

COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Leicester's ambition is to be:

a premier city in Europe with a thriving and diverse society in which everyone is involved and in which everyone can have a decent, happy and fulfilling life. A city with a strong economy, a healthy, caring and educated society, a safe and attractive environment and an improving quality of life – a sustainable city.

SELF ASSESSMENT



COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

CONTENTS

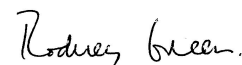
PAGE

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. SETTING THE SCENE | 1 |
| A Vibrant City
Complexity and Inequality
Adding Value through Political Leadership and Partnership
Adverse Funding Conditions | |
| 2. WHAT WE ARE AIMING TO ACHIEVE | 4 |
| Corporate Purpose
Our Medium Term Priorities
Maintaining the Focus on Priorities | |
| 3. HOW WE HAVE SET ABOUT DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT | 7 |
| Improving Community Leadership
Improving Community Engagement
Improving Service Performance
Improving Governance Arrangements | |
| 4. WHAT WE HAVE AND HAVE NOT ACHIEVED | 12 |
| Education and Lifelong Learning
Social Care and Health
Community Safety
Jobs and Regeneration
Environment
Diversity – Culture
Diversity - Housing
Progress on Resource Management
Current Financial Position | |
| 5. WHAT HAVE LEARNT AND WHAT WE PLAN TO DO NEXT | 17 |
| Learning from Listening
Learning from External Challenge
Learning from Best Value Reviews
What are the Problems Still to be Faced
Future Plans | |

ACTION PLAN



Leader of the Council



Chief Executive

1. SETTING THE SCENE

Leicester is a vibrant, diverse and complex city albeit with significant deprivation and inequality. Over recent years we have achieved some notable improvements and success endorsed by service users and external accreditation. Poor performing services are being addressed through strong political leadership in partnership with others despite adverse funding conditions.

A Vibrant City

- 1.1. Leicester is the largest city in the East Midlands. As Britain's most diverse City, it is a vibrant place with pace and excitement. It has been celebrated in the New York Times for its progressive approach to racial integration. It has been hailed in the Rough Guide as an up and coming visitor destination. We have two major universities. There is an extraordinarily cosmopolitan range of restaurants and clubs. The largest covered market in the country and the Belgrave Road – famous for the quality and range of its South Asian shops and restaurants – contribute to Leicester being a top shopping destination. The Tigers are a world-class rugby side and soccer, cricket and basketball have huge followings. The Philharmonia is in Residence at De Montfort Hall and festivals such as Christmas, the Caribbean Carnival and Diwali – the largest outside India – punctuate the calendar.
- 1.2. The National Space Centre (NSC) is the only Landmark Millennium Project in the region. Originated in partnership with the University of Leicester, it has drawn 0.3m visitors in its first year, 20% above projections. It has added an iconic building to the skyline and stimulated new thinking around regeneration in its locality. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment honoured us in its Award 2001 for the quality of building developments in the City such as the NSC, Bede Island North, the Land Registry, and Soar Footbridge. We are fortunate to have a manufacturing base, which needs to be maintained and the economic resilience which derives from a large 'small business' sector. ¹This is a City beginning to realise its ambition as a European City of the 21st Century.
- 1.3. Leicester's vitality comes from having many different cultures living and working together. It is expressed every day through a range of cultural activity, such as sport, art, music, architecture, commerce, fashion, festivals and food. The large student population, including a number from overseas, also enhances the vitality.
- 1.4. The ethnic composition is a major distinguishing factor with well over a quarter of the population being from Asian or African Caribbean origin.
 - Population 290,000 (mid year estimate 2000).
 - 33% of total population from ethnic minorities; 50% of under 16s (2000 estimate).The population mix requires greater flexibility in service delivery and service improvement. For these and other reasons, the City has a tradition of vigorous political debate and activity. Much of this has been focused not only on service improvement, but also on the quality of local neighbourhoods and on the essential importance of community cohesion.
- 1.5. Our equal opportunity policies embrace all minority groups and create a commitment which is a major focus of the provision of high quality services to local people. We work towards reflecting the population in the use of council services and the make up of the council's elected members and staff. The nature of the community of Leicester and the Council's positive stance makes it a welcome home for many new minorities.

Complexity and Inequality

- 1.6. Leicester's cultural diversity is an enormous asset. But all our communities do not share equally in its success. Inequality and deprivation mixed with cultural and racial diversity create exceptional complexities. Choice, tolerance and justice are pulled in different directions. Local politicians, health providers, faith leaders, police and the media wrestle with sensitive contemporary issues such as:
 - Targeting deprivation, which can be seen as favouring newer communities.
 - Promoting choice, which can be seen as permitting segregation.
 - Welcoming integrity, which can be seen as assimilating legitimate cultures.They do so generally with good will and make considerable progress. However, the interaction between race and deprivation in social and economic terms is often unexpected and shifting. Unforeseeable surges of people from abroad can pose new realities for all service providers without notice. Such

¹ Community Plan (2000)

complexities are exacerbated by an inevitable degree of unwitting institutional racism evident in large organisations. There is also a small minority of those in Leicester and wider afield who exploit community tensions with extreme and intemperate language. Leicester's cultural diversity is a precious asset that needs to be carefully cherished. It cannot be taken for granted. Part of the solution involves understanding the dimensions of inequality and cultural diversity which the Council is seeking to address and the following data describe some of its main features.

- 1.7. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2000 identifies very significant deprivation. Of the 28 wards:
- 13 wards are among the 10% most deprived in England.
 - More than half of the city's population live in these wards.
 - Deprivation affects white, outer wards (79% of children in North Braunstone live in low-income families) as well as Asian inner city areas.
 - Leicester ranks in the bottom 10% in the Government's Deprivation Index.
 - 50% of children live in overcrowded households compared with 11 % nationally.
 - 18% of children live in higher social class households compared with the national average of 31 %.
 - Families from ethnic minorities are more likely to live in larger households, have higher rates of unemployment and be in lower paid employment than the average.

Information on deprivation is contained within the Atlas of Social and Economic Conditions² compiled in house using GIS mapping. These maps and key statistics are available on the council's intranet site and provide key information about areas of the city for staff and members.

- 1.8. Unemployment in the city is higher than the national and regional levels.

Date	Leicester	East Midlands	National
March 2001	6.7%	3.3%	3.6%

- There are also substantial variations in the unemployment levels and rates when analysed by ward ranging from 2.1% to 18.2%.
- 1.9. The economy relies heavily on commuters. Nearly half the people who work in Leicester commute from outside; placing stress on the transportation networks into the city. Half the households in Leicester do not have access to a car.
- 1.10. The City's children are served by 87 primary schools, 16 secondary schools and 10 special schools. Recently the school population increased by 900 (2%) following the arrival of Dutch Somalis. This adds to the high number with language and other complex needs. The variety of cultures and faiths provide a rich culture that is a challenging asset. Whilst educational attainment at all key stages is below the national average, the gap is narrowing. The largest significantly underachieving group is white children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Estimates show up to 40,000 adults in the City have difficulties in literacy and levels of participation in deprived wards are very low. Recent population figures suggest that there is an increasing migration of families out of the city, in particular those with more able children. This, in conjunction with the higher than average increase in the older population means that, unless the potential spiral of decline is addressed by regeneration and renewal, the City will face a population of increasing need with dwindling resources.
- 1.11. Health inequality is concentrated within certain groups of the population:
- Emergency admissions to hospital for older people in Leicester increased three times faster than the rest of England.
 - Coronary heart disease among Asians is 50% higher than among white people.
 - Smoking related illnesses are much higher among low-income families.
- 1.12. In 2000/2001 a total of 41,212 crimes were recorded equating to 142 incidents per 1000 population. Robbery increased by 8.6% and assaults increased by 0.7%.
- 1.13. The amount of waste is increasing, putting pressure on resources. In 2000-2001 the amount of household waste that was sent to landfill was reduced by 2%; the recycling rate increased from 10.5% to 13.7%.
- 1.14. Substandard housing contributes to health inequality, a poor environment and affects the educational achievement of children.
- On current trends, without intervention over 50% of the council stock will have one or more defective elements by 2010, the government's decent homes target.

² Atlas of Social & Economic Conditions (1999)

- In the private sector, we estimate a £420million backlog of repairs.
- Demand for adapted housing continues to outstrip supply across all tenures and the waiting list is expected to grow further. This is set against a 43% reduction in capital allocation to fund private sector disabled adaptation work.

1.15. Leicester has a large number of cultural venues and festivals which attract people to the City. Leisure facilities are important to local people and the most widely used services, as evidenced in Residents Surveys and the Cultural Strategy research. Yet many buildings are deteriorating and are inappropriate to the needs of people in the city. Recently, budget pressures and reallocation of priorities has necessitated closure of some facilities.

1.16. Despite these complexities and inequalities, the 2001 Residents Survey³ identified:

- 6% net increase in satisfaction with the running of the Council.
- Leicester performs in line with its levels of deprivation.
- The two main areas of concern are cleanliness and safety.
- Effective communication is important and needs to be improved.

Adding Value through Political Leadership and Partnership

1.17. In 1997 the council became Unitary and faced a £17m budget reduction. It inherited a legacy of services which were found to be performing below a satisfactory level: Education was, at that time one of the lowest performing in the country. The council's first statement of Strategic Direction⁴ prioritised these service areas for improvement. The poor condition of many buildings inherited from reorganisation required considerable capital investment to bring them up to standard. To remove surplus places and reduce costs, the Council embarked on major reviews of Secondary Education, closing and reorganising six schools, and of Elderly Persons Homes, closing six homes and refurbishing others. Both attracted strong concerns.

1.18. The Council has been under the continuous political leadership of a single party for more than 20 years. Since Unitary Status, there has been sustained leadership, often with all Party support, on a few strategic priorities around the integrity and sustainability of Leicester. This has led to a track record of service improvements and innovations such as:

- The only Unitary Authority in the country to win Beacon Council in all 3 years of the scheme.
- Commendation in the Cattle report for pioneering work on community cohesion⁵ and Beacon Council for Promoting Racial Equality.
- The first major British City to win the Environment City, European Sustainable City, EMAS and Beacon Council for Environmental Quality.
- Significant improvement in school standards confirmed by Ofsted.
- The fastest improving LEA in the country.
- Third fastest improving Social Services Department (2000) and a top quartile performer (2001).
- One of only 10 Housing Departments in the country to win government A grading 4 years running with a sustainable approach to housing investment, and Beacon Council in Housing Maintenance.

1.19. Consultations to develop the Community Plan have demonstrated that the Council has broadly identified correctly the key priorities of citizens confirmed by the Residents' Survey 2001. To improve our responsiveness to the community, our political cultures and working methods have also undergone change. We have improved officer/Member working relationships through the development of Political Conventions that have been commended by academics, consultants and other Councils. We have set up a Cabinet with Leader arrangement including delegated powers for decision making by individual Cabinet Lead Members to speed up processes. There are a number of Scrutiny Committees focusing on key aspects of the Council's business. The aim is to bring decision making out into the open and to give more Members an effective role reflecting community concerns.

1.20. The complexities and inequalities within Leicester have underlined the importance of generating step changes in the experience of service users by working together in closer partnership. For example, Health, Social Care and Housing needs increasingly overlap and cannot be effectively addressed without a strong commitment to understanding and supporting complementary agendas. Libraries are at the heart of lifelong learning as well as e-government and they contribute directly to social inclusion. Effective education institutions are central to revitalising neighbourhoods and strengthening community cohesion.

³ Leicester Residents Survey (2001)

⁴ Strategic Direction (1999)

⁵ Community Cohesion in Britain (2002)

Transport policy contributes to economic as well as leisure activities and both impact on public health. Housing design, maintenance and allocations policies are indispensable to building safer communities and raising educational standards. Developing more strategic cross-service integration in these ways is increasingly regarded by our public, private and voluntary partners as essential to improving performance.

- 1.21. For these reasons, the Council is now at the hub of a network of partnerships working together on the key issues facing the City. The Leader chairs the local strategic partnership (the Leicester Partnership); Cabinet members and Directors play key roles in its seven main sub-partnerships, and in Regional and Sub-Regional forums. We lead and facilitate groups to manage social cohesion (Partnership against Crime and Disorder) and interfaith working (Council of Faiths). We responded to the CRE Leadership Challenge by bringing together the top executives in the city to create commitment to tackling race inequality in Leicester. After an unsteady start, we are working effectively with the Braunstone Community Association to support New Deal investment of £50m in our most deprived area. The latest Annual Audit Letter cited several important partnerships as significant council achievements, e.g. Leicester Regeneration Company, Leicester Shire Economic Partnership and Connexions.
- 1.22. We now recognise that further step change is required. Central to our future agenda is the Revitalising Neighbourhoods⁶ project which will:
- Establish ten Neighbourhood Forums to facilitate greater community involvement.
 - Appoint ten Neighbourhood Managers to co-ordinate local service delivery.
 - Establish a new senior structure of Corporate Directors who will be more strategic, more integrated, more locally focussed and more performance orientated.
 - Restructure front line services to make them more responsive to local need.
 - Stimulate a change in organisational culture to sustain these changes.
- 1.23. With clear political leadership and working in partnership with local communities and other agencies the Council is seeking to rethink its community leadership and service delivery roles from the users' point of view. We are using Best Value to challenge why and how we meet needs. Although the agenda ahead is enormous, we are encouraged that progress requires us, in a large degree, to build on our track record. This has shown a readiness to engage with our communities and an openness to change and to learn from others' best practice. We have delivered innovative solutions and seen a real turn-round in some poor services and improvements across all services, frequently as a result of the contribution of our partners.

Adverse Funding Conditions

- 1.24. Local Government Reorganisation merged a comparatively high spending District Council with under-funded upper tier services. (District Council 38% in excess of its SSA; County Services 6% below).
- 1.25. The new Council has suffered in successive settlements and received the lowest SSA increase of all upper tier authorities over 5 years cumulatively. This was the result of both formula changes (£3m from the children's social services SSA in 1999/2000) and data changes (falling population and school pupil trends counter to national trends). If the Council had received the average SSA increase since 1996/97 our budget would be £22m higher. The adverse impact this has had on our Performance Indicators can be imagined by reflecting on what additional service improvement might have been possible if, in line with the average Authority, our energy had not been deflected by managing £22m of budget reductions. In the last 2 years the unforeseeable migration of Dutch Somalis into the City has incurred costs of £2-3m that existing national funding mechanisms have so far been unable to respond to.
- 1.26. Our ambition and robust determination to succeed has been evident despite unparalleled financial pressures and exceptional community complexity and inequality. We have played to our strengths in community leadership and partnership and engaged with the asset that our vibrant and diverse communities represent. We have a track record of innovation recognised in Beacon awards, and of improving poor services accredited by external review. In our quest to drive improvements in Education, we are stimulating a city-wide debate over the advantages and disadvantages of new funding opportunities such as a City Academy, and faith and other distinctive schools. There is still an enormous agenda ahead if we are to see step change in revitalising our neighbourhoods, securing community cohesion and improving the experience of users across all of our services. The challenges ahead to which we have to rise remain greater than ever. We turn now to consider what we are aiming to achieve.

⁶ Revitalising Neighbourhoods Report (2001)

2. WHAT WE ARE AIMING TO ACHIEVE

We want strong neighbourhoods that underpin integrity and sustainability. We want to deliver the community plan priorities and maintain robust community cohesion. We will also meet national priorities and statutory requirements to create a quality European city full of pride and potential.

Corporate Purpose

2.1. To achieve Leicester's ambition the council's corporate purpose is:

*To promote the **integrity and sustainability of Leicester** and its people in the interest of their past, their present and their future with the intention of creating a **quality European city full of pride and potential.***

Our Medium Term Priorities

2.2. The Council's corporate priorities are developed under six themes:

- **Diversity** – We want to build a city where everyone has a place at the table, a city that is viewed and experienced as “home” for everyone.
- **Community Safety** - Tackling crime and the fear of crime to make our homes, communities and city safer.
- **Education** – Raising standards in all our schools to improve life for our children and young people in the future.
- **Social Care and Health** – to improve the health and well-being of Leicester people and provide help and support to people when it is needed.
- **Environment** – as Britain's first “Environment City” we are committed to sustainable development to improve the quality of life for all Leicester people.
- **Jobs and Regeneration** – to invest in our biggest asset, the people of Leicester, to develop jobs and new modern industries to ensure that everyone prospers in the 21st century.

The priorities are delivered through the Council's nineteen cross cutting key corporate strategies. Further details about goals, targets and actions to achieve these priorities are contained in our Best Value Performance Plans⁷. The table below shows the relationship between the strategies and priorities.

<u>KEY STRATEGY</u>	CORPORATE PRIORITIES					
	<i>Diversity</i>	<i>Community Safety</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Social Care and Health</i>	<i>Environment</i>	<i>Jobs and Regeneration</i>
Annual Library Plan	✓		✓			
Central Leicestershire LTP		✓			✓	
Children's Services Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓		
City of Leicester Local Plan	✓				✓	✓
Community Care Plan	✓			✓		
Community Learning Plans	✓		✓			✓
Corporate Equalities Action Plan	✓					
Crime and Disorder Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cultural Strategy	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Early Years Development and Childcare Plan	✓		✓			✓
Education Development Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Environmental Policy Statement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health Improvement Programme	✓			✓		✓
Housing Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Joint Investment Plans	✓			✓		✓
Quality Protects	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
The Leicester Regeneration Strategy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Waste Management Strategy					✓	
Youth Justice Plan	✓	✓	✓			✓

⁷ Best Value Performance Plans (2001/02; 2002/03)

We manage our resources to deliver our priorities through the following strategies.

- Human Resource Strategy (including Equality, Training & Development and Health & Safety)
- Budget Strategy (Capital and Revenue)
- Asset Management Plan
- Information Communications Technology Strategy

2.3. Leicester 's first community plan was produced in partnership with key stakeholders and launched in November 2000 following extensive consultation with a wide range of organisations and individuals with the support of the local media. The council adopted the mission and priority themes of the community plan as its corporate priorities. The community plan is monitored through an action plan⁸ by the Leicester Partnership and is reviewed periodically. This sets out the targets to be achieved by a number of organisations.

2.4. We actively consulted on our budget proposals through two consultation exercises in successive years (2000 and 2001) and through public opinion surveys. Education, Social Care and Community Safety are clearly the top priorities and additional resources have been made available to improve those services. These commitments are embedded in our three-year revenue strategy.

2.5. However, we recognise the need for flexibility in allocating resources. Last year's public opinion survey identified cleanliness particularly in the city centre as a concern and as a result this years budget has made an additional £1m available to address these concerns.

2.6. Whilst focussing the council's resources on the identified priorities, other methods of resourcing additional services and developments are pursued.

- The ward of North Braunstone is implementing improvements through £50m of New Deal funding.
- Seven SRB programmes have contributed £41million of investment in the most deprived wards.
- European funding through Objective 2 will generate £21million of funding over seven years.
- Lottery funding has been agreed in principle towards financing a new sports centre and for parts of the proposed cultural quarter to enhance the performing arts provision in the city.
- The government have agreed to a Private Finance Initiative to improve the disposal of waste by providing a municipal composting facility. We estimate this will bring in £50million over 5 years.

2.7. We are negotiating a Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA)⁹ with Central Government which will run until March 2005. The LPSA is a key vehicle for delivering the Community Plan. The selection of targets was designed to drive the community plan themes in particular areas of weakness in performance. The Leicester Partnership has shaped and agreed the targets. This ensures local priorities are reflected as well as the government's strong national focus. Delivery of these targets will improve the lives of local residents and enhance the quality of the city.

2.8. The proposed targets are:

Community Plan Theme	Community Plan Goal	PSA Target
Diversity	To ensure that a decent home is within the reach of every citizen in Leicester	Addressing fuel poverty by improving the condition of housing stock in the private sector
	Ensuring the provision and use of quality cultural and leisure services events and activities	Improving social and personal well being and enhancing social cohesion by increasing cultural participation
Education	To raise standards of achievement for all	Raising standards in the City by increasing educational attainment at GCSEs
Social Care	To develop services to promote the independence of older and disabled people	Enabling more older people to live as independently as possible by providing high quality preadmission and rehabilitation care.
	To reduce health inequalities	Improving life chances for Looked After Children by achieving an overall reduction in the number of Looked After Children
	To reduce health inequalities	Improving life chances of children and young people in care by increasing educational attainment at GCSEs

⁸ Community Plan Action Plan (2000)

⁹ Local Public Service Agreement (2002)

Community Plan Theme	Community Plan Goal	PSA Target
	To reduce health inequalities	Reducing health inequalities by reducing the number of adult smokers in Leicester
Community Safety	Reduce rate of burglaries	Making Leicester a safer place to live by reducing domestic burglary in the city
Jobs and Regeneration	To target disadvantaged groups in the labour market to increase their employability prospects	Improving employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups within the city
Environment	Reduce number of road accident casualties	Making Leicester's roads safer by reducing accident casualties
	Leicester Residents Survey	Making Leicester a cleaner and better place by improving the cleanliness of the city centre

2.9. The Chief Executive's Annual Report¹⁰ reflected on the achievements of the previous year and, whilst emphasising the need to maintain commitment to the community's priorities, highlighted three key priorities for the Council in the year ahead. These are:

Revitalising Neighbourhoods

The City Council's approach for many years has been to develop neighbourhood services based on a strong citywide perspective. The Community Plan strongly reflects local opinion that the City Council should work with local people and neighbourhoods enabling local views and ideas to influence what goes on. Voter turnout at local elections is low. Revitalising Neighbourhoods aims to:

- Increase the level of involvement by local people in their communities and in the decisions made about their communities.
- Improve the delivery of services to local communities.

Racial Harmony

Embedding racial equality and integration to sustain stronger community cohesion.

Community cohesion and integration of our diverse communities remain central priorities to Leicester's well-being. The encouragement and support we have received from the Beacon Council process, the Cattle report and the CRE has, if anything, raised the threshold of what needs to be achieved.

Service Improvement

Whilst the last annual report acknowledged that performance management was a weakness, the change programme commissioned at that time to re-engineer our effectiveness has proved its worth and has been endorsed by the District Auditor. We still need to lift our game further on performance management to see more services performing in the top quartile to meet national as well as local priorities.

Maintaining the Focus on Priorities

2.10. In a complex and ever changing city like Leicester we must remain focused on our priorities and respond quickly to new needs and opportunities. Last year, for example, the arrival of people from abroad has had an impact on our services and budgets. The specific pressures on Social Services have been recognised by creating a specialist team of social workers. Education has provided additional support to the local community as well as needing to identify substantial additional funds for the extra pupils in schools. It is too early at this stage to quantify the effect these pressures have had on mainstream access response.

2.11. We believe all the services we provide are important to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Leicester. The constrained budgets since gaining unitary status have led to cuts in some services. For example, the council withdrew from direct provision of employment training as other agencies increased their provision. Best Value Reviews have challenged the need for services and after three years, no services have been decommissioned. We continue to prioritise Education, Social Care and Community Safety in response to the views of citizens.

¹⁰ Annual Report: 'Striving for High Performance' (2002)

2.12. Members and Directors maintain a focus on priorities through the corporate management process and structures. There are a large number of corporate action plans to which departments are expected to contribute. The community plan contained over 50 targets attributed to the City Council. The Residents Survey action plan¹¹ contained approximately 80 targets. In conjunction with action plans for 19 key strategies, Best Value improvement plan targets and national performance indicator targets, the picture begins to blur. The plethora of objectives and targets reflects the complexity of our business but does not facilitate good business planning. A smaller number of SMART action plans with priority targets clearly stated would enable the organisation to maintain a clearer focus over coming years.

3. HOW WE HAVE SET ABOUT DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

We are improving the lives of the people of Leicester through leading the community, working with our partners, involving citizens and managing ourselves to the highest standards.

Improving Community Leadership – *shaping the future of the city through the Council's leadership of the community plan and partnership working.*

3.1. Leicester Partnership is the local strategic partnership which brings together key decision-makers and community representatives to improve neighbourhoods, public services and the quality of life of local people. Its main areas of work are community planning, neighbourhood renewal and public service agreements. The partnership is designed with direct links to the six sub- partnerships responsible for delivering the community plan priorities described in section 2.2. plus the Cultural Strategy Partnership.

3.2. A Board member from each of these sub-partnerships is also a member of the Leicester Partnership. This ensures that there are clear lines of accountability between the Board and its delivery mechanisms. The Board additionally benefits from an effective balance of members from the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. A good mix of geographical communities and communities of interest is represented.

3.3. During its first year the partnership has:

- Achieved an effective Board backed by a constitution and protocol.
- Shaped the development of Leicester's proposed Local Public Service Agreement.
- Been successfully accredited by the Government Office for the East Midlands allowing Leicester to access £6m from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.
- Held its first general assembly meeting attended by 160 stakeholders.
- Reported back on an 80 % achievement of targets in the first year of the Community Plan.

By its very nature, some of this policy development has been somewhat "top down". The Council has a successful history of working in partnership and delivered successful regeneration programmes under City Challenge, SRB and a current New Deal programme. In the SRB areas, local initiatives are involving people in decision making and proving successful in improving community engagement, improving cross service working and delivering improvements in services.

3.4. A more "bottom up" approach geared to developing a local neighbourhood focus, giving local people a stronger stake and voice in the future of their community and facilitating local joined up service delivery throughout the city is now underway as part of the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project.

Improving Community Engagement – *ensuring the people of Leicester are better informed, consulted, engaged and empowered to participate in their communities.*

3.5. A consultation audit in 2000 showed almost 300 individual consultation exercises had taken place over the previous year. A database of consultation is now on the council's intranet site to improve the quality of consultation and reduce the likelihood of consultation fatigue through combining projects. The council has regularly consulted residents through a corporate survey since 1988, has consulted on two budgets and on new political structures. A Young Peoples Council has been in existence since 1997 and a Senior Citizens Forum and African Caribbean forum have been in existence for over five years. A Peoples Panel will be established by May 2002 in conjunction with the new Primary Care Trusts. This consultation influences decisions, for example, Black History Month has developed into a two-month season in Leicester through the input of the African Caribbean community. The Young People's Council influences the LEA's anti racism work by maintaining an emphasis on the racism that many black young people experience. In particular, they have contributed to the Young Gifted and Equal publication and played a formal part in the establishment of the Connexions Service.

¹¹ Residents Survey Action Plan Report (2001)

- 3.6. The 1998 residents' survey identified information for the public as a major issue. Improvement was required at a corporate and departmental level. As a result:
- Leicester Link has been improved and relaunched with audited circulation figures showing improved distribution.
 - The council has developed its own Internet site recognised nationally as one of the best in its field. The number of hits has increased from 227,141 in 2000 to 1,104,478 in April 2002.
 - The council's internal magazine Face has also been improved and we have developed our own intranet site to aid internal communication.
 - The 2001 survey showed that "the decline in information provision observed in 1998 has been halted" and the proportion of people feeling well informed has significantly improved by 5 percentage points.
 - There are widespread differences in satisfaction levels amongst age groups, ethnic groups and geographical areas of the city. People want more information on the reasons for taking decisions and how the council spends its money.

A communication strategy will be developed to improve information for the public by 30th October 2002.

- 3.7. The next major step in our development comes through the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project, which will improve local community engagement in decisions affecting neighbourhoods. We will establish ten Neighbourhood Forums and appoint Neighbourhood Managers to co-ordinate services at the local level by October 2002.

Improving Service Performance –*embedding Best Value in the organisation to achieve continuous service improvement to meet the needs of the people of Leicester*

- 3.8. In 1999 a self -assessment (Policy into Practice)¹², facilitated by District Audit, confirmed that the council was poor at performance management. Whilst we were good at developing policy and setting objectives and action plans, we were not monitoring and evaluating the results to demonstrate we were achieving our objectives. The performance management framework was devised to address this weakness and encompass the requirements of best value to continually improve the services we provide.
- 3.9. The performance management framework is the key to improving our services. Following the current restructure of senior management, Service Directors will be accountable to Corporate Directors for the performance of services in their portfolios. The framework specifies the aims and objectives of the council and is the vehicle for communicating them to staff members and the public. The framework is driven by priorities set within the community plan, national priorities, statutory requirements and local political priorities presented through 19 key service strategies and 4 resource strategies. (See section 2.2) These follow through to business plans and individual programmes. The Best Value Performance Plan draws the picture together and feeds into the Best Value review programme and inspection/audit. The framework is in diagram form in the Performance Management Framework report.
- 3.10. Business planning is the key to delivering performance management. Managers' competence in writing business plans is developed through the provision of training and guidance material. Business plans incorporate best value principles of the four Cs and the requirement for appropriate performance indicators. Last year's Best Value audit identified inconsistencies in the quality of business plans but our recent audit has shown that progress is being made although inconsistencies still exist.
- 3.11. The council recognises that its primary resource is the quality of managers and staff who are ultimately responsible for the delivery of services. The employee review and development scheme (ERDS) provides the opportunity to review performance and determine training needs and set targets for each individual. In the past the weakness has been an over emphasis on training needs and under emphasis on the appraisal of the individual's performance. The application of ERDS across the council has been inconsistent. This is additional evidence of the need for performance management to be improved. Work has started on this with the development of senior management competency profiling that recognises the importance of managers being able to appraise individual performance, along with a number of other key competency standards.
- 3.12. In October 2001, Directors agreed a framework¹³ of monitoring performance. This clarifies roles and responsibilities for the delivery, and monitoring of performance. The Best Value Audit Report in 2001 highlighted the under ambitious target setting within the Best Value Performance Plan. This year,

¹² Policy into Practice – District Audit (1999)

¹³ Performance Monitoring Report (2001)

Directors have reviewed estimated outturn and targets for all Best Value PIs in comparison with Metropolitan authority averages to ensure targets are challenging. Whilst Members have expressed their concern that some targets are not being met they expect targets to be ambitious but realistic, particularly where performance reflects current political priorities and budgetary constraints.

- 3.13. The Council's Best Value Review programme has provided the opportunity to systematically challenge all services. We have reviewed a mixture of direct and support services and carried out both single service and cross service reviews. Progress is regularly reported to Directors; Members and Cabinet agree the scope, the fundamental challenge and the final improvement plan. The need for the service (or part thereof) is fundamentally challenged. In the third year, the criteria for selecting services for review was the importance to revitalising neighbourhoods.

Improving Governance Arrangements – *creating more efficient, effective, transparent and accountable governance that responds to the needs of our citizens.*

Political Arrangements

- 3.14. The Council has a new political structure to deliver better, faster decisions; the key milestones were:

DATE	MILESTONE
January/February 2002	First public consultation
September 2000	An interim Cabinet and Leader arrangement replaced the committee system
April 2001	Additional consultation confirmed the preference for the new arrangement
July 2001	Introduction of Standards Committee
29 th November 2001	The structure was formalised in a new constitution agreed by full council

Following 18 months of operating the new system, it is clear that the scrutiny function requires review and improvement if it is to operate effectively.

- Member support is being reviewed taking on board recommendations expressed by the Independent Panel on Members Allowances.
- Regular programmes of member training are made available particularly to support new members.
- The Council's work on political conventions is recognised nationally and has been used as a model by other authorities.

- 3.15. The Council operates through the Leader, with Cabinet, Scrutiny and Regulatory model of local governance. The Leader is without portfolio, Cabinet Portfolios are:

Finance and Resources	Strategic Planning and Regeneration
Housing and Neighbourhood Renewal	Arts, Leisure and the Environment
Highways and Transportation	Education and Lifelong Learning
Social Services and Personal Health	Best Value
Human Resources and Equal Opportunities	

56 councillors serve the existing 28 wards. A reduction to 54 members is proposed in the Periodic Electoral Review currently nearing completion.

- 3.16. Scrutiny Portfolios are:

• Arts, Leisure and Environment	• Education and Lifelong Learning
• Housing	• Highways and Transportation
• Social Services and Personal Health	• Strategic Planning and Regeneration

- 3.17. The Council is introducing six corporate portfolios each managed by a Corporate Director. The portfolios are:

• Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal	• Environment, Regeneration and Development
• Education and Lifelong Learning	• Housing
• Resources, Access and Diversity	• Social Care and Health

There is also a Chief Executives Office responsible for policy, performance and communications.

Organisation Arrangements

The Council agreed a Local Code of Corporate Governance and the management arrangements to ensure sound corporate governance across the Council in May 2002.

- 3.18. The Council has strong financial systems and procedures with a good record of probity and financial accountability reflected in recent annual audit letters. In recent years, the Council has improved the

standard of its final accounts and introduced decentralised finance management across service departments in a structured way. Decisions about revenue and capital spending are based on formal medium-term strategies. Revenue budgets are regularly monitored, and the Council has not been subject to significant financial problems which were not predicted when they could have been. The Council is implementing an innovative new approach to internal control, involving production of monthly assurance statements for the Chief Finance Officer for key corporate systems.

- 3.19. There are areas where improvements are being made:
- A recent District Audit report identified weaknesses in standards of Internal Audit which are being addressed by means of a private sector partnership.
 - Payroll (a service identified as poor in the Ofsted review) has reduced its error rates and a Best Value review is looking at options for fundamental change (the status quo is not a viable option).
 - Council tax collection rates remain in the bottom quartile, and have recently deteriorated due to problems experienced in the Benefit service - this issue is being tackled by the implementation of new integrated local tax/benefit systems and a restructuring of the 2 services. (It is, however, noted that there is a link between deprivation and council tax collection performance).
 - The quality of financial management information is currently being improved through the Financial Management Information System (FMIS) re-implementation project, and steps have been taken to improve the quality of capital expenditure monitoring.
- 3.20. Risk Management is a developing area and steps are being taken to improve and systemise risk management processes which will produce good results next year. This has commenced with the creation of a new Corporate Risk Management Group, which will develop the framework and report twice yearly to Directors' Board and annually to Cabinet on progress. The strategy is based on the identification of hazards and the risks associated with those hazards.
- 3.21. The Council self-insures its major risks, subject to deductibles and aggregates, and a specialist team manages the internal fund. As part of Risk Management, the Council recently reviewed and revised its policy and procedures on health and safety, reporting bi-annually to Directors and Members. The five priority risk areas which have been identified and agreed are: work related upper limb disorder, stress, contractor management, water management systems and asbestos. Each has a separate action plan and projects have delivered agreed improvements over the past year.
- 3.22. After a failure in project management in delivering a major capital project six years ago, the Council has redesigned its approach to project management. We have established new guidelines and are training all staff involved in major projects. All lead officers on major projects, at the inception stage and during their implementation, are required to identify, and then manage the risks associated with their project. Risks should be reported in business plans where they are medium to high and the action to be taken to manage those risks.
- 3.23. Resulting from the Best Value Inspector's recommendations a Corporate Procurement Team was established. One of the key tasks for the Team is to develop an e-procurement solution for the management of the purchasing of and payment for goods, services and works by Leicester City Council to enable analysis of purchasing sufficient for corporate decisions on future arrangements to be made.
- 3.24. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) service is leading the response to the national e-government agenda and we are on target for 2005. Following a Best Value Review of Customer Care, we have recently integrated ICT and Customer Services (front of house and the switchboard) into an ICT and Customer Access division with the brief to "improve access to and delivery of public services through the best use of ICT". The ICT service is currently undergoing a Best Value review to ensure it meets the strategic aims of the council.

4. WHAT WE HAVE AND HAVE NOT ACHIEVED

There is clear leadership underpinned by sound political conventions, openness to change and high ambition. We have turned round failing services and there are significant examples of high performance and innovation, external accreditation and some international recognition. However, a culture of rigorous performance management is not yet fully embedded throughout the council. Our priorities are not always clear and focused and alternative management arrangements are still being developed.

4.1. We are proud of our achievements in improving the quality of life in Leicester.

- Leicester is the only Unitary in each of the past three years to have achieved a Beacon status award. In 2000 for housing maintenance, in 2001 for maintaining a quality environment and in 2002 for promoting racial equality.
- To date 80% of our original targets in the Community Plan Action Plan have been met.
- Of 20 indicators adopted by the Leicester Partnership to illustrate the key trends affecting the quality of life in the city in each of the priority areas:
 - 9 showed positive movement.
 - 7 negative movement.
 - 4 indicators proved to be inconclusive, due either to the data not being collected over enough years or no clear trend emerging.

These and other specific outcomes are set out below within the corporate priority themes.

Education and Lifelong Learning

We have successfully turned around a failing education service in less than two years and put in place the building blocks which will improve attainment. The recent inspection of the LEA in 2001 showed substantial progress has already been made and all key indicators are on an upward trend and the Education Partnership Board will close in July having completed its work. A new city-wide Partnership Board will take its place. Furthermore, the new Education Development Plan (EDP) has been graded 2 by the DfES.

4.2. Educational achievement across schools in the City has risen significantly:

- 38% of pupils achieved 5 GCSEs at grades A*-C in 2001 compared with 34% in 2000.
- With the exception of Key Stage 2, the results for City schools improved in 2001.
- The rate of improvement since 1996 in Key Stages 1 and 3 is greater than the national rate.
- The improvement in Key Stage 4 GCSE results from 2001 was above the national average.

In spite of these improvements the City remains below the national average.

- During the last six months schools have focused on improving core subjects in Key Stage 2.
- We have set challenging targets to improve over the next two years. The targets are stretched by both the Excellence in Cities initiative and LPSA.
- We aim to improve GCSE results to 46% in summer 2004 to meet our LPSA stretched target.

4.3. A major weakness remains the under achievement of specific children:

- Of the 30 Looked After Children who left care last year none achieved 5 GCSEs. This has been recognised in the new EDP, which has prioritised social exclusion and will be addressed with the additional support of LPSA pump priming allocation.
- Targets to reduce the number of exclusions from schools were not achieved and we remain in the bottom quartile.

The Vulnerable Children Best Value review will improve the coordination between support services. A review of special education is examining how to support more pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

4.4. An increasing proportion of schools inspected by OFSTED are now judged to be good or very good:

- We have 6 beacon schools.
- The number of schools with serious weakness has been reduced from 15 to 2.
- The number of schools in special measures reduced from 15 to 2.
- Schools are getting out of special measures quicker.

Notwithstanding these improvements:

- 30% of schools are still ranked in the lower categories of E and E*.
- 7% more primary schools are in these categories than would be expected.
- We have not pursued the review of Primary Education because of the need to prioritise the issues arising from the Ofsted report.

- 4.5. The City has a high level of participation in adult learning provided by the LEA:
- 10% of adults sign up for at least one course per year.
 - Participation rates declined during a protracted review of the youth and community services.
 - The new Division has increased levels of activity and participation rates are now at least as high as they were prior to the review.
 - Unit costs in relation to other authorities are high and the new Lifelong Learning and Community Division is implementing a strategy to prepare for changes in the LSC funding regime in 2003.
- 4.6. Satisfaction of users with schools and adult learning was measured in the Residents Survey:
- 81% of users were satisfied with primary schools in 2001, compared with 77% in 1998.
 - Satisfaction with secondary schools remained at 66%; a period when secondary reorganisation was taking place.
 - Levels of satisfaction with adult learning provision are amongst the highest in the country, increasing from 76% in 1998 to 85% in 2001.

Social Care and Health

Since the Joint Review in 1999 we have moved from good plans to good partnership and improved the way in which we work. This now provides the basis for us to move forward and improve more outcomes for children and adults.

- 4.7. Family support services improved with the reviews of cases of children on the child protection register increasing from 85% to 97%, exceeding the target of 95%.
- 4.8. A Corporate Parenting group works towards improving the quality of life for Looked After Children. This has had some notable successes that are best illustrated anecdotally. For example, because free swims were offered to foster families, 2 children learned to swim, gained confidence and started doing better at school. One young person in residential care who had not attended school for four years was employed at a leisure centre and achieved some basic qualifications, including health and safety. The number of Looked After Children increased in 2001/02 from approximately 480 to 520. This has required additional resources.
- 4.9. The performance of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and the Drug Action Team (DAT) has been very good. 38 of the 40 targets were fully or substantially met and action plans have been highly commended by Government Inspectors for each of the three years of the YOT. The DAT has a positive first evaluation. We will have now established a baseline from which we can measure improvement in the service next year.
- 4.10. Intensive and intermediate care shows improvement:
- More adults with physical disabilities have been helped to live at home, rising from 3.9 per 1000 to 5 per 1000) and is significantly above the national average.
 - 80% of adults now receive a statement of their needs compared with 58% in 1998/99, nearing the national average of 81%.
 - Our performance in avoiding delayed discharges from hospital is good. Numbers fell from 9 to 3 in January 2002. Further improvements will be made, in partnership with the Primary Care Trusts through our LPSA.
 - The occupational therapy waiting list fell from 600 in December 2000 to 152 in December 2001.
- Significant budget overspends need to be addressed and this in turn depends on the implementation of the new Care First computer based information management system which will be completed by September 2002.
- 4.11. 62% of citizens are now satisfied with Social Services, compared with 51% in 1998 and 89% of users are satisfied compared with 87% in 1998.

Community Safety

The Crime and Disorder Partnership is well established and has now produced its second three-year strategy.

- 4.12. The trend in crimes recorded by the police is downwards, a decrease of 7.2% in 2000/01 compared with 1999/2000, which is better than the national average of a 2.5% decrease.
- The incidence of domestic burglary is now 28.2 incidents per 1000 households compared with 36 and 39 in the previous two years.
Domestic burglary is still the crime that causes most concern for residents of Leicester.
 - The incidence of violent crime is increasing, rising 9% between 1999 and 2001 and is expected to rise again.

- Early indications are that vehicle crime has increased in 2001/02 and is ranked sixth in the order of concern in the residents' survey.

These three areas are priorities in the 2002/03 Crime and Disorder Strategy. The targets for reduction are in the table below.

	Year 1 Reduction	Year 2 Reduction	Year 3 Reduction
Domestic Burglary	6%	7%	7%
Violent Crime	3%	3%	4%
Vehicle Crime	6%	5%	5%

Since domestic burglary causes most concern to residents, the target is stretched in the LPSA to achieve an additional 7% reduction over the three years.

Jobs and Regeneration

The number of jobs in Leicester has increased since 1998, a trend that is mirrored in the regeneration areas. The physical regeneration of the city is evident with new buildings, disused buildings given new life and the high profile National Space Centre.

4.13. New Deal for Communities, SRB and Objective 2 funding is regenerating communities in several areas of the city. Halfway through a ten year programme, the achievement of the SRB schemes in deprived areas includes:

- 673 jobs created and 798 jobs safeguarded for local residents.
- Qualifications for 1,511 people.
- 9,544 young people benefiting from personal development.
- 115 new businesses.
- 72 buildings brought back into use, including 33,000 square metres of business space.
- 36,200 people and 6,183 homes benefiting from community safety improvements.
- 16,735 people benefiting from new sports facilities.
- Assistance to 353 voluntary sector organisations.
- Support for 100 new community capacity building initiatives.

4.14. The latest figures from the Office of National Statistics shows a slight fall in the number of people unemployed, the City has a jobless rate of 4.8%. The trend in unemployment is downwards but income inequality increased until 1999 and fell slightly in 2000. A recent TUC survey found that ethnic minority employees in Leicestershire earn significantly less than average. (Mercury 15th April).

4.15. One of the Council's top capital priorities is the development of a Cultural Quarter in the St Georges area. Phase one of the scheme is a new Performance Arts Centre and Incubator units for creative industries. This will provide new jobs and contribute to the physical regeneration of the city.

4.16. Leicester Market is currently undergoing a major refurbishment with a £650,000 investment to make the Markets more attractive and a wider programme of specialist markets will attract a broader section of people.

4.17. Satisfaction with Leicester as a place to live is high at 80%; the net satisfaction rate of 67% has remained unchanged since 1998. (Leicester Residents Survey)

Environment

The council achieved beacon status for Maintaining a Quality Environment in 2001.

4.18. The Quality of Life Indicators show:

- Satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live has declined over a long period with net satisfaction declining from 67% in 1998 to 63% in 2001. (Residents survey)
- Air quality is improving, the number of days air pollution exceeds national standards fell from 20 in 1998 to 5 in 2000.
- The amount of household waste collected per person increased to 469 kilos per head in 2001 from 457.5 in 2000.

4.19. Residents rate refuse collection as an important service. (Residents Surveys 1998, 2001). The service maintained a top quartile position until last year when adverse weather affected performance. (985 bins per 100,000 missed compared with 52 in the previous year). Targets were set to return the service to high performing but a high number of complaints were received in April 2002 and we now estimate that

performance will remain below average. The council is addressing the problems in consultation with the contractor.

- 4.20. Every city resident has access to recycling facilities. Recycling of waste has improved to 13% of total waste but the figure is still disappointingly low. The new composting facility will recover 40% of household waste and will be in place by 2005. A full Risk assessment has been carried out on this major project.
- 4.21. The City Centre will be improved by an inter-agency approach to tackle the problems with the Street Scene (especially pavement obstructions, litter, graffiti and flyposting) and make it more welcoming. The project aims include assessing the effectiveness of a "spot it, sort it, stop it" strategy and determining the appropriate democratic forum for shaping and commissioning City Centre Street Environmental Services.
- 4.22. The Transport and Highways service is included in a Best Value Review, due to be completed by June 2002. Significant improvements have been achieved since becoming the Highways Authority in 1997:
- The number of roads in need of repair has reduced from 52% to 20%
 - The number of footpaths which are easy to use has increased from 19% to 65%.
- The proportion of roads in need of repair is still significantly high in comparison with other authorities. The major new investment from the Local Transport Plan will help to improve the city's road infrastructure, public transport and road safety over the next five years. This will be at the cost of indicators relating to road closures remaining in the bottom quartile.
- 4.23. Significant improvement has been achieved in the time taken to deal with planning applications rising from 68.4 days in 1999/2000 to 64.6 days in 2000/1, which is above average performance. Our performance on searches, however, is currently in the bottom quartile and currently subject to review.
- 4.24. Satisfaction with refuse collection, street lighting, recycling facilities, street cleaning, road maintenance and public toilets has decreased since 1998 (Residents Survey). A Best Value Review of Environmental services has commenced this year to carry out a full assessment of these services.

Diversity - Culture

The development of Leicester's Cultural Strategy has achieved widespread support from cultural providers across the city and praise from GOEM. For the first time, it draws together cultural providers in partnership to support and deliver a common vision for the cultural life of the City.

- 4.25. Participation in cultural activities increased during 2001/2002:
- Visits to museums increased by 9%.
 - Attendance at arts activities increased by 5%.
 - Swims and visits to leisure centres increased by 1%.
 - Libraries have not shown an increase due to closures for refurbishment.
- More rigorous monitoring of attendance and visits to events is in place to enable the outcomes from the levels of investment to be evaluated. A target to increase participation has been included in the LPSA.
- 4.26. We have introduced an Under Fives Strategy as a result of a redirection of resources to support early years learning and literacy. Usage of services in 2001/2002:
- 400 Books for Babies packs issued in February and March 2002.
 - 5,859 visits to the dedicated book bus for under 5's, parents and carers.
 - 234 visits to under 5s story telling sessions at every library.
 - 6,176 visits to homework clubs in 16 libraries
- 4.27. As a result of the Best Value Arts and Entertainments review, the Haymarket Theatre programme now includes culturally specific productions in the main programme.
- 4.28. Satisfaction of users with leisure services was measured in the Residents Survey (2001).
- Satisfaction with arts and entertainments is 82% compared with 72% in 1998.
 - Satisfaction with museums is 85% compared with 84% in 1998.
 - Satisfaction with libraries is 81% compared with 87% in 1998.
- The decrease can be explained by the proposed library closures in 2000 subsequently withdrawn
- Satisfaction with Sports facilities is 62% compared with 75% in 1998.
- The decrease can be explained by the closure of two central sports centres. A new sports centre is under development.

Diversity – Housing

We are improving the quality of our housing stock and our relationship with tenants. Our homelessness service gained excellent Best Value inspection results.

4.29. The Housing stock of 26,000 homes has been rationalised to take out poor quality surplus accommodation. As a result the Council can achieve the Governments decency standard by 2010.

- We were awarded Beacon status for our housing repairs and maintenance service in 2000
 - We were designated a “well above average housing authority” by the DTLR this year for the fourth year in succession.
 - 74% of the budget is now spent on planned maintenance compared with 49% in 1997/98.
 - We reduced the average weekly costs of management per property to £7.68 this year from £8.57 in 1999/2000
 - We reduced rent arrears to £1.790m in 1999/2000 from £2.064m in 1997/1998
- The problems with the benefit system caused an increase in rent arrears in 2000/01.

4.30. The Housing Benefits service was recognised as performing well in the Benefits Fraud inspection in 1998. We invested in a new document imaging processor to improve response times and service access. In the last year, due to the collapse of the contractor, there has been a major decline in service performance causing user complaints, press and member concern and severe pressures on our staff. The problem has been addressed by a £200,000 plus improvement plan but despite decisive action it is inevitable that performance will remain in the bottom quartile over the next year. The problems will reduce performance in terms of rent arrears and council tax collection which will take time to get back to the previous levels.

4.31. Despite major improvements to the Housing stock, net satisfaction with council housing has decreased among users of the service from 61% in 1998 to 56% in 2001. A £350,000 programme has recently been approved to improve customer care in the service.

4.32. Corporate Progress on Equality

- The makeup of service users is difficult to measure. We are striving to devise methods of measuring the use of services, as there are no national performance indicators. Improvements include:
 - Council contact information in minority languages on the website.
 - Improved access to library books in different languages in central libraries.
 - Improvement of electoral services through translated publicity, phone lines and staff interpreters at polling stations.

- The make up of elected members is in the table below:

Total	Asian	African Caribbean	White
56	13 (23%)	1 (2%)	42 (75%)

14(25%) of councillors are women.

- The make up of staff at 31st March 2001 (excluding school based staff) was:

Total	Asian	African Caribbean	White
8543	16%	4%	71%

Some information was not known or not provided.

61% of staff are women; 4% are disabled.

- We failed to publish a level of CRE standards in our 2001/02 Best Value Performance Plan due to an office reorganisation and a delay in recruiting new staff. A full audit has now been carried out and an overall assessment of level 2 agreed with many areas already attaining levels 3 and 4.

Progress on Resource Management

4.33. Whilst most of the Human Resource performance indicators are in the top quartile the service does need to be fundamentally changed to support the council's other change programmes driven by performance management and Revitalising Neighbourhoods. The Best Value review will report its improvement plan in June. The Council is about to embark on a major cultural change programme in support of the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project.

4.34. Property Services were recently awarded a “good” category for their Asset Management plan. Users and an Ofsted Inspection have identified weaknesses in the service. A review is currently taking place to integrate property functions across the Council and to reconfigure the service to be more responsive to users.

- 4.35. The Council has a well established and highly regarded 'one-stop' Customer Services Centre in its main City centre office which receives in excess of 100,000 visitors a year, and continues to actively look at ways of improving its customer access arrangements through both assisted and unassisted access channels. The Council's internet site is highly regarded nationally, particularly for its accessibility to visually impaired users, and we've seen a phenomenal growth in its popularity since launch in 1999 - 227,141 hits in April 2000, 827,141 hits in April 2001 and 1,104,478 hits in April 2002. Examples of transactional services already available include reporting housing repairs and applying for school based jobs. Priorities for the coming months include on-line book reservation and renewals and on-line payments for a wide range of Council services.
- 4.36. Legal services have recently been reaccredited under "Lexel" with an excellent assessment in part due to new customer care initiatives. However, major weaknesses in their financial performance have been identified and are currently being addressed. The District Auditor has repeatedly identified a favourable legality framework for the Council in his annual audit letter.
- 4.37. During all years 1996/97 to 2000/01, the Council spent within its budget. The Council was also successful in maintaining its agreed minimum working balance of £5m uncommitted reserves. 2001/02 has seen a more difficult budget position, with anticipated overspendings in Social Services (in common with many authorities nationally). This was, however, recognised very early in the year and steps were taken to minimise the problem.
- 4.38. Despite the difficulties, we have addressed the funding shortfall in Education and have done more than simply "passport" national increases in Education SSA. The Council has gradually increased its spend relative to SSA from 97% in 1997/98 to 101% in 2001/02. We have succeeded in:
- Introducing medium-term planning, committing itself to (and delivering) limited tax rises and new resources for stated key priorities.
 - Preparing and living within balanced budgets.
 - Responding to new, unexpected pressures such as the recent arrival of persons from abroad, and the growing national spending trend in Social Services.
 - Developing a capital strategy assessed as "good" by Government Office.

5. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT AND WHAT WE PLAN TO DO NEXT

In the future we need to generate step change to improve the experience of service users through culture change, customer care and performance management. We need to focus on community cohesion and friendlier local community engagement by revitalising neighbourhoods and achieving our equality standards. We need to drive performance management through the organisation to have measurable outcomes from all our improvement plans.

Learning from Listening

- 5.1. The Council has learnt to listen and believes it does this well. This means listening to the community, key stakeholders and external critics. This listening led to the strategic decision to embark on a major programme of enhancing community involvement in the delivery of services, the Revitalising Neighbourhoods Project. The main messages were:
- Council structures have little or no meaning to services users - Local environmental services need to be joined up and shaped locally.
 - Community engagement will only follow a measure of devolvement of power and resources.
 - The communities' capacity to shape and influence local affairs has to be developed and maintained.
 - The Council has sometimes been seen as a barrier rather than a friend or ally.
- 5.2. At a service level, this listening led to improvements in the provision of services. Housing Repairs can now be reported up to 8pm, anti social behaviour has a specialist team, and redevelopment includes the community not just bricks and mortar. We have changed our allocations policy recognising vulnerability and therefore preventing homelessness. We have created a Housing Options service to enable customers to access all options at one go.
- 5.3. Work is underway to open a neighbourhood based Customer Services Centre in January next year. It is anticipated that this will be the model for similar neighbourhood centres in the future. We are also

reviewing existing telephone access arrangements with a view to developing a small number of telephone access points modelled on our Beacon Housing Repairs call centre. Plans are well advanced for a health and Social Care Centre in Braunstone for 2003/2004.

- 5.4. We will improve our response to complaints. The satisfaction with handling complaints is poor and we will monitor the number of complaints, response times and satisfaction rates, but more importantly whether complaints result in service improvement.

Learning from External Challenge

5.5. We have acknowledged and acted upon the findings and recommendations of external inspections including Ofsted, Joint Review, Best Value Inspectorates and Independent Consultees, District Audit and Government Offices. We have invited external inspection through our three beacon status bids. We have attended most other Beacon dissemination events to learn from other authorities' best practice. The main messages from these challenges are that we have been good at:

- Developing innovative policy to tackle contemporary issues.
- Putting into place structures, programmes and resources to implement those policies.

But we have not been so good at:

- Performance managing and evaluating the delivery of the objectives and ultimate outcomes.
- Reshaping the culture of the organisation to embrace the values implicit in the new policies.

Learning from Best Value Reviews

5.6. The inspection of our first year reviews found services unlikely to improve. In part, these reviews had not been approached with sufficient openness to change but Best Value Reviews are now a key driver of change. Learning the lessons has resulted in much better inspection judgements for the year 2 reviews that found the prospects for service improvements were excellent (libraries and homelessness) and the first year review of procurement was revised to "likely to improve".

5.7. Performance management ensures best value is seen as part of day-to-day management. Business Plans are produced using the 4 "C"s. Business Plans are monitored to assess compliance with the corporate requirements.

5.8. Assistance to managers and staff is offered through the Best Value and Performance Management training courses, for example on consultation and benchmarking. Nearly three years on, we are seeing our performance indicators improve. The key challenge on Best Value is to maintain the level of achievement on reviews and to ensure this remains as the key tool informing members about the performance of services and the options which will bring about improvements.

What are the Problems Still to be Faced

5.9. Over the last two years we have improved our Governance arrangements. Most of our support services have or are being reviewed. Our main area of weakness is in Human Resources where the outcome of our Best Value review will drive significant change. We have recognised in preparing for the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project, that to be successful the organisation needs to undergo a major programme of cultural change, which is now being developed. Preparations for the CPA have highlighted further our strengths and weaknesses and shown how far we have to go to meet the highest standards we wish to achieve.

5.10. Although our new political structures are efficient with major strengths in our approach to Community Leadership and Partnership working, these need to be improved further if our partners are to have confidence in our leadership. The Scrutiny process also needs to be reviewed and strengthened, as does the local ward role of Members through the Revitalising Neighbourhoods Project.

5.11. Our budget position makes us vulnerable and must continue to be managed tightly. We have successfully redirected resources to our priorities but this has had its impact on other services, mainly within the departments of Environment, Development and Regeneration, and Cultural Services and Neighbourhood Renewal. The reduction in the number and range of services available has resulted in public dissatisfaction, a lowering of morale and a reduction in performance. One of our weaknesses is our reluctance to define what is not a priority and take action to withdraw from these areas.

5.12. Over the last five years our focus has been on establishing the new Unitary Council, defining our strategic priorities and establishing the systems to ensure they are delivered. Recent experience in renewal areas and public opinion surveys have demonstrated that to some degree we have not been

successful enough in engaging with local communities in local front line service delivery. We have recognised this and the Revitalising Neighbourhoods project will, over the next two years put into place key elements to improve local mechanisms to engage with our communities and better co-ordinate local service delivery. This is a major challenge and will require us to manage carefully the tension between local, citywide and national priorities.

- 5.13. Leicester is known for its Community Cohesion and much of what we wish to achieve is dependent on maintaining our commitment to equal opportunities and diversity. The changing nature of our diverse population over the next decade will present some fundamental challenges to us as we seek to improve services and revitalise our neighbourhoods. Our target is to achieve level 2 in the new generic equality standard in 2002/2003, encompassing race, sex and disability. We will then set targets to improve the standard. Our corporate equality action plan will be agreed and implemented by all departments and will encompass all minority issues, including race and disability.

Future Plans

- 5.14. Our current strategic action plan is attached. Key priorities include:
- A review of the Community Plan to set new goals and targets
 - Responding to the issues raised in the public opinion survey.
 - A focus over the next twelve months on revitalising neighbourhoods, community cohesion and service improvement.
 - The implementation of the three-year budget strategy.
 - The implementation of key service and capacity improvements to deliver national, regional and local priorities are set out below,

Education and Lifelong Learning

Service Improvements

- Building on previous achievement and ensuring that there is effective learning to:
 - Raise attainment of pupils from 3 to 7 at the foundation stage and Key Stage 1.
 - Raise attainment of pupils from 7 to 11 at Key Stage 2.
 - Raise attainment of pupils from 11 to 14 at Key Sage 3.
 - Raise attainment of pupils from 14 to 19 at Key Stage 4 and post 16.
- To narrow attainment gaps and tackle underachievement for pupils with special educational needs, looked after pupils, vulnerable pupils, including pupils with challenging behaviour and gifted, talented pupils.
- Promote effective language acquisition for all pupils, with specific reference to under-achieving pupils from minority ethnic communities and from areas of high social/economic deprivation.
- To widen participation in learning and community development.
- To raise standards of achievement through learning and community development.
- Implement the infrastructure for the People's Network in libraries by December 2002.
- Extend study support to 16 libraries by July 2002.

Capacity Improvements

- Continue to provide co-ordinated and consistent support for schools causing concern.
- Implement the co-ordinated strategy for teacher supply, recruitment and retention.

Social Care and Health

In particular, we will address the areas for improvement from the recent inspection.

Service Improvements

- To improve placement stability and educational attainment of Looked After Children.
- To reduce child protection re-registrations.
- To improve the quality of services.
- To reverse the recent decrease in intensive home care.

Capacity Improvements

- To develop a staff development, recruitment and retention strategy which meets the changing needs of the Department.
- To implement Carefirst.
- To develop the Commissioning Strategy in adult services.

Housing

Service Improvements

- To continue to develop and expand the role of tenants in service improvements.
- To raise awareness amongst staff and stakeholders of new and emerging cultures.

- To enable and improve the equality of opportunity under the corporate parenting scheme.
- To continue to improve the Council's housing stock to achieve decent homes targets.
- To improve temporary accommodation to a range of customer groups.
- To continue to work with partners to address the level of rough sleeping.
- To ensure a seamless and consistent service to customers (Housing Advice and Hostels).
- To ensure that the benefits backlog will be tackled by September 2002.
- To ensure that service quality in benefits administration continues to recover and improve.
- To continue to meet Governments targets with respect to the implementation of rent restructuring.

Capacity Improvements

- To improve and achieve consistent customer care and satisfaction ratings.
- To actively promote the apprenticeship scheme and increase areas of under-representation.

Culture Services and Neighbourhood Renewal

Service Improvements

- Increase participation in cultural services, particularly by excluded groups, in line with the LPSA and Cultural Strategy.
- Improve the diversity of programming, for example a series of events and exhibitions for the Arts Council's year of Diversity, June 2002 to 2003.
- Improve the quality of the environment through a planned programme of public art commissions.
- Achieve Green Flag status for two city parks.
- Begin building the new Braunstone Leisure Centre in Spring 2003.

Capacity Improvements

- Develop the Cultural Strategy Partnership to deliver the cultural strategy.
- Create Neighbourhood forums.
- Appoint ten Neighbourhood Managers.
- Implement (with the City's Crime and Disorder Partnership) the new Crime and Disorder Strategy.

Environment, Regeneration and Development

Service Improvements

- Implement the new City Centre Security Centre.
- Improve road safety by installing 11 new pedestrian controlled crossings and upgrading 27 existing sites, and by working with the Police to install 23 new road safety camera sites around the City.
- Invest £12.7 million in the transport infrastructure.
- Improve the roadworks information available to the public.
- Pilot a 'cashless' system for school meals in secondary schools to improve the speed of service and reduce the stigma of free school meals.
- Deploy another pedestrian-controlled cleaning machine in the City Centre and introduce more 'out of hours' cleansing to improve street cleanliness.

Capacity Improvements

- Choose the private sector partner for the Integrated Waste Management scheme to increase Leicester's recycling rate to 40% from 2006.

Resources, Access and Diversity

Service Improvements

- Make the democratic process even more open, accessible and effective.
- Improve customer access especially through the application of IT.

Capacity Improvements

- Improve the scrutiny function of the council.
- Procure more strategically and tactically and make more use of IT to make the best of the Council's buying power.
- Develop financial management in response to the revitalising neighbourhoods project and to further improve financial information provided to cost centre managers.
- Improve the payroll system.
- Improve the performance management of financial control.
- Make Human Resources and Equalities a more strategic and proactive service.
- Improve asset planning including the utilisation of accommodation.

5.15. Five years on from Unitary Status we shall over the next few months be reviewing and setting a new Strategic Direction in the light of changing priorities and the outcome from the CPA.