



Green
Flag
Award

Corporate Plan 2006/2009

Featuring the Best Value Performance Plan 2006/2007



Chester-le-Street
District Council

OneTeam

Working together to fulfil the needs of our communities

Our Commitment to Equality and Diversity

We want to ensure that everyone using our services are 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 being able to use any of 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 Members have been properly trained, and more training is planned in the future.

We will continue to work towards complying with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Amendment Act to make sure 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 continuously improve the level to which we comply to the Local Government Standard for Equality.

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 at Civic Centre, Newcastle Road, Chester-le-Street, County Durham DH3 3UT.

Telephone: 0191 387 2130 e-mail: IanForster@chester-le-street.gov.uk

Foreword

This is our second Corporate Plan. It incorporates our Best Value Performance Plan for 2006/2007

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

We are a much better council than we were two years ago and that is official. We have continued to make **GOOD PROGRESS** on our improvement programme and this has now been acknowledged by the Audit Commission. In March the Commission published a 'Progress assessment'. This was its view about how good the council is now. The Commission feels the Council has now set out clear ambitions for the District in its Corporate Plan and has strengthened its working arrangements, including the way it manages its budget, to enable it to deliver these ambitions. The commission felt the senior politicians and managers are providing good leadership to local communities and to the Council itself. They feel we have worked hard to improve our management and to train and support our staff to improve services.

To test out whether our improvement work is leading to real and positive change for our communities the Commission inspected our environmental Services in February this year. They are shortly to produce their findings. We hope that they will consider that this service, which includes refuse collection and recycling, grounds maintenance, and streetcleaning was a **GOOD SERVICE** (Two Star) with **PROMISING PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT**. In reaching this conclusion we hope that the Audit Commission took into account the views of our customers and partners. The Commission thought we were performing well in areas of street cleanliness, recycling and user satisfaction. They also said we had a good track record in delivering improvements. In early May an inspection of our Housing Service is taking place and we hope by the time we have published our corporate plan we will have at least a one star housing service. This will be another big step forward for the council.

This all says a great deal about your council. It means that services to you are improving we are beginning to deliver high quality services to you and that they are going to get even better. We are grateful to our customers and partners for helping us to where we are now. However, we are not complacent. We have set our sights on being a truly excellent council and we will not lose our momentum so we can achieve this. The next year will be crucial. We will be concentrating on our priorities and in particular:

- make progress on proving that we are delivering value for money across the council;
- make progress in user focus and equality and diversity
- progress our proposals to look at other ways to deliver services including our Housing and Leisure Services.

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 at 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 *where you will find things*

Our Corporate Plan is broken down into 10 Chapters including this one

Chapter 1

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

Chapter 2

Provides you with details of your Council. This chapter sets out the structure of the Council, how it makes decisions and how it goes about managing its performance to achieve such 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

Lets you know what the Council is trying to achieve, its vision, aims and objectives. It shows how these link to the Community Strategy, your vision of Chester-le-Street in 2010. If you want to know what we are aspiring to turn to page XX now.

Chapter 4

This chapter lets you know what our achievements were in 2005/2006 including those to meet our aims for last year and our recovery programme. If you want to see examples of what we have achieved last year turn to page XX.

Chapter 5

This part of the plan addresses our achievements on our best value and local performance indicator achievements during 2005/2006. If you want to see what we have 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, 2006/2007. 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 – our ‘Medium Term Financial Strategy’. Interested in our spending? Go to page 99.

Chapter 8

The obstacles we might encounter in delivering our vision of our ‘strategic risks’ are identified in this chapter. It also shows how we intend to manage them. If you are interested in our risks look at 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 intending to improve how we engage with our customers turn to page XX.

We present examples of performance indicator out-turns both 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, how we are going about meeting them and what we have achieved and 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 is 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. 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 2006/2007 to ensure they remain focused on things that are most important to our communities. However, this document provides this information to help you judge how well you feel about 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. 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 by the 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 organisations 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 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. Our plan 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 done, but what we have not done as well as what 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 will be developed by our Service Team Managers for areas like, Leisure, Housing and the Environment which will provide details of how we will

go about implementing them. 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 fulfil 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.

Chester-le-Street as a learning Council

Until last year we had only previously produced a Best Value Performance Plan. This had not contained the level of information to allow our customers and partners to know what we are really about. To put this right, and for the first time, we incorporated our Best Value Performance Plan into our Corporate Plan having learned from feedback from our customers, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), Audit Commission and best practice elsewhere. We have decided to produce this year's plan in the light of this learning. We feel that this year's plan is a bolder, more informative, focused and aspirational document. We feel it ought to be more helpful to our partners and customers as well as ourselves. We hope that you will find that the Plan has improved content, concentrates on outcomes and shows how the Council is making a difference in the community.

We had generally good feedback from customers and partners on last year's plan. We have made the following improvements this year. We have

- concentrated on the future rather than the past
- improved the way we set out our proposals to make it clearer what you can expect from our intended actions
- improved our focus on equality and diversity
- provided improved details about how the council can prove it is improving
- provided improved information on customer satisfaction trends.

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

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 its heart is the market town of Chester-le-Street, currently progressing 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 are female. 16% of the population are over 65 while 24% of the population are below the age of 19. 99% of the population is white. The largest ethnic minority group being Chinese at 0.3% of the total population. 84% of our population hold 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 is 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 5 77 people and a gross expenditure of over £36 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 developing ideas for a district wide Regeneration Strategy which will be 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. Recent regeneration projects at Pelton Fell and the Town Centre are showing what is possible. Indeed the current agreed regeneration scheme at Pelton Fell is an example of how we have worked closely with our community to help realize their ambitions.

Your Council's Progress

We feel 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 performing well below what was expected. We have since improved the administrative leadership by appointing a new Chief Executive in June 2004 and a completely new Senior Management team in early 2005. The team, which is supporting a council with a relatively newly elected Membership, is 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.

We agreed the second phase of our Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP) with the Minister responsible for Local Government which we are implementing to assist our recovery. We feel that as a result 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. 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 Community Strategy is not a council plan. It was developed by representatives of all the various interests in the District that it was possible to engage. 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 efforts have been recognized by those who monitor our progress. In March the Audit Commission published a progress assessment. This is an evidence based statement of where the Commission feel we are now compared with where we were in 2003. The Commission feels your

council is making good progress in addressing the serious weaknesses they identified at that time. The Commission describes how the actions the Council has taken since 2004 are helping it to improve the way it works and to deliver better services for local people.

The Commission feels the Council has set now set out clear ambitions for the district in its Corporate Plan and has strengthened its working arrangements, including the way it manages its budget, to enable it to deliver these ambitions. It feels that senior politicians and managers are providing good leadership to local communities and to the Council itself. It has worked hard to improve its management and to train and support its staff to improve services. The assessment shows that the Council has made a lot of progress in tackling its problems. It now understands the needs of local communities much better and is using this knowledge to improve its services in line with local views. It is laying down good foundations for the future and is well placed to continue to improve the way it works and to deliver better outcomes for local people.'

Quote “The Council agreed a new Corporate Plan in May 2005, setting out a new vision and seven new priorities for the Council. These provide an explicit customer focus and underpin the Council’s contribution to the Community Strategy . .” Audit Commission March 2006

It feels that the performance of the Council’s services is improving overall. The inspectors found:

- Progress on key regeneration projects, including Drum Industrial Estate, Bowes Business Park, Pelton Fell and the town centre.
- Improved planning and benefits payment systems.
- Progress on improving waste collection and recycling services.
- Much improved access to services through the Council’s website and electronic services.
- The housing service continues to face significant challenges but has plans for improvement.

There is further evidence that the council is getting much better as a result of our improvement programme. The Audit Commission will publish their results of their inspection of the Environmental Services Inspection at the end of May. Our environmental Services Team are responsible for refuse collection, recycling, keeping our streets clean and looking after the environment in a range of ways including grounds maintenance. After a rigorous inspection process, known as the ‘harder test’, we hope that the Commission will have concluded that the service was a **Good Service with Promising Prospects for Improvement**. This is the best result on a service inspection experience by the council and one of the best in the whole of the county. It shows that there has been a significant move forward in the provision of these community priority services. In reaching their conclusions we hope that the Inspectors will have found that:

- there are generally above average levels of satisfaction with environmental services with good service outcomes during 2005/06;
- the service is increasing the opportunity for residents to use open spaces through biodiversity and conservation work with communities;
- the Council maintains high levels of cleanliness in the district measured as top quartile performance in 2004/05;
- the Council is meeting recycling and composting targets, rates improved 2005/06 to 30%;

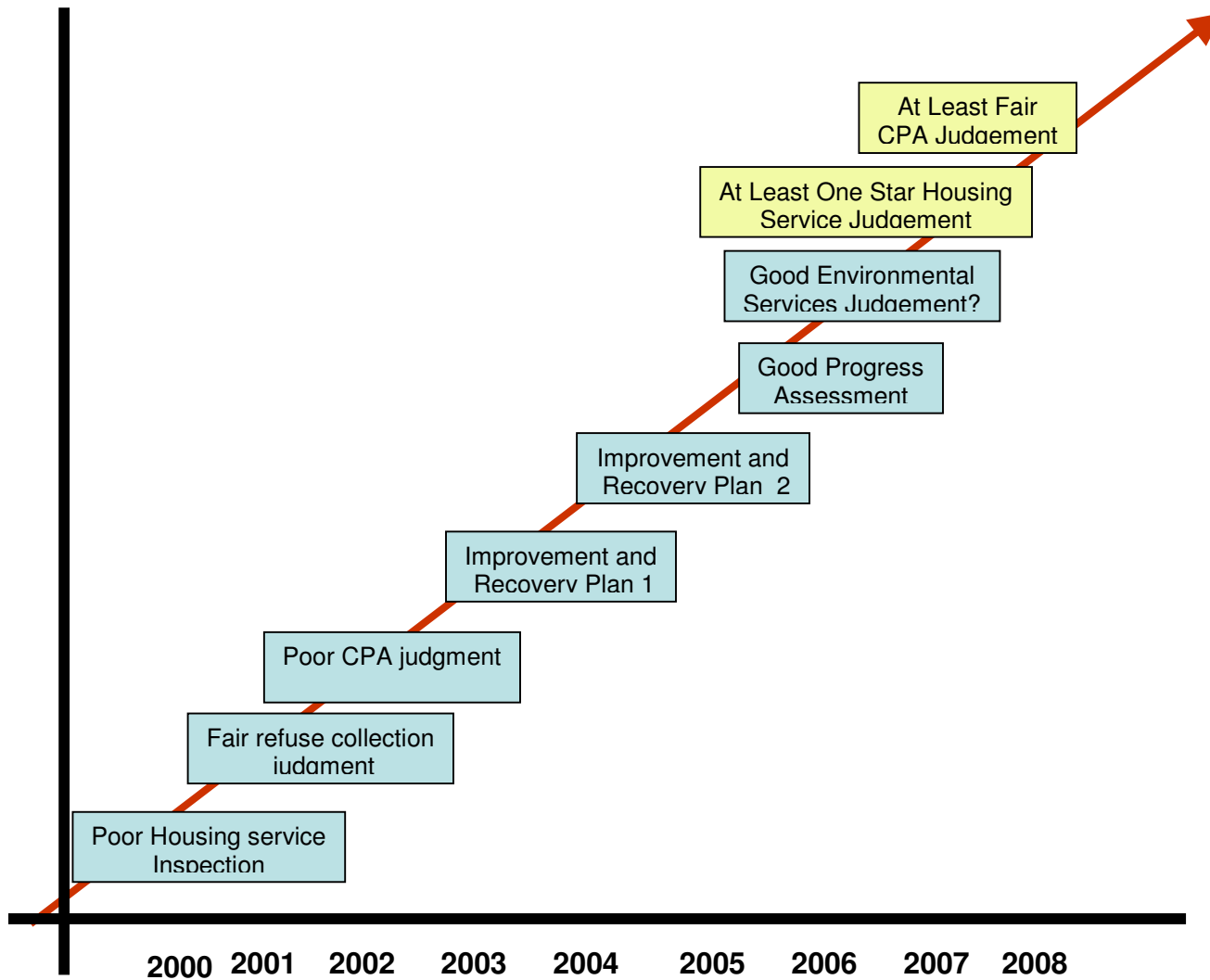
- there is a proactive approach to waste minimisation which has resulted in a slight reduction in the amount of household waste collected, against a national trend of increased amounts;
- the service is working more closely with communities through new practices such as zonal working and neighbourhood management pilots in two areas;
- it has received environmental awards include Green Flag, Green Apple and a Gold Award at the Tatton Royal Horticultural Society show.
- the service can demonstrate a significant track record in recent years that has delivered improving performance through new and improved working practices and enhanced services that users recognise;
- satisfaction with services and facilities is generally increasing;
- the Council is an effective environmental leader and the service has strong corporate and political support;
- the service has a good calibre of staff who are committed to driving improvements for their customers;
- there is good partnership working to increase the service's capacity to deliver; and,
- plans for the future showing how the service will contribute to corporate and community priorities are set out in service plans and are supported by the Council's performance management system;

In May we had an Inspection of our Housing Service and we await the results. We want to at least show that we have a One Star housing service. If we can achieve this we have confidence that we may improve our Comprehensive Performance Assessment Rating before the end of this financial year.

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

Our long term vision is to become an excellent council in the true meaning of the word. We want to be delivering excellent services to our community that are economical, efficient and effective. We want our customers to know that we are delivering value for money for 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, partnership working and simply doing things differently are therefore going to be key to our success.

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 to sustain them and ensure continuous improvement. We have confidence that we will achieve what we have set out to do. As shown above it is not just our view that we are making good progress in both our recovery and our service delivery. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 provides evidence of our achievement in service delivery and improvement in a little more detail.



Our Journey Towards Excellence

Structure of the Council

Part and parcel of our improvement has been how we have structured ourselves. The Council comprises 34 elected Members, 29 Labour, one Conservative, and 4 Independents. The Council has implemented a 'Cabinet' system for Local Government. This includes an Executive Committee led by the Leader of the Council and six Portfolio Holders. The Council has established panels of Members who are not on the Executive of the Council 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)

Members

Leader of the Council
Councillor Linda Ebbatson

Deputy Leader and Finance and Leisure Portfolio Holder
Councillor Simon Henig

Environment Portfolio Holder
Councillor Alan Holden

Regeneration and IT
Portfolio Holder
Councillor Chris Jukes

Human Resources and
Communications Portfolio Holder
Councillor Simon Westrip

Housing and Community Safety
Councillor Isabel Smith

(Insert Diagram)

Senior Managers

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

Roy Templeman

Chief Executive]

Tony Galloway

Director of Development Services

Ian Broughton

Director of Community Services

Linda Chambers

Director of Resources

Ian Forster

Assistant Chief Executive

Alison Swinney

Head of Organisational Development

Quote: “Political and managerial leadership is now good. The Leader, Deputy Leader and new Chief Executive have over the last year demonstrated active and effective leadership. Councillors have grown in their roles and continue to be engaged, committed and enthusiastic. The Council now has a strong corporate management team and working relationships between senior officers and councillors are good. .” Audit Commission March 2006

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 7 Members

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Comprising Chairs and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Panels

Planning Committee Licensing Committee Standards Committee Audit Committee

Key Supporting Working Groups

***Service Team Managers Group
Capital Programme Working Group***

***Working to support improvement across the council
Programme managing key council spending on projects***

**Project Management Board
Modernisation Project Team
Equalities and Diversity Working Group**

**Corporate Governance Group
Employee Suggestion Scheme**

**Well Being at Work Working Group
Health and Safety Committee**

**Programme Managing the councils improvement programme
Driving electronic services and uptake and managing the web-site
Driving the councils diversity agenda and performance managing the
Equalities Plan
Ensuring internal controls and driving information management
Managing the councils approach to encouraging staff to promote
improvements
Managing well being at work within the organisation
Working to protect the health and safety of staff and customers**

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:

(Insert Diagram)

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 accord 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 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 Team on a quarterly basis. This includes annual target, quarterly return and an explanation of the result (including measures to address underperformance).
- It is the responsibility of Service Heads, 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;
- The Assistant Chief Executive's Teams develop the framework for performance improvement which will include for 2006 onwards criteria for value for money judgements; Executive Members, Directors and Service Team Managers drive performance improvement;
- The Assistant Chief Executive's Teams are responsible for reporting achievements of progress of the Corporate Plan (including Best Value and Local Performance Indicators) to Executive on a quarterly basis;
- The Assistant Chief Executive's Teams are responsible for reporting achievements of progress of the Improvement and Recovery Plan to Executive and Monitoring Board on a monthly basis; a system of reality checks is established and carried out by the Customer Relationship Manager to check and record actual outcomes;
- Our performance will be published annually in our Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan. Chapter 5 provides this information for 2005/2006,; and,
- Each service unit, 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. It will be important to focus on outcomes from achievements and not simply the achievements, in the introduction of improvements themselves. 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 performance management framework is greatly improved now that the Corporate Plan is in place, and the Council has put a good performance management system in place. ." Audit Commission March 2006

The performance management framework is greatly improved now that the Corporate Plan is in place, and the Council has put a good performance management system in place.

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 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 all of 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. The Strategy has been going through a process of being updated during the last year. This has been 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 updated Community Strategy now sets out a clear vision, four key aims and 10 priority areas. The vision of the revised Sustainable Community Strategy remains 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 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 will now be supported by clear action plans. Appendix 2 sets out the aims and priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy in greater detail.

Quote: “The Council is now taking a lead role in the LSP. The Council is supporting the LSP to update the strategy to produce clearer, more measurable short (one-year) and medium (four-year) action plans.” Audit Commission March 2006

By working with our partners to achieve the 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 and seven priority areas to underpin its contribution to the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Council's vision is:

'Working together to fulfill the needs of our communities'

The Council Values remain to be:

- ***An authority that is customer focused, that understands the needs of communities and values resident and business engagement***
- ***An authority that is value added based, 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 Community Strategy and where staff development and training is prioritised***
- ***A council that is accessible to everyone to commit to equality whilst recognising diversity***
- ***A council that is active both regionally and nationally***

Our Improvement and Recovery Plan

Having established a vision, aims and values we felt that we must set our stall out to improve the way the council goes about its business. We concentrated on the key areas of weakness that were found by the Audit Commission in their Comprehensive Performance Assessment judgement. These are areas upon which the council must improve if it is to become the type of council we want to be. The drivers of change are:

- 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.

The drivers of change form the basis of our Improvement and Recovery Plan 2 , agreed by the ODPM, and are 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 Priorities - *a focus for 2006/2007 onwards*

It can be seen from the above that a key driver for change is ensuring that the Council's Corporate Plan is aligned with the Community Strategy. The Community Strategy is being updated and the current vision and aims of the Council have been reviewed as part of our corporate planning process. We consider that our vision remains clear and bold and does not need changing. It supports the delivery of the Community Strategy. We also feel that the values we have established remain up-to-date and relevant. The drivers for change within our Improvement and Recovery Plan 2 equally remain relevant and need no alteration at present.. At the same time we did not feel that our aims for 2004/2005 clearly identified priorities which will give us the focus we need for the future. We felt therefore that we needed to move to a clearer set of priorities from last year onwards. We are realistic in saying that our key organisational priority is successfully delivering our Improvement and Recovery Plan. We will continue to focus on this and our journey towards excellence..

However, to ensure that we focus on what really matters to our communities and particularly having listened to our partners and customers we have established the following 7 key priorities. These are things that really matter to our community and ourselves over the next couple of years.

These priorities, based on community engagement, and which shape our proposals for 2005/2006 and beyond 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

Community Strategy that you wanted us to focus on achieving

We have responded by focusing on our actions to achieve the 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 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, 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 develop a Regeneration Strategy for the District which represents the diversity of our communities, their needs and aspiration 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.

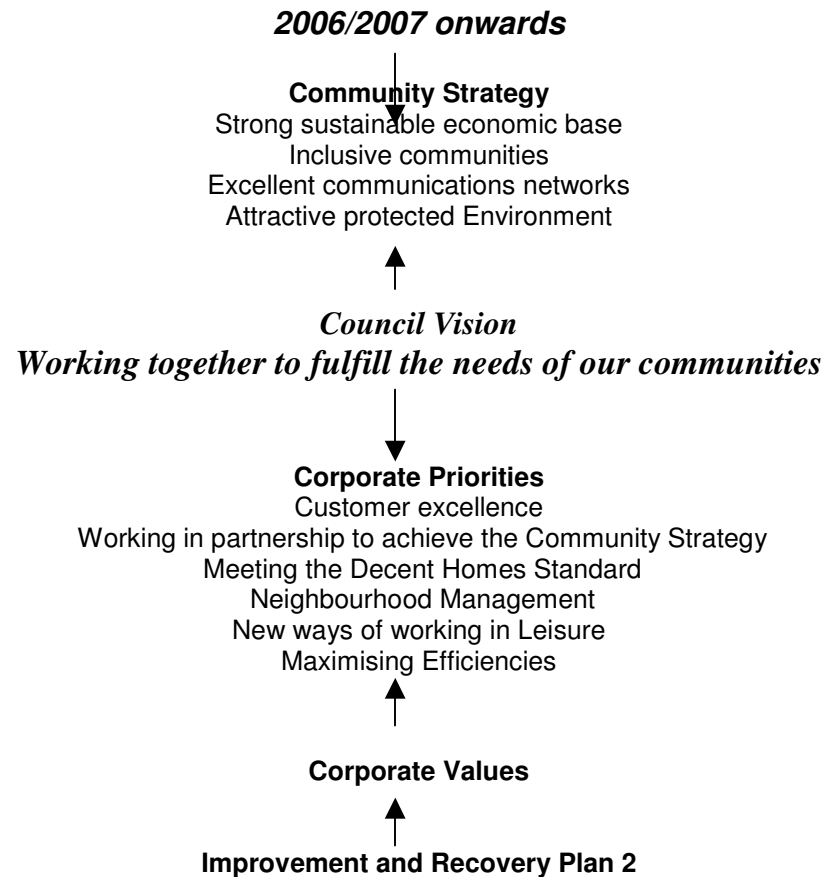
Things which are not Priorities

We feel we are good at setting priorities and need to get better at deciding what is not a priority. Other things we do outside the seven priority areas will not be identified as priorities. 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 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. **and summarised in the delivery action plan set out in Appendix 3.**

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

The change we have made in how we go about our business is shown diagrammatically on the next page.



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) as 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 Districts, Voluntary and Community Services and organisations such as the Police, Fire and Rescue Brigade and the Primary Care Trust to develop the Agreement with the Government.

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 justice all sit within the outcomes developed within our LAA.

We have set challenging targets where we believe we can have the 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. Rising 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 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.

4. Our Achievements 2005/2006

This year we have 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 have set out 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 and 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 we ensure equality and celebrate diversity.

What have we achieved?

So far we have:

- *secured a GOOD service with PROMISING PROSPECTS of improvement judgement from the Audit Commission following a rigorous 'harder test' inspection of our Environmental Services. As a result customers can be assured that the services provided in refuse collection and recycling, street cleaning and grounds maintenance meet standards above the average expected*
- *Developed and commenced implementation of our Equalities Policy which incorporates our Racial Equality Scheme. 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*
- *Established an Equality and Diversity Working Group which is assisting the council in addressing equality issues that exist in the organisation. This is helping to celebrate diversity, is engaging with other councils to share resources and is driving the implementation of*

the Equalities Action plan. It has agreed and implemented a change to the councils Language Translation Service provider with direct improved access outcomes for those within our community whose first language is not English.

- *Provided Equality and Diversity awareness training to all Members and staff in the organisation and as a result we have improved skills and knowledge to improve service delivery to those in our community who are less likely to access the services we provide*
- *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 which will help to improve the quality of life of our most vulnerable*
- *Continued to improve the services we provide right across the council and this is shown by a positive inspection of our environmental service and what we hope will be a positive inspection of our housing service*
- *Developed and implemented a Customer Excellence Strategy aimed at developing consistent customer focussed service right across the council which is resulting in better customer care when you do business with us*
- *Developed a single point of reception at the civic centre so customers can be assisted by the first officer they meet at the council improving customer care*
- *Agreed service standards across the council and in Environmental Services with the agreement of local residents groups and as a result improved our performance on such things as answering mail and telephone calls*
- *Developed guidance for the development of service standards across the council so customers can enjoy a level of service they have helped to establish*
- *Agreed and implemented a compliments, comments and complaints policy and procedures which give our customers an opportunity to have their complaints addressed*
- *Completed our audit of community engagement and developed a Community and Engagement and Involvement Strategy which will assist us in improving how we engage all our customers in our work over the next few years*
- *Continued to carry out our annual residents survey which has shown that your satisfaction with us is generally increasing and which is helping us to continue to improve services, set our budget*
- *Reviewed our 'constitution' or how we go about our business including allowing the opportunity for the public to speak at our Council, Executive, committees and panel which has improved both customer engagement and our accountability*
- *Administered and supported over 100 council committees and Panels, providing agendas and minutes on the councils website*
- *Supported the development of a completely new committee, the Licensing Committee which considers license applications, without any increase in democratic services staff.*
- *Have carried out our first Tenants survey which is helping us to set budgets and improve our housing service to our customers*
- *Established a Modernisation Team which focused on achieving national e-government and Priority Service Outcomes targets and is now turn focus to managing the web-site and improving take up of on line 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 web site which not only provides better information but allows you to interact with the council (our web site is now in top 100 in country from 459th)*

- *Achieved 90% of required national Priority Service Outcomes and 88% of Good Priority outcomes from a very low starting point (17% at the beginning of the year) and as a result customers can be assured that that we are achieving what the government expect of us in terms of electronic service delivery*
- *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 your first point of contact with the council:*
- *Developed a system to allow you to contact the council at home through the intranet as a result of changing our web-site provider and developing our site to meet national expectations*
- *Developed a new website for community services allowing an improved choice of access to Housing services;*
- *Improved electronic customer support systems in Leisure and Environmental Services improving customer access and performance management;*
- *Implemented an on-line participation system which allows the public to vote on issues that may affect them;*
- *Customers can now, amongst other things, make and view planning applications, undertake electronic payments and e-billing, access accounts with us and access a housing benefits calculator all on line.*
- *Adopted our Statement of Community Involvement for the Planning Services and were one of the first in the country to submit this to the Secretary of State for approval. As a result our customers now know how and when they can get involved in planning issues.*
- *Reviewed our basket of local indicators in order that we can show how we are improving at a local level rather the national level through statutory best value performance indicators.*
- *Implemented comprehensive restructures across the council to ensure we have the right staff with the right skills to improve services including our Revenues and Benefits service;*
- *Implemented 114 improvement recommendations in our Revenues and Benefits services including clearer defined roles, an overpayments policy, Landlord Information Pack, Service level agreement with internal partners, better automated internal systems and improved processes and procedures*
- *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 whose privacy is protected;*
- *Developed a system of making insurance claims over the internet making the system more accessible and resulting in a speedier claims service;*
- *Developed a pilot on home working with a view to reducing accommodation costs and making services more efficient in the future;*
- *Undertaken an 'organisational development programme' which has engaged all managers, supervisors and 'inspirers' in developing our 'One Team' approach and which is actively developing the right skills and competencies within our organisation to meet customer aspirations and our improvement programme;*
- *Embarked on an 'action learning set' approach to carrying out improvements in the council by engaging staff in activity outside their normal area of service delivery;*

- *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 aid us meet our priorities;*
- *Improved the communities overall satisfaction with how we do things consistently over the last two years*
- *Delivered Customer Care Training to the whole of the Community Services Directorate to improve the customer service skills of our 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 councilors are more effective in their roles as community leaders;*
- *Developed priority relevant 'action learning sets' aimed at improving the customer focus culture, celebrating diversity and achieving Investors in People accreditation. By implementing the findings of these areas of work we will be ensuring that we become more customer focussed, address our diversity responsibility and have a work force which is supported and committed to improvement;*
- *Through the Local Strategic partnerships we have worked with young people to engagement 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 buildings open to the public which are accessible including Chester-le-Street Cemetery which is now Disability Discrimination Act Compliant.*
- *Supported 23 Tenants and Residents groups across the District helping build their capacity to improve the quality of life in those areas they represent.*
- *Support 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 we put things right where they go wrong*
- *Achieved maximum points on the Pendleton Survey which ranks the planning service in the top 30% nationally and together with other quality achievements as a result helps to ensure that customers have a high performing planning service.*
- *Significantly improved performance on handing major planning applications from 40% to 67%, and householder applications from 91% to 95%*
- *Carried out a local customer survey on planning applications for the first time outside best value requirements which allows the planning team to understand customer satisfaction*
- *Carried out 3225 pest control treatments in both Council and privately owned properties. Of these treatments, 87.6% were carried out within set time scales.*
- *Produced draft Environmental Services, Environmental Health and Planning Service Enforcement policy to make it clearer to our community how and when enforcement action will be taken and identifying clear standards of what to expect.*
- *Improved information available at Planning Committees including presentation of photographs and detailed plans assisting members decisions on application as well as customer understanding of proposals through a more transparent committee system*
- *Carried out a campaign last Spring to encourage the take up of benefits have resulted in 188 claims for housing and or council tax benefit.*

- Worked in partnership with the Pensions Service and attended flu jab clinics and various community centre to encourage pensioners to take up benefits. This resulted in 129 people being entitled to housing and or council tax benefit and an additional £110,850 being paid out in pension credit.
- Achieved a Gold National Clean Air Award in recognition of its 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
- Improved our performance in quality of our race Equality Scheme, ;percentage of invoices for commercial goods and services paid; non-domestic rates collected, top earners who are women, top earners from minority ethnic communities, numbers of employees retiring early, buildings open to the public that are accessible; and services delivered electronically

***Quote: Chester le Street District Council has made good progress in setting out its ambitions for the district and in supporting these ambitions with clear implementation plans. It is working with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) to provide much improved community leadership.”
Audit Commission March 2006***

Priority 1: What have we not achieved and why?

We have not yet:

- Introduced a dedicated customer service team although we propose to do this by the end of June 2006. This has not been achieved in the initial deadline as resources did not allow. The Customer Excellence Strategy refined the deadline to June;
- 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. We intend to complete this by March 2007;;
- Made progress on achieving Charter Mark Status for Environmental Services at it has been decided that it would best to seek this for our customer services team in the future;
- Signed up to the national Members Charter but are likely to achieve this by July and be the first district council in the region n to do so
- Met our targets on a range of indicators including percentage of appeals allowed by appointed Inspectors
- Developed a multi disciplinary approach to determining major applications and have proposals in place to address this
- Failed to establish a planning customer forum and will develop this during 2006/2007

- *Improved our performance in percentage of council tax collected, number of working days lost to sickness, percentage of employees retiring on health grounds or percentage of local authority employees from ethnic minorities.*
-

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.

What we have been trying to do

We set out to ensure that we played our fullest possible role in providing clear community leadership within our 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 and this is expected to be agreed by the District Partnership in May and the Council in June. This will mean clear, measurable targets for achieving its aims as well as meeting the requirements of achieving a sustainable community strategy*

- 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 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 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 building capacity within the community.
- Took a lead role in developing community engagement in the design a 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 having a clear performance management framework to ensure strategy is implemented
- Signed up to the HARP protocol with the probation service to assist the integration of ex-offenders into the community and allowing the council to work together with other partners to address the accommodation and support needs of ex-offenders
- Worked with our partners to develop a Local Area Agreement to improve service delivery across the County
- Developed and published a District profile to help us understand our communities better
- Passed a resolution to become a Fair Trade Council and only Fair Trade coffee and tee is served at meetings in the council at no additional cost. As a result the community is helping to support producers in poor countries receiving a fair price for the goods they produce thus improving their quality of life and those of their workers.
- Developed priority relevant 'action learning sets' 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
- Worked through the District partnership with the County Council in the delivery of the Local Transport Plan 2 for local measures such as Bike Parking, cycling paths and the promotion of other forms of transport increasing access and improving the health of residents by more sustainable methods of transport

Quote The Council has further developed and strengthened partnership working, including some joint service provision with neighbouring local authorities, regeneration projects in partnership with the private sector and good links with the voluntary sector. ”
Audit Commission March 2006

Priority 2: What have we not achieved and why?

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 the resources within the Community Service Directorate although work is due to be complete by July 2006*
 - *Developed a Cultural Strategy for the District along with our partners due to partner capacity. A policy group of the District Partnership is currently working on this and a Strategy is due to be complete by December 2006*
-

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:

- *Delivered over 16,000 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 380 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 an action plan for the implementation of a Stock Options Appraisal and appointed consultants to assist us in our approach which has helped us build on the work we have already undertaken to improve the housing service*
- *Undertaken a Stock Condition Survey which has given us a better picture of what levels of investment we need to achieve the Decent Homes Standard. Tenants can now be assured that we have accurate and up to date information to base our decisions upon.*
- *Undertook a mock housing inspection in September 2005 and a formal Audit Commission Inspection in May 2006. While the results are awaited we hope that we will achieve a judgment of at least a 1* FAIR service with PROMISING PROSPECTS of improvement when the Inspectors issue their findings in July 2006. as a result there will be clear evidence to our community that we are making progress in improvement in the housing service*
- *Developed implemented and revised action plans to assist us in improving the service we provide an meeting the challenges of external scrutiny*
- *Developed 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.*
- *Opened a tenants resources centre in the District and providing outreach facilities for service delivery while closing area offices which were not providing value for money*
- *Opened a community house in Sacriston, helping to support community development and creating a community hub. It is ran by the community for the community and is available for community engagement with a range of service deliverers*
- *Developed a new website for the Community services Directorate*
- *Developed a landlord accreditation scheme which has led to improvements in the quality of private rented housing sector*
- *Launched a so far successful rent deposit scheme which has prevented homelessness in the district*
- *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 our most vulnerable customers*
- *Appointed a Support Worker in the Housing Options Team to work with vulnerable client groups including the homeless This has provided a key resource to ensure that we help those who find themselves in difficult, or unfortunate circumstances.*
- *Installed a new homelessness database to enable the service to track and support homelessness households allowing more efficient working*
- *Implemented a knowledge management system based on most frequently asked questions to improve the efficiency of processes within the housing service and as a result provide a better, more consistent service to out tenants.*
- *Developed a new allocations scheme to allow fairer access to council houses to people with priority need and particularly the most vulnerable*

- *Published a Tenants Handbook and Repairs and Maintenance policy and guide to inform tenants of service standards, advice on the complaints system and ensuring accurate repairs reports. This has improved information, engagement and efficiency of the service through improved reporting*
- *Reviewed and published a new Tenant and Leaseholders Compact improving engagement with our tenants*
- *Reviewed and published Service Standards for Housing Services, Property Services and Careline setting out clearly to our customers what level of service they may expect in the future.*
- *Granted 505 new tenancy agreements from our allocations register*
- *Provided £182,834 of grant aid on 36 disabled facilities grants to private home owners and occupiers. This assisted residents to install stairlifts, level access shower, grab rails and ramps improving their chances to live independent lives*
- *Spent £187,182 on 34 private houses to carry out essential works such as tackling leaking roofs, dangerous electrical wiring and damp proofing.*
- *Developed new decoration allowance scheme and a tenants insurance scheme compensating tenants from disturbance while helping to secure insurance at competitive rates*
- *Developed Egan style partnering arrangements for the procurement of the HRA capital programme ensuring modern construction methods and partnership working with contractors to deliver the highest quality customer outcome and more for our money*
- *Increased the energy efficiency rating (SAP) of our council stock from 49% to 65%*
- *Developed an asbestos management scheme which will assist in the protection of the health and safety of tenants and staff while carrying out repairs and modernisation works*
- *Completed the evaluation of the introduction of handy man, street wardens and estate caretakers and tenants and the police have supported their introduction at no extra cost to tenants*
- *Developed a priority relevant 'action learning set' aimed ensuring we maximise relationships between the council and any future deliverer of services we currently provide including housing and leisure.*
- *Launched 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.*
- *Approved a comprehensive set of new private sector housing policies. These policies provide a set of rules which enable Council resources to be effectively targeted towards a series of grants and other financial assistance packages to vulnerable households. They also set out a series of service standards and provide cross linkages to the Council's activities in wider regeneration schemes.*
- *Improved our performance in the average sap rating of local authority owned dwellings, proportion of unfit houses improved as a result of council action; rents collected as a proportion of rents owed; percentage change in non-decent homes; average stay in bed and breakfast accommodation, percentage change in the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation and percentage responsive repairs carried out.*

Priority 3: What have we not achieved and why?

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 the tenancy agreement as this will form part of the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) process as we were awaiting government national standards which were only published in May 2006*
 - *reviewed all housing policies in light of the Housing Act 2004 as we consciously decided to retrain staff on modern working practices and install new technology to help us achieve what is required more efficiently and effectively*
 - *appointed handy man, street warden and estate warden services as we are now considering how we can secure the resources to do this and meet tenants needs*
 - *Improved our performance in the proportion of non-decent homes and meeting Racial Equality standards for rented housing;*
-

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 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 Framework and agreed this with the District Partnership as a partnership approach to regenerating the district. This provides Chester-le-Street with a social physical and environmental framework for improvement in the future.*
- *Secured funding for the Bowes Business Park. The Park is now under construction and will create over 4000 m2 of high quality office/commercial space in a parkland setting. Release of western extension of Drum Industrial Estate which will create almost 750,000 ft2 of quality logistics accommodation creating over 1000 jobs*
- *Published an Integrated Regeneration Strategy for the village of Pelton Fell. Signed development agreement with Bellway Homes, Nomad Housing Association and Durham Aged Miners Homes and commenced 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.*
- *Almost completed a major regeneration and housing renewal project at Middlefield and Sandyford, Pelton in partnership with Haslam Homes and Three Rivers Housing Association. This project successfully integrates new housing for sale with social housing and Council owned properties.*
- *Negotiated sale of Holly Crescent, Sacriston to Barratt Homes to include 50 affordable homes for sale (30% of development). Council has secured 100% nomination rights for these homes on first purchase and every subsequent purchase for 4 years. Homes will remain affordable in perpetuity.*
- *Continued work on £5M New Heart Programme. Improvements to Front Street now complete (design won national award for urban realm regeneration). Priorities for 2005/06 and 2006/07 are renewal of culvert, development of Mechanics Institute centre for lifelong learning and community enterprise (MILE), creation of a new civic square (Civic Heart), redesigned market place and the development of key gateway sites.*
- *Commenced work on a major regeneration project at Grange Villa linked to the wider Durham Coalfields Initiative. Nathaniel Litchfield will work closely with the local community of the next six months to produce a comprehensive area development framework. In parallel the Council is working in partnership with Accent Regeneration to undertake physical improvements works to homes in the village.*
- *Attracted some £500,00 from the Single Housing Investment Pot (SHIP) to invest in Grange Villa, and the success of the project has led to the council receiving a further £2.5million to further regenerate our District (this is the highest award in the whole of the County).*
- *The town centre renaissance project has received a grant of £500,000 for improvements to the Mechanics Institute, which will form the hub of a network of community resource centres across the District:*
- *A feasibility study into supplying the village of Edmondsley from renewable energy has been completed and 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. The outcomes will be a truly innovative scheme of potential national and international importance, significant improvement to the environment and strong community engagement.*

- *Energy efficiency targets set by the government have been exceeded for the first time. 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 councils commitment to sustainable development*
- *Continued to implement our Parks to larks policy for people an biodiversity ans as a result 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*
- *A solar car challenge was held with 5 primary schools with children being positively engaged in an innovative way in learning about renewable energy and how important energy use around the home is.*
- *Developed priority relevant ‘action learning sets’” aimed at understanding and engaging the business community and developing a green travel plan*
- *Worked to ensure we have built in 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 our over 60% insulation scheme called COSY, improving warmth of the homes 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 have been working to achieve Fair Trade Status to help sustain business in developing countries*
- *Worked with partners to develop the Valleys project which is a green corridor link between Stanley and Chester-le-Street Town centre increasing access to the countryside and improving community health.*
- *Carried out an ‘unmet demand’ survey on the district’s taxi service. This survey, together with the continued development and operation of our Taxi Working Group, has enabled the Council to make informed decisions in relation to the overall provision and regulation of taxi operations in the district. In particular, the needs of disabled persons have been re-assessed.*
- *Improved our performance in percentage of houses built on brownfield land, percentage of major planning applications decided within targets, percentage of other planning applications decided within targets, percentage of householder scale applications decided within targets, the number of planning appeals which were upheld, score against a quality of planning services checklist and percentage local searches dealt with in 10 days.*

Priority 4: What have we not achieved and why?

We have not yet:

- *Improved our performance in percentage of minor planning applications decided within targets*

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 can carry out targeted intervention into the neighbourhood of most need where there will be joined up service delivery. Through strong community leadership we wanted to develop civil 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:

- *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.*
- *Developed an Implementation Team of frontline staff across the partners, and a Steering Group of key Officers, Members and community representatives*
- *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*

- *Action Plans have been developed with partners engaged in the Pilots and these are being actively addressed by the Implementation Team*
- *Completed two Streetsafe initiatives at Sacriston and Pelton. These have been partnerships with the Police, Fire Brigade and others to reduce crime and fear of crime within Neighbourhoods. This included proactive action by the police and the councils while arranging diversionary activities for young people and engaging the public in clean ups. Results included reduced crime including youths causing annoyance and criminal damage, improved environment through 'Womble Days' and graffiti removal and raised awareness through combined Community Safety work in schools and leaflet drops. 78% of those surveyed in Pelton at the end of the pilot felt that the pilot had been a success.*
- *Developed a community Engagement and Involvement Strategy which will help us engage communities better and develop citizenship*
- *Won a Gold Award at the Tatton Royal Horticultural Show for grounds care apprentice work of the Lambton Worm. This shows that residents can benefit from high quality services and best practice on local green space management and the advantages of wildlife on health and well being.*
- *Achieved and exceeding national targets for recycling (18%) by achieving a 30% 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 will assist civic renewal and community engagement in the district*
- *Have undertaken environmental citizenship educational programme in local schools raising the awareness of children in environmental issues*
- *Developed a priority relevant '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 help us work in partnership with others better to reduce crime and the fear of crime*
- *Increased coverage of district by CCTV and as a result are helping making the district a safer place by detection and prevention of crime and anti social behaviour*
- *Worked with the police and other partners to reduced domestic burglary and overall crime levels have not increased compared with national trend of increase ensuring that the safety and well being of people in the district is improving*
- *Supported the police to successfully bid for additional CPSO's to increase police presence on the streets, increasing public reassurance and assisting in the prevention of crime and anti social behaviour*
- *After extensive public consultation we delivered the full requirements of the Licensing Act 2003 on time. This included holding 14 hearings, to determine applications for premises licences where objections had been raised. This work has enabled the Council to embrace its new responsibilities brought about by the Act and has strengthened its working arrangements with businesses, residents affected by licensing activities, Durham Constabulary and other interested parties improving the quality of life in our communities.*
- *Undertaken resident questionnaires about areas where residents have expressed concern about crime and responded to such concern*
- *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 helping to address social implication of drug use across the district*
- *Carried out educational activity in schools jointly with the police on anti social behaviour which has resulted in a reduction in truancy levels*

- *Undertaken surveys that show that fear of crime is low in the district against national trends*
- *Restructured the partnership that is working on the communities behalf to reduce crime and substance misuse and developed action plans to meet targets the partnership has set itself*
- *Carried out 3225 pest control treatments in both Council and privately owned properties. Of these treatments, 87.6% were carried out within set time scales.*
- *Dealt with 217 complaints about noise complaints and dealt with another 363 public health related issues.*
- *Commissioned an updated study of the air quality of the district.*
- *Worked in partnership with groundwork North Durham which dreww 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 Developmnet project, Hilda park, Pelton and Ouston, Avondale Terrace, Poets Estate as well as 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*
- *Improved our performance in percentage of waste recycled (more than doubled), amount of waste collected per head of population; cost of waste collected per head, score against environmental health good practice checklist, number of domestic burglaries, number of domestic refuge places available and number of racial incidents recorded*

Priority 5: What have we not achieved and why?

We have not yet:

- *Been able to introduce a new vehicle tracking system in Environmental Services due to the need to test a range of products for value for money and the need to consider contractual arrangements*
 - *Improved our performance in the number of car crimes*
-

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 leisure services so they are more economic, efficient and effective by considering innovative ways to deliver our services. We wanted 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 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:

- *Achieved an 'Outstanding' OFSTED categorisation for Selby Cottage Childcare Centre showing that this facility delivers the best possible level of service in providing childcare allowing parents pursue their careers on the assurance that their children are been cared for to the highest standards*
- *Have undertaken a consultation exercise to seek views on the future delivery of Leisure Services to help us deliver options for improved service delivery in the future*
- *Developed a priority relevant '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.*
- *Undertaken major refurbishment work at the Chester-le-Street Civic Centre improving the pool hall facilities for our customers completed on time and on budget.*
- *Obtained funding from and registration to the Inclusive Fitness Initiative for the provision of accessible gym facilities to improve opportunities for people with disability to engage in physical activity*
- *Commenced work with our partners to ensure the arts and culture are embedded in what we do and this will result in the improvement of cultural experiences for our communities*
- *Ensured that the Riverside retains its Green Flag Award showing a continued commitment to the Environment by the council*
- *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*

- *Implemented a new electronic management and point of sale system in Leisure Services to help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service*
- *Continued the process of upgrading the districts playareas, in line with our play areas strategy, which has helped to improve safety standards as well as increasing children's play experience while engaging children and residents in their design. Completed projects were at Moorfoot, Grange Villa, Nettlesworth and Low Flats Road.*
- *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*
- *Durham & Chester le Street Lifestyles Initiative achieved the Institute of Leisure & Amenity management Health & Physical Activity recognition award*
- *Implemented a new partnership for the provision of bar and catering services at Roseberry Grange Golf Clubhouse which has enabled an extension of the service delivered and improving facilities for our customers*
- *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 will be completed by August 2006 and will help to engage more young people in sport improving their skills and health.*
- *Undertook a feasibility study on redeveloping the promenade and surrounding area at riverside with particular emphasis on improving safety and accessibility to improve the facilities available to our community*
- *Begun the final phase of the flood defence work at riverside which will be completed by September 2006.*
- *Established a community sports coaches scheme within the District*

Priority 6: What have we not achieved and why?

We have not yet:

- *Been able to complete our Leisure Services Options appraisal as a result of the availability of resources and we are now working with our consultants to produce an Options Report by July 2006*
 - *Been able to introduce an online system to allow customers to book leisure facilities on the internet as a result of the need to ensure that the new Leisure Services electronic system is embedded into the service first, this will however be introduced by June 2006.*
-

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:

- *Developed a range of electronic systems across the council to improve service delivery particularly in investing in the council's web site;*
- *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 including systems in Leisure and Environmental Services, leading to more efficient and effective service delivery to customers*
- *Implemented a Document Imaging and Management system in Revenues and benefits to provide a more economic efficient, and effective service to our customers;*
- *Developed an intranet system to improve communications and avoid paper waste within the council between both members and officers and as a result improve service delivery across all council services.;*
- *Invested in the council's telecommunications infrastructure to improve and create more reliable access to our computer systems throughout the councils buildings and allowing more efficient service delivery*
- *Carried out a range of service restructures across the council including Information Technology, Finance and Accountancy, Revenues and Benefits, Planning Regeneration and Environmental Health and the Assistant Chief Executives Teams to maximise the use of resources within the teams with the result of more economical, efficient and effective service delivery;*

- *Established three priority relevant '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;*
- *Developed an Information Management Strategy which sets out clearly how we are going to store and retrieve the information we hold throughout the council, the implementation of which has the potential for significant efficiency savings for the council.*
- *Introduced new financial regulations and procedures and provided guidance on them, ensuring that managers are equipped to manage their budgets better improving out overall financial management arrangements.*
- *Entered into a partnership with Derwentside District Council in sharing procurement resources improving how we will buy goods and services in the future and making savings of over £40,000 in the process*
- *Developed 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*
- *Achieved level 2 in our 'Use of Resources' assessment carried out by the Audit Commission. This robust internal control framework , which included the setting up of a 'Corporate Governance Working Group' supports our 'corporate governance' arrangements. This can re-assure our customers that we are looking after their resources better;*
- *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 focussed quality standard (ISO 14001) which increase the perception that the council takes responsibility for its own environment 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.*
- *Ensured that the work of our Internal Audit team is reviewed quarterly by the council and secured the approval of the teams 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 £240,000. as a result there has been enhanced development quality and the provision of a diverse range of community facilities as part of regeneration schemes in accordance with the aims of sustainable development.*
- *Achieved Planning Delivery Grant of some £500,000 over two years as a result of increased planning performance and as a result are able to invest in the planning service to make more efficiency savings.*
- *Secured reward grant of some £148,000 over two years through improve service performance on key performance indicators*
- *Worked with other District Councils to share resources and experiences in improving equality and Diversity in the District and as a result are maximising the resources that are available to the four councils concerned*
- *Worked with other councils to develop the County wide Local Area Agreement which ought to result in new ways to deliver improved services across the County*
- *Made efficiencies by not placing homeless families in bread and breakfast accommodation which has saved the council some £700,000*
- *Secured £70,000 from the ODPM to help prevent homelessness*
- *Improving twice as many homes in 2006/2007 by improved ways of buying 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*

- *Developed an IT policy which is aimed at saving paper, reducing stationary costs while contributing to environmental protection*
- *Improved our performance in number of benefit claimants visited, number of fraud investigations carried out, number of fraud prosecution and sanctions undertaken, average processing time for new benefits claims, accuracy of claims and amounts of overpayments recovered.*

Priority 7: What have we not achieved and why?

We have not yet:

- *Not yet been able to provide the information to show that we are delivering value for money across all services*
- *Completed our work on Value for Money studies throughout the organisation 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 over the next three years.*
- *Reviewed the effectiveness of the Audit Committee in the light of new guidance issued to the council and this will now be achieved by August 2006.*
- *Fully developed workforce planning in line with the National Workforce Strategy and addressed Single Status due to available resources although we have targeted completion of this by March 2007 and remain on target to achieve this*
- *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*
- *Improved our performance in number of fraud investigators employed and average processing time for benefits changes of circumstance.*

Our Improvement Programme : Improvement and Recovery Plan Achievements

What we have been trying to do

The council has learned from the past we want to move forward 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 in our first Improvement and Recovery Plan agreed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in September 2004. Such achievements were set out in our Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan last year

We have worked over the last year to develop a second phase of our Improvement and Recovery Plan. 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 Our Improvement and Recovery Plan 2 (IRP2) has been 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 and will lift this authority from its current poor rating. Fundamentally, we believe that in doing so we must plan for excellence. The Plan was agreed by the ODPM in November 2005 and we are now vigorously pursuing its implementation. IRP2 therefore the central feature of our Improvement Programme Improvement & Recovery Plan 2 is 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 and Delegation

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

The Audit Commission have acknowledged the value and importance of our Improvement Programme. In their Progress report of March 2006 they say:

Quote“The Council revised its Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP) during 2005 and this now provides a good focus for improvements to the way the Council works. The Council made good progress during 2005 in delivering the detailed action plan for the IRP.” Audit Commission March 2006

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 is 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 get to where we want to be 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, recognises 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. Our 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 we have is:

- honest;
- recognises our weaknesses;
- acknowledges the recommendations made by the Audit Commission following their inspections; and
- helps is to move us out of recovery into continuous improvement

Throughout our 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 so far in implementing the second phase of our improvement programme

IRP Theme	Summary of Achievements	Outcomes – What it means to you
Vision into Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear priority planning process in place, linked to the community strategy, resources and service planning • An Information Strategy developed • Audit of existing processes of providing information and participation undertaken • Baseline information of engagement and participation activity established • Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy Developed • Single reception point in the Civic Centre • Proposals developed and submitted for the adoption of Local Area agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council’s budget and expenditure is based on regularly reviewed priorities • Strategy in place which allows the Council to effectively manage its information • Council now has a clear picture about how all services engage customers • Council uses information on how it engages with the community, to improve opportunities for the community to engage in service delivery and decision making • Clear action plan on how we are going to improve our engagement with our communities • Customers have one stop access to all Council services within the Civic Centre • Council will work in partnership with other Councils and organisations to improve services to communities
Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public summary of the Constitution developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers have information on the Constitution in an accessible form

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors and Officers trained on the new Constitution and guidance produced • Statement of Internal Control produced • Capital Plan developed • Business Continuity Strategy developed. • Process to develop how we will to ensure Value for money is delivered • A system for ensuring efficiency savings are made established • Emergency Plan reviewed and updated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors and Officers have improved knowledge of Council procedures and will use to the best advantage of the community • A baseline position of the Council's Internal Control Systems established • A programme of expenditure approved, linked to the Council's priorities • Council has clear processes in place to ensure services continue in the face of emergencies • Officers have clearer understanding and guidance of how to ensure the Council are delivering value for money • Services are delivered more efficiently • Council now has an up to date Plan in place which advises how to prevent, reduce, control or mitigate the effect of an emergency.
<p>People & Performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PDP policy, guidance and training contains a key element on Equalities & Diversity • Corporate Equality Plan adopted. and More detailed training on Equalities & Diversity provided for Officers and Members • Investors in People (IIP) criteria adopted • Training and Development needs of Officers and Members established and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officers and Members have greater knowledge on Equalities and Diversity issues. • Equalities & Diversity is embedded into the Council's decision making process and its services and systems are fully inclusive • Council now has a clear indication of where improvements are required in line with IIP • Council has a clear picture of Members and Officers training needs and a programme is in place

	<p>Training and Development Programmes established for Officers and Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme of action learning sets has been developed and implemented. • Revised Performance Management System introduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A programme is in place which enables cross-departmental working • Council has improved information and can challenge performance more effectively
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New computerised Performance Management system implemented • A framework for managing performance established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A system now available for Managers to more effectively monitor progress of performance measures • Performance is effectively managed
Improving Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation carried out with the community on the delivery options for Leisure Services • New Corporate Procurement Strategy adopted • Annual Residents Opinion survey carried out • Programme of customer - focussed performance reviews in place • New and improved website developed • Schedule of surplus Council assets and disposal schedule produced • Key services shown to improve through results of service inspections and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community is involved in determining the future provision of the leisure services • Improvements to the way the Council buys its goods and services • Council has up to date knowledge on customer views about the Council • Improvements identified that will lead to greater efficiency in service delivery • Improved content, functionality and access to the website for customers • Council has a clear picture of its landholding and its contribution to its corporate and the community objectives • Customer shave improved standards of service and can be assured of the council's commitment to continuous service improvement across the

	acknowledgement of progress by Audit Commission	board.
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5. Our Performance Indicators Achievements 2005/2006

What this chapter is about

This section summarises how we performed last year. You will have already seen from Chapter 4 that we have already commented on our performance as part of what we have achieved and not achieved. This chapter provides more detail on our performance on 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 2005/2006 the Audit Commission on behalf of the Government required us to produce a total of 49 indicators. Some of these had more than one result to show. There were, therefore, really 84 separate indicators to monitor and report upon.

These 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 and planning;
- cultural and related services; and
- community safety, including crime.

A full list of indicators in these categories, our performance against them and explanation is provided on pages XX to XX (see table 1 attached). Please note that where we identify top quartile comparisons, these are based on information from published by the Audit Commission on national

performance during 2004/2005. Information for 2005/2006 is not yet available for all District Councils. Available information for comparative years shows good improvement in indicators in the top quartile and slight improvement in bottom quartile indicators between 2002 and 2005. We hope that in view of the improved performance this year we will be able to show a trend of improvement when the Audit Commission public national comparisons in early 2007.

Year	% of BVPI's within Top 25%	% of BVPI's within Bottom 25%
2002/2003	22%	37%
2004/2005	30%	36%

As a result of this we could compare better or worse for performance last year. Further comparative information and our targets for the next three years are provided in Appendix 3.

We

- achieved our targets in 66% (47%) of cases;
- improved on last year in 82% (53%) of cases;
- showed an improving trend over a three years in 70% (44%) of cases;
- secured performance in the top 25% in the country in 36% (42%) of cases; and
- reduced our bottom quartile performances to 24%.

Unfortunately we

- failed to meet our targets in 34% (53%) of cases;
- failed to improve in 18%(47%) of cases;
- show a declining trend in 16% (40%) of cases; and,
- still show bottom quartile performance in 24% (33%) of cases.

Corporate Health Indicators

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

- level of equality Standard achieved;
- quality of our race Equality Scheme;
- percentage of invoices for commercial goods and services paid;
- percentage on non-domestic rates collected
- percentage of top earners who are women;
- percentage of top earners from minority ethnic communities;
- percentage of employees retiring early.
- percentage of buildings open to the public that are accessible; and
- percentage of services delivered electronically.

However, we were less successful in terms of;

- percentage of council tax collected;
- number of working days lost to sickness;
- percentage of employees retiring on health grounds;
- percentage of local authority employees from ethnic minorities and

41% of our corporate health performance indicators were in the bottom quartile nationally while 24% were in the top 25% in the country.

Housing Indicators

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

We made improvements in

- the average sap rating of local authority owned dwellings
- proportion of unfit houses improved as a result of council action;
- rents collected as a proportion of rents owed;
- percentage change in non-decent homes;
- average stay in bed and breakfast accommodation;
- percentage change in the average number of families placed in temporary accommodation
- percentage responsive repairs carried out;
- number of benefit claimants visited;

- number of fraud investigations carried out;
- number of prosecution and sanctions undertaken;
- average processing time for new benefits claims;
- accuracy of claims;
- amounts of overpayments recovered.

Unfortunately we were not able to improve in

- proportion of non-decent homes;
- meeting Racial Equality standards for rented housing;
- proportion of non-decent homes; and
- number of fraud investigators employed;
- average processing time for benefits changes of circumstance

Only 11% of our housing performance indicators were in the bottom quartile nationally while 17% were in the top 25% in the country. This compared with 30% 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;
- amount of waste collected per head of population;
- cost of waste collected per head;
- percentage of houses built on brownfield land;
- percentage of major planning applications decided within targets;
- percentage of other planning applications decided within targets;
- percentage of householder scale applications decided within targets;
- the number of planning appeals which were upheld;
- score against a quality of planning services checklist;
- percentage searches dealt with in 10 days; and
- score against environmental health good practice checklist.

However, we did not do so well in

- percentage of minor applications decided within targets

In terms of our environmental services indicators 15% of these were in the top 25% while 0% were in the bottom 25% in the country. 30% of our planning indicators were specifically in the top 25% while none were in the bottom 25%.

Community Safety Indicators

We showed mixed performance in terms of community safety indicators.

We improved in

- number of domestic burglaries; and
- number of domestic refuge places available; and
- number of racial incidents recorded

However, we did not do so well in

- number of vehicle crimes.

None of these were in the top or bottom quartile

Quote“Overall, based on key performance indicators (PIs) for 2004/05, 59 per cent of PIs were above the average compared to all councils, with 39 per cent in the top quartile. There have been significant improvements in the planning service, in the revenues and benefits service and in e-government.” Audit Commission March 2006

The following pages (See table 1) and Appendix 3 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 with the council. While there are positive areas of improvement we know that we have to improve to achieve a better Comprehensive Performance Assessment judgement in the future. We have plans in place to address our performance and will target areas of underperformance and in particular those in the bottom quartile which are not getting better. This year we have developed action plans to meet our targets which we will monitor alongside our target achievements. We will get better.

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 4. However, in order that we can improve, we said last year that we have worked to develop a new basket of local indicators. These, together with targets for the next 3 years are set out in Appendix 5 we will be collecting information on our performance on these during the year and will publish our results in next years plan. We will also continue to work to refine these indicators

Customer Satisfaction Indicators 2000/2006

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 next statutory survey is required during 2006/2007. It will require us to carry out the following range of surveys:

- a general survey of a random sample of the whole community;
- a survey of council housing tenants;
- a survey of benefit claimants; and
- a survey of planning applicants.

As part of our Improvement programme we decided that undertaking a general resident's survey every three years was not sufficient or up to date to allow us to set our priorities and consider our budgets. We therefore now undertake a general resident's survey every year (October 2004 and November 2005). In addition for the first time in the last year we have undertaken a survey of our tenants. These surveys are taken on the council behalf by recognised market research companies. In addition to this we have started to undertake regular service based surveys including in 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.

Residents Survey Results

This was based on a sample of 3,000 residents. We received a response rate of 48% which is extremely good. Key results of the Resident's surveys show:

- Your satisfaction with the council generally has continuously increased from 52% in 2003 to 58% in 2005
- Your satisfaction with how we are keeping land and streets free of litter and refuse has increased from 52% In 2003 to 58.7 % in 2005
- Your satisfaction with parks and open spaces has increased from 65% in 2003 to 78.4% in2005
- Your satisfaction with the council keeping you informed has increased from 48% in 2003 to 61% in 2005
- Overall the council is maintaining and improving standards on statutory indicators
- Satisfaction with handing of complaints is not improving

- Most important in making a place a good place to live were 'low level of crime', (69.7%), and 'health services', (52.1%). Nearly half of all respondents also mentioned 'clean streets', (48.6%). Least important were 'sports and leisure facilities', (9.7%); 'community activities', (4%); art and cultural facilities', (1.5%); and 'race relations', (1.1%).

Tenants Survey Results

The survey was undertaken with all tenants (over 4,300). We achieved a response rate of 40% which we feel is also very good. Key results of the Tenant's survey show:

- General satisfaction with the council as landlord has decreased from 74.88% in 2003 to 70% in 2005
- Tenant satisfaction with opportunities to participate has fallen from 58.22% in 2003 to 54% in 2005
- Of those dissatisfied the time to undertake was the biggest issue
- 62% of tenants were satisfied with the repairs service
- 69% felt that the council keeps them well informed
- 50% of tenants felt the tenant participation service had improved
- 67% of tenants feel their rents represent value for money
- 51% of tenants feel their homes are in good condition
- 66% do not feel their heating costs to be expensive
- 76% are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live
- 66% were satisfied with the level of grass cutting
- 88% of tenants who use Careline are satisfied with the service
- The top three neighbourhood quality of life issues were cleanliness of streets, vandalism and dogs
- 70% would like to see an estate caretaker or an estate warden but at no cost

Our Response

We will continue to respond to your views to help us set our priorities, budgets and service standards. We know that 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.

6. Our Proposals for 2006/2007 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 as part of our Improvement and Recovery Plan.

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 are have to be consistent, co-ordinated and proactive and standards have been set and agreed in conjunction with customers. Our employees are trained, motivated and rewarded and will be able to identify if the customer needs extra help or advice, will 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 we 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 we propose the following:

CE1	Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Seek recategorisation under the next round of Comprehensive Performance Assessment by June 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respond to CPA consultation by May 2006 ▪ Develop action plan to support existing Improvement Programme by July 2006 ▪ Implement action plan from July 2006 ▪ Seek application for recategorisation by October 2006 ▪ Receive application approval by November 2006 ▪ Submit Self Assessment by January 2006 ▪ Undertake Inspection by February 2007 ▪ Receive judgement by May 2007 ▪ At least a 'Fair' recategorisation judgement 	This will give the council the opportunity to prove that it has been serious about its improvement programme and what it feels it has achieved. It will ensure that residents do not have a council which has been be given a poor label and customers will have the assurance that the council is better managed, better focused and is delivering much better services in partnership with others including the community.
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE2	Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Implement our Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of action plan in Strategy ▪ Increased community and partner engagement ▪ 90% of actions achieved on time ▪ 3% increase in customer satisfaction ▪ Positive Audit Reports ▪ Improved CPA categorization ▪ 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 Simon Westrip

CE3		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Implement Equality Plan through to March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of action plan ▪ Increased community and partner engagement ▪ 90% of actions achieved on time ▪ 3% increase in customer satisfaction in Local Indicators ▪ Positive Audit Reports ▪ Improved CPA categorization ▪ Impact and engagement of all services 	The council will be proactive in meeting legislative requirements while celebrating diversity and culture within our communities 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
CE4		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Complete implementation and review Customer Excellence Strategy by March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of action plan ▪ Development of Customer Services team by August 2006 ▪ CRM System Operational March 2007 ▪ Customer Care Training complete by January 2007 ▪ 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 ▪ Improved CPA categorisation ▪ Impact and engagement of all services 	The council will have 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 Simon Westrip

CE5	Milestone/Measure		Outcome
Carry out General Residents, housing, planning and Benefits Best Value Customer Satisfaction surveys by June 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procure Market Research Provider by July 2006 ▪ Meet ODPM guidance and 'window' ▪ Receive Final Report buy April 2007 ▪ Analyse and publish results by June 2007 ▪ Improved satisfaction rates from 2003 BVPI's ▪ Achievement of 2006/7 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 Simon Westrip
CE6	Milestone/Measure		Outcome
Continue Roll out of Customer Relationship Management System across all services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Environmental services and Revenues and Benefits requests in place by June 2006 ▪ CRM System Operational across all services March 2007 ▪ Implemented on time and within budget ▪ % of transactions and customer profile recorded on system increases year on year 		The council will be able to deal with 80% of enquiries at first point of contact
Lead Officer	Craig Etherington and Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes
CE7	Milestone/Measure		Outcome
Complete the remainder of the Benefits Fraud Inspectorates recommendation on the Benefits service by December 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement action plan monitored by Project Management Board ▪ % on actions achieved against targets ▪ 3% across the board improvement in Benefits customer satisfaction BVPI's ▪ Improved BFI judgement ▪ Re-categorised CPA judgement 		Customers will receive an improved level of service above minimum requirements.
Lead Officer	Jayne Henderson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

CE8		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop and implement a Benefits Take up Strategy and implement by March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and adopt Strategy by March 2007 ▪ Review annually ▪ Annual % increase in benefit take up ▪ 3% increase in Benefits customer satisfaction BVPIs 	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

CE9		Milestone/Measure	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 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and adopt Strategy by March 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

CE10		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Explore potential for multi media facilities on the web-site by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carry out feasibility study by August 2006 ▪ Introduce facilities by March 2007 if benefits outweigh costs ▪ Increase in members of the public accessing the website 	This can allow better information to be provided on the council's web site possibly allowing council committees or conferences to be recorded on video and released over the internet. As a result the communities can get a better a picture of the council and listen to debates on issues of importance that affect their future
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

CE11		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Introduce a Geographical Information System for displaying spatial information on the council's web-site by June 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procurement of system by April 2006 ▪ Launch on web site by June 2006 ▪ 5% Increase in website interactions 	Customers are able to have easier access to map based information about their neighbourhood and have more information about the council
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor. Chris Jukes

CE12		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Introduce improved council telephone system by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ assess options by September 2006 ▪ Procure system by December 2006 ▪ Implement and train staff by March 2007 ▪ Improved speed in answering calls ▪ 90% of calls answered in 15 seconds ▪ 3% Increase in customer satisfaction 	Customers have improved access to the council with a modern telephone system which will be able to cope with increased volume of calls more quickly.
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark/ Craig Etherington	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Jukes

CE13		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Improve reception facilities at the Civic Centre by September 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure appropriate designs by June 2006 ▪ Procure provided by August 2006 ▪ Carry out works by September 2006 ▪ Increase customer satisfaction with reception facilities and service provided 	This will provide an improved welcoming facility for improving customer care within the council, improving disabled access, more comfortable waiting facilities while allowing self service electronic facilities.
Lead Officer	Craig Etherington	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

CE14		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Establish Planning Users Forum by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish Membership by September 2006 ▪ Establish regular meetings and agree Terms of Reference by December 2006 ▪ Develop work programme and implement by March 2007 ▪ Review Annually 	Users of the planning service are engage in service standards, service improvement and service planning and as a result improved overall service delivery in the planning service
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

CE15		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Apply for the Members Charter Status by December 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submit application by July 2006 ▪ Undergo Assessment by August 2006 ▪ Achieve accreditation by December 2006 	The community will be ensured that the councilors that represent them are fully committed to meeting the highest possible standards of personal development and have the skills to exercise their community leadership roles
Lead Officer	Alison Swinney	Lead Executive Member	

CE16		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Complete our Organisational Development Programme by December 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement Member and Officer competency frameworks from May 2006 ▪ Consider the outcomes of action learning sets ▪ % of members and officers meeting required competencies ▪ 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 One Team, The community will be assured that the council has the best people to lead the community and deliver services
Lead Officer	Alison Swinney	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

CE17		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Review Improvement and Recovery Plan 2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review Plan by October 2006 ▪ Secure agreement by ODPM by December 2006 ▪ Positive Audit Reports ▪ Improved CPA categorization ▪ Engages all service 	The community can be assured that the councils Improvement Programme has itself improved in the light of experience, learning and change
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

CE18		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Work to develop a Community Hub at Grange Villa by July 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop Proposals with Community by October 2006 ▪ Develop management arrangements and resources required by December 2006 ▪ Install technology required by March 2007 ▪ Launch by July 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 Simon Westrip

CE19		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop a customer incentive scheme for tenants by November 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop scheme by July 2006 ▪ Consult tenants by September 2006 ▪ Launch Scheme October 2006 ▪ Monitor and Review ▪ Reduced rent areas ▪ Improved estate environment ▪ Reduced anti social behaviour 	Tenants will be encouraged to more responsible citizens and good neighbours
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

CE20		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop a system of customer champions throughout the organisation by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluate proposals from action learning set by August 2006 ▪ Develop customer champion scheme by December 2006 ▪ Implement by March 2007 ▪ Monitor and review ▪ Improved customer satisfaction by 3% across the council 	All customers will receive an improved level services with individuals in each service leading improvements in customer care across the organisation
Lead Officer	Craig Etherington/Paul Stephens	Lead Executive Member	Councillors Simon Westrip and Isabel Smith

CE21		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Review our Scrutiny function by September 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Undertake facilitated member workshop to develop options by June 2006 ▪ Consider public engagement by July 2006 ▪ Scrutiny Panels to agree approach by August 2006 ▪ Executive and Full Council to consider by September 2006 ▪ Increased attendance at Scrutiny Panels 	The outcome will be to develop a more effective scrutiny framework which engages the public in the work of panels as a contribution to community engagement in service planning and engagement. More efficient uses of council resources will also be achieved by an improved scrutiny focus.
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

CE22		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop customer contact centre for the Housing Repairs Service by April 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider technology by August 2006 ▪ Procure by December 2007 ▪ Link to Knowledge Management by February ▪ Link to Knowledge Management by February ▪ Implement and Launch by April 2007 ▪ 3% increase in customer satisfaction of those reporting repairs and progress tracking 	The outcome will be to respond to tenants concerns that the current system is difficult and to use and not customer friendly. The result will be that tenants can report repairs and then track progress much easier avoiding frustration.
Lead Officer	Richard Humphries	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

CE23		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop a route map to achieve customer excellence in the Housing Service and promote and engage tenants in its development and implement march 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop innovative route map targeting key areas of excellence by July 2006 ▪ Launch and engage tenants, staff and member by September 2006 ▪ Implement and Review through to March 2009 ▪ Increase in tenant satisfaction ▪ Increase in community engagement 	This will link with our proposed incentive scheme and improve service standards and performance in targeted areas agreed with our tenants thus improving their quality of life.
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

CE24		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Approach accreditation of excellence by making submissions for National Awards linked to customer focus including the Chartered Building Status through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Map out appropriate awards with tenants by March 2007 ▪ Develop clear of evidence of standards required through service improvement by March 2008 ▪ Apply for awards within timescales as required ▪ Achievements of Awards 	The council will have external proof of its commitment to excellence. More importantly tenants will have the benefit of receiving the standards of service excellence which will be targeted.
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

CE25	Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Learn from the establishment of the housing Knowledge Management system by considering the development of a corporate system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore the potential options with the current supplier by July 2006 ▪ Establish the potential cost and benefits of establishing as system by August 2006 ▪ Secure funding if required by November 2006 ▪ Implement if required ▪ Improvement in performance across council ▪ Evidenced Gershon Efficiency savings 	The council will have clearer information more readily accessible and available to staff and its customers on its processes, policies and procedures. Information will be able to be delivered more quickly customers who could have direct web based access to them. This will make it easy to do business and get information from the council
Lead Officer	Craig Etherington	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Simon Westrip[

CE26	Milestone/Measure	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 May 2006 ▪ Implement by June 2006 ▪ Consider Executive/ Officer Performance Clinics by September 2006 ▪ Report performance to Scrutiny quarterly ▪ Improvement in performance indicators across council ▪ Positive District Audit Reports ▪ At least a Fair CPA recategorisation ▪ Improved customer satisfaction 	Customers will benefit from improved performance across services on service delivery which is determined as being and which will improve the quality of life of our communities
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Simon Westrip[

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 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 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

To achieve our objectives we propose the following:

WP1	Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Complete updating of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SSC) and implement action Plans through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LSP agrees to Updated Strategy by June 2006 ▪ Council endorses Strategy by July 2006 ▪ Implement action plans from July 2006 ▪ Formalise Performance Management framework by September 2006 ▪ 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 Ebatson

WP2		Milestone/Measure	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 SSC proposals by July 2006 ▪ Establish contribution targets and action by August 2006 ▪ Establish in Service Planning Review by October 2006 ▪ Monitor and Review ▪ % internal targets met ▪ % SSC targets met across District 	The council will be able to prove its contribution to achieving the Districts Sustainable Community Strategy and the residents of the District will benefit from the achievement of the desired outcomes of the Strategy
Lead Officer	Jeremy Brock	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson
WP3		Milestone/Measure	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 2006 ▪ 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 realised
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson
WP4		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Ensure action plans are established and built into service planning to achieve the actions and targets of the Local Area Agreement by 2008/2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Secure ownership in services of LAA proposals by July 2006 ▪ Establish contribution targets and action by August 2006 ▪ Establish in Service Planning Review by October 2006 ▪ Monitor and Review ▪ % internal targets met ▪ % LAA targets met across County 	The council will be able to prove its contribution to achieving County Durham LAA and the residents of the District and the County will benefit from the achievement of the desired outcomes of the Local Area Agreement
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

WP5		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop a Communications Strategy for the District partnership by December 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agree key principles with partners by August 2006 ▪ Develop Strategy Document by November 2006 ▪ Agree by District partnership December 2006 ▪ Implement ▪ 5% pa increase in publics understanding of the District partnership 	The council and its partners will have clear channels for how it communicates its activity to the general public building on the website and Partnership news.
Lead Officer	Jeremy Brock	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbatson

WP6		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Complete updating of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SSC) and implement action Plans through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LSP agrees to Updated Strategy by June 2006 ▪ Council endorses Strategy by July 2006 ▪ Implement action plans from July 2006 ▪ Formalise Performance Management framework by September 2006 ▪ 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

WP7		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Implement partnership improvement proposals in the Improvement and Recovery Plan through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement Partnership Evaluation software by June 2006 ▪ Use software to develop Partnership protocols by June 2006 ▪ Review effectiveness of existing Partnerships by November 2006 ▪ Assess potential for new partnerships through to March 2008 	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 will be able to make sure that it is getting the best value for money in the partnerships in which it participates. As a result the community will receive better joined up public services
Lead Officer	Jim Elder/Julie Underwood	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebattson

WP8		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Coordinate the Economic Development and Regeneration group of the Local Strategic Partnership through to March 2009		<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 2007 	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	Jim Elder/Julie Underwood	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebattson

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 we propose the following:

DHS1		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Submit an application for the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of the Housing Service by July 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare and submit detailed application by July 2006 ▪ Application delivered on time ▪ Successful application 	Government agreement on transfer subject to a tenant's ballot and further decisions by the councils will enable the council to look at other options for the delivery of the housing service.
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

DHS2		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Carry out a ballot to determine tenants' views on how the council should deliver its housing service during 2006/2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prepare ballot information during 2006/2007 ▪ Undertake Statutory Process during 2006/2007 ▪ Publish results during 2006/2007 	Tenants have the opportunity to engage and determine how the council should provide their housing service in the future
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

DHS3		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Consider future delivery of the Housing Service following the Results of the Tenants ballot and implement option chosen by March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop options on the basis of Tenants choice by May 2007 ▪ Council decides on option to follow by June 2007 ▪ Implement Option by March 2009 	The council is able to base final choices on how the housing service is to be delivered and the Decent Homes Standard achieved on the basis of a clear view expressed by tenants
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

DHS4		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Review Housing Service Improvement plan as a result of the Audit Commission Inspection by September 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Receive Audit Commission Judgement by July 2006 ▪ Consider opportunity to challenge judgement (if necessary) by July 2006 ▪ 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	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

DHS5		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Deliver the three year capital programme by March 2009		<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 the houses when they are brought up to the standard. This will improve the quality of life of our tenants.
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith
DHS6		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Annually Update the Housing Business Plan and Housing Strategy in order that they remain 'Fit for Purpose' by September 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Update documents annually in September ▪ Create 5 page Strategy to meet national guidelines ▪ 'Fit for Purpose' judgements by Government Office ▪ Positive Audit reports ▪ Improved CPA judgements 	Tenants and the community can be assured that the council has robust plan in place to drive improvement in the housing service
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith
DHS7		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop a review and reporting system to provide feedback to tenants and partners (including the LSP) on progress in delivering the Housing Business Plan and Housing Strategy by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop system by October 2006 ▪ Agree with Tenants by December 2006 ▪ Agree with partners, LAA and LSP by January 2007 ▪ Implement ▪ Increase in satisfaction of tenants on information received 	Tenants will have the opportunity to be engaged in deciding on the information they want and can be assured that the council is positively managing the delivery of its housing service
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

DHS8		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Implement an Integrated electronic management system for the DLO by November 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procure software linked to the current housing system by September 2006 ▪ Implement by November 2006 ▪ Evidenced Gershon Efficiency savings as a result of operation 	The efficiency and effectiveness of the 'Direct Labour Organisation' is improved through investing in the latest technology which is compatible with that used in the rest of the housing service
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith
DHS9		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Improve the interactivity and content of the Community Service Web site through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work through Modernisation Project Team to improve content ▪ Increase visits by the public to we pages 	The housing service can be accessed through new methods without tenants or prospective tenants having to visit council officer. There are increased opportunities for transactions to be made over the intranet
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith
DHS10		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Review and update Homelessness Strategy by August 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete review Document by June 2006 ▪ Secure Council approval by July 2006 ▪ Commence implementation by August 2006 ▪ % 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	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith
DHS11		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Implement Priority Needs Funding for 2006/2007 by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement funding regime by March 2007 ▪ % increase in satisfaction of vulnerable customers 	This work support homelessness prevention work as identified in the homelessness prevention strategy
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

DHS12		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop and implement action plans to improve tenants satisfaction in response to the 2005 Tenants Survey through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify key areas of improvement and action plan to address by June 2006 ▪ Implement action plans and monitor through Performance Clinics by March 2009 ▪ 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 Isabel Smith
DHS13		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Provide purpose built homelessness persons accommodation by March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carry feasibility study by July 2007 ▪ Select Partner by July 2007 ▪ Secure Planning Permission by December 2007 ▪ Secure resource by March 2008 ▪ Develop and occupy by December 2008 ▪ Increase in number of homeless persons houses 	The outcome will assist in improving the quality of life of the most vulnerable in our community.
Lead Officer	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith
DHS14		Milestone/Measure	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 	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	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

DHS15	Milestone/Measure	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	Ian Broughton	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Isabel Smith

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 we will

RD1	Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop a Regeneration Strategy for the District and implement by March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with stakeholders June 2006 • Publish first draft of Strategy for consultation September 2006 • Adopt the Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan October 2006 • 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	Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Begin work on the Local Development Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the Sustainability Appraisal by Sept 2006 • Publish Draft Core Strategy by March 2007 • Adopt the Statement of Community Involvement by March 2007 • Publish the Annual monitoring Report Dec 2006 • Set up sounding boards for the LDF focussing on housing and • Development issues July 2006 • Documents on which to base firm planning decisions 	There will be an up to day document on which the council can base sound planning decisions
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member
		Councillor Alan Holden

RD3	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Implement the Town Centre Regeneration scheme by March 2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Urban design improvements carried out March 2007 ▪ Develop an ongoing Town Centre/Markets Promotional Strategy in Partnership with Town Centre businesses December 2006 ▪ Develop a Town Centre in Bloom initiative. March 2007 ▪ Formalise the Town Centre Ambassadors Group Sept 2006 ▪ Regenerate the Market and widen the retail offer to include Farmers, Continental, Craft and other specialist markets December 2006 ▪ Complete the refurbishment of the Mechanics Institute March 2007 ▪ Develop Links to the Riverside ▪ Develop a “café culture” ▪ Undertake a Town Centre Health Check by March 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 per annum ▪ 	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	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD4	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Implement the Regeneration of Pelton Fell By March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First homes on Phase 1 complete – June 2006 ▪ Phase 2 road and footpath closure confirmed – July 2006 ▪ Phase 2 A works start on site – August 2006 ▪ Neighbourhood Regeneration Partnership (NRP) Project Manager starts work – September 2006 ▪ Business plan and capital funding strategy for the Community Resource Centre (CRC) complete – September 2006 ▪ Wordsworth Avenue environmental improvement scheme complete – October 2006 ▪ Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the village heart approved – Autumn 2006 ▪ Number of new homes 	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 Improved local environmental quality and facilities. The quality of life of residents of Pelton Fell will improve as a result	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD5	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Implement the Regeneration of Sacriston by March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete and Area Development Framework for Sacriston October 2006 ▪ Agree Action Plan for investment in Sacriston using Single Housing Investment Programme December 2006 ▪ Progress Partnerships and initiatives with Sacriston Traders by March 2007 ▪ Implement action Plan 	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 Improved local environmental quality and facilities. The quality of life of residents of Sacriston will improve as a result	
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD6		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Implement the Regeneration of Grange Villa by March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the Area Development Framework for Grange Villa June 2006 • Agree the Action Plan including key dates for implementation through Single Housing Investment Programme June 2006 • Number of development sites sold - September 2006 • Number of homes improved ▪ Number of environmental improvements completed 	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 Improved local environmental quality and facilities. The quality of life of residents of Grange Villa will improve as a result
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD6		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Implement phase two of the land management study and disposal of assets identified as being surplus to requirements		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement land management study ▪ Increase in number of sites sold September 2006 onwards ▪ Level of capital and revenue savings achieved by March 2007 	Greater variety of tenure on estates across the District
Lead Officer	Martin Walker	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

RD8	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Develop a multi disciplinary approach to dealing with major Planning applications by March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop Development Team Approach Meetings by September 2006 ▪ Participants sign up to terms of reference by November 2006 ▪ Formal Launch in December 2006 ▪ Increased BVPI performance in speed of handling major applications ▪ Increased BVPI 205 performance on quality checklist ▪ Improved customer satisfaction of major developers 	A speedier service is offered to developers on major planning application which may contribute to the regeneration or social, economical or environmental well being of the District. Improved partnership working and efficiency savings	
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

RD9	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Development of the online 'Parsol Expert System' (PARA SOL) in the planning service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Council signs up to service by October 2006 ▪ Product procured by December 2006 ▪ Product brought on line by March 2007 ▪ BVPI 205 performance on quality checklist ▪ Improved planning customer satisfaction 	Increase access to the planning service including application progress tracking	
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	

RD10		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop and implement Environmental Policy through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policy to be agreed by Council by August 2006 ▪ Develop baseline data and policy targets by December 2006 ▪ Develop action plan for implementation by December 2006 ▪ Implement and Monitor ▪ Review Annually ▪ Evidenced Gershon efficiencies through waste minimisation 	Council plays a strong role in environmental stewardship ensures it minimises waste, helps to protect the environment and improves corporate value for money.
Lead Officer	Andy Stephenson	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden
RD11		Milestone/Measure	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 2006 ▪ Implement by September 2006 ▪ 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 alan Holden

RD12		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop and launch Eco-Link – a Sustainability Guide to Chester-le-Street by July 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guide prepared and published by July 2006 ▪ Guide issues on website in July 2006 ▪ Increased numbers accessing webpage 	The project will provide a sustainability guide to the district by detailing where the community can access fair trade, secure bikes, recycle materials and access play areas and the like. The community will be able to access this and contacts for local services on the website. This will improve information about sustainability within the community
Lead Officer	Andy Stephenson	Lead Executive Member	Lead Officer

RD13		Milestone/Measure	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 ▪ Secure funding required by ▪ Secure Planning Permission by Nov 06 ▪ Procure works by April 07 ▪ Complete by April 10 ▪ 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	Lead Officer

RD14		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Complete an Infra red study of energy consumption across the District by March 2007		<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 Alan Holden
RD15		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Plant an additional 50 Trees in the District per annum through to 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify locations and implement ▪ 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 MacCallum	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden
RD16		Milestone/Measure	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 MacCallum	Lead Executive Member	

RD17	Milestone/Measure	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 2006 ▪ Develop Draft Strategy by December 2006 ▪ Consult by February 2007 ▪ Adopt by March 2007 	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 all our communities
Lead Officer Gordon MacCallum		Lead Executive Member Cllr Alan Holden

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 result, helping to create an improved environment and sustainable communities

To achieve our objectives we propose the following:

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 into the there will be joined up service delivery. Through strong community leadership we want to develop civil 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.

To achieve our objectives we propose the following:

NM1	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Produce a Neighbourhood Management Strategy for future roll out of by October 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review learning and best practice from pilot projects by June 2006. ▪ Receive proposals and recommendations from Action Learning Set 10 on Neighbourhood Management by June 2006 ▪ Produce evaluation report from pilots by July 2006. ▪ Use findings from the evaluation report to produce final strategy ▪ Strategy document agreed by executive by October 2006. ▪ Decrease in levels of crime ▪ Increase in recycling ▪ Decrease in incidents of fly tipping ▪ Increased customer satisfaction ▪ Evidenced Gershon savings 	A strategic document informed by the learning from the pilot projects, examples of best practice from other authorities and the work of the Action Learning Set, that will provide the framework and guidance for the delivery of Neighbourhood Management throughout the district. As a result we will deliver better, joined up services to our customers	
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Cllr Alan Holden

NM12	Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Roll out of Neighbourhood Management through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategy document produced by October 2006 ▪ Financial resources for roll out identified as part of budget planning process from October 2006 onwards. ▪ Non financial resources identified and in place by March 2007 ▪ Roll out programme agreed with Executive by March 2007 ▪ Commence roll out April 2007 ▪ Decrease in levels of crime ▪ Increase in recycling ▪ Decrease in incidents of fly tipping ▪ Increased customer satisfaction ▪ Evidenced Gershon savings 	A consistent approach to the delivery of neighbourhood management which embraces a multi disciplinary and multi agency approach to service delivery that is informed by and driven by local residents and local need

Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Cllr Alan Holden
NM3	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Develop Environmental Services Improvement Plan as a result of the Audit Commission Inspection by November 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Receive Audit Commission Judgement by May 2006 ▪ Take into account Scrutiny report on recycling and views of Executive ▪ Review service improvement plan as a result of areas for improvement identified in the judgement by November 2006 ▪ Implement Action Plan ▪ 90% improvements achieved on target 	The community can be assured that the service has learned from the experience of external assessment and developed service improvements as a result	
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallum	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden
NM4	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Develop Environmental Strategy as a result of the Audit Commission Inspection by November 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Receive Audit Commission Judgement by May 2006 ▪ Take into account Scrutiny report on recycling and views of Executive ▪ Develop a Strategy by November 2006 ▪ Implement Action Plan ▪ 90% improvements achieved on target 	The community will have access to a clear strategy as to what the council is doing to meet its responsibilities to the environment.	
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden
NM5	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Appraise Grounds Care service integration by March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop Recommendation on completion of Neighbourhood Management Pilots by August 2006 ▪ Implement by March 2007 ▪ Service Standards met or exceeded ▪ Evidenced Gershon efficiency savings and value for money 	Improved efficiency and level of service to meet customers needs and expectations	
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallum	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

NM6		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Evaluate Refuse Collection against national best practice by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft agreement for task and finish and implement by March 2009 ▪ Evidenced efficiency savings 	Delivery of improved value for money to service users
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallum	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

NM7		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Carry out Trade Waste Options Appraisal by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and consider options report by December 2006 ▪ Implement Findings by March 2007 	Value for money is achieved for the council and the community by selection of the best practical option following careful assessment
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallum	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

NM8		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Increase participation of households in recycling through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnership applications to DEFRA by July 2006 ▪ Roll out communications Strategy by November 2006 ▪ BVPI 82 targets achieved or exceeded 	Residents will gain an understanding o their environmental impacts and understand the role of the council in meeting government recycling expectations
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallum	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

NM9		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop a community education programme for environmental services issues and implement by October 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and market test an adult programme by July 2006 ▪ Refine and deliver the programme to adults by October 2006 	Residents will gain an understanding o their environmental impacts and understand the role of the council in meeting government recycling expectations
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallum	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

NM10		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Adoption of Corporate Enforcement Policy March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop Corporate 'Virtual' Enforcement Team ▪ Development and adoption of Corporate Enforcement Policy by March 2007 ▪ Implement and Annually review 	The community and those where enforcement action will be targeted will have a clear understanding of what the councils standards of service will be an 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 this will underpin Neighbourhood Manaagement activity across the District
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden
NM11		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Adoption of Planning Enforcement Policy March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development and adoption of Planning Enforcement Policy by March 2007 ▪ Implement and Annually review 	Consistent base for procedures, standards of service and decision making on planning enforcement issues which will underpin Neighbourhood Manaagement activity across the District
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden
NM12		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Adoption of Environmental Health Services Policies including Licensing and Health and Safety Enforcement Policy March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development and adoption of Environmental Health Enforcement Policies by March 2007 ▪ Implement and Annually review 	Consistent base for procedures, standards of service and decision making on planning enforcement issues which will underpin Neighbourhood Manaagement activity across the District
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

NM13	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Establish a service to meet the requirements of the Gambling Act 2005 and implement through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set up Working Group by September 2006 ▪ Establish framework, procedures, policies and protocols by December 2006 ▪ Implement January 2007 ▪ Increased number of licensed premises 	The community will be assured that the council has effective system for considering licensing of gambling premises in order that the impact of such facilities on the social, economical and environmental well being of communities is not adversely affected.	
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

NM14	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Adoption of Environmental Services Enforcement Policy March 2007	<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 fly tipping and dog fouling which will underpin Neighbourhood Management activity across the District	
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallum	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

NM15	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Adoption of Corporate Transport Policy March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development and adoption of Transport Policy by March 2007 ▪ Implement and Annually review 	Consistent base for procedures, standards of service and decision making on Transport services procurement issues which will underpin Neighbourhood Management activity across the District	
Lead Officer	Gordon MacCallum	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

NM16		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Ensure full compliance with National Food Safety Standards Agency by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement agreed action plan for full compliance by March 2007 ▪ 	Residents can be assured that all food shops and pubs in the district exercise the high standards of food hygiene
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Alan Holden

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

To achieve our objectives we propose the following:

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 we will

NWL1		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Carry out a full options appraisal of the delivery of the Sports, Arts and Leisure Services by December 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consultants complete Report by July 2006 ▪ Council considers report and selects key options for further appraisal ▪ Consultant provide detailed report on Options by November 2006 ▪ Council agreed preferred option by December 2007 ▪ Target dates achieved 	The council has given full consideration with external expert advice on the range of options available and selected an option which provided the best value of money for the council and the community
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

NWL2		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop Preferred option delivery plan and implement by March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine Procurement process by March 2007 ▪ Develop Service Improvement Plan by June 2007 ▪ Procure by March 2008 	The councils 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 Henig

Proposal	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
To raise the profile of arts within the district.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop year of culture proposals by march 2007 ▪ Completion & adoption of a new district arts strategy by March 2007 ▪ Continue to lead LSP culture through to March 2008 ▪ Develop action plan as part of updating Community Strategy and implement by March 2008 ▪ Ongoing satisfaction of key partners in arts development ▪ Acknowledgement in improved CPA judgement 	More residents experience a wider range of arts activities and the District is recognised for its innovative and creative use of 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	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Lead Officer

NWL3		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Ensure that the Riverside continues to retain its Green Flag Award with an improved rating through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Green Flag Award made annually 	This will ensure the community benefits from the councils continued commitment to the environment
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

NWL4		Milestone/Measure	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 March 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Football foundation application submitted by end July 2006 (including completion of football development plan for this project) ▪ All required funding to be in place by January 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 Henig

NWL5		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Work towards achieving QUEST quality accreditation for Chester-le-Street Leisure Centre by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Application submitted by March 2007 	This will show our commitment and achievement to excellent leisure service provision.
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

NWL6		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Continue the process of upgrading the District Playgrounds, maintaining that all our equipment and surfacing is to the required national standards through to March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review funding available from Capital programme and developer contributions by August 2006 to allow consideration of work programme for the year. ▪ Increased number of play areas conform to industry safety standards 	This will ensure that we continue to upgrade play facilities in the District while engaging children and residents in their design.
Lead Officer	Tony Galloway	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

NWL7		Milestone/Measure	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 in 2008/2009 ▪ Maintain Outstanding judgement 	This will ensure that the 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 Henig

NWL8		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
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 by November 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community consultation to be completed by the end of September. ▪ Revised play strategy to be completed by end October. ▪ Make application by November 2006 ▪ Receive decision by May 2007 ▪ Implement funding ▪ Successful bid 	A successful application will see a significant improvement for play provision in the district, especially that identified by young people themselves.
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Cllr Simon Henig

NWL9		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Ensure that online booking and payment for leisure activities is available by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online bookings available by June 2006 • Online payments available by March 2007 	Customers will find it easier to both book and pay for activities at a time that suits them. In addition queues at the leisure facilities should reduce so improving the visit experience for other customers.
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Cllr Simon Henig

NWL10		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Undertake a pilot programme at the leisure centre which offers free swimming to all people under 16 for a 3 month period by November 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have all arrangements in place and have promoted the pilot ready for implementation on 17th June ▪ Appraise impact by November 2006 	The leisure centre will be able to compare attendance information to see what impact on swimming attendances by young people the removal of an admission charge has. This will help to feed into future pricing strategies aimed at encouraging regular physical activity by young people.
Lead Officer	Simon high	Lead Executive Member	Cllr Simon Henig
NWL11		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Refurbish the 3 tennis courts at Riverside and establish a junior tennis club on the site as part of a wider tennis development plan for the district by August 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ District tennis development plan completed by July 2006 ▪ Refurbishment of tennis courts completed by August 2006 ▪ Increased levels of participation in tennis particularly by young people 	Improved quality of tennis facilities within the district linked to improved playing, training and coaching opportunities.
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Cllr Simon Henig
NWL12		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Continue to extend the lifestyle initiative to increase capacity to target groups, especially hard to reach ones, identified by key project partners ie the PCT through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extend provision of exercise referral scheme to clients with diabetes. ▪ Increased levels of participation by targeted groups 	More individuals with diabetes from disadvantaged communities and groups displaying health inequalities, being active more often.
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Cllr Simon Henig

NWL13	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
To develop the riverside site as a multi sport environment in partnership with Durham County Cricket Club by March 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Submission of business and sports development plans to regional sports board by September 2006 ▪ Project supported by regional sports board by December 2006 ▪ Appointment of multi sport environment development officer by March 2007 ▪ Implement ▪ Increased facilities available ▪ Increase in take up of activities 	Increased playing, training and coaching opportunities across key focus sports through strengthening the support infrastructure available.	
Lead Officer	Simon High	Lead Executive Member	Cllr Simon Henig

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

To achieve our objectives we propose the following:

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 we will

ME1		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Seek recategorisation under the next round of Comprehensive Performance Assessment by June 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respond to CPA consultation by May 2006 ▪ Develop action plan to support existing Improvement Programme 	Council shows value for money in delivery of internal audit service
Lead Officer	Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Linda Ebbattson

ME2		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Work in Partnership when required to respond to the challenges of Local Government Review through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respond to the impending Government White Paper by September 2006 (or as otherwise directed by White Paper) ▪ Respond to further opportunities for engagement as they arise ▪ Formal submission documentation and evidence 	The communities' best interests are considered at a time of potential change
Lead Officer	Roy Templeman	Lead Executive Member	Linda Ebbatson

ME3		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Progress our action plan to improve the Councils Use of Resources Assessment through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme manage action plan implementation ▪ Ensure embedding of actions taken in organisation ▪ Achieve Level 3 by March 2007 ▪ Achieve Level 4 by March 2009 ▪ Positive Audit reports ▪ Improved CPA categorization ▪ 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		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop corporate criteria for establishing Value for Money across the council and implement through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learn from Progress assessments Use of Resources judgements by June 2006 ▪ Learn from Environmental Services and Housing service Inspections by July 2008 ▪ Consider recommendations of action learning set by July 2008 ▪ Agree criteria and implement by July 2008 ▪ Build into performance management framework by September 2006 ▪ Incorporate in Use of Resources Self Assessment by August 2008 ▪ Build into CPA Self Assessment by January 2007 where achievable ▪ Improved Use of resources judgement to level 3 ▪ Improved CPA categorization to at least Fair 	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		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Continue our Procurement Partnership with Derwentside District Council by implementing our Procurement Strategy and implementing the Procurement action Plan through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Actions achieved to timetable ▪ National Strategy targets achieved ▪ Demonstrable Gershon efficiency savings achieved 	As the way we buy goods and services improves the council will demonstrate value for money to our community and stakeholders
Lead Officer		Lead Executive Member	

ME6		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Implement Phase 3 of the Information Management Strategy by introducing document imaging and processing in the planning service by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procure system by October 2006 ▪ System live March 2007 ▪ Improved or sustained BVP! Planning performance ▪ Increase in productivity in planning service ▪ Evidenced Gershon efficiency savings 	The system will allow easier and more efficient storage and retrieval of documents within the planning service. This will improve the performance of the team in terms of speed or quality with direct benefits to the customers of the service
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes

ME7		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Implement phase 4 of the Information Management Strategy by considering introducing a corporate Electronic Document Records and Management system by March 2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implementation of key actions of Strategy action plan on target ▪ Completion of feasibility study and budgeting by March 2007 ▪ Procurement of system by October 2007 ▪ Implementation of system by March 2008 ▪ 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 Officer	Graeme Clark and Ian Forster	Lead Executive Member	Councillors Chris Jukes and Simon Westrip

ME8		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Extension of Home and Remote Working for staff and members by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of pilot by June 2006 ▪ Revised Policy by August 2007 ▪ Roll out of pilot findings and recommendations by March 2007 ▪ Annual % increase in staff home working ▪ Evidences Gershon efficiency savings 	More efficient ways to deliver services through reduction in accommodation costs and reduced staff traveling benefits to the environment
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Simon Westrip

ME9		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Confirmation of Information security by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Development of ICT security Policy by December 2006 ▪ Implementation of policy by March 2007 	More efficient use of information within the authority
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jules

ME10		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Development of the councils intranet through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase in use of the intranet by Members and officers 	More effective and efficient staff and improved internal communications
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

ME11		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Development of Web-site content through to March 2009		<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 service ▪ Involvement and engagement of all service ▪ 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 Office	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip
ME12		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Development of new Information Communication and Technology Strategy and implement by March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and adopt Strategy by council by July 2006 ▪ Implement from July 2006 ▪ Improved use of ICT ▪ Demonstrable Gershon savings by introducing more efficient systems in the organisation ▪ 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 Chris Jukes

ME13		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Develop an Electronic Asset Management System by March 2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Procure system by October 2006 ▪ System live March 2007 ▪ Clearer understanding of council assets ▪ Evidenced Gershon efficiency savings 	The council will be able to have more efficient and effective management of its assets, investment plans for such assets.

Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Chris Jukes
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ME14	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Implement E- Government Communications Plan to maximise investment in new technology through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Modernisation Project Team agreement to Communications Plan by July 2006 ▪ Modernisation Project Team agree targets by July 2006 ▪ Individual services commence implementation of campaigns by August 2006 ▪ 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 gets better	
Lead Officer	Graeme Clark	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Westrip

ME15	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Promotion of an anti fraud culture by developing and implementing an Anti-Fraud Strategy underpinned by corporate fraud awareness training by March 2007	<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 ▪ 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

ME16	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Continue to operate an internal audit service that complies with CIPFA Codes of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self assessment for Internal Audit annual Report submitted to council in September 2006 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

ME17		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Continue to minimize Audit Commission Audit fees by meeting recognised standards through to March 2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Re-engineer internal audit processes y June 2006 ▪ Embed new processes in working practices by April 2007 ▪ 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

ME18		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Restructure Internal Audit Service to maximise use of resources		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Internal Audit fully staffed by September 2006 	Council shows value for money in delivery of internal audit service
Lead Officer	Jacqueline McConnell	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

ME19		Milestone/Measure	Outcome
Review the role of the Audit Committee and ensure that it meets what is required by 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 things are being done right and are addressed if they go wrong.
Lead Officer	Jacqueline McConnell	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

ME20	Milestone/Measure	Outcome	
Engage our Service Improvement Team and key departments in developing continuous process improvement in the organisation through to March 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commence project by May 2008 ▪ Train teams by September 2006 ▪ Complete projects in three services by January 2007 ▪ Build in learning to develop programme for roll out across the council by April 2006 ▪ Implement through to March 2009 ▪ Statement of Internal Control and agrees the areas of corporate governance it wishes to consider ▪ Increase in performance in designated service areas ▪ Evidenced Gershon Efficiencies 	Customers will receive improved service delivery by the council constantly reviewing its processes and become more efficient and effective	
Lead Officer	Julie Underwood	Lead Executive Member	Councillor Simon Henig

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 and Recovery Plan Proposals

It is important to our recovery that we achieve all the requirements of our second Improvement and Recovery Plan. Progress, and work to do, is detailed in Appendix 6. We cannot stand still when we have completed these tasks. We will work during the year to update our Improvement Programme.

7. Our Financial Performance

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 2006/07

The General Fund

The Council's general fund budget in 2006/07 amount to £7,815,767 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 income less income from fees and charges, government grants and other income.

2005/2006		Service	2006/2007	
Gross	Net		Gross	Net
£	£		£	£
		<u>SUMMARY</u>		
370,880	291,600	General Fund Housing	314,550	224,690
1,233,160	444,840	Community Safety & Development	1,019,410	426,300
3,824,510	1,826,300	Leisure	4,119,690	1,899,290
1,076,110	204,180	Regeneration	959,490	136,970
708,340	586,500	Environmental Health	717,620	564,690
572,350	252,840	Planning	674,640	261,040
3,207,540	2,328,760	Environmental Services	3,389,440	2,528,750
13,649,890	574,250	Revenues and Benefits	13,714,940	665,690
604,370	(92,440)	Finance and Accountancy	597,540	19,050

68,690	66,270	Personnel	216,580	214,160
506,820	497,250	Strategy Team	598,780	594,080
747,090	586,440	Legal & Democratic Services Manager	1,180,630	1,040,490
761,890	667,760	Corporate Functions	854,780	793,960
(48,520)	(373,200)	Other	(39,863)	(429,643)
27,283,120	7,861,350		28,318,227	8,939,517
0	(130,000)	Less Use of Balances	0	0
0	0	Add Contributions to Reserves	23,900	23,900
0	(200,000)	Investment Interest	0	(257,630)
27,283,120	7,531,350		28,342,127	8,705,787
0	(621,330)	Capital Accounting Adjustments	0	(890,020)
27,283,120	6,910,020		28,342,127	7,815,767

The net general fund expenditure is funded as follows:-

Formula Grant £4,895,026
Council Tax £2,940,741

This means that about 37% of the costs of the Council's services are funded by Council Tax payers. The change in the Council's budget from 2005/06 to 2006/07 amounts to just under £906,000. The main reasons for this are:-

- Provision for general inflation of £50,000
- Increase in pay and pensions of £350,000
- Increase in energy costs of £100,000
- Provision for a new concessionary travel scheme of £467,000
- Reduction in the use of reserves of £100,000
- Benefit costs transferred from the Housing Revenue Account of £45,000
- Less increased income of £206,000

The Council did receive additional grant from the Government of just under £694,000 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 £168.00 for a Band D property in 2006/07; this is an increase of £7.77 (or 4.8%) on the charge for 2005/06. 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 £112.00 for 2006/07; an increase of £5.18, or just under 10 pence per week. The estimated outturn for the last financial year shows that it will be on budget. This is still subject to confirmation as we will not know the final figures until the 2005/06 accounts are closed.

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 2006/07 budget for the Housing Revenue Account is shown below:-

	2006/07
	£
Expenditure:-	
Property Services	3,032,380
Central Costs	437,350
Estates Management	788,490
Income Management	265,290
IT & Accounts	373,760
Tenant Support	136,540
Exceptional Items	227,000
Stock Option Appraisal	300,040
Sheltered Housing	227,870
Contribution to Supporting People	34,450
Cost of Democracy	277,740
	6,100,910
Depreciation	2,375,680
Debt Management & Loan Charges	775,320
Total Expenditure	9,251,910
Funded by:-	
Rents - Dwellings	10,353,840

Rents - Non-Dwellings	255,410
Charges for Services and Facilities	50,700
Interest receivable	41,000
Negative Subsidy Paid to ODPM	-4,281,410
Major Repairs Allowance	2,375,680
Total Income	8,795,220
DEFICIT	456,690

The budget includes several new growth areas which have been included to improve service delivery to tenants including work to improve properties to make them more attractive to let, text messaging for tenants to advise them of repairs appointments. The Council approved a rent increase of 5% for 2006/07, giving an average actual rent of £48.92, based on a 50 week year. This compares with the Government guidance rent of £49.20, again based on a 50 week year.

The Capital Programme

Our capital programme is divided into two areas: housing and other services. A three year capital programme has been agreed for housing:-

2006/07	£4,566,000
2007/08	£4,601,000
2008/09	£4,637,000
	£13,804,000

This requires a £2 million contribution each year from capital receipts. The housing programme is aimed at achieving the Decent Homes Standard. Examples of this expenditure includes new kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors, heating systems and disabled adaptations. The 'other services' capital programme requires funding of £1.783 million from capital receipts in 2006/07. In addition, the programme will benefit from funding from other sources, including government grants and developers' contributions. Schemes included in the programme include improvements to Chester-le-Street Town Centre, regeneration programmes, works to the cemeteries, leisure improvements, housing grants (for non-Council houses) and investment in information technology. The Council has agreed to prioritise its capital programme expenditure so that only available funding from capital receipts is committed.

Quote: Financial management has improved. The Council implemented a new financial management system during 2005; this produces more useable and more regular reports for budget holders. It has improved its budget setting processes, and has developed a medium term financial plan to direct its resources more effectively towards what it is trying to achieve.” Audit Commission March 2006

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. It is based on assumptions that the work currently underway to ensure the revenue budget is sustainable over the medium term is completed by September 2006, to ensure that resources can be made available for key service priorities. 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.

General Fund Projections

Chester-le-Street District Council will receive Formula Grant of £4.895 million in 2006/07 and £5.038 million in 2006/07; this equates to increases of 3% and 2.9% respectively. As the Medium Term Financial Strategy runs up to the end of 2008/09, some assumptions have had to be made for the final year. The Strategy assumes a further increase of 2.9%; clearly this will have to be revisited 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 Government has announced that it expects to see Council Tax increases of less than 5%. For 2006/07, the Council increased its tax by 4.8%; the financial strategy currently assumes the same level of increase, year on year, but also sets out how the available resources will vary if Council Tax levels differ from the level originally assumed. Basically, every 1% increase in Council Tax yields an additional £27,000.

The Council has produced a balanced budget for 2006/07, without requiring any contribution from its reserves. However, significant challenges will face the authority for 2007/08 and 2008/09. By September 2006, it is our intention to ensure that we have a sustainable general fund revenue budget for the remainder of the period covered by the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Council already has plans to do this. Work is already underway to address one of our key priorities 'maximising efficiencies'. This includes new ways of working, following our investment in e-government initiatives; the introduction of the one-stop shop and the development of our Procurement Strategy. The other major issues facing the authority - securing stock transfer and the review of leisure options are expected to have significant financial implications and these will be incorporated in the financial strategy as they become more certain. Obviously it is essential that the Strategy is updated to reflect any changes to the financial projections.

The Council has developed a strategic approach to its Value for Money work and this will cover all service areas. Once the funding gap has been met, further resources released can be redirected to the Council's priority areas in line with our budget prioritisation process.

Housing Revenue Account Projections

The majority of the resources available are generated from the rent income from dwellings, with the remainder being generated from rents from garages and charges for specific services. The amount of rent charged for each individual dwelling is controlled by the Government's formula rent calculation, and assumptions have been made that rents will increase by an average of 5% per annum for the next three years.

The major uncertainty in preparing HRA projections is the amount of subsidy payable to the Government. Subsidy often changes significantly as the Government determines the amount annually. The subsidy to be paid to the Government in 2006/07 increased by approximately £444,000 which meant that resources had to be taken out of reserves in order to balance the HRA budget. However, this is only expected to be needed this year, in future years, the HRA costs should be able to be retained within the resources generated in year, provided that the Government does not drastically change the subsidy calculations.

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 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 2006/07 revenue budget incorporates £258,000 from interest income on investments.

Reserves

The general fund revenue reserve stands at £374,000 which amounts to approximately 4.8% of the net revenue budget for 2006/07. This is regarded as adequate for the Council. The 2006/07 budget, and the financial strategy up to 2008/09, 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 £960,000. These were last reviewed as part of the 2006/07 budget setting process and will be, again, subjected to review when the final accounts for 2005/06 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 major financial changes, such as that relating to the housing stock are more certain. 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 new financial regulations, which, again, have been widely communicated as part of the new constitution; training on the new 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.

Contracts

In respect of contracts awarded in 2005/2006, 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.

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 reduced. Sometimes we don't take the opportunity of doing some things because there are 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 causes 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 our Service Plans;
- assess and review risks in the decisions we make on a daily basis;
- Service Team Managers keep Service Team Risk Registers under review;

- the Councils 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 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.

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 tabled below.

(To be developed)

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 set out on page XX;
- 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 will be 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 are 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 we 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 are 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 recognize 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 and

will be properly trained, and more training. 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. We aim to meet Level 1 by March 2006, Level 2 by March 2007, and Level 3 by March 2008.

Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2005/2006

In order that we can show how seriously we have included our first Equality and Diversity Annual Report in this section of the Plan. 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 2005/06; what we planned to do but have not achieved during the year; and what our plans are for the future.

Background

The Community Strategy for the district of Chester-le-Street sets out its key priorities to achieve inclusive communities as:

- To promote equality of opportunity, strong communities and access to services for all our community
- To achieve great quality, choice and efficiency in the provision of housing to meet the needs of all our community
- To make the District a safer place to live, work and visit; to further reduce crime and disorder and to improve public reassurance
- Enhance lifelong learning opportunities for all those living and working in the District, to improvement the life chances and quality of life for all
- To work together in partnership to improve health and well being of the people of the District; tackle inequalities in health; and improve access to and quality of health and social care services
- To develop opportunities for communities from across the District to access sport, cultural and leisure activities

As a leading partner in delivering these priorities, the Council has appointed two 'Equality Champions' whose primary role is to promote the equalities agenda both internally and externally to the Council. The champions are Councillor 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 of these projects was 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. 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 two people on the working group 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 2005 a significant amount of work was completed, enabling the Council to achieve Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. This was from a previous position of Level 0, and higher than our target of Level 1.

As a local authority, the council also has a duty to promote racial equality, and we are measured against this 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%.

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

Training

- All employees received equality and diversity awareness training, and all managers had further training on their specific responsibilities
- Councillors received awareness training, and further training specific to their responsibilities
- Four employees were trained to undertake diversity impact assessments, and now deliver training to other staff
- A consultant was used initially to provide the training, but we have trained a group of staff to enable them to carry out awareness training in the future, thereby transferring skills into the organisation.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- We have developed a three-year rolling programme of impact assessments, and commenced assessments in four areas
- We provided training for employees to enable them to undertake assessments.

Corporate Equality Plan – incorporating Race Equality Scheme, and Equality Policy

- A comprehensive Corporate Equality Plan has been developed, approved and adopted by Council. This document has received very positive feedback from organisations outside the council who have an interest in equality and diversity, and from the Audit Commission
- 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

- The Council's existing Race Equality Scheme was reviewed by the consultants assisting us in our project, and found to be inadequate. The scheme was completely re-written to ensure that it fully addressed the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. It also includes a three-year action plan to deliver the scheme, and in doing so, also supports the Corporate Equality Plan.
- 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.

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 other councils in County Durham which will help to make us more efficient, for instance by sharing resources.

Celebrating diversity

We have established a 'cultural calendar' that shows the different cultural and religious festival days. We have used this to help us promote special events. For example, we invited children from a local infant school to perform their 'dragon dance' in the Civic Centre to celebrate Chinese New Year, and displayed their art work in our public restaurant.

What we have not achieved

To support consultation on diversity impact assessments and other aspects of service consultation, we had planned to recruit a Diverse Service Users Forum. Unfortunately this has not been possible due to a number of difficulties regarding time and budget constraints.

We will ensure that the forum is developed during the coming year.

Our plans for the future

The major focus for 2006/2007 will be to ensure that the action plans in the Corporate Equality Plan and Race Equality Scheme are implemented. We will monitor progress on a monthly basis, and report on our performance to Councillors every quarter.

As well as a Race Equality Scheme, new legislation demands that councils also have a Disability Equality Scheme by December 2006, and a Gender Equality Scheme by April 2007. We have begun developing our schemes, and are working with partner organisations in doing so. This provides an opportunity to share resources and expertise, but most importantly, have a joint consultation exercise that means we are not asking the same people the same questions several times over.

The three-year Diversity Impact Assessment programme will continue to be rolled out, with assessments commencing in Community Safety and Development; Information and Communication Technology; Human Resources; and Leisure Services.

As stated above, we will recruit and develop a Diverse Service Users Forum. As well as giving feedback on our impact assessments, the forum will help us to have a better understanding of the diverse needs of minority communities, and how our services can be improved to actually meet those needs. The forum will consist of representatives from community groups and support organisations, as well as individuals from within the minority communities themselves. We plan to establish the forum by the end of August 2006.

We will improve how we address the needs of our diverse communities in our service plans, by setting more focused objectives and targets. These will be monitored through our performance management processes, and progress regularly reported to Councillors.

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, and will continue to develop the cultural calendar.

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, Improvement Programme Manager on 0191 387 2221, or by e-mail at julieunderwood@chester-le-street.gov.uk.

EITI strapline.

Appendix 2 *Aims and Priorities in 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

Appendix 6 ; Improvement Programme – Improvement and Recovery Plan Proposals

The following are proposals in IRP2 which we are yet to complete. Timelines and measures can be found in the plan itself.

Vision into Action

Community Engagement: Ensuring the development of a wide range of ways for customers to engage in service delivery

Outcomes	Key Actions and Milestones
<p>There are diverse and appropriate opportunities for all to engage in service delivery and decision making. The Council has a clear understanding of what the community wants from the Council. The Community understands how it can contribute to the Council achieving its vision and aims through community leadership. Community leadership directly encourages take up of opportunities.</p>	<p>Embed information management strategy by March 2008</p> <p>Embed new ways of engagement identified by from the review of existing forms of engagement including voluntary organisations, minority groups and the community partnerships by April 2007</p> <p>Embed the Community Engagement and Involvement Strategy in collaboration with the Council's partners on the District Partnership and monitor effectiveness by March 2007</p> <p>Align service plans with the strategy to mainstream strategy in service delivery by May 2006</p> <p>Continue to provide Support District Partnership Policy Groups to further develop action plans until March 2008</p> <p>Establish customer services team and provide relevant training by June 2006</p>

Partnership Working: Ensuring that we work with our partners and other stakeholder to achieve effectiveness

Outcomes	Key Actions and Milestones
<p>The Council works effectively with public, private and voluntary partners at local, regional and national levels to achieve better outcomes and support the development of sustainable communities through improved community leadership. The Council works together with other adjacent councils, in particular those in the north of the County of Durham, as well as the County Council, to achieve positive outcomes for the community through the Durham County Accord. The Council works in partnership to deliver Local Area Agreements which will cut across boundaries and organisations and provide a dynamic way to improve public services to our communities. Increased number of services delivered jointly across councils and other partner organisations.</p>	<p>Review the effectiveness of existing partnerships including the District Partnership, and develop improvement proposals by November 2006</p> <p>Implement proposals to improve existing partnerships by December 2006</p> <p>Review impact of partnership improvements by December 2007</p> <p>Review effectiveness of partnership protocols developed to ensure consistent principles of partnership working by March 2007</p> <p>Identify and implement new opportunities for partnership working by June 2006</p>

Decision Making

Embedding the constitution: Ensuring that our Members and staff use the powers given to them to the best advantage of our customers

Outcomes	Key Actions and Milestones
A Constitution that is fit for purpose, is publicised, effectively used and delegates responsibility and authority to appropriate levels; and reflects a modern council that is accountable, transparent and accessible in its decision making process and conducting its business	Develop and conduct a formal audit of decisions, which will capture whether the Council is making a difference, embed monitoring into the Council's performance management framework, and provide an annual report by September 2006

Accountability: Ensuring that Members, officers and other who manage our resources ensure that efficiencies are achieved

Outcomes	Key Actions and Milestones
A Council in which Officers and Members at the appropriate level are trained, empowered and accountable for the effective and efficient management of the Council's financial, non-financial and human resources within a performance management framework that measures, monitors and reviews individual, team and corporate level performance as appropriate against agreed targets	<p>Implement Capital Plan with effect from March 2006 and ongoing</p> <p>Ensure Business Continuity Plan is embedded in the organisation by March 2007</p> <p>Develop and implement a system for ensuring value for money assessments are carried out within the Council, and monitored and reviewed by May 2006</p> <p>Embed and review system implemented by May 2007</p> <p>District Partnership steering group to implement and embed proposals arising from study of ways in which to more effectively engage young people and hard to reach groups in the community by March 2007</p> <p>Feedback to be captured and used to inform further improvements by March 2007</p>

Decision effectiveness and learning: Ensuring that we regularly review the decisions we make, reflect on them and learn by them

Outcomes	Key Actions and Milestones
<p>The Council has a variety of robust evaluation and monitoring mechanisms to ensure agreed outcomes are achieved against specified targets and performance</p> <p>The Council builds learning into all aspects of its activity, is able to share learning, celebrate achievement and positively address under-achievement</p>	<p>Review monitoring system implemented for ensuring intended objectives of decisions are realised by March 2007</p> <p>Implement Strategy to establish learning culture within the Council by June 2006</p> <p>Embed proposals of the Strategy into organisation by April 2007</p>

People & Performance

Mainstreaming equalities and diversity: Ensuring that we build equality and diversity into everything we do

Outcomes	Key Actions and Milestones
<p>Customers feel valued and listened to, and especially that individual needs are considered Individuals and representatives from minority groups are involved and engaged in determining and testing service delivery The Council actively promotes and encourages equalities and diversity in a variety of ways</p> <p>Equality and diversity is firmly embedded into the Council's decision making processes The Council's service provision, systems and processes are fully inclusive</p>	<p>Review outcomes of guidance on equality and diversity implemented to assist report writing, policy writing and decision making by August 2006.</p> <p>Embed diversity impact assessments throughout the organisation in accord with agreed three year programme including the establishment of a database of policies, procedures, guidance and other information by September 2008</p> <p>Develop a programme of activities to promote equality and raise awareness of race and other diversity issues – in consultation with relevant community groups by June 2006</p> <p>Implement programme adopted in accord with timescales set out in agreed proposals by June 2007</p> <p>Review outcomes of programme implementation by March 2008</p>

Empowerment: Ensuring that we give people the skills and capacity to make the decisions we expect of them

Outcomes	Key Actions and Milestones
<p>Employees feel valued and supported Employees are confident, and are appropriately skilled and equipped to work effectively There is demonstrable and effective leadership across the organisation, supported by consistent and meaningful communication Chester-le-Street District Council is a learning organisation and builds upon good practice Employees are actively encouraged to be creative and innovative</p>	<p>Complete Implementation and embed learning from Management Development Programme by July 2006</p> <p>Evaluate management development programme by March 2007</p> <p>Embed culture of an action learning programme for organisation development by December 2006</p> <p>Adopt and implement workforce approach to workforce planning, ensuring it is integral to service planning by December 2006</p> <p>Embed and evaluate workforce approach by December 2007</p> <p>Undertake an Audit of working practices by July 2006</p>

Embedding performance management: Ensuring that the performance management framework is fully implemented across the Council

Outcomes	Key Actions and Milestones
<p>The organisation has a culture whereby everyone in the Council is consciously looking to improve everything all the time Performance is effectively managed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ corporately ▪ at service level by individuals <p>Service delivery is optimised by the continuous review and evaluation of performance, leading to focused service improvements</p>	<p>Embed performance management framework by June 2006</p> <p>Work with LSP partners to improve performance management framework for the LSP by May 2006</p> <p>Evaluate reporting system on the basis of how performance management information is used throughout the organisation, recommend and implement improvements and ensure that the performance reporting framework is fit for purpose by December 2006</p> <p>Embed PerformancePlus performance management system, and model corporate and service objectives by February 2007</p> <p>Pilot the mapping of individual objectives from PDPs into PerformancePlus in the Assistant Chief Executive's team by December 2006</p>

Improving Services

Leisure provision: Ensuring we consider future options for the delivery of this key service

Outcomes	Key Actions and Milestones
<p>All sections of the community have equal and fair access to leisure and cultural activities</p> <p>The community feel that they are engaged and involved in determining the nature of leisure services and cultural activities offered by the Council</p> <p>The community of Chester-le-Street has a leisure service which is more efficient, economical and effective, is of higher quality and offers more choice at a more competitive price</p>	<p>Carry out an option appraisal of the delivery of the leisure service by June 2006</p> <p>Adopt the preferred option and develop an action plan to implement the agreed option June 2006</p> <p>Implement the action plan by June 2006</p>

Making the best use of resources: Ensuring we achieve more cost effective, better performing services by our choice of procurement

Outcomes	Key Actions and Milestones
<p>Resources are allocated to meet priorities that are agreed by the Council as a result of community engagement</p> <p>The Council delivers more cost effective, better performing services shaping resources to meet priorities</p> <p>Customers are clear about the standard of services they are going to receive because they have been engaged</p>	<p>Implement the Council's adopted procurement strategy by June 2006</p> <p>Embed and evaluate the Council's adopted procurement strategy by September 2007</p>

Targeted service improvement: Ensuring we improve services in accordance with our priorities, including Housing, Environment, Culture and Benefits

Outcomes	Key Actions and Milestones
<p>Our community benefit from an accessible used-focused customer excellence approach to service improvement that puts the customer firmly at the centre of what the Council does</p> <p>Continuous improving services, based on a sound understanding of customer needs and priorities, and aligned with the Council's main priorities, are delivered</p>	<p>Ensure the Council's Customer Excellence Strategy is embedded, monitored and reviewed with effect from March 2006 (and ongoing)</p> <p>Ensure the Council's Complaints Policy and Procedure is embedded, monitored and reviewed with effect from March 2006 (and ongoing)</p> <p>Ensure the Council's Corporate Equality Plan is embedded, monitored and reviewed with effect from February 2006 (and ongoing)</p> <p>Implement programme of customer-focused performance reviews assisted by the Service Improvement Team, based on Council priorities including Housing, Environmental Services and Exchequer from April 2006 (ongoing)</p> <p>Develop and implement improvement action plans taking into account best practice established from CPA service block key lines of enquiry, as appropriate</p> <p>Monitor and Review website to ensure its contribution to continuous improvement in access to services by March 2007</p> <p>Complete public space management plan by July 2006</p> <p>Implement Revenues and Benefits Action Plan by December 2006</p> <p>Embed customer focused corporate and service delivery standards, to be reviewed with focus groups by December 2006</p>