



**Chester-le-Street**  
District Council

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## **Chester-le-Street District Council**

### **Corporate Performance Report Summary April 2007 – December 2007**

#### **Report of Corporate Management Team**

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##### **Data Quality**

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the information presented in this Report. The council is committed to improving its data quality management. As part of this it has developed a Self Assessment, a Data Quality Policy and a Data Quality Strategy was developed in September 2006. The Director of Corporate Services has officer responsibility for data quality and the Executive member for Community engagement and Partnerships is Data Quality Member Champion. The Audit Commission has concluded that there are at least adequate arrangements in place to endure good data quality across all their Key Lines of Enquiry.



**Chester-le-Street**  
District Council

This report is a summary of the detailed document entitled **Corporate Performance Report April 2007 – December 2007**. This is available on request. It provides a summary of the council's progress on key areas of its performance, what learning is taking place and how any under achievement is being addressed.

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# 1. Corporate Plan Progress

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## 1.1 Summary

The new Corporate Plan was published at the end of June. Progress against the plan has been delayed because of the uncertainty around Local Government Review. At the meeting of the Executive in October Members agreed a revised approach to re-assessing priorities and proposals. Revisions were considered by the Executive in December. However the council is embarking on the development of a Transition Plan which will further review what can be achieved in the remaining lifetime of the Council. In addition key staff and members are now becoming significantly engaged in Local Government Reorganisation work. In view of this it is not felt that reporting of progress against the Corporate Plan is valuable until proposals have been updated and there is a clear agreement of where the council's priorities do lie. Progress against the Plan will therefore be reported in the next corporate performance report.

## 2. Best Value Performance Indicators

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### 2.1 Summary

There have been a number of indicators removed from the BVPI set for this financial year. There are now 44 Best Value Performance Indicators which the authority are required to collect and report for 2007/2008. These equate to 74 individual returns.

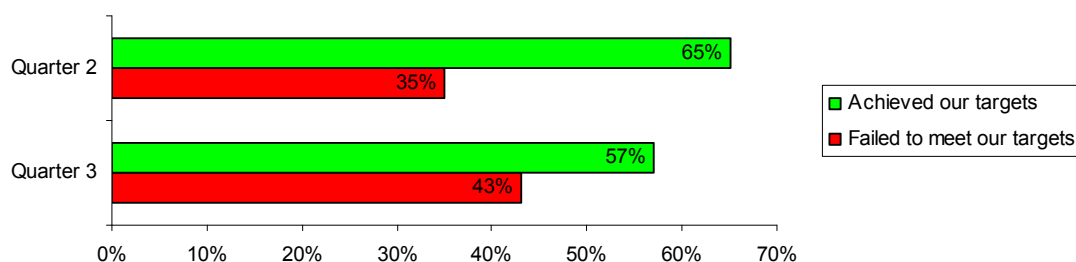
#### Best Value Performance Indicators

Performance for the 74 individual Best Value Indicators is as follows (comparisons against last quarter outturn figures are shown in brackets):

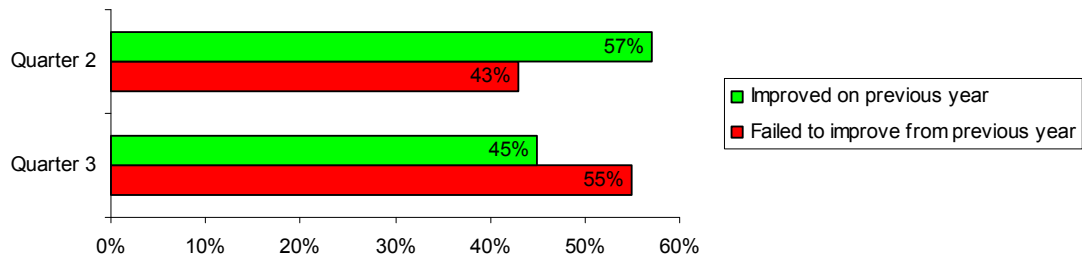
57% (65%) have achieved target  
43% (35%) have failed to meet targets  
45% (57%) have shown an improvement from last year  
55% (43%) have failed to improve from last year  
52% (54%) show an improvement against same period last year  
48% (46%) have failed to improve against same period last year  
40% (41%) show best quartile performance  
30% (21%) show worst quartile performance

(Note: Quartile figures now show a more accurate position as we are able to compare performance against the National District Councils 2006/07 outturns recently published by the Audit Commission.)

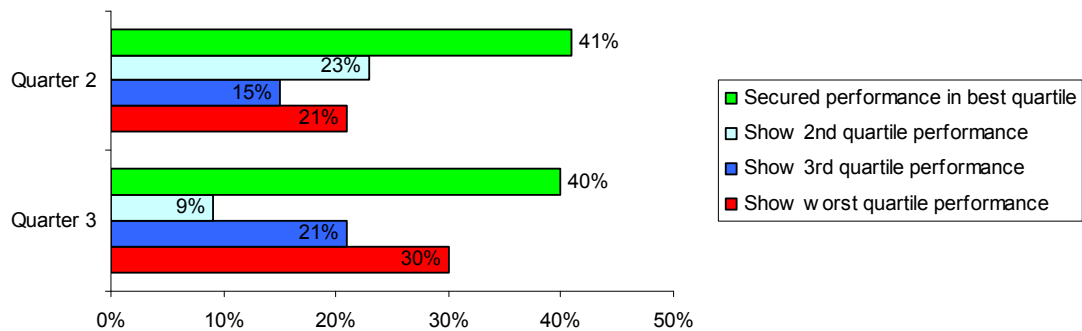
#### BVPI Achievement against Target



## BVPI Improvement from last year



## BVPI Quartile Comparisons



Figures continue to show improved performance over the third quarter of this year with 40% of indicators comparing favourably with best quartile performers. There has been a slight dip in performance in terms of achieving targets; improvement from last year and the number of indicators within worst quartile but it is anticipated that this should show improvement by the year end. It must be noted that some indicators do not show a true reflection of their overall performance due to the frequency of reporting but this is resolved in the year end reported figures.

## Corporate Performance Clinics

Corporate Performance Clinics continue to be held each quarter and prove to be very effective. The Audit Commission has also acknowledged that the Clinics add value to data use and reporting and suggest it would be beneficial to continue with them.

The last Clinic held 23 November 2007 principally concentrated on the second quarter performance report; the key 19 Best Value indicators requiring additional focus throughout the year; corporate service standards; the new National Indicator set to be introduced from 2008/09 and data quality issues. The next Clinic is scheduled to take place on 22 February 2008.

## Key 19 Best Value Performance Indicators

A set of 19 key Best Value indicators have been identified from last year's annual performance as requiring additional focus throughout this year. These indicators either: did not achieve target, did not improve, did not show an improvement trend, or were within the worst quartile performers.

The set of 19 indicators are listed in the table below. (Those highlighted in bold were also included in the key 20 indicators monitored last year.)

<b>BVPI</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Why focus?</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>% invoices paid in 30 days</b>	<b>Target not achieved Worst Quartile</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>% council tax collected</b>	<b>Target not achieved No improvement Downward trend Worst Quartile</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>% non domestic rates due</b>	<b>Target not achieved Worst Quartile</b>
11a	Percentage of top-paid 5% of staff who are women	Target not achieved No improvement Downward trend
<b>12</b>	<b>No days lost as a result of sickness</b>	<b>Worst Quartile</b>
<b>64</b>	<b>Number unfit private dwellings returned into occupation</b>	<b>No improvement Downward trend Worst quartile</b>
66a	Rent collected by the local authority as a proportion of rents owned on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) dwellings	Target not achieved No improvement Downward trend
66d	Percentage of local authority tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears	Worst quartile
<b>184a</b>	<b>% non decent homes</b>	<b>Target not achieved No improvement Worst Quartile</b>
<b>184b</b>	<b>% proportion of non decent homes</b>	<b>Target not achieved Worst Quartile</b>
<b>212</b>	<b>Average time to re-let homes</b>	<b>Target not achieved No improvement Downward trend</b>
202	The number of people sleeping rough on a single night within the area of the authority	No improvement Downward trend Worst quartile
76c	The number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit fraud investigations carried out by the Local	Target not achieved No improvement Downward trend

<b>BVPI</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Why focus?</b>
	Authority per year, per 1,000 caseload	
78a	The average processing time taken for all new Housing and Council Tax Benefit claims submitted to the Local Authority, for which the date of decision is within the financial year being reported	Target not achieved No improvement Downward trend
82a(ii)	Total tonnage of household waste arisings sent by the Authority for recycling	Worst quartile
199b	The percentage of relevant land and highways from which unacceptable levels of graffiti are visible	Target not achieved No improvement Downward trend Worst quartile
200b	Has the local planning authority met the milestones which the current Local Development Scheme sets out?	Target not achieved No improvement Downward trend
127a	Violent crime per 1,000 population in the Local Authority area	Target not achieved No improvement Downward trend
174	The number of racial incidents reported to the Local Authority, and subsequently recorded, per 100,000 population	Target not achieved No improvement Downward trend

Performance against the 19 key indicators is as follows (comparisons against last quarter outturn figures are shown in brackets):

59% (56%) have achieved target  
41% (44%) have failed to meet targets  
36% (50%) show an improvement  
64% (50%) have failed to improve  
36% (50%) direction of travel shows an improvement trend  
36% (30%) direction of travel shows a declining trend  
20% (11%) show best quartile performance  
60% (44%) show worst quartile performance

Figures show improved performance over the third quarter of this year in terms of achieved targets and best quartile performers. These indicators still, however, require clear focus and monitoring against improvement.

## **2.2 Detailed performance Information**

Detailed performance information to support the above figures is available on the attached spreadsheet. This information will be used for the purpose of the next Performance Clinic.

## **2.3 Learning and remedial action**

Remedial measures to improve performance are agreed as part of the action planning and Performance Clinic work.

We continue to drive performance improvement through ensuring that:

- people are clear as to what has to be achieved;
- an action plan to deliver is in place;
- procedures are changed to provide capacity to improve; and
- careful monitoring of measures are in place.



## **3. Local Performance Indicators**

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### **3.1 Summary**

We continue to measure the local performance indicators which were developed for 2006/2007. These are not statutory indicators, but indicators that show our performance in other areas of service provision that are of local, rather than national, interest. This year there are 34 local performance indicators. These equate to 37 individual returns. Performance for the local performance indicators is as follows (comparisons against last quarter outturn figures are shown in brackets):

56% (53%) have achieved target

44% (47%) are behind target

61% (61%) have shown an improvement from last year

39% (39%) have failed to improve from last year

56% (53%) show an improvement against same period last year

44% (47%) have failed to improve against same period last year

Figures show improved performance over the third quarter of this year in terms of achieved target and improvement trend.

### **3.2 Detailed Performance Information**

Detailed performance information to support the above figures is available on the attached spreadsheet.

### **3.3 Learning and Remedial Action**

Remedial measures to improve performance are agreed as part of the action planning. We will continue to work to refine these indicators.

## **4. Financial Monitoring Position**

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The mid year financial monitoring report was considered by the Executive in December. Progress of financial performance will be reported in the next corporate performance report.

## 5. Risk Management

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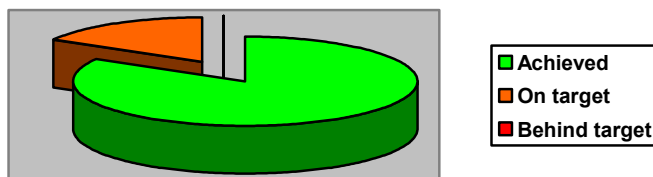
### 5.1. Summary

Implementation of the Corporate Risk Management Strategy for 2007-08 comprises 24 key actions which include the following achievements within the current period:

- Environmental Risk Review
- Annual Service Planning & Risk
- Support to Stock Transfer Insurance

The delivery of the strategy continues with 15 of the 18 actions due to date completed and the remaining 3 on target to complete to timescale.

Progress on the Strategy is therefore as follows:



The Corporate Plan set out 20 Key Strategic risks and it is considered that these have been effectively managed over the current year. The Strategic Risk Profile was updated for the current Corporate Plan and a more comprehensive review is due to be undertaken later in 2007-08 alongside the review of priorities and development of the transition plan.

### 5.2 Learning and remedial action

The council has committed to re-assess its key strategic risks as a result of its learning and this has been identified within the corporate planning cycle. Strategic risks will be assessed as part of the process of the adoption of the Transition Plan. Risk management will also be further embedded through the next round of service planning and key decision making. Progress is good in terms of the implementation of the strategy and no remedial action is considered necessary.

## 6. Human Resources

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### 6.1 Summary

At the end of the period the council employed 542 staff. Staff turnover for the year was 12%. Significant progress is being made;

- Staff sickness was an average of 11.7 days per staff member for the quarter, which can be broken down as follows;

<u>Authority total:</u>	11.7 days average 6.7 days (long term) 5.1 days (short term/occasional)
<u>Directorates:</u>	
Resources	8.6 days average 3.1 days (long term) 5.4 days (short term/occasional)
Development	11.8 days average 6.4 days (long term) 5.4 days (short term/occasional)
Community	15.8 days average 10.2 days (long term) 5.5 days (short term/occasional)
CE/ACE Teams	8.9 days average 5.3 days (long term) 3.5 days (short term/ occasional)

A total of 164 employees achieved 100% Attendance for 2006/07.

- 7 employee suggestions were made through the employee scheme, over the period.
- The authority took part in Investors in People assessment in September 2007 and has successfully been awarded the IIP accreditation.
- The Councils Organisational Development Programme for 2007 “Rising Stars” is underway.
- 360 degree appraisals have now been concluded for Service Team Managers, the Council’s Corporate Management Team and for Executive members.
- The Council’s Organisational Development Strategy was on target.

- The Employee survey 2007 was issued to staff in September 2007 and we are currently awaiting the full report.
- TUPE transfer of employees to Cestria Community Housing Association was in the final stages.
- Service Team Managers have taken part in 360 degree appraisal and received personal coaching and group development
- Single Status, part 2 has been addressed and concluded.
- New Policies on Home-working and Managing Organisational Change, including policies on Handling Re-structures, Redundancy, Retirement and Redeployment were approved
- The Organisational Development Strategy is being implemented and actions are 100% on target.
- The Corporate Workforce Development Plan is being implemented
- Guidance on Succession Planning was developed, approved and embedded
- Workforce development planning was integrated into service planning and service team workforce development plans produced and approved for all service teams.
- A corporate Training and Development Plan was developed and is currently being implemented
- A corporate end of year training and development evaluation report was considered by the Council's Corporate Management Team with a view to evaluating the cost benefit analysis of corporate training undertaken.
- Action plans have been developed for performance indicators in relation to equalities and diversity
- All action plans on target.

## **6.2 Learning and remedial action**

Significant progress is being made in terms of HR performance. All action plans are on target. Progress has been made in this quarter in improving sickness performance indicators. An action plan has been agreed to address this and this has been addressed as part of the performance clinic work. The Team's Service Plan is also on target. Action Plans will be developed where improvement is not being achieved.

The Organisational Development Programme has been significantly progressed and learning from this has been built in the Corporate Training Plan and Learning Strategy. In particular 11 Action learning Sets concluded work on a range of topics to meet the councils priorities in the Corporate Plan and the Improvement and Recovery Plan. This approach will take place once again during 2007/2008 as part of the next organisational development programme. Not only will services improve as a result of implementing recommendations but the learning can be applied to action learning set development in the future.

In addition a programme of CPI (continuous process improvement) projects were also undertaken and completed during the year. These resulted in both measurable outcomes organisationally and individually for those involved and increased learning and development. Similar projects and learning will take place again as part of the Organisational Development Programme for 2007/08.

# 7. Equality and Diversity Position Statement

## 7.1 Summary

The revised Diversity Impact Assessment methodology is now being implemented by Service Team Managers as part of the service planning process. Completed DIA timetables will be submitted to EDWG in February to aid scheduling of assessment monitoring and so that relevant consultation can be co-ordinated.

Local Government Review will impact in the following ways:

- The Corporate Equality Plan will not be revised in January, but will remain unchanged. Progress will continue to be monitored quarterly at Equality and Diversity Working Group. Checks will be made to ensure that requirements of the revised Equality Standard for Local Government are being met. A report will be submitted to Council in January setting out this position, and providing information so Members can be assured of our continued compliance.
- Although it is anticipated that the Authority will be meeting the requirements of Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, external validation will not be sought, and therefore we will not be able to declare our Level 3 target at the end of March.

The Equality and Diversity Working Group is now meeting quarterly rather than monthly. It will continue to monitor progress and performance, but has determined to focus on key events over the next 15 months, covering all 6 strands of the equality agenda.

## Performance

*Corporate Equality Plan actions:*

	<b>Number of actions</b>	<b>% completed</b>	<b>% on target</b>	<b>% behind target</b>
Corporate Equality Plan	115	84% (82%)	16% (18%)	0%
Equality Scheme	53	79% (58%)	21% (42%)	0%
Total	168	83% (73%)	17% (37%)	0%

*Equality & Diversity Working Group work programme:*

At the November meeting of EDWG, it was agreed to draw a line under the existing work programme and start afresh in the New Year with a new programme that reflects the group's objectives for the next 15 months.

## **7.2 Learning and remedial action**

Following a review of the Equality and Diversity Working Group's effectiveness, in November it was agreed to move to quarterly meetings. Monitoring and performance management would still take place, but the group agreed to focus on a series of events over the next 15 months that would relate to all 6 strands of the equality agenda. This will be done on a task group basis, and the first 2 events will be:

- ▶ February: LGBT history month – a number of different activities are planned
  
- ▶ April: It's a Knockout – a repeat of the event undertaken by an Action Learning Set in September 2006. There will be mixed participation – those with learning disability, physical disability and able bodied.



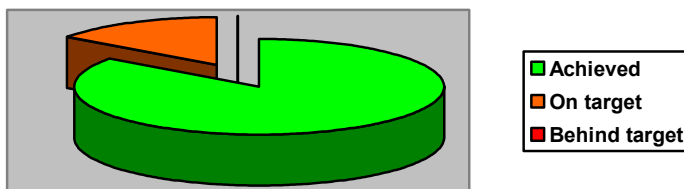
## 8. IRP Position Statement

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### 8.1 Summary

The Council is now out of intervention, and a decision made to draw a line under Improvement and Recovery Plan (2). The remaining objectives to be achieved are about embedding good working practice and it is felt that this will be evidenced in the quarterly performance management report. A new, shorter Improvement Plan has been agreed, and this will be monitored through Programme Management Board. This is focused on the new council priority of People and Place, and will cover the period up to 31 March 2009 when the new unitary authority comes into being. Although the new Improvement Plan has a limited timeframe, it is extremely important that the council continues to ensure improving services for the community during that time.

At the end of December, final performance on IRP 2 was: of the 137 key actions 85% (85%) had been achieved, 15% (15%) remain on target, 0% (0%) were behind target.



### 8.2 Learning and remedial action

The implementation of 2 Improvement and Recovery Plans has led to an enormous amount of learning for both individuals and the organization as a whole, culminating in the 'good' CPA result. This should place people in a stronger position in terms of finding roles in the new authority.



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# **Chester-le-Street District Council**

## **Corporate Performance**

### **April 2007 – December 2007**

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## **9. Modernisation Project Team Progress**

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### **9.1 Summary**

The Modernisation Project Team have shifted its emphasis from priority shared outcome implementation to electronic service delivery take up, implementation of the authority's ICT Strategy and continued web site improvement.

Throughout the year, targets and action plans for electronic service take up have been monitored with all service teams.

In the third quarter of 2007, the Modernisation Team has continued to make progress on a number of projects; including further development of the County-wide CRM System with environmental service requests now built into the system. Both the E-Democracy System and the new Land and Property Asset Management System are now in use, with further work planned for 2008. The Modernisation Team have been working with the Revenues and Benefits service to seamlessly transfer completed online application forms into the service teams Document Management system ready for processing by benefits staff. The Modernisation Team have also been working with Cestria Community Housing to set up their new ICT infrastructure.

The council website continues to be developed and between October to December 2007 the authority saw 32,553 visitors to the website. Despite a reduction of visitors in December, this is a slight increase from the previous quarter of 31,504 visitors.

The Modernisation Team have continued to monitor the take up of electronic services in 2007. Table A shows the take up for the following key electronic

services for the calendar year 2007, comparing the target for take up against the actual take up.

Table A

Electronic Service	Actual Take Up for 2007	Target Take Up for 2007
Change of Address notifications	55	52
Electronic billing of Council Tax and Business Rate Bills	20	26
Council Tax Direct Debit transactions	131093	146288
Business Rate Direct Debit transactions	5033	5000
Swipe-card Council Tax transactions	55539	30000
Benefit fraud referrals via website	8	12
Benefit fraud referrals via Text Message	5	8
Benefit take up enquiry via Text Message	0	8
Mobile benefit assessments	158	8
Online service accounts approved	110	150
Online service requests received via website	25	300
Percentage of planning applications received via website	25%	25%
Job applications received electronically	110	100
Job enquiries made via website	25	200
Percentage of Building Control applications received via website	5%	5%
Number of visitors to the council website	129139	123708
Number of self service payments made via the website	1463	1100
Number of payments made over telephone	9565	7250
Number of self service bookings made for leisure facilities via the council website.	781	-

No major electronic service projects are planned in 2008 in light of the forthcoming new unitary council. The work of the Modernisation Team has now been completed, the team will however continue to monitor the take up of electronic service into 2008.

## 9.2 Background to progress

The Modernisation Project Team has continued to put in place projects that help to underpin electronic service delivery.

Between October and December 2007 the Modernisation Team has made further progress with the following projects:-

- a) CRM System – Work continues with the County Durham E-Government Partnership. A number of environmental service requests are now recorded in the CRM system; including Bulky Collections, White Goods, Garden Waste, and Rechargeables. A new facility is still planned to enable service requests made from the council website to be seamlessly transferred into the CRM system for action by council staff.
- b) Although the ICT service has not been selected to be the long-term ICT provider for Cestria Community Housing, it will support the Housing Service and Cestria Community Housing for a transitional period until new arrangements are finalised with the association's new ICT provider.
- c) The authority continues to work on the new standard (BS 7666) for sending land and property address data to the National Hub for Land and Property information. The authority continues to work towards the deadline of 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2008 to meet compliance with the new standard.
- d) The Ward Map for members on the Intranet has been extended to include the new Neighbourhood Profiles.
- e) The telephone system has been extended to incorporate a Contact Centre approach to call handing. This allows the authority to identify periods for service teams where call volumes are high and can help managers to identify busy periods where more resource should be allocated to deal with calls more effectively.
- f) The E-Democracy System is now in use and allows democratic staff to handle papers for council meetings. Development of the system will continue to allow internal officers to submit reports and allow council reports to be published on the council Intranet and website.
- g) E-Tendering – As part of the work of the Procurement Strategy Network, the authority is planning to implement a new E-Tendering System. A review is currently being undertaken to decide whether the authority will implement this product in consideration of the delays to implementation, local government review and the benefits that can be achieved before a new unitary is formed.

- h) The Modernisation Team has sent surveys to members in December 2007 to elicit members ICT needs.
- i) A new design for the Intranet has been implemented and the council website continues to be maintained. Recent work on the website includes new pages for the Local Development Framework.
- j) The Modernisation Team have supported the Revenues and Benefits service to implement two new service improvements; a new reporting system to provide more management information for the service and introducing a facility to seamlessly transfer benefit application forms completed on the council website into the service teams document management system, ready for processing by benefits staff.

### **9.3 Learning and remedial action**

Although, the work of the Modernisation Team has now been completed, the authority will continue to work on existing electronic service projects, will continue to seek continual improvement to the council website and Intranet and will monitor the take up of electronic services into 2008.

The work of the Modernisation Project Team and the lessons learned will be taken forward into 2008 and the new unitary council.

## **10. Audit Feedback & Summary**

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### **10.1 Summary**

The formal CPA Judgement was received in June and was reported in the last quarterly report. Chester-le-Street has moved from a 'poor' to a 'good' council.

There was only one key Audit Commission Report published during the second quarter. This was the result of the Pilot Benefits Inspection.

Earlier this year the Benefits Team volunteered to take part in an Audit Commission Pilot to help develop a new Inspection Framework for the Benefits Service. The learning from the pilot is intended to establish a completely new inspection regime following the merger of the former Benefits Fraud Inspectorate's merger with the Audit Commission.

The process is a 'harder test' based on customer outcomes rather than the previously process orientated performance standards approach. An inspection was undertaken in June and an Inspection report was issued in August. The Inspectors found that the service was now a 'good' service with 'promising prospects for improvement'. This was the best result out of all the pilots. We unofficially now have a better service than the likes of Bradford and Tower Hamlets.

This is another excellent result for the council and shows how much progress the benefits team has made. They were labeled a poor service in 2004.

In October the council was successful in gaining the Investors in People Accreditation. This is a significant success and proves how well the council supports and develops its workforce in delivering its services.

The only audit Report to be received in the third quarter was confirmation that the Best Value Performance Plan complied with the relevant legislation.

### **10.2 Learning and remedial action**

The council has learned much from the CPA and Pilot experiences and service improvement has been undertaken as a result. Most importantly the council volunteered for both inspections. Indeed Investors in People is a voluntary accreditation and this proves that the council is open to external scrutiny and evaluation.

# 11. Compliments, comments and complaints Analysis

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## 11.1 Summary

Throughout 2007-2008 the Council continues to focus upon embedding the culture of handling and responding to complaints in a timely and positive manner. Complaints should be seen as an opportunity for feedback from customers and a way to influence the way we deliver services in the future. In addition, with effect from July 2007, the e-govt partnership CRM will be used for the control of complaints across the Council and we would expect this to enhance performance once time is given for it to bed in.

### Total Complaints

The following statistics represent the information received for the period April 2007 – September 2007. Figures for the same period last year are indicated in brackets.

209 (261) formal complaints were received by the Council.

25 % (58 %) were considered to be justified

75 % (42 %) were considered to be unjustified

9 (10) Ombudsman complaints were received during the period.

No (2) complaints were upheld by the Ombudsman

155 (154) compliments/letters of thanks were registered during the period.

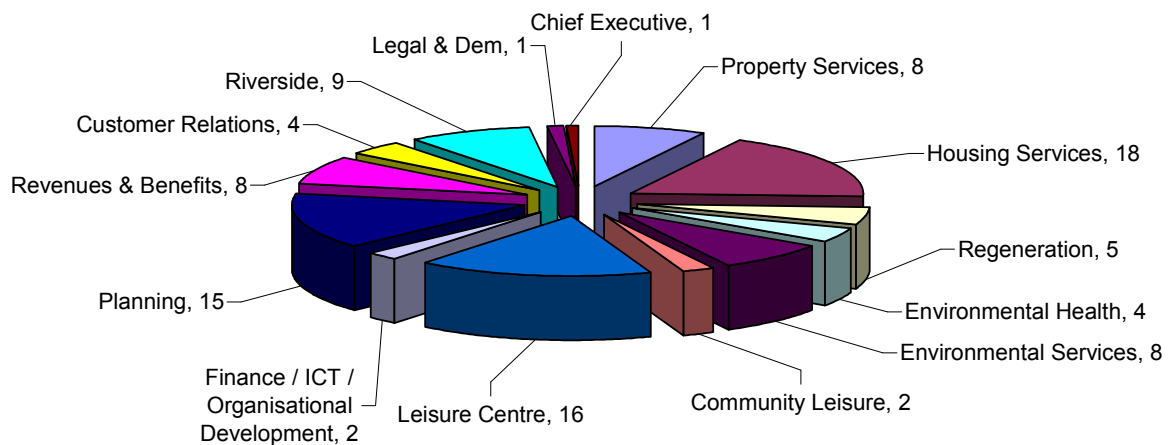
## 11.2 Formal Complaints April 2007 – December 2007

A total of 209 (187) formal complaints were submitted in the period

### Nature of Complaints – Service Teams

- 8 % (19 %) related to the Revenue and Benefits service
- 8 % (20 %) related to the Environmental Services
- 8 % (25 %) related to the Property Services
- 18 % (13 %) related to Housing Services
- 27 % (26 %) related to the Leisure Services
- 15 % (5 %) related to Planning Services
- 5 % (4 %) related to Regeneration
- 4 % (2 %) related to Environmental Health Services
- 4 % (2 %) related to Customer Relations
- 3 % (2 %) related to Finance / ICT & Organisational Development

% of complaints received by Service Area



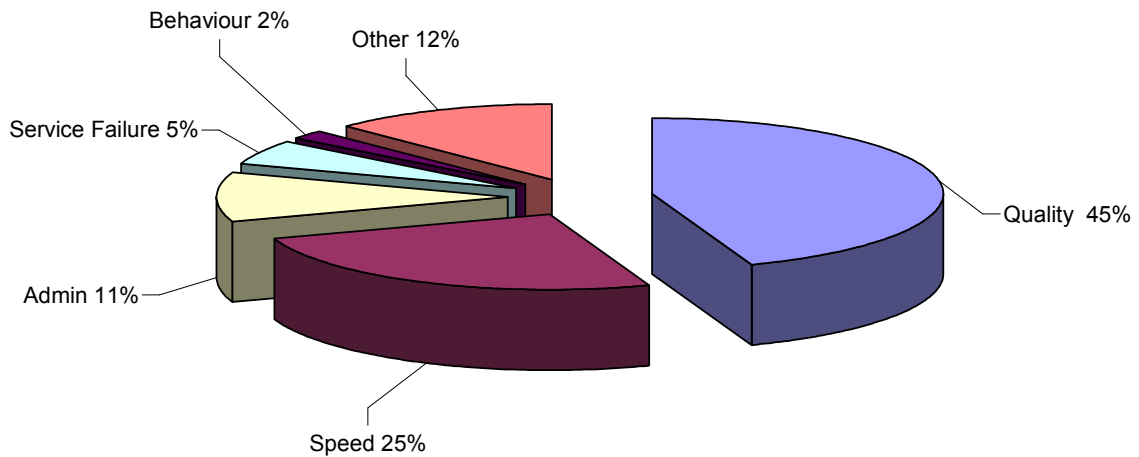
Property Services	Housing Services	Regeneration
Environmental Health	Environmental Services	Community Leisure
Leisure Centre	Finance / ICT / Organisational Development	Planning
Revenues & Benefits	Customer Relations	Riverside
Legal & Dem	Chief Executive	



## Nature of Complaints – Complaint Types

- 45 % (67 %) were in respect of *quality of service*
- 11 % (9 %) were in respect of *administration of services*
- 2 % (7 %) was in respect of *behaviour of staff*
- 5 % (0%) were in respect of *service failure*
- 25 % (9 %) were in respect of the *speed of service provided*
- 12 % (8 %) were in respect of other reasons

Nature of complaint 2007/2008

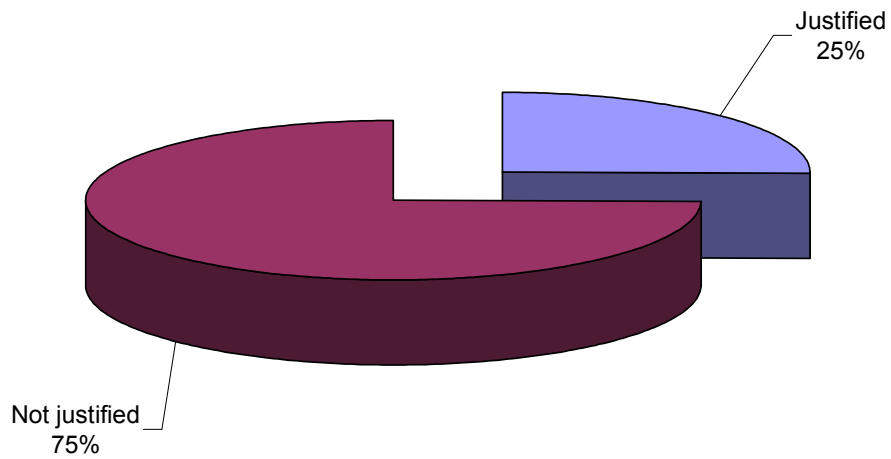


**Outcome**

25 % (43 %) were considered to be justified

75 % (57 %) were considered to be unjustified

**Proportion justified / unjustified complaints 2007/2008**



### 11.3 Ombudsman Complaints April 2007 – December 2007

9 (10) Ombudsman complaints were received during the period.

No (2) complaints were upheld by the Ombudsman

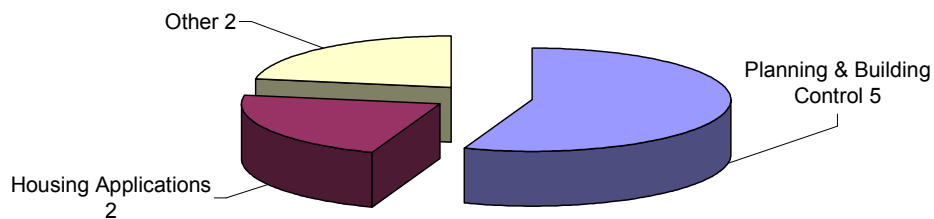
#### Nature of Complaints

56% related to planning services

22% related to housing services

22% related to other areas

Ombudsman by classification 2007 / 2008

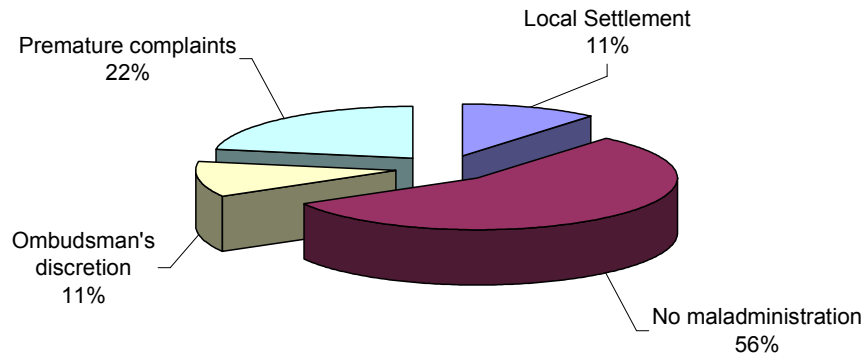


#### Outcome

The Ombudsman issued 6 decision letters in the period:

Complaints upheld	0%
Local settlement	11%
No or insufficient evidence of maladministration	56%
Ombudsman Discretion	11%
Outside jurisdiction	0%
Premature complaints	22%

### Ombudsman decisions 2007 /2008



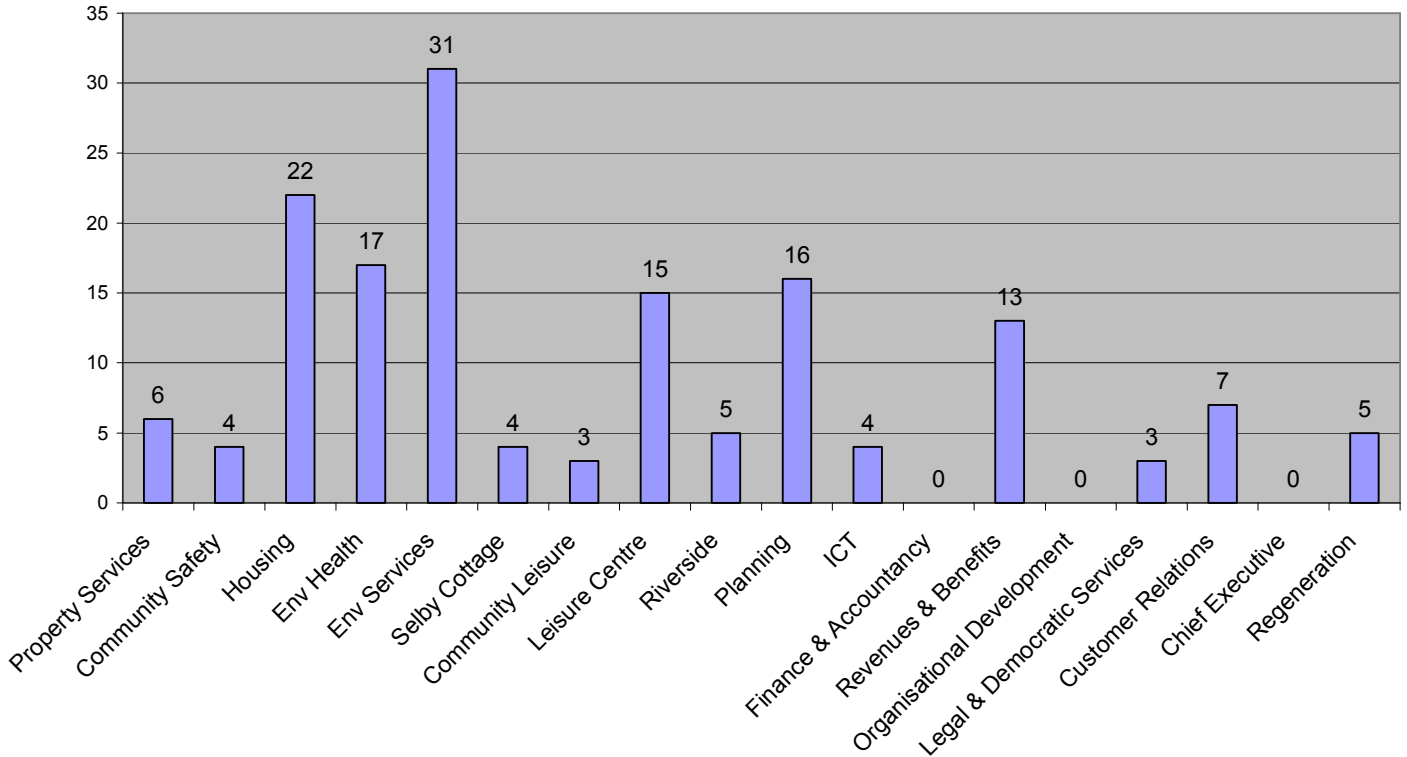
#### 11.4 Compliments April 2007 – December 2007

155 (154) compliments/letters of thanks were registered during the period.

##### Nature of Compliments

- 13 related to the revenue & benefits service
- 31 related to the environmental services
- 22 related to housing services
- 27 related to the leisure services
- 16 related to planning services
- 17 related to environmental health services
- 5 related to regeneration
- 7 related to customer relations
- 6 related to property services
- 4 related to resources / ICT / organisational development
- 7 related to council / combined services

### Compliments Received by Teams April - December 2007



## 11.5 Other Performance Information

New monitoring processes were put in place last year and the following results can be identified:

- 84 % of complaints were responded to in 10 days (target 90%)
- 79 % MP queries were responded to in 10 days (target 90%)
- 98 % Freedom of information enquiries were responded to in 20 working days (target 100%)
- 89 % of e-mail enquiries were responded to within 24 hours (target 100%)

## 11.6 Learning and remedial action

It has become clear over the year that the analysis of complaints at service level is necessary in order that individual services can learn from complaints and share this learning across the organisation. Proposals have been built into the Learning Strategy to embed this throughout the organization.

A further analysis of results shows that:

- The number of complaints received compared to the same period last year has reduced by 20% – 209 compared with 261
- Most complaints related to Leisure Services, Planning and Housing which combined equate to 60% of all complaints received.
- 45% of complaints related to the quality of service people have received.
- The % of justified complaints has reduced from 43% to 25% when compared to the same period in 2006/2007.
- Targets set to respond to a range of complaints and enquiries have not been met throughout the year, however there have been clear signs of improvement compared to the same quarter in 2006/2007, namely an overall 11% increase in MP enquiries dealt with in target time and also overall handling of complaints within target time has increased by 2% although remains unacceptable and needs to improve in terms of meeting our service standard targets. This issue will be further addressed as part of the 2007 performance clinics. In addition a number of other initiatives will take place in 2007 – 2008, namely:-
  - A wholesale review of complaints procedures and processes as part of the Council's Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) project between December 2007 and May 2008.

## 12. Partnerships Progress

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### 12.1 Summary

As part of the council's Improvement and Recovery Plan there were clear actions to consider and improve the effectiveness of existing partnerships. To add weight for the need of this the Audit Report, identified in Section 10 (page 20), suggested that the council was underperforming in this area. Whilst the council was therefore already aware of this there was a clear need to make change.

The council has responded by approving a Partnership Strategy in November 2006 with a detailed Action Plan. The council has commissioned an electronic Partnership 'toolkit' through the North East Centre of Excellence and provided training to Corporate Support Team. The Chief Executive has been selected as the council's Partnership Champion and the Portfolio holder for Community Engagement and Partnerships is the Member Champion.

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

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

Programme Management Board is monitoring implementation of this toolkit.

The review of our partnerships has a significant impact on the development of a single priority of 'people and place'. An assessment of the potential gaps in performance of partnerships and what we can do in the council's remaining lifetime to secure sustainable change is part of ongoing work to develop the new priority. Progress will be reported here in due course.

### 12.2 Learning and Remedial Action

It is too early to measure improvement as a result of the introduction of the Strategy. Similarly it is too early to gain any learning from our experiences and with the use of the toolkit. We have found that some partners are reluctant to engage in our effectiveness activity and we will need to find ways of convincing partner organizations of mutual benefits. Clearly we need to ensure that both the strategy works for the council and meets our objectives and addresses the

previous findings of the Audit Commission. Programme Management Board will capture such learning and will consider remedial action against strategy implementation underperformance. The Strategy will be reviewed as part of the process agreed by Executive for reviewing strategies in the light of local government re-organisation.



## 13. Data Quality Progress

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### 13.1 Summary

The following progress has been made in respect of the implementation of the Data Quality Policy since April 2007:

- The adoption of the Strategy and action plan;
- Data quality risks, commitment and proposals built into Corporate plan;
- Data Quality Policy and Strategy communicated to customers through the Internet;
- Data Quality Policy and Strategy communicated to staff and members through the Intranet;
- Data Quality built into Performance Management Handbook and communicated to staff;
- Data Quality considered as part of the Performance Management Review;
- Data quality commitment incorporated as a feature of Corporate Performance Reports and within performance clinics:
- Decisions made not to publish information because data quality was not proved e.g. a decision not to publish BV 166 quarterly statistics because the information as to performance was not dependable, and now resolved.
- Data Quality included in Corporate Training Plan as part of Performance Management training.
- Intranet site developed
- Corporate Guidelines developed and implemented
- Corporate Audit devised and built into intranet, will identify gaps to assist strategy development
- Further awareness undertaken as a result and data quality is communicated more clearly now. Communications plan developed and on intranet
- Data Quality Responsibility Register developed and significantly completed
- Programme Management Board taking stronger role on monitoring of data Quality
- Improved sign off with LPI's following same process as BVPI's
- Data quality incorporated into all corporate reports and built into Report Writing Protocol
- Developed revised Service Plan Guidance
- Staff and Managers Audit undertaken
- Training presentation provided to all staff
- Data Quality Training provided as part of Members Induction programme
- Data quality built into Performance Clinics
- A review of the Data Quality Strategy Action Plan and the Data Quality Policy is underway

The Audit Commission carried out an audit of Data Quality Arrangements and their conclusions will be identified in the next Corporate Performance Report.

There are no issues of Data Quality failures or exceptions to be reported this quarter.

### **13.2 Learning and remedial action**

Significant progress has been made in respect of the implementation of the Data Quality Strategy largely around corporate awareness.

As a result of the audit we now have a good understanding of where there are potential weaknesses in the Authority and will be able to address these in the future.

No remedial action is required as part of any Data Quality failures or exceptions during the current quarter.

# 14. Local Government Reorganisation Progress

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## 14.1 Summary

In September 2007 a project team was set up to help manage the council's contributions potential transition to a new single unitary authority. The team is led by the Director of Corporate Services and based around the council's Performance and Improvement Team. It also includes key Human Resources, communications, a representative for the trade unions and support staff. So far it has:

- Developed and agreed terms of reference and principles;
- Developed an Intranet site to allow access to key documents and information for staff and members;
- Developed an Information Request Register and responded to initial data requests where appropriate;
- Developed a communications plan; and
- Published three newsletters to staff and Members
- Engaged in transitional arrangements.

The team will be commencing development of a project plan as soon as there is clarity on the future following decisions on judicial review.

The council has re-organised its senior management to assist it in developing the capacity within the organisation to deliver business as usual while contributing to the transition to the new organization. At the same time the council has commenced developing a transitional plan which will help it focus on a single priority of 'people in place' through to March 2009.

## 14.2 Learning and remedial action

Significant progress has been made in establishing a team to assist the council positively contributing to the smooth transition to a new unitary authority.

# 15. Overall Performance

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## 15.1 Summary of Overall Performance

While there is some disappointing performance on BVPI's generally there remains to be a positive direction of travel overall:

- The corporate plan proposals and priorities are under review through the development of a Transition Plan which will be reported to council for adoption in March;
- While 57% of indicators have achieved targets less are showing improvement, slightly less show top quartile information and more show bottom quartile. However it is hoped that the year end figures will show a better reflection of achievement;
- In terms of the 19 key indicators in need of improvement, 59% have seen targets achieved, 36% have improved, 36% show an improving trend and there are now more in top quartile and less in bottom quartile;
- Local indicators continue to show performance improvement as 51% have improved last year;
- 75% of actions in the Risk Strategy have been completed and work has commenced on the remaining 25%, strategic risks will be re-assessed as a result of the adoption of the emerging Transition Plan;
- Sickness levels within the council have started to improve and there is strong HR performance including the achievement of Investors in People. Staff turnover is high for the first time this year with a 12% turnover rate being recorded;
- There are no actions behind target in the Equality Plan action plan;
- It has been agreed that the work of the Modernisation Team has been achieved and the Team no longer meets;
- The Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP2) has been drawn to a close following the council officially coming out of intervention. This has been replaced by an Improvement plan which will be accommodated in the Transition Plan;
- There have been no Audit Commission reports in the last quarter although the IIP accreditation proves the progress the council has made in supporting and developing its people;
- There have been significantly less complaints this year than last (209 compared with 261 this time last year) and the proportion of compliments, 1 compliment for every 1.3 complaints, is improving. Only 25% of complaints were considered justified compared to over 40% this time last year;
- Response times to corporate standards remain cause for concern but continue to improve overall;

- Significant progress has been made on Data Quality and it is anticipated that a good Audit Commission Data Quality audit will be received before the end of the year and be reflected in the Annual Audit letter and Direction of Travel Statement; and
- Local Government Reorganisation has begun to impact on the work of the council.

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