



**LEEDS**  
CITY COUNCIL

**COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE  
ASSESSMENT**

**SELF ASSESSMENT SUBMISSION**

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## SECTION 1 - SETTING THE SCENE

### Leeds – a successful city

1. Leeds has been one of the most successful cities in the UK over the last ten years, transforming its image from that of an industrial northern town to an exciting city at the forefront of e commerce, finance and retailing. The true measure of its success is found in the contrast with so many cities and towns outside the south east – Leeds has bucked the trend, attracting the most dynamic elements of the British economy, in turn bringing prosperity and employment.
2. The success of the city is evident to anyone who visits. The quality of shopping, the range of bars, restaurants and clubs, has created a tremendous vibrancy within the city. Underneath this surface lie hard facts of economic strength: 38,000 net additional jobs created between 1996 and 2000; £1.8bn invested in the city between 1992-2001, with £700m under construction and an additional £2.7bn in the pipeline. From a position of nearly 10% unemployment a decade ago, unemployment today stands at 3%.
3. Why has Leeds been such a success? There is no single factor or single body responsible but Leeds City Council has been pivotal in creating the conditions in which the city has thrived. The Council's long-sighted attitude towards working with the business sector and investing in the city has paid huge dividends, as reflected in the views of Graham Hall, Chair of Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Development Agency:

*"Leeds' enormous growth over the past decade is by no means an accident, believe me, it's by design. The business focused Council leadership and its long series of innovative property deals are the basis of the thriving city you see today. It's an approach I'd like to see adopted in as many as possible of the disadvantaged areas across the region to get their economies moving forward."*

4. The Council's record of community leadership extends back over many years. Anticipating the development of LSP's by a decade, the Council established the Leeds Initiative in 1990, bringing together public, private and community interests from across the city.
5. The Council has invested wisely in developing the property and transport infrastructure. The recent development of Millennium Square stands as an example of how the Authority has enriched the physical appearance of the city and provided a new venue for entertainment and the arts, whilst serving to attract private investment in the surrounding area. The Council's transportation policies have meant that, despite the city's success, traffic is travelling more freely than it did three years ago, with a reduction (albeit slight) in the percentage using cars. The development of the £500m Supertram symbolises the Authority's approach to delivering major schemes with economic and social benefits in partnership.
6. Beyond direct investment, the Council has promoted regeneration through careful purchase and disposal of assets and a positive attitude towards development. The redevelopment of the waterside is only one example of how the authority has facilitated growth. Whilst the most obvious improvements to the visitor are in the centre, work has taken place throughout the city. Two of the most exciting on going projects relate to the redevelopment of derelict land in the Aire Valley and the work with the Health Service to regenerate the inner city area of Harehills.
7. An essential part of making Leeds a place in which people want to live, work and invest, is the quality of both its environment and its cultural life. The Council provides vital support to, amongst others, the critically acclaimed Opera North, and one of the most vibrant provincial theatres in the West Yorkshire Playhouse. The Council also hosts its own innovative events programme, ranging from Opera in the Park to major rock concerts, drawing thousands of Leeds residents and visitors each year. The Council maintains the most extensive range of parkland in the country, which a successful bid for £8.5m from the Urban Parks Initiative of the Heritage Lottery Fund, to improve both Roundhay and Kirkstall Parks will further enhance.
8. The speed of the transformation of Leeds is perhaps best summed up in the huge growth of tourism to the city. On the latest figures, tourism grew by 30% in three years, bringing

approximately £648m into the economy. The expansion of top quality hotel and residential accommodation in the city demonstrates the confidence of the private sector in the city's continued success. With a student population of over 45,000, in turn bringing huge economic benefits to the city, Leeds University has repeatedly been the most sought after university in England.

9. With Leeds success comes an increasingly pivotal role in the Region. Over the course of the last decade, the number of in commuters to Leeds has doubled from 36,000 to 72,000. It is predicted that over the next ten years, 40% of the new jobs in the Region will be in Leeds. The Council is stepping up its presence in working on joint interests within the area, and increasingly seeking to work with the core cities to influence the national agenda.
10. If the true measure of a Council is the success or otherwise of its area, then Leeds City Council is unrivalled. However, whilst many have shared in that success, not all have. For this reason, the Council has as its key challenge to ensure that the opportunities that Leeds now presents are available to everyone – this priority is the Council's main focus and at the centre of its key priorities and initiatives.

### **Leeds – the community served by the Council**

11. Leeds is a large area, extending 15 miles east to west and 13 miles north to south, with a population of 727,000. The district consists of a main urban area with a population of approximately 500,000, and an outer ring of small towns and countryside, the majority of which is green belt. The outer towns, such as Wetherby, Otley and Morley have their own distinctive character.
12. In many ways the challenges facing the country as a whole are reflected here, with Leeds acting as a barometer of change. As in the country, concealed within the averages lie wide differences within the city in the most basic areas of education, housing, employment, health and safety from crime.
13. The contrast between inner and outer Leeds is marked. An area with the population the size of a London Borough is characterised by multiple disadvantage. Seven of the inner wards fall within the 10% most deprived in the country, twelve within the bottom 20%. Within the inner city are low levels of educational attainment, poor housing, and high levels of crime. Many of the areas are characterised by low income, with high benefit dependency. One of the most stark contrasts shows that the premature death rate in the inner city is 39% above the national average, whereas in the outer areas it is 11% below.
14. People from an ethnic minority background make up 6% of the population as a whole, with people from a Pakistani, Indian and the Caribbean background forming the largest groups but also with substantial populations from Bangladesh and China. The mix of cultures greatly enriches the city and plays an important part in its appeal as a modern cosmopolitan centre.
15. The ethnic minority population is, however, largely concentrated in a small number of the most deprived wards within the city, characterised by poor owner occupied and rented accommodation. These areas share many of the problems of all the inner city but there are specific issues affecting particular communities whether in education, health or crime. Comparisons of the disturbances in the city last year with those in Oldham and Bradford are misleading – there is little evidence of racial tensions between communities, and, in particular, the far right have played little part in Leeds. Self-evidently, however, the disorder marks the disaffection, particularly of young men, in the Asian community, a challenge to which the Council and the city must respond in their approach to community cohesion.

### **Leeds – The Modernised Council**

16. Leeds City Council has 99 Members serving 33 wards. Its current political balance is 61 Labour, 19 Liberal Democrat, 16 Conservative, 2 Green, with one seat vacant.

17. The Council moved very early to establish a modernised structure. In May 1999, the Council dispensed with its 19 committees and 30 sub committees, moving to a single Executive Board, with a small number of regulatory committees, together with three scrutiny boards. The arrangements have undergone refinement, with a strengthening of the Scrutiny Board arrangements, expanding to six boards, with two chaired by members of the opposition. The Authority also put in place arrangements to support Members undertaking their representative role by establishing 16 Community Involvement Teams, which cover from one to three wards and have delegated budgets.
18. The changes have not been without problems or critics but there have been considerable benefits. The Executive Board is made up of six majority group Members with portfolios and the two leaders of the major opposition parties. The portfolios are: Leader (Corporate, Education Leeds); Deputy Leader (Neighbourhoods and Regeneration); Development and Sustainability; Lifelong Learning and Leisure; Resources and Performance Management; and Social Care.
19. The agendas of the Executive Board concentrate on the key issues facing the Council in a way that was not being achieved through the previous committee system. Whilst in this arena political differences are marked, within the area of Scrutiny, a non partisan culture has developed in which issues are debated far more freely than the previous committee system allowed. During the course of three years of operation, only one minority report has been issued, demonstrating the willingness to find consensus on all sides.
20. With the introduction of the new Constitution, the format of the full Council meeting has been changed. The meetings include new mechanisms through which to hold the Executive to account. Beyond the Council debating and approving the elements of the Policy and Budget Framework, at each Council meeting a portfolio holder provides a statement and is subject to questions. Likewise there is a rolling programme of chairs of Community Involvement Teams reporting to the meeting.
21. The development of the role of ward Members under the new arrangements has been more mixed. As in many councils, Members who were used to serving on a range of committees have at times felt disengaged from policy formation and unsure of their new role. The development of the Community Involvement Teams (CITs) has, however, provided a focus for activities, resulting for the first time in the development of community plans for each area of the city, setting out its needs and the actions to follow. The Council, however, is keenly aware of the need to improve present systems and is actively seeking to find more effective ways of involving Members at a local level.
22. A key change emerging from the revised political arrangements has been the changed role of officers, with greater delegated responsibilities. Again the changes have not been without critics, but have achieved both a more appropriate balance between the role of officers and Members in operational arrangements and improved the efficiency of the organisation.
23. The officer arrangements<sup>1</sup> remain based upon a fairly traditional departmental structure but corporate management has significantly changed to enable the authority to operate more effectively on a cross cutting basis. A Central Executive Team (CET) is made up of the Chief Executive and two Deputy Chief Executives who exercise corporate leadership and a performance management role in relation to all Directors. CET meet each week on a rotating basis with the Directors who support the portfolios of Cabinet members to ensure that matters are dealt with on a cross cutting basis. The structure of meetings allows for a concentrated debate with appropriate Directors on a related set of issues. Relevant partners also attend these meetings on a regular basis.
24. The Council accepts that the full implications of modernisation have yet to be worked through in the Council. With this in mind, two Directors were seconded in January to draw up proposals

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<sup>1</sup> Officer Structure – see website [www.leeds.gov.uk](http://www.leeds.gov.uk)

which will seek to involve local ward members more extensively and to find ways of integrating services more effectively – the latter aspect will examine the appropriateness of the current officer structure. These issues are picked up in greater detail in section 4.

### Leeds – an exemplar for partnership working

25. Leeds has a strong history of partnership working, first embracing the concept and practicalities of partnership working in the early 1990s and now covering virtually every area of city life. The partnership has flourished, gradually expanding its remit from the renewal of the city centre and the management of regeneration funding, to developing an early Community Strategy, the Vision for Leeds<sup>2</sup>, in 1998. The Leeds Initiative<sup>3</sup> forms an umbrella body. Accredited as a Local Strategic Partnership on 28<sup>th</sup> February, it provides a sense of vision and purpose, as well as providing opportunities for joint planning, joint ventures, lobbying and networking.
26. The Initiative has developed strategy groups, aiming to deliver the daughter strategies from the Vision for Leeds and partnership groups who work to promote the ongoing social and economic development of the city. These include a new multi-sector partnership that has evolved in response to and to support the Leeds' Integrated Cultural Strategy<sup>4</sup>. Work is now underway to develop Vision II, the Community Strategy.

### The challenges facing the Council

27. Having stimulated growth and success, the Council's overarching concern is to address the multiple facets of deprivation within the city. Each of these facets, whether education or housing, has its own challenges but successful regeneration also means tackling them in the round. We are also fully conscious of the need to drive performance improvement and value for money across the board in the basic services upon which all people rely. In meeting these priorities the Council has set organisational challenges which will improve our capacity to deliver, some of which centre on seeing the modernisation project through, whilst other focus on the systems and individuals, both Members and staff, which will help us deliver.
28. The success of the Council over the past number of years, illustrated in its performance against priorities, the award of Beacon Status in two successive years, corporate Investors in People (IiP) accreditation, and recent awards received from the LGC and Chartermark, provide us with confidence that the challenges we face can be met. This view was reflected in the IdEA's comments following its recent revisit.

## SECTION 2 - WHAT IS THE COUNCIL TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

### The Vision for Leeds

29. The Council's policy objectives were largely established as part of the response to the Vision for Leeds, a strategic plan for the city developed by the Leeds Initiative Partnership. The Vision for Leeds process began with a consultation exercise embracing all sectors of the Leeds community, private sector businesses, the voluntary sector and other statutory bodies. All private households were sent a questionnaire of which 10,000 were returned.
30. Much of the concern emerging from the exercise focused on the development of a two-speed city. From this, the Council set down its Mission Statement in the Corporate Plan three years ago, and it remains valid today. It is ***"to bring the benefits of a prosperous, vibrant and attractive city to all the people of Leeds"***. We believe that it is this combined approach of maintaining the prosperity of the area, alongside intense activity to regenerate deprived area, that is not only vital to achieving social justice but the long-term sustainability of the city and its communities.

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<sup>2</sup> The Vision for Leeds: A Strategy for Sustainable Development

<sup>3</sup> The Leeds Initiative Guide – [www.leedsinitiative.org](http://www.leedsinitiative.org)

<sup>4</sup> Integrated Cultural Strategy

## Council priorities 1999-2002

31. The Council's Corporate Plan 1999-2002<sup>5</sup> set down a number of priorities, in both service and organisational areas. The organisational priorities were established as a means to help deliver the priorities and service improvement, with eight core values also established to inform the way the Council operates.
32. The Council's priorities during the first Corporate Plan period were:
- **Best Value** - To secure Best Value by obtaining the most efficient and effective means of delivery to meet the needs of local people.
  - **Community Planning** - To introduce, across the city, a planning process which provides for a co-ordinated approach to meeting the concerns and priorities of local communities.
  - **Democratic Renewal** - To reform the Council's structures and decision-making processes in the interests of efficiency, transparency and accountability.
  - **Regeneration** - To reduce inequality in the city.
  - **Community Safety** - To achieve sustainable reductions in crime and disorder.
  - **Economic Competitiveness** - To play a major role in promoting the economic prosperity of the city and the region.
  - **Educational Attainment** - To raise the level of educational attainment of school age children.
  - **Environmental Management** - To protect and enhance the quality of the natural and built environment.
  - **Health & Community Care (Older People)** - In conjunction with partner organisations, to promote and maintain the health, well being and independence of older people.
  - **Housing Conditions** - To improve the quality of housing in the public and private sectors
  - **Transport** - To encourage greater use of public transport and other sustainable modes of transport.
  - **Employment** - To counter social exclusion by removing barriers to employment and opportunity.
33. The above policy objectives are complemented by the following core values which underpin the delivery of all services of the Council:
- Best Value;
  - Countering poverty and inequality;
  - Equality of opportunity;
  - Good employment practice;
  - Open, responsive and accountable government;
  - Partnership working;
  - Putting the needs of the public first;
  - Sustainable development.
34. The priorities and targets in the Corporate Plan covered a wide range of important issues for the community in Leeds and the targets set were ambitious and wide ranging. Sections 3 and 4 describe what has been achieved.

## Why we established those priorities?

35. The original Corporate Plan drew heavily upon the Vision for Leeds. Community safety and public transport figured particularly high in the consultation, supported by further polling research by the Authority. For example, feeling safe from crime emerged from a survey as an issue that was of high priority but where performance was perceived as poor - 97% felt that it was a priority for action and only 30% agreed that enough action was being taken. Public transport links were perceived in the same light - 87% felt it was a priority, 33% said performance was good.
36. The priorities, however, were not solely formed by consultation but also by the need to align services with government priorities and respond to performance information. In truth there is a very good match between national and local priorities in Leeds. How the government agenda has informed the choice of the Council's priorities is set out within the Corporate Plan in the

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<sup>5</sup> Corporate Plan 1999-2002

introductory section, whilst the key issues raised under each priority show local factors which have led to their choice.

### What happened during the period of the Corporate Plan 1999-2002?

37. The Corporate Plan has not been a static document. Through an annual review process<sup>6</sup> it has been possible to monitor progress against priorities, take account of significant developments, such as best value reviews, consultation through community planning or the citizens panel, or changes in government policy.
38. The first Corporate Plan was a watershed for the Council. Not only has the Council delivered against the majority of issues and targets within the Plan, it moved the Authority on as an organisation. It helped the Council communicate its priorities to all Members, staff, partners and customers and drive forward progress on priorities by providing a reference document for all planning purposes. It helped change the culture of the organisation to one that is based on managing performance at all levels, on action planning to deliver cross cutting issues and on working to deliver the Vision for Leeds. It demonstrated the Council leading by example in resourcing and planning its services to deliver the Vision for Leeds.
39. The Corporate Planning framework, particularly corporate priority action plans and lead member briefs, ensured that there was a sustained focus on delivering against the priorities. They are a regular agenda item on strategic management team meetings and Executive Member meetings, either for discussion and action or update and monitoring. The Corporate Plan provided the framework for the associated three year Financial Plan and informed a resource allocation of approximately £20m to be spent on priorities during the three year period.

### Council priorities for 2002-2005

40. Building on the achievements of the first Corporate Plan, the Council is about to enter a new Corporate Plan period. Lessons have been learnt, and the process to develop the Plan has been much more inclusive. Directors have developed the Plan on the basis of their shared priorities and Cabinet have signed the Plan off as a document for wider consultation with Members (through Scrutiny and Community Involvement Teams), partners (through the Leeds Initiative and with key service delivery partners) and staff (through senior managers in the organisation). The Corporate Plan<sup>7</sup> will be submitted to Full Council, alongside the Best Value Performance Plan, and the Three Year Financial Plan, in June 2002.
41. The Corporate Plan 2002-2005 sets out the following priority areas, all designed to deliver the Mission and 'close the gap', with progress measured against a set of measurable and specific targets:

<b>Vision for Leeds theme</b>	<b>Focus</b>
Creating Better Neighbourhoods and Confident communities	Reducing crime Improving housing conditions Supporting independence among older people
Making the most of people	Secondary performance Engaging young people
Competing in a Global Economy	Investment leverage Unemployment
Integrated Transport	Reducing the percentage of journeys by car
Looking after the environment	Improving the streetscene Improving recycling rates

<sup>6</sup> Corporate Plan 1999-2002: Annual Review March 2000 / Annual Review March 2001

<sup>7</sup> Corporate Plan 2002-2005: Closing the Gap (draft)

42. There is strong continuity between the first and second plan. The service themes are the same but they have been refined using the following principles:
- The priorities have been more explicitly aligned with the Vision themes
  - There is an overarching theme of 'closing the gap'
  - There are fewer, more precise, targets, (often from the LPSA or the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy)<sup>8</sup> which focus on the main challenges
  - The plan is more explicit about organisational development
  - The Corporate Plan is the first part of an overall Council Plan, with the BVPP being the second part
  - There is a clearer relationship to other plans (including personal development plans) ensuring greater coherency and an improved focus.
43. The specific targets chosen by the Council strongly reflect the concerns which have emerged from community consultation, through the community planning process – burglary, the need for positive activities for young people, and an improved street environment. The LPSA<sup>9</sup> has also informed the Corporate Plan priorities, which again selected issues of local importance as well as responding to national Public Service Agreement priorities.
44. The organisational priorities within the new Corporate Plan have also moved on, recognising that there are some areas from the previous plan that have been progressed better than others. The fact that the Corporate Plan still contains organisational issues recognises the value we place on the ongoing development of the organisation. The organisational priorities established are:
- Bringing our core values to life
  - Completing and implementing a fundamental organisational review
  - Improving our leadership capability
  - Addressing equality issues in service delivery and organisationally
  - Delivering electronic government
45. The last of these, in particular, was inadequately represented in the last Corporate Plan. Building on the long standing work within the Authority to develop one stop access<sup>10</sup>, the Council has embarked on a process which will transform the delivery of many Council services, helping the Council become more focussed on the needs of the public. The Council must make itself accessible at the times people require it and via the channels people prefer to use. In taking forward electronic government<sup>11</sup>, the Council will seek to marry the twin objectives of maximising efficiency, whilst combating social exclusion. Installing 500 PCs in libraries by the end of 2002 and connecting all libraries to the People's Network to provide free internet and e-mail access, backed up by supported learning sessions, will help to achieve this. The Council is using a cross cutting Best Value review of Access to Services to drive this challenging agenda work forward.
46. Another feature of the new Corporate Plan is an improvement to the policy planning and performance management framework. The first Corporate Plan helped to direct resources to corporate priorities and problem areas, but the intention will be to do even more in the next three years to have a better integration between financial planning, service planning, risk management and human resource planning. We expect that the Corporate Plan will significantly inform the Vision for Leeds II – the new Community Strategy that will be launched in 2003 and that it will provide a lead for partners to follow in their corporate planning of services to respond to city issues. We will engage partners more in organisational development, so that there will be a closer connection between the way partners work., as signified by their participation in the recent Leadership Conference events.

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<sup>8</sup> Leeds Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy - 2001

<sup>9</sup> Leeds City Council Local Public Service Agreement – December 2001

<sup>10</sup> Customer Services Strategy 1999-2002

<sup>11</sup> Implementing Electronic Government Statement – Leeds City Council – July 2001

## SECTION 3 - HOW HAS THE COUNCIL SET ABOUT DELIVERING ITS PRIORITIES?

### Progress against the organisational objectives for 1999-2002

47. A key element to delivering against the Council's service priorities was making progress against the organisational objectives. The Council has a strong record of achievement against each:
- **Best Value:** the Council has embedded Best Value, refining its approach in the light of what it has learnt. The council has delivered its best value programmes to time, using the reviews as a means of tackling many under performing services (see below).
  - **Democratic Renewal:** the Authority moved swiftly to modernised arrangements.
  - **Community Planning:** the Council fulfilled its objective of establishing community planning across the city, successfully undertaking consultation and producing plans<sup>12</sup> for the 16 areas of the city.
  - **Regeneration:** the Council with its partners has formulated its regeneration strategy, attracted funding, and made real in roads into deprivation (see below).
48. What follows is a description of the other key building blocks the Authority has put in place to deliver its priorities, although the Performance Management Framework is described in section 4. The section is divided between work underway within the Council to build up our own capacity and the work we do with others to meet our priorities.

### Section 3a. Building our own capacity

49. This section cannot do justice to all the supporting frameworks, policies and plans that enable us to deliver our priorities. More details of where these documents can be found are contained in the new Corporate Plan.

### Our financial strategy

50. The Council has a history of strong financial management. The budget is not over-reliant on reserves, which means that we could sustain the current position for at least three years. We have the third lowest Council Tax amongst the metropolitan authorities (Band D £895.99) and have very collection rates (almost 96% in year). There is regular financial control and monitoring at senior officer and Member level, as well as a strong professional links across the Council between departmental and central finance staff.
51. Whilst the links between financial and strategic planning can always be improved there has been substantial progress. Over the course of the last three years, the Council has sought to align its financial strategy with its Corporate Plan, moving to a three year planning cycle for each. The recent White Paper proposals include a requirement for Councils to produce a three year revenue forecast. This Council's first Three Year Financial Plan<sup>13</sup> was published in 1999, with the second currently being formulated to support the new Corporate Plan, covering the period 2002-2005. Despite the fact Leeds has had a lower than average settlement in recent years (last year it was 4.5% compared to 5.3% nationally), SSA budget increases have been passed on to schools, and other Education Services, and we have managed to redirect approximately £20 million of revenue spend to support corporate priorities.
52. The Council also seeks to maximise grant income to the city in order to pursue its priorities and has been successful in all six rounds of SRB funding and Objective 2, bringing in £125m over 6 years. A particular achievement has been to agree the Neighbourhood Renewal Funding Statement with our partners for the first two years of the Fund, which will target resources towards regenerating specific areas of the city. As a further example, the Council has worked with

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<sup>12</sup> Community Plans for each of the 16 CIT areas

<sup>13</sup> Financial Plan 1999-2002

its partners to attract £9.5m to fund community safety schemes over the course of the past three years.

53. During 2002-03 a number of priorities in the new Corporate Plan will receive additional funds. For example, the budget for tackling anti-social behaviour has increased from £0.5m in 2001-2002 to £2m in 2002-2003, with an additional £225,000 made available to tackle burglary through the LPSA, and £500,000 will be spent on extending CCTV. An extra £850,000 will be spent on improving the street environment and a further £500,000 will be spent on building capacity in three regeneration areas in order to progress against the floor targets in the NRS.
54. The Capital Programme includes the following examples of resources directed at priorities:
- £160m for Council Housing aimed primarily at improving houses against the decency standard in regeneration areas
  - £150m highways spending, £20.9m for A65 Quality Bus Initiative and £46m towards Supertram
  - £8.67 for regeneration in the Aire Valley Employment Area
  - £3.46m Unsupported Credit Approvals through the LPSA for the redevelopment of 8 out of ten Waste Sorting sites
  - £1.4m to develop outdoor multi-use sports areas and arts centres at three schools to encourage primary children to take greater part in sports and activities
55. The improvement to the budget process builds upon significantly more communication and involvement on budget issues in recent years, with briefings of all Members and senior officers so that there is a common understanding of the pressures and priorities. The process for debating the Policy and Budget framework within the new constitution<sup>14</sup> will enhance this further in the future. The Council is also committed to the clear communication of financial information to the general public which is evidenced by the nomination of the Council's accounts for both national and local awards, winning the Yorkshire Annual Report Awards 2000 and being highly commended in the Accountancy Age Awards for Excellence 2000.

## Developing Staff and Members

56. If the Council is to deliver against its priorities it needs both capacity and capability amongst its staff and Members. As a means of meeting this objective in our first Corporate Plan, we set a target to achieve corporate recognition for Investors in People (IiP) by March 2002, achieved in July 2001. The IiP Assessor<sup>15</sup> said:
- “...The Council clearly values its staff and recognises the importance of staff development at all levels. The benefits of training and development, and the quality of leadership and senior and middle management are evident in the Councils’ reputation nationally as a forward thinking and successful local authority”*
57. The staff satisfaction survey completed in April 2001<sup>16</sup> reported that more than 86.3% of respondents know the aims and objectives of their team.
58. The senior managers appraisal scheme<sup>17</sup> and appraisal/development schemes within Departments help ensure that officers have clear roles and responsibilities that are geared towards delivering organisational priorities. Guidance on Departmental and Service Planning<sup>18</sup> points staff to make links between what individuals do and other plans within the Council.
59. The Leeds Leadership Programme (LLP) has been a significant development for the Council, taking the 150 most senior managers through an intensive and wide-ranging programme of development. It contained different elements of:

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<sup>14</sup> New Constitution – December 2001

<sup>15</sup> Leeds City Council Corporate IiP Report – July 2001

<sup>16</sup> Leeds City Council – Staff Satisfaction Survey Report – April 2001

<sup>17</sup> Senior Managers Appraisal Scheme

<sup>18</sup> Service and Departmental Planning Guidance – March 2002

- personal development planning, based on 360 degree feedback
- major change events – conferences based on the organisational priorities within the Corporate Plan, for example regeneration in Harehills<sup>19</sup> and Putting the Needs of the Public First<sup>20</sup> (which linked customer and staff satisfaction with equal opportunities)
- skills development modules on issues like Managing Change and Coaching and Feedback
- project working with colleagues from different departments on corporate issues, such as a reward and recognition scheme and a toolkit for partnership working.

60. It is too early to fully evaluate the impact of LLP but already it has provided a very useful platform for developing the Corporate Plan on a more inclusive basis, it has improved cross departmental working, and improved communications, allowing managers from different disciplines to interact and meet the Central Executive Team at first hand on a regular basis.
61. As part of broadening ownership within the Council there has been an increased focus on communication. ‘Key messages’ from all the major meetings are produced and widely shared amongst officers and Members through the Intranet. The key messages have been very positively received, and indeed are now used by the Leeds Initiative to cover partnership meetings. Seminars and briefings for Members are available on a wide range of issues, such as Best Value reviews and the budget.
62. Modernisation has demanded new approaches and skills for Members. With regard to Member Development, we are signed up to both the IDeA National Charter for Member Development and LGIU Councillor Development Charter. We introduced a Member Development Framework, which included individual consultations with the majority of Members in order to develop a personal development plan. Members identified development needs in the following areas: information needs, media skills, networking, management skills, presentational skills, scrutiny, communications, community engagement, financial planning, planning legislation, advocacy skills, and IT skills.
63. A third of these development needs have been met already, through a variety of methods, from e learning, traditional training courses, information seminars, and workbooks on key issues. The remainder will be met, as planned, in the coming year.
64. We will also continue to seek new development opportunities to maximise the benefits of linking the perspectives and experiences of Members and the workforce who deliver our services, as has occurred at the recent LLP Conferences.

## Best Value

65. The impact of Best Value<sup>21</sup> on driving up performance is described elsewhere. The Council’s attitude was summed up by the District Auditor in the June 2001 BVPP Audit Report<sup>22</sup>:

*“The commitment to making a success of Best Value across the Council is strong. There have been improvements in the approach to Best Value that we would expect to have an impact on outcomes. An analysis of outcomes as measured by BVPIs shows Leeds to be performing very strongly with reference to actual performance and future targets..... The Council is responding positively to change. Best Value is being embraced as a key component in driving modernisation and is becoming more integral to day to day management.”*

## Equal Opportunities

66. The Council has worked over the course of the last 3 years to raise the profile of Equal Opportunities and this section cannot do justice to the progress that has been made. The Council already has a workforce that reflects the ethnic minority profile of the city, with more than 7% of

<sup>19</sup> Pre Conference Pack and Post Conference Report – Regeneration – September 2001

<sup>20</sup> Pre Conference Pack and Post Conference Report – Putting the needs of the Public First – February 2002

<sup>21</sup> Best Value Guidance – Leeds City Council

<sup>22</sup> District Audit Report on BVPP 2001-2002 – June 2001

the workforce from BME groups. The LPSA also includes a target focussed on service delivery for BME groups. We have £5m in the Capital Programme to address disabled access, £1m of which has been committed. As a further example of improving services to people with disabilities assistive technology is being introduced into our libraries.

67. A core value in the last plan, Equal Opportunities is now one of the five organisational priorities in the new Corporate Plan. All Departments have achieved CRE level 1 and most have achieved CRE level 2. We are looking forward to using the new Generic Standard. One of the LLP projects, made up entirely of Directors, has helped the Authority to make more progress in this area, by significantly raising the profile. The progress the Authority has made is reflected in the following examples.
- Employers Organisation's guidance on the new Equality Standard makes reference to only two local authorities, including Leeds City Council, as potential models of good practice. The engagement and involvement of key stakeholders through the Validation Group has been particularly highlighted. They state that Leeds model adapts well for the Equality Standard.
  - The CRE have invited the council to be a pilot authority to assist in the implementation of the new positive duty arising from the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. They are particularly interested in the way in which the authority intends to link the requirements of the positive duty with current work on the local government standard.

## **Risk Management**

68. Managing risks is an integral part of management, whether at a strategic, operational or project level. As the Council moves forward with ambitious programmes of change, involving a greater variety of partners, it potentially exposes itself to more risk. This makes the explicit reference to risks and the documentation around risk management more important. The Authority has a Risk Management Policy<sup>23</sup> and a framework that is strongly developed in the financial area, particularly through joint risk based work with internal audit and external audit, and through work on insurable risks. Equally, there is an explicit consideration of risks within the capital programme, on major projects and within best value reviews.
69. The approach to risk management overall is something that one of the Deputy Chief Executives is to champion, to ensure that our approach is explicit, comprehensive and documented. We are working with District Audit to achieve this improvement, working around the following five headings (organisational objectives, operational, emergency, service continuity and insurance) and then with the material from the CIPFA/SOLACE framework.

## **Section 3b. Delivering in Partnership**

70. Whatever the capacity of the Council, we know that we cannot deliver against key issues which face the city on our own. Below are concrete examples of how we are working with others to deliver our priorities. Again the space constraints require selective examples.

### **Partnerships with public agencies**

71. As one of many examples, the Council is pooling community safety resources with the Police in one organisation, employing around 100 people, reporting in through the Community Safety Partnership. The Drug Action Team has been integrated within the Unit, including a joint commissioning officer with access to a pooled budget provided by Health and Social Services.
72. There are already strong practical examples of work with the six police divisions, including work on target hardening and dealing with abandoned vehicles leading to demonstrable improvements in the reduction of revictimisation and the speed with which cars are removed. Innovative work between the Council, Police and Magistrates has led to the development of special arrangements

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<sup>23</sup> Risk Management Policy – December 1999

in cases of domestic violence – the cases are heard by experienced magistrates, who bring knowledge and consistency of judgement, with support on hand for the women concerned.

## **Partnership with the Community Sector**

73. The Council supports community and voluntary groups across a wide range of activity, ranging from tenants groups to local arts organisations to a total of £20m per annum. As an example, our success in achieving Beacon status<sup>24</sup> in supporting independent living for older people is partly based on our partnership with a network of 35 voluntary organisations, many of whom involve older people themselves through their management committees or as volunteers. These organisations provide a wide range of preventative services which complement the Council's focus on people with higher dependency needs. Over £1m is invested in these schemes each year.

## **Delivering in Partnership with the Private Sector**

74. The Council has increasingly worked with the private sector to improve the level of services that it provides. In particular, the Council has used PFI to deliver against many of its key objectives, developing extensive procurement expertise in the process.
- Through project partnerships with Jarvis and a consortium led by the John Mowlem Group, three High Schools and five primary schools will have been built. These projects will have provided new schools for 5,600 children and young people. The level of PFI credits amounts to £57m.
  - There is a further £84m in the pipeline to provide new primary and secondary schools.
  - It is likely that there will be an additional £23m PFI credits for six additional one stop centres.
  - The Council is currently at the procurement stage for a £46m project to revitalise the Swarcliffe area of Leeds, improving 1800 dwellings.
  - The Leeds Inner Ring Road Stage 7 PFI Project has been approved by DTLR as part of the Leeds TPP submission. The outline business case has been developed and will be submitted to DTLR after Executive Board approval. It could involve a £42m PFI scheme.
  - The largest project, Supertram, involves the construction and operation of three tramlines from North, South and East Leeds into the City Centre. The Council is working in conjunction with the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (METRO), who are leading this project, which will be supported through PFI. Total investment is approximately £500m.
75. The Council, with Metro, engaged in a groundbreaking bus priority scheme with the major bus operators in Leeds constructing a new guided bus scheme on the A63/A64 – a £10m investment to which both Arriva and First Group provided between them 50% of the infrastructure cost. This is the second guided bus scheme in Leeds and the first to have such a substantial private sector contribution since deregulation.
76. Beyond working with the private sector to deliver major projects, the Council is working with the private sector to deliver mainstream services. A third of highways maintenance and building maintenance is delivered through private firms, whilst a mixture of independent providers support social services. Recent Best Value reviews are identifying an enhanced role, ranging from the strategic partnerships proposed in traffic management and IT, to the direct outsourcing of Security.
77. Links with major employers in Leeds have widened the job opportunities available to unemployed people across the city. The Council won two Local Government Chronicle awards this year for innovation and private/public partnership for the Job Guarantee Programme which operates in partnership with a range of local employers including Tesco, Debenhams, WH Smiths and

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<sup>24</sup> Beacon Council Report – Independent Living for Older People – April 2001

Littlewoods. The programme has recently helped over 400 unemployed people in the city secure work, some for the first time in a decade. The Council provides training, whilst the employers uniquely guarantee jobs to local people based on their future potential rather than past work experience. The effectiveness of the programme is demonstrated by the high proportion of people who remain in work long after first securing work.

78. As a final example of working with the private sector to deliver social benefits, the Council has a strong relationship with Leeds United, symbolised by the role Peter Ridsdale plays as Chair of Education Leeds. As a specific example of cooperation with the Club, the Council ran the Leeds United Book Challenge. The project encouraged people of all ages to read a wide range of books and complete six challenges last summer. The award was one of only eight presented by *The Big Issue in the North* for projects which had really made a difference to people.

## **SECTION 4 - WHAT HAS THE COUNCIL ACHIEVED/NOT ACHIEVED TO DATE?**

### **Making Leeds a better place to live and work**

79. The previous section of the self-assessment concentrates on the building blocks the Authority has put in place to deliver improved services. The Council has always been clear that these organisational changes were a means to an end - to improve services for the people of Leeds. The majority of services are improving and, importantly, we have been achieving against the priorities that we have set. There remain exceptions to this trend which we are determined to put right. By necessity the examples given below of improving services and those giving concern are selective - for full details of the Council's performance, shown over time and in comparison with others, the BVPP<sup>25</sup> provides comprehensive coverage.

80. Before setting out some of the service improvements for which the Council is directly responsible, it is worth considering some of the progress made on key issues in the Corporate Plan to which we have made a contribution over the past three years:

- Employment – unemployment has fallen from 5.4% to 3%, with inner city unemployment falling from 13% to 7%.
- Transport – mean car (34.1km/hr) and bus speeds (21.2km/hr) in peak rush hours increased on the latest figures between 1995/2000, whilst the percentage of journeys by car into the city centre has reduced.
- Burglary rates within the city have fallen from 55 to 49.1 per one thousand households, and vehicle crime has fallen from 41 to 33.4 per one thousand population.
- Regeneration - The number of wards falling within the 10% most deprived wards in England has declined from 9 to 7.

81. The question of who should take credit for the achievement is secondary to their significance.

### **Improving Council Services**

82. There are many services which the Council has direct responsibility for where an upward trend can be clearly seen. The following are just a small selection of services highlighted in the last Corporate Plan.

- Results at key stage 2 in literacy and numeracy have improved over the last three years from 71 to 73%.
- The percentage of people receiving support in their home has improved from a low base of 5.9% to 8.7%.
- The percentage of void properties, against a background of low demand in parts of the city, has fallen from 3.58% to 2.88%.

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<sup>25</sup> Best Value Performance Plan 2001-2002

- 75% of new homes have been developed on brownfield sites.

83. Perhaps of even greater significance are examples of where the Authority has improved performance by deliberately targeting services, which it believed to be poorly performing. The Council, in particular, has sought to use its Best Value reviews to drive improvement up:

- Refuse – three years ago the Refuse Collection service was poor, missing over 2000 bins per 100,000. The Authority disbanded the department placing it under new management and established a best value review to drive service improvement. It is currently missing 65 bins per 100,000. Having received a good and likely to improve rating from the Inspectorate, the service has gone on to win charter mark accreditation<sup>26</sup>. During the last year the authority has also published its integrated waste management strategy<sup>27</sup> and increased its recycling rate from 8.9% to 14%, which is a good start towards the LPSA target. The recently developed Meanwood Road site has already increased its recycling rate from 30% of waste deposited to 63% since the new customer focused format was opened.
- Homelessness – at the beginning of this year, the time taken to process homelessness applications was in the bottom quartile of performance and had a declining trend. Following a fundamental best value review, entirely new processes of dealing with applications have been brought forward. The number of applications that have been processed within 33 days has improved from 63% to 80%.
- Highways Maintenance - as a result of a survey of residents, the Council found the greatest imbalance between importance given to a service and satisfaction in the area of highways maintenance. The public dissatisfaction with the condition of the roads was reflected in low performance. The Council prioritised the service in its budget from 1999/2000, which together with a local transport plan allocation of £6.65m, and new ways of working promoted through the best value review, has seen a marked improvement in principal roads in need of repair, with the figure falling from 40% to 31% last year.

84. The Council has also used Best Value reviews positively and responded to inspection results:

- Benefits - following the report from BFI in December 2000, the Council has revised its management arrangements and has since tackled all the major concerns relating to fraud, whilst also improving the level of service. The staff from the Benefits service are being asked by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate to help share its good practice with other authorities.
- Sport - following a disappointing Best Value Review of Sport the service is in the process of rapid transformation. Progress has so far included a 13.5% increase in the number of young people using sports facilities. The Council is seeking to add to this success through the achievement of its LPSA target of increasing sport participation for young people from target areas by 20%. In addition, capital funding of £26m over 8 years has been agreed by the Executive Board for improvements to sports centres, including the provision of a new 50m swimming pool and diving facility and an athletics and bowls centre.
- Procurement - following a very thorough best value review of purchasing and procurement in Leeds, good progress is being made with the service improvement plan. The procurement service has also Pathfinder Status for electronic government and is working with the Western Australian Government to deliver this. The Electronic Tendering System is now working and plans are advanced for this to be rolled out across the Yorkshire and Humberside Region. The inspection received a 'good' and 'likely to improve' score. The Council is confident that it will deliver the £35m savings between now and 2005, with £6.29m having been achieved in 2001-02.

85. Despite the ambitiousness of the targets within the corporate plan, 70% of the targets have been reached in full. The improvements the Authority have made in partnership and by its own efforts have been in vital areas to the quality of people's lives. There is little doubt that Leeds is a better place in which to live and work than it was five years ago. 72% of Leeds residents stated that they were satisfied with Council in last year's survey for the DTLR, a figure far in excess of the average.

<sup>26</sup> Chartermark Report – Refuse Service

<sup>27</sup> Integrated Waste Management Strategy – December 2001

## Tackling Under Performance

86. Against the background of this success there remain areas of concern where services have not improved as we would have wished and indeed where services have recently declined.
87. Perhaps the most important target the Council has failed to make significant progress on over the past three years has been in secondary school education. Having identified Key Stage 4 as a vital area in the last Corporate Plan, the Council's performance has remained relatively static, with the result that performance has slipped further behind the national average. Some of the deficiencies of the Council's approach were exposed in the report by Ofsted, whilst the transition precipitated by that report in turn meant that a period of time was dominated by management change rather than on support to schools.
88. The determination of the Council to move forward on this issue, however, cannot be doubted. Not only has the Council identified secondary education as the sole target in the education related part of the LPSA and the Corporate Plan, it has taken positive steps to reorganise secondary school education in the city through its high school review which seeks to ensure minimum standards in schools. The decisive action taken to close a school reported as failing by Ofsted has also demonstrated the willingness of the Executive Board to take difficult decisions in the interests of improvement. Importantly, in the recent survey of Heads by Ofsted, there was strong support of the work being undertaken to drive school improvement. Undoubtedly the clarity of vision brought to the work by the Chief Executive of the arms length company, Education Leeds, has played a significant part in allowing the Authority to move forward with this vital agenda.
89. There remain processes within the Authority which are not carried through as speedily as they should. In the case of Planning, performance in percentage terms in processing applications has been below target this year. Whilst this is a matter for concern, it should be seen in the context of a 10% increase in applications in successive years 2000-2. In the calendar year 2001 an unprecedented 6136 applications were received and output did not initially keep pace with this increase. In 2000-1, output increased by only 3.8%. However, in 2001-2, this measure of activity and productivity has increased substantially, by about 19%, so that a basis for maintaining improved performance has now been established. Again the Council has identified the need within its budget to prioritise the services and ensure that it has adequate resources to enable performance to be further improved and sustained. As with previously mentioned services, it has also initiated a best value service review to ensure continuous improvement.

## Ensuring Continuous Improvement

90. The Council has established strong performance management processes to track both the delivery of its priorities and trends in the performance of its core services. The District Auditor has congratulated the Council on the clarity of its BVPP which sets out comprehensive details of its performance. The document illustrates the seriousness with which the Council treats the data, providing analysis over years, by comparison with Metropolitan and core cities and analysis by quartile. The information is considered by the Executive Board, and by subject area by the Scrutiny Boards, at which Directors are called to account.
91. Performance information is considered at a regular cycle of Strategic Management Team meetings and is used extensively within Departmental Management Teams to focus improvement. As can be seen above, the Council has considerable evidence of using the data as a basis for setting its priorities and undertaken best value reviews in a bid to drive performance up.
92. As with many authorities, however, we have found that the sheer quantity of performance indicators inhibits their use at a corporate level. To overcome this problem, the Council has sought to establish a smaller number of indicators<sup>28</sup> (43), which focus on its key priorities and major areas of service provision. By using colour coding to indicate the trend in performance and

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<sup>28</sup> Leeds Basket of Indicators – report to Central Executive Team

the Council's relative performance against others, issues are readily identifiable by the Central Executive Team and the Executive Members with portfolios. The Council is developing its cost effectiveness measure as part of its LPSA which will add a further dimension to the analysis.

93. In driving forward improvement the Council has chosen to open itself up to external scrutiny over the last few years. The Council invited the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to undertake a peer review<sup>29</sup> in 2000, from which the Authority has greatly benefited. Whilst recognition of the Authority's achievements and future direction was gratifying, the Council also sought to seriously address the recommendations of the team, notably in its renewed emphasis on communication, equal opportunities and the development of its democratic structures. In their follow up visit, in October 2001, the IDeA reported<sup>30</sup> that the Authority "*embraced the findings and responded positively to the associated recommendations...*"
94. The willingness to use external challenge and open itself up to scrutiny can also be seen in a number of other moves taken by the Authority. All the Council's Best Value Reviews contain elements of external challenge, with representatives of knowledgeable outside bodies playing a full part in the conduct of the review. The Council's participation in the first round of LPSAs equally shows its confidence to accept stretching targets to which it will held to account. As a last example, the very willingness of the Council to be a pathfinder for Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) demonstrates its open attitude.

### **How much progress has the Council made?**

95. The Council is a very different place than it was three years ago. The more obvious signs of difference are evident in the modernised decision making arrangements and in the establishment of Education Leeds but there have also been fundamental shifts in the culture of the organisation.
96. From an Authority which had no statement of priorities, it is now moving into a second three year cycle of planning, with a tight focus on important targets, integrated with the Vision for Leeds. Whereas the Authority operated with little open debate in its committees, key issues are now thoroughly aired and debated at Executive Board and within Scrutiny. The Council has also moved from a position where little action could be taken by officers without committee approval, to a position of extensive delegation, with Executive Board concentrating on matters of strategic importance. The relationship between Members and officers, criticised in Ofsted, has been clarified and formalised.
97. With some exceptions in relation to statutory plans, the Council did not consult widely on the community's priorities and views of services prior to the launching of the Vision for Leeds. Since that time, however, the Council has become increasingly sophisticated in its use of consultation, using a wide range of methods in taking forward best value and local community planning, and as importantly in building it into improvement. This consultation is done very much through the partnership arrangement and the Community Engagement Framework<sup>31</sup>.
98. Relatively little attention was previously paid to leadership development among either Members or staff. Again the Authority has made great strides, building up its capacity for future progress. Communication and involvement of staff, particularly at senior levels, has greatly improved, establishing a greater unity of purpose across the Authority.
99. These developments are hugely significant to the future prospects of the Authority. There have already been significant service achievements but there is now real sense that the Authority is moving forward with a sense of purpose and confidence.

### **SECTION 5 - IN THE LIGHT OF WHAT THE COUNCIL HAS LEARNT TO DATE, WHAT DOES IT PLAN TO DO NEXT?**

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<sup>29</sup> Improvement and Development Agency Peer Review – Leeds City Council – June 2000

<sup>30</sup> Improvement and Development Agency Peer Review – Follow Up Report – Leeds City Council – October 2001

<sup>31</sup> Leeds Community Engagement Framework

100. The Council is not complacent and remains acutely conscious that there remain substantial challenges both for the Council as an organisation and within specific services. What follows is a candid description of some of the problems the Council faces in the years to come, together with an outline of how we intend to address them. For the purposes of this submission, the challenges have been divided between organisational challenges and those within key service areas.

### **Section 5a. Corporate capacity**

101. Whilst there are many organisational challenges which face the Authority, there are two which stand out at present, both of which relate to the changes brought in through modernisation – the officer structure and the engagement of ward Members.
102. Despite the progress made over recent years, described in the previous sections, there remain some organisational and cultural barriers within the organisation. The speed of change at a political level now stands in contrast to the relative lack of change in the departmental officer structure. Executive Members have taken on broad cross-cutting roles, and CIT's have been developed, whilst the departmental structure which reflected and supported the former committee system has remained more or less intact. Whilst there is no benefit in change for the sake of it, key concerns have emerged from public consultation around the quality of the environment, community safety and provision of services for children and young people, all of which activities/issues fall between departments under current arrangements. There is a requirement to consider how the Council can provide more integrated operational services which address these public concerns. As an additional point, despite the efforts to better involve Directors through the revised management team structure, the number of departments also militates against developing fully effective corporate ownership across the officer corps.
103. Although the workforce in the Council is broadly representative of the population it serves, the Council is also conscious that the make up of the majority of senior managers within the Council is predominantly white and male. The Council is committed to achieve a more mixed profile amongst its senior managers. The Executive Board has committed to all senior appointments being advertised.
104. The disengagement of many back bench Members is common across much of local government. It is of concern not only because Members feel underused and under valued but because disengagement from the corporate agenda can often impede the need to change services. The Council needs both to address how it can enable Members to further enhance their representative role and provide an opportunity to shape local services to the needs of their community. Beyond this it needs to positively engage all Members in decisions which affect the city as a whole, gaining their support when difficult issues are faced.
105. The two issues raised above are being confronted by the Council head on in the review being undertaken of political and management arrangements requested by the Executive Board. The Council is looking at both how services can be integrated on the ground and at a strategic level to drive improvement. This review closely links with significant cross cutting best value reviews and changes required to deliver the electronic government agenda. The Council envisages a slimmed down senior management structure as well as new ways of working. The Council has dedicated high level resources to the review to ensure that it proceeds quickly and has credibility. In relation to revised political arrangements which give Members a greater involvement in decisions affecting their local communities, it is envisaged that a new model will be proposed in May. The review is seeking to build a consensus, reporting to a working group made up of all the party leaders and the deputy leader, and informed by the view of all ward members.
106. In relation to the engaging Members further, significant progress has taken place on Member development. The Council has also put in place strong and improving IT support for Members to ensure that information they need is available to them. More than 80 Members have PCs at home, with internet/intranet and e mail access. Increasingly officers run seminars for all parties and provide single party briefings on key issues facing the Council in anticipation of events. A good example of this lies in the work undertaken to prepare Members for the changes to the Housing

Department brought about by the decision to form arms length organisations. This issue cannot be resolved over night, and may indeed be an in built tension of modernised arrangements, but the Council will continue to make efforts to further involve all Members in the way forward.

## **Section 5b. Key Service Issues**

107. Again, there are many service challenges which face the Council and therefore what follows are brief details of the ones that are most pressing.

### **Education**

108. The Ofsted report has been an important watershed for the Council. Whilst unhappy with the tone and balance of the report, the Council recognised the validity of many of its findings, and sought to respond positively by working closely with the DfES to establish Education Leeds. The Authority has swiftly adapted to the establishment of Education Leeds. The company is fully engaged in the corporate agenda, symbolised by the involvement of the Chief Executive of the company in the management teams of the Council and the membership on the company's board of the two deputy chief executives of the Council. What remain to be confronted are the hard service issues. Improvement is partly handicapped by the existence of 3500 surplus places across the system which diverts resources from where they are needed and in certain circumstances militates against the effectiveness of individual schools.
109. The manner in which the Authority has gone about tackling these issues symbolises a new willingness to tackle difficult issues. Most proposals to close schools, either to facilitate improvement or remove places, create strong community resistance which in times past had discouraged the Council from taking action. Over this past year, the Executive Board has responded positively to the challenges placed before it by Education Leeds to take decisive action, often in the face of considerable protest, to act in the interests of children's education in the city. There is considerable confidence that this agenda is now moving rapidly forward.
110. The lessons of Ofsted have extended beyond Education, in particular in the greater clarity of officer and member roles, the improved transparency of decision making and corporate responsibility for service issues and performance.

### **Services to Older People**

111. The Council exhibits many strengths in the manner in which it manages services to older people. It is a Beacon Council for supporting independent living and an LGA Pathfinder. Behind this status lies a recognition of the pioneering work that the Council has undertaken with the health service to jointly plan and commission services, its involvement of the voluntary sector and the emphasis given within the Council to involving older people in shaping service delivery.
112. These strengths, however, do not disguise the difficulty that the Council faces, with growing pressures upon the budget and the need for Council to reorientate services to support those in highest need and provide services for older people as citizens rather than the passive recipients of care. The Council undertook a thorough Best Value review that set out a clear direction for the Authority. The review included a significant consultation exercise, conducted independently. Some aspects of the implementation of that plan have been difficult. Last year the Authority was caught up in a controversy surrounding the proposed closure of a number of day centres as part of a reconfigured service, which provoked opposition among those attending, the local community, the press and local Members, leading to the Council withdrawing its proposals following the consultation period.
113. Whilst in some respects the outcome can be presented as simply the Council listening to what the public and users had to say, the starker lesson is the difficulty of remodelling provision in such sensitive areas. The leadership of the Council and senior officers have had to consider how such issues might be better dealt with in future. The lessons can be summarised as follows:

- the Best Value review dealt in principles not particulars - the practicalities of implementation need to be thought through in any improvement plan;
- the Council's thoughts on the reorganisation of services need to be surfaced as early as possible to promote open discussion of the options available to the Council;
- more active effort need to be put into working with the local community, the press and Members to prepare them for the changes;
- perhaps the most important lesson is that the justification for the reorganisation of services should stress the positive benefits which will come, rather than allowing best value to be presented as purely budget driven - people need to see why services will be better as a result of sometimes painful change.

114. This is not to say that these issues are easy, or that it is possible in all circumstances to persuade all those involved. Nor should the Council place itself in a position where it is unable to step back in the face of the consultation it has undertaken. The Council is still determined to meet the objectives set out in the best value performance plan and is now working with the Primary Care Trusts and community providers.
115. On a positive note, the handling of the reconfiguration of residential care demonstrates that many of the lessons have been learnt. In a programme which will see four of the Council's homes change their current use, with a further five demolished, the Council has agreed a sensitive re-provision programme which achieves change with the minimum disruption to the older people involved.
116. With regard to Social Services, it is to be observed that the Executive Board now meets separately to ensure the issues receive due attention.

## Housing

117. The IDeA in its one specific recommendation relating to direct service provision, called upon the Council to develop a Housing Strategy<sup>32</sup> which would generate the investment needed to improve the condition of Council housing in the city. The Council had already flagged this as a key priority in its own Corporate Plan. It is estimated that £1bn of investment will be needed by the end of the decade to bring all Council housing up to a standard of decency, with almost half failing that test at present.
118. The Council over the course of the last year has made significant steps to establish a way forward. The Council has worked closely with the DTLR on the development of the arms length option. Following widespread consultation with tenant and local members, the Authority has decided to break the Housing Department into six units of 10,000 to 15,000 properties. Each will be established as a separate company and bid for arms length investment. The intention is to have the structures in place by the end of the year, with inspections taking place in the early part of next year. In the event of the Authority not being able to gain funding for one or more of the areas, the boards which have been created will then be in a position to manage properties on a more local, participative basis and to consult tenants on other investment options, including voluntary stock transfer.
119. Again in this case there are some who are opposed to any change, hoping for a shift in government policy which will allow the Council to retain its entire stock and deliver direct investment. Unison has taken an active stand against any change, most recently in its agitation to secure a no ballot among tenants for a PFI investment in the Little London area. The Council will need to remain resolute and actively campaign to achieve the investment required to improve the quality of housing within the city.

## Social Inclusion

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<sup>32</sup> Housing Strategy 2000-2006

120. The Council has made a significant impact upon deprivation within the city over the course of the last number of years but there remains much to be done. Many of the issues discussed in this self assessment feed into tackling the problems of deprivation - improved schooling, better housing, lower crime - but there is also the need to make better connections between them. Poor social conditions militate against success in education, whilst under performing schools lead to low demand on estates. Whilst there is much evidence of strong initiatives between departments, the Council and its partners need to further develop cross cutting work in the vital matter of regeneration. This commitment is reflected throughout the new Corporate Plan, even in the title, is 'closing the gap'.
121. The Council is committed to working in specific parts of the city to achieve the floor targets across a range of deprivation indicators set out in the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy. These targets are jointly owned with our partners, particularly in the police and the health service - success cannot be obtained by any one agency working alone. In moving forward with issues, it will not be enough to depend upon specific regeneration funding - all agencies need to examine the need to bend mainstream budgets further to support areas of need within the city.
122. The Council has a strong commitment to tackling disadvantage among ethnic minority communities, as shown by the intensive work taking place in the Harehills and Beeston Hill areas of the city. The Council has also committed to reducing the gap in educational attainment between specified ethnic minority groups and the city average as part of its PSA. The Council's mechanisms for engaging the ethnic minority communities need to be improved and in particular the absence of ethnic minority representation on the Local Strategic Partnership is a considerable matter of concern. The Council and its partners recognise these deficiencies and are working to swiftly move forward in overhauling representation as well as looking to develop better consultation and engagement mechanisms outside these formal structures.

#### **Final Remarks**

123. As with all Councils, Leeds has many challenges. There are many key issues which need to be tackled if all the people of Leeds are to share in the success that the city has achieved. There is also improvement to be made to basic services, against which the competency of a council is judged. In making these changes, the Council is also aware that it needs to go on changing itself.
124. This is not a revelation. The Council has set out its stall to change over the past three years and has come a long way as an organisation and in the results that it has delivered. The Council hopes both that these efforts will be acknowledged and encouraged and that we can work co-operatively with the Audit Commission to drive improvement further.