

# Introduction

The past year has been a busy one, having worked through Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), a new Government regime designed to evaluate local authorities and set in place a framework for their continuous improvement. Our inspection was undertaken in February 2004 and we were disappointed to be assessed as a weak authority. A summary of the inspectors' findings is given in section 6.

Having come to terms with the disappointment, we have picked ourselves up, shaken ourselves off, and are now moving forward to address the areas of weakness identified, with a view to demonstrating clear organisational change at a further assessment towards the end of 2005, and improving our rating at the next inspection.

This plan sets out the Government's agenda for local government, and what we are planning to do to help deliver both this and our local priorities.

It provides a summary of what we have achieved over the past year, and how our performance compared with other councils in 2003/04.

Key objectives for the coming year focus on delivering our CPA Improvement Plan; continuing to improve key services such as housing benefits, council tax, homelessness and recycling; and delivering major new projects such as the new leisure centre in Rayleigh, refurbishing the Windmill and its environs, and further upgrading the environment of Websters Way.

Paul Warren  
Chief Executive Officer