# PEER REVIEW

## 1    BACKGROUND

1.1    This report provides details of the planned Peer Review of the Council, which is now scheduled to take place in July 2007.

## 2    INTRODUCTION

2.1    The Council has the option to volunteer for a "Peer Review" at no cost to the Authority.  Unlike an inspection, the "Peer Review" is seen as a "critical friend" assessment of the Council and provides useful feedback in terms of an external independent view as to the Council's current position, relative to a range of factors.  A "Peer Review" is seen as essential prior to any CPA re-inspection and is a useful tool in itself.  The last Peer Review of the Council took place in 2003.

## 3    DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

3.1    In this year's Key Plans and Actions report for 2007/2008, a "Peer Review" was scheduled for July 2007, to allow for sufficient time to elapse between the Review and any application for CPA reassessment (and hopefully subsequently CPA re-inspection).  In discussing with the IDEA, who oversee the Peer Review process, the scope for conducting a Peer Review in July the only dates that have come forward are 9-13 July.  Whilst these dates start to run into the holiday period, it is considered that the July slot offers a better window than moving to the autumn, when the budget process, contract renewals, the critical stages of the LDF, preparation for the Investors in People Re-inspection and renewal around the Local Area Agreement process all start to factor significantly into the Council's work programme. Also, any delay in the Peer Review may impact on the timeframe between the Review and any likely CPA reinspection.

3.2    The Review Team itself will be led by a serving Chief Executive from another District Council.  It will also comprise an elected Member plus one or two officers (normally senior managers from other Councils).  The Chief Executive will be Ray Templeman from Chester-le-Street District Council and the Member will be Claire Denman, Deputy Leader of Crawley District Council. Chester-le-Street was scored a "Poor" Council at the last CPA inspection but it is understood that Council is now going through the reinspection process. Therefore, the information received on that alone through his involvement in this process could be extremely useful to the Council.  Crawley was scored a "Fair" Council under the CPA when it was inspected in 2003.  At that time it was Labour controlled.  It is now Conservative controlled.

3.3    The Peer Review will be conducted in a similar fashion to the "Access to Services" inspection, but with the emphasis on the "critical friend" approach rather than inspection.  Hence the first day will be one of tour and familiarisation; there will then be 3 days of interviews (group/individual) and survey/examination work; the last day will be set aside for preparation and feedback.

3.4     At the time of writing this report, a detailed timetable has not been finalised, but it is anticipated that it will be similar to that for the Access to Services inspection.  A copy of the overall Peer Review process is outlined in Appendix 1.  Prior to the Review commencing, a written submission is sent to the Review team.  A copy of the guidance around that submission is attached as Appendix 2.  Drafts of the written submission (to be submitted prior to the Review) and a draft of the suggested timetable is being sent to Board Members under separate cover.

**4      RECOMMENDATION**

4.1     It is proposed that the Executive Board

   (1)      notes the progress and timetable in connection with the Peer Review.

   (2)      agrees the draft submission and timetable, with amendments as appropriate, to be sent to the Peer Review Team.

Paul Warren

Chief Executive

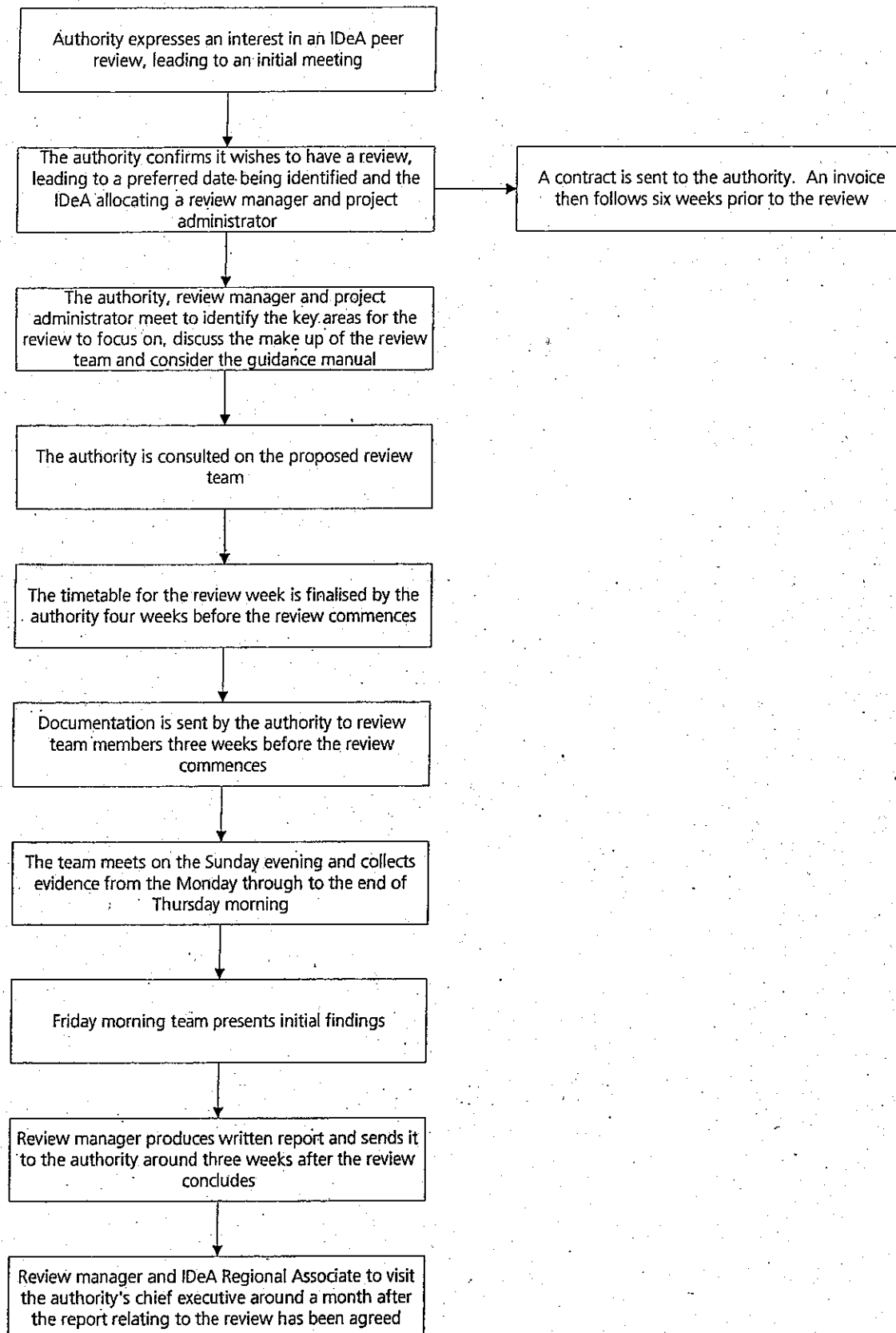**Background Papers:-**

None

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I If you would like this report in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.

IDeA Peer Review Guidance for Local Authorities – March 2005

## 2. Process Chart

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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Authority expresses an interest in an │
│ IDeA peer review, leading to an       │
│ initial meeting                       │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐         ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
│ The authority confirms it wishes to  │         │ A contract is sent to the        │
│ have a review, leading to a preferred │────────▶│ authority. An invoice then       │
│ date being identified and the IDeA   │         │ follows six weeks prior to the   │
│ allocating a review manager and      │         │ review                           │
│ project administrator                │         └──────────────────────────────────┘
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ The authority, review manager and    │
│ project administrator meet to        │
│ identify the key areas for the review │
│ to focus on, discuss the make up of  │
│ the review team and consider the     │
│ guidance manual                      │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ The authority is consulted on the    │
│ proposed review team                 │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ The timetable for the review week is │
│ finalised by the authority four weeks │
│ before the review commences          │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Documentation is sent by the         │
│ authority to review team members     │
│ three weeks before the review        │
│ commences                            │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ The team meets on the Sunday evening │
│ and collects evidence from the       │
│ Monday through to the end of         │
│ Thursday morning                     │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Friday morning team presents initial │
│ findings                             │
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                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Review manager produces written      │
│ report and sends it to the authority │
│ around three weeks after the review  │
│ concludes                            │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
                  │
                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Review manager and IDeA Regional     │
│ Associate to visit the authority's   │
│ chief executive around a month after │
│ the report relating to the review    │
│ has been agreed                      │
└─────────────────────────────────────┘
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Appendix 3 – Benchmark

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# Corporate Peer Review Benchmark
## July 2005

Final v1.1

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# Corporate Peer Review Benchmark 2005

## Introduction

This is the totally revised benchmark of an ideal authority as developed by the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (IDeA). It will form the basis of Corporate Peer Reviews carried out by the IDeA until further notice.

The benchmark has been revised to reflect changes in the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) framework for 2005 as well as the latest thinking in what makes an ideal local authority. Crucially, the benchmark has been slimmed down to make it a more user-friendly tool, both for self-assessment by authorities and for use by reviewers during a review.

It is expected that the benchmark will evolve as it is used.

## The benchmark framework

The benchmark is now comprised of four themes:

1. Leadership & governance
2. Customer focus & community engagement
3. Resource & performance management
4. Organisation & people

Each of these four themes is further divided into a number of elements, see figure 1.

## Figure 1. The Benchmark Framework

| Themes | 1. Leadership & governance | 2. Customer focus & community engagement | 3. Resource & performance management | 4. Organisation & people |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elements | 1.1 Ambition<br>1.2 Prioritisation<br>1.3 Decision making and scrutiny | 2.1 Customer focus<br>2.2 Communication & community empowerment<br>2.3 Delivering through partnerships | 3.1 Performance management<br>3.2 Resource management<br>3.3 Change & project management | 4.1 Organisational design & development<br>4.2 Managing people & diversity |

## The elements of the benchmark

The remainder of this benchmark document describes each of these eleven elements using a standard template as follows:

- **What do we mean by the element** – a short definition of the element

- **What are the key features of an ideal authority** – the benchmark, the key features that an ideal authority would have in this area

- **What will we look for in a review** – the sorts of questions we might ask, the people we might talk to and the evidence we would be seeking to gauge where the reviewed authority is in relation to the benchmark

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# 1. Leadership and governance

## 1.1 Ambition

**What do we mean by ambition?**

The council has a vision of what it wants to achieve for its locality and communities and has translated this into a set of ambitions

The council provides clear community leadership, working with partners to deliver unambiguous and challenging ambitions for the local area. This is based on a shared understanding of the interests of all sections of the community. The benchmark considers this element under three headings:

a. **Relevant and shared** – ambitions reflect the vision for the area, the relevant issues and opportunities, and are widely held

b. **Integrated** – ambitions are clearly reflected in both the council's and partners' plans and activities

c. **Monitored and updated** – the council knows whether ambitions are being achieved and updates them to reflect changing circumstances

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## What are the key features of an ideal authority?

| | An ideal authority – ambition |
|---|---|
| **Relevant & shared** | • The council is recognised internally and externally as providing **effective leadership** and being willing to champion and address difficult issues.<br><br>• The council **works with partners** to address key local, national, and possibly international, challenges and, through this, secure the well being of local communities. **Clear ambitions reflect the scale of the issues** and **opportunities** whilst remaining achievable. Ambitions are **widely understood and supported** by all stakeholders.<br><br>• The ambitions reflect the **shared understanding** the authority and its partners have of the interests and needs of all sections of the community. This understanding is **based on information gathered and shared** in a co-ordinated way between the council and its partners, which take into account the demographic changes and the socio economic and environmental context that the council and partners are operating within. |
| **Integrated** | • Ambitions are **clearly reflected in the council's strategies and plans**, both statutory and otherwise. Within the authority people are enthusiastic about achieving the ambitions. All councillors contribute to the development and review of ambitions and related strategies.<br><br>• The council understands how its own services and activities, and those of its partners, can contribute to achieving ambitions. There is an open and mature approach to **sharing and combining resources** between partners. Where relevant, local public service agreements (LPSAs) and local area agreements (LAAs) are being driven forward by the authority to support the achievement of the ambitions.<br><br>• The **community strategy**, which is fully owned by the Local Strategic Partnership, **reflects the ambitions**, which are broken down into clear actions and SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, resourced and timed) targets deliverable in the short, medium and long-term.<br><br>• The council takes responsibility for ensuring that **partnership arrangements are sound** and deliver the priorities, which support the overarching community ambitions for the area. |
| **Monitored & Updated** | • The council and its partners **monitor both what is and what is not being delivered**. Changes to, and progress against, the ambitions are communicated effectively to elected members, council staff, partner organisations, local people and other stakeholders. Monitoring is used to anticipate new trends and challenges.<br><br>• **Mechanisms are in place to identify changing circumstances** locally nationally and regionally and to respond proactively to these. The council is practiced at making other's initiatives its own and reflecting best practice in its activities and seeks to influence thinking sub-regionally, regionally and nationally as appropriate. |

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## What will we look for in a review?

| Review Areas | Probes and evidence - ambition |
|---|---|
| Relevant & shared | • Understand the key geographic, demographic, economic, environmental and social context that the council and its partners are operating in. Where appropriate, understand the national, regional, sub-regional, authority and neighbourhood contexts within which the council and partners are operating.<br><br>• Ensure ambitions are stretching and challenging and will make a real difference for local people.<br><br>• Check that elected members, council officers, partners and stakeholders share a common purpose and have clearly defined responsibilities and accountabilities. All partners and the council work together as appropriate and necessary across both organisational and geographical boundaries to address issues of community ambition and concern.<br><br>• Ensure that priorities support the ambitions for the area.<br><br>• Seek evidence that the council is able to take hard/unpopular decisions when necessary, which benefit the local area in the longer term. |
| Integrated | • Check that community plan aims are reflected in the council's corporate plan.<br><br>• Ensure that high quality engagement with service users, local citizens, partners and stakeholders plays a key role in informing council and community ambitions. Within the council, members and officers at all levels and contractors (e.g. internal and external providers) are engaged in consultation around community needs.<br><br>• Identify whether local people understand and support the council's ambitions for its community. |
| Monitored & updated | • Seek evidence of regular monitoring of community and corporate plans.<br><br>• Identify whether SMART targets are used to assess progress.<br><br>• Ensure that effective action is taken if progress is not satisfactory, by both council and partners as appropriate.<br><br>• Check whether plans are updated as required (at least annually) with the involvement of relevant stakeholders. |

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## 1.2 Prioritisation

### What do we mean by prioritisation?

A council's ability to identify and stay focused on what is most important and to allocate resources and direct activities to reflect these priorities. The benchmark considers this element under three headings:

d.      **Identifying priorities** – the processes for ensuring priorities are real and shared

e.      **Aligning resource**s – ensuring resources follow priorities

f.      **Staying focused** – the ability to maintain political and managerial focus on priorities

### What are the key features of an ideal authority?

| An ideal authority - prioritisation |
|---|
| **Identifying priorities**<br><br>• There is a **transparent process** for prioritising council activity that reflects shared ambitions. The council's leadership ensures support for the priorities amongst the local community, partners and other stakeholders.<br><br>• Priorities reflect the community strategy and other key strategic documents. The efforts of the council and its partners are **focused on the priorities**, with agreed action plans capable of ensuring successful delivery. Such action plans contain clear targets for the short, medium and long-terms and are focused on outcomes delivering tangible benefits for local people. The action plans reflect the contributions that all partners are able to make.<br><br>• There is a **holistic, crosscutting approach** to delivery of the priorities, with collaborative cross-boundary working both organisationally and geographically. **Performance management mechanisms** are in place that make clear the respective responsibilities the council and its partners have for delivering the priorities and ensure progress against them is kept on track. **Continuous monitoring** of the context within which the council and its partners are operating, along with **regular community and stakeholder consultation**, lead to the priorities being appropriately revised in order to ensure they remain relevant.<br><br>• The council is able to make **difficult decisions** and stick to them. |
| **Aligning resources**<br><br>• Within the authority, the priorities sit at the heart of the council's performance management framework at all levels and are the focus of **co-ordinated financial and service planning**. Elected members and officers understand the implications of the priorities for their activities. The resources of the council and partner organisations are allocated and managed in a way that reflects priorities, with the council being willing and able to shift resources to match needs, thus demonstrating clarity over both what are and what are not the council's priorities. |
| **Staying focused**<br><br>• The council **maintains its focus** on its priorities to ensure the desired impact is achieved. Members and senior officers are not distracted from the priorities by minor operational matters or crises and initiatives are only undertaken where there is a clear purpose that contributes to the delivery of them. |

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## What will we look for in a review?

| Review Areas | Probes and evidence - prioritisation |
|---|---|
| Identifying priorities | • What process (s) does the council use to identify and agree priorities?<br><br>• Are staff Members and partners aware of the priorities?<br><br>• Are citizens, users partners and other stakeholders involved in a meaningful way?<br><br>• Do relevant plans (community strategy, corporate plans etc) reflect the priorities?<br><br>• Do priorities have regard to the national framework and take account of the social and economic environment and the interests of hard to reach groups? |
| Aligning resources | • Does the council's budget process contain a mechanism to ensure priorities drive resource allocation?<br><br>• Is there evidence of resources being moved from non-priority areas into priority ones? |
| Staying focused | • Do cabinet (or similar) and corporate management team agendas reflect the priorities or are they overwhelmed with urgent but non-priority items? |

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## 1.3 Decision-making and scrutiny

### What do we mean by decision-making and scrutiny?

The Council has integrated and robust executive arrangements, which are clearly understood by officers and members across the authority. These arrangements ensure a transparent executive-scrutiny 'split' and result in efficient, effective decision-making (with appropriate delegations) and robust 'critical friend' challenge to the executive from the overview & scrutiny function. The benchmark considers this element under three headings:

g. **Structure** – an effective split and proper checks and balances between appropriately resourced executive and non-executive functions

h. **Systems and processes** – the transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of decision related processes

i. **Relationships** – the nature and effectiveness of relationships between executive and scrutiny, officers and members and the council and the public in relation to making decisions

### What are the key features of an ideal authority?

| An ideal authority – decision making & scrutiny |
|---|
| **Structure** <br> • There is a **clearly understood 'executive-scrutiny' split**, which is ensured throughout the corporate political management arrangements and played out in practice. <br><br> • The **executive arrangements** for the authority **are clear** with a structure that works effectively such that decisions are made efficiently and effectively (whether cabinet and leader, mayoral or fourth option). <br><br> • **Arrangements for the overview & scrutiny function are clearly understood** and there is a focus for 'non-executive' examination of policies and decisions; usually an overarching, co-ordinating committee and a series of scrutiny committees or panels, which mirror the executive portfolios. <br><br> • Both executive and scrutiny functions are **member-led** with elected members taking full responsibility for the brief they hold. In particular cabinet portfolio holders are fully engaged and working effectively with appropriate senior officers. The lead member for scrutiny and chairs of scrutiny committees/panels take a lead in shaping the scrutiny agenda and are accorded sufficient status to command respect across the authority. |

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| **Systems and processes** | • Decision-making arrangements are well publicised and understood by both members and officers across the council so that they are **open and transparent**. In particular meetings of scrutiny committees are open to the public and their work is well documented and accessible to the public.<br><br>• The scrutiny function is **integrated effectively**. Good use of the council's Forward Plan guides work programmes and plans and budgets are examined at the appropriate stage of the corporate planning cycle for maximum corporate benefit. There is evidence of corporate 'buy-in' across the council to these arrangements and the scrutiny function is not regarded as a marginal activity.<br><br>• A **clear system of delegations** to cabinet portfolio holders and/or senior officers is in place and both executive members and senior officers are clear as to how this works. Delegation *means* delegation.<br><br>• Both executive and scrutiny functions are **properly resourced** with sufficient professional officer support for a functional work programme, particularly the scrutiny function, which needs different skills for evidence-based enquiry. |
| **Relationships** | • Good decision-making and scrutiny is evidenced by **constructive working relationships** between the executive and scrutiny colleagues. Relationships reflect mutual respect for each function irrespective of party politics.<br><br>• Constructive working relationships may be formalised through **protocols** which set out how work programmes are coherent, document effective information flows such that scrutiny has access to corporate management information as required, and establish how the executive responds to scrutiny recommendations.<br><br>• There is evidence of the scrutiny function effectively providing a **'critical-friend' challenge** to the executive irrespective of political party loyalty, which is a result of evidence based examination of an issue and a consensus around recommendations for future action. It is not an arena for oppositional party politics or aggressive posturing.<br><br>• The **'call-in' process is operationally reasonable** and understood by both members and officers. It is used where needed to call-in a decision of the executive before implementation where there are serious grounds for doing so – not for political mischief making. It is expected that call-in would always be used appropriately.<br><br>• Leadership in good corporate governance reflects the community leadership responsibility of the authority to ensure community well being. There is **effective public engagement** in inclusive policy-making and decision-making. An effective executive works with and through the scrutiny function to achieve this and scrutiny committees demonstrate innovative and varied ways in which the views of the public are directly and indirectly sought as evidence for their reviews of policy and major decisions. |

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## What will we look for in a review?

| Review Areas | Probes and evidence – decision making & scrutiny |
|---|---|
| **Structure** | • Examine the political management arrangements, constitution and related documents.<br><br>• Talk to key stakeholders about the operation of these arrangements. |
| **Systems & Processes** | • Where possible observe a cabinet and a scrutiny session.<br><br>• Examine agendas, minutes work programmes and Forward Plans.<br><br>• Examine delegation arrangements.<br><br>• Identify resources (money, officers, accommodation etc.) to support executive and scrutiny. |
| **Relationships** | • Identify the stage and extent to which scrutiny is engaged by the executive to examine policies and decisions pro-actively rather than retrospectively.<br><br>• Examine the process whereby the executive respond to scrutiny recommendations and the number of recommendations agreed and implemented. Whilst working relationship should be constructive, the scrutiny function should not be totally 'executive led'.<br><br>• Talk to stakeholders. |

Our thanks to the *Centre for Public Scrutiny* who developed this element of the benchmark

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# 2. Customer focus and community engagement

## 2.1 Customer focus

### What do we mean by customer focus?

An authority's willingness and ability to understand users' wishes and needs and engage them in designing and delivering accessible services that best meet the needs of all members of the community including hard to reach groups. The Council's corporate priorities include a commitment to customers, which outline how they will deliver high quality efficient services in different ways to meet the needs of the local community. Political and management structures, resource allocation and other systems and processes are organised to this end. There are easily available and clearly expressed standards of service that customers can expect .The benchmark considers this element under three headings:

j.      **Responsive services** – quickly understanding what users want and need, creating opportunities to extend choice

k.      **Efficient and effective services** – delivering services in a cost-effective manner to meet these needs

l.      **Accessible services** – services can be accessed in ways and times that are convenient for all users

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## What are the key features of an ideal authority?

| An ideal authority – customer focus |
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|---|---|
| **Responsive Services** | • The council **listens to its customers, users and citizens**, working with them to prioritise and design services according to their wishes and needs. These wishes and needs are reflected in corporate ambitions and in required outcomes and performance targets.<br><br>• The council **understands what drives customer satisfaction** and uses this information to improve services, extending choice and personalising services where possible. The council uses local data to understand resident needs and plan services accordingly. There is an understanding of the service user profile and thorough analysis of non-users to ensure that provision of services is not biased against any sub-section of the community, with particular reference to traditionally excluded or hard to reach groups.<br><br>• The council has a well-developed, well-publicised **complaints procedure**, accessible to all citizens through a range of channels. Complaints are resolved as quickly as possible and there are targets for the time taken to respond to both formal and informal complaints. Complaints information is analysed and used to improve services. |
| **Accessible Services** | • The council has an excellent **understanding of when, where and how users want to access services,** including provision of services and information in different languages and formats and providing access for people with disabilities. This understanding is developed through consultation with users from diverse communities, analysis of usage information and timely feedback to users.<br><br>• Users are able to **access services at times and places which are convenient to them.** Use of e-technology and call centres are used to extend the hours and ways that users can access services. Services are designed around customer needs, providing seamless, one-stop access to all public services in the area. |
| **Efficient & Effective Services** | • The council strives to make the **user experience as pleasant and efficient as possible.** Staff have a culture of "customer first". There are clear well publicised service standards.<br><br>• The council uses methods such as **on-line, card and direct payments** to empower individuals to achieve more appropriate provision.<br><br>• Good use is made of **performance and unit cost data** to ensure services are delivered cost-effectively |

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## What will we look for in a review?

| Review Areas | Probes and evidence – customer focus |
|---|---|
| **Responsive Services** | • How does the council, both corporately and through individual services, consult and engage users to keep informed about what they want and need? <br><br> • Has the council conducted user testing on individual access channels? <br><br> • Does the council have a consultation strategy on who/how often they consult their customers? <br><br> • What evidence is there that such user consultation/involvement actually leads to changes to services, tailored to user needs? <br><br> • Is there a complaints/compliments system and is it used to improve services? <br><br> • How does the council ensure appropriate customer training for different staff groups (e.g. front line staff)? <br><br> • Is there a Senior Officer/Lead Member with responsibility for customer services? |
| **Accessible Services** | • Does the council understand its users' needs, especially those with non-standard needs (e.g. language, physical, timing, location etc.)? <br><br> • Does the Council make efforts to deliver its services in an equal, consistent and sensitive way to all members of its community? <br><br> • Does the council use a range of delivery channels (face-to-face, phone, letter, electronic) and times to maximise access for users? <br><br> • Has the council carried out equality impact assessments and what has the council done to improve services based on those assessments? |
| **Efficient & Effective Services** | • Is there evidence that customers feel that they are getting value for money from the council, and does the council effectively communicate its efficient use of resources? <br><br> • Are there well-publicised service standards? <br><br> • Is compliance against these standards regularly monitored? <br><br> • Can the council demonstrate that it knows its customers and their preferred means of contact? <br><br> • Are the council redesigning access to services around its customer base? <br><br> • How is information on customers used/shared across the council to resolve queries and deliver services more effectively to customers . <br><br> • Does the council know how cost-effective its services are in relation to appropriate comparators? |

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## 2.2 Communication and community empowerment

### What do we mean by communication & community empowerment?

The dialogue a council has with its communities and the way in which it involves those communities in developing a local vision, setting priorities and shaping services. The benchmark considers this element under three headings:

m. **Local dialogue** – on-going two-way communication between the council and its communities

n. **Representation** – acting as effective advocates for the interests of all sections of the community, including hard reaching groups.

o. **Participation** – involving local people in developing the vision, agreeing priorities and making decisions

### What are the key features of an ideal authority?

**An ideal authority – communication & community empowerment**

**Local dialogue**

- The council **routinely informs the community and its partners** about its services, activities, performance and decision making in a way that is accessible to all and actively **manages its reputation**. The council's communication **methods are regularly evaluated and adapted** in response to customer/citizen feedback.

- The characteristics of customers and citizens are identified to ensure **equal access to all** information. Relevant information is provided in understandable and appropriate languages and formats. A **range of communication channels** including the internet are used and information promotes positive images of all population groups in the community, avoiding stereotypes.

- **Consultation is taken seriously** before determining what action is taken and **feedback** is given to those consulted, both on the results of the consultation and the action that will be taken.

- **Evaluation and monitoring** measure the impact on policy and strategy development and that they have been both effective and have met community expectations within available resources. Evidence of good practice is recorded and shared with other authorities and organisations.

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|---|---|
| **Representation** | • The council has a **strategy to increase electoral turnout** including specific measures to target under represented groups. |
| | • **Residents know who their local councillors are** and how they can contact them, confident that their best interests are the primary concern of those who represent them. |
| | • Councillors understand local issues and the priorities of local people. They act as **advocates** for the communities they represent, balancing local interests against wider community needs. The Council is committed to developing the **community leadership and engagement role** of councillors and has systems to ensure that the representational role of councillors has influence and impact. |
| | • **Ranges of consultation channels** are used and any practical or financial barriers to effective participation are addressed. **Community resources and capacity are built** to take advantage of the opportunities offered to them to be consulted and involved |
| **Participation** | • The council recognises the **diversity of its community** and the particular requirements to enable them to participate effectively and make collective or personalised choices. |
| | • The council believes that community well being, vibrancy, and sustainability is enhanced by **citizens participating in the Council's decision making** processes and provide opportunities for doing so. To ensure consistency, there is a corporate approach to consultation that provides opportunities for residents to: |
| | • **Express their needs and, concerns** for the area, including their long-term vision, priorities for local spending and their experience of services from a range of agencies, including the council; |
| | • Express their level of **satisfaction** with the council; |
| | • **Input views** about how the services might be improved and hear how they are once consultation closes. |
| | • Where appropriate, the council has some form of **area level arrangements** in place such as area forums and area committees, (and, where appropriate, town and parish councils) to make a significant input to priority setting and to represent views from more local areas to the council or the LSP. |

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## What will we look for in a review?

| Review Areas | Probes and evidence – communication & community empowerment |
|---|---|
| Local dialogue | • Examine any communications and consultations strategies.<br><br>• Look at examples of written communications, consider style, plain English (and other languages/formats), frequency, coverage etc.<br><br>• Identify feedback to those consulted on what happened to their views.<br><br>• Look for use of both open and closed sampling techniques that are needed to ensure the validity of findings and offer all citizens an opportunity to take part. |
| Representation | • Identify any strategies for increasing electoral turnout.<br><br>• Look at websites and other sources of councillor information.<br><br>• Identify any surveys that indicate how well people know whom their local councillor is and how to get things done.<br><br>• Examine how councillors are supported in playing their representative roles. |
| Participation | • Seek evidence that the council is clear about the diverse make up and needs of its communities (e.g. use of Census and local survey data).<br><br>• Examine the various consultation mechanisms that are used. Is good practice identified and shared (from both within and outside the council)? Are a variety of methods used, which are suitable for particular groups? (e.g. the internet/mobiles phones to consult young people).<br><br>• Identify examples of consultation being used to inform and affect decisions.<br><br>• Examine structures and/or mechanisms in place to engage communities at a more local level (e.g. ward or neighbourhood). |

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## 2.3 Delivering through partnerships

### What do we mean by delivering through partnerships?

The Authority works effectively through partnerships at all levels. This includes both mandatory partnerships (e.g. Crime & Disorder) and partnerships where there are communities of interest, including collaborative working, networks and partnerships at regional and sub regional level.

The authority identifies partners with whom it can deliver and sustain added value in defined areas. Defined areas are identified via consultation, analysis, and clarity of objective(s). Programmes, projects and outcomes are visible and relevant to communities; excite interest; encourage innovation; and stimulate fresh thinking and new working.

Partnership working is optimised to share learning and ensure knowledge transfer, up-skilling both partners in any interaction. Activities and tasks carried out in partnership are subject to the council's performance management framework, and carry the same burden of accountability as activities carried out solely within the council.

The benchmark considers this element under four headings.

p. **Right partners in the right relationship** - the authority takes trouble to sign up partners who will commit, and is prepared to include unconventional partners as well as the more conventional. The authority carries out mapping/auditing of the partnerships it is involved in. It embeds the principles of partnership working into its corporate strategy and policies. It is able to demonstrate an understanding of partnership principles/governance structures.

q. **Deciding on priorities**– there is commitment to consultation, analysis and clarity of objective(s). Objectives go beyond process.

r. **Communication**– the public and press are regularly and professionally informed of what is happening, why and when.

s. **Implementation**– the authority meets partners regularly to plan and report progress. There is good preparation and strong follow-through. Partners turn up and leave meetings re-fuelled and re-committed. Partnership projects include exit strategies, and are preferably mainstreamed, to ensure sustainability.

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## What are the key features of an ideal authority?

| | An ideal authority – delivering through partnerships |
|---|---|
| **Right partners, right relationship** | • The authority **identifies and attracts** partners who are committed to improvement and have authority, energy, resources and motivation.<br><br>• Partners punch their **weight**. What each 'brings to the party' is clear.<br><br>• The **leadership** of the authority visits and signs up partners and nurtures relationships.<br><br>• **Elected members play an active, visible role** in partnership activities, assuming responsibility for creating and promoting a vision on behalf of the community. The authority treats partners – including the voluntary and community sector and business representatives - as equals and seeks equal commitment from them. Reciprocal expectations are clear.<br><br>• **Relationships with the other partnerships** covering the same geographical area (e.g. between county and district partnerships in two tier areas, or between "specialist" partnerships like CDRPs and LSPs) and their plans have been explored, discussed and understood. The partnership has sight of the big picture.<br><br>• The authority looks for opportunities to **rationalise partnerships** and activities that duplicate each other and are not adding value, acts upon its findings and takes other partners with it. |
| **Priorities** | • The partnership identifies, through consultation with citizens/users, analysis and commissioned research as necessary, issues which are **priorities** and on which it can make and sustain a measurable improvement.<br><br>• Ambition, targets and timetable are **stretching, but realistic** provided all commit. The partnership is undaunted by complex issues that cut across organisational boundaries.<br><br>• **Objectives** go beyond generalisations (such as 'improving sustainability'), are **specific** about what is to be achieved (e.g. 'to reduce fatal and serious road accidents in the County by 25% over three years.) and **make sense to everyone**.<br><br>• **Choice of partnership projects** enthuses people and converts them to partnership working.<br><br>• Partners find out what has worked well elsewhere and **apply that learning**: action is knowledge-based. |

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|---|---|
| **Communication** | • Partnership members, and their staff, know what is being done and why. There is **clarity about roles, responsibilities and boundaries**. |
| | • Good information, listening and feedback produce a **strong accountability culture**. No partner regards the work as optional. |
| | • **Consultation** includes both geographical communities and communities of interest. |
| | • **Public and the media** are told about partnership projects, results, what will happen next and how it will be sustained. |
| | • **Success** is celebrated and shared. There is a mature attitude to dealing with failure (e.g. avoidance of recrimination). |
| | • People in the relevant community **notice and talk about the difference** and champion maintaining the improvement. |
| **Implementation** | • Partners meet regularly to **plan and report progress**: everyone turns up. Preparation for meetings is good: papers are of high quality and identify effective choices. |
| | • The partnership **commits resources, takes decisions** when they are needed and **stays focused.** |
| | • Partnership decisions **shape and focus** the activities of partner organisations to meet community needs. |
| | • **Debate is encouraged,** learning is continuous and implications for cultural change and fresh methods of working are identified, understood and acted on. |
| | • **Projects have finite life**, extended only for sound reasons agreed by partners |

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## What will we look for in a review?

| Review Areas | Probes and evidence – delivering through partnerships |
|---|---|
| Right partners, right relationship | • Talk to partners, council officers and members.<br><br>• Examine partnership structures, constitutions, objectives etc.<br><br>• Look for examples where there is an evaluation of learning, competencies and skills and transfer of knowledge between partners.<br><br>• Identify examples of intermediaries delivering services.<br><br>• Identify any learning and outcomes that are documented.<br><br>• Identify whether the authority has done any partnership training. |
| Priorities | • Examine partnership plans, performance measures and targets.<br><br>• Where possible compare partner's 'corporate plans' for synergy.<br><br>• Talk to stakeholders to identify what they think the priorities are/should be – look for consistency. |
| Communications | • Talk to stakeholders – how informed and involved do they feel, is there consistency in what they know?<br><br>• Examine any communications strategies and outputs (newsletters, emails etc.)<br><br>• Review consultation mechanisms, any survey results, key messages and resultant actions.<br><br>• Where possible talk to local press. |
| Implementation | • Examine partnership agendas/action plans.<br><br>• Where possible identify budgeted resources and actual spend on partnership deliverables by partner.<br><br>• Where possible observe partnership meetings to identify style, effectiveness etc. How focused are partnerships on priorities?<br><br>• Identify evidence of achievements attributed to partnerships, which would not have been possible without partnership working. |

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# 3 Resource and performance management

## 3.1 Performance management

### What do we mean by performance management?

Performance management is taking action in response to actual performance to make outcomes better than they would otherwise be. This operates at individual, team, service, corporate and community levels. The benchmark considers this element under three headings:

t. **Performance culture** – performance management is seen to be taken seriously at the top of the council and is an integral part of managers jobs and everyone's objectives.

u. **Effective processes** – there is a clear 'golden thread' between community and corporate priorities and service and individual objectives, and effective and timely processes in place to ensure that activity corresponds to these priorities. The authority looks for innovative ways (e.g. through technology) in which to deliver performance information more efficiently.

v. **Action oriented** – the focus of performance management is in achieving results: improved services, better value for money etc.

### What are the key features of an ideal authority?

## An ideal authority – performance management

*Performance culture*

- **Leaders champion the use of performance management** as one of the means for achieving improvement. Leaders lead by example in proactively managing performance and talk publicly about improving performance.

- **Elected members are actively interested** in performance management and help drive improvements. There are clearly defined, effective and complementary roles in performance management for executive, scrutiny and full council.

- **Good performance is recognised and celebrated**. The council effectively and systematically **deals with poor performance** at individual, team and service level, leading to action being taken to improve.

- Performance management is seen as **'part of the day job'**, integral to the way in which officers and members operate. Staff are involved in managing and improving performance (setting targets, regular feedback on their own performance and corporate performance information).

- Managers and staff have the **skills and abilities** necessary to manage performance (including providing constructive feedback in the case of poor performance).

- There is **learning across the authority**, with partners and more widely about how to improve performance, with time and opportunities explicitly made available. There is willingness across the organisation to learn from mistakes without an atmosphere of fear or blame.

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<table>
<tr>
<td rowspan="1"><strong>Effective processes</strong></td>
<td>

- There is an effective **performance management framework**, including all elements of the plan-do-review-revise cycle, embedded at all levels in the organisation, and with others with whom it fulfils its functions in partnership.

- There is an effective **balance between central support and control**, to ensure an effective system with flexibility to allow for differences across the organisation, and encourage ownership of performance management.

- The performance management framework is **fully integrated** with the management of finance, people, IT, information, and property, including the planning, reporting, action and re-allocation of these resources.

- The performance management process plays its role effectively in relation to other initiatives and activities such as **community planning, LSPs, LPSAs, CPA, LAAs, and efficiency**.

- The authority **consults and involves** users, clients, citizens and other stakeholders, and this is used in developing indicators and targets and monitoring and managing performance.

- The council, the community and partners have a **clear and accurate understanding of how the council is performing** and how far it is meeting its objectives.

- Planning, data collection and analysis, reporting and action take full account of the needs of **minority and other specific groups and geographic areas**.

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<tr>
<td><strong>Action oriented</strong></td>
<td>

- **Action is taken** which leads to improved performance, or revisions to objectives. There is time allocated at all levels for monitoring, reviewing and managing performance.

- Councils and partners individually and collectively review performance within a **culture of open debate and constructive challenge** with a view to improving real outcomes for local people.

- Actual or likely difficulties with carrying out action plans are **raised by partners at an early stage** to avoid problems escalating.

- The council and its partners **invite external challenge and evaluation** where appropriate with a view to improving the delivery of their objectives.

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## What will we look for in a review?

| Review Areas | Probes and evidence – performance management |
|---|---|
| **Performance culture** | • Seek evidence of senior members and officers taking performance management seriously, allocating regular times to manage performance and talking up its importance.<br><br>• Identify examples of good performance being celebrated and rewarded.<br><br>• Seek examples of poor performance being effectively managed.<br><br>• Confirm that non-executive members, managers and staff all recognise the importance of performance management and understand their role in the process. |
| **Effective processes** | • Determine whether there is a 'golden thread' between community and corporate targets and service and individual ones.<br><br>• Identify evidence of performance being managed at all levels and parts of the authority.<br><br>• Confirm that stakeholders agree that targets are realistic and achievable but challenging and are fully owned by the services and teams to which they relate.<br><br>• Examine whether qualitative and quantitative information is used to gain a rounded view of performance, and whether target setting, performance monitoring and review takes citizen and customer feedback into account.<br><br>• Identify whether data is as up to date as possible, and reporting and review cycles reflect risk and the time needed to take necessary remedial action. |
| **Action oriented** | • Identify evidence of performance management being used to improve outcomes.<br><br>• Seek evidence of action planning and follow up to regular performance monitoring activities. |

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### 3.2    Resource management

### What do we mean by resource management?

Resource management is about making the best use of resources (people, money, assets) to deliver the council's strategic objectives. It depends on sound financial management and is measured in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money, VFM).  Best Value is about improving VFM. The Government's "efficiency" agenda (Gershon) is about targeted programmes to release resources for redirection into frontline services. This benchmark considers this element under three headings that incorporate the main Gershon focus areas:

w.    **Use of resources** – the council makes best use of its resources – people, money and assets.

x.    **Process improvement** – redesign of services and processes increases productivity and reduces time and cost while maintaining or improving quality

y.    **Smarter procurement** – strategic approach reduces time and cost and increases value from external spend (third party resources).

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## What are the key features of an ideal authority?

| An ideal authority – resource management |
| --- |

**Use of resources**

- There is **leadership** of the efficiency agenda and **corporate support** to it including internal communication.

- Getting **value for money** is everyone's business.

- All the fundamentals of sound **financial management** (revenue and capital) are in place and working effectively. Proper arrangements have been made for financial reporting and accountability, internal controls (including partnerships), risk management and the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption.

- Financial management is integrated with **people** management and the management of **assets** (property and technology) and **third party resources** (procurement) at a strategic level and through cyclical planning arrangements (service planning, performance management etc.). This enables the council to make informed decisions about the **best use of resources** to deliver its priorities and strategic objectives. Investment is made in poorer services and external resources are leveraged effectively.

- The council's **information systems** support an integrated approach to resource management. Systems capture cost and activity data in a way that supports the analysis of patterns and trends and enables accurate **unit costs** to be derived for key services. This information is used effectively for benchmarking and to drive improvements (see process improvement and smarter procurement).

- **Internal review** programmes (e.g. Best Value) and **overview and scrutiny** target opportunities for improved value for money including Gershon focus areas.

- Significant spending (and disposal) decisions are based on a rigorous **option appraisal** and a **business case** that establishes the benefits, costs and risks. **Whole life costs** and (community) **benefits** form the basis of decisions.

- **Programme and project delivery** is properly resourced, and close attention to **cost** management is paralleled by a sustained focus on the realisation of **benefits** (including VFM). Effective **risk management** disciplines are consistently applied, including **gateway reviews**. Stakeholder engagement and communications is a central feature of change programmes.

- There is a prioritised, **medium-term** (3-6 years) strategy and action plan designed to meet or exceed the Government's **efficiency targets** and address cost and performance issues highlighted in Audit Commission **VFM profiles** and it is being delivered. Includes both cashable gains and non-cashable gains (people and productivity). Provides appropriate local **incentives**.

- The "efficiency" agenda is seen as part of a **"bigger picture"** and is integral to the council's ambitions and vision for public services in the locality.

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| | |
|---|---|
| **Process improvement** | • **Customer-facing** processes (transactions) and **non-customer facing** processes (support services) are mapped, base-lined and benchmarked down to the transaction level. <br><br> • Customer services and support services (central, devolved and outsourced) are reviewed from a **cross-cutting** perspective and a **whole system** approach is adopted for the review of commissioning, assessment and care management, and service delivery processes in adult social care and children's services (depending on council type). <br><br> • The council seizes appropriate opportunities for improved VFM through, **simplification, standardisation** and **shrinking** of processes including **invest- to-save** (technology and property) and, where there is a business case, through **sharing** (shared service centres), **shifting** (delivery out of lower cost locations or improved asset utilisation) and **sourcing** (market testing and outsourcing). <br><br> • Improvements increase **productivity** (and in particular the amount of "productive time" skilled staff spend in contact with customers) and reduce **time** and **costs** while maintaining or improving quality. |
| **Smarter procurement** | • Third party spend is analysed and broken down by **category.** A sourcing strategy and management plan is adopted for each major spend category with **cost reduction** and **value improvement** as the focuses. <br><br> • The full range of **e-Procurement tools** is used to achieve reductions in prices and process costs. <br><br> • **Partnering** arrangements and longer-term relationships with suppliers (particularly in construction and highways) incentivise collaboration throughout the supply chain to achieve time and cost savings and to improve quality. <br><br> • Markets are managed (especially in adult social care and children's services). **Demand** is forecast and co-ordinated. The capacity of the **supply base,** including the third sector where appropriate, is developed to meet the council's (changing) requirements. Appropriate use is made of **self-supply** (in-house provision) to regulate prices, manage risk etc. <br><br> • Optimal use is made of national and regional contracts and framework agreements put in place by **consortia** and public sector agencies. <br><br> • The council collaborates locally (including through the **LSP**), regionally and nationally to **co-ordinate** procurement including, where appropriate, the **aggregation** of requirements into regional and national contracts and framework agreements. |

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## What will we look for in a review?

| Review areas | Probes and evidence – resource management |
|---|---|
| **Use of resources** | • Members and staff demonstrate by their attitudes and actions that improving VFM ("efficiency") is part of the culture. Decisions are routinely challenged on VFM grounds. Issues raised in Audit Commission VFM profiles are recognised, unpacked and addressed. |
| | • Confirm that the council has a medium term financial strategy, capital strategy and asset management plans, prioritised capital programme, sound finances (balanced budget, reserves and balances, not overspending, affordable borrowing plans etc) and robust internal controls and reporting arrangements. Audit letter. |
| | • Identify that cyclical resource and performance management processes are optimising use of resources (all types) to deliver priorities and strategic objectives. Poorer services have benefited from investment. |
| | • Confirm that internal reviews and scrutiny reports have led to VFM improvements. |
| | • Identify whether managers and members demonstrate a focus on managing costs as well as quality. Unit cost comparisons for key services and examples of actions taken where improvements are indicated. |
| | • Seek evidence that option appraisal is being applied systematically to significant capital projects, ICT investments, PPP, business process outsourcing and other change programmes and projects. Business cases. |
| | • Identify whether programmes and projects are routinely delivered successfully to time, cost & quality using structured method (inc lessons learned and gateway reviews). |
| | • Confirm that there is a realistic strategy and action plan to deliver efficiency gains over a 3-6 year period (to meet government targets). Projects are properly scoped, with an initial business case, and adequate resources allocated to delivery. Local incentives to deliver. |
| | • Examine whether members and senior managers volunteer a vision for public services in the locality in which the efficiency agenda is a driver. |
| **Process improvement** | • Identify any "as is" and "to be" process maps and metrics used to optimise processes. |
| | • Seek evidence of a cross-cutting approach to customer services and support services and a whole system approach to adult and children's services. |
| | • Seek evidence of HR strategies, technology and asset management being used to reduce costs and improve productivity. Pay and workforce strategy, ICT strategy, IEG statements, asset management plan. |
| | • Identify evidence of shared, shifted & sourced services, each supported by a business case. |
| | • Seek evidence of significant resources (cash and staff time) having been released for council priorities through process improvements. |

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| Smarter procurement | • Identify whether there is an embedded strategic approach owned by members and top managers and appropriate use of procurement professionals.<br><br>• Identify use of procurement cards and e-Procurement tools including e-Auctions.<br><br>• Seek evidence of effective partnering with suppliers (supply), attested by partners and SMEs.<br><br>• Identify use of consortium contracts and collaborative procurement.<br><br>• Seek evidence of demand and supply in key markets being in balance.<br><br>• Identify whether major procurement decisions have been based on whole life costs and (community) benefits.<br><br>• Identify significant resources (cash) having been released for council priorities through smarter procurement and other (community) benefits. |
|---|---|

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### 3.3    Change and project management

**What do we mean by change and project management?**

The authority is willing and able to challenge the status quo and there is an appetite to re-position the authority in order to fulfil its ambitions, benefit from opportunities and address challenges. A culture of positive challenge and regular review is central to delivering change. Senior Leaders articulate the purpose and benefits of change. The design and timings of change programmes takes into account their effectiveness both in the interaction with other major initiatives and recognising that there can be a trade off in benefits, such as between change with short-term efficiency and stability. The authority encourages organic, bottom up change initiatives and innovation, as well as top down change programmes. There is a formally adopted approach to project and programme management that is widely understood within the council. The benchmark considers this element under three headings:

z.       **Ability to discern** the need for change – the authority is willing and able to challenge the status quo

aa.     **Positive challenge and regular review** – a culture of positive challenge and regular review is central to delivering change

bb.     **Effective approach** – the council enables change to be successfully implemented and has a formally adopted approach to project management

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## What are the key features of an ideal authority?

| | An ideal authority – change & project management |
|---|---|
| **Challenging the status quo** | • The authority has the **ability to discern the need for change** and is able to act quickly and effectively to re-position the authority in order to fulfil its ambitions, benefit from opportunities and address challenges.<br><br>• There is a **strategic approach** to identifying the need for change, which provides mechanisms for people at all levels within the organisation, local people and partners to contribute thinking.<br><br>• The leadership of the authority demonstrates a **willingness to listen** and be **flexible** and guides and supports people through change.<br><br>• Senior leaders **articulate the purpose and benefits** of change.<br><br>• **Communication and engagement** with people both within and outside the organisation regarding change is effective. |
| **Positive challenge, regular review** | • A culture of **positive challenge and regular review** is central to delivering change.<br><br>• **Learning** is drawn from both within and beyond the organisation, from both successful and unsuccessful activities.<br><br>• Change addresses **cultural as well as structural and process issues** and people within the organisation have a **positive attitude towards change**, seeing it as an opportunity. |
| **Effective approach** | • There is a **formally adopted approach to project and programme management** that is widely understood within the council and which provides effective checks and balances to ensure the successful delivery of council activities.<br><br>• **Appropriate risk-taking** is supported and **risk management** is fully integrated into the authority's approach to managing change, projects and programmes.<br><br>• The **design and timing** of change programmes takes into account their effectiveness both in the **interaction** with other major initiatives and recognising that there can be a **trade-off** in benefits, such as between change with short-term efficiency and stability.<br><br>• **Change processes are planned, supported and resourced** with project and programme management arrangements in place to enable change to be successfully implemented and consolidated. |

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## What will we look for in a review?

| Review Areas | Probes and evidence – change & project management |
|---|---|
| **Challenging the status quo** | • Identify the existence of mechanisms to enable the contribution and exchange of ideas, communicate change and support teams and individuals through the change process.<br><br>• Evaluate the extent to which there is understanding and enthusiasm for change within the authority.<br><br>• Determine the level of visibility of the authority's senior leadership championing and supporting change. |
| **Positive challenge and regular review** | • Determine the extent to which challenge, review and learning are embedded in the culture of the authority.<br><br>• Evaluate the extent to which change addresses cultural as well as structural and process issues. |
| **Effective approach** | • Identify examples of change and projects/programmes successfully delivered.<br><br>• Examine the provision of training for people in the authority's approach to project and programme management.<br><br>• Determine the extent to which risk management is embedded within the organisation.<br><br>• Determine to what extent the project management approach /infrastructure promotes corporate objectives and priorities to produce a 'one council' culture rather than a departmental silo culture. |

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# 4    Organisation and people

## 4.1    Organisational design and development

**What do we mean by organisational design and development?**

This element focuses on an authority's ability to develop organisational structure, processes and culture that best meet its current and likely future needs – i.e. developing an authority that is fit for purpose. Effective management of change is at the heart of this element. The benchmark considers this element under three headings:

cc.    **Management and strategy** – the leadership required to create a fit for purpose authority

dd.    **Process and structure** – the way in which change is managed and the effectiveness of the structure

ee.    **People and behaviours** – the management, people skills and development, communications and working culture

## What are the key features of an ideal authority?

| | An ideal authority – organisational design & development |
|---|---|
| **Management & strategy** | • The **vision and values** of the organisation are reviewed in the light of future needs and stakeholder views. <br><br> • This **vision is clearly articulated** with staff and partners and informs OD work. <br><br> • Senior members and managers demonstrate **organisational leadership.** <br><br> • Major OD/change initiatives stem directly from corporate strategic objectives and are approved on the basis of a **sound business case.** <br><br> • The importance of strategic HR/OD issues is **recognised at senior manager and member forums,** to enable effective decision-making. The 'people' implications are considered as an integral part of the OD process (i.e. taken into account at the outset) and regarded as key to successful implementation. |
| **Process & structure** | • The steerage and co-ordination of major change initiates is through a **structured project management approach.** <br><br> • The approach to performance management recognises that high performance is not only expected but underpinned by a **supportive organisational environment.** <br><br> • The organisational structure is **fit for purpose** – it enables staff to respond effectively to customers and is internally coherent. <br><br> • There is a robust approach to **internal communications** and meetings that addresses the need for two-way exchanges both horizontally (peers) and vertically (management). |
| **People & behaviours** | • There is a culture where **sharing ideas and practice is encouraged**. Good practice is sought, captured and fed back to improve service delivery. <br><br> • Whole system approaches are used to **plan staffing requirements in line with business needs** (showing clear linkages) and identify any capability gaps. **Staff development is implemented and evaluated consistently** to ensure that it supports organisational development and design. <br><br> • **Staff are able to contribute**, through appropriate mechanisms, to both management and service improvement. <br><br> • **Productive relationships** exist within teams, across teams and layers. There is consistent **good people management practice that is aligned to organisational need.** |

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## What will we look for in a review?

| Review Areas | Probes and evidence – organisational design & development |
|---|---|
| Management and strategy | • Confirm that staff/partners have been involved in developing the vision/values and feel comfortable with the outcome (link between vision and OD work).<br><br>• Determine whether ownership is demonstrated through management action that is consistent with the vision and values.<br><br>• Identify whether the authority can clearly explain why any change initiative is happening and that it is part of a co-ordinated corporate approach (i.e. there aren't several improvement projects with similar objectives and key managers are not overburdened with unplanned initiatives).<br><br>• Examine whether appropriate agenda items are identified, prepared discussed and actions are followed through.<br><br>• People management issues are represented (either by an HR director or a member of staff with corporate responsibility for HR) on the Senior Management Team and these are fully considered when undertaking organisational development and design. |
| Process and structure | • Identify whether there is a robust project structure where key players understand their role and have the resources (time, money, staff) to fulfil the project.<br><br>• Seek examples and perception of trust/openness, regular dialogue with managers. Staff survey and feedback evidence. Coverage of timely performance management with transparent outcomes.<br><br>• Assess whether senior managers can explain the rationale behind the current structure and how it will handle future challenges. Features include accountability for key areas; clear reporting lines and balanced workloads.<br><br>• Examine the range, frequency and effectiveness of personal contact /meetings. Assess electronic forums – web, intranet, access to email, etc. |
| People and behaviours | • Identify examples of good practice sharing and ideas generation.<br><br>• Examine the use of feedback from external and internal sources (IIP, inspection/CPA/ staff surveys) to monitor levels of staff engagement and the quality of people management practice.<br><br>• Identify: whether holistic (whole system) approaches are used to plan staffing requirements in line with business needs (showing clear linkages) and identifying any capacity gaps; staff development is well resourced to support organisational development and design; managers have access to advise and support on the people implications of service redesign.<br><br>• Assess whether: managers are willing to listen and have set up the appropriate mechanisms to capture feedback; knowledge and best practice is sought, captured and shared across the organisation and with partners.<br><br>• Assess whether managers have a clear understanding of their management responsibilities and of equality issues, underpinned by HR policies and approaches explicitly designed to meet business needs and resolve business issues. |

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## 4.2 Managing people

### What do we mean by managing people?

This element focuses on an authority's ability to recruit, develop, organise, manage, reward and retain a workforce that has the flexibility and capability to deliver improved service performance. High performance people management is at the heart of this element and it relates clearly to organisational development and change. The benchmark considers this element under three headings:

ff. **Management and strategy** – sponsorship and communication of a clear people strategy

gg. **Process and structure** – the way in which change is managed and the effectiveness of the structure

hh. **People and behaviours** – the management, people development, communications and working culture

### What are the key features of an ideal authority?

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2" align="center"><b>An ideal authority – managing people</b></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6"><b>Management and strategy</b></td><td>

• The importance of **strategic HR/OD** issues is recognised at senior manager and member forums. These forums allow for debate and dissemination of key information to promote effective decision-making.

• The **vision and values** of the organisation are clearly addressed in the organisations' **people strategy.**

• The people **strategy is aligned to strategic priorities**. This strategy is **communicated** to staff and partners and they are **involved in its development**. 'People ' implications are considered as an **integral part of the business process** and regarded as **key to successful implementation of the corporate plan.**

• There is a clear **strategy for leadership development** and talent management at all levels of the organisation.

• Organisational practice and culture supports the principles of **high performance people management.**

• The organisation recognises that a **diverse workforce reflects the community it serves,** which in turn can **enhance service delivery.**

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**I&DeA**
improvement and development agency

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|---|---|
| **Process and structure** | • The steerage and co-ordination of major change initiatives involves a **partnership approach with staff and union representatives.**<br><br>• The approach to **reward management** recognises that high performance is not only expected but underpinned by a supportive organisational environment and approach to career development.<br><br>• HR Practices and change activities are subject to rigorous **equality impact assessment.**<br><br>• The **organisational structure** focuses on the front-line and is subject to regular business process review.<br><br>• The organisation has a well developed approach to **workforce planning** and understands it future workforce needs.<br><br>• The organisation understands where its **key skills shortages** lie and is addressing them not just through targeted recruitment but a planned approach to re-skill exiting staff and looking to share skills with partners and neighbouring authorities. |
| **People and behaviours** | • There is **wide ownership** of people management across the organisation.<br><br>• Imaginative approaches to **flexible working** are encouraged because it is understood that this can improve individual and team performance and provide better services for the customer.<br><br>• **Staff development** is aligned to business need (clear linkage) and implemented consistently. Staff management and development is **well resourced** and is implemented **consistently** across the organisation. There is **regular evaluation** to show how this contributes to organisational performance.<br><br>• The **competencies and behaviours** required of staff both generally and in specific jobs are clearly related to organisational objectives and are well understood by staff.<br><br>• **Productive relationships** exist within teams, across teams and layers. This is underpinned by **robust HR policies and approaches** designed to meet business needs and resolve HR issues. |

## What will we look for in a review?

| Review Areas | Probes and evidence – managing people |
|---|---|
| **Management and strategy** | • Assess whether the authority is familiar with the national Pay and Workforce Strategy and that there is a clear plan for managing and developing people to address its strategic priorities that has a wide ownership across the council.<br><br>• Identify whether the authority aligns organisational performance management to the management of people.<br><br>• Identify whether the authority is working through the generic Equality Standard for Local Government.<br><br>• Identify whether the authority is either fully recognised as an Investor in People or is working towards full recognition. |
| **Process and structure** | • Identify whether the authority has either completed and evaluated a local pay review under the terms of the national pay agreement or is on target to complete one by April 2007.<br><br>• Assess whether the authority has looked at the concepts of total rewards and flexible benefits.<br><br>• Identify whether the authority is actively examining ways to share recruitment and pool skilled staff with partners on a regional and/or sub-regional basis.<br><br>• Determine if there is enthusiasm for a variety of approaches to management development, including coaching and mentoring.<br><br>• Identify whether there is a well-targeted, efficient recruitment system that makes an offer to all groups in the potential workforce, with regular evaluation against the workforce plan. |
| **People and behaviours** | • Seek evidence of corporate support and monitoring for key elements of day to day team management and team building.<br><br>• Examine reports from external and internal sources (e.g. IIP, inspection/CPA, staff survey).<br><br>• Identify whether appraisal systems are linked to competency structures, where appropriate and that competencies and behaviours inform and underpin work plans and developmental plans for every member of staff.<br><br>• Assess whether managers are willing to listen and have set up the appropriate mechanisms to capture feedback<br><br>• Assess whether managers have a clear understanding of their management responsibilities and equality issues, underpinned by HR policies and approaches explicitly designed to meet business needs and resolve HR issues. |