelled as a Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the post of Corporate Director

has been deliberately constructed to foster cross-directorate working on complex, cross-cutting issues. For example the Corporate Director - Adult Social Care is pulling together corporate leadership addressing the needs of older people.

1.12 In 2005/6 the Council employed 13,000 FTE employees (18,793 total headcount) and the Council's net budget was in excess of £500 million including funding to schools. This will fall to £284m in 2006/07 following the introduction of the Dedicated Schools Grant (£247m). Key spend areas are Education £47.8m (17%); Children's Social Care £29.2m (10%); Adult Social Care £99.7m (35%); Public Protection £24m, Highways £12.9m (5%); Libraries £6.2m (2%). Cumbria's sparsity, ageing population and economic performance add to the cost of service delivery, presenting significant challenges to the Council which it meets through a prudent, but challenging, medium term financial planning process, with a strong emphasis on efficiency and value for money.

1.13 Integral to this are the Council's commercial partnerships with Amey, worth £25.3m per annum in 2005/06, which runs to 2012; Agilisys worth £7.5m per annum running to 2012; and Capita £19.6m per annum to 2011. These have been essential in improving service delivery, delivering efficiency savings (£4.1m in 2005/06) and increasing employment within Cumbria.

1.14 In March 2006 the Employment Tribunal reported its judgment on long-standing equal pay cases against the Council. The legal process is continuing and it is difficult to assess in detail the potential overall costs. However the Council's financial strategy is being strengthened to ensure prudent financial stewardship whilst continuing our improvement agenda.

1.15 The Council has become an increasingly effective player in regional affairs, particularly through the North West Regional Assembly, including chairing the NWRA for 2006-2007. Regional partners comment that Cumbria 'punches above its weight' gaining buy in to concessions such as agreement to ring fenced top up allocation of EU structural funds in the next round for the county, recognising its unique economic status. Following a concerted lobby the NWRA, European Commission, MEPs and MPs supported the case for additional euro funding for Cumbria. The county has also lobbied hard and successfully for increased recognition of Cumbria's needs in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy, early drafts of which adopted too strong a focus on city regions (particularly Manchester - Merseyside) to the detriment of Cumbria's interests.

Cumbria - the context for community leadership and service delivery

1.16 In our planning and prioritisation, we have established structures and systems to take account of Cumbria's scale, sparsity, economic and social history and settlement. England's second largest county, Cumbria has the third highest levels of

population sparsity. More than 50% of Cumbria's total population of 494,800 live in rural communities with only Carlisle (63,000) and Barrow (58,000) having populations exceeding 28,000; whilst 70% of our settlements have populations of less than 200 people.

I.17 However, Cumbria is a county of contrasts. The popular national, and sometimes regional, perception of Cumbria as synonymous with the Lake District and idyllic rurality belies a much more complex mix of settlements, lifestyles and policy priorities. It also masks significant levels of deprivation in Barrow and West Cumbria, as well as pockets of deprivation in rural parts of the county and Carlisle.

I.18 Cumbria's economy is a mix of higher than average levels of employment (79.6% of working age population) contrasted with 27 Super Output Areas, and 12 wards, which are in the 10% most deprived nationally. This includes parts of Carlisle, Barrow and Workington. The county's rate of economic growth was the slowest in the UK between 1996 and 2003, highlighting the relative economic decline due largely to the impact of the contraction in the industrial legacy of manufacturing and steel industries.

I.19 Despite evidence of a turnaround in recent months, there is still a need to consider a future where the second largest employer in the county - the nuclear industry (of which Cumbria is hub for the UK) is undergoing major job losses and shift in emphasis. Potentially 8,000 high value jobs at Sellafield will disappear over the next 10 years - almost double the job losses at the Rover car plant closure which attracted considerably more national attention. The Council is working in partnership with the MPs, district councils, West Lakes Renaissance and Cumbria Vision through the DTI-chaired West Cumbria Strategic Forum to develop a West Cumbria Master Plan setting out an aspirational, but achievable, vision for the future of the area, with a concrete action plan for change.

I.20 Over 60% of the UK's radioactive waste and much higher levels of high and medium level waste is held in the county and the Council works closely with partners to influence national policy on decommissioning, radioactive waste management and socio-economic plans, to further Cumbria's interests. With partners, the Council successfully lobbied for the location of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority to be based in the county, providing high value jobs and supporting the objective of making West Cumbria a centre of excellence for nuclear decommissioning.

I.21 There are 17,205 VAT registered businesses in Cumbria with 83% of companies employing less than 10 people. Fewer than 100 companies in Cumbria employ over 200 people and the county has faced major recent job losses with 3,000 high value jobs lost in companies including Corus, Cavaghan and Gray and Robertsons combining with the uncertainties in the nuclear industry. The proportion of businesses reporting skills gaps fell in all districts except Allerdale between 2002 and 2004, although the gap remains low. Skill gaps were most prevalent in Barrow and Eden.

I.22 To meet the skills gaps, partners including the Council have lobbied for the establishment of a University of Cumbria (opening in 2007). The Council has pressed for it to have a focus on supporting growth, diversification and workforce development across the local private sector, thereby playing its part in sustained economic recovery and growth, with potential links, for example, to the nuclear industry.

I.23 Over 37% of the land area of Cumbria lies within the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks. In addition the county contains three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and part of the Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site and the St Bees Heritage Coast. Cumbria has a wealth of nature conservation interests, including 274 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 800 Scheduled Ancient Monuments and 7,500 listed buildings. This high quality environment has massive benefits in terms of profile and recognition, particularly encouraging tourism, but some stakeholders believe planning policy and its implementation has overly constrained new development. The Council has been a key partner and contributor in a strategic review of policy by the Lake District National Park Authority. This has resulted in a vision for the park focused on fostering sustainable economic development, with a new delivery partnership integrated within the Cumbria Strategic Partnership.

I.24 Waste minimisation and recycling are two of the most important environmental issues facing the county. There has been a steady upward trend in the amount of household waste recycled since 2002/03 and a slower growth in waste disposed in landfill, bringing Cumbria down from previous high levels and better in line with performance of other counties.

I.25 There is no significant problem of homelessness in Cumbria, but the county does have problems with affordable housing, particularly in South Lakeland and Eden. At the same time there is also a market renewal initiative in the West Cumbria and Barrow, again highlighting the contrast across the county.

1.26 Socially, Cumbria's diversity is closely aligned with the map of regeneration priorities. Parts of West Cumbria and Barrow for instance show a poorer than average performance across a range of health indices such as life expectancy, cancer mortality and low birth weights. Life expectancy is lower than the national average in all districts bar South Lakeland and Eden. Barrow is the only district with life expectancy significantly lower than the national average and that of the North West. Barrow also suffers from higher than national average cancer mortality.

1.27 The county's population balance is ageing significantly and by 2028 one in three will be retired, a 62% increase since 2003 with parallel drop in working age population. This reinforces the need for prioritisation towards health and social services. The impact of this trend will be experienced differently around the county. Importantly the greatest concentration of older adults will be in those areas most geographically remote. The Council is modernising its services to older people and ensuring effective financial planning to target changing demographics. Last year the adult social care budget increased by £1.5m to reflect this demographic profile.

1.28 Cumbria's recorded crime rates are lower than the national average for England, although there are significant crime hotspots associated with deprivation and damage to vehicles. Violent crimes are increasing, in line with the national average. In most crime areas fear of crime is lower than the regional and national average. The Council has led the creation of the county wide Safer and Stronger Partnership for community safety, which brings together local authorities, Cumbria Constabulary, criminal justice agencies and the community and voluntary sector. The Partnership led the development of the "Building Respect and Pride: Safer and Stronger Communities Agreement", which started in April 2006. This is the first step towards a full Local Area Agreement, which is being developed this year. The SSCF Agreement includes targets for securing effective partnership engagement to tackle priority issues such as priority prolific offenders, domestic violence and fear of crime through better integration of neighbourhood policing and watch.

1.29 Given the sparse, rural nature of the county, the population is heavily dependent on car journeys, with the percentage who travel to work by public transport half the England average and two thirds of the regional average. The relatively limited road network in Cumbria impacts significantly on journey times and we are developing 'movement strategies' in support of regeneration plans, especially in areas such as West Cumbria and Carlisle.

1.30 Recognising its nationally high levels of people killed and seriously injured on the roads, Cumbria's Local Public Service Agreement addressed a range of behaviour changing and road design measures, achieving significant improvement in performance ahead of national targets, although not quite reaching the challenging stretch targets set in the Agreement.

Section 2: Corporate assessment

Ambition for the community

Self-Assessment score: 3

Clear and challenging ambitions for the area and its communities.

2.1 The Council is a highly influential, responsive and effective convenor of local partnerships, identifying, prioritising and addressing the ambitions of Cumbria's communities. Through the Cumbria Strategic Partnership (CSP) the Council has brought together all key public and voluntary agencies, under a private sector chairman to agree a common set of ambitions - 'Sustainable Cumbria', our county wide community strategy. Unusually for a two-tier area this is fully integrated with community strategies developed by each of the county's five Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

2.2 The Strategy sets out 9 priority areas and 7 cross-cutting themes, which address priority issues highlighted across the county (most of which are summarised in the Context section) :

Priority Areas	Cross-cutting Themes
Sustainable communities and well-being	Sustainable development
Barrow and West Cumbria	Climate for investment
Carlisle	Unlocking skills and releasing talent
The Lake District National Park	Young people
High quality tourism	Communication
Strategic communications	Modernising
Creating wealth and a diversified economy	Celebrating Cumbria
Rural regeneration	
Housing	

2.3 Partners in the area have, in the past, been accused of lacking coherent priorities and a single unified voice to articulate a common vision and sense of purpose for improving quality of life in the county. We have taken the lead in bringing partners together through the CSP to further develop the shared ambitions and priorities for the area. 'Sustainable Cumbria' was the start of this process; Cumbria is in the third phase of Local Area Agreements (LAAs) and we are currently using the process to help strengthen the "single-voice" focus on priorities, expressed in outcome terms, and thereby also help refresh the

Community Strategy and further improve our partnership working.

2.4 We are also active partners in the development and delivery of geographic specific plans which address the key needs in areas such as:

- Carlisle Renaissance resulting in our financial support for the city development framework and movement strategy, addressing the aftermath of the January 2005 storms.
- Support through land assembly in the port area for delivery of the Barrow Master Plan.
- Transport movement and economic regeneration support to the development of the West Cumbria Master Plan, our response to the structural change in the nuclear industry which is supported by the DTI-led West Cumbria Strategic Forum.
- Development of the Kendal Master Plan.

2.5 The Council Plan, "Building Pride in Cumbria", sets out the Council's own contribution to the Sub-Regional Strategy as well as articulating a clear and ambitious set of improvement priorities. Our mission "Building Pride in Cumbria" encapsulates the drive towards a positive performance culture in our organisation, the improved services we want to deliver to the public, and the leadership we aim to provide for our county. Our priorities are to:

- Improve the life chances of children and young people.
- Improve the health and wellbeing of adults.
- Make Cumbria more prosperous.
- Create safe and secure communities.
- Create and protect a high quality environment for all.
- Improve Council services.

2.6 Within these priorities, we have had a particular focus on immediate improvements in:

Service areas	Cross-cutting areas
Children and young people's services	Improved customer contact arrangements
The care of older adults	Better evidencing of how consultation has helped shape priorities and deliver more effective services
The minimisation of waste	A consistent approach to community engagement including with hard to reach groups
Re-cycling	Greater focus on Cumbria's diversity with an early focus on black and minority ethnic communities
Highway maintenance	Rural matters

2.7 Delivery of the Council Plan is driven by Cabinet and the Corporate Management Team, through thematic performance groups and the Corporate Performance Group. We have taken action to ensure our employees understand the organisation's priorities.

Ambitions are based on a shared understanding amongst the Council and partner organisations of local needs.

2.8 The Community Strategy was developed through a consensus building approach. It has achieved county wide agreement on key advocacy issues such as Carlisle Renaissance, a university for Cumbria and the Barrow master plan. It involved individual sessions with key stakeholders to understand how their priorities, until then mainly expressed at a sub-county level, could be better unlocked within the context of a county wide approach. It is used as a starting point for related strategy development - for instance the Sub Regional Housing Strategy, Drug and Alcohol Team strategy, cultural strategy etc.

2.9 The Council champions a range of information and intelligence gathering work on behalf of the whole county. The Cumbria Economic Intelligence Partnership (CEIP), staffed and funded by the Council, commissions regular economic, employer, and skills surveys. It identified Cumbria's critical economic underperformance with respect to Gross Value Added and helped inform lobbying for EU and UK structural funds post 2006. Other examples of an improved evidence-based approach include:

- The use of modelling software such as ACORN to understand better the socio-economic diversity of Cumbria's population which was used to evaluate engagement of different groups in recycling activity, for better marketing by the Cumbria Waste Partnership.
- Helping partners involved in children's services understand better the link between educational attainment and social characteristics, highlighting schools which buck the trend.
- Providing an evidence base for the forthcoming review of school provision, and for library coverage across the county, ensuring efficient use of resources taking account of future population levels and their character.

2.10 To further increase use of evidence, the Council's Information and Intelligence Team led publication of background evidence files for each of the LAA shared priority blocks as the basis for development of the shared outcomes framework, drawing on published sources and identifying gaps in information needing further work. This has been invaluable in risk assessing specific potential outcomes, ensuring they have a secure evidence base, learning from experience with Local Public Service Agreement targets.

2.11 The Council also fosters effective county wide consultation on behalf of stakeholders. A recent example of this being the use

of 'Community Voice' the Citizen's Panel, to influence discussions on race and diversity, which led to the repositioning of the Barrow Multicultural Centre into a Cumbria Multicultural Service. Consultation on the LAA outcomes framework will take place shortly through 'Community Voice'. We have also commissioned MORI to undertake a large scale Quality of Life survey on behalf of the Council and all the partners in the CSP. This will allow us to assess need and set baselines for attitudinal targets in the LAA (such as fear of crime; perceptions of inclusion; attitudes to smoking and exercise etc). Consequently, we are confident that the refresh of the Sustainable Community Strategy for Cumbria is firmly needs based.

With its partners the Council provides leadership across the community and ensures effective partnership working.

2.12 The Council has a strong track record of championing the needs of the local area. It does not take this role in isolation but as key player within the CSP. Some key outcomes include:

- Lobbying for the establishment of the University of Cumbria.
- A review of the benefits of World Heritage Site status for the Lake District with the Council undertaking this role at the request of partners.
- Lobbying to secure the establishment of the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency headquarters in Cumbria and changes to the Energy Bill requiring the NDA to help address socio-economic issues in carrying out its duty.
- Action to prevent the closure of cottage hospitals in Cumbria in advance of a strategic and holistic approach to health needs across the county, with the NDA stepping in to support the hospitals financially (in line with its socio-economic duty).
- A single PCT for Cumbria to ensure better integration with social care and better strategic planning of health needs.
- The only area in the North West, apart from Merseyside to secure ring fenced Objective 2 European funding.
- Spearheading the Cumbria Race and Diversity Partnership, including the lead for undertaking the 2005 Cumbria Attitudes Survey.
- Successful development of the Children and Young people's Plan following wide consultation and participation of children and young people.
- Leadership of the establishment of innovative regeneration companies, including the UK's first large-scale rural regeneration company and West Lakes Urban Regeneration Company.

2.13 We continue to work to improve relationships with our district councils, which in the past, were patchy. Together, we have established the Cumbria Local Authorities Strategic Board (CLASB) bringing together leaders and chief executives from each council with the specific and constructive remit to explore options for shared services, efficiencies and more effective joint working, within the context of the CSP and LSPs. Areas of joint working include property, recruitment and building control. This

is supported by the Achieving Cumbrian Excellence initiative (see Capacity section).

2.14 Our Council Leader is chairing the North West Regional Assembly next year and is the Vice Chairman of the CSP. This is one example of our success in deploying national capacity building funds and opportunities for mentoring and personal development to increase the confidence and effectiveness of our members in partnership settings. For instance the IDEA sponsored partnering with Cheshire County Council in 2004-5.

2.15 Finally we are using development of the LAA to set the pace for taking difficult decisions. Our successful sign-off of a Safer and Stronger Communities agreement in April 2006 was acknowledged by GONW as a significant achievement, demonstrating ability to make choices about priorities - supporting strategic interventions like tackling prolific and priority offenders, when some stakeholders had more local and non-strategic objectives.

Prioritisation

Self-Assessment score: 3

There are clear and robust priorities within the ambitions for the area.

3.1 The 'Sustainable Cumbria' Strategy has a clear set of priorities set out in the SRS Action Plan. These are monitored by the Partnership on a periodic basis to assess progress and achievement. The Council is leading, in partnership, development of Cumbria's Local Area Agreement, creating a clear set of shared priority outcomes which address the common objectives of partner organisations. This draws strength from the Council's successful track record in negotiating and agreeing partnership priorities across a wide range of well-being areas. It is being driven by Thematic Partnerships nested within the overall framework of the CSP with the opportunity, through meetings of thematic chairs and lead officers, for transfer of learning on priority setting across diverse disciplines. This has enabled Cumbria's expertise in regeneration to help inform and influence shared priority setting in new fields such as healthy communities.

3.2 The Council Plan is the key driver for priority setting and delivery within the Council. Development of the plan draws on evidence gathering, and horizon scanning relevant national and local policies. It includes explicit cross referencing against ambitions and priorities identified in community strategies at county wide and LSP level, thus reflecting community and other stakeholder needs. The plan picks up relevant audit and inspection feedback to ensure priority is given to addressing issues identified in them. The Council Plan is supported by a Tactical Delivery Plan, a shorter term (1 year) improvement plan containing all our tactical priorities for improving services, monitored and managed at CMT and Corporate Performance Group.

3.3 The Council Plan is recognised by staff, partners and auditors as clear, focused and prioritised. Communication methods have included:

- Catchy, plain English poster campaign relating priorities to people's jobs.
- A summary, wall planner version.
- Innovative direct marketing to staff.
- Use of Team Briefing.
- Best Value Performance Plan.
- Staff magazine - Newsroom.
- Communication with the public takes place under the themed headings.

3.4 There is a real sense that we are operating as one Council with clarity of purpose and direction. The 2005 staff survey shows 89% of staff understood their own roles and responsibilities. However, the link between their own roles and the corporate priorities was not as strong and we have enhanced communication in this area (e.g. our campaign shows real examples of the Council contributing and making a difference).

3.5 Close alignment is secured with the budget and medium term financial strategy through joint council plan and budget development workshops for members and managers. Budget planning which enable monitoring and reporting against Council Plan themes. It is therefore possible to track and evaluate expenditure against priorities, as in the budget review in 2004-5 which saw substantial investment in children's services (£1m in addition to passporting additional FSS) waste management (£1.7m), and highways (£0.65m) offset by reduced funding in other areas. The strategy to reinvest catering savings into services for youth (with the support of the Schools Forum) provides a specific example of how priorities were informed by performance, and a financial strategy was agreed to move resources to meet priorities over more than one financial year. This was further refined in the budget for the 2006/07 financial year: budget guidelines set increases for all areas at 2% (later adjusted to 1% for central services such as those in Strategy and Performance). The difference between the 2% and the actual settlement provided headroom to allow the Council to target priorities and known significant pressures. Hence resources were moved in to priority areas such as waste (£3.5m) ICT (£1m) and HR (£0.43m).

3.6 We are committed to improving our understanding of the needs and priorities of minority BME groups within Cumbria. The Cumbria Attitudes survey has raised awareness of levels of passive discrimination, resulting in the Council's decision to step change work towards Equality Standard Level 3 by 2007. The Council recognises that the low absolute numbers of BME people magnifies problems and ignores the significant levels of migrant

workers - particularly supporting the tourism and service sector and thereby playing a valuable and significant part in the county's economy. We want to understand this issue further and participated in a national Audit Commission research project (findings due in November 2006) looking at the implications for better supporting these people's needs.

3.7 Particular priority is given to ensuring council policies and services meet the needs of rural communities, recognising that national initiatives frequently need adaptation in a county as sparsely populated as large parts of Cumbria. 'Rural Matters', our rural proofing manual is nationally recognised as best practice by the LGA in national conferences and has succeeded in giving constructive challenge to decisions about service delivery. Examples of issues that have been 'rural-proofed' include Registrars Services, direct payments, new civic amenity sites, and the Environment Advice Service. Rural proofing has influenced our approach to procurement, ensuring that within legal constraints, local suppliers are more easily able to tender for contracts - for instance holding open days for local food suppliers tendering for our contracts in 2006 and working with Business Link to improve our approach.

3.8 The Children and Young People's Plan sets out 17 priorities for improvement based on needs analysis covering all five Every Child Matters outcomes and service management. The Board has agreed objectives to improve the effectiveness of partnership work, joint planning and commissioning.

A robust strategy to deliver the priorities.

3.9 The Council Plan is highly effective, recognised in staff surveys and through recent inspection and peer review work. It sets out SMART targets including top priorities, cross referenced to national and local policies. The Tactical Delivery Plan also sets out a basket of Key Performance Indicators and specific outcomes which are reported on a quarterly basis through themed Performance Groups and as an overall set, to the Corporate Performance Group (engaging Cabinet members and Officers). All commitments and options are fully costed through the integrated approach to budget and policy planning.

3.10 Directorate Service Plans translate the Council Plan themes into priorities, aligned with budgets which are, themselves, integrated within individual personal objectives through annual appraisals. The Council's success in this is evidenced by corporate Investors in People accreditation; since then, feedback has resulted in an improved and more streamlined Council Plan, making integration still more straightforward.

3.11 The Council budget is aligned with Council Plan themes, as well as being disaggregated to team level to facilitate effective management. Thematic budget workshops enable consideration of corporate contribution towards particular aspects of the Council Plan, helping to avoid silos. The Council Plan is deliberately non-aligned with directorates to avoid silos, although

each theme has a lead Corporate Director who is accountable for performance alongside lead Cabinet portfolio holders.

3.12 A key recent development has been agreement around clear standards for key operational services, to be published in the summer edition of the resident's magazine 'Your Cumbria'. These draw upon national good practice, ensuring effective communication of the Council's priorities for service delivery and clearly demonstrating our user-focused approach. The standards establish the baseline for services to operate to, yet allow for local priorities to be reflected in the delivery of services.

3.13 All council decisions, including cabinet and council committee papers are required to demonstrate their impact on the Council Plan and Budget and, specifically their potential impact on equality issues. This ensures that resource allocation to partner organisations, whether through Service Level Agreements or grants, is explicitly aligned with the Council Plan.

3.14 As part of our fundamental review of options for procurement of services – the Invest to Save and Improve programme (ISI) - the Council was one of the first nationally to embark on ambitious strategic partnership/outourcing arrangements through the Capita contract which began in February 2001. It has learnt from its experience in setting priorities in its contracts with commercial strategic partners. Whilst early target setting with Capita demonstrated an understanding of the need to secure wider community benefits from public-private partnerships, the mid term review has very much firmed these up, and is a much tighter approach to contract /performance management and the need to develop the wider benefits. Similarly, the contract with Amey for Highways Maintenance has learnt from benchmarking against high performing councils in this field.

Robust action is taken to deliver the strategy.

3.15 The Council's strategic priorities are delivered through robust service planning which enables high level outcomes and targets to be translated into day-to-day actions. This is achieved through our directorate service plans, which identify activities, performance targets, accountability, risks and budgets to help achieve key strategic priorities (including all the objectives within the Council Plan). These are routinely developed using the active involvement of staff each year. Actions are then cascaded down into targets for individuals as part of the appraisal process and are supported by our strengthened approach to project management

3.16 The Council is increasingly experienced in securing delivery of its priorities through direct services, contracts, strategic partnerships and leadership of partnerships, evidenced by our overall 'Improving Well' Direction of Travel judgement in 2005. This is demonstrated by our rapid turnaround in performance for Children's Social Care to regaining a 1 star rating, with particular success in securing good partnership working to help children achieve economic well being. This is alongside similar

achievement in the 2005-6 performance for Adult services with more people helped to live at home (reflecting the top council plan priority), reduced delayed transfers from hospital, improvements for people staying independent at home and better prospects for people with learning disabilities being helped into employment, all medium term objectives in the Council Plan.

3.17 Last year we forged the first county wide Safer and Stronger Community Agreement, mediating between agencies and partnerships at a range of county and sub-county scales to establish a clear set of priorities as a basis for resource allocation. This plus detailed work from Overview and Scrutiny has led to a secure basis for tackling domestic violence in Cumbria, building on experience gained through LPSA 1, where 568 convictions were achieved against the stretch target of 134 convictions. This has allowed the exchange of experience and learning from rural and urban based projects within a county-wide strategic approach.

3.18 Overview and Scrutiny also plays an important role in reviewing and challenging the Council's priorities. For example, they evaluated our response to the UK wide debate on healthier eating at school initiating a random sample of school meals in Cumbria. This resulted in a manual of best practice and free support to all our schools improving quality and contributing to shared outcomes on childhood obesity in our draft LAA. This type of work has led to the function being cited as an example of good practice by the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

3.19 Action plans to address the needs of BME groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage have been identified through action plans for each directorate. These identify priority areas for intervention; for instance securing targets in individual appraisals, ensuring all staff pass through diversity training, and ensuring key policies and reviews are subject of equality impact assessments. By the end of July 2006 around 70 senior officers across the Council will be trained in carrying out an Equality Impact Assessments and some 3000 front line staff have received equality awareness training. By April 2007 objectives and targets on equality will be set in all Service Plans on the basis of findings from the Equality Impact Assessments.

3.20 Action plans addressing the needs of BME groups are being implemented through a range of proactive campaigns, for example working in partnership with Carlisle United Football Club to eliminate racism as well as using award winning community theatre outreach to change attitudes within our schools. This has led to a nationally recognised book based on work carried out in our schools to tackle racism and prejudice, 'Another Spanner in the works', together with a dedicated Race Equality Team in the school support service.

Capacity

Self-Assessment score: 2

Clear accountability and decision making to support service delivery and continuous improvement.

4.1 The Council fully understands that its capacity is more than the people and resources at its disposal. It is the way that the Council uses these resources to optimum advantage, in partnership with others, that will determine whether or not we are successful in achieving our priorities. We also recognise that it is important that available capacity is focussed on the delivery of key priorities and that roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and acted upon.

4.2 Capacity of the Council has improved tremendously following the reorganisation of the management structure and appointment of a new corporate management team: fully in place in November 2005 for the first time in three years. CPA evidence shows a settled and consistent chief officer team with a positive and focussed improvement plan is essential to the effectiveness of an organisation; in Cumbria, we are already experiencing the step change in improvement that this brings. Directors were recruited using stakeholder appointment panels, including a children's panel for the Corporate Director - Children and Young People.

4.3 The Council constitution, which is regularly reviewed, sets out how the Council operates and decisions are made. There is a clear, widely understood scheme of delegation that enables strategic and operational decisions to be taken at an appropriate level. We regularly review and update our Statement of Internal Control to ensure the highest standards of probity and that systems are robust and effective. The Council has established an audit and assurance committee which provides a forum for reviewing the work of internal and external audit and monitoring the effectiveness of risk management across the Council. The Committee has an important role in enhancing accountability and reviewing performance improvement systems.

4.4 We have recently refreshed our Cabinet portfolio roles to align more effectively with Council Plan priorities. Our Cabinet and Corporate Directors are given specific accountabilities in the Council Plan for the use of resources to deliver our strategic outcomes and also for variations in performance against targets. Similarly, both accountability and responsibility sit with our Heads of Service at the operational level, with targets set and reviewed annually with reference to our Leadership Behaviours Framework. Council and Cabinet decision making processes are integrated with our scrutiny management processes and we have devolved decision making power and responsibility to our 6 local committees. Locality working is a strength of the Council, although we recognise, following the recent Democracy Commission report, that greater clarity would help improve capacity to deliver and we are currently reviewing arrangements.

4.5 Our processes for decision-making are transparent to members, officers and the public and enable the Council to work effectively. Recently the capacity of Overview and Scrutiny has been enhanced through the establishment of time-limited, task and finish groups to focus on policy development and review work related to the Council's corporate objectives. We have also developed the role of the tripartite meetings involving Cabinet and Scrutiny members and corporate directors so that there is a greater understanding of corporate issues and agreement as to lead roles, especially in relation to consultation. This has helped increase levels of understanding across the Council, avoided unnecessary duplication and also facilitated better working relations between members.

4.6 Risk management is firmly embedded in the Council, although we are working to improve the consistency of approach and the evidencing of risk mitigation actions. There is both a top-down and bottom-up approach to risk. The Corporate Performance Group annually participates in a workshop to refresh corporate risks for the year, the latest one in May 2006. The workshops are facilitated by Zurich Municipal. Corporate risks are owned by Corporate Directors and reported on quarterly. Risk management is also firmly integrated in service planning, with the identification of risks alongside development of all key priorities. All high level risks identified in service plans are entered on to Riskwise (the corporate risk register computer system) alongside the development of risk mitigation action plans. These are considered on a regular basis at Departmental Management Teams, Thematic Performance Groups and the Corporate Performance Group.

4.7 Major strategic partnerships incorporate risk management workshops where a review of initial risk allocation takes place and a risk matrix and register are prepared. Thereafter, throughout the procurement phase, risks are regularly updated and risk transfer options considered. Examples include a risk identification workshop for the waste strategic partnership involving all client stakeholders and a risk register has been actively managed throughout the procurement of a replacement financial management system.

Capacity is used effectively and developed to deliver ambitions and priorities.

4.8 As a county council serving a sparse area, we know we have to work hard to demonstrate value for money. Our Council Plan 2006-09 emphasises the Council's commitment to improving services and providing value for money and within 'Improving Council Services', one of our 6 Council Plan themes, we have an explicit aim to achieve greater efficiency, value for money and continuous improvement. Our approach challenges relatively high cost services and targets efficiency improvements to generate investment and improvement potential.

Notable successes so far include:

- Cumbria was included in Municipal Journal's list of the top 10 local authorities for ambition for efficiencies in 2005/6.
- We are on track and expect to hit the 'cost-effectiveness' stretch target at the end of our Local Public Service Agreement this year (the measure is 116 comfortably ahead of the target of 108).
- Our strategic commercial partnerships with Amey, Agilisys and Capita have delivered efficiencies of £4m in 2005/6 (see below).
- We have reviewed areas of relative high cost from analysis of Audit Commission vfm profiles and other benchmarking resulting in budget savings in 2006/7. For the 2007/8 budget, the Council has embarked on wide ranging service reviews and cross cutting work, challenging areas to identify how services might be delivered for 10% and 20% reductions in budget. External challenge is being provided by Impower's analysis of 2006 vfm profiles and the latest Annual Efficiency Statements.
- We delivered record capital investment of £64m in 2005/6 within 0.3% of budget (£60m in 2004/5 and £44m in 2003/4).
- Our work on procurement will deliver savings of £1.5m.
- We have balanced service delivery and investment with modest Council Tax increases and maintained financial stability. Since 1997/8 Cumbria has recorded one of the lowest Council Tax increases and is bottom quartile for average Council Tax per dwelling despite a disproportionate number of Band A and B property. Reserves have been well managed, enabling the Council to cope with emergencies, and reserves are being put aside for equal pay.

4.9 In Cumbria, we have unprecedented levels of partnership working with strategic commercial partners. These stem from the Invest to Save and Improve (ISI) programme recognised nationally as one of the most thorough reviews of council activity to identify opportunities for new procurement and partnership options. The Audit Commission consider that we have achieved and retained significant learning from the ISI programme, the project management of which they considered to be sound.

- We established a strategic partnership for ICT with Agilisys in April 2005. The vfm case demonstrated significant risk transfer valued at £1.5m a year. Key to the partnership's success is the use of business cases taken to the joint strategic board, proving business need and reward for each investment. As part of the strategic partnership the Council is investing some £7.5m a year to develop new ICT projects, with a total contract sum of £52.5m. Agilisys have helped increase capacity by front-loading the contract with their own resources to deliver early implementation of new ICT systems. The contract will deliver £1m of efficiencies per annum.
- Amey Infrastructure Services have been contracted to provide highways services from April 2005. The vfm case demonstrated £7m benefits over the seven year contract compared with continued in house arrangements. Amey prices are some 10% lower providing efficiencies of £2.2m a

- year. Cumulative efficiencies are guaranteed in the contract. The Council, Amey and Capita work together in a tripartite partnership as Cumbria Highways. Additional work to the value of £250,000 per annum is provided by Amey free of charge dependent on the value of work placed through the contract. Hence, we will be delivering £500,000 worth of road drainage work, aimed at locations where flooding to property is seen as a potential problem - an area of importance to the public, given Cumbria's recent experience
- Our partnership with Capita, which started in 2001 has already delivered £3.8M savings, £7M of capital receipts and 220 new jobs in the last five years. The total jobs figure is based on a 'grade/skills mix', comprising of staff ranging through from administrative and technical, to senior manager. Capita have been given until January 2009 to deliver 1,000 new jobs in total
 - The partnership with Capita has helped our Archive Service secure a £4.8m investment in the form of a Heritage Lottery grant to transform the historically important but run down Lady Gilford House in Carlisle into a modern archives and family history research centre. The project stemmed from the library and archive service review and improvement plan in 2004.
 - We are currently looking to appoint a commercial strategic partner for waste management, with a decision to be made in the Autumn. This will involve our LAWDAC company, Cumbria Waste Management.

4.10 Increasing emphasis is now being put on securing efficiencies and improved capacity through partnership with other local authorities, particularly through shared service work led by the Cumbria Local Authorities Strategic Board (see 2.13 above).

4.11 The Council recognises its staff as critical to future success and has the ambition to be clearly recognised as the employer of choice in the area. In 2005, the Council commissioned MORI to carry out an employee attitude survey across the Council. Overall, the results were very positive. Key headline responses included:

- 73% of respondents confirmed that the Council was about or above average place to work compared with other organisations they had worked for, and
- 89% of respondents strongly agreed or tended to agree that they understood their roles and responsibilities within their teams, and
- 64% of respondents were very or fairly satisfied with their current job.

4.12 Worryingly, around 1 in 7 people reported concerns about bullying and harassment. Since no other authorities have surveyed staff on this (or will report outcomes) we have no comparator information to benchmark against. However, we believe this to be unacceptable and are doing more work to explore the issues and do all we can to support staff. We have commissioned Equality Works to do to do further research (including a more

detailed survey and follow-up interviews on a confidential basis) and report back with suggestions for improvement.

4.13 The Council also gained corporate recognition as an 'Investor in People' in 2004 and we look forward with confidence to 2007 when we will rise to the challenge of a revised set of standards.

4.14 Although adequate, we recognised in 2005 that HR provision needed significant improvement in capacity if we are to effectively support all our employees to achieve the step change in service performance that we aspire to. Consequently we have:

- Used IDeA support to help us to refresh our (HR) People Strategy and work force planning.
- Used the mid term review of the Capita contract to fundamentally improve the interface between Council and Capita. Strategic operational support was provided by Capita and directly within some departments; this is being brought back in to the Council to provide for a more consistent approach with strong links back to the policy development setting to assist policy implementation and embedding. This will also support sickness absence and positive attendance policy.
- We are putting an additional £432,000 in to strengthen the HR structure in 2006/07 (reducing to £340,000 in 2007/08), recognising the limited capacity within the Council. This will be targeted primarily at additional HR operational advisors within directorates to support the change management process, especially in Children and Young People and Adult Social Care (including Cumbria Care). Although placed within directorates to support management teams, staff will have a functional responsibility to the Head of HR to ensure consistency and high standards.
- We have worked with Capita and Agilisys to business process re-engineer all the transactional HR procedures to provide a standard, consistent approach based on the best practice within the Council and in other local authorities. This will provide for better performance measures and a more robust specification for the work undertaken by Capita. Subject to evidence of effective delivery against the new specification, all transactional work will be undertaken by Capita from April 2007 (again this is mixed provision at present between Capita and some Council directorates).
- We are developing a business case for improved ICT as part of our strategic partnership with Agilisys. This work will be informed by the BPR work and new structure and will be ready for roll out in the Autumn.

4.15 For some years now, the Council has experienced difficulty in recruiting to a range of professional posts, in areas of national shortage such as in Social Work, Planning and Trading Standards. Our first phase of work force planning has been a pragmatic approach to addressing key gaps, through for example: investing in improving our recruitment and advertising processes, Council image as an employer, employee helpline, work-life balance/family

friendly policies, home working etc with improved results. The approach taken for Social Workers and Occupational Therapists comprised a number of measures, some of which will have an impact in the medium to long term. Staff have welcomed the reimbursement of fees for registration with the General Social Care Council seeing this as recognition of their value to the Authority. Following the introduction of the Retention Incentive Scheme, the Authority has been able to promote more attractive benefits of working in Cumbria and some posts, which were proving particularly hard to recruit to, have been filled. We have established traineeships in some areas of particular difficulty so that upon qualifying, a 'hard to fill' post will be permanently filled. We also have a specific action plan and timetable for developing a work force development plan, again supported by the IDeA.

4.16 Sickness absence levels are above average and not meeting our stretching targets, although the trend in recent months is downward. We are taking action to improve rates through a Positive Attendance Strategy; training for line managers including skills required; a temporary HR post to work with managers in specific high absence rate areas; an Employee Assistance Programme giving online and tele-based help for staff; and a revised Occupational Health contract with Capita as part of the mid-term review, linked to a target to improve absence rates by 15%.

4.17 As part of our improvement agenda we have recognised to the need to implement a consistent and robust approach to project management. We launched an on-line project management toolkit in early 2006, drawing on national expertise secured through our ICT partner, Agilisys, with 6 key corporate projects in our Tactical Delivery Plan piloting its use before full roll out and it is now being used by our LAA programme co-ordinator.

4.18 Within the Council, each directorate is carrying out Equality Impact Assessments on critical areas of policy development over the next 12 months and 2000 front line staff have been directly trained in diversity through partnership with Equality Works. This has led to greater accessibility of council services for BME and other minority groups. Examples of work in this area include development of translations for key website pages into Bengali, Cantonese, Polish, Lithuanian, Turkish and Urdu. New policies, strategies and documents will have a strapline in these languages along with contact details for obtaining translated documents. The National Register of Public Service Interpreters is utilised when necessary and a new corporate access to information policy is being launched which will cover interpreters, translators, and information in accessible formats

The Council, and its partners, have the capacity they need to achieve change and deliver their priorities.

4.19 ICT has been a weakness of the authority in the past, but our partnership with Agilisys is helping us to make great strides forward. We achieved 94% electronic service delivery in

December 2005 from a low baseline of 40% in December 2004 and achieved all but 3 of the mandatory and good e-government priority outcomes. We have identified priority areas for new ICT systems, linked firmly to our improvement agenda: such as a new financial ledger system; customer relationship management to improve our customer access; electronic social care record; improved HR; and procurement. Day to day operational ICT support is taking longer to improve than we would have wished, but, together with Agilisys, we are now making progress with an increase of PC numbers by 20% last year.

4.20 We have also used the ICT capacity to drive improvement. The 'Connected Cumbria Information Hub' is one of the major projects being delivered by the Connected Cumbria Partnership with districts. This gives customers throughout Cumbria an additional access channel that enables services to be received through a single window. A key element of this integration of provision across all local authorities and between the tiers of government is that it is done in ways that will make sense to the customer.

4.21 We are confident that our Corporate Planning processes ensure our budgets are 'policy-led' and that our financial capacity is sufficient to meet our objectives. Alongside our Council Plan, we have a strong medium term financial strategy with detailed plans for year 1 and projections for years 2 & 3, together with a four year capital programme with financing rolled forward each year, an annual treasury management strategy, an investment strategy and a risk management strategy which is currently being updated.

4.22 Reserves have been set at appropriate levels and well managed, enabling the Council to cope with emergencies, such as the 2005 storms and floods. The Council faces a significant financial risk from the current equal pay claim, but we are actively managing the risk and using medium term financial planning process to manage our way through. In particular, financial reserves are being put aside and the service review process will help to identify additional resources not only for equal pay, but also to continue to resource priority areas.

4.23 We have invested in capacity building on a number of fronts and we are confident that this investment is delivering results. For Members and Partners, we have successfully participated in both the Achieving Cumbrian Excellence programme (ACE) and the Cumbria/Cheshire Learning Partnership, which have resulted in revised working practices for cabinet, increased clarity and confidence about what community leadership means and partnership building leading to successful collaboration on waste and, now, property management. We have also supported development for members through the establishment of individual learning plans.

4.24 A key part of strengthening our leadership and organisational development capacity is ensuring our managers have the right skills and display the requisite behaviours to effectively support and develop our people in an ever changing

environment. We have developed a Management Development Programme, building on our highly regarded Leadership Behaviours Framework. This will be rolled out in the Autumn and supported by the revised HR structure.

Performance Management

Self-Assessment score: 3

There is a consistent, rigorous and open approach to performance management.

5.1 The Council has made significant improvements in performance management since our Corporate Assessment in 2002 as recognised by the Audit Commission in the annual audit and inspection letter: "Strategic planning, performance management and working with public and private partners have radically improved over the last three years, particularly in the last year." We continue to embed our performance management framework (PMF) and there is an evident 'golden thread' from the county wide Community Strategy 'Sustainable Cumbria' through the 'Building Pride in Cumbria' Council Plan to directorate and unit service plans and on to groups and individuals. We have consistent arrangements in place for tracking progress against our Corporate Plan, our Local Public Service Agreement and our baskets of statutory performance indicators (BVPI, PAF) supported by a robust appraisal process. We are confident that Members and Officers are now using more robust performance information to concentrate effort on our priorities for improvement, for example, in waste management.

5.2 Our on-going focus on key priorities linked to resource allocation and better performance monitoring and management is leading to demonstrable improvements in performance. We sustained and improved the performance of 74% of BVPIs in 2005/06; and in 2004/05, the latest year of comparative information, 20% of our PIs were in the top quartile nationally (a slight decrease from 22% in 2003/04) and we reduced the number of PIs in the lower quartile from 42% in 2003/04 to 29% in 2004/05.

5.3 The Council has a specific Performance Group for each theme in our Council Plan that meets at least bi-monthly and within a culture of open debate and constructive challenge, performance information is regularly used to manage service improvement and to agree remedial action to bring performance back on track where the risk of underperformance is evident. Each Performance Group is chaired by a lead Cabinet Portfolio holder and is attended by a lead Corporate Director and relevant Heads of Service. Notable successes include actions which have resulted in reductions in killed and seriously injured and the amount of waste collected.

5.4 The Council also has a Corporate Performance Group, consisting of Cabinet and CMT and encourage open and transparent challenge, our inspectorates and colleagues in Government Office North West are invited to attend. The main

item of business for the Corporate Performance Group is to track overall progress against the Council's Tactical Delivery Plan (the short term, tactical improvement plan, approved alongside the Council Plan by full Council in March 2006). The Council's scrutiny panels actively consider performance, particularly as part of conducting systematic reviews of services or cross cutting themes.

5.5 The Council has developed a single database of performance information which provide regular traffic-light reports on PIs and key actions in the TDP to our Corporate Performance Group and our Thematic Performance Groups. A balanced scorecard is being piloted within Children's Services to evaluate its effectiveness in driving performance management and planning. We are currently working with our ICT strategic partner, Agilisys, to publish performance information on both our intranet and internet sites, with Children and Young People providing a pathfinder area. We are also at the early stage of leading on the development of a performance management framework to support our Local Area Agreement.

5.6 Our systems for individual appraisal have also improved within our overall PMF, all personal objectives are aligned with Council Plan themes and objectives and our workforce are now better informed about their individual and team contributions to improving Council services. Despite a high level of appraisals carried out, we have not evidenced that they have been undertaken since recording on the HR ICT system is problematic; this is being addressed in the appraisal round currently underway.

5.7 The Council operates in a culture of open review and our high cost services are routinely challenged. We have strengthened our financial management and monitoring processes and our budget monitoring reports are considered on a monthly basis by our Corporate Planning Cabinet Working Group. In terms of value for money and our drive to secure service efficiencies, Cumbria was included in top 10 local authorities for the ambition of our 2005/6 plans.

5.8 Following the programme of Current Performance Improvement Assessments in 2004, the Council has focused its service review activity through the Tactical Delivery Plan, supported by robust project management arrangements. This year this approach has driven work on reviewing HR systems, recognising their criticality for the performance of the organisation. Similarly the plan set the context for a series of service reviews and 'cross cutting' work to identify the scope for significant savings for the 2007/8 budget, looking at options for 10 and 20% budget reductions using Impower's analysis of 2006 value for money profiles and the latest Annual Efficiency Statements. The intention is to create a further £10 million headroom within the budget which would be used to fund the revenue costs of any additional borrowing for equal pay, implementing Single Status and Job Evaluation from April 2007 and in the event of further pressures arising.

5.8 The Council invited SOLACE to carry out a peer review of

our strengths and areas for improvement in January 2006 and we have recently signed-up to the Cumbria Strategic Leadership Programme with support from the IDeA, a programme with a strong performance focus. These initiatives provide further example of our appetite for open debate and a constructive challenge of our performance.

5.9 Progress has been made in bringing together risk management, financial and non financial performance through the work of Performance Groups. Corporate budget monitoring reports on the reasons for variations between spend and budget, implications for services and proposed management action. Service Plans map the linkages between objectives, risks, risk mitigation and performance indicators. And work is underway to bring together the corporate performance monitoring and risk recording systems (see capacity section). However, there remains work to be done to ensure that risk and all aspects of performance are integrated providing a rounded perspective on overall performance and outcomes.

5.10 There are areas where we know we need to improve further, for example we have focused our corporate resources on improving data quality across the Council. In particular we have responded to known risk areas in our Adult Social Care and Libraries services and our confidence in management information has improved significantly in producing more performance data for local committees.

5.11 The Council has improved its complaints and commendations process over the past year so that people can be signposted to where they can get help; the provision of a clearer complaints and commendations form (available on line); and the publication of service standards. Survey work shows that 70% of residents are happy with the way their complaint was handled. Further improvements, such as a draft Customer Charter, are part of the Customer Access initiative. In particular we need to ensure that performance information on complaints and commendations are consistently considered by Performance groups to help drive improvement.

The Council and partner organisations know how well they and each other are performing against planned outcomes.

5.12 We have strengthened our client arrangements to manage our performance in our strategic partnerships with Capita, Amey and Agilisys. Our jointly agreed governance arrangements enable open and constructive challenge of our partners' performance.

5.13 To maximise the impact of our performance information, we are now gathering, analysing and using information at a local level, to better inform and engage our Local Area Committees, to get under the skin of county wide performance information, and to take decisions about use of resources and service improvement closer to our local communities.

Two examples are given below.

- Adult Social Care 'Percentage of Items of Equipment and Adaptations Delivered within 7 Working Days' (PAFD54/BVPI56). In 2003/04, the Cumbria figure was 87%, a 4 blob rating. Broken down by area, the best performing area scored 87% (5 blob), and the lowest scored 59% (2 blob). In this case, local reporting raised some questions, and one conclusion was the fact that the contract for delivery of equipment in some areas was unsatisfactory. The more problematic areas were targeted, such that the lowest performing area in 2003/04 is, at the last count in May 2006, achieving 83% (4 blob). Performance at county level has also improved and has a 5 blob score of 88.3%.
- Road Safety - Statistics on the numbers of people killed and seriously injured (KSIs) on Cumbria's roads are presented to Local Committees on a regular basis. An additional report is due to be presented to each Local Committee in the near future which is based on KSI targets and contains recommendations on what should be done at community level. This means a change in emphasis from Road Safety Officers periodically visiting schools to speak to pupils on road safety issues. Road Safety Officers are now to work with Area Support Managers and Neighbourhood Development Officers in order to participate in community groups such as neighbourhood forums. The aim of this is to encourage Local Committees to maximise safety, especially that of pedestrians and children, on the roads.

5.14 The Council regularly uses the following mechanisms to consult with the public. These include:

- Community Voice. The Council's citizens' panel is run on a partnership basis with district/borough councils and Cumbria Constabulary. We have over 3000 Cumbrian residents on the panel. It is used to find out what the public think about an issue, or when implementing a new project or policy that requires ideas to be tested out. It also helps us measure public satisfaction with different services. Recent examples include internet usage, attitudes to race and diversity, satisfaction with highways, communications, cultural events and public transport.
- Neighbourhood Forums. 60 forums across the county give communities a space to discuss local issues and engage with service providers. They are used frequently by the Council and its partners to consult with communities.
- Online consultation. The Council makes regular use of online surveys and discussion forums. On hot topics these can generate a lot of feedback.
- Consultation Finder. This provides a publicly accessible online database of the Council's planned, current and recently completed consultation activity. It is searchable by interest, location, date and so on. This was launched in February 2006, over time it will build into a valuable resource both for the public and council officers. The Council is working in partnership with Barrow Borough Council and South Lakeland

District Council on this project; all three councils contribute information into the same database.

5.15 Development of our LAA is establishing a performance management framework for partnerships. We have piloted this approach through Safer and Stronger Communities, and the Children and Young People Partnership Board.

Knowledge about performance is used to drive continuous improvement in outcomes.

5.16 The Council uses the triennial Best Value User Satisfaction surveys to monitor overall satisfaction levels with council services and we have set an ambitious target and course of action to improve our rating between 2006 and 2009.

5.17 Both our Council Plan and our Local Public Service Agreement contain examples of targets that are set in line with our priorities. Our Council Plan waste targets for example are set in partnership and we jointly carry out campaigns to spread the message to Reduce, Re-Use and Recycle.

5.18 Over recent years, we have welcomed and learned from specific service inspections covering a range of our services. As a result we have made the following improvements:

- Accessibility and User Focus - implementation of customer relationship management, improvements to reception areas and setting service standards.
- Libraries and Archives - better, more responsive opening hours, including Sunday opening, piloting Library Links in village shops and reviewing small libraries and mobiles.
- Waste Management - increase in recycling rates and reduction in the rate of increase of waste collected.

5.19 We recognise there is scope to improve our ability to learn from good practice across the Council and we have put in place a series of measures to help us do so:

- Performance Groups regularly review 'exception' performance issues. Corporate Performance Group for example recently learnt from Children's Services use of balanced scorecards as a tool for performance improvement.
- The Excellence Awards Scheme, launched last year, culminated in presentations across a range of categories, celebrating success and helping to generate a feel good factor as part of our 'Building Pride in Cumbria' approach
- Update news - a frequent, accessible briefing for all employees incorporating 'Peter's Diary' to give the Chief Executive an opportunity to highlight excellence, recent awards and key messages to improve learning.
- Managers conferences - Quarterly Heads of Service and Top 100 events are held with a recent focus on external input - e.g. a MORI Director recently gave a fresh perspective on the public's perception of councils.

- Brainwaves suggestion scheme - invites good ideas from staff. Recent successes include better incentives for car sharing to training events, and the introduction of a Fairtrade policy for refreshments at Council meetings.

These innovations are backed up by weekly review of performance issues by the Corporate Management Team and weekly briefings from Directors circulated to all teams and incorporated in the Members Information Bulletin.

5.20 Scrutiny has also played a key role in helping use performance to improve outturn, for example their recent work on learning disability and pooled fund arrangements.

Achievement

Sustainable communities and transport

Self-Assessment score: 3

Overview

6.1 Over 37% of Cumbria is covered by national landscape and built environment designations including 2 national parks, 3 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, 800 scheduled ancient monuments and 600 Grade I and Grade II* listed buildings. In this context, the county faces unique environmental challenges in ensuring sustainability and appropriate development. Air quality levels are generally high, with the exception of one road corridor out of Carlisle being addressed through the Carlisle Northern Development Route.

6.2 Cumbria also faces unusual and severe economic challenges - the slowest growth rate of any sub-region in the UK between 1995-2003 (23% against a UK average of 55%) and relative economic decline in terms of Gross Value Added per head of population. Employment rates vary from top UK quartile employment in Allerdale, Eden and South Lakeland to bottom quartile in Barrow, Carlisle and Copeland. This matches our support for master planning exercises in these targeted areas. Overall unemployment levels are falling and at their lowest levels for 20 years, as are numbers of claimants of Job Seekers Allowance. This is matched by growth in the business stock base measured through VAT registrations, with business survival rates higher than any other part of the north west (according to the Small Business Service). The county's adult skills levels are slightly below national average, particularly in Copeland, although research by the CEIP shows a reducing number of businesses reporting significant skills gaps over the past three years, particularly in Carlisle.

6.3 Quality of life is a key asset - an independent study by Strathclyde University research group identified Kendal as having the best quality of life in England in terms of its mix of education, entertainment, employment and health care facilities with the rest of the county scoring highly.

6.4 Thus the Council has to reconcile tensions between the environment, sustainable development and the needs of communities. The Cumbria Strategic Partnership has successfully lobbied for stronger recognition of Cumbria's interests in the Regional Spatial Strategy, a counterpoint to regional focus on city region growth in the Northern Way approach.

6.5 Uniquely in the North West, Cumbria has aligned planning and housing policy under a county wide Community Strategy - Sustainable Cumbria. This has 'daughter documents' - the Sub Regional Spatial Strategy ('Delivering Sustainable Cumbria') and Sub Regional Housing Strategy. These are fully integrated with the community strategy, and are acknowledged by GONW as an innovative approach, helping facilitate the use of the community strategy as a material consideration in land-use planning as envisaged in national guidance.

Sustainable economy

6.6 Key challenges include job losses from UK nuclear industry restructuring on West Cumbria, the impact of national defence policy on surface vessel and submarine construction in Barrow, promoting Carlisle's role, and diversifying the economy of rural Cumbria, particularly generating higher value jobs.

6.7 The Council's response has been to advocate the need for nationally innovative regeneration interventions, to work with partners leading master planning in priority regeneration areas; Barrow, West Cumbria and Carlisle, and to lobby at regional, national and European level for resources, all within the overall context set by Sustainable Cumbria, the community strategy. Key initiatives include:

- Invest in Cumbria (IiC) - the county's inward investment agency, now wholly owned and managed by the Council, promoting business relocation and growth, building on and diversifying economic strengths. Recent major successes have included helping to secure the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority base, working with Westlakes Science and Technology park to create a regionally significant growth centre for expertise. Aftercare is particularly important to IiC, to ensure sustainability of investment.
- Cumbria Vision - as the sub regional regeneration partnership jointly established by the Council with NWDA. Integrated as one of the thematic partnerships of the CSP incorporating West Lakes Renaissance (WLR) and Rural Regeneration Cumbria (RRC) the county's two regeneration companies established between 2001-2002 coinciding with recovery of the county's relative economic performance with growth between 2002-2003 back at the UK average (5.5% per annum) for the first time in nearly 10 years.
- Increasing post 16 participation in education and training through a successful LPSA target of 73% engagement (rising to 90.1% including government supported schemes). Focused work takes place in deprived areas with close working between the Pathways teams and Connexions.

- 'Made in Cumbria' business support organisation for over 500 businesses manufacturing and designing high quality products which reflect the county's approach to quality and value. Other support includes a network of Farmers Markets and workshop courses in key skills to develop the sector's profitability
- Complementing the regeneration companies, the Council has a direct responsibility and track record in land-reclamation including the county wide Land Reclamation Programme, Derwent Forest, Barrow Port and Maryport Developments, resulting in reclaiming 800 acres, 2.2 million square ft of floor space, creating 2,900 jobs and £100m investment.
- Cumbria Tourist Board recognises tourism and related business input some £400m per annum into the economy. The Council has helped support CTB's expansion into fields such as ICT and marketing support to tourism businesses as well as direct collaboration - for instance work by the county's Registrar Service with CTB to promote Cumbria as an ideal venue for weddings, civil partnerships and other ceremonies.
- The Council's management of Port of Workington is cited in a Department of Transport report (May 2005) on municipal port management as an exemplar, urging other local authorities to consider our model of management through a Business Development Manager and clear action plan developed collaboratively with West Lakes Renaissance including an investment plan of £15m of which the Council has planned for £4.5.
- Work in partnership with NWDA to secure the best Broadband coverage in non-metropolitan England, with over 99% of household communities and 96% of businesses having access to broadband services.

6.8 Underpinning most of this activity is the Council's role as accountable body for over £250 million UK and EU regeneration programmes. Our Regeneration Support Team provides a one-stop service for regeneration companies and Government office alike. The RST provides policy, advisory and lobbying support as well as technical project appraisal, monitoring and claims. A key role is regional and national advocacy work, including securing regional assembly support for ring fenced European resources to Cumbria during the post 2006 structural fund round.

6.9 At a local level our Neighbourhood Development teams provide capacity building support to community groups trying to access regeneration funds to address their needs - including through the Market Towns Initiative and through the 'Local Matters' guide which sets out best practice in community engagement.

Housing

6.10 The Council, District Councils and Housing Associations have formed a sub-regional housing partnership to develop the first Sub-Regional Housing Strategy 2006-2011. This sets policies on affordable housing, creating decent homes and environments, housing the homeless, regeneration and providing homes for support or additional facilities. Affordability is Cumbria's greatest single housing issue although there are also areas of market renewal in Barrow and West Cumbria. A recent survey in South Lakeland by the Rowntree Foundation identified it as the least affordable in the North of England based on average incomes. The strategy is fully integrated with the Council's approach to supporting independent living - through which our Supporting People Programme contracts with 50 housing support providers who provide a menu of tenancy support services to over 10,000 vulnerable adults each year, enabling them to establish and maintain tenancies.

6.11 The new Joint Structure Plan should result in significant increases in numbers of privately funded affordable housing, as translated through District level Local Development Frameworks. The Lake District and South Lakeland authorities have already taken on board this guidance. Eden District Council requires that at least 50% of housing in new developments must be affordable. A county wide basis for negotiating affordable housing prices to meet local needs is to be worked up with the involvement of housing associations and private housing developers with standardised s106 agreements for use by all planning authorities in Cumbria.

6.12 Cumbria partners recognise though that most available housing authority land has now been sold off and so all councils are looking to their own portfolios. The Council ensured the impending sale of the Cockermouth highways depot will lead to development incorporating 25% affordable houses. Recognising the importance of accommodation for our growing migrant workforce, we are working with the Audit Commission on research to better understand the levels of immigration and the impact this is having on the housing market.

6.13 The Commission for Rural Communities singled out Cumbria as an example of good practice for its approach to use of reduced second homes council tax discount and hosted a seminar in Cumbria to highlight our approach - reducing the discount rate to 10%. The Council has also provided 50% of its share of second homes council tax income to district councils. This has helped, for example, South Lakeland District Council put resources into affordable homes in major projects. Funding from the county's share also went into the local committee highways programmes, partially addressing the impact of extra tourist miles on the highway network.

Environment

6.14 Sustainability is well integrated into policy and practice through sustainability appraisals of plans and through our new Energy Manager and waste minimisation team. Waste management and minimisation has been transformed by positive working between county and districts over the past two years, learning from highly critical inspection and internal review feedback. A major service and scrutiny review took place in 2004-5, visiting excellent councils across the UK, resulting in increased capacity more inline with UK averages including investing £2m to redevelop key household recycling centres. The first to benefit - Flusco, is a beacon for similar future upgrading, recognising how a high quality site encourages appropriate use - e.g. by traders. On this basis a permit scheme has been introduced, drawing on national best practice, to ensure householders with trailers are, indeed, bona fide. Recycling rates have doubled over the past two years and the county has moved from lower quartile to 2nd quartile, more than exceeding the DEFRA standard (actual 26% compared with a standard of 21% in 2004/05).

6.15 Last year waste arisings were expected to grow at a rate of 3.5%. Due to the minimisation and prevention message the weight of household waste collected per head of population fell by 2% from the previous year. From facing £1.3m penalties at the start of 05-06 for Landfill Tax, a turnaround has been achieved avoiding LATS fines with £400k credit in place. The partnership is pooling Waste Performance and Efficiency grant for 2006-2007 in order to maximise its benefits across the county.

6.16 Tangible outcomes to date include a major publicity campaign, including work directly with SMEs and schools with 12,000 pupils signed up to Recycling Awards for Schools recognising their ability to influence their families. The Council's information team used citizens panel and market research to identify key target groups with different propensities to recycle to help focus these campaigns. The Council's Cumbria Waste Prevention Fund supports community innovation including encouraging over 3500 people to take up compost bins and home compost.

6.17 The future of waste management is being secured through tendering for a commercial strategic partner. Drawing on lessons from consultancy through the 4Ps, this is looking at joint collection and disposal arrangements, development of joint approaches and common service delivery standards.

6.18 The Council's environmental performance is being addressed by cross-directorate team work including a travel-share database, improving office recycling facilities and reducing water use by deploying 'hippos' in office cisterns as early wins. Capita's expertise in environmental design is being tapped to develop design guidance for council developments. Schools are being assisted to develop green travel plans and 165 have taken this up so far.

The Capita regional business centre at Kingmoor Park is a demonstration project for use of natural ventilation rather than air conditioning. A series of supplier workshops have been held to raise awareness amongst SMEs who work with the Council on sustainability and environmental procurement. An increasing amounts of waste generated by road works is now recycled, returning as raw materials and reducing landfill and reliance on aggregates.

6.19 The Council is a key partner on the Biodiversity steering group, promoting the county as the number one wildlife destination in the country through the Wealth of Wildlife project and the Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan. The Council gives practical advice on nature conservation policy and impacts and enhancements from minerals and waste developments.

An environmental roadside verge maintenance policy is also operated with a win-win for efficiency and biodiversity with cuts timed to protect wildflowers along 400 miles of special verges.

Transport

6.20 The Local Transport Plan defines the role of transport in achieving economic growth, social inclusion and improving the quality of people's lives. The recent audit judgement was that a 'fair' transport service has 'promising prospects' based on continuing improvement in road conditions and environmental impacts and rural isolation. Condition of our principal roads was 2nd quartile; non principal classified was top quartile but non principal unclassified 3rd quartile in 2004-5. This was also matched with 'promising' view on the emerging LTP, with consequences for resource allocation. A recent Citizen Panel survey found that 80% of people rated the condition of highways as average or better.

6.21 The county's major infrastructure scheme is the Carlisle Northern Development Route, a PFI scheme awaiting DfT approval with critical importance for opening up access to West Cumbria, speeding access times to the motorway for traffic from the North and North East which currently has to route through Carlisle. This will enhance employment at Kingmoor Park, relieve Carlisle of through traffic, encourage modal shift and open up access to West Cumbria.

6.22 The Council's fundamental 2005 review of passenger transport, concluded a more integrated approach to accessibility planning was needed, setting policy for the Council's approach to transport in education, social care and 'conventional' public transport areas. A resultant accessibility plan now sets standards for access to work, education and health care. Innovation in meeting these is particularly encouraged through options such as Rural Wheels - a scheme to help develop and facilitate transport services in sparse/rural areas through a mix of demand responsive approaches. The smart card scheme - NOW is another example of innovation through partnership between Cumbria, Blackburn, Blackpool and Lancashire County Council. Smart cards enable concessionary access to all Cumbria bus services for eligible people.

6.23 The Council supports passenger transport through a range of options; subsidy for routes which are of particular importance to the community, home-to-school services, funding of community / voluntary sector provision (e.g the Fell Runner bus service) and lobbying and negotiation with the private sector. An example of the latter came during the last year when Stagecoach threatened to pull out of Kendal all together - which would have led to no bus services in the town. Extensive public consultation through the Local Committee and Kendal neighbourhood forum resulted in a reversal of this view and improved traffic management. Important lessons have been learnt regarding project management and scheduling of works. Similar infrastructure improvements have been secured working in partnership with National Rail to secure interchange improvements at key rail stations encouraging multi-modal shift.

6.24 The Council's Neighbourhood Forums also support development of Community Transport Plans helping with issues like effective traffic management and road safety. In the past two years, town centre enhancement schemes like Appleby and Keswick have improved pedestrian facilities, resurfaced carriageways and introduced 20mph speed limits founded in extensive consultation with parish and town councils, and partnerships with the districts.

Safer and Stronger Communities

Self-Assessment score: 3

Overview

7.1 Overall, Cumbria does not exhibit high levels of crime or fear of crime. In 2003/04 and 2004/05, Cumbria was below the average for England and Wales for the rate of household and personal victimisation and for fear of burglary, car crime, violent crime and perceived disorder. However, whilst the level of recorded crime is falling in Cumbria, overall fear of crime is increasing albeit rates are still below national averages. This sets the context against which the 4 local Crime and Disorder Partnerships have set out their respective strategies for tackling crime and disorder.

Crime and the fear of crime

7.2 The Council is active on Cumbria's four CDRPs through engagement of Fire and Rescue, Children's services and Adult Social Care directorates as well as policy coordination. The Council has contributed resources and a full time post to the CDRPs to support the delivery of these strategies. The strategic context to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour is the 'Building Pride and Respect in Cumbria' SSCF Agreement. This was developed by the Safer and Stronger Communities thematic partnership of the CSP, led by the Corporate Director - Strategy and Performance, Chief Constable and Chief Fire Officer. This group is the county wide Community Safety Partnership and

brings together a range of partners in the criminal justice field and chairs of the 4 CDRPs.

7.3 A local 'Information Sharing Protocol' enables the Council to share information with partners to obtain a comprehensive picture of local problems. This covers work with the Probation Service to improve graffiti removal, implementation of a 'car clear' scheme in North Cumbria involving the Council's Fire Service and more effective service coordination between CDRPs and District Councils. Locally, there is also sharing of the national DVLA database information to deal with abandoned vehicles and adopting the National Intelligence Model to drive improvement activity in CDRPs.

7.4 CDRPs work with the Crown Prosecution Service to ensure that strategies and priorities (eg prolific offenders, perpetrators of domestic violence) are integrated and our approach to the duties contained in Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act have been recognised as good practice and will be shared at LGA conference in Summer 2006.

7.5 We have responded positively to the recent launch of the national Respect Agenda with projects that are aimed at increasing active citizenship and tackling crime and disorder, including:

- A 'safer clubbing' audit which graded nightclubs in Carlisle according to their compliance with National Safer Clubbing Guidance.
- 22,000 Neighbourhood Watch volunteers across Cumbria. These volunteers are now all linked to a bespoke communications system (Voice Connect) which enables them to share intelligence and information.
- Pubwatch and Shopwatch schemes. Each district has a scheme working with our trading standards teams which is managed by local licensees and retailers which involves excluding individuals who offend on their premises (shoplifting violent crime etc). Kendal and Carlisle have both achieved national awards for their approaches to safer business practices in their town centres.
- A doorstep crime initiative and training with key partners including Neighbourhood Watch, Police, Trading Standards, Age Concern, the Fire Service and Consumer Direct. In Barrow, Fire Service personnel who carry out home safety checks are now trained in giving doorstep protocol advice to vulnerable clients. This avoids duplication. Trading Standards together with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships provided training to Neighbourhood Watch members in doorstep protocol and this was then cascaded down into the respective communities.
- A Safer Homes Scheme in Carlisle and Eden, West Cumbria and South Lakeland. This has contributed to dramatic reductions in domestic burglary over the last three years well above target. This scheme has also been selected in the top 10 for the National Tilley Award for Problem Solving to reduce crime.

- Plans for a partnership with Cumbria and Lancashire constabulary to develop dial "101" single non-emergency call centre, building on the success of Consumer Direct.

7.6 In recognition of importance of domestic violence within each of the CDRP strategies, the Council, with partners, negotiated stretch targets for domestic violence within our LPSA and to improve on our LPSA achievements beyond 2006, funding for a county wide domestic violence co-ordinator was provided by the Council from April 06.

Antisocial behaviour

7.7 In partnership with local CDRPs, we are confident that the multi-agency, front-line staff approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour is producing results. CDRPs are focused on amending the behaviour of clients rather than going straight to enforcement. Our key staff are engaged in Intervention Panels at CDRP level as required on a case by case basis. Involvement of frontline staff is improving effective networking and exchange of intelligence to deal effectively with ASB.

7.8 We are also adopting a multi-agency targeted approach to citizenship at Key stage 3 in schools for example in 2004 and 2005 whereby Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme participants in a Carlisle school were filmed giving their perspectives on anti social behaviour and how it could be tackled. The resulting film was then shown to peers in the classroom by the participants. The 'Phoenix Young Fire-fighter' schemes, seek to build confidence and self-discipline in underachieving young people who are at risk of being excluded from mainstream schools.

7.9 Each CDRP now has the means to quickly remove graffiti whether through the respective district council mechanisms or by using offenders carrying out unpaid work. This is complemented by a new initiative launched by the Council where staff can report graffiti in their workplace/local area etc and this will be referred on to the appropriate agency. There is a dedicated graffiti email address which has been publicised in council staff publications. We are providing a counselling service for young fire-starters and we have implemented enforcement campaigns targeting licensees selling alcohol to under-18's in partnership with the Police, Home Office, North West Trading Standards Departments, Licensing Authorities and young people who make the test purchases.

Drugs and alcohol

7.10 As a partner in the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT), we have robust, integrated arrangements in place for tackling substance misuse. CDRP strategies are aligned with the Children and Young People's Plan and Adult Treatment Plans for Cumbria, and to the national drugs strategy. Our DAAT is considered by the National Treatment Agency to be performing well. The 'Addaction' (Addiction Action) team commissioned by the DAAT was recently voted North West Drug team of the year. Each CDRP has a drug & alcohol task group. The drugs

agenda is well integrated into the work of the Safer and Stronger Communities Thematic Partnership and the SSCF agreement.

7.11 Active intervention reduces drug and alcohol misuse e.g. through trading standards enforcement campaigns on under age purchasing of alcohol and solvents and the 'Night Safe' alcohol intervention programme. Also, alcohol designation areas are established via CDRPs where this is deemed appropriate. The Culture Secretary has recently singled out West Cumbria as being one of the top performing Basic Command Units outside the Metropolitan Police area for reducing town centre violent crime. This campaign is now being evaluated with a view to rolling out in other parts of Cumbria

7.12 All CDRPs have a strategy for working with prolific and other priority offenders, a large proportion of whom have problems with substance misuse. Action plans for these offenders include both treatment and rehabilitation where appropriate and drug misusers are supported in order to reduce re-offending. This can be assistance with stable housing via arrangements with Registered Social Landlords or can be related to training and employment. Our established regularly updated audit processes via Cumbria Partnership (CuPS) enable close monitoring of drug related crime, ASB and the effect of the night-time economy, this data is used by CDRPs to plan and evaluate initiatives both at strategic and operational task group level. There is evidence that offending is reducing as a result of our CDRP strategies for working with prolific and other priority offenders (PPOs) e.g. 30% reduction in offences by PPOs within the Carlisle and Eden CDRP area between 2004-2005.

7.13 Our "Straightline" multi-agency substance misuse service provides early intervention, advice and education targeting needs in 11-19 year olds. It is available through schools, Connexions and other settings, benefiting over 300 referrals a year.

Reducing accidents

7.14 The Council working with partners has significantly reduced the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads over recent years, the number of people killed or seriously injured has been reduced from 482 in 2002 to 427 in 2005, and we remain ahead of our national target for KSIs, although much still needs to be done. We are continually improving understanding of causes of road deaths and injuries through research and intelligence coordinated through the Cumbria Road Safety Partnership.

7.15 Cumbria is using the fire and rescue service to deliver 'drive survive skills' to young people in schools before they start learning to drive through partnership between Capita road safety officers, schools and the fire service. Additionally, we are targeting road awareness training at Key Stage 4 in schools and colleges and to other young drivers through employers and the chamber of commerce. This has identified young drivers as being at higher risk and that speed is a key factor in the incidence

and severity of collisions. Our road safety education and training programme is now targeting this year's activities on awareness and training on communities where risks are higher, including deprived wards with high levels of casualties.

7.16 A GIS system is jointly used by Fire and Rescue and Adult Social Care to assess the risk attaching to vulnerable, at risk and hard to reach groups. We are also working in partnership with local Housing associations on improving home safety. As a result, the 8000th home fire safety check was carried out this year in partnership with local housing associations based on this intelligence. The increase in checks over the past 3 years has resulted in a decline in injuries due to dwelling fires over the same period.

7.17 The 'action wards' initiative is targeting people who live in wards where there is a known high risk of fire and has:

- Sited a mobile Fire Station in a high-risk ward.
- Participated in promoting Bonfire safety in the days leading up to Bonfire night.
- Engaged with young people to provide recreation opportunities including discos, arts and sports events.
- Organised litter picks and environmental clean-ups.
- Initiated and promoted chip pan amnesties.

7.18 Additionally, work has taken place with the housing department of Carlisle City Council to deliver multi-lingual fire safety advice to migrant workers. Our electric blanket testing programme virtually doubled in 2005 and we tested 1,124 blankets, and for the first time we introduced free replacements for vulnerable householders where blankets were deemed to be hazardous.

Preparedness for internal or external emergency situations

7.19 Emergency planning arrangements have been tested by severe weather; a Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak; an outbreak of Legionnaires Disease; a national fire service strike; a fuel crisis, and, most recently, extreme flooding in January 2005. The Council's overall response to these emergencies has been good with inter agency collaboration having taken place during the recovery phases of major incidents.

7.20 The Council helped to establish a comprehensive, multi-agency programme of training and exercising to prepare key responders. A Cumbria Media Emergency Group (CMEG) has been formed which meets on a 6-monthly basis. This group's aim is collectively to ensure that there are robust arrangements for warning and informing the public on any major incidents.

7.21 The Council is active in the Regional Resilience Forum (RRF) and the Cumbria Resilience Forum (CRF). It also has membership of several multi-agency sub-groups to the RRF and CRF, including the Regional mass fatalities sub-group and the,

Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear sub-group, and LA Co-ordination sub-group. We are working in partnership with Business Link Cumbria and Cumbria Chamber of Commerce to promote business continuity, through established private sector organisations, to, in particular, the Small and Medium Enterprises within Cumbria. The Cumbria Business Recovery Group was established post-January storms and floods to assist business in recovery.

Building stronger communities

7.22 We have been awarded 'Civic Pioneer' status in recognition of our good practice for Community Engagement nationally and through our LPSA target 'Building Active Communities' the Council has developed robust arrangements for multi-agency consultation with District Councils, Police, RSL, Regeneration Agencies and Health Services through 63 neighbourhood forums.

7.23 The Council invests c£500k in supporting forums, local communities and community groups through a network of neighbourhood development officers and voluntary capacity building work. Our Neighbourhood management model delivering positive achievements including evidence of significant resident and systematic identification of local needs. In the last six months of 2005/6 over 3000 residents were involved in neighbourhood forums.

7.24 Voluntary sector capacity building and its underpinning Compact is currently being refreshed through an HM Treasury led 'pathfinder' and related Cumbria 'Changeup' workstreams. This work will be concluded in September 2006, resulting in more effective commissioning, support and collaboration arrangements.

7.25 The Council is taking a lead role in improving active citizenship via a structured approach to community involvement and engagement through such issues as the Trading Standards voice connect watch, The Botchergate Initiative and first aid training to carers of young children, in partnership with 'Sure Start'. The no cold calling zones, run by trading standards and partners help communities come together to assert their collective will to protect and empower vulnerable members. This is helping strengthen community identity, e.g. in tightly knit urban housing areas dominated by elderly residents.

Healthier communities

Self-Assessment score: 3

Overview

8.1 The health of Cumbria's communities is quite sharply differentiated, broadly in line with the county's regeneration priority areas. Life expectancy rates vary between Eden and South Lakeland (above the national average) and other Districts where it is at, or in the case of Barrow significantly lower than the national average. Mortality rates for heart disease are particularly

significant and above national average across Cumbria (apart from South Lakeland) although coronary heart disease rates are declining. Just over 1 in 10 Cumbrians has a long-term illness or disability and three quarters of these are not in employment. The county has, for the past three years supported a Local Public Service Agreement target addressing the issue of getting people in the 20% most deprived wards in West Cumbria off incapacity benefit and back into the workplace. We exceeded the stretched targets, helping 106 people into full time employment (stretched targets 70) and 55 people into employment not exceeding 20 hours per week (stretched targets 50).

8.2 Teenage conception rates are reducing, although in Carlisle the rate is significantly above national average. The Council is, through its county Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator, addressing this issue through innovation such as a teaching pack for men designed to raise awareness of sexual and mental health issues including the consequences of sex and fatherhood. This is starting to make inroads into performance albeit with an inevitable lead in time. Young mum's community health workers have recently been introduced, leading to a 42% increase in use of clinics with 1654 young people benefiting from awareness and contraception services. Smoking incidence shows a decline in line with national figures although female smoking remains consistently above the national level. Work on smoking cessation is being targeted through a prioritised approach through the Action Wards approach and the Cumbria Healthy Schools team.

8.3 The Council is influencing other organisations and intervening directly to address priorities set out in the Council Plan theme - Improving the health and well being of adults. This includes co-sponsorship with the Strategic Health Authority of the Whole Systems Review of the health sector in the county. This seizes the opportunity of a single Primary Care Trust for Cumbria to re-evaluate the mix of acute and non-acute health provision and realign the role of the health sector and council. We have prioritised health assessment for looked after children - successfully influencing health partners to give them priority e.g. for dental services. All social workers have trained in assessing CLA health needs. Specialist health visitors provide clear pathways into specialist health support.

8.4 The new Cumbria Partnership Executive aligns NHS trust boards and the Council within the framework of the CSP, leading development of the Local Area Agreement healthy communities block and overseeing areas of capacity planning and service delivery which have a joint health and social care responsibility or interface.

8.5 An early outcome from this strategic collaboration has been to support a successful bid by the Universities of Lancashire and Liverpool for improved medical and dental education in Cumbria including 32 new undergraduate dental places providing a long-term solution to the crisis in dental health care in the Carlisle area and plugging a sub-regional gap in medical education.

8.6 The joint health scrutiny committee was recognised by the

Centre for Public Scrutiny, with Cumbria the only authority to gain two awards on public health scrutiny issues. Tangible outcomes from our scrutiny work include persuading the NHS to make a number of health service improvements, particularly in better local access to mental health, improve the health advice to teenagers in schools, retaining a full emergency hospital service in West Cumbria, improved management of pooled fund for learning disability and better road safety advice in schools.

8.7 The Health and Well Being scrutiny committee hosted a workshop involving all NHS organisations and Patient and Public Involvement Forums in Cumbria, reaching an agreement across all parties about how health scrutiny in the Healthcare Commission's Annual Health Check. This learning is being applied to scrutiny's approach to Local Area Agreement work.

8.8 At a neighbourhood level our forums are crucial for public service consultations. For example this year's work with the NHS on adult community services including district nurses, physiotherapist and community hospitals engaged forum members. A weight of opinion ultimately helped to influence the decision by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority to gap fund Cumbria's Community Hospitals whilst a strategic Whole Systems Review determines a long-term way forward. Similarly our school Organisation review is currently using forums for a wide ranging community consultation.

What has the Council, with its partners, achieved in its ambitions for the promotion of healthier communities and the narrowing of health inequalities?

Children and young people

8.9 The Cumbria Healthy Schools team deliver a strategic set of personal, social and health education interventions addressing issues as diverse as relationships, drugs and emotional health and well being advice including health accreditation for schools through an award scheme.

8.10 The quality of school meals is being improved with a good practice guide published in May 2005 to educate and inform parents through primary and secondary schools - 835 of schools are engaged in a healthy schools programme with 50% gaining an award by December 2006. A random 5% of schools are tested annually and reports are presented to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel. A 'Get wise to food - it matters' campaign encourages young people to try different foods and through activity sheets promote key messages about the role a balanced diet plays in keeping fit and healthy. This is helping push update of meals to nearly 10% more than the national average. Premises staff have also been supported to encourage this shift by running workshops on menu development in the context of national nutritional standards, focusing on healthy meals using predominantly Cumbrian ingredients. As the UK's second Fairtrade county we are striving to improve the quality of food at Council functions - only Fairtrade drinks will be served at key

meetings including those of Full Council and we are considering expanding this to offer more produce combining high ethical and health standards. All our children's homes provide healthy diets and encourage young people to help plan menus and food preparation.

8.11 We demonstrate good practice in using environment and sport as motivational tools linking sport training with literacy, numeracy and ICT standards through the Playing for Success national initiative. This is delivered through two centres - Carlisle (based with Carlisle United Football Club) and Barrow (Barrow AFC) with a third planned at Whitehaven Rugby League club.

8.12 Promotion of active lifestyles for children is also secured through Better Ways to school schemes, giving children incentives to avoid using cars, using a structured approach to encourage increasing self-confidence, linked with safer routes to schools through the Council's walk to school coordinator.

8.13 The county sport partnership is identified by DfES as an example of national good practice in its work with children and young people, and featured on their training video because of its ground-breaking work linking Physical Education to Neuro-developmental delay, a programme of exercises and techniques to improve children's physical literacy, supporting their development and improve physicality of children with limited balance, coordination and fine motor control.

8.14 The Health and Well-Being scrutiny committee is playing a key role too, meeting with teenagers across Cumbria to focus on youth facilities, access to information and advice on matters to do with health risk and use of out of school time. In the past year, this was cited by the Centre for Public Scrutiny as best practice in use of its action learning funds. It has helped influence health promotion programmes such as the 'Drop Zone' café in Barrow and the 'Rural Foyer' in Eden giving confidential advice and guidance.

Healthy adult lifestyles

8.15 The Health and Well being for Older people strategy sets a context for work including increasing take-up of services from ethnic minority groups, health action plans for older people with learning disabilities, providing home safety checks and tackling dishonest doorstep traders who impact on personal stress and therefore health and well being by targeting vulnerable people.

8.16 Cumbria integrates Fire and Rescue and Adult Social Care front line activity to target home safety checks to older adults most at risk. This is an excellent example of prioritisation and focus which arose from engagement with LSP Health Inequalities work in the south of the county using the Action Wards initiative linking high levels of fire incidents with other risk indicators including high percentages of older people. In Barrow this has been augmented with young people carrying out visual audits to identify health and safety issues affecting them, then working with

the county and Barrow Borough Council to rectify them. This culminated in an exhibition demonstrating how empowering young people in this way can have health benefits and enrich their quality of life.

8.17 Cumbria Sport also promotes adult engagement in sport promoting healthy lifestyles engaging with communities to increase their participation. Cumbria's volunteer development officer with Cumbria Sport was selected as one of the specialists designing the volunteer strategy for the Olympic Games in 2012, the only such person from the North West and thus well placed to ensure Cumbria benefits fully from the opportunities from the national event. The county also supports a Disability Sports Development Officer focused on enabling recreational activities for people with disabilities.

8.18 Health is being improved within our workplace, demonstrated by a sharp downward trend in accidents over the past three years- decreasing by 22.5% in 2004-5, in spite of a push within (then) Social Services to increase reporting of incidents. Reportable accidents fell even more (33%). The Katie Chemical campaign, promoting safe use of dangerous substances at work won a regional award through European safety funding in recognition of its effectiveness in reaching out into schools and local communities to promote safety around hazardous substances, a particular issue for Cumbria's farming community.

Older People

Self-Assessment score: 2

What has the Council, with its partners, achieved in its ambitions to promote and support the independence and well-being of older people?

Overview

9.1 We are confident that we are responding effectively to national and local policy for Older People and are effective in supporting people to remain in their own homes. Our Performance Indicators for 2005/06 show that we have:

- Low numbers of admissions to residential/nursing care (5 blobs).
- Increased numbers of households receiving intensive home care (3 blobs).
- Increased numbers of users receiving direct payments (3 blobs).
- Increased numbers of people receiving items of equipment (5 blobs).
- Low waiting times for assessment (3 blobs).
- Low waiting times for care packages (4 blobs).
- High intensive home care use as a percentage of residential care (4 blobs).

9.2 We are planning for major demographic changes over the next ten years. Since 1991, the number of young people aged 15-29 has dropped by 24,000 or 24%. By contrast, 26.7% of householders are pensioners compared with the national average of 23.7%. Since 1991, the number of people over 65 has increased by 8% and those over 85 by 37%. It is predicted that the population of over 85s in Cumbria will increase by 117% from 2003 to 2028. It has been projected that there will be an additional 700 people in the 85+ age group in 2006/07 compared to 2005/06 of which 50% will require Social Care support.

9.3.1 There are many challenges for the Council in delivering our improvement agenda for older people. Issues of deprivation, rurality, isolation, lack of a provider workforce, are all present but being tackled with imaginative solutions. Services have sometimes developed in isolation, responding to the requirements of the different PCTs and thus, good practice has not been shared uniformly across Cumbria.

9.4 We have a clear outcome focused strategy for older people in Cumbria and this has been developed through listening to older people and working closely with wide range of council departments and with our partners in health, voluntary and private sectors. Our strategy clearly evidences how the Adult Social Care Directorate will take the lead in delivering key Council priorities:

- To increase independence and choice for older people and their carers.
- To increase inclusion of people with disabilities in local communities.
- To promote healthy lifestyles.

9.5 Older People told us that they wanted to be consulted with in a variety of ways and we have responded to this via the Service User Participation Strategy and action plan for older adults in Cumbria. Also, the Council has an Older Persons Champion in each of our Directorates whose role is to champion the needs of older people, to ensure all policies and practices are 'older people friendly', to promote the engagement of older people and to tackle discrimination. Our partners have a high regard for our staff and the enthusiasm and Pride they demonstrate in provision of services for older people. We continue to work in partnership to develop 24/7 services to enable people to remain in their communities.

9.6 We will be developing a countywide approach in meeting the needs of older people with mental health problems and will be developing further services for people with dementia, as well as better utilising the COMPACT between the Council and the voluntary sector to further develop relationships between these two sectors. We will ensure our Single Assessment Process across health and social care is more comprehensively implemented and the role of care coordinator more central to the process and we will further develop our work to ensure that the Race Equality Scheme is full implemented and that improved

arrangements are in place to ensure that the needs of older people from BME communities are recognised and addressed appropriately. Our care planning process is being developed in line with a more person-centred, outcome-focused holistic approach.

Strategic Approach

9.7 The Council has cross party support for the prevention and well-being agenda and there is recognition and ownership of the need to change the way services are planned and delivered to respond to the demographic changes of an ageing population. Councillors have clear responsibilities for social services for older people and their carers, including arrangements for the review of policy and effective scrutiny arrangements for performance. Our Cabinet Member and Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care is also our Older Person's Champion and represents the Council on the Better Government for Older People (BGOP) initiative. We have a vibrant and strong voluntary-sector that is fully engaged with the statutory sectors in working to improve the health and well-being of older people.

9.8 We are building on the already excellent work we have undertaken across the Council with colleagues in the Fire, Transport, Leisure and Libraries Services and to deliver on the Cumbria Health and Well Being Strategy, and specifically to:

- Improve interdepartmental planning within the Council and build on the good practice we already have.
- Ensure that the planning and delivery of services meet the changing aspirations of our ageing population through effective and sustained working with statutory and local community based organisations.
- Maximise engagement with the local community to identify and support specific changes and developments that will support active ageing.

9.9 The rural wheels initiative is a good example of the Council responding to the transport needs of older people living in a remote rural area. Outcomes include developing a programme of using school minibuses and taxis to enable older people to maintain their social contacts and access essential services. The Library Service provides large print and talking books throughout the county and provides home deliveries to 732 housebound people using mobile libraries, library delivery vans and volunteers.

Meaningful Engagement

9.10 Our service users and carers are increasingly enabled and empowered to shape services for older people through a planned process of effective consultation and participation and we have a huge variety of user participation/consultation groups and forums. For example, the development of Direct Payments has been heavily influenced and overseen by service users via countywide forums.

9.11 Together with our partners, we produce and distribute comprehensive information to older people in various formats. All published information is available on the Council's website and it includes details of all services including: what it is, how to apply, assessments, eligibility and costs. There are also pages describing what help is available to different client groups, what information is available, how to contact us, jobs, updates, lists of providers, complaints and access to records. All of our public information is available in printed form and information in large print, on tape and in other languages and formats is available. We distribute a service user survey monthly to all service users who receive an integrated care plan, that asks, "Are your cultural (religious, dietary) needs met", and we have a well-established readers panel that provides comment and advice on information when in draft form and this panel has been effective in reducing jargon and shortening documents. The Council uses the language line telephone interpreting service to deal with initial enquiries from people preferring not to use English.

9.12 We have undertaken reviews of our older people's services to establish the level of BME service users. An outcome of this review was the formation of the Adult Social Care Directorate equalities group and the development of the Directorate Equality and Diversity Strategy. Working with many statutory and non-statutory organisations we have developed the South Lakes Multi Cultural Forum to discuss issues relating to the BME community, promote the services of the Multi Cultural centre and raise awareness of accessibility to appropriate advice and services for the BME population as well as positively promoting the establishments of BME networks.

9.13 We are aware however that our care planning process needs to develop in line with a more person-centred, outcome-focused, holistic approach and the quality of our care-planning recording also needs positive development.

Range of Services

9.14 To ensure that service users and their carers remain independent and have more choice around the services they receive we are expanding the 'menu' of services available to older people in Cumbria and increasing the quality and flexibility of these services.

9.15 To ensure older people receive the support they need at night we have developed a flexible Generic Domiciliary Care Scheme into a night-time service in North Cumbria and expanded our social care night-time home care service in South Cumbria. We have developed our extra care services across the county and have recently won a national award for one of these specialising in older people with mental health problems.

9.16 Partnerships with Health and district councils are strong as evidenced by excellent examples of intermediate care schemes, reduced delayed discharges and innovative support schemes to help older people live at home:

- We have developed TeleCare schemes with district councils,
- There have been reductions in the numbers of people whose transfers from hospital have been delayed (Cumbria performance is better than the national average for this PI and we have achieved 4 blobs in this area) and
- Older people told us that they wanted to stay in their own homes but are sometimes unable to because they do not feel safe and adequately supported. In response we developed and are now implementing a county wide, jointly planned 'virtual care village model'.

9.17 With regard to Intermediate Care, the level of activity and positive outcomes for older people is impressive and we are proud of our achievements in this area. For example, in West Cumbria 622 Community referrals were received and 238 Hospital referrals resulting in 6,714 acute bed days being saved and 14,600 home care hours saved in 2004/05.

9.18 Our 'Supporting People' programme includes provision for long-term services such as sheltered accommodation and community alarms and short term floating support services and the programme provides funding to the management of the Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) in Cumbria, in partnership with district councils. HIAs provide proactive assistance in the form of information and advisory services to vulnerable homeowners and private sector tenants who are older, disabled or on low incomes to remain in their own homes. Additionally, we have recently expanded our Promoting Independence Partnership Projects to about 2,500 older people per year providing a low-level intervention scheme aimed at adults over 55, and we have made rapid response services available to District nurses to access home care services.

9.19 As at 14th May 2006, there are 80 older adults in receipt of a Direct Payment and we are targeting staff development training on Direct Payments for Social Workers working with older adults in order to increase this to 120 by April 2007. Take up of Direct Payments by carers of older people has been slow and consequently, we have been working with carer's organisations to try and identify the reasons for low take up, aiming to improve on our current number.

9.20 Within the Council, we have developed the Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service/Adult Social Care Directorate Data Sharing Protocol which enables vulnerable client information to be integrated on to the Fire and Rescue service mapping systems identifying key geographical areas of lone pensioners at risk of fire which enables the service to respond as appropriate.

9.21 Finally, we are aware of the need to continue to develop our ICT systems to improve the collection of management information and support to operational staff and to bring together financial and activity data to support management decision-making.

Children and young people

10 This is the subject of a separate Joint Area Review self-assessment and therefore, as agreed with the Audit Commission, not included here.

Conclusion

11 We believe that Cumbria County Council is an increasingly ambitious, self confident and self aware organisation. There is a tangible sense of change in our culture and ways of working as we translate proven ambition into delivery and outcomes through partnerships. You will experience this during your visit and in particular, this self assessment has demonstrated evidence of:

Political and managerial leadership

- Stronger management and leadership - A full strength management team with clear and effective partnerships with cabinet, scrutiny and members working through local and neighbourhood structures.
- Clear ambitions and priorities - our Council Plan, grounded in an understanding of partnership priorities through community planning, sets out a focused vision and values. It is driving engagement with key partners to secure a positive future for Cumbria. It reconciles priorities at county wide and local level.
- Performance management that works - A golden thread from Council Plan through to directorate and team objectives is managed through effective and constructively challenging member and officer systems. Under-performance is identified and addressed. Resources are well aligned with improvement priorities and external capacity - through our strategic commercial partners and others is drawn on, based on evidence and proven capability.

Community Leadership

- Positive community leadership - We have embraced this role and are determining the agenda for Cumbria, grasping difficult issues such as library provision and the future of our Fire and Rescue service, taking them to the community for full and frank debate to inform decisions. We are confidently influencing regional and national decisions through effective advocacy. We're making a difference with partners on key issues like the future for public health, European funding and university provision in the county.
- Partnerships with purpose - Our approach has been transformed since 2002. We are a highly influential, responsive convenor of partnerships. Inevitably this is not always popular, particularly where the Council is expanding its ambition and influence into new areas of the well-being agenda. The Cumbria Strategic Partnership, complementing the county's five Local Strategic Partnerships has defined ambitions through 'Sustainable Cumbria' and is now hosting development of the 'Cumbria Agreement' - our Local Area Agreement.

User focus and diversity

- Locality working to get close to our community - A long track record of locality working is now being better integrated with other partners - the districts, health and the police – especially through our innovative neighbourhood forums. We've responded to the national debate on neighbourhood devolution through independent review by the Democracy Commission and as a result we're introducing a series of improvements including strengthened performance management in our Local Committees to help them drive up standards in their area.
- Consultation - Listening to learn: We firmly believe outcomes are stronger when the community is engaged in decision making. Our locality working helps make this more effective, backed up by an increasingly systematic approach to taking the learning from consultation to maximise its value to the organisation and our partners.
- Challenging perceptions - The low absolute numbers of BME communities resident in Cumbria often masks the diverse nature of the county, especially given the level of migrant workers in the tourism and food industry. We want Cumbria to be an open, welcoming and tolerant place, not only to live in but also to visit and work in.

Value for money

- Identifying problems and dealing with them - We are tackling difficult issues through mature debate and evidence based decision making. Service reviews involving partners, scrutiny and external support have tackled long-standing areas of weakness - waste management, adult social care and children's services, resulting in improved partnership working and increased capacity to transform outcomes.
- Our employees - helping them to learn and achieve: Survey evidence shows our employees are more positive about working for Cumbria than national averages. We have recognised capacity issues in Human Resources and are addressing these, reflecting our commitment to helping staff learn and develop, equipping them to help achieve our challenging targets and priorities.

Finally, the real test of value for money and of all the issues set out in this assessment is our success in delivering real outcomes for the people of Cumbria. Across the full range of our services we are making a difference to life in Cumbria. We have the confidence and capacity to make it an even better place to live, work and visit.

Appendix I

Self Assessment scores:

Headline question	Theme	Score
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	3
	Prioritisation	3
What is the capacity of the Council, including with its partners, to deliver what it's trying to achieve?	Capacity	2
	Performance management	3
What has been achieved?	Achievement (overall)	3
	Sustainable Communities and transport	3
	Safer and Stronger Communities	3
	Healthier Communities	3
	Older People	2
	Children and young people	Scored separately in JAR self assessment
Overall corporate assessment score		3

