



Green
Flag
Award

Corporate Plan

Featuring the Best Value Performance Plan .



Chester-le-Street
District Council



Working together to fulfil the needs of our communities

Our Commitment to Equality and Diversity

We want to ensure that everyone using our services is treated fairly and without prejudice or discrimination. We also know that all of our customers are individual.

Our community is becoming evermore diverse. We want to celebrate and encourage this diversity. We are committed to ensuring that no-one is excluded from being able to use any of our services and that all our customers have the same opportunities to improve their quality of life. All customers should have equal access to the services provided by the Council. This means that we recognise that people have different needs and requirements and we will do all we can to meet these. Our staff will respond promptly, politely and sensitively to all of our customers and have specific customer service standards. Councillors and staff have been properly trained, and more training is planned in the future.

We will continue to work towards complying with the requirements of equalities legislation to make sure that the services we deliver, and the facilities we deliver them from, are fully accessible for all our customers, whatever their circumstances. In improving access and communication, we want to reach those members of the public who are normally least likely to take up our services. We will also ensure that we continuously improve the level to which we comply with the Equality Standard for Local Government.

What do you feel about our plan and our proposals?

Our plan provides you with a great deal of information about our progress, our performance, and our proposals for the future. We would like to know how you feel about these things.

Do you think that we are making progress?

Do you feel that our performance is meeting your expectations?

Do you agree with our priority areas, and proposals we have in place to meet them?

How useful is our plan to you?

How would you improve it?

Have you any other views that you would like your council to consider?

We have said that your views matter. Please let us know what you think. We will listen, we will learn, and as a result, we will continually improve.

***If you have any views please contact Ian Forster, Assistant Chief Executive,
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Telephone: 0191 387 2130 e-mail: IanForster@chester-le-street.gov.uk***

Foreword

This is our new Corporate Plan. It incorporates our Best Value Performance Plan for 2007/2008

We are delighted to present you with our new Corporate Plan which tells you about our achievements over the last year and plans for the next three years and beyond.

It is now official. Chester-le-Street is a ‘good’ council. During the year, we have been inspected by the Audit Commission and they have assessed us against national improvement criteria. In June, this year, they published their report. They concluded that the Council has made significant progress since its corporate assessment in 2003. At that time we were judged to be a ‘poor’ council. We have exceeded expectations. We are the **first** council, of any kind, to make such a substantial transition. This is great news for our communities. It means that service delivery has improved during the last couple of years and will continue to improve in the future. We feel the key reason for this huge improvement is our focus on delivery of things that matter most to our customers. This has included progress on customer excellence, housing, regeneration, neighbourhood management and efficiencies.

We are going to continue our focus on delivering better customer outcomes. As a ‘good’ council, committed to achieving excellence, we are going to build on our successes over the last few years. We are committed to continuous improvement. Our aim is to ensure that the standards of service you receive get better and your opportunities to engage in their development, delivery and performance continue to increase.

We have significant challenges ahead. In the second half of the year, the Government will make a decision on the future of local government in County Durham. That decision will affect everyone that lives in, conducts business in, works in and visits Chester-le-Street. There is the potential for significant change in how services are provided and how people are involved in their delivery. We cannot predict what that change may consist of and it could mean that a new authority is created to deliver services in Chester-le-Street and across the whole County. Whatever may happen, Chester-le-Street and its surrounding villages will continue to exist. We want to ensure that the local area and its people secure the best out of any change that occurs. We want to look after your interests by working to ensure that we take advantage of opportunities for our District and by ensuring that any possible disruption is kept to a minimum. During the year, we will be reassessing our priorities as a result of change over the last few years and the potential for change in the future. This will enable us to continue to deliver services to the standards you want while continuing to plan for your long term future.

Key to our future success will be continuous improvement, partnership working and simply doing things differently. We hope you find our plan useful and informative. In it, you will be able to find out a little more about our improvement programme as well as our plans for the future. Our achievements over the last year are set out and you will be able to see how we have performed.

Linda Ebbatson Leader

Roy Templeman Chief Executive

If you have any views please contact Ian Forster, Assistant Chief Executive, Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, County Durham DH3 3UT. Telephone : 0191 387 2130 e-mail IanForster@chester-le-street.gov.uk

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1. How to use this plan and *what it is about*

The Corporate Plan is broken down into 9 chapters

Chapter 1

As well as telling you how to use the plan this chapter provides an introduction to the plan.

Chapter 2

This chapter provides you with details of your Council. It sets out the Council structure, how it makes decisions and how it manages its performance to achieve its aims. If you want to know what processes we are putting in place to help us manage our desired achievements, turn to page XX now.

Chapter 3

Informing you of what the Council is trying to achieve is the purpose of this chapter. Here we set out our vision, aims and objectives and show how they link to the Sustainable Community Strategy, your vision of Chester-le-Street in 2016. If you want to know what are our aspirations for Chester-le-Street are, turn to page XX now.

Chapter 4

This chapter lets you know what our achievements were in 2006/2007, including those to meet our aims for last year and for our recovery programme. If you want to see examples of what we achieved last year, turn to page XX.

Chapter 5

This part of the plan addresses our achievements on our Best Value and Local Performance Indicators during 2006/2007. If you want to see what we achieved on performance indicators last year, turn to page XX.

Chapter 6

This chapter lets you know what our priorities and plans are for the future, particularly over the next year, 2007/2008. It considers plans to meet our agreed priorities, our Improvement Programme, our key service objectives and other activities that we are engaged in. If you are interested in our corporate plans, go to page XX .

Chapter 7

This chapter sets out our financial performance over the last year, details of our budget for this year and details the principles of our future spending – the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Interested in our spending? Go to page XX.

Chapter 8

The obstacles we might encounter in delivering our vision - our 'strategic risks' are identified in this chapter. It also shows how we intend to manage them. If you are interested in the risks, go to page XX.

Chapter 9

Our concluding chapter addresses our commitment to customer focus and diversity. It lets you know how we are going to engage our customers in the future. If you want to know how we are going to improve our engagement with our customers, turn to page XX.

We present examples of performance indicator results in Chapters 4 and 5.

The information in these particular chapters will help you understand;

- what we measure;
- what our results were;
- whether our targets have or have not been met;
- whether we got better or worse, and why;
- whether there is a trend of improvement; and
- an explanation of the result.

What is this document really about?

This document tells you about your District Council. It sets out our ambitions, what action we are taking to meet them, and what we have, and have not, achieved. It tells you about how we have performed having taken your views on board. More importantly, it tells you about what the Council plans to do over the next three years and, particularly, what it is proposing to do in the year ahead.

Each year, we publish performance figures for all our main services. Some of these are national indicators of how we are doing. These are called Best Value Performance Indicators. We have a duty to publish these in a 'Best Value Performance Plan'. Other information we give to you are indicators of how we are performing locally against standards and targets we have set ourselves. We do not have to publish local indicators. Indeed we will be revising our local indicators throughout 2007/2008 to ensure they remain focused on things that are most important to our communities. However, this document provides this information to help you make a judgement on the performance of your Council. Corporate Plans and Best Value Performance Plans can mean a lot of things to a lot of different people. Indeed this council recognises and celebrates diversity of views. Some people feel these plans are produced to satisfy the government about what councils are doing. Some people may therefore say that they are only produced because they are required to be. At Chester-le-Street, we feel the Corporate Plan is an important and crucial part of our progress. It is not just a key element of our Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP), approved initially by the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, but a fundamental part of our 'performance management framework'. It is an important document in making clear our vision and aims and showing how far we have progressed to achieve them. The plan will ensure that we are able to prioritise and focus on achieving our ambitions. Our plan gives you information about this.

We, as elected members and officers of the council, want to engage you in all aspects of our service delivery. We carried out a residents' opinion survey last year, we have engaged tenants in developing options for the housing service and we have worked with community organizations, through the District Partnership, to understand what you would like us to do. Equally we want to share our ambitions, priorities, experiences and results with you. We have developed these with your help. We also want to let you know what we are going to do in the medium term to achieve our service and improvement objectives. This includes how we will secure resources through our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). Our Corporate Plan incorporates our statutory Best Value Performance Plan for 2007/2008

Our plan explains to you how we intend to perform in the future. It sets out a firm vision and the steps we are determined to take to secure it. It provides a balanced view on what we have set out to do and whether or not we have achieved our existing plans. It includes details of actual outcomes that have resulted from our improvements. It also provides the results of the previous years work. It shows, for example, how well we have done in handling planning applications, how well we have recycled waste and what improvements we have introduced into our housing services. Our plan, in being balanced and honest, shows you not only what we have achieved, but what we have not done as well as we intended to. It gives reasons for any failures in our performance. It shows you whether we have got better or whether we have not met standards we expected. It provides comparison with other councils. We provide details of how far we have achieved our improvement plans, in particular the Improvement and Recovery Plan, setting out what the outcomes of progress have been.

Our Corporate Plan provides a strategic or high level overview of the work we need to do to deliver our priorities. Individual service plans are developed by our service team managers for areas such as, leisure, housing and the environment. These provide details of how we will go about achieving in the priority areas. From this information, together with your experience of our services, you will be able to make your own mind up about how good your Council is. Your comments, views and opinions are welcomed. They will help us understand your needs and allow us to

develop ways in the future to fulfill them, working together as '**OneTeam**'. Our plan covers a three year period. We will review it every year so it remains up to date and relevant particularly in the light of potential change.

2. Your Council - Where we are and where we have come from

Chester-le-Street in context

Chester-le-Street District is situated in the north of County Durham in the North East of England. Chester-le-Street is 68sq kilometres (or 28 square miles) in size with a population of 53,300. The District lies between the conurbations of Gateshead to the north and Sunderland to the east. Durham City, the cathedral city, is located to the South. At the heart of the District is the market town of Chester-le-Street, currently the focus of a town centre redevelopment and a number of district-wide regeneration projects. The surrounding countryside is home to several outlying villages which grew up alongside the local collieries. They too are in the process of change and renewal. The town has a long history going back to Roman times when it was the site of a fort on the main north-south supply route for the Roman army. During the early medieval period it was the resting place of St. Cuthbert's body and the Lindisfarne Gospels for over a century. In more recent centuries coal dominated the landscape, economy and culture. The region's industrial and social heritage is celebrated in the internationally renowned Beamish Open Air Museum which lies within the District. Natural heritage is also cared for, with lowland fells to the east and west of the Wear river plain providing diverse wildlife habitats. At a recent regional conference on bio-diversity, the District's innovative approaches to landscape management in the built environment were enthusiastically received.

Population has risen by 3.4% since 1991 in Chester-le-Street whereas the North East has seen a 2.8% fall. Over 51% of the population is female. 16% of the population is over 65 while 24% of the population is below the age of 19. 99% of the population is white. The largest ethnic minority group is Chinese at 0.3% of the total population. 84% of our population holds Christian beliefs. The rate of economically active people is about 78%. The total number of households in the District is 22,850 with 18,500 of homes being privately owned. In recent years, local unemployment figures have fallen from 9.7% (above the national average) to 2.1%. The area is served by excellent transport links, with the A1(M) motorway and the East Coast mainline both running through it, and many of our residents travel to work outside the District. While there are a growing proportion of older people in the population, the District is one of only two local authorities in the area to have attracted inward movement of people and hence population growth over the last 20 years.

Typical property values are very affordable with a 2 bedroom terrace house costing around £95,000 and a 3 bedroom detached house costing £175,000. In terms of the Index of Deprivation, Chester-le-Street has 34 'Super Output Areas'. 17.6% of these are within the most deprived 20% in the country and 3% in the most deprived 10%. 12% are within the least deprived 20% in the country, while 3% are within the least deprived 10%.

New approaches and fresh insights are key themes both locally and in the region. History was recently made when the first new Test Match cricket ground in England for 100 years was developed at Chester-le-Street. A privately owned industrial estate is currently expanding rapidly through private sector investment and public sector initiative. 400 new jobs will be created as a result. The District Council is still the largest single

employer in the District with a workforce of some 570 people and a gross expenditure of over £38 million. Most businesses are small and concentrated in the town centre but many are keen to develop and grow in a new climate of enterprise, renewal and opportunity.

Chester-le-Street remains a highly attractive area in terms of inward investment. However, we need to maximise the benefit of our location on the A1 and the East Coast mainline to help ensure long term employment prospects for all our residents. The Council is currently implementing a district-wide Regeneration Strategy which has been informed by your ideas about what is important about Chester-le-Street and the surrounding villages and countryside, as well as how we can redevelop parts of the District to improve facilities and the environment. The Strategy is about making the most of the District and securing the greatest benefit for our communities. Recent regeneration projects at Pelton Fell, Grange Villa, Sacriston and the town centre are showing what is possible. Indeed they are examples of how we have worked closely with our community to help realise their ambitions. We want to build on our achievements in these areas to date.

Your Council's progress

We have moved from being a 'poor' council in 2004 to a 'good' council in 2007. We have exceeded our own expectations by leapfrogging the national 'weak' and 'fair' categories, the first council in the country to achieve such a substantial transition. The scale of our progress has not been down to good luck. It has been a result of delivering the services you wanted, backed up by robust planning for the future.

Our progress has been dramatic. Between 2000 and 2003 we received poor service and corporate inspection results. Although inspectors recognised that there was, by then, a willingness within the authority to implement change and that a number of our services were performing quite well, we were still performing well below what was expected. We have since improved the administrative leadership of the council by appointing a new Chief Executive in June 2004 and a completely new senior management team in early 2005. The team supports a council with a relatively new elected membership which has proved its ability to develop and be strong community leaders. It has driven forward positive change and we have become the only district council in the North East to achieve the Members Charter. Together we are committed to ensuring that the right building blocks are put in place to ensure that improvements to services can be delivered. A key focus area for strategic management and service improvement has been the housing service and work with our tenants. Last year was another challenging year for us. It was a year where we rose to the challenge of improvement. We commenced our process of recovery, not with just recovery in mind, but to set us on a journey towards excellence.

In November 2005, we agreed the second phase of our Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP) with the Minister responsible for Local Government which we have been implementing to assist our recovery. As a result, we feel we have been successful in establishing the building blocks that have helped us improve as a council. We have continued to work hard to improve our services. To do this, we feel we have shown our ability to make progress by making tough decisions. Our decision to consider the option of delivering our housing service by transferring it to a new landlord and release significant additional money for improvements is one example that clearly shows this. This decision was fully supported by our tenants who voted earlier in 2007 to allow the transfer to happen. We have fundamentally engaged with our community and partners to help us develop priorities and improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the District. We have worked with our partners to develop our first Community Strategy and are already updating this in order that we can improve upon the work we have already done. The Sustainable Community Strategy is not a council plan. It was developed by engaging representatives from various interests in the District. It is a shared vision for the future, a vision for achieving the economic, social and environmental regeneration of the District. There was confidence that the '**OneTeam**' approach, linked to our clear partnership working, would get us where we wanted to be. We have introduced new structures, working practices

and processes to help us work smarter. We have therefore been concentrating on ensuring that the council is 'fit' to make the service improvements to which this Corporate Plan refers.

Our improvement efforts started to be recognised by those who monitored our progress. In March 2006, the Audit Commission published a progress assessment. This was an evidence based statement of where the Commission felt we were compared with where we were in 2003. The Commission felt we were making good progress in addressing the serious weaknesses they identified at that time.

***Quote “Chester-le-Street District Council has made significant progress since its corporate assessment in 2003. It is now a ‘good’ council .”
Audit Commission June 2007***

There was further evidence that the council was improving as a result of the improvement programme. In May 2006, the Commission judged our environmental services to be a ‘good’ service with ‘**promising prospects for improvement**’. In July 2006, they confirmed that our housing service had improved from ‘poor’ to ‘**fair**’.

We stated in last year’s Corporate Plan that we wanted to improve further and achieve at least a ‘fair’ corporate assessment. In November 2006, we were successful in convincing the Audit Commission that we were ready for the council as a whole to be reassessed under the national system for judging council performance. As a result, a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) was undertaken by the Audit Commission at the end of February 2007. They have just published their report which shows that we went one better than our corporate plan aim by becoming a ‘**good**’ council. In reaching this conclusion, the Audit Commission took account of the views of our customers, partners and other stakeholders. They found that we have:

- ensured we understand the needs of local people;
- clear priorities which focus on what is important to the public;
- applied organisational development and continual process improvement;
- shared with our partners an ambitious and challenging vision clearly set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy;
- developed a supportive organisation with a ‘can do’ attitude among councillors and staff;
- focused on priority services of economic and social regeneration, neighbourhood management and improving housing and leisure;
- priorities which are based on a good understanding of community needs:
- taken difficult decisions such as the transfer of our housing stock;
- demonstrated effective community leadership;
- delivered good services which continue to improve;
- developed sound ways of keeping on track and delivering on promises; and
- improved customer satisfaction in service delivery.

We have made fantastic progress in a short period of time. Communities in Chester-le-Street District now have a council that is delivering. As a result, the Council has moved out of recovery and is no longer subject to central government intervention. We can now focus more of our energy

on further service improvement as a result of reduced monitoring and measurement. Focusing on delivering services which meet customer needs has been a key driver to our achievements. We have also used innovation and learning to improve the following key areas of our business:

- **Leadership** – Strong political and managerial leadership to secure change.
- **Policy** – ensuring clear policies and strategies have been in place to achieve priorities.
- **People** – ensuring strong organisational development, support and a 'can do' attitude.
- **Partnership and resources** – working hard to improve efficiencies, build our own capacity and deliver value for money.
- **Process** – systematically looking at continual process improvement.

To help you understand what the Audit Commission have found, we have provided quotations from their report throughout our Corporate Plan. You can access a full copy of the Inspector's report either from our website, or that of the Audit Commission.

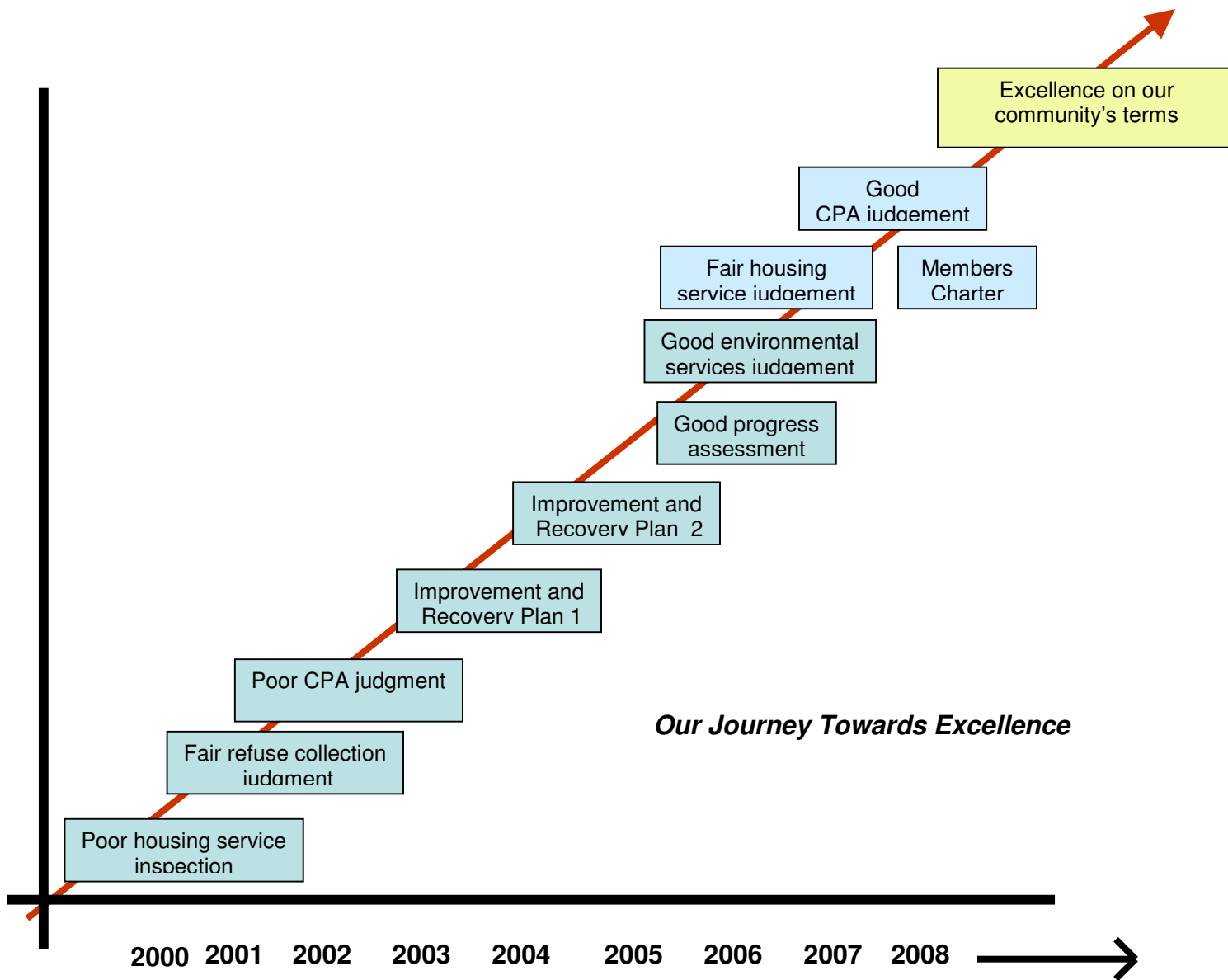
Our Long Term Vision – Continuous improvement, planning, partnership working and doing things differently

We are not complacent and we will not rest on our laurels. Despite the potential changes in local government, the last thing we want to do is 'coast' on the back of our past successes. As long as we are a council in our own right, our long term vision remains to become an excellent council in the true meaning of the word. We want to base this on what you feel is excellence and not just an assessment made by the Audit Commission. We want to be delivering excellent services to our communities that are economical, efficient and effective. We want our customers to know that we are delivering value for money services that meet their needs and in which they are engaged. We firmly believe that achieving excellence is a journey and not a destination. Continuous improvement, planning, partnership working and simply doing things differently are therefore going to be key to our success. In the event of any change in local government, we are committed to delivering excellent services and making sure any disruption, as a result of change, is kept to a minimum.

While we have clearly moved forward, we know there is much for us to do to become a council of the highest standard. We are determined to do what is necessary to achieve this. We will build on the improvements we have already made, with the support and contributions from our customers and partners, in order that we can sustain them and ensure continuous improvement. On the basis of our successes to date, we have confidence that we will achieve what we have set out to do.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 provide evidence of our achievement in service delivery and improvement in a little more detail.

If you would like further information on our recent Corporate Performance Assessment judgement, visit our website: www.chester-le-street.gov.uk



Structure of the Council

Part and parcel of our improvement has been how we are structured. Following the Local Government election in May 2007, the Council now comprises 34 elected Members, 26 Labour, 2 Conservatives, 1 Liberal Democrat and 5 Independents. The Council has implemented a 'Cabinet' system for Local Government. This includes an Executive Committee led by the Leader of the Council and includes 6 Portfolio Holders. The Council has established panels of Members who are not part of the Executive, but critically analyse the work of the Council. These committees are called Overview and Scrutiny Panels. Our Overview and Scrutiny Management Board co-ordinates the work of the panels who look at the key areas of priority for the Council and invite comments from the public, our partners and other stakeholders.

(Insert Diagram)

Executive Members

Leader of the Council, with responsibilities for Human Resources, Equalities and Young People
Councillor Linda Ebbatson

Deputy Leader, Resources and Value for Money Portfolio Holder
Councillor Simon Henig

Regeneration and Strategic Planning Portfolio Holder
Councillor Chris Jukes

Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder
Councillor Simon Westrip

Community Engagement and Partnership Working Portfolio Holder
Councillor Stephen Barr

Health and Well Being Portfolio Holder
Councillor Maureen Potts

(Insert Diagram)

Senior Managers

The senior officer management of the Council involves a Corporate Management Team which comprises the Chief Executive, 3 Directors - Resources, Community Services and Development Services, the Assistant Chief Executive, the Head of Organisational Development and the Head of Regeneration.

Roy Templeman

Chief Executive

Tony Galloway

Director of Development Services

Paul Stephens

Acting Director of Community Services

Linda Chambers

Director of Resources

Ian Forster

Assistant Chief Executive

Alison Swinney

Head of Organisational Development

Martin Walker

Head of Regeneration

Quote: "Political and managerial leadership is good. Senior councillors and managers respect each other and work well together. Staff, key stakeholders and partners are complimentary about the leadership displayed by the Council." Audit Commission June 2007

The political decision making structure is:

(Insert Diagram)

Full Council

Chaired by the Chairman
of the Council and
comprising 34
Members

Executive

Chaired by the Leader of the
Council and comprising
a total of 6 Members

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Comprising Chairs and
Vice-Chairmen of the Overview
and Scrutiny Panels

Overview and Scrutiny Panels

3 panels comprising non-Executive Members

Key Committees

Planning Committee Licensing Committee Standards Committee Audit Committee

Key supporting working groups

Insert diagram

Corporate Support Team

Capital Programme Working Group

Programme Management Board

Modernisation Project Team

Equalities and Diversity Working Group

Corporate Governance Group

Employee Suggestion Scheme

Health and Safety Committee

Corporate Procurement Group

Working to support improvement across the Council

Programme managing Council spending on key projects

Managing the Council's improvement programme

Driving electronic services and uptake and managing the website

Driving the Council's diversity agenda and performance managing the Equalities Plan

Ensuring internal controls are effective and driving information management and data quality

Managing the Council's approach to encouraging staff to promote improvements

Working to protect the health and safety of staff and customers

Ensuring we purchase goods and service at the best possible price

Your involvement

Our long term vision is to become an excellent council in the true meaning of the word. We want to deliver excellent services to our community, where our residents feel that we are listening to their views and priorities, and see that we are taking the appropriate action to respond. We know that we cannot always deliver everything people would like us to and we sometimes have to balance priorities. We are, however, committed to working closely with our communities and our partners to find solutions, not problems!

Our District Councillors are best placed to represent the voice of local people and through them the Council can better understand how the needs of individual residents, businesses and whole communities can be addressed. All Members of the Council are involved in the Council's programme of improvement and personal development to ensure that we are best placed to respond to those needs.

There are already a number of ways in which our residents can get their views and needs heard by the Council and become involved in improving the District in which we live and work. These include:

- contacting your Councillor on issues that affect you;
- attending regular Councillor ward surgeries;
- coming along and speaking at Council committees and panels;
- responding to consultation and engagement events;
- joining in local neighbourhood events like our 'Womble Days';
- taking part in focus groups;
- responding to satisfaction surveys we undertake with you;
- letting us know your views through our compliments, comments and complaints system; and
- joining residents' or tenants' associations and groups.

We are committed to increasing the opportunities for our communities to engage with us, so that as many people as possible can take an active part in influencing service delivery, local democracy and holding the Council to account. Our Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy, now agreed with our partners, is a clear action plan to help us ensure we meet that commitment. We want you to be involved – please take up your opportunities to do so.

Performance Management Framework

Another key element of our recovery has been establishing the way we set priorities and check our performance. In order that we can ensure that it manages its business we have developed our 'performance management framework'. This ensures that the Council:

- sets a clear vision;
- focuses on outcomes;
- establishes democratic and community engagement;
- is committed to accountability for results; and
- ensures it has a 'strategic and enabling corporate core' to make sure we achieve the improvement we need.

The performance management framework we have adopted can be explained visually as follows:

(see page 21 of current plan for diagram that needs inserting here)

To ensure that we continuously check whether we are achieving what we say we are going do, and to take remedial action where we may be failing, we will ensure that the following process remains in place:

- our vision and priorities are reviewed and refined through the annual priority planning process, engaging both Elected Members and employees;
- our vision and priorities for service improvement are based on regular engagement with Executive and Ward Members, customers and partners; revised priorities during the year are assessed in accordance with the corporate planning cycle based on the achievement of the corporate vision and new priorities developed in Chapter 3;
- Service Plans and the Corporate Plan are reviewed annually to ensure that they are consistent with changing priorities;
- service team managers and their teams monitor achievement of the individual delivery plans on at least a monthly basis;
- performance is a formal agenda item on Corporate Management Team, Directorate Management Team and service team meetings;
- performance indicators, whether national or local, are presented to the performance and improvement team on a quarterly basis. This includes annual targets, quarterly returns and explanation of the results (including measures to address underperformance);
- it is the responsibility of Service Team Managers, Directors and relevant Executive Members to ensure such indicators are achieved. Performance is judged on incremental performance each quarter with the final quarter reported as whole year out-turn;
- we use Continual Process Improvement (CPI) and Action Learning Sets (ALS) as tools to deliver service improvement;
- the Corporate Development Unit develops the framework for performance improvement which has included, from 2006 onwards, criteria for value for money judgements; Executive Members, Directors and Service Team Managers drive performance improvement;
- the Corporate Development Unit are responsible for reporting progress achievements of the Corporate Plan (including Best Value and Local Performance Indicators) to Executive on a quarterly basis;
- the Corporate Development Unit are responsible for reporting progress achievements of the Improvement and Recovery Plan to Executive on a monthly basis; a system of reality checks is established and carried out by the Performance and Improvement Manager to check and record actual outcomes;
- we are committed to high standards of data quality to ensure the information we use is timely and accurate;
- our performance is published annually in our Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan. Chapter 5 provides this information for 2006/2007;
- each service team, through relevant Executive Members, is responsible for ensuring that under-performance is targeted and addressed through establishing new ways of working, business re-engineering where necessary, or the introduction of new processes or procedures where possible. Where under-performance is considered justified, clear reasons are given. In such circumstances, when under-performance relates to tasks rather than targets, revised deadlines are provided; and
- It is important to focus on outcomes rather than simply the achievements, in the introduction of improvements. If the monitoring and review process does not show that desired outcomes are being achieved, then the Service Plan and the Corporate Plan will be reassessed and corrective action taken to ensure outcomes are secured.

Quote: “The Council is performing well in performance management. It has a robust performance management framework that ensures that councillors, managers and staff understand how their efforts support delivery of corporate objectives. The Council coordinates service delivery

and financial performance management and makes sure that reliable information is available to those people who need it. .” Audit Commission June 2007

Strategic planning of service delivery

To supplement the performance management framework we want to ensure that we have a sound embedded corporate planning cycle. This is to ensure that we continue to:

- review our vision, priorities, aims and objectives;
- develop clear, accessible plans for delivery;
- ensure that we secure sufficient resources to meet our goals;
- set performance standards and targets; and
- monitor and review our performance.

The annual cycle at Chester-le-Street adopted through the Corporate Plan is set out in Appendix 1.

3. Our Vision, Aims, Values and Priorities

The vision of Chester-le-Street – Where we want to be

In March 2004, the Chester-le-Street District Partnership, which is the Local Strategic Partnership for the District and includes organisations from public, private and voluntary sectors, as well as representatives of community groups, published its shared vision for the future of the District. This is called the Community Strategy. The strategy has a long term, 10 year aspirational vision that focuses on the economic, social, environmental wellbeing and regeneration of our District. Some shorter term priorities and actions were identified to get the strategy off to a good start. The Community Strategy will be delivered by the organisations, groups and individuals within the District Partnership. This includes the District and County Councils, the Primary Care Trust, the Police, the Fire and Rescue Service, the District's Council for Voluntary Service and many others. During 2006, the Strategy was reviewed and updated and the revised Sustainable Community Strategy was launched in November 2006. This review was undertaken to ensure that there are much clearer targets set to meet the objectives of the Plan. It has also been necessary to ensure that the strategy is sustainable. The original vision of the Community Strategy was as follows:

‘By 2014 the District of Chester-le-Street will be a place where people choose to live, to learn, to work and to visit. There will be inclusive, safe and healthy communities in our towns and villages built on a strong, sustainable economic base with excellent communication networks. The District Council will be a place where everyone is working together for a sustainable future.’

There are now four key elements to the Sustainable Community Strategy underpinned by 10 priority areas. The key aims are:

- A strong, sustainable and diverse economic base
- Inclusive communities
- Excellent communication networks
- An attractive and protected environment

Achievement of the Sustainable Community Strategy is supported by clear action plans. Appendix 2 sets out the aims and priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy in greater detail.

Quote: “The Sustainable Community Strategy describes a clear vision for the area which the Council shares with its partners. This vision links well to the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the Council's Corporate Plan to provide a cohesive strategic planning framework. .” Audit Commission June 2007

By working with our partners to achieve the Sustainable Community Strategy's vision we will improve economic, social and environmental wellbeing for communities across the District. While the aims and priorities to achieve the Strategy's vision are expressed separately, they are all linked to each other. Actions to achieve one priority will impact on other priorities. For example, good quality housing contributes to healthier communities and a safer environment; and the development of leisure and cultural opportunities will contribute to the better health of our communities, to improved education and skills attainment as well as creating new business and employment opportunities. The Council has developed its own vision, values and seven priority areas to underpin its contribution to the Sustainable Community Strategy.

The Council's vision is:

‘Working together to fulfil the needs of our communities’

The Council values are:

- ***An authority that is customer focused, that understands the needs of communities and values resident and business engagement.***
- ***An authority that measures added value,, where services are focused on outcomes and success is measured by the impact on the quality of life of local people.***
- ***An authority that learns from experience and the experience of others, is open to external challenge and operates comfortably in a mixed economy.***
- ***A council that acts as ‘OneTeam’ where staff and elected Members work together and have a clear understanding of their role and the contribution they make to service and corporate priorities.***
- ***A culture of performance management where service plans are closely aligned to the Sustainable Community Strategy and where staff development and training is prioritized.***
- ***A council that is accessible to everyone, committed to equality, whilst recognising diversity.***
- ***A council that is active both regionally and nationally.***

Our Improvement Plan

Having established a vision, aims and values, we felt that we must focus on improving the way the Council does business. We concentrated on the key areas of weakness that were found by the Audit Commission in their Comprehensive Performance Assessment judgement in 2004. These were areas upon which the Council must improve if it was to become a 'good' council. The drivers of change were:

- ensuring we can turn our plans into reality;
- ensuring that we get decision making right;
- ensuring we develop our people and our ability to achieve; and
- ensuring that we make significant improvements to key services.

These drivers of change formed the basis of our Improvement and Recovery Plan 2, agreed during 2005 by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, and were set out in the following ways:

Vision into Action

There is a clear focus on priorities and the Community Strategy, Corporate Plan, Service Plans and individual plans are aligned.

Decision Making

Decisions are made and implemented by the right people at the right time, at the right level, to ensure an effective response to our communities' needs.

People and Performance

Ensuring that Members and employees have the capacity, knowledge and tools to deliver efficient services.

Improving Services

Ensuring continuous service improvement within council services and those delivered in partnership that are targeted to address customer needs and council priorities.

Our Improvement and Recovery plan is now virtually complete and as a result, we are clearly a much better council. In order for us to achieve our ambitions of continuous improvement, we intend to reflect on our progress and develop a new Improvement Plan. This will include addressing the specific areas for improvement set out in the Audit Commission, June 2007 Report which are:

- developing an action plan to deliver the Local Development Framework to support our regeneration and housing strategies; and
- developing a leisure strategy, based on community engagement, to help evaluations of options for new ways of working in leisure.

Our Priorities - *a focus for 2007/2008*

Having clear priorities, based on community engagement, has been an important part of our focus on service improvement. We introduced seven clear priorities in our Corporate Plan in June 2006 and have maintained focus on these. Together with our partners, we updated our Sustainable Community Strategy during last year and have continued to update our Corporate Plan to reflect change. During the coming year, we intend to review our priorities as a result of recent change. For example, our tenants' decision to vote for the transfer of the housing service from the Council

to Cestria Housing Association means that the Council will not be directly involved in delivering the housing service. We will, therefore, be implementing our corporate planning cycle and revisiting our priority areas in the autumn. We have already started on this work and will be reflecting on what you have said as part of this process.

Quote: “Priorities are based on a good understanding of local need, informed by feedback from residents, supplemented by periodic needs assessments. Council priorities link well to national and sub-regional priorities. The Council's priorities are clearly stated in its Corporate Plan and are understood by staff and other stakeholders.” Audit Commission June 2007

In the meantime, we will continue to pursue our existing priorities and build our Corporate Plan proposals around them. These are the things that really matter to ourselves and our community for the next year at least.

These priorities, based on community engagement, shape our proposals for 2007/2008 and beyond. They are set out as follows:

You said through our Residents’ Opinion Survey that you wanted us to improve the way we provide services

We have responded by focusing on customers as our first priority

Priority 1: Customer Excellence

Improving customer care while providing new ways to access our services. This includes delivering our equality policy and celebrating diversity in our District and beyond while meeting our e-Government targets and national priority service outcomes.

As a key partner in the District Partnership we agreed a set of priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy that you wanted us to focus on achieving

We have responded by focusing on our actions to achieve the Sustainable Community Strategy objectives as our second priority

Priority 2 : Working in Partnership to deliver the Community Strategy

Continuing to work with our partners in the District Partnership to deliver actions within the Sustainable Community Strategy and to ensure it continues to address priorities for the District as a whole.

We engaged you, as tenants, in the process of improving our housing service, and you said that you wanted us to consider the transfer of our housing stock

We have responded by focusing on achieving an improved housing service as our third priority

Priority 3 : Meeting the Decent Homes Standard

Working with our tenants to consider new ways of providing our housing service and accessing additional funding which will meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

As a key partner in the District Partnership you said that you wanted us to develop a Regeneration Strategy for our District

We have responded by focusing on achieving the regeneration of the District as our fourth priority

Priority 4 : Regenerating the District

Working with businesses, partners and customers to implement a Regeneration Strategy for the District which represents the diversity of our communities, their needs and aspirations for the future.

You said through our Residents' Opinion Survey that we needed to improve standards of street cleanliness in the District and this was one of your key priorities

We have responded by focusing on neighbourhood management as our fifth priority

Priority 5 : Neighbourhood Management

Working with our community and partners to deliver action at the neighbourhood level, improving the quality of public services, engaging people in local democracy and, as a result, helping to create an improved environment and sustainable communities.

You said through our Residents' Opinion Survey that there needs to be more leisure provision, particularly for young people, but it was not an area you felt ought to be targeted for more spending

We have responded by focusing on the future of leisure services as our sixth priority

Priority 6 : New ways of working in Leisure

Considering options for the delivery of our range of leisure services, improving the level of service offered, while responding to priorities the community has identified for the service.

You said through our Residents' Opinion Survey that we needed to improve how we met the needs of local people and how we deliver services efficiently

We have responded by setting targets for improved efficiency and considering different ways of working with our partners as our seventh priority

Priority 7 : Maximising Efficiencies

Finding new ways of working in all services by working in collaboration with others to achieve economies of scale and better service delivery.

Areas of non- priority

Other things we do outside the seven priority areas will not be identified as priorities. However, we are not saying these areas will not be invested in at all, or that they are not important. We need to concentrate on what is **most** important. If we did not, then we would not have priorities at all. If

this was the case we would never be able to focus on the true desire and needs of our community. Milestones, targets and measures for non-priority areas will still be incorporated into relevant Service Plans, although most services will contribute to the above priorities.

We feel that our vision and priorities are ambitious yet clear, practical and achievable. Our proposals for the year ahead are strategic. We will measure our achievements against our milestones, targets and outcomes that will be developed in the project plans for the proposals set out in Chapter 6.

Ultimately however, your views will be the overall measure of our success. We will continue to ask you for your opinions and contributions on major service developments and your views on how we are achieving against priorities in the plan.

Key Supporting Strategy

We have clear plans of action to ensure we deliver our priorities. We have developed clear strategies to enable us to move forward. These are set out in Appendix 3.

Partnership Working

It is clear that partnership working is fundamental to what we can achieve in the District. Many of the achievements set out in this Corporate Plan could only have happened by working with others. 'Working in Partnership' is a firm priority and we have developed a Partnership Strategy to help us achieve our vision. The key components of the strategy are:

- understanding what partnerships we are in;
- understanding how effective they are;
- understanding how healthy they are; and
- ensuring that we improve those which need to be.

We have developed a 'partnership toolkit', promoted by the North East Centre of Excellence, to help us do this. Our Programme Management Board is measuring implementation of this toolkit. We have also ensured we have a Member (with Executive responsibility for partnerships) and Officer champion to help keep us on course.

Local Area Agreement

To assist in the delivery of our Corporate Plan and the Sustainable Community Strategy, partners and partnerships in County Durham have embraced the opportunity to develop a Local Area Agreement (LAA). This is a means of securing significant improvements in services for the people of County Durham. Chester-le-Street District Council has worked with the County Council, other Durham district councils, voluntary and

community services and organisations such as the Police, Fire and Rescue and the Primary Care Trust to develop the Agreement with the Government. It was subject to a refresh and review during 2006.

Partners believe that an LAA will have a positive impact on local communities, lead to better quality services and have a major impact on quality of life through the streamlining of funding arrangements and the development of new working arrangements. It is hoped that the introduction of a Local Area Agreement will mark a turning point in partnership and joint working in County Durham and a shift towards more collaborative working, built on trust and openness, for the benefit of local people.

In County Durham we are aiming to take a different approach – a unique approach, which is both innovative and adventurous. It is a truly inclusive process which is being built on trust and a commitment from all partners to prioritise improvement in local services. Through this new and different approach, we aim to break old moulds and work together to develop new and innovative ways of delivering integrated services that are more responsive to the needs of local people.

The focus of this Agreement is on improving outcomes for local people. We have therefore set four overarching objectives against which the public and local communities can test our success and see the added value provided by the LAA. These are our key aspirations for the LAA:

- narrowing the deprivation gap;
- improving access to services;
- supporting sustainable service improvements;
- improving public satisfaction with their local area and increasing the number of people who feel able to influence public services.

The outcomes set out in our LAA aim to give people more say in the way places are run and will promote the government's recent Respect Agenda – the government focus on supporting families, working with the most challenging families, improving behaviour in schools, improving activities for children and young people, strengthening communities and ensuring effective enforcement and community.

We have set challenging targets where we believe we can have a positive impact on the lives of local people. The outcomes focus on:

Children & Young People:

1. Children eating and drinking healthily and taking regular exercise.
2. Promoting emotional well-being.
3. Helping parents and carers to develop appropriate skills.
4. Protecting children and young people from homelessness and failing tenancies.
5. Protecting young people from crime and anti-social behaviour.
6. Improving attainment levels and reducing the gaps between different groups.
7. Improving access to safe play, leisure and recreational facilities.
8. Enabling children and young people to shape and improve their communities.
9. Promoting a positive image of children.
10. Increasing levels of participation in learning opportunities.

11. Reducing the effects of poverty.

Economic Development & Enterprise:

1. Supporting employers to tackle worklessness.
2. Increasing entrepreneurial activity.
3. Raising the GVA of the County.
4. Improving skills to meet current and future business needs.
5. Increasing the supply of business space to meet current and future business needs.
6. Meeting the economic needs of the most disadvantaged areas.

Healthy Communities and Older People:

1. Increasing life expectancy and substantially reducing premature mortality rates.
2. Improving health in disadvantaged areas.
3. Improving access for vulnerable people to services, leisure and social activities.
4. Improving opportunities for vulnerable people to play a full and active role in their community.
5. Providing greater independence and choice for vulnerable adults.

Safer and Stronger Communities:

1. Reducing crime, the harm caused by illegal drugs and to reassure the public, reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.
2. Building a strong sense of community in a cleaner, greener, more attractive environment.
3. Engaging the community in shaping and improving more accessible services.
4. Improving quality of life in disadvantaged areas.
5. Ensuring housing is of a decent standard and is affordable and accessible.
6. Providing access to an integrated transport system.

Although the LAA in County Durham has been structured around the four 'blocks' identified above, all partners recognise the cross-cutting nature of many of our ambitions and links between outcomes. Partners acknowledge the need to work across the four blocks in order to develop effective methods of service delivery and this will be a key element of the work undertaken as we move forward. The Council has strong representation on the strategic, tactical and operational teams delivering the Local Area Agreement.

You can find more about the Local Area Agreement by accessing the website at: www.durhamlaa.org.uk

4. Our Achievements 2006/2007

This year we have again set out our achievements against our corporate priorities

Priority 1: Customer Excellence

Improving customer care while providing new ways to access our services. This includes delivering our equality policy and celebrating diversity in our District and beyond, while meeting our e-Government targets and national priority service outcomes.

What we have been trying to do

We set out to ensure that we become a council which is customer focused, pursues customer excellence and is easy to do business with. We wanted the services we provide to be consistent, co-ordinated and proactive. We wanted to set standards agreed in conjunction with customers. We wanted to ensure our employees are trained, motivated and rewarded, are able to identify if the customer needs extra help or advice, help sort out problems and take personal responsibility for them. We set out to make sure that services are responsive and accountable to all citizens, including minority and vulnerable groups, by regular reporting and consultation. We wanted to be a council that provides every opportunity to be engaged in local democracy and service delivery and in doing so, ensure equality and celebrate diversity.

What have we achieved?

So far we have:

- *Secured a **GOOD** Comprehensive Performance Assessment result proving that communities in Chester-le- Street are supported by a strong, improving council.*
- *Secured partnership support for our Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy which is increasing the opportunities you have to get involved in public services.*
- *Reviewed, and continued implementation of our Equalities Plan which incorporates our Equality Scheme (covering all strands of the equality agenda) while engaging service users in its development. As a result the Council has achieved Level 2 of the Equality Standard for local government and all customers can be assured that the Council is working hard to ensure that services are truly accessible to all.*
- *Significantly improved our performance on promoting racial equality from 53% to 84%, while exceeding our own target of 75%, ensuring that we have more effective measures in place to avoid discriminating against ethnic minority groups in our communities.*

- *Responded positively to national changes and worked with the County Council, other district councils and transport providers to ensure that we could provide the best possible Concessionary Fares Scheme which allows free travel across the County. As a result, we have achieved a better than expected service for over 9,000 of our most vulnerable people helping to improve the quality of their lives.*
- *Almost completed implementation of our Customer Excellence Strategy aimed at developing consistent customer focused service right across the Council, which is resulting in better customer care when you do business with us.*
- *Implemented agreed service standards across the Council and in environmental services with the agreement of local residents groups. As a result, improved our performance on such things as answering mail and telephone calls.*
- *Embedded our corporate complaints system with specialist training from the Local Government Ombudsman. This has enhanced our complaint investigation system and identified suitable remedies to ensure that customers received fair and consistent complaint responses and resolutions.*
- *Continued to carry out our annual residents' survey which has shown that your satisfaction with the Council is generally increasing and which is helping us to continue to improve services and set our budget. As a result, we have ensured that the residents of Chester-le-Street District are given the opportunity to inform our decision making process and express their views on the services we deliver. In total, over 4500 residents have rated our services and their comments will form the basis of an action plan to improve services.*
- *Carried out our second tenants' survey which is helping us to set budgets and improve our housing service to our customers.*
- *Reviewed the way we communicate with people. Increased council media coverage has led to a more informed public. This along with our key publications has resulted in year on year increase in satisfaction of residents i.e. satisfaction levels for how well we keep people informed has increased from 53% to 61% in three years.*
- *Increased the number of press releases we issue by 100% over two years. Customers are better informed about council services and achievements, providing more opportunities for citizens to be involved in our services.*
- *Reviewed our 'constitution', or how we go about our business, including allowing the opportunity for the public to speak at Council meetings - Executive, committees and panels, which has improved both customer engagement and our accountability.*
- *Introduced public speaking at all council committees and 46 members of the public had their say when planning applications were decided during the year.*
- *Administered and supported over 100 council committees and panels, providing agendas and minutes on the Council's website.*
- *Ensured that we maintained our electoral register and ensured processes were in place to manage this years local council elections that took place in May, including preparing for postal voting. As a result, the community were able to have their say on who will represent them at District Council and Parish Council level.*
- *Continued with our modernisation team which focused on achieving national e-Government and Priority Service Outcome targets and turn its focus to managing the website and improving take up of online services. As a result, targets have been achieved and customers have more choice how to access the Council.*
- *Made significant progress in the provision of services that can be delivered electronically which not only will improve customer options to contact us but will result in better value for money.*
- *Met government targets for e-Government (BVPI 157 now 100% achieved) and have fundamentally improved our website which not only provides better information but allows you to interact with the Council.*
- *Achieved 100% of required national Priority Service Outcomes and 92% of good Priority Outcomes from a very low starting point (17% at the beginning of 2005) and as a result, customers can be assured that we are achieving what the government expect of us in terms of electronic service delivery.*

- *Implemented a communications campaign to raise the awareness of electronic service via the Council website. As a result, we have improved communications in local newspapers and District News to increase the take up of services available on the Council website. The use of new electronic services allows the Council to work more effectively and increase the availability of council services to customers.*
- *Introduced closed website facilities (extranets) for Council partners. These support the capacity of Council partners and partnerships and allow those groups to collaborate and make effective use of electronic information.*
- *Developed our own intranet, allowing internal teams to collaborate and share information more effectively. This helps to provide service teams with timely information which can help improve service to customers.*
- *Enhanced our website so that customers can now have access to more services such as booking leisure facilities, taking part in consultation forums, make payments for council tax and rent, request access to services 24/7 by completing an online form. They can also submit and view planning applications and establish if they are entitled to housing benefit by using our online calculator.*
- *Provided access to our electronic performance management system, through our website, providing more information about how we are performing.*
- *Introduced a Geographical Information System so you can view maps of your area on our website.*
- *Introduced a new cash receipting system resulting in more efficient, speedy and informative balances and billing information to all customers.*
- *Introduced a new electronic benefits fraud system which allows improvements to fraud investigations.*
- *Developed an asset management computer system to help us manage our land and property holdings better.*
- *Developed an ICT strategy which is a clear route map for continuously improving our use of technology to improve customer service.*
- *Improved the security of the information held electronically and as a result, customer information held is not susceptible to fraudulent use.*
- *Developed a system to enable customers to book leisure facilities over the internet.*
- *Improved the Council's telephone system for increased call handling efficiency, resulting in greater customer satisfaction and reduced number of abandoned calls.*
- *Worked with the County Council and other districts to implement a 'customer relationship management' system which, when rolled out, will help us to answer 80% of your queries at first point of contact with the Council. Our legal services team can now scan and distribute land search applications to our planning, environmental health and regeneration teams via one computer system. This has increased the speed at which searches are completed and removed the need for any paper based information being distributed.*
- *Completed implementation of our revenues and benefits 228 action point improvement plan ahead of schedule and improved performance which now compares with the best 25% in the country and means we are delivering far better services to the most vulnerable.*
- *Developed and implemented a benefits take up strategy, allowing more people to access their entitlements to financial help.*
- *Met top quartile performance in four out of five of our benefits Best Value Performance Indicators, successfully carried out three fraud prosecutions and applied 12 sanctions on customers committing fraud and as a result, performance has improved and customers can be assured that public funds are being protected, while the service can genuinely focus on those in our community who need the most support.*
- *Introduced ways of working with customers on benefits claims in their own homes which ensures that clients do not have to travel to the Council and that privacy is protected.*
- *Introduced a planning users forum and a 'development team approach', improving engagement and quality of our planning service.*
- *Undertaken an organisational development programme under the banner of the 'OneTeam Inspirational Programme' which has engaged all managers, supervisors and 'inspirers' in developing our 'OneTeam' approach and which is actively developing the right skills and*

competencies within our organisation to meet customer aspirations and our improvement programme. This has meant that managers are better equipped to deliver service and have better skills in terms of things like equality and diversity, customer care and leadership.

- *Delivered an 'action learning set' approach to carrying out improvements in the Council by engaging staff in activity outside their normal area of service delivery.*
- *Introduced workforce development planning which means that people, resources and development are now aligned to our priorities.*
- *Delivered 'continual process improvement' (CPI) pilots in terms of flytipping, speed of re-letting council houses and invoice payment speed which have delivered improved performance and reduced waste resulting in improved customer outcomes. These were so successful, that they have been extended to housing, aids and adaptations and benefits processes as well as having been built into our performance management framework.*
- *Fully developed workforce planning in line with the National Workforce Strategy and addressed Single Status Agreement.*
- *Developed succession planning to ensure that we can sustain service delivery quality where staff move on to take up other posts.*
- *Developed a new health and safety regime, including improving understanding and responsibilities through a corporate working group and new policies and procedures.*
- *Developed an Organisational Development Strategy to take us towards our aim of being an excellent council and provide the best possible services to our customers.*
- *Developed a Corporate Training Plan which includes the roll out of customer care training across the organisation and seeks to address corporate needs arising from our staff personal development appraisal system, ensuring that we meet any skills gaps that exist in the organisation and to aid us to meet our priorities.*
- *Applied for, and were successful in, securing the Members Charter which proves that our councillors have strong community leadership skills and are better at supporting communities as a result.*
- *Carried out a review of our scrutiny panels to ensure that their work reflects Council priorities and as a result, ensuring that they respond to your needs.*
- *Delivered customer care training to the whole of the community services directorate to improve the customer service skills of staff to the benefit of our customers.*
- *Ensured that we have invested in member training through the Modern Member Programme and member appraisal and as a result, your councillors are more effective in their roles as community leaders.*
- *Through the Local Strategic Partnerships we have worked with young people to engage them in what matters to them, including the environment, with some of the young people engaged winning County awards.*
- *Worked to improve the percentage of our open public buildings which are Disability Discrimination Act Compliant including Chester-le-Street Cemetery by auditing all our buildings, costing work and prioritizing improvement.*
- *Supported 23 Tenants and Residents groups across the District, helping build their capacity to improve the quality of life in those areas they represent.*
- *Secured runner up in the national Cemetery of the Year Award for the Ropery Lane Cemetery, as a result of exceptional customer care.*
- *Set up the Friends of Ropery Lane Cemetery Group to engage people in the delivery of a sensitive service.*
- *Won the national 'Loo of the Year' Award for the Foundry Lane public toilets and thus, obtained independent acceptance of the quality of service provided at these facilities.*
- *Supported the District's Federation of Environmental Groups who are working as volunteers to complete a 'Connections' project, developing local walks with interpretation panels at the Riverside, Edmondsley, Ouston and Urpeth, Grange Villa, Pelton Fell, and Chester Central.*

- Introduced quarterly reporting of corporate performance information, including performance indicators and complaints monitoring, which is now available on the Council's website. As a result, the Council can take earlier action against underperformance and customers can be assured that take we action problems in a timely manner.
- Significantly improved performance on handling major planning applications from 67% to 87.5 % , minor applications from 85% to 91% and householder applications from 90% to 96%.
- Significantly improved performance on planning appeals - the Inspector upholding 87.5% of decisions.
- Achieved 83% customer satisfaction for planning services.
- Completed 99% of food premises inspections within timescales.
- Improved performance to 100% against a checklist of environmental health best practice.
- Achieved 100% of pollution control improvements on time .
- Focused on indicators that have either not improved, or are in the bottom 25% in the country, to secure improvement and as a result, 70% of these got better over the year.
- Achieved maximum points on the Pendleton Survey which ranks the planning service in the top 30% nationally and, together with other quality achievements, helped to ensure that customers have a high performing planning service.
- Justified complaints about the council are reducing and we now receive one formal compliment for every two complaints we get about our service delivery.
- Responded to 99% of local searches in 10 days, with the average being 7 days.
- Assisted 568 personal searches compared to 393 in 2005/2006 and 271 in 2004/2005.
- Been lead authority on the county wide customer relationship management system for land searches.
- Secured a successful outcome for a necessary highway stopping up order public inquiry and secured a successful Magistrates Court prosecution for a footpath stopping up order.
- Secured a successful variation to our car parking order.
- Been lead on the Local Area Agreement communications and website development to help people understand more about the Local Area Agreement.
- Achieved a second Gold National Clean Air Award in recognition of our outstanding commitment to providing a tobacco smoke free environment to protect the health, safety and well being of all who enter council buildings.
- Formally resolved to support national options for a complete ban of smoking in pubs and eating places which has helped effect national change towards health improvement.
- Helped encourage 500 businesses to go smoke free prior to the national implementation date.
- Celebrated 25 years of formal town twinning with Kamp-Lintfort, engaging in a series of events and visits, and sharing culture and life experiences between people of different European backgrounds. [Eduardo town twinning photo here.](#)

Quote: The Council is performing well (in achievement and improvement). Good current performance, and improvement in key services, such as waste, planning, benefits, street cleaning and grounds maintenance is recognised in performance indicators, improved customer satisfaction and inspection reports. Similarly, effective partnership working, particularly with the police, local communities and the County Council is leading to social regeneration, improved neighbourhood management and reduced crime. ” Audit Commission June 2007

Priority 1: What have we not achieved and why?

We have not yet:

- *Created a fully equipped customer services team to deal with 80% of service requests at first point of contact as we have focused on other priorities. We are currently reviewing this to help us ensure we have established the right customer services team by July 2007. This will be supported by the new customer relationship management IT system and an improved telephone system. We will enhance the role of this team throughout 2007 / 2008 to meet our objectives.*
- *Implemented a planning advisory system as our market testing with other authorities shows that significant customer problems have been experienced.*
- *Fully implemented our customer relationship management system because we have had to work with others to achieve this in view of its cost and complexity.*
- *Achieved actions in our Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy, largely because working on a partnership action plan has had significant unexpected resource implications.*
- *Met our targets on a range of best value performance indicators.*

Priority 2: Working in Partnership to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy

Continuing to work with our partners in the District Partnership to deliver actions within the Sustainable Community Strategy and to ensure it continues to address priorities for the District as a whole.

What we have been trying to do

We set out to ensure we played the fullest role in providing clear community leadership within the District. We want to achieve the vision, aims and priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy, your vision of the District, by 2010. The Council wanted to promote and encourage true partnership working with all those who can help achieve sustainable communities while promoting community cohesion. As a result, we wanted to ensure that we improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the people we serve. We know and acknowledge that we cannot make the change we need on our own. Partnership working in all areas, including partners not engaged in the Local Strategic Partnership, is a crucial success factor for us.

What have we achieved?

So far we have:

- *Been acknowledged by the Audit Commission as taking a strong leadership role in the Local Strategic Partnership.*
 - *Worked to support the Partnerships Steering Group and sub groups to update the District Partnerships Community Strategy. This was published and launched in November 2006. This means clear, measurable targets for achieving the aims, as well as meeting the requirements of, achieving a Sustainable Community Strategy.*
 - *Produced a summary document for the public to understand what we are trying to do through the Sustainable Community Strategy.*
 - *Established action plans and built these into service planning, to achieve the Council's contribution to the actions and targets of the Sustainable Community Strategy by 2016. As a result, the Council is able to demonstrate its contribution to achieving the District's Strategy and the residents of the District will benefit from the achievement of the desired outcomes.*
 - *Continued to support the Community Partnerships which engage the community in the work of the Local Strategic Partnership and developed proposals to review their effectiveness in our Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy. As a result, the Council is acting in a community leadership role to improve how people engage with our partners in the delivery of the Community Strategy.*
 - *Developed a District Partnership website, which is currently under review, and published a quarterly newsletter, Partnership News, promoting and publicising the work of the District Partnership.*
 - *Continued to support a network of Tenant and Resident Associations across the District including the development of two new associations and a community house in Sacriston to build capacity within the community.*
 - *Took a lead role in developing community engagement in the design of delivery of Phase 2 of the Streetsafe Initiative in Pelton, securing community involvement and ensuring the pilot delivered the community safety improvements identified by local residents.*
 - *Developed, with our partners, action plans to support the roll out of the Crime and Disorder Reduction and Substance Mis-Use Strategy and as a result, now have a clear performance management framework to ensure the strategy is implemented.*
 - *Worked with our partners to develop and implement the Local Area Agreement to improve service delivery across the County. This has included taking a lead role on communications and the development of a Local Area Agreement website.*
 - *Ensured action plans are established and built into service planning to achieve the actions, outcomes and stretch targets of the Local Area Agreement by 2008/09.*
 - *Carried out an 'action learning set', aimed at developing ways to support the work of the District Partnership, to ensure that we can maximise the benefits of the LSP.*
 - *Managed a project on behalf of the District Partnership to engage children and young people in the development and planning of services which are provided for them.*
 - *Developed a Council Communications Strategy and Partnership Strategy in order that we have more effective partnerships in the future.*
 - *Coordinated the Economic Development and Regeneration Group of the Local Strategic Partnership.*
 - *Worked with partners, including the Police and Lilac House at Sacriston, to develop and implement an estate agreement to improve crime and the environment in conjunction with the local community.*
 - *Developed and adopted a Partnership Strategy including a Partnership Toolkit supported by the North East Centre of Excellence which gives us the direction and tools to measure and improve the effectiveness of the partnerships that we engage in.*
 - *Continued to improve the energy efficiency of many homes. 5546 have been improved since 2002.*
 - *Continued to work with partners with a view to achieving fair trade town status in 2007.*
 - *Launched the ecolinks website in conjunction with Groundwork.*
-

Quote “The Council works well in partnership to augment shared capacity. It is involved in an effective county wide e-Government partnership and has worked with parish councils to deliver better play areas and environmental improvements. It has also worked with community groups to deliver social regeneration through community projects including Grange Villa and Lilac House .”Audit Commission March 2006

Priority 2: What have we not achieved?

We have not yet:

- *Completed the development of a coherent medium term strategy for the development of the voluntary sector, nor agreed longer term goals for this sector largely due to capacity.*
- *Developed a Partnership Communications Strategy specifically for the District Partnership by December 2006.*
- *Developed a Cultural Strategy for the District, along with our partners, due to partner capacity.*

Priority 3: Meeting the Decent Homes Standard

Working with our tenants to consider new ways of providing our housing service and accessing additional funding which will meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

What we have been trying to do

We wanted to create sustainable communities where people want to live and work. We want our housing service to be accessible to a wide variety of service users. We wanted to support and protect our most vulnerable people and households, helping them to live more independently. In considering the best options to deliver the housing service, we set out to provide choice and good quality tenure housing. We wanted to support vibrant housing markets that satisfy the needs and aspirations of our communities.

What have we achieved?

So far we have:

- *Achieved a One star (Fair) housing service, improved from a No star (Poor) service, by focusing on housing improvement and better tenant engagement in the delivery of the housing service.*

- *Reviewed and implemented the Housing Improvement Plan as a result of the Audit Commissions fair housing service judgement, ensuring that the housing service gets better for tenants.*
- *Submitted a successful application for the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of the housing service.*
- *Secured a positive vote, by over 60% of all our tenants, to transfer the housing stock to Cestria Housing Association.*
- *Increased opportunity for tenant engagement is now evident. A new and updated Tenant Participation Compact has been developed by tenants which has enabled significant opportunities for improved tenant engagement. The Service engaged over 1,000 tenants in the stock option appraisal process and in the last 12 months over 5,000 tenants have participated in a range of events linked to future service development and stock transfer.*
- *Held a Tenants Conference, attended by well over 200 tenants, to help shape the future of the housing service.*
- *Delivered over 17,500 repairs to Council properties in the last 12 months responding to tenant repair requests.*
- *Spent £3.6m on modernisation and improvements to Council properties improving the quality of life of our tenants.*
- *Developed and commenced implementation of a Decent Homes Implementation and Improvement Plan which has set out exactly what we need to do to improve our housing stock to meet national targets.*
- *Carried out over 118 individual improvements to housing service delivery.*
- *Developed a three year capital programme and are working to develop this to five years and, by doing so, the Council and our tenants can have clearer and flexible information about how we intend to programme our investment activity.*
- *Developed, implemented and revised action plans to assist us in improving the service we provide and meeting the challenges of external scrutiny.*
- *Implemented a Housing Business Plan and a Housing Strategy, both of which have been signed off as 'Fit for Purpose' by the Government Office, a feat achieved by only half the councils in the country. This ensures that we have strong plans in place to develop a clear vision for housing for the future, supporting our efforts to meet the Decent Homes Standard, while engaging our tenants in service delivery.*
- *Introduced a new performance management framework in the housing service including use of HOUSEMARK benchmarking information to better monitor performance.*
- *Updated the Council's racial harassment policy to reduce racial crime in the District.*
- *Developed a customer profile system, while developing a program of Diversity Impact Assessments, in order that we can understand our customers more and thus respond better to their needs.*
- *Let contracts on the basis of cost and quality to secure the best for our tenants.*
- *Established a new iWorld Integrated Housing Management System to better deliver the housing service to our tenants.*
- *Closed Sacriston area office, three outlying depots and the manufacturing facility at Sacriston to improve value for money.*
- *Continued to support Lilac House community house in Sacriston, helping to support community development and creating a community hub. It is run by the community for the community and is available for community engagement with a range of service deliverers.*
- *Reviewed and updated our Homelessness Strategy, enabling us to ensure we are achieving what we have set out to do in our initial strategy, while addressing the needs of some of our most vulnerable customers.*
- *Established a homelessness forum to oversee the delivery of the Strategy.*
- *Developed a homelessness pack, posters and leaflets, webpage and translation services to publicise the service.*
- *Established a Domestic Violence Practitioners Group and worked with Derwentside Domestic Violence Forum to improve our service to vulnerable people.*

- *Worked with partners in the Homeless Advisory Partnership to secure £100,000 priority need funding to help reduce homelessness in County Durham, while securing another £70,000 over the next two years.*
- *Installed a new homelessness database to enable the service to track and support homelessness households allowing more efficient working.*
- *Developed a new allocations scheme to allow fairer access to council houses to people with priority need and particularly the most vulnerable.*
- *Launched a Landlords Accreditation Scheme, securing 70 private accredited landlords and 240 private rented accredited properties to date, and thus, improving the quality of private rented accommodation.*
- *Received 220 Right to Buy applications and 94% of offer notices were responded to in 8 weeks.*
- *Repurchased a former council house on the Right to Buy first refusal, probably the first council in the country to do so.*
- *Helped 32 tenants purchase their homes and this resulted in income of over £1.6million in capital receipts.*
- *Launched the Housing and Returning Prisoners (HARP) protocol for ex-offenders;*
- *Adopted the Supporting People Strategy.*
- *Granted 505 new tenancy agreements from our allocations register.*
- *Awarded 39 discretionary repairs assistance grants to enable private houses to carry out essential works such as leaking roofs, dangerous electrical wiring and damp proofing. This led to 5% of non decent homes improving to decent.*
- *In further support of vulnerable people, we have undertaken some 5500 affordable warmth installations as part of our COSY scheme. In partnership with Scottish Power, match funding allowed the Council to install the following measures into private sector homes; 4328 received cavity wall insulation, 3109 received loft insulation, 1003 received draft proofing, and 1192 energy efficient light bulbs fitted. In total 5546 properties benefited from measures, or, 25% of the private sector stock by the end of March 06. COSY as a scheme was initially targeted at residents of 60 or over, the group most likely to be in fuel poverty from Government guides. The scheme has played a major part in raising the Housing Energy Conservation Act (HECA) performance of the Council from 6% in year 6, to 23 % after year 10, or 17% in 4 years, and has put the Council on target to achieve its goal.*
- *Carried out adaptations to 44 properties, with 33 made fit or brought up to the Decent Homes Standard and improvements made to 54 private properties.*
- *Successfully won the Supporting People contract in open competition for the delivery of the CareLine service to all vulnerable households in the District. The winning bid was shaped by feedback from tenants on the service level and standards they wished to see developed. The service is applying for TSA Accreditation and is hoping to be only the second CareLine provider in the country to be awarded the new TSA Accreditation standard. The CareLine service is seen as a beacon of good practice across the County.*
- *Implemented an integrated electronic management system for the Direct Labour Organisation (DLO), improving its efficiency and maximizing the benefits to tenants.*
- *Improved the interactivity and the effectiveness of the community services pages on the Council's website, including a facility for tenants to report repairs over the internet improving choice and speed of access.*
- *Used videostreaming for the housing transfer which improved the multimedia facilities on the Council's website.*
- *Developed an action learning set aimed at ensuring we maximise relationships between the Council and any future deliverer of services we currently provide, including housing and leisure.*
- *Continued to work with the Durham City and Chester-le-Street Home Improvement Agency (HIA). The HIA attracts Government funding and represents a partnership between the PCT, Social Services and the district councils of Durham City and Chester-le-Street. The HIA provides a home based service and acts as advocate to home owners to ensure that vulnerable persons receive access to relevant*

services. In doing so, the HIA ensures, for example, that all paperwork for grant aided property repairs and improvements are completed properly and any works are carried out to a good standard by competent builders, freeing customers of unnecessary bureaucracy and worry.

Quote “The Council takes difficult decisions. In 2005, it realised that it did not have the resources to meet the government target of achieving the Decent Homes Standard in all its properties by 2010. Despite concerted opposition from the national movement to defend council housing, a strongly held belief among some stakeholders that public ownership of social housing was desirable and a neighbouring council incurring substantial costs when a proposed transfer was not endorsed by tenants, it decided to ballot its housing tenants about transferring ownership of the housing stock to a housing association. This decision was endorsed when tenants subsequently decided in favour of transfer in March 2007.”Audit Commission June 2007

Priority 3: What have we not achieved?

We have not yet:

- *Devised a preventative strategy for anti-social behaviour due to the implications of the Governments very recently published Respect Agenda.*
 - *Reviewed all housing policies in response to the Housing Act 2004, but work is well advanced to achieve this by Summer 2007.*
 - *Produced an empty property strategy for non local authority owned vacant dwellings.*
-

Priority 4: Regenerating the District

Working with businesses, partners and customers to develop a Regeneration Strategy for the District which represents the diversity of our communities, their needs and aspiration for the future.

What we have been trying to do

We set out to embed social and economical renewal as a cornerstone of what we do. We wanted to ensure that we target those areas of the District that have the most need, through improving environments, housing, community facilities, and learning and employment opportunities. In doing so, we wanted to build sustainable communities within the District. We wanted to exploit the District's excellent location, and current facilities and communication networks, to provide new economic opportunities. This included manufacturing and distribution, a knowledge-based economy and tourism and leisure. We wanted to make the best of new challenges and opportunities such as the Northern Way and the Regional Spatial

Strategy to achieve the best possible outcomes for our District. As a firm part of renewal, we wanted to ensure that we protect and enhance the natural and built environment.

What have we achieved?

So far we have:

- *Developed our Regeneration Strategy in conjunction with the District Partnership. This provides Chester-le-Street with a social, physical and environmental framework for improvement in the future.*
- *Secured over £30 of investment for every £1 spend by the Council over the last 2 years.*
- *Continued with the implementation of the Integrated Regeneration Strategy for the village of Pelton Fell. Signed a development agreement with Bellway Homes, Nomad Housing Association and Durham Aged Miners Homes and progressed towards the completion of the redevelopment of Whitehill Crescent. This will create 251 new homes. Integrated within this scheme will be 91 social homes to rent and 12 shared equity homes. Secured private sector funding to assist in the development of a new community resource centre and multi use games area at Pelton Fell. Embarked on a major physical renewal project at the Poets' Estate, Pelton Fell based on a comprehensive Environmental Improvement and Place Making Strategy, prepared by Turlay Associates, working closely with local people. A Neighbourhood Regeneration Partnership with local representation on the Board has assumed responsibility for driving the regeneration project and implementing the Integrated Regeneration Strategy.*
- *Continued work on the £5M New Heart programme. Improvements to Front Street are now complete (the design won a national award for urban realm regeneration). We have completed the regeneration of MILE House and almost completed work on the redevelopment of the market.*
- *Significantly progressed work on a major regeneration project at Grange Villa. Nathaniel Litchfield has worked closely with the local community to produce a comprehensive area development framework. As a result of this work, the Council is working in partnership with Accent Regeneration to undertake physical improvement works to homes and the environment in the village.*
- *Working towards implementation of the £500,000 grant aid from the Single Housing Investment Pot (SHIP) to invest in Grange Villa, and the further £2.5million to regenerate our District from Ship II (this is the highest award in the whole of the County).*
- *Ensured that 250 new homes have been built in the District over the last 3 years and we have assisted over 1200 residents to improve their own homes through improved planning and building control services.*
- *Successfully negotiated developer contributions to things like infrastructure and public art through Section 106 agreements amounting to some £1,500,000 over the last three years. As a result, there has been enhanced development quality and the provision of a diverse range of community facilities in regeneration schemes, in accordance with the aims of sustainable development.*
- *Recognised the need for more jobs within the District, both major industrial estates in the District are thriving and about to expand. At the privately owned Drum Industrial Estate, we have worked with developers to secure the expansion of the estate (which will create about 700 new jobs) to which we are contributing through our capital programme, while at the Council-owned Stella Gill Estate, the commercial success of the tenants has enabled us to sell land for significant expansion. The recent Lambton Estates office development will create 60,000 sq feet of prestige office floorspace.*
- *Conducted a feasibility study into supplying the village of Edmondsley from renewable energy. This shows that the village can be carbon neutral. The Council is now working with its partners and the community to take this further and make it a reality. Funding has been secured to enable a business plan to be prepared. The outcome will be a truly innovative scheme of potential national and international importance, significant improvement to the environment and strong community engagement.*

- *Restructured our regeneration team to help focus on service delivery, including community safety, and make a more coordinated approach to capacity building.*
- *Exceeded energy efficiency targets set by the government. The Council is now on target to achieve the 30% reduction in energy consumption by 2011.*
- *The Council has signed up to the North East Fuel Poverty Declaration and our communities can be assured of the Council's commitment to sustainable development.*
- *Continued to implement our Parks to Larks policy for people and biodiversity. As a result, we have ensured a more biodiverse District and greater ownership and appreciation of our communities of local green open spaces.*
- *Implemented our Street Tree and Urban Woodland policy resulting in a consolidated management approach to tree protection and maintenance, while ensuring a safer District.*
- *Developed action learning sets aimed at understanding and engaging the business community and developing a green travel plan.*
- *Worked to ensure we have built environmental sustainability into our key strategies including the Local Development Framework, Housing Strategy and Housing Business Plan.*
- *Implemented the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA), and the over 60 insulation scheme, COSY, ensuring the warmth of our most vulnerable residents while reducing their energy bills and helping reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*
- *Worked with our partners including the Primary Care Trust, Age Concern, Citizens Advice Bureau, Energywatch and the Benefits Agency to implement our Affordable Warmth Strategy, maximizing the benefits available to our most vulnerable residents.*
- *Established our status as a fair trade council and worked to achieve Fair Trade Status to help sustain business in developing countries.*
- *Developed the Shared Priorities Project aimed at chaotic drug usage and offered floating support, through youth workers, to individuals on health and social issues.*
- *Dealt with over 250 complaints about alleged breaches of planning control, with all complaints being responded to within target time scales.*

Quote “The Council is performing well in regeneration. It has delivered economic and social regeneration in Chester-le-Street town centre and surrounding villages. An important feature of social regeneration is the Council empowering community groups to participate in regeneration initiatives. This has secured sustainable improvement and built community confidence and self belief.”
Audit Commission June 2007

Priority 4: What have we not achieved?

We have not yet:

- *Progressed in identifying sites of contaminated land and taking action against the worst of these.*

Priority 5: Neighbourhood Management

Working with our community and partners to deliver action at the neighbourhood level, improving the quality of public services, engaging people in local democracy and as a result, helping to create an improved environment and sustainable communities.

What we have been trying to do

All too often people living and working in neighbourhoods with poor standards of environmental quality are passed from one service of the council to another and from one organisation to another. We set out to ensure that we are able to carry out targeted intervention into our neighbourhoods by providing joined-up service delivery. Through strong community leadership we wanted to develop civic renewal and community engagement at local and neighbourhood level. We want people in neighbourhoods in our District to feel proud to live and work there, taking ownership and responsibility for improving standards within them.

What have we achieved?

So far we have:

- *Achieved a 'Good' street cleaning, refuse collection and grounds maintenance service with 'Promising Prospects for Improvement' judgement for our environmental services following a 'harder test' inspection last year.*
- *With our partners, implemented a Neighbourhood Management Pilot in two areas of the District, Chester West and North Lodge. This has resulted in improved community engagement and improved street cleanliness. We have developed an approach to take the pilots further across the whole of the District under the banner of 'Pride in our Neighbourhoods' which will be rolled out in the forthcoming months. This includes staff across all Council services becoming responsible for reporting environmental crime.*
- *Restructured our street cleansing team to enable a more efficient and effective service to be developed across the District generally, and to support the Neighbourhood Management Pilots specifically, while backing up the environmental services team with a new system for managing customer requests (known as FLARE).*
- *Held estate walkabouts to identify issues of community concern so they can be addressed.*
- *Identified and targeted environmental hotspots, with the use of technology, to help us understand, not only where, but why, they exist so we can target the cause of the problem and address it to improve the quality of life of affected communities.*
- *Developed an environmental services Improvement Plan following our 'Good' service judgement last year and made improvements in publicising what the service is doing and achieving.*

- *Undertook a continual process improvement project, which successfully reduced the amount of time taken to remove flytipping from an average of 3.54 working days to an average of 1.29 working days, and as a result, provided a more responsive service to customers.*
- *Served 33 flytipping offenders with fixed penalty fines and made successful prosecutions in 2 cases in partnership with the Environment Agency.*
- *Used vehicle trackers to ensure that we can direct council vehicles to hotspot sites to make more effective use of resources and respond to untidy land more quickly.*
- *Integrated additional green space management for biodiversity to ensure greater access to nature and a diverse open space realm.*
- *Secured the services of a fully trained arboriculture officer in order that the public can receive prompt professional advice about trees on Council owned land and subsequent expert management carried out where necessary.*
- *Developed a Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy with our partner which will help us engage communities better and develop citizenship.*
- *Achieved and exceeded national targets for recycling (18%) by achieving a 24.42% outturn through improvements, partnership and use of local recycling facilities.*
- *Developed a strategy to promote active citizenship to assist the future delivery of neighbourhood management in our Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy and as a result, assist civic renewal and community engagement in the District.*
- *Have undertaken an environmental citizenship educational programme in local schools, raising the awareness of children about environmental issues.*
- *Implemented a successful bonfire policy which has resulted in fewer cases of bonfire nuisance while assisting the Fire Brigade to reduce their costs.*
- *Implemented an electronic system to help us address anti-social behaviour in the District more effectively.*
- *Carried out an action learning set aimed at monitoring the success of the neighbourhood management pilot to help develop proposals for future roll out across the District.*
- *Strengthened the community safety team to improve our partnership working and help to reduce crime and the fear of crime.*
- *Worked with the Police and other partners to reduce overall crime levels.*
- *Worked in partnership with the Police to make a dispersal order to deal with youth disorder at Gibside which has been very successful and has reduced anti-social behaviour in that area, improving the quality of life for residents.*
- *Targeted enforcement on drug dealers through joint work with the Police and other partners in the District which has resulted in arrests and evictions and helped to address social implications of drug use across the District.*
- *Jointly carried out anti-social behaviour educational activity in schools with the Police which has resulted in a reduction in truancy levels.*
- *Carried out 1315 pest control treatments in both Council and privately owned properties.*
- *Dealt with 425 complaints about public health related issues.*
- *Commissioned an updated study of the air quality of the District.*
- *Worked in partnership with Groundwork North Durham which has drawn down over £400,000 of funding to progress environmental schemes at Nettlesworth Community Green, Bill Forth Memorial Park, Chester Moor Recreation Ground, Cong Burn Valley Green Corridor Development Project, Hilda park, Pelton and Ouston, Avondale Terrace, Poets Estate and a RAW tennis community facility at the Riverside complex.*
- *Worked in partnership with the Great North Forest to create new woodland and increase access to the countryside for our communities.*

Priority 5: What have we not achieved?

We have not yet:

- *Fully rolled out neighbourhood management because we want to ensure that we have the proper resources in place when we do so.*
- *Carried out trade waste appraisal options and developed a formal school education programme due to a lack of capacity in the teams.*
- *Adopted corporate enforcement policies, a transport policy or environmental service enforcement policy due to more pressing priorities.*

Quote “The Council has also implemented neighbourhood management projects in Chester West and North Lodge wards. These involve street care, housing, environmental health and community safety officers working with the County Council, Police and Fire and Rescue services to tackle street care issues in a cohesive way. This combination of good underlying performance and imaginative solutions to specific problems contributed to environmental services receiving above average customer satisfaction in each of the past three years.”
Audit Commission June 2007

Priority 6: New ways of working in Leisure

Considering options for the delivery of our range of leisure services, improving the level of service offered, while responding to priorities the community has identified for the service.

What we have been trying to do

We set out to develop more economic, efficient and effective leisure services by considering innovative ways to deliver our services. We wanted to improve access, standards of provision, customer choice, and reduce the cost of service provision for our leisure services, open spaces, sports provision and cultural services. In doing so, we wanted to ensure that we promote and mainstream culture and the arts, providing new life experiences for our residents, while building on existing opportunities to attract visitors to Chester-le-Street.

What have we achieved?

So far we have:

- *Undertaken a consultation exercise seeking views on the future delivery of leisure services.*
- *Undertaken an action learning set aimed at maximising relationships between the Council and any future service provider for housing and leisure.*
- *Obtained funding from, and registration to, the Inclusive Fitness Initiative for the provision of accessible gym facilities, improving opportunities for people with disabilities to engage in physical activity. As a result, there have been 2198 visits to the gym by people with disabilities and 152 have had gym inductions. Disabled customers comment favourably about engagement processes.*
- *Ensured that the Riverside retained its Green Flag Award showing a continued commitment to the environment by the Council.*
- *Provided clear examples of high quality and comparative performance such as the Selby Cottage Childcare Centre which has received an Outstanding OFSTED report and the Green Flag Award for the Riverside is an example of openness to external challenge.*
- *Ensured that in the recent Active People Survey for overall levels of participation in regular exercise amongst the adult population, Chester-le-Street came 7th in the region and 3^d in the County. For volunteering to support sport we are equal 3^d in the region and 2nd in the County.*
- *Commenced work with our partners to ensure arts and culture are embedded in what we do resulting in the improvement of cultural experiences for our communities.*
- *Supported Sacriston Community & Sports Trust to attract external funding to facilitate the construction of new facilities within Sacriston Welfare Ground which will improve sports provision and opportunities for engagement in sport within this community. The local community will soon have new community facilities providing important local services for all groups on a long term sustainable basis. In addition, the supervision of the wider site will be improved so reducing concerns of anti-social behaviour and vandalism.*
- *Implemented a system to allow members of the public to book leisure facilities online and thus improved accessibility and choice.*
- *Continued the process of upgrading the District's play areas, in line with our Play Areas Strategy, which has helped to improve safety standards, as well as increasing children's play experiences, whilst also engaging children and residents in their design.*
- *Attracted further funding to extend the Lifestyle Initiative specifically to promote health-related projects such as Healthy Horizons, which promotes physical activity for older people, and the childhood obesity project as part of our commitment to work in partnership to improve the health of our community.*
- *Extended the Lifestyles Initiative to include clients with diabetes. Linking and supporting a more active lifestyle to people with health problems is helping them attain a better quality of life.*
- *Implemented year two of the Healthy Horizons Project and established over 20 regular community-based exercise sessions for the under 50s engaging over 200 residents.*
- *Over 50 residents attended the Cardiac Care in the Community Programme improving their quality of life.*
- *Extended a series of led walks in partnership with Durham City through the free, fortnightly 'Footsteps to Fitness' Programme.*
- *Secured funding to engage a specialist to ensure targeted intervention for increased participation in physical activity.*
- *Worked with the families of obese children through the FISCH Project throughout 21 schools across Chester-le-Street and Durham City, engaging 870 children from Chester-le-Street.*
- *Developed a formal commitment with partners to secure the future provision of the Lifestyle Initiative, as well as an action plan to ensure future activity is fully co-ordinated.*

- *Attracted £50,000 from Barclays Spaces for Sport Fund to refurbish the 3 tennis courts at Riverside and establish a junior tennis club on the site. The project has helped to engage more young people in sport, improving their skills and health.*
- *Completed the final phase of the flood defence work at the riverside.*
- *Established a community sports coach scheme within the District.*
- *Improved the wildlife area at the Riverside in consultation with the residents association and local groups, creating a rich flower meadow and picnic area - a significant educational resource backed up by a new Wildlife Spotters Guide.*
- *Increase visitor numbers to the Riverside site.*
- *Developed a multi sport project with the Durham County Cricket Club.*
- *Introduced children at the Selby Cottage Childcare Centre to the concepts of wildlife nature and conservation while holding a **Free Trade day**.*
- *Increased usage of the Indoor Centre at the Riverside by attracting other sports such as table tennis, karate and school sports activities.*
- *Hosted an 'It's a knockout event', organised by an action learning set, sponsored by local businesses, and ran in partnership with PHAB, giving opportunities for people with physical and learning disabilities to participate in sport.*
- *Refurbished three more play areas in the District bringing them up to European standards. This was accomplished using both Section 106 funding and funding from the Capital Programme. Out of the 28 play areas in the District, 17 have now been refurbished to bring them up to standard. Local children were engaged in the design brief and can now enjoy a safe and enjoyable play experience.*
- *Carried out improvements to the outdoor areas of the Selby Cottage nursery. Access arrangements have also been improved which will help maintain the outstanding OFSTED rating when next inspected. The improved outdoor areas not only give children specially designed areas to use that are appropriate for their age group, but also enable year round use due to the synthetic surfaces used. Access to good outdoor space is an important part of all children's learning and play and the nursery now has excellent provision.*
- *Supported Chester-le-Street Rowing Club in hosting the first regatta at Chester-le-Street for many years.*
- *Entered into a new partnership agreement aimed at introducing more women to golf at the Rosberry Golf Course.*
- *Implemented a new floodlighting scheme at the golf course driving range, improving facilities and reducing crime.*
- *Established a new electronic database to assist in promotional activity at the golf course.*
- *Reviewed pricing policy to engage more young people in golf and other sporting activities.*
- *Provided a free swimming pilot for under 16s at the leisure centre for a 3 month period running from June to September. This was funded by the Children's Fund. Attendances by under 16s rose by 30% over the 3 months and 45% over the six week school holiday period. It was such a success it is being repeated again over the summer school holiday period this year, again supported by the Children's Fund.*
- *Undertook customer satisfaction surveys which showed that 90% rated staff helpfulness at the leisure centre as good or better and 95% of teachers considered the FISCH project as excellent.*
- *Secured in excess of £250,000 of funding across the last three years, through Section 106 Agreements to be used to provide new and enhanced leisure facilities in the District.*
- *Submitted an application for Quest Quality Accreditation at the leisure centre in March 2007, assessment is due in August 2007.*

Priority 6: What have we not achieved?

We have not yet:

- *Been able to complete our Leisure Services Options Appraisal because of the Council's capacity and made a conscious decision to delay this piece of work until July this year in order that we could focus on this priority.*
- *Achieved the Quest Quality Accreditation for Chester-le-Street Leisure Centre, although we expect a decision in August.*
- *Submitted an application to the Big Lottery Fund to improve play provision for young people, following the guidance of the Sports Council. We will be making a submission during late summer and work has already commenced to make sure that this deadline is achieved.*
- *Completed and adopted a new District Arts Strategy by March 2007. The long term absence of the Arts Officer has meant this work has had to be deferred due to a lack of capacity. A temporary Arts Officer is being recruited and will develop the strategy/delivery plan for adoption by end of October 2007.*
- *Submitted an application to the Football Foundation for funding towards new sports facilities on Sacriston Recreation Ground. This was deferred due to a lack of capacity in the sports development team. The overall project has also experienced funding problems with the sports elements being pushed back into the second phase. The application will be submitted by September 2007 as part of the second phase funding package.*

Quote "The Council is improving leisure provision in the District. It has refurbished the gymnasium at the leisure centre in Chester-le-Street to make it accessible to people with disabilities and to improve the facilities. It has also attracted Arts Council and government funding to promote arts provision across services. It worked in partnership to develop the Riverside Sports Complex which now includes the Riverside Cricket Ground, an international cricket venue and home of Durham County Cricket Club and an indoor cricket centre and the home of the Durham County Football Association. This has established the town as a sporting venue of international and regional importance. The Council also worked in partnership with the Primary Care Trust and Durham City Council to promote a healthy 'Lifestyle Initiative'. This included over 1,000 children being involved in a programme of healthy eating and physical activity." Audit Commission June 2007

Priority 7: Maximising Efficiencies

Finding new ways of working in all services by working in collaboration with others to achieve economies of scale and better service delivery.

What we have been trying to do

We wanted to provide services that our community is happy with, and for which they receive value for money. We set out to provide more economical, efficient, and effective services right across the Council. We accept that to make real change, we have to adopt new ways of working in everything we do. We have a crucial part to play in creating sustainable communities. To achieve excellence in our services we need to be innovative, and know that we cannot make the changes we want on our own. We have set out to work in partnership with other councils to deliver the quality of service our community deserves, while making the efficiency savings that will help us invest in achieving our priorities.

What have we achieved?

So far we have:

- *Achieved a better than anticipated CPA result.*
- *Worked in partnership with other District Councils to respond to the Local Government White Paper and submitted a joint bid in January 2007.*
- *Improved on some of our Use of Resources judgements and, in particular, established a corporate approach to value for money. This is ensuring that in service planning and in making key decisions we are looking at the best ways to increase efficiencies and produce best value for our citizens. In doing so, we achieved level 2 in our Use of Resources Assessment carried out by the Audit Commission. This robust internal control framework can reassure our customers that we are looking after their resources better.*
- *Improved financial management by a team restructure, improved procedures and electronic support, improved the Medium Term Financial Strategy and improved monitoring and controls.*
- *Secured a positive audit on Data Quality which pitched us as one of only two council's in the County who have adequate arrangements in place across all the Audit Commissions criteria (Key Lines of Enquiry) for data quality management. As a results, citizens can be assured that the performance information we use is accurate and up to date.*
- *Worked in partnership with Derwentside and Easington to share web development skills and website hosting and helped to deliver services more cost effectively.*
- *Developed and adopted a Data Quality Policy and Strategy to help us build on the adequacy of our data quality management.*
- *Developed a range of electronic systems across the Council to improve service delivery particularly, investment in the Council's website.*
- *Developed an e-Government communications plan to improve take-up of electronic services.*
- *Operated an audit service which is highly regarded by the Audit Commission and complies with national codes of practice.*
- *Delivered an audit service on behalf of other organizations.*
- *Improved and introduced new electronic systems across the Council to improve performance management and service delivery and to achieve national e-Government targets and Priority Shared Outcomes. This included systems in leisure and environmental services, leading to more efficient and effective service delivery to customers.*
- *Undertaken three action learning sets, looking at a corporate process for proving value for money in all services, the best use of council accommodation and financial management. By implementing the proposals from these areas of work, we will be able to assure our customers that we are seriously addressing efficient use of resources within the organisation.*

- *Entered into a partnership with Derwentside District Council to share procurement resources improving how we will buy goods and services in the future and making savings of over £40,000 in the process.*
- *implemented our first Procurement Strategy which will help us achieve national targets and ensure we achieve value for money in the goods and services we purchase.*
- *Saved over £800,000 by achieving our annual efficiencies targets.*
- *Introduced a series of other improvements such as meeting deadlines for the production of our accounts, Medium Term Financial Planning, new accounting systems and Members scrutiny of budgets and out-turn reports.*
- *Evaluated the grounds care service against a nationally recognised, customer focused quality standard (ISO 14001) which increases the perception that the Council takes responsibility for its own environmental impact.*
- *Produced the first Annual Report of the new Audit Committee so that members and the public can now have reasonable assurance on the effectiveness of our internal control framework.*
- *Successfully carried out 24 prosecutions for benefit fraud over the last few years, protecting public money. Successfully applied 54 sanctions over the same period including prosecutions and penalties on customers committing benefit fraud.*
- *Received a 'STRONG' internal annual benefits service audit.*
- *Increased the number of direct debit council tax collections by 3% following a take-up campaign.*
- *Worked in partnership with the Valuation Office Agency to speed up property banding, the first council in the County to do so.*
- *Merged council tax bills with notification letters and the Best Value Performance Plan Summary to reduce production and delivery costs.*
- *Secured an annual efficiency saving relating to improvements in attendance and reduced sickness days.*
- *Secured a saving of about £20,000 on internal delivery of training and development for councillors and staff.*
- *Worked in partnership with the Pension Service on a joint take-up exercise resulting in vulnerable customers receiving £11,000 more.*
- *Ensured that the work of our internal audit team is reviewed quarterly by the Council and secured the approval of the team's service plan by the Audit Committee in January. As a result, the Council and the community will obtain value for money for the internal audit service.*
- *Successfully negotiated developer contributions to things like infrastructure and public art through Section 106 agreements amounting to some £1,500,000 over the last three years. As a result, in the provision of a diverse range of community facilities through regeneration schemes, in accordance with the aims of sustainable development, has been enhanced.*
- *Achieved Planning Delivery Grant of some £682,000 over three years due to increased planning performance. As a result, we are able to invest in the planning service to make more efficiency savings.*
- *Worked with other district councils to share resources and experiences in improving equality and diversity in the District and as a result, maximising the resources that are available to the councils concerned.*
- *Worked with other councils to develop the Countywide Local Area Agreement which ought to result in improved ways to deliver services across the County.*
- *Carried out continuous process improvement pilots in areas such as reletting of council property which has reduced the time taken to relet property, while saving the Council an estimated £30,000 per year. The pilots proved so successful that they are being used in other areas such as improving aids and adaptation processing times.*
- *Made efficiencies by not placing homeless families in bread and breakfast accommodation which has saved the Council some £700,000.*
- *Improved twice as many homes in 2006/2007 by improving procurement services.*
- *Saved resources by investing in modern apprentices while giving opportunities of skilled employment to young people.*
- *Increased the spending on adaptations to reduce the waiting list by realigning resources.*
- *Implemented an IT policy which is aimed at saving paper, reducing stationary costs while contributing to environmental protection.*

Priority 7: What have we not achieved?

We have not yet:

- *Achieved Level 3 for our Use of Resources judgement and have put in place an action plan to address this.*
- *Completed our work on value for money studies throughout the organization. Pending the outcomes of our action learning set, we will be implementing proposals from July.*
- *Fully implemented our Information Management Strategy which is a medium term strategy for the next three years due to lack of capacity in the organisation. We will be looking at other ways to achieve this during the current year.*
- *Maximised working with other councils to deliver improved services largely because of the different speeds other councils wish to work at, we are addressing this.*

Quote “The Council is working well to improve efficiency. It has implemented a good performance management framework to identify areas of good and poor performance. This enables it to target corrective action at less efficient services using techniques such as continual process improvement, improvement plans and encouraging new ways of working by empowering individuals. The Council supports these actions with a comprehensive organisational development programme, effective personal development programmes and a corporate focus on value for money. These measures are systematically improving efficiency.” Audit Commission June 2007

Our Improvement Programme: Improvement and Recovery Plan Achievements

What we have been trying to do

The Council has learned from the past, we are looking to the future and want to be an excellent council. We have set out a structure for ensuring change happens. We are committed to the effective and responsible management of change in order to address the performance issues that emerged from our Comprehensive Performance Assessment. We are equally committed to ensuring that the measures that must be put in place

as components of the Improvement and Recovery Plan provide a robust base for long term sustainable improvements in the quality of services and, in turn, a demonstrable improvement in your quality of life. We achieved much in implementing our first Improvement and Recovery Plan agreed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in September 2004. These achievements were set out in our Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan last year.

We agreed a second phase of our Improvement and Recovery Plan in November 2005. It was recognised that the first Improvement & Recovery Plan had a relatively short term perspective, which was focused on developing a sound organisational structure. It was agreed that a second plan was needed to elevate the organisation out of recovery and drive forward more long term sustainable improvements for the future. The Improvement and Recovery Plan 2 (IRP2) was designed, not only to address the specific issues identified by the Audit Commission, but also to provide the framework for long term sustainable improvement that will touch on every aspect of service delivery. This has helped the Council lift itself from its previous poor rating. Fundamentally, we believe that we must plan for excellence. IRP2 was therefore the central feature of our Improvement Programme. Improvement & Recovery Plan 2 was based on the original key themes from IRP1 and identifies twelve headline objectives that seek to embed many of the principles and practices laid down within the first Improvement & Recovery Plan. They are as follows:

Vision into Action

Community Engagement

Making sure we develop a wide range of ways for customers to engage in service delivery

Priority Driven Budgeting

Making sure we set and monitor our budget continuously on the basis of reviewing our priorities

Partnership Working

Making sure we work with our partners to achieve effectiveness

Decision Making

Embedding the Constitution

Making sure that our staff use the powers given to them to the best advantage of our customers

Accountability

Making sure that members, officers, and others who manage our resources, ensure efficiencies

Decision Effectiveness and Learning

Making sure we regularly review the decisions we make, reflect on them, and learn by them

People and Performance

Mainstreaming Equality & Diversity

Making sure that we build equality and diversity into everything we do

Empowerment

Making sure that we give people the skills and capacity to make the decisions we expect of them

Embedding Performance Management

Making sure that our performance management framework is fully implemented across the Council

Improving Services

Leisure Provision

Making sure we consider future options for the delivery of this key service

Making the Best Use of Resources

Making sure we achieve lower cost, better performing services by our choice of procurement. Ensuring that we can meet efficiency expectations through improved ways of buying goods and services

Targeted Service Improvement

Making sure we improve services in accordance with our priorities including housing, environment, cultural and benefits

Quote “The Council uses action and improvement plans to good effect. Since 2004 it has been systematically focused on improving performance. It delivered an Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP) in conjunction with the Monitoring Board of officials from GONE and local government inspectorates. More recently it has produced IRP2. Strategies and service plans include action plans that are supported by initiatives to develop capacity and organisational self confidence.” Audit Commission June 2007

We recognise that the ultimate success of our programme of improvement will be measured by the extent to which our customers, the residents of Chester-le- Street District and our businesses, have an improved quality of life, are clear about our priorities, understand and have access to the decision making process and are fully engaged in every aspect of service delivery. Building a strong and continuing relationship with our communities was therefore a pivotal factor of this plan, and to reflect this, the structure of the improvement process has been designed to be inclusive, with close links to the District Partnership. The Council is not complacent about the scale of improvements needed or the difficulties associated with the management of change. Nevertheless, change is needed and this must be founded on a clear set of values and a collective understanding of the core principles on which we will strive to deliver future services. These core principles were set out in Chapter 3.

To achieve our aspirations will take time and will require an evolving culture of confidence, achievement and performance management. We have service strengths to build upon and a track record in partnership working. Our Improvement and Recovery Plan, however, recognised that some of our services have operated in a ‘dysfunctional’ environment with a lack of clear leadership, prioritisation and personal and collective responsibility. Our improvement themes have been brought together under a new political and administrative leadership with a drive and determination to work with our staff and partners as ‘*OneTeam*’ to deliver these improvements and to ***‘work together to fulfil the needs of our Communities’***.

Our Improvement and Recovery Plan begins with a clear statement of our commitment to tackle difficult issues and make significant changes. Our elected Members and Council staff are all signed up to it. Cultural change is seen as crucial to the Council getting better. As indicated earlier, a ‘*OneTeam*’ approach that puts people at its heart, has been introduced.

We feel that the Plan:

- was honest;
- recognised our weaknesses;
- acknowledged the recommendations made by the Audit Commission following their inspections; and

- helped move us out of recovery into continuous improvement.

Throughout the Corporate Plan we have painted a picture of the future by giving a clear vision of what we are trying to achieve, how we will get there and how we will make sure we get there on time. We have set out a structure for ensuring change happens.

What we have achieved during 2006/2007 in implementing the second phase of our Improvement Programme

IRP2: Summary of Achievements 2006/07

IRP Theme	Summary of Achievements	Outcomes – What it means to you
<p>Vision into Action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commenced implementation of Information Strategy. • A clear priority planning process has been embedded, linked to the community strategy, resources and service planning. • Corporate Plan reviewed in light of priorities and the Council’s budget decisions. • Service plans reviewed in light of priorities and the Council’s budget decisions. • Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy agreed by the District Partnership as a joint way forward. • Service plans have been reviewed to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is managing its information effectively. • Successful budget established based on the Council’s priorities. • Customers, employees and members are clear about what the Council is trying to achieve and how they propose to do it. • Individual services ensure that the priorities of all customers are reflected in service design and delivery and employees are clear about how they contribute. • A strategy is in place to allow the Council to work with key partners to improve engagement with its communities. • Consideration is given to the Council’s priorities in service delivery and

	<p>mainstream strategy in service delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A customer services team established and relevant training provided. • Community Strategy reviewed. • Partnership Strategy produced. • Led the Durham Districts 'Pathfinder to Unitary' response to the Local Government White Paper. • Identified and implemented opportunities for partnership working. 	<p>design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers have seamless and comprehensive access to services within the civic centre. • A strategy is in place to ensure the Council and partners are working toward the same goals to improve quality of life, for those living, working and visiting Chester-le-Street. • A strategy is in place to ensure more effective and efficient partnership working. • The Durham District's proposals for local government for County Durham were considered by the Government. • More efficient and effective ways of working, which will improve services to communities.
<p>Decision Making</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewed agenda protocols for key Council decision making bodies. • Reviewed financial regulations. • An audit of Executive and Council decisions has been undertaken. • Capital Plan implemented. • District Partnership adopted a Young Persons Charter of Participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocols in place that ensure decision making is efficient, transparent, accountable and responsive to the needs of the people. • Improved efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's financial management arrangements. • Improved report writing and decision making. • Council monitors the agreed programme for General Capital Fund Expenditure. • Young people are engaged in the design of services provided for them.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Strategy developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council captures learning and shares it across the organisation.
People & Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality and Diversity local performance indicators produced and monitored. • A programme of activities to promote Equalities and Diversity developed. • A programme of action learning sets completed and proposals for future implementation agreed. • 'OneTeam' Management Development Programme implemented and evaluated. • A corporate approach to workforce planning adopted and implemented. • An audit of working practices undertaken. • Performance Management Framework embedded throughout the organisation. • Use of the computerised performance management system embedded throughout the organisation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council can measure performance against identified needs of minorities within the community. • Minority groups within the community are involved through consultation and celebratory events. • Action learning is embedded across the Council as an effective way of learning. • The Council has clear competency frameworks in place which help inform standards required of managers and address development needs. • The Council has up to date information regarding the current and future skills and numbers of employees required to deliver services. • The Council has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures in place for dealing with all human resource issues. • The Council is actively monitoring performance and addressing any underperformance in a timely manner. • Improved performance monitoring and reporting.
Improving Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement Strategy implemented. • Customer care training delivered to all relevant employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in the way the Council buys its goods and services. • Employees are able to respond to customers needs more effectively.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme of continual process improvement projects completed. • Corporate Equality Plan reviewed. • Website monitored and reviewed. • A Land Management Study completed. • 228 BFI recommendations for benefits implemented. • Customer focused corporate service standards embedded and reviewed. • Housing Improvement Plan implemented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements in services that will lead to greater efficiency. • Equalities and Diversity is embedded into the Council's decision making process and its systems and services are fully inclusive. • Improvements made which have improved content and access to services for customers. • Council has clear picture of its landholdings and their use and any surplus land assets have been disposed of on the open market. • Improved service delivery to customers. • Reduction in number of complaints received and increase in customer satisfaction levels. • Improved service delivery to customers.
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Scrutiny Improvement Achievements 2006/07

The scrutiny function at Chester-le-Street was restructured during 2006, following extensive consultation and work with Members. The previous scrutiny panels of Strong Communities, Green Communities and Safe & Healthy had become outdated and lacked focus on current Council priorities, the restructuring has provided clear links to corporate priorities and objectives. The 3 panels are now:

- *Partnership & Efficiency Overview and Scrutiny Panel*
- *Leisure & Neighbourhood Overview and Scrutiny Panel*

- *Regeneration & Housing Overview and Scrutiny Panel*

Achievements during 2006/2007 include:

- The Comprehensive Performance Assessment concludes that 'scrutiny is effective', clearly showing a significant improvement from the 2004 conclusion of 'scrutiny is underdeveloped'.
- The submission of a number of reports for consideration by the Council's Executive on a wide variety of topics including the future of the Council's Industrial Estates, the Nexus LinkUp Bus Service, the Future of Scrutiny, Member and Public Attendance, Leisure Activities for Young People, Environmental Enforcement and Public Toilets.
- Panels have discussed, considered and reviewed reports submitted by various services on a range of subjects including Revenues & Benefits Performance Information, Corporate Performance Information, Equalities Policy, Housing Allocations Policy, Regeneration Strategy, Community Services Performance Information, Adoption of Environmental Policy, and Policy and Protocol for Environmental Services Enforcement Team.
- Continuing to monitor corporate and service performance, contributing to and celebrating improvement progress.
- An extensive review undertaken on leisure activities for young people with the panel gathering information from a variety of sources including external organisations, young people and partnership groups, as well as a visit to a neighbouring authority to compare practices.
- Developing more inclusive work programmes by asking parish councils, community organisations, partners and the general public for views on possible scrutiny topics.
- Securing national acknowledgement of scrutiny progress through the Centre for Public Scrutiny. They used Chester-le-Street as a positive case study in a recent publication 'Scrutiny, Performance and Improvement: the road to excellence.' Officers were invited to London as part of the launch of this research document, to present on progress and also to share their experiences with other local authorities.
- A review into environmental enforcement and the new powers contained in the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 included visits to Durham City and Middlesbrough Councils respectively. This was valuable to the scrutiny panel in gaining evidence on how other councils were developing the implementation of this act.
- Increasing the development of public awareness and involvement in the scrutiny process by use of the Council's website, District News magazine and local press and radio to highlight the work of scrutiny in Chester-le-Street and obtain public opinion on a number of issues under review.

- Engagement with a variety of groups using a range of techniques to gain evidence and information on which to make sound recommendations. This has included the use of focus groups, site visits, surveys, graffiti walls and interviews, all of which have been used effectively by scrutiny panels during their work in 2006/07.

5. Our Performance Indicator Achievements 2006/2007

What this chapter is about

This section summarises how we performed last year. You will have already seen in Chapter 4 our comments on our achievements in the last year. This chapter provides more detail on performance measures that allow us to compare ourselves with others.

Here you can see:

- a summary of how we performed on the indicators that we have to produce by law (Best Value Performance Indicators);
- full details of our results for each indicator;
- whether we improved or not;
- whether we met our targets or not;
- what our trends are like over a period of time;
- a reason for how well or how poorly we have done;
- targets we have set for the next three years; and
- a summary of other indicators we have produced locally.

Summary of last year's performance

During 2006/2007 the Audit Commission, on behalf of the Government, required us to produce a total of **47** Best Value Performance Indicators. Some of these had more than one result to show. There were, therefore, really **83** separate indicators to monitor and report upon. We are also required to produce 9 Customer Satisfaction Best Value Performance Indicators. We analyse the results of these later in the section.

Best Value Performance Indicators fell into the following categories:

- corporate health, those indicators showing how the Council as a whole is doing;
- housing, including benefits;
- environment, including cleanliness, waste, environmental health and planning;
- culture and related services; and
- community safety and wellbeing.

A full list of indicators in these categories, our performance against them, and explanation is provided on pages **XX** to **XX**. Please note that where we identify top quartile comparisons, these are based on information published by the Audit Commission on national performance of district councils during 2005/2006. As a result of this, we could compare better or worse for performance last year. Our targets for the next three years are provided in Appendix 4.

Comparative information for 2006/2007 is not yet available for all district councils. However, available information for previous years shows a good trend of improvement in indicators in the top 25% in the country and less in the bottom 25% in the country. The following table shows that over the last few years we have increased the number of our indicators which are the amongst the best in the country from 27% to 33% while reducing the indicators amongst the worst in the country from 35% to 30%.

Year	% of BVPI's within Top 25%	% of BVPI's within Bottom 25%
2002/2003	27%	35%
2004/2005	32%	36%
2005/2006	33%	30%

During 2006/2007 we:

- achieved our targets in 75% (66%) of cases;
- improved on last year in 66% (79%) of cases;
- showed an improving trend over a three year period in 64% (68%) of cases;
- secured performance in the top 25% in the country in 47% (33%) of cases; and
- reduced our bottom quartile performances to 18% (30%).

Unfortunately we:

- failed to meet our targets in 25% (34%) of cases;
- failed to improve in 34%(21%) of cases;
- show a declining trend in 28% (17%) of cases; and,
- still show bottom quartile performance in 18% (30%) of cases.

Corporate Health Indicators

We generally showed good performance in terms of our corporate health indicators. We made improvements in:

- quality of our race equality scheme;
- percentage of invoices for commercial goods and services paid;
- percentage on non-domestic rates collected
- number of working days lost to sickness;
- percentage of employees retiring early;
- percentage of employees retiring on health grounds;
- percentage of employees who have a disability;
- percentage of employees from ethnic minority communities; and
- percentage of buildings open to the public that are accessible.

However, we were less successful in terms of:

- level of the Equalities Standard for Local Government;
- percentage of council tax collected;
- percentage of top earners who are women; and
- percentage of top paid 5% who have a disability.

25% of our corporate health performance indicators were in the bottom quartile nationally while 19% were in the top 25% in the country.

Housing Indicators

We showed mixed performance in terms of our housing indicators and benefits.

We made improvements in:

- the average SAP rating of local authority owned dwellings;
- percentage of tenants with more than seven weeks gross rent arrears;
- percentage of tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears;
- percentage change in non-decent homes;
- average length of stay in hostel accommodation;
- percentage change in the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation;
- percentage of households claiming homelessness;
- number of prosecution and sanctions undertaken;
- average processing time for written notifications of change of circumstances;
- number of benefit claimants visited;
- amounts of overpayments recovered;
- percentage of overpayments recovered against total debt; and
- percentage of overpayment written off.

Unfortunately we were not able to improve in:

- proportion of unfit houses improved as a result of council action;
- rents collected as a proportion of rents owed;
- percentage of tenants served with seeking possession notices;
- meeting the Commission for Racial Equality standards for social landlords;
- proportion of non-decent homes;
- average time taken to relet council houses (although our CPI pilot has made a significant difference to the potential);
- average stay in bed and breakfast accommodation;
- the number of people sleeping rough;
- proportion of repeat homelessness;
- average processing time for new claims;
- number of fraud investigators employed;
- number of fraud investigations carried out; and
- percentage of benefits calculations correct.

31% of our housing performance indicators were in the bottom quartile nationally, while 13% were in the top 25% in the country. This compared with 40% of benefits and council tax indicators in the top quartile and 0% in the bottom quartile.

Environment Indicators

We performed well throughout our environmental indicators.

We improved in:

- percentage of waste recycled;
- total tonnage of waste sent for recycling;
- percentage of household waste sent for composting or treatment;
- tonnage of household waste sent for composting or treatment;
- percentage of residents served by kerbside collection of one recyclable;
- percentage of residents served by kerbside collection of at least two recyclables;
- percentage of land clear of litter etc;
- percentage of land where flyposting is visible;
- score against checklist of environmental health quality;
- percentage of sites with information about contamination;
- percentage of pollution control improvements completed on time;

- percentage of reports on abandoned vehicles investigated in 24 hours;
- percentage of abandoned vehicles removed within 24 hours;
- percentage of major planning applications decided within targets;
- percentage of minor applications decided within targets;
- percentage of other planning applications decided within targets;
- having a LDF rolling programme;
- publishing an annual report on progress;
- the number of planning appeals which were upheld;
- percentage of conservation areas with an up-to-date character appraisal;
- number of conservation areas with published management;
- score against a quality of planning services checklist.

However, we did not do so well in:

- amount of waste collected per head of population;
- percentage change in the amount of waste collected per head;
- cost of waste collected per head;
- percentage of land where graffiti is visible;
- number of sites of potential contamination;
- percentage of houses built on brownfield land; and
- meeting milestones in the Local Development Framework.

In terms of our waste and cleanliness indicators, 42% of these were in the top 25% in the country, while 17% were in the bottom 25%. 83% of our environmental health indicators were in the top 25% in the country while 0% were in the bottom quartile. 67% of our planning indicators were specifically in the top 25% while 0% were in the bottom 25%.

Community Safety and Wellbeing Indicators

We showed good performance in terms of community safety indicators.

We improved in:

- number of domestic burglaries;
- robberies per 1000 population;
- number of vehicle crimes;
- score against a checklist of actions taken against domestic violence; and
- percentage of racial incidents which resulted in further action.

However, we did not do so well in:

- violent crime per 1,00 population; and

- number of racial incidents recorded.

20% of these were in the top quartile nationally and 0% were in the bottom quartile.

***Quote “Overall, the Council delivers good services that continue to improve. Based on national performance indicators for 2005/06, 45 per cent of the Council's key performance indicators (PIs) are in the best quartile. This compares favourably with the national average for district councils of 32 per cent. Similarly, the Council exceeds the national average for improvement. Since 2002/03, the Council has improved its performance in 65 per cent of PIs - the district council average is 58 per cent. The Council has also made considerable progress in important areas including improving access to services for customers, finance, information technology, risk management and partnership working.”
Audit Commission June 2007***

The following pages and Appendix 4 set out our Best Value Performance Indicators. The key on this page will help you understand the information provided. Over the last two years improvements in setting and monitoring targets for the future have been made as part of our new performance management system within the Council. We have made significant progress in terms of improvement in our performance and this is reflected in the 'good' CPA judgement. We will, however, continue to address performance and will target areas of underperformance. This year we have developed action plans to meet our targets which we will monitor alongside our target achievements. We will continue to get better.

Insert indicator analysis

Local Performance Indicators

Last year we produced a sample of our local indicators. These are not statutory indicators but indicators that we felt showed our performance in other areas of service provision that are of local rather than national interest. We have continued to produce these and show the results in Appendix 5 while targets for the next 3 years are set out in Appendix 6. We will be collecting information on our performance on these during this year and will publish comparative results in next year's plan. We will also continue to work to refine these indicators. Last year we met our targets in 51% of cases.

Customer Satisfaction Best Value Performance Indicators 2006/2007

The Government requires all local authorities to seek the views of its customers every three years. The first of these surveys was conducted in 2000 and the second in 2003. The last statutory survey was undertaken during 2006/2007. This requires us to carry out the following range of surveys:

- a general household survey;
- a survey of council housing tenants;
- a survey of benefit claimants; and
- a survey of planning applicants.

In total, there are 9 customer satisfaction Best Value Performance Indicators which equates to 21 individual indicators. A full list of these indicators, our performance against them, and an explanation is given on pages xx to xx. Please note that where we identify top quartile comparisons, these are based on information published by the Audit Commission on national performance of district councils during 2003/04. Our targets for the next three years are provided in Appendix 4.

As part of our improvement programme, we decided that undertaking a general residents' survey every three years was not sufficient to allow us to set relevant priorities and consider our budgets. We therefore now undertake a general resident's survey every year. In addition, for the second time this year, we have undertaken a survey of our tenants. These surveys are taken on the Council's behalf by recognised market research companies. In addition to this, we have started to undertake regular service based surveys including for our planning service. Our Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy also looks to secure a corporate approach to surveys across all service areas to help us develop our plans and help set service standards. In terms of performance:

- 57% of our customer satisfaction Best Value Performance Indicators improved;
- we met 52% of our targets;
- 57% showed an improving trend; and
- 33% were within the top 25% in the country.

Residents' Survey Results

This was based on a sample of 2,600 residents. We received a response rate of 48.9% which is extremely good. Key results of the Residents' survey show:

- Your satisfaction with the Council generally has increased from 52% in 2003/4 to 54% in 2006/7.
- Your satisfaction with how we are keeping land and streets free of litter and refuse has increased from 52% to 68%.
- Your satisfaction with parks and open spaces has increased from 65% to 78%.
- Your satisfaction with sports/leisure facilities and events has increased from 56% to 65%.
- Your satisfaction with planning increased from 76% to 85%.
- Your satisfaction with the revenues and benefits service has increased from 79% to 82%.
- 84% felt that household waste collection showed value for money.

- 74.5% felt that the concessionary fares scheme offered value for money.

However:

- Your satisfaction with the Council keeping you informed has reduced from 53% to 49%.
- Your satisfaction with the waste collection service has reduced from 87% to 83%.
- Your satisfaction with local recycling facilities has reduced from 74% to 64%.
- Satisfaction with handing of complaints is not improving at 30%.
- Only 40% considered that the Council was delivering value for money overall.
- Only 58% considered revenues and benefits delivered value for money.

The Survey also showed that;

- Most important in making a place a good place to live were 'a low level of crime', (72.3%), and 'clean streets', (54.9%). Nearly half of all respondents also mentioned 'health services', (41%) and 'affordable and decent housing' (40%).
- 'Activities for teenagers' (57%) was felt to be the greatest priority for improvement in the local area followed by 'level of crime' (41.5%) and 'road and pavement repairs' at 34.7%.
- Two services therefore stand out as being the 'most important' and 'in most need of improvement'. These are low level of crime and clean streets.

Tenants' Survey Results

The survey was undertaken with all tenants (over 4,300). We achieved a response rate of 48% which we feel is also excellent. Key results of the tenants' survey show:

- General satisfaction with the Council as landlord has increased from 70% in 2005/06 to 73% in 2006/07.
- Tenant satisfaction with the repairs service has increased from 62% to 73%.
- Tenant satisfaction with their accommodation has increased from 56% to 81%.
- Tenant satisfaction with their property has increased from 75% to 81%.
- Tenant satisfaction with the area in which they live has increased from 76% to 81%.
- Tenant satisfaction with communications has increased from 69% to 87%.
- Tenant satisfaction with how the landlord listens to their views has increased from 69% to 74%.
- Tenant satisfaction with value for money has increased from 67% to 75%.
- 87% of tenants are satisfied with time taken to undertake repairs.
- 92% of tenants are satisfied with attitude of repair staff.
- 86% of tenants are satisfied with quality of repair work.
- 87% of tenants felt good about their landlord.
- Tenant satisfaction with opportunities to participate has increased from 58.22% in 2003/04 to 69% in 2006/07.
- 100% of tenants from minority groups are satisfied with opportunities for participation.

However;

- General satisfaction with the Council as landlord has decreased from 75% in 2003/4 to 73% in 2005.

Insert customer satisfaction indicator analysis here – see spreadsheet

Our Response

We will continue to respond to your views to help us set priorities, budgets and service standards. We need to know more about our communities and their needs. Equally we need to let our communities know exactly what we are doing and what we are achieving. Both of these are fundamental actions in our Community Engagement and Involvement strategy. Above all we need to improve services. Our Corporate Plan proposals seek to do that. The plan also sets out proposals to develop and implement action plans to specifically improve resident and tenant satisfaction. During this year, we have agreed action plans to improve customer satisfaction. We are committed to doing this.

We are listening to your views. They are important to us and will help shape our future plans and improvement work.

Commitment to Data Quality

The Council is committed to continually improving data quality including for example, the importance of, and arrangements for, securing the quality of key data that is used to measure our performance. In particular, through our Corporate Governance Group, we will continue to work to:

- put in place senior level arrangements for data quality;
- define expectations for data quality;
- put in place effective systems and resources to manage data quality; and,
- have effective arrangements and controls for use of data.

The officer responsible for data quality is the Assistant Chief Executive and the lead Member for data quality is the Executive Member and Portfolio Holder for Community Engagement and Partnership Working

Quote “The Council uses accurate and reliable data to support performance management. The Council's arrangements to secure data quality are effective and improving. Overall strategic responsibility rests with the Assistant Chief Executive and he is supported by a lead councillor appointed from the Executive. The Council formalised its data quality policy in June 2006. The policy identifies improvements to systems supporting the collecting, recording, analysis and reporting of performance indicators and these are being implemented. The Council has put in place data recovery arrangements for all systems on its computer network and a business continuity plan is in place. .” Audit Commission June 2007

6. Our Proposals for 2007/2008 and Beyond

What this chapter is about

- advises you what we propose under our 7 priorities including desired outcomes;
- advises you what we propose under each aim of the Council including our priorities and what that means; and
- identifies what we propose to do to develop our Improvement Programme as a result of the 'good' Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

Our Improvement Proposals

Priority 1 : Customer Excellence

Improving customer care while providing new ways to access our services. This includes meeting our e-Government targets and national priority service outcomes.

Our objectives for this priority are

We want to ensure that we become a council which is customer focused, pursues customer excellence and is easy to do business with. The services we provide have to be consistent, coordinated and proactive, with standards set and agreed in conjunction with customers. Our employees are trained, motivated and rewarded and to identify if the customer needs extra help or advice, help sort out problems and take personal responsibility for them. We make sure that services are responsive and accountable to all citizens, including minority and vulnerable groups, by regular reporting and consultation. We want to be a council that provides every opportunity to be engaged in local democracy and service delivery and, in doing so, ensure equality and celebrate diversity. We want to be acknowledged for being a council which has improved and is continuing to improve.

To achieve our objectives and secure continuous improvement we propose the following:

CE1	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop a revised Improvement Plan taking into account the view expressed in the Audit Commissions Comprehensive Performance Assessment Report, June 2007 and secure positive direction of travel reports through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respond to CAA consultation by July 2007 ▪ Consider CPA inspection report at Full Council by July 2007 ▪ Carry out a review of corporate priorities by September 2007 ▪ Agree Improvement Plan by December 2007 ▪ Maintain a 'Good' re-categorisation judgement and positive direction of travel assessments on an annual basis 	Customers can be assured that the Council will not rest on its laurels over the positive CPA judgement and ensure it has a robust improvement plan which secures continuous improvement in the Council and the services it delivers.
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE2	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Revise the priorities of the Council and agree non-priorities taking into account any proposals to reorganise local government following the result of the current national government consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commence the process by considering the results of the Council's annual opinion surveys by June 2007 ▪ Receive the decision of national government on the future of local government by August 2007 ▪ Establish clear priorities and non-priorities based on a thorough risk and opportunities analysis by September 2007 ▪ Progress budget setting process for 2008/2009 on the basis of revised priorities by March 2008 ▪ Set out new priorities in 2008/2010 Corporate Plan by June 2008 	The Council will have a set of up to date priorities which respond to the needs of our communities and allow it to continue its focus on what matters to the public.
Lead Officer	Roy Templeman	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE3	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Review our Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete partnership action plan by September 2007 ▪ Undertake review of Council strategy by March 2008 ▪ Implement from April 2008 ▪ Increased community and partner engagement ▪ 90% of actions achieved on time ▪ 3% increase in customer satisfaction ▪ Positive audit reports ▪ Impact and engagement of all services 	The Council will understand its community better and the community will understand the Council better. There will be increased opportunity for the community to engage with the Council and our partners in a meaningful way.
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Stephen Barr

CE4	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Implement Equality Plan through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of action plan ▪ Increased community and partner engagement ▪ Review of action plan by March 2008 ▪ 100% response to new legislation within statutory timescales ▪ 90% of actions achieved on time ▪ 3% increase in customer satisfaction in local indicators ▪ Improve to Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government ▪ Positive audit reports ▪ Impact and engagement of all services 	The Council will be proactive in meeting legislative requirements while celebrating diversity and culture within our communities and with our communities. The Council will know much more about our community profile and will be better placed to provide equality of services particularly to those who do not normally access them.
Lead Officer	Julie Underwood	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE5	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Complete implementation, embedding and review of the Customer Excellence Strategy by March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of action plan ▪ Development of customer services team by August 2007 ▪ CRM system operational March 2008 ▪ Review strategy document and achievements by March 2008 ▪ 80% of customer enquiries answered at first point of contact ▪ 90% of actions achieved on time ▪ 3% increase in customer satisfaction including complaints handling ▪ Reduction in complaints ▪ Positive direction of travel ▪ Impact and engagement of all services 	The Council will have a vastly improved customer care culture with the resources, skills, technology and behaviours to enable change to have taken place. Customers will benefit from improved services standards across all services.
Lead Officer	Craig Etherington	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Stephen Barr

CE6	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Carry out general residents' satisfaction survey by December 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procure market research provider by September 2007 ▪ Meet ODPM guidance ▪ Receive final report by April 2008 ▪ Analyse and publish results by June 2008 ▪ Improved satisfaction rates from 2007 BVPI's by 3% ▪ Achievement of 2007/8 BVPI targets 	The Council will have improved knowledge about how communities perceive the delivery of services across the District. The information will be used to develop priorities and set budgets.
Lead Officer	Craig Etherington	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Stephen Barr

CE7	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Continue roll out of Customer Relationship Management system across all services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CRM system operational across all services by March 2008 ▪ Implemented on time and within budget ▪ % of transactions and customer profile recorded on system increases year on year ▪ Targets to be developed by December 2007 	The Council will be able to deal with 80% of enquiries at first point of contact
Lead Officers	Craig Etherington and Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Stephen Barr

CE8	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop improvement plan for the Benefits Service as a result of the inspection pilot undertaken with the Audit Commission by December 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake pilot inspection by June 2007 ▪ Receive results by August 2007 ▪ Agree improvement plan and build into service plan by December 2007 ▪ Implement through to completion ▪ % on actions achieved against targets ▪ 3% across the board improvement in benefits customer satisfaction BVPI's ▪ Positive unpublished inspection result ▪ Positive direction of travel statement 	Customers will receive an improved level of service, above minimum requirements. The Council will benefit from pilot learning and sharing experiences with others.
Lead Officer	Jayne Henderson	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Simon Henig

CE9	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop and implement a benefits take up strategy and implement by March 2009. A benefits take up campaign means working with partners e.g. Welfare Rights, CAB, not just ourselves, to maximise benefit entitlement and bring new customers onto benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and adopt strategy by June 2007 ▪ Review annually ▪ Annual % increase in benefit take up ▪ 3% increase in benefits customer satisfaction BVPI's 	This will maximise income and improve the quality of life of our communities most disadvantaged and vulnerable customers through active support and pro-active intervention.
Lead Officer	Jayne Henderson	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Simon Henig

CE10		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop and implement a revenues take up strategy to maximise direct benefits and e-payments and ensure customers have correct entitlement to discounts, reliefs and investment by March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and adopt strategy by June 2007 ▪ Develop targets by September 2007 ▪ Review annually ▪ Annual % increase in revenues take up ▪ Annual % increase in electronic transactions ▪ 3% increase in revenues customer satisfaction 	Income is maximized by applying correct discount entitlements resulting in increased quality of life for customers.
Lead Officer	Jayne Henderson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

CE11		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop and implement an anti-fraud strategy by March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and adopt strategy by June 2007 ▪ Review annually ▪ Targets to be developed by September 2007 	Continue to protect public funds and create an antifraud culture.
Lead Officer	Jayne Henderson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

CE12		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Consider the introduction of instant messaging between customers and the Council over the authority website		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider options and develop targets by December 2007 ▪ Introduce facilities if benefits outweigh costs by March 2008 ▪ Increase in use of the Council website ▪ Improved satisfaction of website users 	Contact with council officers via website to assist customers to find the information or access the services they need.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

CE13		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
CRM System – website customer self service		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider options and develop targets by December 2007 ▪ Introduce facilities if benefits outweigh costs by March 2008 ▪ Increase in the use of CRM and self service facilities 	Customers can initiate their own requests via the Council or Partnership website. These service requests will be seamlessly transmitted to the CRM for action.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

CE14		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Development of Council's website through to 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain working partnerships with Derwentside and Easington ▪ Incremental website improvement ▪ Continue to support LAA and LSP website 	All customers can get easy access to information and electronic services. Council services available outside normal office hours.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

CE15		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Development of Council's intranet through to 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incremental intranet improvement 	More effective collaboration and sharing of Council information.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

CE16		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Development of Council's extranet through to 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify possible users and communicate facility by July 2007 ▪ Improved capacity for members, community, voluntary groups and partners to share and collaborate more effectively ▪ Develop targets by September 2007 	Improved capacity for members, community, voluntary groups and partners to share and collaborate more effectively.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

CE17		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Carry out customer satisfaction for benefits & local taxation customers other than the 3 yearly BVPI (customer satisfaction not currently measured in local taxation) by March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan to be developed by 30 May on proposed approach and methods for measuring satisfaction ▪ Implement customer satisfaction measurement from second quarter of 2007 i.e. 1 July onwards ▪ Satisfaction monitored and action plan drawn up to improve by December 2007 ▪ Targets to be set by December 2007 	Supports overall vision for customer excellence, allows customers to have a say in how we provide our services for future improvements.
Lead Officer	Jayne Henderson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

CE18		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Consider improvements to reception facilities at the Civic Centre by September 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reconsider proposals in the light of local government review by August 2007 ▪ If required procure by October 2007 ▪ Carry out works by December 2006 ▪ Increase customer satisfaction with reception facilities and service provided 	This will provide a more welcoming facility for improving customer care within the Council, improving disabled access, more comfortable waiting facilities and allowing self service electronic facilities.
Lead Officer	Craig Etherington	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

CE19		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Introduce service level agreement with Cestria Housing to ensure customers can continue to pay rent in desired way		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish by January 2008 ▪ Implement from January 2008 and monitor ▪ Targets to be set by January 2008 ▪ Increased customer satisfaction 	Improved customer satisfaction with ways in which payments can be made to the Council and its partners.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

CE20		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Improve Council image through implementation of Corporate Communication Strategy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agree Strategy by July 2007 ▪ Implement and agree targets by September 2007 ▪ Increased media releases ▪ Increased positive press coverage ▪ Increase in customer satisfaction ▪ Increased satisfaction and understanding of the Council 	Citizens have a greater understanding about what the Council does, how well it performs and how they can have a greater say in how we function.
Lead Officer	Craig Etherington	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

CE21		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Work to develop a Community Hub at Grange Villa by September 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop proposals with Community by October 2006 ▪ Develop management arrangements and resources required by December 2006 ▪ Develop targets by September 2007 ▪ Install technology required by September 2007 ▪ Launch by September 2007 ▪ Numbers visiting and accessing hub increase ▪ % satisfied with the facility increases 	The community can access services delivered by the Council and its partners locally without the need to travel.
Lead Officer	Craig Etherington	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

CE22	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop a system of customer champions throughout the organisation by March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluate proposals from action learning set by August 2007 ▪ Develop customer champion scheme by December 2007 ▪ Implement by March 2008 ▪ Monitor and review ▪ Improved customer satisfaction by 3% across the Council 	All customers will receive an improved level of service, with individuals in each service leading improvements in customer care across the organisation.
Lead Officer	Craig Etherington	Lead Executive Member
Councillors Stephen Barr		

CE23	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Review environmental services customer standards by January 2008 and implement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor performance of existing standards by September 2007 ▪ Engage community in re-assessing standards and targets by November 2007 ▪ Adopt new standards and targets by January 2008 ▪ Improved customer satisfaction 	Streets are cleaner and local standards are improved.
Lead Officer	Gordon McCallam	Lead Executive Member
Councillor Simon Westrip		

CE24	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Secure Cemetery of the Year Award by March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain and improve standards of the district's cemeteries through to March 2010 ▪ Apply for Cemetery of the Year Award by December 2007 ▪ Secure improved customer satisfaction ▪ Secure award 	
Lead Officer	Gordon McCallam	Lead Executive Member
Councillor Simon Westrip		

CE25		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop and implement action plans to improve performance on national best value indicators particularly those which are both failing to improve and are in the bottom 25% in the country		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agree action plans by June 2007 ▪ Implement by July 2007 ▪ Improvement in performance indicators across the Council ▪ 65% improvement across basket of BVPIs ▪ Positive direction of travel reports ▪ Improved customer satisfaction 	Customers will benefit from improved service delivery performance across services improving the quality of life of our communities.
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE26		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Continue our Organisational Development Programme through to May 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake action learning sets and CPI projects and report by May 2008 ▪ Build in learning to decide future programme by March 2008 ▪ Consider the outcomes of action learning sets and targets by September 2007 ▪ % of members and officers meeting required competencies ▪ Measured outcomes from projects completed against intended outcomes/ scope of brief ▪ Some measured outcomes will also be developed as part of the brief for each set/project ▪ Improvement in performance in 100% of CPI project processes ▪ IIP recognition ▪ Engages all services 	The outcome of this programme will be that all councilors, managers and supervisors will have the level of competency required for their roles and the Council will act as OneTeam. The community will be assured that the Council has the best people to lead the community and deliver services.
Lead Officers	Alison Swinney/Julie Underwood	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE27		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Extend leadership & management development opportunities to others throughout the Council to aid with succession planning through to 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commence workshops by July 2007 ▪ Dec 2007 - 360 degree appraisal for managers ▪ Targets to be set by September 2007 ▪ Improved employee survey results ▪ Improved management reviews against competency frameworks 	Community benefits from managers with improved skills.
Lead Officer	Alison Swinney	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE28		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Further embed succession planning across the Council with a view to building capacity by March 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workforce development plans produced in line with service plans by January 2008 and on annual basis thereafter ▪ July 2007 – Rising Stars programme commences ▪ Oct 2007 –workshops complete ▪ November 2007 – action learning sets and Continual Process Improvement projects commence ▪ Participants on programme develop effective skills at the next level of management and apply these effectively back in the workplace ▪ Programme assists with career development aspirations 	Community is assured that there is no reduction in service as a result of staffing change.
Lead Officers	Alison Swinney/Julie Underwood	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE29		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Embed work force development planning across the Council by 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workforce development plans produced in line with service plans by January 2008 and on annual basis thereafter ▪ Service plans and corporate plan and priorities are delivered on time 	Links to the community and customers in the delivery of service and corporate plans and priorities.
Lead Officer	Alison Swinney	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE30		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Ensure new elected members are equipped with the relevant skills by August 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carry out induction programme for new members by August 2007 ▪ Service plans and corporate plan and priorities are delivered on time ▪ Evaluations from training events ▪ Feedback from member support assessments of how learning was applied ▪ Feedback from community groups 	Effective community leadership, engagement and representation.
Lead Officer	Alison Swinney	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE31		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Senior managers and politicians engage in a top team development programme of transformational leadership by March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Top team programme commenced November 2007 ▪ March 2008– evaluation of programme 	Effective community leadership, engagement and representation.
Lead Officer	Alison Swinney	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE32		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Embark upon further programme of elected member development linked to the role of the front line councillor by March 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members training plan implemented from September 2007 and reviewed annually ▪ Evaluations from training events ▪ Feedback from member support assessments of how learning was applied ▪ Feedback from community groups 	Links to the community and customers in the delivery of service and corporate plans and priorities.
Lead Officer	Alison Swinney	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE33		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Carry out customer satisfaction for building control service customers by March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey to be undertaken in accordance with government guidance ▪ Customer satisfaction to be measured from 1 October onwards ▪ Satisfaction monitored and targets and action plan drawn up to improve by February 2008 	Supports overall vision for customer excellence, allows customers to have a say in how we provide our services for future improvements.
Lead Officer	Anneliese Hutchinson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

CE34		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Carry out customer satisfaction for planning and environmental health customers by March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Plan to be developed by 30 June on proposed approach and methods for measuring satisfaction ▪ Customer satisfaction to be measured from 1 October onwards ▪ Satisfaction monitored and targets and action plan drawn up to improve by February 2008 	Supports overall vision for customer excellence, allows customers to have a say in how we provide our services for future improvements.
Lead Officer	Anneliese Hutchinson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

CE 35		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Establish business forum for planning and environmental health customers by March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Database of customers to be established by 31 July ▪ Inaugural event Autumn 2007 ▪ Terms of reference and future programme and targets agreed by January 2008 ▪ Improved satisfaction for business users 	Supports overall vision for customer excellence, allows customers to have a say in how we provide our services for future improvements.
Lead Officer	Anneliese Hutchinson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

CE 36		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Carry out improvements to access arrangements to council buildings to bring them up to the standard promoted by the Disability Discrimination Act		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agree priorities with user group ▪ Secure resources by Autumn 2007 ▪ Implement a programme of improvement ▪ Increase the % of buildings accessible to the public by 10% per annum (BV156) 	A fully inclusive service to all our customers at our buildings.
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE 37		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Secure Investors in People accreditation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete final action plan actions by July 2007 ▪ Complete final audit of awareness and process by September 2007 ▪ Undertake external assessment by October 2007 ▪ Secure accreditation by December 2007 ▪ Formal IIP accreditation 	All of our customers can be ensured that staff are trained and motivated to deliver excellent services.
Lead Officer	Alison Swinney	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

Priority 2 : Working in Partnership to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy

Continuing to work with our partners in the District Partnership to deliver actions within the Sustainable Community Strategy and to ensure the Strategy continues to address priorities for the District as a whole.

Our objectives for this priority are

We want to ensure that we play our fullest possible role in providing clear community leadership within our District. We want to achieve the vision, aims and priorities of the Community Strategy, your vision of the District, by 2010. The Council will promote and encourage true partnership working with all those who can help achieve sustainable communities while promoting community cohesion. As a result, ensure that we improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the people we serve. We acknowledge that we cannot make the change we need on our own. Partnership working in all areas, including partners not engaged in the Local Strategic Partnership, is a crucial success factor for us.

To achieve our objectives and secure continuous improvement we propose the following:

WP1	Milestones/Measure/Target	Outcome
Complete updating of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and implement action plans through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement action plans ▪ 90% of actions completed on time ▪ 90% of targets met 	The community strategy has clearer actions and targets to meet the community vision, aims and objectives.
Lead Officer	Jeremy Brock	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Linda Ebbatson

WP2	Milestones/Measure/Target	Outcome
Ensure action plans are established and built into service planning to achieve the actions and targets of the Sustainable Community Strategy by 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure ownership in services of SCS proposals by July 2006 ▪ Establish contribution targets and action by September 2006 ▪ Assess contribution to Respect Agenda by October 2007 	The Council will be able to prove its contribution to achieving the District's Sustainable Community Strategy and the residents of the District will benefit from the achievement of the desired outcomes of the Strategy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish in Service Planning Review by October 2006 ▪ Monitor and review ▪ % internal targets met ▪ % SCS targets met across District 		
Lead Officer	Jeremy Brock	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

WP3	Milestones/Measure/Target	Outcome	
Ensure action plans are established and built into service planning to achieve the actions and targets of the Local Area Agreement by 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through golden threading exercise, secure ownership in services of LAA proposals by October 2007 ▪ Assess contribution to Respect Agenda by October 2007 ▪ Establish contribution targets and action by September 2007 ▪ Establish in Service Planning Review by October 2007 ▪ Monitor and review ▪ % internal targets met ▪ % LAA targets met across District 	The Council will be able to prove its contribution to achieving the County Local Area Agreement and the residents of the District will benefit from the achievement of the desired outcomes of the Strategy.	
Lead Officer	Julie Underwood	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

WP4	Milestones/Measure/Target	Outcome	
Work in partnership with other councils to develop the implementation of the Local Area Agreement through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop performance management framework and governance arrangements by September 2007 ▪ Participation on project team and LAA Board 	The benefits of the Local Area Agreement to the community in terms of improved service delivery and improved quality of life are realized.	
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

WP5		Milestones/Measure/Target	Outcome
Continue as lead for communications for the Local Area Agreement and website management through to March 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop communications strategy by December 2007 ▪ Ongoing website development ▪ Participation on project team and LAA Board ▪ 5% per annum increase in website hits ▪ % increase in LAA press releases 	The benefits of the Local Area Agreement to the community in terms of improved service delivery and improved quality of life are realized.
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

WP6		Milestones/Measure/Target	Outcome
Develop a communications strategy for the District Partnership by December 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agree key principles with partners by August 2007 ▪ Develop strategy document by November 2007 ▪ Agree by District Partnership by December 2007 ▪ Implement ▪ 3% per annum increase in public understanding of the District Partnership 	The Council and its partners will have clear communication channels for its activity to the general public building on the website and Partnership News.
Lead Officer	Jeremy Brock	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

WP7		Milestones/Measure/Target	Outcome
Implement Partnership Strategy proposals in the Improvement and Recovery Plan through to March 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement partnership evaluation software by June 2007 ▪ Use software to develop partnership protocols by June 2007 ▪ Develop partnership register by June 2007 ▪ Prioritise partnerships for evaluation 	The Council will be able to improve and develop partnerships to ensure that we achieve the vision in the Community Strategy. Resources can be maximized and the Council can ensure that it is getting the best value for money in the partnerships in which it participates. As a result, the community will

	<p>and develop programme by September 2007</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set targets by September 2007 ▪ Review effectiveness of existing partnerships by November 2009 ▪ % of partnerships evaluated ▪ % of partnerships which are considered to be effective ▪ Assess potential for new partnerships through to March 2010 	receive better joined up public services.	
Lead Officers	Roy Templeman	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

WP8	Milestones/Measure/Target	Outcome	
Coordinate the Economic Development and Regeneration Group of the Local Strategic Partnership through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions to the Sustainable Community Strategy action plan completed by September 2006 • Set forward plan of activities for the policy group by March 2008 	There will be a more comprehensive and joined up approach to our economic development in the District through better partnership working. This will improve the social, economical and environmental well being of the District.	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

WP9	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Establish partnership arrangements with Cestria Community Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LSVT transfer Jan 2008 ▪ Partnership arrangements signed off Sept 2008 ▪ Monitor and review of offer document promises (quarterly and ongoing) 	Enabling the successful transfer of homes to a new Registered Social Landlord for the District.	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

WP10	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Outsource delivery of housing register and homelessness functions to Cestria Community Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SLA established for homelessness service by Jan 2008 ▪ SLA established for housing register by Jan 2008 ▪ Choice based Lettings Scheme in 	Enabling the successful transfer of homes to a new Registered Social Landlord for the District and operation of systems that will ensure that high quality services are delivered and provided to applicants for housing.

		operation by Sept 2008	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

WP11	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Undertake housing needs study and housing market assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Housing needs study completed Dec 2008 ▪ Housing market assessment completed Dec 2008 	The development of a sound evidence base for which future planning and investment decisions can be made.	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

Priority 3: Meeting the Decent Homes Standard

Working with our tenants to consider new ways of providing our housing service and accessing additional funding which will meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010

Our objectives for this priority are

We want to create sustainable communities where people want to live and work. We want our housing service to be accessible to a wide variety of service users. We want to support and protect our most vulnerable people and households helping them to live more independently. In considering the best options to deliver the housing service we want to provide choice and good quality tenure housing. We want to support vibrant housing markets that satisfy the needs and aspirations of our communities.

To achieve our objectives and secure continuous improvement we propose the following:

DHS1	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Implement tenants' decision to pursue the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of staff to Cestria Housing Association by January 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transfer the service to the new organisation by January 2008 ▪ Use toolkit designed by the action learning set ▪ Transfer delivered on time 	The new organisation will be able to secure required improvements in the housing stock to bring peoples homes up to at least the Decent Homes Standard within government targets.	
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

DHS2		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Manage smooth transfer of employees to Cestria Housing by January 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transfer of employees to housing association by January 2008 	Ensures a continuous housing service as organisation changes.
Lead Officer	Alison Swinney	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig
DHS3		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Continue to implement housing service improvement plan as a result of the Audit Commission Inspection in September 2006 until transfer in January 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review service improvement plan as a result of areas for improvement identified in the judgement ▪ Implement action plan ▪ 90% improvements achieved on target 	Tenants can be assured that the service has learned from the experience of external assessment and developed service improvements as a result.
Lead Officer	Paul Stephens	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes
DHS4		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Continue to deliver the three year capital programme by January 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver 2006/2007 programme by March 2007 ▪ Publish revised three year plan by February 2008 ▪ 100% of budget spent ▪ 100% planned homes improved ▪ 95% customers satisfaction from recipient tenants 	The Council makes progress in meeting national standards and tenants benefit from the improved quality of houses brought up to the standard. This will improve the quality of life of our tenants.
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig
DHS5		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Annually update the Housing Strategy in order that it remains fit for purpose by March 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update Housing Strategy by January 2008 ▪ Create 5 page strategy to meet national guidelines ▪ Fit for purpose judgements by government office ▪ Positive audit reports 	Tenants and the community can be assured that the Council has robust plan in place to drive improvement in the housing service.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Members	Councillor Simon Henig / Councillor Chris Jukes

DHS6	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Review and update Homelessness Strategy by August 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete review document by June 2007 ▪ Secure Council approval by July 2007 ▪ Commence implementation by August 2007 ▪ % increase in satisfaction of vulnerable customers 	The Council will have an up to date action plan to address the needs of some of our most vulnerable customers
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Chris Jukes

DHS7	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Implement priority needs funding for 2007/8 by March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement funding regime by March 2008 ▪ Targets set by September 2007 ▪ % increase in satisfaction of vulnerable customers 	This work supports homelessness prevention work as identified in the homelessness prevention strategy.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Chris Jukes

DHS8	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop and implement action plans to improve tenants satisfaction in response to the 2005 Tenants Survey through to January 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify key areas of improvement and action plan to address by June 2007 ▪ Implement action plans and monitor through performance clinics by January 2010 ▪ 3% improvement in satisfaction rates 	The concerns of tenants, where satisfaction is low, will be addressed in a systematic manner ensuring that improvements are made by learning from customers.
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Chris Jukes

DHS9	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Work in partnership with other County districts to undertake private sector stock condition survey by May 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procure consultants by November 2007 ▪ Carry out survey by February 2008 ▪ Develop action plan to address results by May 2008 	Ensure that we have up to date information on which to base our future plans. The outcome to our customers will be that we will maximise the use of resources to deliver the best possible service.

Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes
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DHS 10	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Review housing policies in light of Housing Act 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Report on Housing Act by July 2007 ▪ Review of private sector housing policy by August 2007 ▪ Adoption of empty properties action plan and targets by December 2007 ▪ Increase in decent homes for the private sector 	Full implementation of the Housing Act in Chester-le-Street leading to an increase in decent homes in the private sector.	
Lead Officer	Anneliese Hutchinson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

Priority 4 : Regenerating the District

Working with business, partners and customers to develop a Regeneration Strategy for the District which represents the diversity of our communities and needs and aspirations for the future

Our objectives for this priority are

We want to embed social and economical renewal as a cornerstone of what we do. We want to ensure that we target those areas of the District that have the most need through improving environments, housing, community facilities, and learning and employment opportunities. In doing so, we want to build sustainable communities within the District. We want to exploit the District's excellent location, and current facilities and communication to provide new economic opportunities. This will include manufacturing and distribution, a knowledge-based economy and tourism and leisure. We want to make the best of new challenges and opportunities such as the Northern Way and the Regional Spatial Strategy to achieve the best possible outcomes for our District. As a firm part of renewal we want to ensure that we protect and enhance the natural and built environment.

To achieve our objectives and secure continuous improvement we propose the following:

RD1	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Implement our Regeneration Strategy for the District and implement by March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement through to March 2009 • Improved LAA economic development indicators 	New strategy and annual action plan to guide and promote regeneration and development across the District.	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD2	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop and publish a Local Development Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of core strategy and development control planning document to Secretary of State by February 2009 • Submission of development allocations planning document to Secretary of State by January 2010 • Adoption of core strategy and development control planning document by May 2010 • Adoption of development allocations planning document by April 2011 	There will be an up to date document on which the Council can base sound planning decisions.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Chris Jukes

RD3	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Complete the town centre regeneration scheme by March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete market plan regeneration by June 2007 ▪ Develop a business plan for the market, including the maximised use of the 'Civic Heart' space by July 2007 ▪ Develop town centre master plan by March 2008 ▪ Develop links to the Riverside 	More vibrant and successful town centre, positively promoting investment in Chester-le-Street and as a result, improvements in the social, economical and environmental well-being of the District and the people in its communities.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop a 'café culture' ▪ Undertake a town centre health check by March 2008 ▪ Work with partners to develop a town centre ambassadors group by July 2008 ▪ Assess the evening economy and produce a strategic report by March 2008 ▪ Reduction in number of vacant units in the town centre ▪ Increase in number of events held 	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes
RD4	Milestones/Measures/Targets		Outcome
Implement the regeneration of Pelton Fell by March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wordsworth Avenue environmental improvement scheme complete by May 2007 ▪ Phase 2 new build complete by July 2007 ▪ Funding in place for the Community Resource Centre (CRC) by April 2008 ▪ Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the village heart approved by Autumn 2007 		This will result in better quality homes for local people. Local people will be involved in the ongoing planning of their area and there will be an enhanced local environment and facilities, improving the quality of life of residents of Pelton Fell.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes
RD5	Milestones/Measures/Targets		Outcome
Implement the regeneration of Sacriston by March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete an Area Development Framework for Sacriston by June 2007 ▪ Agree action plan for investment in Sacriston using Single Housing Investment Programme by June 2007 		This will result in better quality homes for local people. Local people will be involved in the ongoing planning of their area and there will be an enhanced local environment and facilities, improving the quality of life of residents of Sacriston.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes
RD6	Milestones/Measures/Targets		Outcome
Implement the regeneration of Grange Villa by March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete work in delivering the Area Development Framework for the village by March 2008 		This will result in better quality homes for local people. Local people will be involved in the ongoing planning of their area and there will be

			an enhanced local environment and facilities, improving the quality of life of residents of Grange Villa.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD9	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Progress the Carbon Neutral Edmondsley Project through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop the scheme with the community and partners by June 06 ▪ Drafting of a business plan by July 2007 ▪ Complete by April 2010 ▪ Establishment of first carbon neutral village in the UK 	This will act as a national pilot to demonstrate how renewable technologies can be adopted within the home and reduce energy bills, while helping to protect the environment and secure meaningful community engagement.	
Lead Officer	Andy Stephenson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

RD10	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop a business led approach to workforce planning under the banner of Partnerships for Futures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agreement of principles of project commission by July 2007 ▪ Test viability and principal sponsors by August 2007 ▪ Formation of Board and agree commissioning by January 2008 ▪ Recruit team in Mile House and members by January 2008 ▪ Identify targets to be achieved in Year 1 by January 2008 ▪ Commence workforce planning consultancy by January 2008 ▪ Evaluate commitment against performance targets by May 2008 ▪ Develop Year 2 business plan by May 2008 ▪ Level of activity including numbers of employers and agencies engaged ▪ Identification of gaps in skills/jobs ▪ Sustained employment, numbers taking up jobs and for how long 	The Council and other agencies will work with local businesses to identify real future job opportunities, creating a direct link with education and further education establishments to give people in Chester-le-Street a real opportunity for jobs. It will include getting people who are not in employment, education or training into jobs which can be sustained. This will be largely private sector funded and will improve the quality of business as well as the quality of life of individuals and their families.
Lead Officer	Roy Templeman	Lead Executive Member Councillor Chris Jukes

RD10	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Prioritise vulnerable households in the implementation of thermal efficiency measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification of priority households across the District requiring insulation measures by March 2007 ▪ Assist priority and vulnerable households by providing insulation installations through to March 2009 ▪ % of measures undertaken against numbers of properties requiring insulation 	Reduction in fuel poverty levels across the District by reduction in residents' bills and increasing their awareness of energy conservation issues.
Lead Officer	Andy Stephenson	Lead Executive Member Councillor Simon Westrip

RD11		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Promoting a tourism and leisure based economy, building on the unique cultural heritage of the District, with a detailed action plan by December 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In place by December 2007 Targets by December 2007 	New strategy and annual action plan to guide and promote regeneration and development across the District.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD12		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Work with partners to explore how the enormous potential of the transport infrastructure can be maximised locally by November 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In place by November 2007 Targets by November 2007 	Improved transport to ensure better access, greater choice, higher quality and more sustainable local provision.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD13		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
To promote the District and its attractions as a place to visit, live, work, and invest, with a detailed action plan for the marketing of the District		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In place by December 2007 Increased visitor numbers Targets by December 2007 	Increased visitor numbers and general well-being of the District.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD14		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
To develop an anti-poverty strategy for the District by September 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In place by September 2007 Targets by September 2007 	New strategy and annual action plan to guide and reduce poverty across the District.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Steve Barr

RD15		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
To dispose of identified surplus Council-owned land in order to further, regeneration objectives by October 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In place by October 2007 • Targets by October 2007 	Make better use of Council-owned land for the benefit of the community.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD16		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop protocols, and partnership agreements that will maximise their impact in the regeneration of the District and contribution to the Decent Homes Standard through to March 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In place by September 2007 • Targets by September 2007 • % decrease in non decent homes 	Increase the number and % of private rented dwellings which meet the Decent Homes Standard.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD17		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
To promote further affordable homes nomination agreements in new private sector developments by March 2010.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In place by March 2010 • Targets by December 2007 • Increased percentage of affordable homes 	More affordable homes in the District.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD18		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
To review the community facilities available within the District, and to draw up an action plan to fill gaps by December 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In place by December 2007 • Targets by December 2007 • Increase in use of community facilities 	Increase in number, range and use of community facilities building community capacity and improving quality of life.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD19		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
To work with partners in delivery of the crime and disorder reduction strategy, with specific initiatives in regeneration corridors according to locally identified issues through to March 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In place by March 2010 Targets by December 2007 The % of residents who feel that they felt 'fairly safe' or 'very safe' 	Improved crime and fear of crime.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD20		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
To audit the engagement of local communities within regeneration and develop an action plan for maximizing engagement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In place by September 2007 Targets by September 2007 Increase in numbers participating in community regeneration 	Better community engagement in the regeneration of neighbourhoods.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD21		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
To work with the community and voluntary sector to understand their current and potential contribution to regeneration objectives and the creation of sustainable communities, with an audit and action plan agreed		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In place by December 2007 Targets by December 2007 	Increased help and support to the voluntary sector from the Council and as a result, improved capacity building in the community.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD22		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
To work with partners to research the future skills needs of employers compared to the availability of skills within the District, with feasibility work undertaken		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In place by September 2007 Targets by September 2007 	A more appropriately skilled workforce relative to the needs of local employers.
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes
RD23		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome

To work with partners aimed at increasing skills, and access to skills and training provision, within and throughout the District, with a particular emphasis on linking this to regeneration corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In place by September 2007 • Targets by September 2007 	Increased employment and enterprise training opportunities.	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD24	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
To work with partners to maximise the impact of MILE House through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In place by June 2007 • Targets by July 2007 	Increased employment and enterprise training opportunities.	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD25	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
To work with the Learning District Partnership in examining how the delivery of the Regeneration Strategy can encourage and facilitate wider participation in learning opportunities through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In place by December 2007 • Targets by December 2007 	Increased skills and learning opportunities	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD26	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
To examine, with partners, and reflecting the LAA, the opportunities to promote a culture of encouraging small and medium enterprises, and social enterprises within the District, with an audit undertaken and action plan by December 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In place by December 2007 ▪ Targets by December 2007 	Improved Council support for small and medium size enterprises in the District.	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD27	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
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To establish multi team Section 106 working group, to ensure effective use of Section 106 funds to aid regeneration of District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group established by 30 July 2007, with relevant officers signed up ▪ Thereafter group meeting on quarterly basis ▪ Able to demonstrate effective recycling of 106 funds to capital schemes 	Additional investment in District.	
Lead Officer	Anneliese Hutchinson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

RD28	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Identify and remediate contaminated land within the District through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop guidelines/information materials for potential developers in the District by Oct 2007 ▪ Consult on, complete and adopt a robust Contaminated Land Strategy for the District by October 2007 ▪ Rationalize existing data to identify priority sites by April 2008 	The Council will have a clear overview of the location and likely significance of contaminated land within the District and will have a priority based work-plan to address these.	
Lead Officer	Anneliese Hutchinson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

Priority 5 : Neighbourhood Management

Working with our community and partners to deliver action at the neighbourhood level, improving the quality of public services, engaging people in local democracy, and as a result, helping to create an improved environment and sustainable communities.

Our objectives for this priority are

All too often people living and working in neighbourhoods with poor standards of environmental quality are passed from one service of the Council to another, and from one organisation to another. We want to ensure that we can carry out targeted intervention by providing joined-up service delivery. Through strong community leadership we want to develop civic renewal and community engagement at local and neighbourhood level.

We want people in neighbourhoods in our D district to feel proud to live and work there, taking ownership and responsibility for improving standards within them.

To achieve our objectives and secure continuous improvement we propose the following:

NM1	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Roll out of Neighbourhood Management through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Produce and distribute 'Street Clean' reporting cards by May 2007 ▪ Produce and distribute monthly 'In your ward' Councillor profiles by May 2007 ▪ Provide a 'Pride in our Neighbourhoods' freephone line by May 2007 ▪ Prepare and distribute 'Pride in our Neighbourhood' leaflet across the District by June 2007 ▪ Review of initiative by September 2007, set targets and make any necessary changes ▪ Publish article on progress in District News by September 2007 ▪ 5% increase in annual customer satisfaction levels ▪ Increase in the number of compliments received from public ▪ Decrease in % of complaints received from public 	A consistent approach to the delivery of neighbourhood management which embraces a multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach to service delivery that is informed and driven by local residents and local need.
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member Councillor Simon Westrip

NM2	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Continue to implement environmental services improvement plan as a result of the Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement action plan ▪ 90% improvements achieved on target 	The community can be assured that the service has learned from the experience of

Commission Inspection by November 2006		external assessment and developed service improvements as a result.	
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallam	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM3	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Develop Environmental Strategy and implement by March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build on draft strategy through action learning set by December 2007 ▪ Take into account scrutiny report on recycling and views of Executive ▪ Develop a strategy by March 2008 ▪ Implement action plan ▪ 90% improvements achieved on target 	The community will have access to a clear strategy of the Council's plans to meet its responsibilities to the environment.	
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM4	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
To target areas for enforcement activities using customer and intelligence led feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify key areas for targeting enforcement from FLARE system by May 2007 ▪ Prepare initial programme of targeted enforcement activity and set targets by July 2007 ▪ Monitor and review programme of targeted enforcement by December 2007 ▪ Increased number of fixed penalty fines issued and successful prosecutions ▪ Decrease in number of incidences of environmental crime 	Targeted enforcement will increase the levels of detection and raise the profile of enforcement activity in the problem areas	
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallam	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM5	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Continue to secure Green Flag / Green	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain high standards through to 	Improved local environments

Pennant awards by March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2010 ▪ Submit applications by December 2007 ▪ Secure awards ▪ Improved customer satisfaction 	
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallam	Lead Executive Member Councillor Simon Westrip

NM6	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
To prepare and agree a Memorandum of Understanding with local secondary schools in considering alternative penalties of anti-social behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare a draft Memorandum of Understanding by June 2007 ▪ Meet with secondary schools in the district to agree and finalise MOU by August 2007 ▪ All schools signed up to MOU by December 2007 	Improved local environment. Young people will have an increased awareness of their environmental responsibilities and the consequences of environmental crime.
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallam	Lead Executive Member Councillor Simon Westrip

NM7	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Review the financial performance of the trade waste service based on the retention of market share and rising disposal costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review performance of trade waste service by June 2007 ▪ Develop and consider options report as part of the 2008/09 budget by September 2007 ▪ Implement findings by March 2008 	Value for money is achieved for the Council and the community by selection of the best practical option following careful assessment.
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallam	Lead Executive Member Councillor Simon Westrip

NM8	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Enter the Northumbria in Bloom competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To gain recognition from external judges set against national criteria in September 2007 	Residents will gain an understanding of the importance of an attractive environment for their own benefit and the promotion of our

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve and promote closer working relationships with Parish Councils, residents groups, schools and business community and the public by formation of a Northumbria in Bloom committee by March 2008 	District as a visitor destination of choice.	
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallam	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM9	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Manage the development of an extension to the kerbside contract for 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft specification prepared by July 2007 Report to Executive and Council for approval by September 2007 Let contract by October 2007 	Ensuring that all households continue to take responsibility for their domestic waste, and the District Council meets its recycling targets.	
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallam	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM10	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
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<p>Implement all aspects of the Clean Neighbourhoods Act 2005</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review frontline staff awareness of the duties that will be required to use the act appropriately by March 2008 ▪ Identify the areas which require change in current working practices by April 2008, including those aspects of the Clean Neighbourhood Act which are not part of current working practice ▪ Arrange appropriate training to ensure all frontline staff have an appreciation of the new act and how best to use it by April 2008 ▪ Assess likely future demands on services using the data collected on environmental crime and the section performance against the targets already in place for BVPIs 218a & b, 199a, b, c, and d, and monitor our performance against service standards including clearing litter, flytipping, sharps etc. ▪ Review progress and identify areas not presently adopted within the Council's constitution by September 2008 	<p>Improved local environments</p>	
<p>Lead Officer</p>	<p>Gordon MacCallam</p>	<p>Lead Executive Member</p>	<p>Councillor Simon Westrip</p>

<p>NM11</p>	<p>Milestones/Measures/Targets</p>	<p>Outcome</p>	
<p>Increase percentage of households waste recycling through to March 2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare publicity material for campaign by July 2007 ▪ Conduct 3 month publicity campaign by October 2007 ▪ Increase household waste recycling to 25% by March 2008 	<p>Residents will gain an understanding of their environmental impacts and understand the role of the Council in meeting government recycling expectations.</p>	
<p>Lead Officer</p>	<p>Gordon MacCallam</p>	<p>Lead Executive Member</p>	<p>Councillor Simon Westrip</p>

NM12		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Introduce a tree replacement and development programme by 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review potential planting around existing biodiversity areas by August 2007 ▪ Develop a tree planting strategy by November 2007 ▪ Commence implementation of planting programme (a minimum of 50 trees per annum) by December 2007 	Improvements in the treescape of the District by the increasing or retaining of tree numbers with a one for one replacement program that meets the needs of the customer and the geographic area.
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallam	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM13		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Adoption of Corporate Enforcement Policy by October 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop corporate 'virtual' enforcement team ▪ Development and adoption of Corporate Enforcement Policy by October 2007 ▪ Implement and annually review 	The community and those where enforcement action will be targeted will have a clear understanding of what the Council's standards of service will be and what will be expected of those who do not keep within the law. Consistent base for procedures, standards of service and decision making on all enforcement issues will underpin Neighbourhood Management activity across the District.
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM14		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Review of environmental health services enforcement policies including licensing and health and safety		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development and adoption of environmental health enforcement policies by March 2008 ▪ Implement and annually review 	Consistent base for procedures, standards of service and decision making on environmental health enforcement issues which will underpin Neighbourhood Management activity across the District.
Lead Officer	Anneliese Hutchinson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM15		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
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Adoption of environmental services enforcement policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development and adoption of environmental services enforcement policy by March 2007 ▪ Implement and annually review 	Consistent base for procedures, standards of service and decision making on environmental enforcement issues such as flytipping and dog fouling which will underpin Neighbourhood Management activity across the District.	
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallam	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM 16	Milestone/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Adoption of a building control enforcement protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development and adoption of protocol by March 2008 ▪ Implement and annually review 	Consistent base for procedures, standards of service and decision making on building control issues which will underpin Neighbourhood Management activity across the District.	
Lead Officer	Anneliese Hutchinson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM17	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Implement and monitor The Health Act 2006 Part 1 through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete promotional/awareness raising campaign for businesses by June 2007 ▪ Implement high profile compliance monitoring program during early stages of the implementation by December 2007 ▪ Embed longer term monitoring strategy into routine inspection/educational activities by December 2007 ▪ Develop targets by December 2007 ▪ High levels of compliance 	The outcome will be to improve the health of workers in the District by reducing the level of second hand smoke they are exposed to.	
Lead Officer	Anneliese Hutchinson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM18	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Identify and remediate contaminated land within the District through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop guidelines/information materials for potential developers in the District by Oct 2007 ▪ Consult on, complete and adopt a robust Contaminated Land Strategy for the District by October 2007 ▪ Rationalize existing data to identify priority sites by April 2008 	The Council will have a clear overview of the location and likely significance of contaminated land within the District and will have a priority based work-plan to address these.	
Lead Officer	Anneliese Hutchinson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM19	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Control emissions to the air from prescribed industrial processes through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete risk assessment of all existing processes to determine appropriate level of 'regulatory effort' required by the District by October 2007 ▪ Ensure that all existing and new installations comply with required upgrades as detailed in relevant process guidance note on or before due date ▪ Survey the District to identify businesses requiring permits that currently to not have them by October 2007 	The Council will ensure that regulated businesses use the 'Best Available Techniques' to minimise the risk to the public and environment within the District.	
Lead Officer	Anneliese Hutchinson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NM20		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop and implement an environmental and sustainability educational programme directed at schools through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish programme by August 2007 ▪ Implement by September 2007 ▪ Complete by March 2009 ▪ Increased number of schools participating ▪ Increase number of children and young people participating 	Greater awareness of environmental and sustainability issues throughout the community particularly addressed towards children, young people and their families.
Lead Officer	Andy Stephenson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip
NM21		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Increase the area managed for biodiversity by 10% by March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify potential areas by November 2006 ▪ Conclude public engagement by February 2007 ▪ Implement by March 2009 ▪ 10% target indicator achieved ▪ Improved service based performance indicator 	Residents can benefit from best practice local green space management and the advantages local wildlife can have on both health and well-being.
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallam	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip
NM22		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Produce a Green Spaces Strategy for the maintenance and development of green spaces in the District by 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify resources by September 2007 ▪ Develop draft strategy by March 2008 ▪ Consult by April 2008 ▪ Adopt by July 2008 	The Council will have a plan of action on how it is to develop its green spaces in the future and this will benefit access to open space for our communities.
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

Priority 6 : New ways of working in Leisure

Considering options for the delivery of our range of leisure services, improving the level of service offered while responding to priorities the community has identified for the service.

Our objectives for this priority are

We want to develop leisure services so they are more economic, efficient and effective by considering innovative ways to improve our services. We want improved access and standards of provision, better customer choice, and reduced cost service provision for our leisure services, open spaces, sports provision and cultural services. In doing so, we want to ensure that we promote and mainstream culture and the arts, providing new life experiences for our residents, while building on existing opportunities to attract visitors to Chester-le-Street.

To achieve our objectives and secure continuous improvement we propose the following:

NWL1	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Commence phase 2 of the Leisure Options Appraisal, developing a preferred option delivery plan and implement by March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reconvene member/officer working group by June 2007 ▪ Prepare an outline options/strategy discussion paper for consideration by member/officer working group by June 2007 ▪ Agree preferred options and prepare detailed briefs by December 2007 ▪ Commence procurement process for preferred options by February 2008 	The Council's preferred option will be procured on the basis of a clear strategy of improvement to secure value for money.	
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL2	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
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To raise the profile of arts within the District through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of a self assessment in line with ACE NE requirements by October 2007 ▪ Completion and adoption of a local arts plan for the District by December 2007 ▪ Contribute to a successful welcome event for the test match in mid June 2007 ▪ 25% increase against previous year on number of arts events/courses delivered in the community 	More residents experience a wider range of arts activities and the District is recognised for its innovative and creative use of the arts. This will improve the cultural experiences throughout the District where our communities can enjoy new life experiences, and enhance and improve service delivery across the Council.	
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL3	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Ensure that the Riverside continues to retain its Green Flag Award with an improved rating through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Green Flag Award retained annually 	This will ensure the community benefits from the Council's continued commitment to the environment.	
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL4	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Continue to support the Sacriston Community & Sports Trust to attract external funding to facilitate the construction of new facilities within Sacriston Welfare Ground by July 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All required funding for phase 1 to be in place by June 2007 ▪ Construction to begin September 2007 ▪ Phase 1 completed and operational by May 2008 ▪ Football foundation bid towards phase 2 to be submitted by October 2007 	This will improve sports provision and the opportunities to engage in sport in a targeted village within the District, improving the well being of its residents.	
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL5	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
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Work towards achieving QUEST quality accreditation for Chester-le-Street Leisure Centre through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Application submitted by March 2007 ▪ Review August 2007 ▪ Assessment October 2007 ▪ Achieve 65% score 	This will show our commitment and achievement to excellent leisure service provision.	
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL6	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Work towards Selby Cottage being recognised by OFSTED as being an 'Outstanding' childcare facility through to March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Next inspection due after September 2007 ▪ Maintain 'outstanding' judgement 	This will ensure that childcare provision provides the best level of care for young children, while allowing parents to pursue their careers in the knowledge that their children are being cared for to the highest standards.	
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL7	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Develop and implement an annual customer survey plan for the leisure services team as a whole through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual plan agreed April 2007 • All surveys to be undertaken in a designated month, monitored on a quarterly basis • All survey results to be available within 2 months of the survey being completed • Targets to be set on completion of initial survey 	Information from the customer surveys will provide key base information to help the continual improvement in services and support the next value for money assessment.	
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL8	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
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Submit an application to the Big Lottery Fund in respect of an available funding package of £200,000 towards improved play provision for young people within the District and implement through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community consultation to be completed by the end of May 2007 ▪ Revised play strategy to be completed by end June 2007 ▪ Make application by September 2007 ▪ Receive decision by March 2008 ▪ Implement year 1 of the strategy 	A successful application will see a significant improvement for play provision in the District, especially that which has been identified by young people themselves.	
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL9	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Improve the management and ongoing development of the Gladstone leisure management system to ensure it provides reports and information that aid service review, planning and online booking facilities are extended, wherever possible, through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central administration team in place by June 2007 • Appropriate staff training on the system by August 2007 • Initial basket of at least 12 reports to be developed and implemented by September 2007 • Reports provide information for relevant LPI's for the third quarter • More activities are made available for online booking 	The reports and information that the Gladstone system provides will help underpin new local performance indicators for the service and work as a positive tool in helping managers understand customer trends and plan/amend services accordingly. Additionally, increasing the scope of the online booking facility will improve access to our services.	
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL10	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Improve performance assessment across the service through benchmarking using the APSE benchmarking framework through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete submissions for the leisure centre and golf complex by August 2007 ▪ Receive performance report from APSE in October 2007 ▪ Review report and ensure areas of improvement are included in the service planning process 	Provides managers with important and relevant information which helps to support the continuous improvement process as well as supporting an improved value for money assessment.	
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL11	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
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Extend delivery of the Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health (FISCH) to deliver phase 2 through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding from MEND confirmed by May 2007 ▪ First 9 week programme to start in July 2007 ▪ Second 9 week programme to start in October 2007 ▪ 60% of all families who start the programme complete the full course ▪ 80% of children who complete the course see their weight remaining stable at least 6 months after the course end 	Children identified as obese demonstrate long term weight maintenance due to a change in attitude and behaviour.	
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL12	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
To implement the multi sport environment project at Riverside by July 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding application approved May 2007 ▪ Multi sport environment officer appointed July 2007 ▪ Implement, in full, the first year action plan 	Increased playing, training and coaching opportunities across key focus sports through strengthening the support infrastructure available.	
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL 13	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
To implement the community sports coaching programme within the District by January 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appointment of 1 F/T and 2 P/T community sports coaches by September 2007 ▪ At least 12 schools within the District engaged in the project by January 2008 ▪ 50 hours per week of direct coaching in and around schools by January 2008 	More young people participating in sports thus increasing general usage of the facilities at the Riverside and across the District.	
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL 14		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Provide free swimming for all under 18's during the summer holiday period through to September 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Funding from Children's Fund confirmed by April 2007 ▪ 50% increase in under 18 attendances from previous level 	More young people exercising on a regular basis, thus contributing to increased levels of health and well-being within the community and more particularly helping to address the issue of childhood obesity.
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL 15		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Organise and deliver an older peoples' physical activity festival within the District by July 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Festival to take place in July 2007 ▪ At least 60 new people attend the festival ▪ At least 20 new clients become regular participants in the Healthy Horizons programme 	With increased participation there will be improved levels of health amongst older people within the community.
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL 16		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop links with at least 3 schools within the District for the provision of golf and gym coaching programmes by March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Links established with first school by June 2007 ▪ Links established with second school by September 2007 ▪ Links established with third school by December 2007 ▪ 50 children undertaking a golf coaching programme by end March 2008 ▪ 50 children undertaking a gym induction programme by end March 2008 	Increased participation will lead to improved levels of health amongst young people in the District.
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

NWL 17	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Continue the process of upgrading the District playgrounds in line with the Play Areas Strategy to ensure they meet European standards for equipment and surfacing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review funding available from developer contributions and Capital Programme by August 2006 to enable work programme to be decided ▪ Young people are consulted as part of each play area development to ensure it is what they want ▪ At least two play areas are upgraded/renewed 	Young people across the District have safe and modern play areas to use and help support an active lifestyle.
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Simon Westrip

Priority 7 : Maximising Efficiencies

Finding new ways of working in all services by working in collaboration with others to achieve economies of scale and better service delivery

What we have been trying to do

We want to provide services that our community is happy with, and for which they receive value for money. We want to provide more economical, efficient, and effective services right across the Council. We accept that to make real change, we have to adopt new ways of working in everything we do. We have a crucial part to play in creating sustainable communities. To achieve excellence in our services we need to be innovative, and know that we cannot make the changes we want on our own. We will work in partnership with other councils to deliver the quality of service our community deserves, while making the efficiency savings that will help us invest in achieving our priorities.

To achieve our objectives and secure continuous improvement we propose the following:

ME1		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Seek to secure a positive direction of travel report from the Audit Commission to build on our progress from 'poor' to 'good' by March 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop action plan to support existing Improvement Programme ▪ Positively address Audit Programme in reaching their conclusions ▪ Secure positive direction of travel reports annually 	Council shows that it is committed to continuous improvement and that it is progressing towards excellence.
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

ME2		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Work in partnership, when required, to respond to the challenges of Local Government Review through to March 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respond to the impending decision on the future of local government by September 2007 (or as otherwise directed by Government) ▪ Respond to further opportunities for engagement as they arise 	The communities best interests are considered at a time of potential change.
Lead Officer	Roy Templeman	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

ME3		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Progress our action plan to improve the Council's Use of Resources Assessment through to March 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme manage action plan implementation ▪ Ensure embedding of actions taken in organisation ▪ Achieve Level 3 by March 2008 ▪ Achieve Level 4 by March 2010 ▪ Positive audit reports ▪ Impacts on all services 	The Council will be able to demonstrate to our communities and stakeholders that it is making the best use of resources and is showing that it delivers value for money across all service areas or has in place action plans to achieve value for money.
Lead Officer	Linda Chambers	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

ME4		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome

Continue to implement corporate criteria for establishing value for money across the council and implement through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learn from CPA judgement and Use of Resources judgements by June 2007 ▪ Learn from environmental services and housing service inspections by July 2008 ▪ Implement recommendations of action learning set by July 2008 ▪ Review guidance and implement by July 2007 ▪ Implement action plans by October 2007 ▪ Incorporate in Use of Resources Self Assessment by August 2008 ▪ Improved VFM statements in 80% of services ▪ Improved Use of Resources judgement to level 3 by March 2008 ▪ Positive direction of travel reports 	The Council will be able to demonstrate to our communities and stakeholders that it is making the best use of resources and is showing that it delivers value for money or has in place action plans to achieve value for money.	
Lead Officer	Linda Chambers	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

ME5	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Continue our procurement partnership with Derwentside District Council by implementing our Procurement Strategy and implementing the procurement action plan through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actions achieved to timetable ▪ National strategy targets achieved ▪ Demonstrable Gershon efficiency savings achieved ▪ Develop targets by September 2007 	As the way we buy goods and services improves, the Council will demonstrate value for money to our community and stakeholders.	
Lead Officer	Linda Chambers	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

ME6	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
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Reconsider implementation of phase 4 of the Information Management Strategy by considering the introduction of a corporate electronic document records and management system by March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of key actions of strategy action plan on target ▪ Completion of feasibility study and budgeting by March 2009 ▪ Develop targets by March 2009 ▪ Procurement of system by October 2010 ▪ Implementation of system by March 2010 ▪ Improvements in BVPI ▪ Engagement of all services ▪ Evidenced Gershon efficiency savings 	The system will allow easier and more efficient storage and retrieval of documents across all services. This will improve the performance of the team in terms of speed or quality with direct benefits to the customers of the service. Council have access to the right information at the right time at the right cost.	
Lead Officers	Graeme Clark / Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

ME7	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Review Information Management Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider options and develop targets by December 2007 ▪ Review strategy by March 2007 ▪ Introduce facilities if benefits outweigh costs by March 2008 ▪ Efficiency savings as a result of document and record management ▪ Improved customer satisfaction ▪ Reduced paper and printer usage 	Improved service provision to customers as council officers have better access to Council information.	
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr
ME8	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Consider business cases for extension of home and remote working for staff and members by March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Revised policy by August 2007 ▪ Roll out of pilot findings and recommendations by March 2007 ▪ Consider individual business cases through to March 2010 ▪ Annual % increase in staff home working ▪ Evidenced Gershon efficiency savings ▪ Targets to be developed on a case by case business 	More efficient ways to deliver services through reduction in accommodation costs and reduced staff travelling benefits to the environment.	
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

ME9	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
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Development of the Councils intranet through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in use of the intranet by members and officers ▪ Targets to be developed by September 2010 	More effective and efficient staff and improved internal communications.	
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

ME10	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Development of website content through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incremental improvements in information available and transactions possible ▪ Improved customers satisfaction with information available by 3% ▪ Increased electronic transactions across all services ▪ Involvement and engagement of all services ▪ Demonstrable Gershon efficiencies as a result of increased take up of services electronically 	Customers will be able to get access to improved information on a 24/7 basis without a need to contact the Council. There will be increased opportunities to participate in services including service requests and transactions with resulting efficiency savings.	
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

ME11	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Review Information Communication and Technology Strategy annually through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review strategy by December 2007 ▪ Improved use of ICT ▪ Demonstrable Gershon savings by introducing more efficient systems in the organisation ▪ Targets to be developed by December 2009 ▪ Engages all services 	Customers will benefit from the implementation of a programme of technological improvements throughout the Council and improved value for money in the Council as a whole.	
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

ME12	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
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Implement e-Government communications plan to maximise investment in new technology through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Modernisation Project Team agreement to reviewed communications plan by September 2007 ▪ Modernisation Project Team agree targets for current initiatives by September 2007 ▪ Individual services commence implementation of campaigns by October 2007 ▪ Increased take up of facilities against targets set ▪ Improved customer satisfaction ▪ Evidenced Gershon efficiency savings 	The community are made fully aware of the electronic transaction facilities available, are encouraged to take advantage of them, are rewarded where possible and assistance to access is given to those otherwise socially excluded. As a result, the Council is more efficient and service delivery and value for money improves.	
Lead Officers	Graeme Clark / Craig Etherington	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

ME13	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Promotion of an anti-fraud culture by developing and implementing an Anti-Fraud Strategy underpinned by corporate fraud awareness training through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of strategy by March 2007 ▪ Annual review ▪ Building training into Corporate Training Plan for 2007/2009 and annually thereafter by March 2007 ▪ Targets to be developed by September 2007 ▪ Increase fraud prosecutions and sanctions ▪ Decreased fraud cases 	An anti-fraud culture will be developed in the Council and the community with the result of protecting public funds and the most vulnerable.	
Lead Officer	Jayne Henderson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

ME14	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome	
Continue to operate an internal audit service that complies with CIPFA Codes of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self assessment for internal audit annual report submitted to Council in September 2007 and annually ▪ Positive external audit reports 	Community can be assured that adequate control is in place to ensure things are being done right and are addressed if they go wrong.	
Lead Officer	Jacqueline McConnell	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

ME15	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Continue to minimize Audit Commission audit fees by meeting recognised standards through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Positive external audit reports 	Council shows value for money in delivery of internal audit service.
Lead Officer	Jacqueline McConnell	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Simon Henig

ME16	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Review the role of the Audit Committee and ensure that it meets what is required for corporate governance by March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Corporate Governance Steering Group considers framework proposals by June 2006 ▪ Audit Committee approves the Statement of Internal Control and agrees the areas of corporate governance it wishes to consider 	Community can be assured that adequate control is in place to ensure correct processes and are addressed if they go wrong.
Lead Officer	Jacqueline McConnell	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Simon Henig

ME17	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Engage our Service Improvement Team and key departments in developing continual process improvement in the organisation through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commence projects by October 2007 ▪ Train teams by October 2007 ▪ Targets set by September 2007 ▪ Complete projects in three services by March 2008 ▪ Build in learning to develop programme for roll out across the Council by April 2008 ▪ Implement through to March 2010 ▪ Increase in performance in designated service areas ▪ Evidenced Gershon efficiencies 	Customers will receive improved service delivery by the Council constantly reviewing its processes, becoming more efficient and effective
Lead Officer	Julie Underwood	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Stephen Barr

ME18		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Introduce e-learning facilities into the authority		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider options and develop targets by December 2007 ▪ Implement e-learning system by July 2008 ▪ Improved skills and competencies of members and council officers 	Improved capacity and competency of members and staff to provide better services to customers.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

ME19		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Consider e-petitioning and e-consultation systems		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider options and develop targets by December 2007 ▪ Introduce facilities if benefits outweigh costs by March 2008 ▪ Increased community engagement ▪ Increase in customer satisfaction 	Improved consultation and engagement with customers over matters of key interest.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

ME20		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Introduce enhanced self service facilities for employee management, including return to work interviews, formal/informal reviews and performance.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider options and develop targets by December 2007 ▪ Introduce facilities if benefits outweigh costs by June 2008 ▪ Efficiency savings from manager and staff self service ▪ Resource capacity improved in HR ▪ Improvement in days lost to sickness by 0.5 days per year over 3 years 	More accurate and effective use of staff reviews, return to work interviews and sickness information. Customers benefit from improved service delivery and improved efficiency.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

ME21	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Introduce a Channel Management Strategy and implement through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop strategy action plan and targets by December 2007 ▪ Implement through to March 2010 ▪ Plans for authority to monitor access channels used by customers, gain understanding of costs per access channel and mechanisms in place to encourage customer to move across to cheaper channels 	Efficiency savings for authority and quicker service delivery for customers
Lead Officers	Graeme Clark / Craig Etherington	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Stephen Barr

ME22	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Review printing strategy with procurement partners, Derwentside DC by March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider options and develop targets by September 2007 ▪ Introduce facilities if benefits outweigh costs by March 2008 ▪ Efficiency savings from joint procurement on printing with council partners 	Contact with council officers via website to assist customers to find the information or access the services they need.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Stephen Barr

ME23	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Implement an e-tendering system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement by September 2007 ▪ Introduce facilities if benefits outweigh costs by March 2008 ▪ Improved opportunities to reach a larger market place ▪ Efficiency savings from cheaper contracts, targets to be agreed by September 2007 	Council resources able to be released to improve other services for customers.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Stephen Barr

ME24		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Consider implementation of e-democracy system in the light of Local Government Review		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider options and develop targets by December 2007 ▪ Secure capital and revenue funding ▪ Introduce facilities if benefits outweigh costs by March 2008 ▪ % staff time freed up to carry out other duties ▪ 2% increase in customer satisfaction with democratic services team 	Improved process and less time to collect and organise reports for council meetings. Improved access to information for customers on council meetings and decisions. Better focus on democratic engagement for customers.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Stephen Barr

ME25		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop corporate e-procurement options		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider options and develop targets by December 2007 ▪ Email of purchase order and BACS remittances by December 2007 ▪ Email alerts to suppliers on tendering opportunities by December 2007 ▪ Consider entry into e-marketplace by September 2008 ▪ Improved opportunities to reach a larger market place ▪ Efficiency savings from reduced printing and postage 	More effective procurement arrangements. Efficiency savings allowing council resources to be deployed to other priority areas for customers.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

ME26		Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Review Data Quality Policy and Strategy and implement by March 2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review policy and strategy by September 2007 ▪ Implement and monitor by March 2010 ▪ 90% actions completed on time ▪ Improved data quality judgement 	The community can be assured that the Council has robust systems in place to ensure that the information it uses is sound, accurate and up to date.
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

ME27	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Undertake Freedom of Information, Data Protection and Copyright health check by March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake survey across Council by September 2007 ▪ Produce audit report by October 2007 ▪ Commence implementation of recommendations by December 2007 ▪ No challenges in respect to FOI, PPA or copyright law 	The community can be assured that the Council has robust systems in place to ensure that it meets the requirements of legislation and that appropriate processes are put in place to ensure this.
Lead Officer	Chris Potter	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Simon Henig

ME28	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Develop the Council's approach to transformational government by December 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage modernisation team ▪ Develop action plan in response to the Varney report by October 2007 ▪ Commence implementation by December 2007 ▪ Commence implementation of recommendations by December 2008 ▪ Efficiency savings with targets to be agreed as part of action plan ▪ 5% increase in take up of electronic services per annum 	The community can be assured that the Council is taking steps to work with partners to make the best use of technology in delivering public services.
Lead Officers	Craig Etherington / Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Stephen Barr

ME29	Milestones/Measures/Targets	Outcome
Adopted Learning Strategy and implement through to March 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scrutiny engagement by July 2007 ▪ Setting of targets by September 2007 ▪ Adoption by Council by October 2007 ▪ Commence implementation by December 2007 ▪ Improved value for money statements across services ▪ Improved performance across services ▪ Positive direction of travel reports 	The community can be assured that the Council is taking steps to learn from its stakeholders and partners as well as using innovation to improve service delivery.
Lead Officers	Craig Etherington / Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Linda Ebbatson

Quote: “The Council has made rapid progress on ICT and e-Government during the past year and now performs well on these. In 2004/05 the Council’s percentage of types of interaction with the public (as measured by BVPI 157) was in the bottom quartile compared to other councils. The Council has now achieved 100 per cent performance on BVPI 157 and the latest (December 2005) local and central government website report shows significant improvement in overall ranking: it is now within the top 25 per cent of websites for accessibility and performance.”
Audit Commission March 2006

Our Improvement Plan Proposals

We intend to complete the remaining actions of our Improvement and Recovery Plan 2. However, as indicated, we intend to develop a new Improvement Plan as a result of feedback from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and decisions made by the Government in terms of Local Government Review. We will publish our revised Improvement Plan once it has been adopted.

7. Value for Money - Our Financial Performance 2006/2007

Our annual revenue and capital spending plans can be divided into the following three areas:

- The General Fund which is made up of day to day spending on services other than council housing. This is funded from government grant and the council tax.
- The Housing Revenue Account which includes all expenditure and income in relation to council houses. This is funded by income from council house rents.
- The Capital Programme which accounts for significant expenditure on buildings and equipment.

Our spending plans for 2007/08

The General Fund

The Council's general fund budget in 2007/08 amounts to £8,100,409 and this is summarised in the table below.

In the table, the columns headed 'Gross' show expenditure before the deduction of any income. The columns headed 'Net' show gross **expenditure** less income from fees and charges, government grants and other income.

Gross	Net	Service	Gross	Net
£	£		£	£
		<u>SUMMARY</u>		
314,550	224,690	General Fund Housing	0	0
1,019,410	426,300	Community Safety & Development	20,280	20,280
4,119,690	1,899,290	Leisure	4,194,350	2,040,120
959,490	136,970	Regeneration	1,589,330	912,510
717,620	564,690	Environmental Health	767,370	627,820
674,640	261,040	Planning	556,960	199,230
3,389,440	2,528,750	Environmental Services	3,772,450	2,719,220
13,714,940	665,690	Revenues and Benefits	15,365,600	749,960
597,540	19,050	Finance and Accountancy	591,390	12,860
216,580	214,160	Organisational Development	181,510	179,510
598,780	594,080	Corporate Development Unit	1,458,060	1,454,150
1,180,630	1,040,490	Legal & Democratic Services	424,390	281,850
854,780	793,960	Corporate Functions	817,330	802,790
(39,863)	(429,643)	Other	251,740	(326,541)
28,318,227	8,939,517		29,990,760	9,673,759
0	0	Less Use of Balances		0
23,900	23,900	Add Contributions to Reserves		0
0	(257,630)	Investment Interest	0	(300,000)
28,342,127	8,705,787		29,990,760	9,373,759
0	(890,020)	Capital Accounting Adjustments	0	(1,273,350)
28,342,127	7,815,767		29,990,760	8,100,409

The net general fund expenditure is funded as follows:

Formula Grant £5,041,615
Council Tax £3,058,794

This means that about 38% of the costs of the Council's services are funded by Council Tax payers.

There has been an increase in the budget of approximately £285,000 (3.6%) from 2006/07 to 2007/08. This is due to pay and price inflation (£230,000) and decreases in grant funding and other income (£55,000). The Council did receive additional grant from the Government of just under £147,000 to help meet these increased costs, but the difference fell to be met by Council Tax payers.

As a result, the Council Tax for Chester le Street has been set at £176.06 for a Band D property in 2007/08; this is an increase of £8.06 (or 4.8%) on the charge for 2006/07. Although Band D is the standard tax band on which all calculations must be based, almost 55% of properties within the District actually fall within Band A and the tax for Band A is £117.37 for 2007/08; an increase of £5.37, or approximately 10 pence per week.

The estimated outturn for the last financial year, based on the probable budget reported in March, is estimated to be £73,000 over the original budget for 2006/07. However, this is still subject to confirmation as we will not know the final figures until the 2006/07 accounts are closed; these will be reported to the Council at the end of June 2007. The £73,000 overspend will be funded by income from the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) grant and will not require any contribution from the general fund reserve. The main problems are due to shortfalls in income in leisure, the market, car parks and a reduction in benefit subsidy grant income. These have been partly offset by additional planning income, licensing income, additional income from industrial units and savings in the corporate training budget. Several service areas, including planning and environmental health, revenues and benefits, regeneration and several support service areas have had salary savings due to vacant posts and/or restructures, meaning that the target savings were achieved in 2006/07.

Housing Revenue Account

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a statutory ring fenced account into which all items of expenditure and income relating to the provision of the public sector housing service must be charged. The HRA cannot be subsidised from the General Fund, neither can it subsidise the General Fund.

The 2007/08 budget for the Housing Revenue Account is shown below:

	2007/08
	£
Expenditure:-	
Property Services	2,629,290
Direct Revenue Financing of Capital Expenditure	390,000
Central Costs	461,780
Estate Management	731,850
Income Management	278,090
IT & Accounts	532,490
Community Engagement	301,070
Exceptional Items	118,100
Stock Transfer	100,000
Special Services - Sheltered Housing	244,460
Care for the Elderly and Careline	41,490
Cost of Democracy	277,740
	6,106,360
Depreciation	2,383,300
Debt Management & Loan Charges	910,670
Total Expenditure	9,400,330
Funded by:-	
Rents - Dwellings	10,856,280
Rents - Non-Dwellings	244,060
Charges for Services and Facilities	56,640
Interest Receivable	61,000
Negative Subsidy Paid to ODPM	(4,147,780)
Major Repairs Allowance	2,383,300
Total Income	9,453,500
SURPLUS	(53,170)

The budget includes several new growth areas which have been included to meet service priorities. These include community engagement, planned maintenance and IT systems. Efficiency savings have been made in order to ensure resources could be redistributed.

Rents increased by 5% in 2007/08, giving an average rent of £49.38, based on a 52 week year. The average increase equates to £2.35 per week, ranging from 90p per week to £3.52 per week.

The Capital Programme

The Council's Capital Programme is divided into three areas: housing, regeneration and other services.

Although the Council receives some specific capital grants and has been extremely successful in attracting external funding, the whole capital programme is extremely dependent on asset sales. The Council has taken the opportunity to use all of its capital receipts resulting from the sale of housing land for the provision of affordable housing and regeneration schemes. By doing this, the Council is able to retain all of its housing receipts for local use. This does mean that the funding for other services is dependent on the proceeds of sales of non-housing land and the retained proportion of Right-to-Buy receipts. Capital receipts expected to be available to fund the programme amount to approximately £3.8 million in 2007/08 and around £2 million per year for 2008/09 and 2009/10. However, these are entirely dependent upon asset sales.

In addition, the Council makes use of the retained proportion of Right-to-Buy receipts resulting from council house sales and benefits from specified capital grant to help meet the costs of Disabled Facilities Grants. The Major Repairs Allowance for the housing capital programme is expected to be just under £2.4 million in 2007/08.

The total funding for the next three years is summarised below:-

	2007/08 £000	2008/09 £000	2009/10 £000	Total £000
Asset Sales	3,758	2,250	2,250	8,258
Specified Capital Grant	127	127	127	381
Major Repairs Allowance (Council Houses)	2,383	-	-	2,383
SHIP2	1,293	-	-	1,293
Supported Borrowing	190	-	-	190
	7,751	2,377	2,377	12,505

After taking account of existing commitments for 2007/08, the Council is expected to have approximately £3 million to allocate to new capital schemes (housing, regeneration and general fund).

The Council's ICT Strategy for 2006-2009 includes outline estimates for the scale of investment required and recognises that a business case will be developed for each potential project. The business case will assess the benefits to the Council and its customers against the cost of procurement, implementation and management.

For 2007/08, capital programme bids have been categorised as follows:

- Statutory Requirements
- Health and Safety Requirements
- Business Critical

The approved programme includes the affordable housing capital programme, regeneration projects, Disabled Facilities Grants, COSY, Works to Industrial Sites, cemeteries works, car park repairs, ICT projects, wheelie bins and new grass cutting equipment. The Council has agreed to prioritise its capital programme so that only available funding from capital receipts is committed.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

Chester-le-Street District Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy underpins the Council's Corporate Plan. The financial strategy aims to provide the means by which we intend to achieve our vision and priorities as stated in the Corporate Plan, and result in priority based budgeting.

The strategy covers a rolling three year period so that the Authority can plan ahead; it includes expenditure forecasts and projected funding. These are based on assumptions which could change over time; and the strategy will need to be reviewed so that the Authority is able to respond to any changes. Key to the management of the strategy is our budget prioritisation process, whereby bids for growth can be ranked and we ensure that the use of resources is linked to the Council's overall vision and priorities.

The Strategy therefore:

- addresses the Council's vision and priorities as stated in the Corporate Plan;
- covers a rolling three year period;
- includes clear assumptions for projections and estimates;
- shows links with other resource management strategies and takes a holistic view of the Council's finances;
- details our financial management arrangements;
- includes prioritisation processes;
- identifies risks and actions proposed to manage risks; and

- identifies monitoring and reporting arrangements.

In effect, the Medium Term Financial Strategy provides the framework for the overall management of the Council's resources and the annual budget process for the next three years.

This strategy is intended to be used for all stakeholders:

▪ For the Executive and Council	- to decide how the available financial resources will be used
▪ For managers and staff	- to reinforce their roles in the financial management arrangements
▪ For residents	- to show how the Council's financial strategy impacts upon service provision
▪ For taxpayers	- to demonstrate how the Council looks after public resources
▪ For partners	- to share the Council's vision and help identify opportunities for joint working

Financial planning and service planning is part of the same process, with clearly linked time scales. The financial planning and budget process is about linking budgets to policies. The process incorporates Value for Money assessments, where services produce a statement as to whether value for money can be demonstrated in accordance with the Council's corporate VFM criteria. The statements are challenged through the Star Chamber approach and the process requires action when value for money is unproven. Similarly, the service planning process requires services to consider their proposals to make efficiency savings over the next three years, and their plans to procure services in the future.

The Organisational Development Strategy sets out workforce planning guidance and this is incorporated in the service planning process, clearly identifying that workforce development planning is an integral part of business planning. The Medium Term Financial Strategy provides a resource plan to underpin the delivery of the Council's local strategies and plans. The Medium Term Financial Plan will be delivered through the implementation of the annual budget strategy and by following the agreed key financial principles.

Chester-le-Street District Council will receive formula grant of £5.042 million in 2007/08. As the Medium Term Financial Strategy runs up to the end of 2009/2010, some assumptions have had to be made for 2008/2009 and 2009/2010. At present, the strategy assumes increases in formula grant of 2.9% for each year; clearly this will have to be revised in the light of the next spending review.

The level of resources available to the Authority to fund its revenue expenditure is also dependent on council tax levels. The council tax increased by 4.8% in 2007/08; for future years the financial strategy currently assumes council tax increases of 4.8%, year on year. The projections also show how available resources will vary if council tax levels differ from the level originally assumed.

The Council faced significant financial pressure in preparing its 2007/08 revenue budget, however, it did achieve its aim of ensuring that the ongoing revenue budget is not dependent on the continued support from the general fund balance. The Authority will face further budget pressures, these will include the need to prepare for housing transfer; as the financial implications of the transfer are developed during the negotiations, they will be incorporated in the projections and the strategy will be updated. As the Council plans to transfer its housing stock to a Registered Social Landlord at the end of 2007/08, the Medium Term Financial Strategy does not project the HRA position beyond the current financial year. The financial implications of stock transfer will be incorporated in the General Fund revenue projections.

Quote: "There are clear links between strategic, service and financial strategies. Managers use clear service planning guidance to ensure that service plans support strategies and link to priorities. The Council also has a good medium term financial strategy (MTFS) that links resources to service needs. The MTFS encompasses revenue, capital and housing budgets for the next three years and does simple sensitivity analysis as well as managing financial risk. This process ensures that strategic, service and financial strategies are well coordinated." Audit Commission June 2007

The Future Capital Programme

Although the Council receives some specific capital grants and has been extremely successful in attracting external funding, the whole capital programme is extremely dependent on asset sales. The Council is taking the opportunity to use all its capital receipts resulting from the sale of housing land for the provision of affordable housing and regeneration schemes. By doing this, the Council is able to retain all its housing receipts for local use. This does mean that the funding for other services is dependent on the proceeds of sales from non-housing land and the retained proportion of Right-to-Buy receipts.

A recent review of all the Council's assets has identified which of these are not currently needed to deliver the Council's services. Work is now underway to determine the most appropriate course of action. This is likely to include the marketing of surplus assets, which will result in capital receipts for the Authority.

Financial Management Arrangements

The Council established its key financial management principles when it first considered the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and adopted its new financial procedure rules in May 2005. The financial procedure rules were revisited when the Council reviewed its Constitution in May 2006, but no changes were required.

The financial management arrangements cover the treatment of:

- Reserves
- Additional income
- Fortuitous savings
- Efficiency savings
- Budgetary growth and capital programme bids
- Service specific funding
- Time limited funding
- Treatment of under and overspends
- Freedoms and flexibilities
- Invest to save initiatives

Treasury Management

All treasury management activities are undertaken within the CIPFA Code of Practice 'Treasury Management in Public Services'. The Council employs external treasury management consultants to advise on its treasury management strategy and provide data and interest rate forecasts to assist in planning and reducing the impact of unforeseen interest rate movements. Our cash flow and investment forecast is monitored and updated on a monthly basis. The 2007/08 revenue budget incorporates £300,000 from interest income on investments. This is considered a realistic, prudent figure and improving upon this is very much dependent on the timing of capital receipts.

Reserves

The general fund revenue reserve stands at £390,000 which amounts to approximately 4.8% of the net revenue budget for 2007/08. This is regarded as adequate for the Council. The 2007/08 budget, and the financial strategy up to 2009/10, do not require any call on the general fund reserve. In addition to the general fund reserve, the Council has several earmarked reserves which amount to just over £1 million. These were last reviewed as part of the 2007/08 budget setting process and will be, again, subjected to review when the final accounts for 2006/07 are reported.

Risk Management

A risk analysis is an essential feature of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. It identifies the major risks in terms of medium term financial planning and details the actions that are being taken to manage these risks. The actions are then managed and reported in accordance with the Council's risk management arrangements.

Monitoring, Reporting and Review Processes

The Medium Term Financial Strategy is monitored by the Council's Executive. As a minimum, this is considered when the revenue budget and capital programme are set for the forthcoming year and when the final accounts for the preceding year are closed. However, the strategy will be reviewed outside of these processes when required, particularly when the impact of major financial changes, such as that relating to the housing stock.

The financial management principles have been communicated and are understood by all service team managers and other budget holders. They have been incorporated in the **financial regulations**, which, again, have been widely communicated as part of the **Constitution**; training on the **financial regulations** has been provided to ensure they are fully understood. Financial monitoring reports are considered on a quarterly basis by corporate management team; high level monitoring reports are submitted to the Council's Executive at the six months, nine months and year end position. The three Overview and Scrutiny Panels receive more detailed monitoring reports for the services within their remit, again at the six months, nine months and year end stages. The Executive also receives quarterly corporate performance management reports which link financial and non-financial management, including key strategic risks. The authority's corporate performance management system links performance indicators (both national and local) with financial management data.

Efficiency Targets

As a result of the publication of the Gershon Efficiency Review, the Government is expecting that Local Government will secure 2.5% efficiency savings of their overall budget. For Chester-le-Street District Council, the three year target to the end of 2007/08 is £813,000; half has to be 'cashable'.

The Council's 2005/06 Annual Efficiency Statement (Backward Look) showed that efficiency savings totalling £410,000 have been made, and that £299,000 of these are cashable. The 2006/07 Annual Efficiency Statement (Forward Look) identifies further efficiency savings of £411,000, all of which are expected to be cashable. If these are all delivered, this means that the Council will have achieved efficiency savings of £821,000 by the end of 2006/07. This is in excess of the three year cumulative target of £813,000 set for the end of 2007/08. The 2007/08 Forward Look Annual Efficiency Statement identifies further savings of £125,000.

Use of Resources and Value for Money

The Audit Commission's annual Use of Resources Assessment evaluates how well councils manage and use their financial resources. The assessment focuses on the importance of having sound and strategic financial management to ensure that resources are available to support the Council's priorities and improve services, covering five themes:

- Financial Reporting
- Financial Management
- Financial Standing
- Internal Control
- Value for Money

The Council's 2006 Use of Resources assessment concluded that arrangements for achieving, managing and improving value for money are now in place, the financial management is improving and a Medium Term Financial Strategy is in place. Improvements were made across the board but particularly in relation to value for money.

Quote: "The Council manages its finances adequately. It implemented a new financial management computer system in 2005. This has improved the accuracy and availability of financial information. The three year medium term financial strategy considers all relevant variables and does simple sensitivity analysis on council tax levels. It also identifies strategic financial risks and how to manage them. The Council approved a balanced budget for 2007/08 with no movement to/from reserves. It also improved its 'Use of Resources' scores for financial management (3), internal control (3) and value for money (2). The Council achieved an overall 2 out of 4 during 2006/07." Audit Commission June 2007

How we are going about buying goods and services

Procurement is simply how we go about buying goods and services at the best possible price and quality. The Government's National Procurement Strategy for Local Government (NPS) set the scene for all councils to deliver significantly better and more cost effective public services. It encourages council's to do this through sustainable partnerships and a mixed economy of competitive suppliers from many sectors. Government guidance specifically requires all councils to:

- Make the necessary cultural changes
- Provide leadership and build capacity

- Engage in partnerships and collaboration
- Do business electronically
- Stimulate markets and achieve local community benefits

Procurement is therefore an increasingly important activity within our Council. This is demonstrated by the decision to share Head of Corporate Procurement with Derwentside District Council and our Corporate Procurement Strategy established in 2006. Procurement is an essential element of the delivery of effective and efficient services and it can make a significant contribution to the work of the Council in support of the Corporate Plan aims.

The Council established a corporate procurement function in 2006 in response to the national strategy. We have built upon the initial capability and pockets of good practice in existence and have adopted some innovative and collaborative approaches to how we do things. Some of our recent achievements have been the appointment of both member and officer procurement champions, the introduction of a shared head of service with Derwentside District Council, the development of our new Corporate Procurement Strategy and the recently developed e-procurement strategy to improve the efficiency and transparency of our procurement process.

There are however further opportunities for improvement in an environment of change, uncertainty, and technological innovation. In addition, there is an increased importance on issues such as climate change and sustainability. As a result, there will be some new and difficult challenges for councils and this re-enforces the importance of a strategic procurement approach.

The Governments Comprehensive Spending Review, 2007 will require us to ensure that spending is aligned to appropriate priorities, and that maximum value for money is achieved for every pound spent. We will also be expected to accelerate improvements and transformation within tight constraints. In view of this, we will continue to ask tough questions such as what services could be delivered better or differently and what may need to be stopped in order to drive out inefficiencies whilst ensuring that the required outcomes are achieved. The Council does not possess all of the resources to tackle these issues and deliver the Corporate Plan by itself. It will therefore be required to collaborate and create partnerships or shared services with others, as well as develop relationships with suppliers in the public, private, social enterprise and voluntary sectors to procure and deliver services on a sustainable basis.

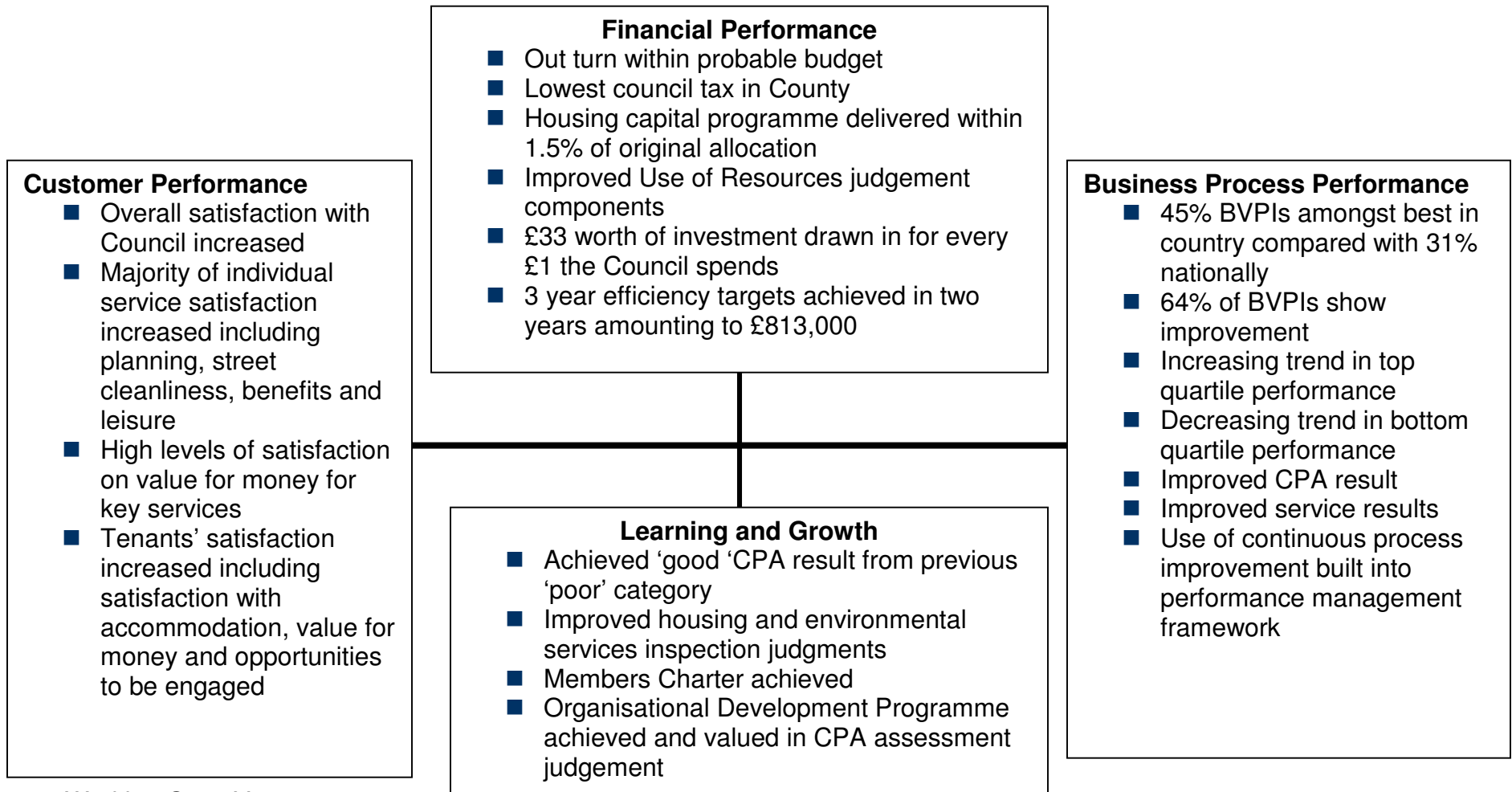
We are proud of our recent strategic procurement progress and will therefore strive to build upon this sound basis in order to meet the future challenges in support of the Corporate Plan.

Contracts

In respect of contracts awarded in 2006/2007, there have been no contracts let which involve a transfer of staff. Therefore, the Council certifies that there have been no compliance issues in respect of the Code of Practice on Workforce Matters in Local Authority Service Contracts.

Our Balanced Scorecard

To help us summarise how our performance across a range of activities measures up, we can demonstrate the following 'balanced scorecard'.



8. Overcoming Obstacles

What this chapter is about

We are aware that sometimes things could happen to prevent us achieving our vision, aims and values. Obstacles can get in our way. Things can happen that with a little planning could be avoided or at least the impact minimised. Sometimes we don't take the opportunity of doing things because of the obstacles associated with them. They could relate to financial, political or environmental issues, for example. We call these obstacles 'risks'. We know that we need to manage them.

Risk management is:

- understanding what our risks or obstacles are;
- considering the likelihood of them happening;
- looking to see what impact they would have on our plans if they happened;
- deciding whether we can bear the risk, and if not;
- looking to reduce, remove or transfer them; and
- providing clear ownership of the risk.

We know that if we do not have effective risk management then we will not have effective management. In the past, we have not effectively managed risks, and we have not had a huge appetite for risk. As a Council we are now working towards being a risk aware, rather than a risk averse Council. We are committed to managing our risks. We want to get the right balance between innovation and change on the one hand, and avoiding shocks and surprises on the other.

Risks can be either 'strategic' where they are crucial to the high level success of the Council as a whole or 'operational' where they are crucial specifically to a particular service, and then impact on the Council as a whole. While these are not mutually exclusive, this Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan concentrates on strategic risks.

A Corporate Approach to Risk Management

We have developed a corporate approach to Risk management in that we:

- manage and review strategic risks and publicise these in the Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan;
- our service team managers review operational risks and publicise these in service plans;
- assess and review risks in the decisions we make on a daily basis and in all reports;
- service team managers keep service team risk registers under review;
- the Council's corporate risk manager keeps a corporate risk register; and
- have developed a corporate 'toolkit' to facilitate this.

Our risk management process is not separate from our performance management framework. It is included in the diagram on page XX. The process can be graphically shown as:

- Defined corporate vision, aims and objectives in the Corporate Plan
- Identification and evaluation of key internal and external opportunities and threats
- Development of action plans or strategies to maximise opportunities and minimise risks
- Establish controls and performance procedures to manage opportunities and threats
- Reports to Executive, Council, senior management and customers
- Monitor, review and adapt

Our Strategic Risks

We have re-assessed our strategic risks. This has been done in the following way:

- we appointed consultants to help us develop risk management in the organisation;
- we carried out a series of interviews with key members, managers and staff;
- we held facilitated workshops to develop key organisational risks;
- we engaged the Council's most senior managers to agree key strategic risks which were critical to the success of our Corporate Plan;
- we have developed in-house skills to manage risks; and
- we have re-assessed strategic and improvement and recovery plan risks on a regular basis.

As a result, we have identified a register of key strategic and operational risks. From this we have identified 20 key strategic risks which will impact on the delivery of our Corporate Plan. These are shown in the following table:

Risk and Lead Officer

1 Implications of change as a result of the Government's decision on Local Government Review
Roy Templeman - Chief Executive

2. Effective planning for the future sustainability of the Council as a result of the potential impact of future ways of working
Roy Templeman - Chief Executive

3. Effective Medium Term Financial Planning

Linda Chambers - Director of Resources

4. Failure to manage retention and recruitment of staff, overall workload, employee development and morale as a result of changes in local government

Alison Swinney - Head of Organisational Development

5. Failure to develop a Leisure Strategy to facilitate the consideration of options for sports, arts and leisure

Tony Galloway - Director of Development Services

6. Effective delivery of the Local Development Framework regeneration within the District ***Martin Walker – Head of Regeneration***

7. Failure to sustain our improvement and direction of travel to meet the rigours of external challenge ***Ian Forster - Assistant Chief Executive***

8. Effective community engagement ***Ian Forster - Assistant Chief Executive***

9. Making sure we have effective structural change and that there is capacity in the organisation to make that change

Roy Templeman - Chief Executive

10. Failure to work in partnership through the District Partnership to deliver the Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement

Jeremy Brock - Community Strategy Advisor

11. Effective delivery of the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of the housing stock within targets

Ian Broughton - Director of Community Services

12. Making sure we have effective cultural change and that we work as 'OneTeam'

Roy Templeman - Chief Executive

13. Ensuring adequate health and safety controls for protection of people who work for us and visit us

Tony Galloway - Director of Development Services

14. Effective strategic asset management

Martin Walker – Head of Regeneration

15. Leadership and support for continued change and improvement by members

Cllr Linda Ebbatson - Leader of the Council

16. Effective performance management and measurement including data quality
Ian Forster - Assistant Chief Executive

17. Achievement of the equality and diversity agenda
Julie Underwood – Performance and Improvement Manager

18. Failure to meet expectations in terms of transformational government
Craig Etherington – Customer Relationship Manager

19. Ensuring effective implementation of the procurement strategy
Linda Chambers - Director of Resources

20. Robustness and effectiveness of information management systems
Linda Chambers - Director of Resources

Monitoring and Review

Risks change. We are therefore committed to regularly reviewing and re-assessing opportunities and risks. We intend to do this in the following ways:

- a corporate risk register will be developed and managed by the Council's risk manager;
- we will ensure that all managers are provided with training, and they in turn, introduce risk management as day to day practice within their teams;
- risk monitoring will be a permanent feature of senior management and Executive;
- performance reports are part of the overall performance management arrangements;
- strategic risks will be reviewed at least annually and be a firm part of the Council's corporate planning cycle; and
- operational risks will be assessed at least annually and will be a key part of the service planning process; and
- progress is reported in the Council's Corporate Plan.

9. Our Commitment to Equality and Diversity - Your Views Matter

Why your views are important

Your views matter to us. We have based our priorities and actions on what you have said over the last year or so. We are putting our customers first. Our customers, partners and other stakeholders are now at the very core of everything we do. Your views are vital to us because we need them to:

- prioritise services and resources to meet our communities' needs;
- plan better services to give users what they want, based on what they feel is important, to meet their expectations;
- set performance standards that are relevant to our services users;
- create a better working partnership and relationship with our customers; and
- highlight problems quickly, giving us more time to respond.

To ensure that this remains the case, we are establishing high standards of customer care and are actively consulting and communicating with you in a variety of ways. We will regularly review our success, to ensure that the results are effective and reliable. Consultation and engagement exercises will be planned and co-ordinated to ensure that the Council and our customers achieve maximum benefit without wasting effort and resources.

Our Commitment to Equality and Diversity

We want to ensure that everyone using our services is treated fairly and without prejudice or discrimination. We also know that all of our customers are different. Our community is becoming evermore diverse. We want to celebrate and encourage this diversity. We are committed to ensuring that no one is excluded from using our services, and that all of our customers have the same opportunities to improve their quality of life. All customers should have equal access to the services provided by the Council. This means that we recognise that people have different needs and requirements, and we will do all we can to meet these.

Our staff will respond promptly, politely and sensitively to all of our customers, and have specific customer service standards and targets to work to. Our services will be flexible and offer choice. To meet this commitment, we have ensured that all our staff and elected members have been properly trained. We will continue to work towards complying with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Amendment Act to ensure that the services we deliver, and the facilities we deliver them from, are fully accessible for disabled customers and for customers, whose first language is not English. In improving access and communication, we want to reach those members of the public who are normally least likely to take up our services.

We will also ensure that we continually improve the level to which we comply to the Local Government Standard for Equality. This is a statutory Best Value Performance Indicator that is checked by the Audit Commission. Our aim was to meet Level 1 by March 2006, Level 2 by March 2007, and Level 3 by March 2008.

Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2006/2007

Introduction

This is the Council's second Equality and Diversity Annual Report. It provides:

- ◆ background information on how and why equality and diversity issues have begun to be dealt with by the Council;
- ◆ what we have achieved so far, but particularly during 2006/07;
- ◆ what we planned to do but have not achieved during the year; and
- ◆ what our plans are for the future.

Background

The Sustainable Community Strategy for the district of Chester-le-Street was launched in November 2006. Its key priorities to achieve inclusive communities are to:

- ◆ promote sustainable communities through better quality and access to housing in neighbourhoods across the District;
- ◆ make the District a safer place to live, work and visit; to further reduce crime and disorder and to increase public reassurance;
- ◆ maximise and promote lifelong learning opportunities as a contribution to the economic, social and environmental well-being of our communities;
- ◆ improve health and well-being of communities across the District; tackle health inequalities; and improve access to and quality of health and social care services;
- ◆ champion the development and promotion of culture, leisure, sport and the arts in contributing to the well being of residents and local communities.

As a leading partner in delivering these priorities, the Council has two Equality Champions whose primary role is to promote the equalities agenda both internally and externally to the Council. The champions are Cllr Linda Ebbatson, Leader of the Council, and Ian Forster, Assistant Chief Executive.

A Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) undertaken by the Audit Commission in 2003 resulted in a 'poor' rating for the Council. In response to this, the Council developed an Improvement and Recovery Plan. This included a large number of improvement projects and actions that addressed the weaknesses identified by the Audit Commission. One such project focused on Equality and Diversity, its desired outcome was that: 'The organisation is fully aware of equality and diversity issues, and builds in effective responses within service provision'.

A review of the Improvement and Recovery Plan in 2005 sought to build on the achievements of the first project, to mainstream equality and diversity by 'ensuring that we build equality and diversity into everything we do.' To that end, a cross-council working group was established (the Equality and Diversity Working Group). This group ensures that planned actions take place, there is effective communication both internally and externally, and that the Council actively promotes equality and diversity. As well as Council staff, there are three members of the working group who are from partner organisations outside the Council. They are able to provide knowledge and expertise for the working group to draw on, along with an external challenge to ensure that what we do has maximum benefit for our communities.

What we have achieved

During 2006 / 2007, a significant amount of work was completed, enabling the Council to retain Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) and be in a position to work towards Level 3 by March 2008. We use the ESLG as the framework for our Corporate Equality Plan. This was revised in January 2006, the action plan was 73% completed, with 37% of actions on target. Further actions have now been added to the action plan as a result of a revised Equality Scheme.

The 'overarching' Equality Scheme has been written to ensure that the Council fulfils its legal obligations to ensure that employees and those who receive our services are treated fairly and equitably, particularly those from minority and disadvantaged sections of the community. It also ensures that the Council meets its statutory duties in relation to race equality, disability equality and gender equality.

As a local authority, the Council also has a duty to promote racial equality. We are measured against: 'the quality of our race equality scheme and the improvements resulting from its application' every year by the Audit Commission. In 2004/2005 we reported a performance measure of 21%; in 2005/2006 we reported a significant increase to 53%; and in 2006/2007 we have improved even further to 84%, exceeding our own target. This is well within the top 25% of councils across the country.

In order to achieve these much improved standards, the following actions were taken:

Training

- All new employees have equality and diversity training as part of the induction process

Diversity Impact Assessment

- Diversity Impact Assessments (DIA) have been carried out in housing, revenues and benefits and some corporate services.
- The DIA methodology and guidance have been revised to make the system simpler and more user-friendly, and also to ensure that in future all service teams undertake DIAs on an annual basis.

Corporate Equality Plan, Equality Scheme, and Equality Policy

- The Corporate Equality Plan 2006 was revised and an updated plan approved by Council in January 2007.
- It includes a three-year action plan, which is based on the requirements of the Equality Standard for Local Government, and is designed to ensure that we achieve Level 3 of the standard by March 2008, and Level 4 by 2010.
- The Council's existing Equality Scheme was broadened to cover all six strands of the equality agenda (race, disability, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation). This has enabled the Council to meet its legal duties.
- In tandem with the above plans, the Council set out its commitment to ensuring fairness and equity for all – community, partners and other stakeholders, and employees – in a Comprehensive Equality Policy. This policy directs how services are provided to meet the diverse needs of those whom we serve. Only minor changes were made to the policy when the CEP was revised.

Monitoring performance and information

- The monitoring of progress on CEP actions is undertaken by the Equality and Diversity Working Group monthly.
- A raft of performance indicators (both Best Value Performance Indicators and Local Performance Indicators) are also monitored by the Equality and Diversity Working Group, and reported to the Council's Executive quarterly.
- An Equalities Monitoring Protocol has been introduced, requiring all service teams to obtain, analyse and use equalities data to improve service delivery to minority groups.

Communications

- The Council commissioned a new translation and interpretation service, to improve services for people whose first language is not English.
- Working closely with the County Durham Society for the Blind and Partially Sighted, the Council provides District News and a number of other key documents in audio tape format for blind people.
- Our website offers both translation and ReadSpeak facilities, making it more accessible and user-friendly.

Partnership working

There is much that still needs to be done to meet the challenges of equality and diversity. The Council recognised this, and the fact that other councils are in a similar position. We have therefore established joint working arrangements with councils and other organisations in County Durham which will help to make us more efficient, for instance by sharing resources.

One good example of this joint working was a major consultation event with disabled people from across the whole County. The feedback from this event was used by the district councils, County Council, Police and Fire services and Durham University to help them develop their respective Disability Equality Schemes.

Action learning set

As part of the Council's Organisational Development Programme, an action learning set was tasked with a project to promote and celebrate diversity. The group held 3 events relating to the diversity strands of age, sexual orientation and disability:

- demonstration and information about the Alexander technique used for older people;
- an awareness day on sexual orientation, with guest speakers from the lesbian/gay/bi-Sexual/transgender community and agencies working with that community;
- an 'It's a Knockout' fun day for council staff and their families, and disabled people within the District. A repeat event is planned for 2007/2008.

Celebrating diversity

The Council's arts development team provided many opportunities for celebrating diversity, including:

- Brass Festival 2005 and 2006 (with a multi cultural theme);
- 'Coming home to your voice' with Stella Davies-Frayne and Cuthbert Resource Centre (this was a 'soul singing' health project specifically for adults who experience severe and enduring mental health problems);
- Elements - Iroko African drumming at St Bede's RC Primary and Annapurna dance company at Pelton Fell Community Centre (Elements is a touring theatre scheme which we buy in to and actively promotes cultural awareness);
- art exhibitions, displaying art works from local community groups, including disabled artists.

In addition, the Council held a week of events leading up to World Aids Day, to promote awareness of sexual health, drug use, and HIV/Aids.

Quote “ The Council is making good progress in promoting diversity and user focus. It created an equalities and diversity working group in January 2006. This group is led by the Leader, supported by the Assistant Chief Executive, and is attended by external groups including those representing people with disabilities. The group has put in place a corporate policy framework and has introduced mandatory training and awareness for councillors and staff. The group is also talking to the Chinese Elders group and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender groups to help shape future service delivery. Through the LSP, the group has also been influential in introducing equality impact assessments. Recent service improvements include the introduction of an assisted bin scheme to help physically disabled people move refuse bins and new guidelines for finding suitable accommodation for homeless single mothers.”
Audit Commission June 2007

What we have not achieved

There has been slow progress on Diversity Impact Assessments. Therefore the methodology and guidance has been fundamentally reviewed and revised. In future, impact assessments will be undertaken annually by service teams to a prioritised timetable. They will consult with communities and agencies as necessary, and report their findings to the Equality & Diversity Working Group, elected members and the public. Progress has also been quite slow implanting systems to record and monitor equalities information. This is now being addressed by all service team managers.

It had been hoped to have consultation groups developed, but due to progress on the implementation of the Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy being slowed by the development of a partnership approach, this has not been possible.

Our plans for the future

The major focus for 2007/2008 will be to ensure that the action plans in the Corporate Equality Plan and Equality Scheme are implemented. We will continue to monitor progress on a monthly basis, and report on our performance to councillors every quarter. Service teams will ensure that they carry out Diversity Impact Assessments and equalities monitoring, both of which will ensure that relevant and specific objectives and targets can be set in their annual service plans.

We will review the Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy, and determine resources to develop consultation groups.

We will continue to work in partnership with other councils and partner organisations, helping one another to meet increasing demands on our time, people and finance.

We will identify more ways in which we can celebrate the diversity of our communities with our communities. We will continue to develop the cultural calendar, including an events facility on our website.

YOUR VIEWS are very important to us. If you would like to comment on this annual report, or you would like more information, please contact Julie Underwood, Performance and Improvement Manager on 0191 387 2220, or by e-mail at julieunderwood@chester-le-street.gov.uk.

Appendix 2 *Aims and Priorities of the Chester-le-Street Sustainable Community Strategy*

Vision

By 2014 the District of Chester-le-Street will be a place where people choose to live, to learn, to work and to visit. There will be inclusive, safe, healthy communities in our towns and villages built on a strong sustainable economic base with excellent communications networks. The District of Chester-le-Street will be a place where everyone is working together for a sustainable future.

Priorities

A strong, sustainable and diverse economic base

Priority 1: Support local business and create opportunities for new and innovative businesses.

Priority 2: Develop Chester-le-Street as a thriving commercial centre.

Priority 3: Develop a tourism and leisure based economy building on the unique cultural heritage of the District.

Inclusive communities

Priority 4: Promote sustainable communities through better quality and access to, and greater choice and improved efficiency in, housing in neighbourhoods across the District.

Priority 5: Make the District a safer place to live, work and visit; to further reduce crime and disorder and to increase public reassurance.

Priority 6: Maximise and promote lifelong learning opportunities as a contribution to the economic, social and environmental well-being of our communities.

Priority 7: Improve the health and well-being of communities across the District; tackle health inequalities; and improve access to and quality of health and social care services.

Priority 8: Champion the development and promotion of culture, leisure, sport and the arts in contributing to the well-being of residents and local communities.

Excellent communication networks

Priority 9: Improve transport to ensure better access, greater choice, higher quality and more sustainable local provision. See also Priority 4 & Priority 6 for e-Government and improving access to services through ICT and community facilities.

An attractive and protected environment

Priority 10: Manage the built and natural environment to promote biodiversity whilst creating greener, cleaner more sustainable communities.

