Comprehensive performance assessment

Crawley Borough Council
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Introduction

1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is part of the wider agenda set out in the Local Government White Paper *Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services*. The White Paper encourages greater focus on improved services for local people by freeing good councils from central government controls and restrictions, and providing poorer councils with more, and better focused, support for improvement. CPA is the first step in this process, that of making an overall judgement of where each council stands.

2 This report presents an analysis of the council’s overall performance as well as two short diagnostic assessments which cover important areas of responsibility. It also includes an assessment of the council’s benefit service by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate, and the appointed auditor’s assessment of performance on each of the main elements of the code of audit practice. The appendices to this report set out further details on the findings of these assessments and the framework for CPA.
Summary of Comprehensive Performance Assessment judgements

3 Crawley Borough Council is a fair council that has invested soundly in its capacity to deliver improvements in the future. It is ambitious and is changing for the better but has a history of not exploiting its full potential. Steps to invest in and expand its capacity, to enable it to achieve the vision now set for local residents, are recent and have yet to feed through consistently into service outcomes.

4 Strategic direction has lacked clarity. Prioritisation has been weak historically and plans and strategies have been vague and poorly communicated. However, the council has changed significantly over the last year. The former corporate plan has been replaced by a new high level mission and aims. A new corporate plan is to be adopted in line with the Local Strategic Partnership’s community strategy, A Vision for Crawley 2003 to 2020, which has now been published. The recent ‘Fresh Direction’ review, which sets out the change programme, and initiatives such as the Fastway transport scheme and the town centre development show the council’s high aspirations.

5 Increasingly the council has the capacity to convert its new vision and direction into improved outcomes for local people. There is corporate change underway to make sure that challenge is effective at all levels. The council has a very healthy financial position and uses partnerships with growing effectiveness to increase its capacity. It has been successful in implementing the national single status job evaluation scheme which has a very significant challenge for the organisation, and one which has been delivered well.

6 Management capacity can be developed further. Internal training and development is widely available but it is not evaluated comprehensively. Some human resource policies are not consistently applied across the council and more work remains to be done on the council’s approach to procurement.

7 Weakness in performance management remains a barrier to driving and sustaining improvement, although a lot of the necessary infrastructure has now been put in place. Improvements are underway and some services have received external accreditation, but performance information is still not being used effectively and there has been a lack of challenge to the cost-effectiveness of services in some areas.

8 The quality of the council’s services is mixed. There is good performance in leisure, culture, open spaces and housing but some services such as waste collection, housing benefit and provision of affordable housing are less good. There have been significant improvements to the environment, physical infrastructure, community cohesion and levels of crime. Performance indicators show mixed progress but more recently improvements are coming through, in faster times for re-letting of council homes and for processing of housing benefit claims.

9 The council’s approach to organisational learning is not yet strategic enough and future plans are not well enough developed. However the prospects are promising with the council’s new chief executive, who joined in July 2002, and the leader acting as champions for change. The council is gaining a better understanding of its community needs, is tackling internal weaknesses and is starting to work successfully in partnership with others.
### Summary of assessment scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top level question</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Weighted score</th>
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<tr>
<td>What is the council trying to achieve?</td>
<td>Ambition</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Prioritisation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focus</td>
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<td>How has the council set about delivering its priorities?</td>
<td>Capacity</td>
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<td>Performance management</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>What has the council achieved/not achieved to date?</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Investment</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>In light of what the council has learned to date, what does it plan to do next?</td>
<td>Learning</td>
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<td>Future plans</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Corporate assessment category</td>
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<td></td>
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Diagram illustrating the themes and scores for Crawley Borough Council

- In light of what the council has learned to date, what does it plan to do next?
- Achieving improvement
- Achievement in quality of service
- Performance management
- How has the council set about delivering its priorities?
- What is the council trying to achieve?

Key:
1. Weak
2. Weaknesses outweigh strengths
3. Strengths outweigh weaknesses
4. Strong
Recommendations

10 It is recommended that the council:

- actively and promptly shares the findings of this assessment with the public, partner organisations, councillors and staff; and
- uses the strengths and weaknesses identified in this report as the basis for its improvement planning.
Context

The locality

11 Crawley is located in West Sussex, in the south-east region of England. Covering just over 2 per cent of the land area of West Sussex, Crawley was largely built during the late 1940s and is an urban new town, extra neighbourhoods have been added to the town in the 1960s, 1980s and 1990s. It has excellent rail and road links being situated near the junctions of the M23 and M25, and air links to other UK airports and abroad via Gatwick airport which is within the borough boundaries.

12 The town is made up of 13 residential neighbourhoods and the population of just under 100,000 people live in 39,000 households, 9,000 of which are Council owned properties. Approximately 11.5 per cent of the population are from ethnic minority communities (2001 census data) compared to the national average of 9 per cent. The town has a young, fast growing and economically active population, 20 per cent of the population is under 14. The population of over-65-year-olds is forecast to increase by 15 per cent in the next ten years.

13 Overall deprivation levels are low, although there are pockets of deprivation, in particular in the Bewbush, Broadfield, Langley Green and Southgate neighbourhoods. Life expectancy rates vary across the town with a seven-year difference between the most affluent and least affluent wards. Teenage pregnancy rates (13- to 17-year-olds) are the highest in West Sussex and are above average for England. Educational attainment in three wards is among the lowest 10 per cent in the country. Crawley’s population is generally less qualified than neighbouring towns and the highest paid jobs are filled by skilled workers from neighbouring areas.

14 Unemployment in the borough is low at 1.1 per cent compared to a national average of 3.2 per cent. Gatwick airport and its support functions provide employment for 38 per cent of the borough work force. Although unemployment is low many jobs are low paid and low skilled. Twelve per cent of households claim benefit in Crawley compared to an average of 7 per cent for other districts in West Sussex. The mean household income of residents is below the regional average. As house prices have outstripped wages there is a high demand for affordable housing in the area.

The council

15 The Labour party has overall political control with 22 of the 32 seats, the Conservatives have 8 seats and the Liberal Democrats have 2.

16 In September 2001 the council adopted the leader and executive model supported by five scrutiny committees.

17 The current chief executive has been in post since July 2002. A peer challenge to the council’s self-assessment was undertaken by a team from SOLACE Enterprises in January 2003. The council employs 820 staff. It has been debt-free since 1996 and has a net revenue budget for 2002/03 of £18.9 million. Council services cost £43 million in 2001/02.
What is the council trying to achieve?

Ambition

18 Crawley Borough Council is ambitious to improve the quality of life of its residents and has shown good community leadership in a number of areas. Through the established community planning process there is a strong platform to inform the council’s direction. Strengths have increased recently and now outweigh weaknesses.

19 The council has demonstrated its commitment to improving the quality of life by taking the lead on a number of initiatives and partnerships, including community safety, community cohesion initiatives and economic development. As a council it has led by example on environmental issues such as recycling and energy efficiency. Initiatives such as the ‘Fastway’ transport scheme and the town centre development show the council’s high aspirations. Partners are supportive of the council’s plans and local people are generally positive about the council’s ambitions to improve the quality of life and environment. Overall, the council has the support of the community that it serves.

20 It has a clear understanding of the scale of the issues and opportunities that the area faces. Through the community planning process and a variety of research and consultation mechanisms such as the community profile research project and housing needs and condition surveys the council is well placed to build on this information to inform its corporate strategies.

21 The council is in a period of transition. Its priorities are currently being reconsidered in the light of the new community strategy for Crawley which has been published. The council sees the community strategy as the overarching document that will inform its corporate and service priorities. The community planning process is well established and a local strategic partnership shadow board is in place. The council has led the planning process and a long-term vision for Crawley has been developed by the Crawley Together Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) along with six key priority areas to form the basis of the strategy. This gives the council a clear agreed direction to inform its priorities.

22 The former corporate plan, which had weaknesses, has been replaced by a new high level vision and aims. A revised corporate plan is in preparation, in line with the community strategy and incorporating the vision and aims. Priorities include the local economy, health and social care, lifelong learning, local environment, community safety and affordable housing. To date the council has defined a new vision ‘to be widely regarded as a first rate authority by 2006’ with four key areas of focus that cover quality of services, customer satisfaction, financial efficiency and management and staff empowerment.

23 The council has historically had strong chief officers focusing on departmental priorities but without enough corporate challenge to carry through cross-service aims consistently. The new chief executive, appointed in July 2002, was given a key objective to build organisational capacity and change this culture of departmentalism.
Since his appointment the chief executive has been active in communicating the council’s vision and programme for change to councillors and staff. The recent ‘Fresh Direction’ review, which sets out the change programme is clear and ambitious. There has been an investment in capacity building for officers and councillors and in renewed democratic structures to support and drive this change.

Nonetheless although the high-level work is now sound, the council’s vision and priorities are yet to be fully embedded in the organisation and understood by all staff. The former culture of departmentalism still creates some political and managerial barriers to building commitment to cross-service aims. The priorities have yet to be defined specifically enough in terms of outcomes for the people of Crawley and to be carried through into operational plans.

**Prioritisation**

The council’s approach to prioritisation is very weak and has few identifiable strengths. It does not have mechanisms to deliver its ambitions to areas of most need. It has not seen the need to prioritise in the past and a culture of prioritisation is not embedded. Prioritisation processes have been recently developed but these are not robust, sustainable or fully accepted by staff or councillors. Communication of priorities to staff and councillors is weak. The level of disinvestment from non-priorities is minimal. Understanding of diversity and social inclusion issues is under developed and these are not addressed in service delivery, despite the diverse population of the district.

A household survey carried out by the council in 1999 was used to inform existing priorities in the current corporate plan. The council has used extensive consultation to inform the priorities for the community strategy. There are examples of where consultation at a service level has informed the shaping of service priorities and standards but this has been mainly departmentally led and is not customer driven. Corporately there is limited use of customer feedback or service information to shape priorities.

Although the council communicates results of consultation to local people through the council magazine, press releases and its website it does not feedback the changes made as a result to its consultees. There are no mechanisms in place to continuously engage communities on issues specific to their area. In these circumstances local people may disengage in the consultation process and have limited ability to influence the council on neighbourhood issues. A survey carried out by the council in 2002 indicated that there were differences in satisfaction between areas of the town.

There are many plans and initiatives in place that attempt to address diversity and social exclusion at some level. However, the council has not tailored its services to meet the needs of its diverse community and to minimise social exclusion. The council may not be addressing the needs of a significant minority and may be inadvertently excluding sections of the community from accessing its services.
30 The council is working in line with statutory and national priorities such as e-government and recycling targets. The council’s approach to balancing national priorities against local community priorities is unclear. The rationale for de-prioritisation is weak and does not reflect need or demand. For example it has not justified why parks are no longer to be prioritised. The council carried out a very successful pilot of postal voting last year where elector turnout was doubled in each of the four wards; despite this the council considers extension of this process to be a low priority.

31 Owing to its strong financial position and a strong political commitment to direct provision of a wide range of services, there is not a culture of seeking best value in procurement. The council has a track record of investing its own resources.

32 The council has involved non-executive councillors in identifying growth and savings for the budget preparation process, which is aligned with the service planning process. The prioritisation process is not robust and the scoring system used does not always align with the council priorities. For example neighbourhood wardens, which were a high council priority were scored by this exercise as a low priority. This was subsequently overruled by councillors in the formal process following a feasibility study that provided further details. Long-term priorities have not yet been defined through this process.

33 Budgeting is largely based on an incremental approach to adjusting existing costs. Savings within directorates have been re-allocated to fund growth in areas within the same directorate with little reference to overall priorities. The cultural resistance to prioritisation and the limitations of the current process will not be sustainable in the long-term in light of possible financial pressures the council may face, such as the pooling of capital receipts. Managers are unclear on what their priorities are and cross-departmental communication is weak, this had led to underperformance in some service areas.

Focus

34 Overall, weaknesses outweigh strengths in this area. Departments within the council have sustained impetus over time in areas such as leisure, the environment and community safety, but corporately the council has not focused on national or its own local priorities such as affordable housing, diversity and the softer social issues of health and pay inequalities. There is a tendency to focus on initiatives rather than the outcomes that the council is seeking to achieve. Although there are performance and project management systems in place, they are not being used effectively to enable the council to concentrate on its priorities.

35 There are a number of key strategies and plans in place for example, housing, community safety, leisure and economic development, but links between them are not always made. For example the links between the economic development strategy and local plan, which should be important ones, are weak. Although many of the strategies refer to corporate objectives and priorities, it is not always clear how these will be will addressed, as is the case for the housing strategy and asset management plan. Some existing strategies such as that for waste management are out of date. There are also gaps, for example the council lacks strategies for procurement or use of its property.
Many of the strategies that exist have still to set targets. Targets that are set are not always challenging enough to address need or deliver tangible outcomes to local people. Without clear targets the strategies will not help the council drive forward on its key priorities.

The council has maintained a strong focus over time on physical infrastructure projects such as environmental improvements and developments, including leisure, culture, green spaces, street scene/environmental issues and community safety. This has led to improved quality within these areas and satisfaction from local people. There are also a number of key projects that are in progress such as the education/leisure project at Thomas Bennet College which will deliver benefits to the community. This demonstrates that the council can invest resources, seek additional funding and deliver in areas that it decides to focus on, resulting in a positive impact for the community.

However these initiatives are not joined up and are generally departmentally led, therefore the council is not maximising its resources effectively. It is difficult to assess what impact theses initiatives have had in delivering against the council’s overall priorities when no clear links are made to corporate priorities or robust measures of success.

Although the council has a number of good initiatives in place such as the Sure Start project and sport and recreation plans there are no overarching corporate strategies to tackle softer hidden community issues such as health and pay inequalities, variable education attainment and diversity. The current approach is fragmented.

There has been investment in better performance and project management systems. Performance information is reported regularly to councillors but the ability of councillors and officers to challenge underperformance is limited.
How has the council set about delivering its priorities?

Capacity

41 The council is successfully addressing past weaknesses in capacity. Strengths now narrowly dominate.

42 Councillors and officers have made positive progress in implementing changes to build capacity since a peer review undertaken by the Improvement and Development Agency in 1999. The council strengthened its corporate leadership through a restructuring of political arrangements in 2001, and subsequently of its senior management team, to create more focus on cross-service community priorities. It appointed a new chief executive in July last year with a brief to harness its managerial and staff capacity more effectively in support of its community aims. This is having effect.

43 The restructuring of political arrangements resulted in the definition of clearer lines of responsibility. Scrutiny and internal challenge by councillors, identified previously as weak, have been given additional officer support and training. Scrutiny arrangements are being significantly changed based on learning from another council. There are good and improving working relationships between the leader and the chief executive and more generally between councillors and officers.

44 The new chief executive and leader are champions for change and working effectively together to drive it forward. Elsewhere in the council leadership is more variable. Leadership is still mainly concentrated with officers; the peer challenge undertaken in January 2003 found that there was insufficient councillor challenge to act as a counterweight to strong officer leadership. Cross-departmental working is now more actively encouraged. In some cases previously separate services have been brought together to achieve better co-ordination. There is a move to give frontline staff increased authority to make decisions, contributing in some areas to measurable improvements in performance.

45 The council has demonstrated a growing willingness to enter into partnerships externally. Its positive approach is acknowledged by stakeholders. It is actively engaged in community safety, environmental and economic development initiatives resulting in reduction in crime, town centre environmental improvements and the development of the Crawley innovation and enterprise hub. In effective partnership with local clubs and schools, the council provides and facilitates a range of activities and sports course initiatives for its young citizens. There are good relationships between the county council and other districts in West Sussex. All parties have joined forces in initiatives such as supporting the LSP, LA21 schemes such as joint recycling and implementing electronic government.

46 The council enjoys a very healthy financial position which provides it with considerable capacity to improve services. Its reserves are significant and it is debt free, enabling it to re-invest all its capital receipts. Allied to this are good financial management procedures which the external auditor rated highly. It has also been able to support its pension fund to avoid deficits. The council has effectively secured through its planning policies funding from developers to improve the quality of public open space in the district.
Its management-competency-based appraisal scheme was developed in conjunction with senior managers. A programme of management training is in place to support it. The level of training and development provided by the council is good. Staff are positive about it. The successful delivery of the national single status job evaluation scheme has been a significant achievement. Good and sustained joint working with unions and staff over an 18-month period enabled its effective introduction.

Staff enjoy working for the council. There are extensive structured staff communication and consultation frameworks in place. In addition to staff surveys there is a monthly team brief and feedback. There are newsletters and a weekly councillors’ briefing. The council also uses its intranet to keep staff and councillors abreast of events in addition to seminars and workshops.

However, the council still has much to do. Corporate working is not as consistent as it should be. The corporate leadership has been strengthened. Some officers and councillors cling to old service-based loyalties and aspirations, and present a barrier to wholehearted concentration on achieving aims for the people of Crawley which usually cross-service boundaries.

The work force does not reflect the ethnic diversity of the local community and the council has not embedded diversity in main stream service delivery. However, some progress is underway. The council is beginning to address this by working in partnership with the voluntary sector and ethnic minority representative groups. It is beginning to build on its equalities policies by developing a framework for diversity and equality. Elsewhere some human resource policies have been applied inconsistently in the council, including performance appraisal and sickness management.

The council’s approach to procurement is mixed, with some services being provided by internal providers and others being externalised. There are some good examples where procurement has been used to secure efficiencies and better quality. Overall however the council fails to challenge itself systematically or strongly enough about its choices. The absence of an adopted council wide procurement strategy is a difficulty which results in inconsistent outcomes and insufficient incentives for service providers to improve quality or to deliver efficiencies or innovation.

Performance management

Performance management is underdeveloped across the council and though improvements are under way, this is an area of weakness for the council. There are some areas where performance is being managed but there is a tendency to allow problems to escalate before corrective action is taken. Comprehensive project management is still developing and the council has acknowledged that risk management and contingency planning within the council is under developed. Overall weaknesses outweigh strengths in the way performance is managed.

The council has the resources required to develop its corporate performance management framework. It now has dedicated staff in the policy unit and has developed a performance reporting system which is used to report performance quarterly to councillors. This has resulted in a change in attitudes toward performance improvement in some areas for example refuse collection. This is not consistent throughout the council and there has been a tendency to react to external challenge rather than proactively monitor and manage performance as in the case of housing benefits. There is also limited management of performance of internal service providers for example ICT and administrative services.
The council’s overall financial standing and performance in terms of meeting targets and delivering budgets has been rated as excellent by external auditors. However, there has also been insufficient challenge as to why some services are comparatively high cost where this approach does not support corporate priorities to balance quality and costs, for example, waste management, grounds maintenance and housing repairs.

Service planning takes place across the council with some links being made to corporate objectives. However, the action plans tend to focus on process issues rather than outcomes for users, and targets in general are not ambitious enough. There is a lack of clear links between the objectives and targets of individual service plans and other strategies. Service standards are not in place for all services and there is little monitoring to measure performance and drive improvements.

Some services have achieved external accreditation for example, Secure Car Parks, Quest for sports development and Lexcel for legal services, which means the council has auditable processes in place to deliver some services to a pre-defined quality standard. Performance appraisal at an individual employee level took place across 75 per cent of the council in 2001/02 but it is not consistently linked to corporate objectives and is generally limited to an assessment of training and development requirements. The fit between staff training courses and identified training needs is weak. Quantifiable target setting for staff and monitoring does not take place.

The council has made a start in addressing poor project management and has recently trained 120 staff in project management processes but project management has not yet sufficiently embedded within the organisation. All new projects are now logged through the corporate policy unit, but there is no overarching co-ordination of the resources required for each project, for example legal or ICT services.

Risk management to date has been limited to physical risks and to assessing risks with regard to inspection regimes within environmental control and the internal audit plan. The project management system has begun to address this, but it is not adequately documented or cross-referenced across all projects. There are however, some examples where risk identification and management is developing, for example the customer contact centre plans and the implementing electronic government statement.
What has the council achieved / not achieved to date?

Achievement in quality of service

59 Overall the council’s performance in the provision of services is mixed and at 64 per cent, public satisfaction is just below average. Public space and leisure facilities are well maintained and used with recent improvements and there is high public satisfaction in most areas. Performance in waste management and some elements of housing is weaker and housing benefits administration is delivered below government performance standards in many areas. The council has not measured its activities or outcomes against its priorities. Overall strengths just outweigh weaknesses.

60 Outward facing achievements are set out below under a combination of the headings of the council’s priorities.

Providing services that balance quality and cost

61 In 48 key indicators of service performance, Crawley is in the top 25 per cent of all councils for 13 of them. The council is in the worst performing 25 per cent of councils for 12 indicators. Performance on the remaining indicators is fairly evenly split between above average performance (11 indicators) and below average performance (12 indicators).

62 All five indicators regarding performance of housing benefit administration are either average or in the worst performing 25 per cent nationally although local people rate the service as mixed, finding personal access and contact with staff comparatively high, but the clarity of information, telephone access and general service are below average. The council provides a good range of customer friendly facilities for local people using its one-stop Revenues and Benefits service and is close to complying with customer services standards for this service.

63 The percentage of council tax collected and transactions that can be conducted electronically are also in the worst 25 per cent nationally.

Providing opportunities to improve quality of life / making Crawley a safer, cleaner and healthier place to live work and visit / balancing our communities economic and social need

64 Although mainly urban, Crawley borough has a good distribution of parks and open spaces across its 13 neighbourhoods. Crawley residents place a high importance on keeping this balance and quality of the local environment. The streets and public places are kept reasonably clean with adequate provision of dog and litter bins. At 65 per cent, the public’s satisfaction with standards of cleanliness is average.

65 The council’s leisure facilities, parks, playgrounds and open spaces are well maintained and used with more than 70 per cent of residents regularly using these facilities. Residents’ satisfaction levels are among the highest in the country across these services. With over 178,000 visitors a year, the Hawth theatre was voted ‘the most family friendly theatre in the south east’ in 2002 by theatre visitors.
66 The council collects less waste per head than the national average but the comparative cost of collection is high and local people’s satisfaction with the service is low. The council encourages waste minimisation and recycling through education and publicity, but has not set challenging targets. An extensive range of recycling facilities is available but the council has yet to significantly develop a means for composting green waste. Local people place a high value on the ‘red box’ kerbside paper collections with over 93 per cent satisfied with the service.

67 Crime rates in the borough are comparatively low in relation to burglary and theft of vehicles but these crimes are rising faster than other councils in Crawley’s Home Office family group. The council’s four town centre car parks all have secured car parks awards and the council has provided 13 closed circuit television (CCTV) cameras in the town centre and 21 cameras in neighbourhood shopping parades to assist crime prevention initiatives.

68 Crawley is the ninth worst performer in the South East in terms of delivering housing against allocation. This lack of housing delivery is due in part to a Government direction preventing development of the new neighbourhood to the north east of the town. The 19 new affordable housing units achieved last year also fell significantly short of the council’s target of 100.

69 The council owns just below 9,000 council homes with 83 per cent of the council’s tenants satisfied with the level of service they receive and the standard of housing is high. There are low backlogs of housing repairs but the ratio of planned to reactive maintenance is in line with best practice. The cost of housing repairs are among the highest in the country and at 42 days, the council’s average re-let time in 2001/02 was better than the national average. The ‘Foyer’ project has been successful in resettling over 20 young people into permanent housing.

**Working together to achieve more**

70 The council has worked with other agencies to drive community development activities in wards with higher levels of deprivation and educational underachievement. For example, it has been instrumental in introducing Sure Start, neighbourhood link groups and substance misuse workshops for youth people from black and minority ethnic groups. A recent community cohesion project in conjunction with the Government Office for the South East resulted in over a thousand young people taking part. As the council has not defined clear measures of success for these initiatives, it is difficult to assess what difference in outcomes have been achieved.

71 Working in partnership with the police, the council fully complies with design standards that enhance the security of buildings on all in-house design schemes and encourages this through a programme supported by the Housing Corporation. Despite this, council surveys show that there is dissatisfaction with antisocial behaviour, particularly in the neighbourhood shopping parades, some open spaces are too dark and there is not enough visible police presence – especially in the Bewbush area.
Achievement of improvement

72 Although the council has delivered many activities and initiatives many of which are of high quality and are valued by the community, overall the quality of service provision and level of service improvements has not substantially increased the satisfaction in quality of life in many areas for the residents of Crawley. The council has made improvements for local people in terms of infrastructure and community cohesion. However, improvements in performance are mixed. Although some performance is improving, it is from a low base or against targets that are not always challenging in terms of the local and national context. There remain several pockets of performance which are poor and deteriorating. The basket of performance indicators used to assess corporate performance show that there are more indicators declining than improving. Overall weaknesses outweigh strengths in achieving improvements.

Providing services that balance quality and cost

73 Significant improvements have been made in the accessibility of council buildings for people with a disability. Service areas which have declined most significantly include housing benefits and council tax collection, although the council is actively addressing these areas. Although there has been a significant improvement in the time taken to process housing benefit claims, the council’s performance remains below government standards. The cost of housing repairs and the speed of determination of planning applications has also declined.

Providing opportunities to improve quality of life / making Crawley a safer, cleaner and healthier place to live work and visit / balancing our communities economic and social need

74 The increased provision of cycling facilities, traffic control measures, and public art have all improved the physical environment. There is improved provision for people with disabilities in leisure centres and the council runs a shopmobility scheme. A recent inspection of indoor recreation facilities commended the introduction of features to enhance safety and the service was awarded two stars (good) with promising prospects of improvement.

75 The introduction of dedicated teams has brought about improvements in the street scene. The council is also participating in the Sussex Police ‘Operation Crackdown’ targeted at reducing the number of abandoned vehicles. In two separate campaigns, over 400 unwanted vehicles have been surrendered by their owners to the council for disposal.

76 The council is well placed to increase recycling rates to over 20 per cent in line with national targets, however performance is not challenging in terms of the local context. There has been reduction in the number of bins missed during collection, but the council has not made progress in reducing the amount of household waste produced, and the total of waste collected has actually risen.
77 The council has introduced a property store to give tenants a clearer choice of the accommodation available. Tenants' satisfaction and rent collection rates have improved. The time taken to relet properties has reduced but the pace of progress is still insufficient. The average number of people in bed and breakfast accommodation at any one time has grown and it is unlikely that the council will reach its targets by 2004/05.

78 The council has made significant improvements to neighbourhood centres and through joint community and sport development, facilities have been provided for young people including arts projects and play opportunities for children with disabilities and special needs. These improvements have been recognised by the local communities.

79 Overall levels of recorded crime reduced by 7 per cent between 1999 and 2000, with domestic burglaries reducing by 25 per cent and motor vehicle crime has reduced by 24 per cent. Crimes of violence, robbery and sexual offences are also falling. The council has used antisocial behaviour orders against local residents although it is not clear to what extent this has contributed to the reduction in crime statistics. Fear of crime however is still increasing. Domestic burglaries and thefts of motor vehicles are currently rising.

80 Overall there has been a deterioration in the views of local people with regard to the quality of life in Crawley. Indicators in the council's corporate plan show that 11 out of 19 satisfaction indicators are going down. For example, in 2002 the number of people who agreed the quality of council services is good overall was 47 per cent compared to 68 per cent in 1999. Other key areas where there is a deterioration in satisfaction include the economy, quality of housing and quality of leisure/cultural facilities.

81 The council has shown some improvement in performance against some of its corporate plan targets, for example satisfaction with cleanliness of streets has increased, residents feel better informed and use of leisure and art facilities have increased but there is little evidence to demonstrate that targets set are challenging or reflect the needs of the community.

82 Out of 29 key performance indicators where improvement can be measured 11 (38 per cent) have shown improvement between 2000/01 and 2001/02. On the other hand 15 (52 per cent) have shown deterioration in performance. Performance on three indicators remain the same.

Working together to achieve more

83 In partnership with the county council, the council has made significant improvements to roads in the Birches and Three Bridges areas to improve parking provision, it has also improved road safety and highway access in many parts of the borough.
Investment

84 The council is investing in some of the key building blocks to secure future improvement in performance including, obtaining external funding, additional staffing, IT systems and infrastructures, scrutiny arrangements, human resources and communication strategies and training for managers and councillors. It is also embarking on some initiatives to develop community cohesion. However there remain some gaps where failure to invest will affect the council’s ability to improve. These include contingency arrangements following the completion of the job evaluation process, improving risk management and contingency planning in general and effective challenge within best value reviews. It is not always clear that the council links investments to outcomes for local people. However Overall strengths outweigh weaknesses.

85 The council has improved officer support for its performance management systems and is introducing initiatives to improve the culture of the organisation to one which drives improvements. In recognition of its weaknesses and lack of challenge in best value reviews, the council has revised its scrutiny arrangements by reducing the number of committees to three, raising the level of business from operational detail to strategic issues and providing more officer support and training and development for councillors. The council has also reduced the number of working groups to enable councillors to spend more time out in the community.

86 The council has responded to external challenge and has amended the best value review programme, as recommended by the Audit Commission Inspection Service, in order to focus on broader reviews. The council has also adopted the district auditor’s recommendations for the best value performance plan, for example, to report performance targets in future plans with all available comparator information. The council has shown improvement following the Peer review undertaken in 1999 and it has begun to address some of recommendations following the recent inspection of human resources (HR).

87 In response to a staff attitude survey conducted last year, the council is developing its HR and communications strategies to focus on informing and listening to staff, improving staff skills for example customer care. It is currently running a management development programme for all third tier officers. The council is also working towards achieving Investors in People accreditation by 2004, with many of the building blocks now in place for this, such as staff communications and development of management capacity.

88 Additional resources have been put in place in priority areas, for example three staff positions have been confirmed in the Local Agenda 21 environment unit to co-ordinate the council’s approach to improving the environment. Several new IT systems have been recently introduced or are imminent, for example, a major upgrade to the network infrastructure to accommodate some graphical information systems and revenues and benefits, cash receipting and housing management systems.
The council has taken forward some good initiatives to develop community cohesion such as Sure Start. It has also recruited a youth council which is democratically elected and has resulted in young people now feeling that they are listened to. Tenant participation and mediation training is actively encouraged. The council has also been proactive in helping to meet community needs such as identifying potential sites for places of worship.

The council has a track record in securing external funding, for example the council is investing in a major guided bus system (Fastway) in partnership with external providers and the county council. It has been successful in obtaining £2 million funding from developers’ contributions.

The council has a medium-term financial plan to eliminate its identified predicted budget deficit within five years and at the same time fund existing growth from savings within the existing budget. In 2003/04, the council plans to achieve a net reduction in the budget deficit of £300,000 through identified growth and savings. The forecast deficit has now been reduced to £700,000.

Council standing orders are in the process of being reviewed in order to encourage a more strategic approach to procurement. The council has recognised in its draft procurement strategy that there is a need to build the capacity of managers through training and development, if it is to radically change its current approach to procurement.

Best value reviews have in general lacked sufficient challenge to bring about efficiencies, for example the parks and open spaces best value review has not addressed high costs relating to extensive facilities provided in Tilgate Park and Nature Centre, and some reviews are too internally focused and do not identify improvements for the people of Crawley, for example the Property Services review. As confirmed by the recent peer challenge, the council is a very process driven organisation. It is not always clear how its investments in processes will be translated to outcomes for local people.

An important weakness in the council’s investment programme is the pace of the council’s approach to risk management and contingency planning. There is no corporate risk management strategy, which has resulted in an ad hoc approach. The council is in a state of transition at present, and as described earlier some major projects are currently underway. The possible impact that job evaluation may have on staff retention, the large number of dependencies on support services such as ICT and the resulting effect they may have on these major projects has not been adequately assessed and planned for and could hinder the council’s ability to deliver its corporate priorities.
In the light of what the council has learned to date, what does it plan to do next?

Learning

95 The council has become more self-aware of the challenges it faces and the barriers it needs to overcome. Although this has been mainly driven by external reviews and more recently by the new chief executive, this has generated plans to address some key organisational barriers to change. There has been a positive response to external reviews and some good examples of learning at service level but the council has not demonstrated a consistent approach to learning throughout the organisation. The response to external reviews has not been used as a mechanism to generate further innovation and improvement. The transfer of skills and knowledge from external consultants to in-house staff has been limited. Overall, despite a willingness to learn – and recognition of the need to change the culture – there has been no strategic approach resulting in improvements for customers. Weaknesses therefore outweigh strengths.

96 The council’s self-assessment demonstrates an awareness of many of the areas that the council needs to develop such as management capacity and an awareness of the need for a cultural change in the organisation if it is to move forward in delivering its objectives. However, the focus of development work has been mainly around internal processes with no strong links being made to the tangible outcomes this work will deliver for local people. Without a fully developed awareness of the results it needs to deliver to the community, the council is in danger of investing in processes that may not fully support the outcomes.

97 External reviews have increased the self awareness of the council. Councillors and officers have shown a positive response to some external scrutiny and a willingness to learn from the experience. Recent examples include the peer challenge and the BFI inspection. The peer challenge carried out in January 2003 found that internal and external challenge is weak with councillors unwilling to take difficult decisions. The new chief executive has accelerated the pace of change since his appointment. As result, the council has some plans in place to address barriers to change, such as building capacity of officers and councillors and improving internal communication. Several of the issues raised by the BFI have already been put into practice, particularly regarding individual performance management.

98 The council has led on the community strategy consultation process and this has helped to inform of the key issues facing the community in particular around health, education and pay inequalities. Learning from experience across the council is mixed. The council has recognised, following a best value review, that it needs to be working in partnership in order to maximise social housing in the borough. The council has recognised that more social housing needs will be met through this process. The development of the Appletree Farm site where a housing association will be the provider, is an example of this. However this has only recently taken place and the council has missed opportunities in the past to increase its performance in this area.
There is no consistent approach across departments to learning from high performing councils – benchmarking work has been undertaken but with no structured approach to developing improvements. Some good examples do exist however, such as the new playground for children with special needs, which was built as a result of seeing a similar successful project in a London borough. The waste service has lower public satisfaction than many comparable local authorities and having examined the reasons from complaints, the council allocated more resources into the maintenance of the recycling ‘bring’ sites resulting in improved customer satisfaction.

The council has shown a willingness to learn by conducting pilot projects – there are a number in place. However the evaluation and review of projects is not robust. A recent example being the production of the council’s communication strategy which has been adopted and moved to the implementation stage. The council did not formally evaluate the issues raised so that lessons can be taken forward to inform future work.

The challenging of performance is an important part of the scrutiny process and it can also aid the development of policy. Best value reviews are not rigorously challenged by the committees. This has limited the potential to further develop services through more rigorous application of challenge through scrutiny. In addition, the council is not using its performance management systems to learn, for example, to challenge the cost of high cost services in some areas.

The contribution of staff to develop learning has been limited for a number of reasons. Training evaluation is not structured and although communication is improving, management communication with staff is inconsistent and underdeveloped in some areas. The council has not learnt from outside consultants that it has employed to supplement internal resources. The development of in-house skills from these opportunities has not been maximised this has resulted in the longer-term engagement of external staff, which is likely to be more expensive. The customer contact centre is an example where opportunities have been missed to develop project management skills within the council’s own workforce. Resources have not been sufficiently released to allow a full transfer of knowledge.

There is little structured approach to learning across the council even where services need to work closely together such as housing and benefits. Here, the problems of poor benefits performance have impacted on the council’s performance in collecting housing rents. A closer awareness of mutual needs would have helped to improve the resulting service for customers. This issue has also been raised during a recent inspection of the council’s housing benefit service.

**Future plans**

The council’s has generally weak future plans. The draft vision based on community consultation has not yet been fully developed, and associated plans to achieve it are therefore not in place. Some plans and strategies do exist to address service issues but there is some inconsistency between these plans. The delay in preparing a longer-term plan prevents progress towards the vision. Overall weaknesses outweigh strengths.
The council has a number of strategies in place, with important new ones being developed to cover change management, procurement and information technology. There are also plans in place for partnership working and delivery of a range of initiatives and projects such as the contact centre and the PFI schools/leisure project all of which will deliver benefits to the community. The council adopted the local plan in 2000 and the council produced its housing strategy in 2001 and reviewed it in 2002. While recognising the number of strategies and plans in place and being developed, there remain important issues not covered such as social inclusion and property strategies. The council has made a commitment to try to balance the economic and social needs of the community but the lack of applying a clear strategy to deal with this affects disadvantaged people. There are no project plans in place to underpin the development and implementation of the social inclusion strategy.

There is an overall human resources strategy and the council has started to implement important aspects of it in relation to appraisals, sickness and performance management. The peer challenge in January 2003 had highlighted the ‘significant recruitment and retention issues’, however, there are no plans in place to specifically deal with this problem. The recruitment budget has been cut by £50,000 and the council is not making sufficient efforts to attract employment from the wider community – particularly ethnic minority communities.

Plans are in place to support some of the issues that relate to the council aims. These include plans to improve transport arrangements, a neighbourhood warden scheme and a number of partnerships. These partnerships will enable important projects to be delivered including new leisure facilities, improved housing maintenance arrangements and higher levels of composting. However, there are no links between all the existing plans and it is therefore difficult for staff, councillors and users to understand the relative importance of individual items. The lack of co-ordination and prioritisation of all the plans, and the amount of action required to complete them presents a confusing picture. The council’s vision is not yet developed. Officers and councillors do not therefore have a clear understanding of the future direction of the council. The peer challenge concluded that future plans are neither prioritised nor scoped and they have no milestones.

Following its self-assessment, the council has produced an action plan which outlines three main areas for improvement:

- providing leadership for the town;
- management priorities; and
- improving under-performing services.

The plan does not address the need to link other plans together and does not contain targets, resources, priorities. Corporately there is little overall awareness of project plans and dependencies. The plan does show a commitment to further involve the community in developing the future ambitions for Crawley. However, in its current form it will not help the council and users understand what the future priorities are, or to judge whether or not the actions will be deliverable.
The council does not always form contingency plans and its plans and strategies do not always link together. The strategic housing supply figures in the housing strategy assume that the expansion of Gatwick Airport blocks the development of the north-east sector and does not consider the additional affordable units that the council could provide if this area were developed. In contrast the local plan assumes development will take place and the council has made firm arrangements to pursue the housing development when the decision on Gatwick is reached.

The financial strategy has enabled the council to fund services at a level significantly above the Government's standard spending assessment (SSA). Although the council has started preliminary work on assessing the impact of losing capital receipts an alternative plan has not been fully developed in order to balance the revised spending requirements in line with the corporate priorities. Work has commenced on this during the budget setting for 2003/04 but there is no clear strategy in place to deal with the longer-term implications should income from interest reduce.
### Summary of theme scores and strengths / weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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</table>
| Ambition  | 3     | • Good community leadership in a number of areas such as community safety and community cohesion  
  • Community Vision and themes established through local strategic partnership  
  • Weakness in corporate plan being addressed  
  • Work in progress to drive change | • New vision aspirational and underdeveloped  
  • Mixed internal leadership  
  • No clarity or overall ownership of corporate objectives |
| Prioritisation | 1   | • Council is developing a better understanding of its external environment  
  • Consultation is used to shape corporate and service priorities  
  • Non-executive councillors involved in prioritisation process | • Consultation departmentally led not customer driven  
  • Diversity and social exclusion issues not integrated into service delivery  
  • Limited opportunity for community engagement, for example, Neighbourhoods  
  • De-prioritisation does not reflect need or demand  
  • No culture of prioritisation  
  • Prioritisation process not robust  
  • Minimal dis-investment from non priority areas  
  • Managers unclear of priorities  
  • Poor interdepartmental communication |
| Focus     | 2     | • Track record of investing resources in areas of focus  
  • Investment in performance and project management systems  
  • A number of key strategies to assist focus on priorities  
  • Focus on specific initiatives that have improved the quality of life of local people  
  • Various projects in progress that will deliver significant benefits to the community | • Links between strategies not always well established  
  • Links between strategies and corporate priorities not strong  
  • Targets not challenging enough few outcomes  
  • Many initiatives delivered in a non integrated manner  
  • Little corporate focus on diversity and social exclusion  
  • Performance information not used effectively |
| Capacity  | 3     | • Healthy financial position  
  • Chief executive and leader champions for change  
  • Good partnership working  
  • Some joint working internally and with other partners  
  • Staff satisfaction with training and development, some empowerment of staff  
  • Councillor support and development  
  • Management training and development | • Leadership in councillors and managers is mixed  
  • Management capacity underdeveloped  
  • Implementation of HR strategies inconsistent  
  • Ad hoc approach to procurement |
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<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Performance management system in place</td>
<td>• Performance measured but not managed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Moving towards a performance management culture in some areas.</td>
<td>• Project Management is weak</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• New project management system in place</td>
<td>• Lack of challenge to high cost services in some areas</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• External accreditation of some services.</td>
<td>• Inconsistent links between objectives, targets and outcomes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Overall financial standing and performance in terms of meeting targets and delivering budget is judged as to be excellent</td>
<td>• Mixed picture of appraisal system</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Service standards not in place across all services and not measured</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Little management of performance of internal providers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement in quality of service</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>• 13 out of 48 PIs are in top 25%</td>
<td>• Lack of clear links between achievements and priorities/strategies.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• High tenant satisfaction</td>
<td>• Below average satisfaction with council services</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• High resident satisfaction with parks, playground open spaces and cultural services</td>
<td>• 12 PIs in bottom 25 per cent</td>
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<td>• High satisfaction with recycling</td>
<td>• Low satisfaction – waste collection</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Comparatively low crime rates</td>
<td>• Dissatisfaction with antisocial behaviour</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• CCTV coverage in town centre and neighbourhoods</td>
<td>• Housing benefit administration below average</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Secure car park awards for council car parks</td>
<td>• Failed to meet target of 100 new affordable units per</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Secure by design standards on in-house design schemes</td>
<td>• Household waste above average</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Streets and public spaces kept clean and well maintained</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Low backlog of housing repairs Range of community projects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement of improvement</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>• Improvement in accessibility to buildings, housing re-let times,</td>
<td>• Quality of life indicators deteriorating</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>infrastructure (town centre, car parks and leisure centres) – recognised by residents and stakeholders</td>
<td>• More indicators from the basket of performance indicators are declining than improving</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tenants’ satisfaction improved</td>
<td>• National PI’s declining (waste collection, staff turnover, housing benefits), council tax collection, cost of housing repairs and turn around of planning applications</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Increase in recycling rates</td>
<td>• Improvement from a low base and not challenging in terms of local or national context</td>
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<td>• Reduced crime – assault, burglary and vehicle</td>
<td>• Household waste increased</td>
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<td>• 400 unwanted vehicles collected</td>
<td>• Increase in the number of people in bed and breakfast accommodation</td>
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<td>• Implemented schemes: cycling, shop mobility, playgrounds, play centres and neighbourhoods</td>
<td>• Fear of crime increasing</td>
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<td>• Burglary and thefts from cars rising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Strengths</td>
<td>Weaknesses</td>
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| Investment    | 3     | • £2 million secured from development contributions for Fastway  
• Investment: project management, IT systems and infrastructure, management training for 3rd tier managers and 3 new staff in LA21 unit, councillor training  
• Improving scrutiny arrangements  
• Improving staff skills – for example, customer care  
• Consultation mechanisms  
• Initiatives to develop community cohesion: Sure Start, recycling  
• Helping to identify religious sites  
• Innovation in consultation methods | • The council does not always link investment to improved outcomes for users.  
• Implications of job evaluation not fully addressed.  
• No investment to improve risk assessment / management and contingency planning  
• Effectiveness of fundamental challenge in best value reviews is variable. |
| Learning      | 2     | • Increased self awareness  
• Awareness of the need to change in culture  
• Plans to tackle barriers to change  
• Positive response to external challenge  
• Learning on key issues facing community  
• Some learning at departmental level | • No structured approach to organisational learning  
• Communication with staff is underdeveloped/inconsistent in some areas  
• Benchmarking underdeveloped  
• Challenge weak  
• Training evaluation unstructured  
• Developments arising from self assessment internally focused no customer outcomes  
• Limited opportunities to transfer skills to in-house staff |
| Future plans  | 2     | • Draft vision in place  
• Some key strategies being developed  
• Contingency planning for north-east sector undertaken  
• Plans for partnership working and a range of initiatives are in place | • No overall improvement plan  
• Future plans not SMART  
• Lack of understanding by officers and councillors of future plans  
• Project plans not co-ordinated  
• No plans in place to deal with recruitment and retention issues |

**Scoring key:**
1 - Weak  
2 - Weaknesses outweigh strengths  
3 - Strengths outweigh weaknesses  
4 - Strong
Appendix 1 - Balancing housing markets (BHM) diagnostic assessment

How well does the council understand its housing market and from its understanding has the council developed the right proposals to help balance its housing markets?

113 The council has developed a good understanding of the housing need and stock condition in the borough on which to base its original housing strategy 2001-2006, but there are flaws in the 2002 revision exercise. The strategy is internally consistent but does not link well to higher level strategies or pay enough attention to contingencies. Nonetheless there are more strengths than weaknesses in the council’s understanding of its local housing markets and its proposals to balance them.

What research base is the council using to understand its housing market?

114 The council commissioned a housing needs survey in 2000 that it used to support its Housing Strategy 2001-2006. The survey was based on 2,972 questionnaire returns and provided the council with information on the number and type of affordable homes needed over the next five years, the aspirations of the local community and appropriate site thresholds for the negotiation of affordable housing on residential development sites.

115 The housing needs assessment also included a survey of the needs of employees and employers in the town. In addition, the council carried out a private sector stock condition survey in 1998 and a council housing stock conditions survey in 1999 that it used to support the strategy. The council has also used the findings of the council housing stock condition survey to support the Housing Business Plan 2003/08.

116 The council revised the housing strategy in 2002 to update targets and to measure progress. However the format adopted makes it difficult to judge where the council has made progress. In addition, the council did not attempt to update the assessment of housing need using other sources of market information and still bases its assessment of housing need on 2000 survey. This is a particular failing in view of the continued inflation in general house prices in the borough since 2000.

How does the council develop and evolve its strategies and plans?

117 The Housing Strategy 2001-2006 is well linked to supporting themes and these are generally supported by appropriate consultation although more needs to be done to reach ethnic minority groups. The council held a conference in April 2001 to take into account partners’ and users’ views in developing the strategy, with neighbouring councils, voluntary sector bodies and tenants. The conference discussed the findings of the surveys and shaped the strategy. The council did not hold a similar event in 2002 when it updated the strategy although it did consult key partners and council tenants.
The strategy has six supporting strategies and contains summaries of their action plans. These supporting strategies are homelessness, private sector housing, housing for black and minority ethnic communities, key workers, empty properties and supported housing and these are well linked to the overall strategy. For example, the strategy picks up from the Black and Minority Ethnic Housing Strategy the need to provide larger homes for Asian households.

The council has consulted relevant groups in the production of each of these supporting themes, including the Private Sector Landlords Forum on private sector housing and the Crawley Ethnic Minority Partnership on black and minority ethnic housing. However, the council recognises that it needs to more to engage with black and minority ethnic communities effectively. Also it is unclear from the text of the strategy whether the council has formally adopted it and over what timescale the council intends to review the content.

The actions set out in both the housing strategy and the supporting strategies focus on specific initiatives and processes rather than on the council’s desired outcomes. Generally the strategies lack measurable targets. For example the housing strategy says that to provide accessible housing for people with disabilities the council will review the standard of design on new development to ‘ensure that a suitable proportion of new homes are built to mobility standards’, without giving an indication of what is a suitable proportion.

Although the council’s housing strategy refers to the council’s current corporate plan and vision with its seven underpinning values, it is not built around the same values and does not make an explicit links. Through discussion with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) the council has defined a set of six shared values that it intends to adopt as a new set of objectives. At present the housing strategy does not make reference to these. This is a result of timing of the LSP initiative and the council is aware that it needs to address it.

The council recognises that influences on the housing market go beyond the borough boundaries and that it should address these issues through joint working. To develop its key workers strategy it commissioned, along with Mid Sussex and Horsham councils, a study of the Gatwick Airport travel to work area.

Along with the other West Sussex districts, Crawley cannot progress its local plan until the county council has adopted the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016. The council adopted its current local plan in 2000, covering the period up to 2006. It has undertaken some consultation on the replacement local plan for 2006-2016 with a view to publishing a consultation draft in summer 2003. It has also, in line with government guidance, carried out an urban capacity study to identify additional development opportunities in the existing built-up area with the aim of increasing urban density during the next period of the local plan.

The council has not reached agreement with its neighbours on how to meet the future housing needs of the sub region. It has concluded that it will have to direct major housing development after 2006 to outside the borough boundary. To achieve this it will need to work in close partnership with the neighbouring councils of Horsham and Mid Sussex. While the councils agree in principle about the county’s development strategy set out in its draft structure plan, the councils disagreed at the examination in public over whether housing after 2006 should go to the west or the south east of Crawley.
The council has produced supplementary planning guidance on affordable housing in recognition of the increased demand identified in the 2000 housing needs survey. This guidance states that the council will seek 30 per cent of new housing development to be affordable, confirming the figure in the local plan. The guidance also seeks to reduce, from 25 units to 15 units, the site threshold where the council will seek affordable housing to allow the council to secure affordable housing from smaller sites.

What are the existing strategies that the uses to help balance the housing market?

There are possible developments that could undermine or increase the council’s ability to deliver its objectives. The housing strategy makes no reference to them, undermining the council’s ability to manage the market. For example the council’s local plan allocates land to the north east of the town for a new neighbourhood of 2,650 new dwellings. The Government Office for the South East (GOSE) has prevented the council from granting planning permission on the site until central government has decided whether to promote a second runway at the airport. If this goes ahead it may permanently prevent the council from granting planning permission. However if the new neighbourhood can be developed it will deliver an additional 765 affordable homes under the council’s present planning policies. The situation has an important bearing on the council’s future ability to deliver affordable homes, and it needs to consider alternative options.

The council has set a clear target of providing 100 affordable homes per annum. This was not in the original housing strategy but the council incorporated it after the 2002 review. This is an important development and represents a clear outcome measure against which the council can measure its performance. The strategy does not however explain the basis for this target or to reconcile it with its housing needs survey that estimates an annual demand for 1,087 affordable units in the borough each year. The target of 100 does not include either the 40 additional units per year over the same period that the council hopes to identify through urban capacity studies or the number of units that it may secure through the development of a new neighbourhood mentioned above.

In general terms the housing strategy supports government priorities but does not draw explicit links between key government targets and the council’s progress. For example the council intends to meet the Government’s decent homes standards before 2010 and should succeed. It does not have a council house stock maintenance backlog. But the housing strategy does not refer to it.

GOSE rated the Housing Strategy Statement 2001-2006, revised 2002, as average against its fit-for-purpose criteria, highlighting many of the issues set out above.

What are the council’s actions and what outcomes has it achieved in helping to balance housing markets?

The council generally provides a customer focused service to its housing tenants. However, the council has not effectively delivered against its one of its key corporate objectives which is the provision of affordable housing. Overall, there are more weaknesses than strengths in the council’s actions and outcomes in helping to balance housing markets.
How is the council working corporately to help balance the housing market?

131 One of the six objectives of the LSP is the provision of affordable housing and the housing strategy says that ‘the key housing issue is affordability’. Uncertainty over the north-east neighbourhood and the delay in the production of the structure plan have constrained the supply of housing land. The council, despite its acute need, has taken a decision to reduce its opportunities to provide affordable housing on a major site that it owns. In 2002/03 it will only provide 19 affordable units against its own target of 100.

132 Within the borough boundary the council owns a major development site that the local plan allocates for housing. This is known as Appletree Farm and has the capacity to accommodate 180 units. In April 2001 the council granted full planning permission for the development of the site, intending to develop the site itself and build 100 per cent new council houses. The Government has recently announced proposals to pool council capital receipts. This would include money received by the council as a result of tenants exercising their ‘right to buy’ on the Appletree Farm site. In light of this the council decided in December 2002 to develop the site in partnership with a housing association. However, as part of the revision to the proposal the council reduced the affordable housing element from 100 per cent to 50 per cent, thereby securing an estimated £8 million capital receipt for the disposal of the site. This appears to be at odds with its main priority, since the constraining factor on affordable housing is land rather than money.

133 Until decision to develop Appletree farm in partnership with a housing association the council had seen its role as the provider of general needs affordable housing. As a result, over the last three years the council has allocated £4 million per annum to its own direct build programme. The council has under spent on this budget as a result of lack of development opportunities. In addition, if the council had spent this money through a housing association then the association could have supplemented the capital by borrowing on the open market. This would have increased the number of dwellings built for the same capital outlay by the council.

134 In 2000 the council set up a joint commission group of housing associations. The lack of opportunity for the development of affordable housing in the town means that the commissioning group has not come into full operation but the council intends to use this arrangement for the development of Appletree Farm.

135 The council will meet the Government’s decent homes standard. It spends £9 million each year in its housing stock, sufficient to meet maintenance needs and prevent a backlog. In 2001/02 the council spent an average of £18.09 per week on each of its properties, which is in the top 25 per cent when compared with other councils nationally. The council is a ‘full repairing’ landlord and replaces a wide range of fittings in council houses that tenants would be responsible for in other councils. However, half of maintenance is reactive rather than planned, compared with good practice guidance of a maximum of 30 per cent, indicating that planned maintenance is not managed efficiently enough despite the good standards of repair.
Eighty three per cent of the council’s tenants are satisfied with the level of service they receive. The council has active tenant liaison groups and supports the formation of tenants associations. The council uses tenants well to advise on the wording of housing forms and literature, to help with the appointment of some housing staff, and to act as mediators in neighbour disputes.

The council’s average re-let time was 42 days in 2001/02. This is below the national average but is an improvement over the previous year when the average was 57 days. The council’s introduction of a choice-based letting scheme known as The Property Store contributed to this improvement. The scheme allows tenants to choose the properties that suit their needs and includes housing association stock.

**How is the council using its housing strategy and enabling role to help balance the housing market?**

Homelessness and the number of people in bed and breakfast is an increasing problem in the borough and the council has not done enough to counter it. The average number of people in bed and breakfast accommodation at any one time has grown from 14 in 2000/01 to 40 in 2001/02. This trend continues upwards. In response to this the council set up a hostel specifically aimed at single young homeless men in partnership with a housing association. To date the scheme has accepted more than 60 homeless young men and successfully moved 20 on into supported tenancies. Nonetheless, the council’s homelessness strategy identifies the need for additional accommodation to move people out of bed and breakfast. The council’s has failed through indecision to provide this. The council identified Walstead House, sheltered accommodation in need of modernisation, but Crawley Homes felt that it was inappropriate for single homeless men. The homelessness strategy still has to identify resources for the scheme.

**How is the council using the local plan to help balance the housing market?**

The council is the ninth worst performing council in the South East in the delivery of local plan housing figures. However, the delivery of housing is largely beyond the council’s control as it relies on the release of the north-east neighbourhood. GOSE have accepted that the council does not have to identify additional housing sites until central government has resolved the issue of expansion at Gatwick Airport. New house completions within the borough are now dependent on the development of infill sites as all major housing sites contained in the local plan have been completed. The lack of large housing sites has affected the ability of the council to deliver affordable housing through planning agreements. The council has only secured 30 units through this route in the last three years.

The council has responded to the current situation by looking to increase housing density, with some success. Between 1997 and 2000 it approved development at an average of 34 dwellings per hectare, complying with government guidance of 30-50 per hectare. The council now looks to increase density further. In February 2002 it refused planning permission for the redevelopment an infill site with 16 detached houses on the grounds that it was an ‘inefficient use of land’. The council has now successfully defended the decision at planning appeal and granted planning permission for a revised scheme that increases the number of dwellings to 29 and with affordable housing in the scheme.
How is the council using its private sector housing strategy to help balance the housing market?

141 The council has identified that the private rental sector accounts for only 4.2 per cent of the dwellings in Crawley and recognises that it does not at present play the role that it could in meeting the need for affordable housing. To facilitate access to private rented accommodation the council has introduced a rent deposit scheme where the council pays the private landlord the deposit and reclaims it from the tenant after six months. The council introduced the scheme in 2002 but has yet to measure its success formally.

142 The council estimates that it has 30 high risk houses in multiple occupation, those with more than three storeys. The council has no formal inspection programme in place for these properties. The council claims that it has adopted a negotiated approach to improving the condition of properties through the use of environmental health legislation, although it has not prosecuted any landlords for more than two years.

143 The council has a limited budget available for home improvements to owner occupied dwellings. However, it does not advertise the availability of this money and allocates it on a ‘first come first served basis’ with no reference to ability to pay. The council does not specifically target this money or measure the results that it achieves. The council has produced policy statements in order to comply with the Regulatory Reform Order but it has not yet developed proposals to use its new ability to intervene in the private sector market.

How well does the council monitor its progress and impact in helping to balance housing markets and how effectively does this feed into future strategies and plans?

144 The council’s monitoring arrangements are hampered by a lack of measurable targets. Where targets do exist they often reflect performance rather than driving it. However a best value review has identified key issues and increased recognition for the need to move to an enabling approach. Commitment to this approach and communication of it is still equivocal.

How does the council monitor its progress and assess the impact of its work to help balance the housing market?

145 The council’s housing strategy is focused on what the council does rather than what it is attempting to achieve. In addition, the strategy does not set out the council’s past performance so it is difficult to identify trends. The revised strategy 2002 failed to identify what had changed from the previous year and what had not. It is therefore difficult for the council to judge progress meaningfully. The main criterion against which the council can measure its performance is the provision of affordable units against its target. Council services report their performance to portfolio holders on a quarterly basis and the council has put in place a framework of service plans. However, the council has tended to respond to disappointing performance by making targets less challenging rather than by reviewing problems and adopting measures that could secure improvements. For example the council set out as a priority the need to reduce the number of people in bed and breakfast accommodation. However the target average number of people in bed and breakfast, 10 in 2001/02, was increased to 25 in 2002/03 in light of the council’s actual performance of 35 in 2001/02.
The council has done a best value review of the implementation of the housing strategy. The review is a challenging document that identifies key issues and emphasises the need for the council to move away from the direct provision of services and develop its enabling role.

How does the council learn from what it is doing to balance the housing market to enable it to improve its further strategies and plans?

The council is beginning to recognise that it should move away from providing general needs affordable housing. This results partly from the changing environment in which the council operates and also from the recognition that the council can increase its ability to deliver improvements if it places more emphasis on its facilitation role. It has started to form partnerships with housing associations around the development of Appletree Farm and will be able to build on this experience in developing other sites, particularly the north-east neighbourhood if it is developed. However, the council has yet to clearly communicate this change of emphasis across the organisation, and faces some resistance from its own members.

Crawley Homes is planning to enter into a strategic partnership arrangement with a private sector maintenance contractor in 2004. It intends to place performance management at the centre of the partnership especially in addressing maintenance cost. The service will also review the continuation of its ‘full repairing landlord’ status. It intends to launch a tenant incentive scheme, where tenants receive incentives in return for prompt payment of rent and for abiding with the tenant’s compact.

The council has also sustained the consortium of land owners involved with the north-east neighbourhood and has continued to discuss the proposals with utility providers to ensure that the council can deliver the development quickly if GOSE lifts the directive.

However, the council has not yet clearly defined its future role in relation to the direct provision of housing and some councillors remain opposed to the idea of ceasing to providing council housing directly. The council has not yet set clear priorities for its housing services and is not maximising the use of its own land to deliver affordable units.
## Summary of balancing housing markets diagnostic judgements and strengths / weaknesses

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<th>Area of focus</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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| How well does the council understand its housing market and from its understanding has the council developed the right proposals to help balance its housing markets? | b     | • The council has a good understanding of the local housing market based on up-to-date need and conditions surveys.  
• The council undertook extensive consultation when is produced the original strategy although recognises that it needs to engage further with some groups.  
• The council is producing a key worker study in partnership with adjoining councils.  
• The housing strategy links to the six supporting strategies.  
• The council has produced planning guidance on affordable housing in light of the shortage in the borough | • The council did not update information supporting the housing strategy in the 2002 review.  
• The housing strategy does not link clearly to the corporate plan or the early objectives of the Local Strategic Partnership.  
• The council has not clarified how the target for its delivery of affordable housing relates to demand.  
• The council’s strategies do not include risk analysis or link explicitly to national priorities. |
| What are the council’s actions and what outcomes has it achieved in helping to balance housing markets? | c     | • The council has begun to work in partnership with housing associations  
• The council’s stock has no maintenance back log and tenants are happy with and actively involved in the service they receive.  
• The council operates a choice based lettings system  
• The council has opened a successful scheme – with an housing association – for homeless single males, but more accommodation is needed.  
• The council has traditionally encouraged development at a high density and this is increasing  
• The council has introduced a rent deposit scheme to help tenants secure private rented accommodation | • The council has not maximised the number of affordable units delivered through the development of its own land.  
• The council is falling short of delivering against its own affordable housing targets.  
• The council had not fully spent the capital allocated to self build and this money would have delivered a greater number of units if spent through an housing association.  
• Number of people in bed and breakfast is increasing  
• The lack of certainty over the housing land supply has led to the council under-performing in the delivery of affordable and open market housing through the planning system – this is largely outside the council’s control.  
• The council does not regularly inspect houses in multiple occupation.  
• The council does not target private sector improvement grant and has not fully explored new opportunities under the Regulatory Reform Order. |
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| How well does the council monitor its progress and impact in helping to balance housing markets and how effectively does this feed into future strategies and plans? | C | • The best value review of the housing strategy has identified key issues for the council.  
• The council recognises the need to increase its role as an enabler rather than a direct provider and has started working in partnership with housing associations to deliver general needs affordable housing. | • It is difficult to measure progress against the housing strategy  
• Targets in performance plans have tended to reflect performance rather than drive it.  
• The council has not clearly defined its new role and widely communicated it. |
| Balancing housing markets diagnostic assessment judgement | | | C |

**Scoring key**
For each of the key areas looked at within the diagnostic assessments the need for improvement, based on the risk of service failure and poor outcomes, is identified using the following scale.

- a = very low
- b = low
- c = high
- d = very high
Appendix 2 - Public space diagnostic assessment

How well does the council contribute to the management of the physical environment?

151 Care of the physical environment and quality of life issues are high priorities for Crawley’s residents and the council has many strengths and few weaknesses in this area. However some of the weaknesses are important ones.

152 The council’s Best Value Performance Plan 2002/2003 reflects the council’s high priority for care of the physical environment and quality of life, and sets targets to measure their achievement. The Crawley local plan emphasises the need to protect and improve the environment. The council has produced supplementary planning guidance notes on standards for private outdoor space. It has used Section 106 planning agreements to fund projects, such as, cycle paths and the Fastway, a guided bus system linking Crawley, Gatwick and Horley, currently under construction.

153 The council has consulted local people on projects designed to reduce crime, enhance the local street scene, encourage walking and cycling and increase public open space provision. Good examples are, at the Broadfield Barton shopping area, where the council demolished a car park that had become a focus for crime; and at the High Street, where it carried out improvements to the street lighting, and introduced measures to slow traffic and reduce antisocial behaviour. The council is undertaking environmental improvements in residential areas that retain the open and green nature of the streets.

154 Street furniture is generally in good condition and of a high design quality in the town centre. There is good provision of litter and dog bins. The council does not use tropical hardwoods for street furniture. An advertising company maintains existing bus shelters.

155 The council owns and operates 4 of the 23 town centre car parks. These car parks have Secured Car Park awards, are well maintained and signed and are patrolled daily. A survey in 2000 showed that car park users were satisfied with the council’s car parks. The council has formed a car park operators’ forum, with private sector operators, aimed at ensuring that all car parks are safe for people to use and of a high standard.

156 The council has 13 public toilets, of which 3 are in the town centre. A MORI survey in 1999 showed high levels of public satisfaction. They are cleaned daily, with those in the town centre being cleaned up to three times per day. All the toilets are accessible to people with disabilities. The toilets are well signed and their opening hours and contact information is displayed. The council has completed a refurbishment programme amounting to £70,000 per year over the last nine years aimed at improving safety and reducing vandalism.

157 A specialist operator provides a small market on Fridays and Saturdays in the pedestrian area of the High Street. The markets are kept clean.
The council is developing a neighbourhood approach to maintenance with area-based teams working on all matters related to parks and street care. All staff receive customer care training with particular emphasis on the neighbourhood approach. The teams do small maintenance jobs without authorisation. The council publicises a freephone number for the public to report problems. It is not possible to report maintenance problems on the council’s website but email addresses are given. Staff record and categorise all reported problems on a computer-based system. The council normally carries out work within 24 hours, but gives maintenance matters with health and safety implications priority.

Through its local plan, the council encourages developers to participate in the ‘Percent for Art’ scheme advocated by the Arts Council. Public consultation has taken place on supplementary planning guidance for providing public art. The town centre and the Greenway, a 15-mile walking route around the town, display public art. An example is the Broadfield underpass mural project, a partnership between the county council and local community groups, which has turned an unattractive area into a colourful feature and makes a safer environment. The council provides £25,000 per annum for public art projects.

However, performance on the speed of determining planning applications is weak. In 2001/02, the council determined 60 per cent of planning applications within eight weeks. This places the council among the worst performing 25 per cent of councils and fails to meet the Government’s national standard, which requires 80 per cent of applications to be determined in eight weeks.

The council employs a community litter officer who liaises with private landowners and concentrates on working in local environment action areas. In some cases, the council cleans up areas of land regardless of ownership. The council makes environmental grants of up to £500 available for environmental improvement projects leading to a cleaner environment.

There are seven main public parks and two local nature reserves. Tilgate Park and Goffs Park have management plans and Tilgate Park won a Green Flag Award in 2002. The council provides children’s play areas in parks and open space across the borough. It also provides four adventure playgrounds. The parks and play areas are well used. The 1999 MORI survey showed that 94 per cent of people were satisfied with the parks, playgrounds and open spaces. Crawley came top of the MORI comparisons table. Best value performance indicators show that in 2000/01, 80 per cent of residents were satisfied with the council’s parks and open spaces. This places the council among the best performing 25 per cent of councils. The council maintains roadside verges as part of an agreement with the county council.

Public play areas are well maintained and inspected daily. The council has carried out a risk assessment for all its children’s play areas. Following an extensive public consultation exercise, it implemented a programme of refurbishment and removal of neighbourhood play areas. The refurbished play areas have included safety surfacing and fencing. The council is investing £200,000 to improve the design of play equipment in open access adventure playgrounds and play centres. It is also developing a range of play area designs to cover for a wide range of age groups and for children with special needs. The council has undertaken an audit of all open space and playing pitch provision, taking into account existing and future needs. The council uses the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) standards for the provision of open space. The provision of open space and play space is a requirement with any new development.
The council provides local nature reserves at Grattons Park and Target Hill, and is completing another at Tilgate Forest. There is a rare breed’s centre at Tilgate Park. The council’s conservation officer works with the Horley/Crawley Countryside Management Project, aimed at counteracting the pressures caused by the built environment around Horley, Crawley and Gatwick airport. The project implements small-scale environmental projects, rights of way improvements and works with volunteer groups. The council has formed an environment forum and is updating its Green Space Strategy, linking it to its park management plans to encompass biodiversity issues and has plans to form a biodiversity group. The council supports the West Sussex tree warden scheme. The council has a policy of minimum pesticide use but still uses peat in its horticultural activities which is not a sustainable sourced material.

However, maintenance costs for parks and open spaces are high compared to many other councils, with unit costs more than double that of low spending councils. The council is aiming for a cost reduction of 2 per cent per annum. It is unclear whether there is a structured means of achieving this saving, although approximately £350,000 was saved last year.

The council’s policies on the needs of people with disabilities and mobility problems are set out in its local plan. It has produced supplementary planning guidance to provide advice to developers on access issues. It has carried out an accessibility audit of all its buildings, creating a programme of improvements necessary to meet the standards of the Disabilities Discrimination Act. The council has implemented the majority of these improvements. It intends completing the full programme by 2004. In 2001/02, 47 per cent of council buildings were accessible to people with disabilities; this was among the best performing 25 per cent of councils nationally. The council has also implemented schemes in parks and gardens to improve access for people with disabilities. The council is working with schools to provide play opportunities for children with disabilities and special needs. The council took a lead in providing the Crawley town centre Shopmobility facility.

The council has developed the Greenway to encourage people to walk and has worked with the county council to implement a network of cycle routes throughout Crawley. Signs and maps support and provide information for these routes. The council has taken a lead in promoting the use of public transport. It engaged consultants to study the transport requirements for Crawley and now works with the county council to develop the Fastway. The council is using commuted payments from Section 106 agreements to fund its share of the project. The council worked with the county council to introduce controlled parking schemes along with variable message signs, in December 2002, to restrict long stay parking in areas of the town centre. Enforcement officers patrol the council’s car parks on a daily basis. The council does not have a transport strategy but is working with the county council and local groups, such as the Crawley Transport Forum, to develop an urban transport plan.
168 The council responds to all complaints of noise including those relating to barking dogs. A contractor provides a response to all serious complaints of noise received outside of normal office hours. The council licenses premises requiring a public entertainment licence. The noise section assesses all applications and advises the licensing section on appropriate licence conditions or recommends refusal. The council investigates all pollution complaints and takes formal action where a statutory nuisance exists. The council’s statutory review of air quality revealed that it would meet its natural air quality objectives and that an air quality management plan is not necessary for Crawley. The council monitors air quality and publishes the results annually. The council has formally adopted the Enforcement Concordat and work has started on implementing its requirements.

169 The council’s Environmental Strategy lacks specific actions or targets. The council does not have a current climate change strategy. Nonetheless it has undertaken an assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions for the whole of its area and has identified flooding as the main impact for the local area. It plans to complete one by December 2003. The local plan places restrictions on development in areas of flood risk. The council consults the environment agency on planning applications and reflects their advice in planning decisions.

170 The council is working to implement an environmental management system (EMAS) across the whole council by the end of 2003.

**Does the council help keep the locality clean?**

171 The council has strengths in this area with a number of collection and recycling initiatives and generally clean streets and open spaces, although there are weaknesses that outweigh its strengths, including a high cost waste collection service that has low public satisfaction and is not supported by a waste minimisation strategy.

172 The council works with the county council and other district councils to promote and develop recycling. It undertakes campaigns on reducing waste, aimed at the public and schools, to stress the need to reduce and recycle domestic waste. However there are no measures of success for these campaigns.

173 Crawley has over 70 local recycling centres. In 2001/02, it collected 14.4 per cent of household waste for recycling, an increase of 0.9 per cent on 2000/01. This is among the best performing 25 per cent of councils. Public satisfaction with the recycling service is high. In 2001/02, 81 per cent of people were satisfied with the recycling facilities making the council one of the best performers. The council has recently introduced a kerbside collection scheme for paper. The council won a National Recycling Award for the promotion of the scheme, which is likely to take the proportion of waste recycled above the Government’s target of 20 per cent for 2002/03. The council is working with Horsham District Council to create a small-scale composting unit. This currently awaits planning permission. The council is promoting the home composting of green garden waste but composts less green waste than most other councils. It ensures that where appropriate, new developments have recycling facilities. DEFRA has awarded the council £220,000 in 2002/03 for paper recycling and £38,000 in 2003/04 for the Furni-aid charity, which recycles used furniture to low income households.
174 Nonetheless the council’s recycling plan is not up to date, not resourced, nor does it contain targets. The council is working to national recycling targets and has not set challenging targets of its own. The lack of a material recycling facility (MRF) restraints improvement in recycling rates. There are problems of cleanliness and health and safety at some recycling centres and the council does not have a specific budget for maintaining these sites. The council is not at present analysing performance and collection information to identify areas where collection of recycling materials is low. The council does not work extensively with the business and voluntary sectors to increase recycling, nor does it provide promotional material in a range of languages for local people.

175 The council has contracted its waste collection service to a private sector company, Serviceteam. The cost of the service in 2001/02 was £37.72 per household, which is among the 25 per cent highest costs for all councils. Missed bins amounted to 198 per 100,000 households in 2001/02, which was among the poorest performing 25 per cent of councils. This was an improvement on the previous year, when missed bins numbered 250 per 100,000 households. Public satisfaction with the waste collection service is well below the average for all councils. The council has recognised its poor performance, and concluded that the level of missed bins is due to obstructions by parked vehicles. A campaign of placing stickers on vehicles causing obstructions is significantly improving the situation.

176 The council does not have a waste strategy although the amount of waste collected per head of population, at 322 kilograms, is among the lowest 25 per cent of councils. This figure reflects an increase of 8 per cent on 2000/01, which is higher than for most other councils. The council is working with the county council to produce a Municipal Waste Strategy for West Sussex.

177 Crawley’s streets and open spaces are clean although some litter accumulates in landscaped areas next to the highway. The council cleans the town centre and neighbourhood shopping parades daily. It removes fly-tips within 48 hours. The council’s staff undertake cleaning as part of the neighbourhood teams initiative.

178 The council sponsored area clean-up weekends in 2002 at locations such as Broadfield and Bewbush. Abandoned vehicles featured in a press campaign early in 2002. Two one-month-long amnesties resulted in the surrender of nearly 400 vehicles for disposal. The council achieves an ambitious target of visiting all abandoned vehicles within five days and participates in the Sussex Police ‘Operation Crackdown’. The council has installed CCTV cameras in the town centre and in neighbourhood shopping parades for environmental enforcement purposes. It has set a standard of removing all graffiti of a sexist, racist or offensive nature within three working days.

179 In 2000/01, 65 per cent of people were satisfied with the cleanliness of the area, an average level for all councils nationally.
Does the council work with partners to improve community safety?

180 Community safety is a priority to which the council devoted resources before it was required to by the Crime and Disorder Act. The Corporate Plan and Vision Statement and working documents, such as service plans, highlight its importance. Community safety is one of six priorities identified in the emerging community strategy. The council takes a leading role in the local Crime and Disorder Partnership, which has devised the Crawley Community Safety Strategy. The aim of the strategy is to make Crawley borough and Gatwick airport safer places. It focuses on ten priorities for action that reflect the concerns of local residents, the local Crime and Disorder Partnership and those of the Government.

181 The strategy identifies a range of actions but is not detailed and does not give measurable targets. It is therefore not possible to ascertain whether the strategy is challenging or gauge its success.

182 The Crime and Disorder Strategy identifies the lead authority for each priority action area. Crawley is taking the lead on tackling racist incidents and hate crime, tackling antisocial behaviour, reducing motor vehicle crime and speeding, and providing public reassurance to reduce the fear of crime. The council has:

- undertaken an independent Crime and Disorder Act audit so that Community Safety is prioritised in all its activities and services;
- produced supplementary service planning guidelines for community safety;
- become a signatory to the pan-Sussex Joint Protocol on the Exchange of Information for Reducing Crime and Disorder in Sussex; and
- set aside £134,000 to establish a community warden scheme.

During the period of the Community Safety Strategy 1999-2002, crime in Crawley reduced by 7 per cent overall. Domestic crime reduced by 25 per cent, all motor vehicle crime reduced by 24 per cent; recorded assaults in the town centre reduced by 58 per cent, and detected offences of youth involvement in crime and substance misuse reduced by 11 per cent.

183 Sussex Police and the county council have agreed arrangements with the council to jointly fund local community safety initiatives. The council is a member of the West Sussex Fear of Crime Group and the West Sussex Strategic Community Safety Partnership, which has agreed a five-year strategy to tackle fear of crime, domestic violence, young people and crime, and racist and hate crime.

184 A major household survey of over 1,000 people, which the council carries out every three years, indicated that people regard safety and a low crime rate as important factors in determining whether somewhere is a good place to live. The 2002 survey showed that people’s fear of crime has increased. The council has also carried out a range of annual consultations with communities as a means of addressing fear of crime. It publishes information about community safety, highlighting successes, in its bimonthly community magazine Crawley Live. There is easy access to community safety information on the council’s website.
185 The council says that it has achieved some of its targets from its 1999-2002 strategy, but has failed to achieve its targets for motor vehicle crime. The strategy does not contain targets so it is difficult to make a judgement on this matter. Domestic burglaries totalled 10.2 per household in 2001/02. This is better than the average council, but is an increase of 27 per cent on the previous year. The council’s statistics show that domestic burglaries have continued to increase during the first half of 2002/03. Vehicle crimes numbered 12.3 per 1,000 people in 2001/02, which is better than the average council, but is an increase of 2 per cent from the previous year. The number of domestic violence places provided by the council fell by 2 per cent in 2001/02 and is now 0.5 per 100,000 people. This is also better than the average council. The Home Office crime and disorder partnership table shows that in comparison to other councils in Crawley’s family:

◆ domestic burglaries are rising faster than average but theft of motor vehicles are falling faster than the family average and the council is among the best performing 25 per cent of councils;

◆ thefts from motor vehicles are rising faster than average but the council is among the worst performing 25 per cent of councils; and

◆ violence, robbery and sexual offences are falling faster than the average but the council is among the worst performing 25 per cent of councils.

186 All the council’s housing schemes comply with Secured by Design standards and it encourages these standards through the enabling programme supported by the Housing Corporation. The local plan requires all new developments to provide an environment that prevents or deters crime, vandalism and antisocial behaviour. A housing development in Maidenbower comprising 119 local authority homes, which adopted the Secured by Design standards, has remained virtually crime free. The Building Research Establishment have cited it as an example of best practice. Repair and improvement programmes also have regard to community safety. For example, improved lighting is included as part of the refurbishment of garage areas. The council’s Sport and Recreation Strategy seeks to ensure that sports contribute to community safety by providing opportunities for young people. Joint community and sport development work has enabled the council to complete diversionary projects, such as, the summer activities programme.

187 The council has adopted a range of measures to combat crime and disorder, including a CCTV system in partnership with the Police. There are 34 cameras situated in the town centre and neighbourhood parades. They have enabled over 2,000 arrests. The cameras are under dual control of the council and the police. The council established an introductory tenancies scheme in 1996 and a mediation service in 2002. The council issued five antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) in 2002. It undertook a successful community art project at Broadfield underpass in partnership with the county council and Artscape, a professional arts agency working on the rehabilitation of young offenders.

Does the council contribute to activities to positively engage children and young people?

188 The council is active and effective in providing activities for children and young people. It works well with the county and other agencies and consults young people about its provision, acting on the results. It provision includes activities designed to promote community cohesion.
189 The council’s leisure centres provide a varied programme of activities for young people. Additionally, in partnership with local clubs and schools, the council provides and facilitates a range of activities and sports course initiatives aimed at young people and children. An example is the Kids Summer Fun project. Importantly, the sports courses feed into longer-term opportunities within local clubs.

190 The council is running a community cohesion project involving the county council’s youth service and Crawley Primary Care Trust. The project is aimed at people between the ages of 8 and 25 who are either socially deprived, from ethnic minority communities, have special needs or who do not normally access services. In the summer 2002, the council ran a varied programme designed to provide structured activities to channel young people’s energies in a positive way, learning experiences, activities to encourage participation and affordable activities targeted at 16- to 25-year-olds. The council liaises with local sports groups and helps them attract external funding to improve and extend the range of activities available to young people.

191 In 2002, along with the county council’s youth service, the council established the Crawley Youth Council. This is an elected body of young people, who work with the council on projects such as, a youth strategy and the provision of a town centre youth information shop. The shop will pilot the first Connexions service in West Sussex, a national service designed to co-ordinate youth mentoring, counselling and careers advice. The council’s community arts team works with young people in providing art in open spaces. For example, it has organised a schools workshop programme with artists engaged in public art commissions on the Greenway circular walking route. The Hawth theatre has provided community arts events aimed at young people. The Crawley Play Service has provided kick-about areas across the borough with informal hangout shelters and seating. It has also provided a skateboard park, four adventure playgrounds and five play centres.

192 The council either provides or supports the provision of promotional material to inform young people of what is on offer. An example is the Kids Summer Fun booklet, which provides information on activities at a range of locations, in an attractive way. The council works with schools to provide many of its activities. The play service makes contact with difficult to reach sections of the community through an outreach programme based on community centres, but also utilises a Community Action Bus. Central government awarded the council a grant to run a Sure Start project from the Broadfield Barton community centre.

193 The council has introduced programmes aimed at meeting the needs of particular groups, such as swimming sessions for women and people with disabilities. It has reviewed its charging regimes for sports, recreation and community services to ensure that sections of the community are not excluded. A survey in 2000/01 showed that 71 per cent of residents are satisfied with the council’s sport and leisure facilities. This is among the best performing 25 per cent of councils.

194 The council has a child protection policy that incorporates the requirement to screen coaches and volunteers working with children. This policy is also communicated to the voluntary sector.
### Summary of public space diagnostic assessment judgements and strengths / weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of focus</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| How well does the council contribute to the management of the physical environment? | b     | • Local plan emphasises care of the environment and supplementary planning guidance issued  
• Section 106 Agreements provide environmental improvements  
• Investment in environmental and safety improvements  
• Well maintained local facilities  
• Complaints dealt with promptly  
• Secured Car Parks Awards  
• High levels of public satisfaction  
• Investment in public art  
• Audit of all open space  
• Uses NPFA standards  
• Management plans and Green Flag awards for some parks  
• Green space strategy being updated to include biodiversity  
• Accessibility of council owned premises improved to meet DDA  
• Shopmobility provided  
• Joint working with county council on public transport and car parking  
• Cycle routes provided  
• Responsive to noise pollution | • High cost of services not fully justified  
• Website can’t be used to report maintenance issues  
• Peat is still used  
• No formal air quality strategy.  
• Environmental policy does not contain targets  
• No climate change strategy  
• Among worst 25% of councils for planning applications determined within 8 weeks (60%) |
| Does the council help keep the locality clean?     | c     | • Provision of recycling bring sites  
• Waste minimisation and recycling education initiatives  
• Kerbside paper recycling collection  
• Complaints managed efficiently  
• Increasing recycling rates  
• DEFRA grants obtained  
• Recycling award for promotion  
• High public satisfaction for kerbside paper collection  
• Fly-tipping dealt with in 48 hours.  
• Abandoned vehicles dealt with  
• Clean-up weekends | • High cost waste collection service  
• High level of missed bins  
• Low level of public satisfaction for collection service  
• No waste management or minimisation strategy  
• No clear measures of success for marketing and promotion  
• Outdated recycling plan  
• No local challenging recycling targets  
• Untidy bring sites  
• Publicity not in minority languages  
• Composting not yet developed |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of focus</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Does the council work with partners to improve community safety? | b     | • Active partner in the community safety (CS) strategy  
• Strategy is reviewed annually and findings distributed to all homes  
• Community safety is one of the six priorities in the community strategy  
• Independent C&D audit.  
• Supplementary service planning guidelines for community safety  
• Joint funding of CS initiatives  
• Crime reduced between 1999 and 2002  
• Violence, robbery and sex crimes falling faster than family average  
• Secured by Design standards used  
• CCTV centre linked to Police | • CS strategy not detailed and does not have measurable targets  
• Community Safety Survey 2002, shows that people’s fear of crime has increased  
• 1999-2002 strategy does not contain targets  
• Domestic burglaries and thefts from motor vehicles are rising faster than the council’s family average |
| Does the council contribute to activities to positively engage children and young people? | a     | • Leisure Centres provide varied activities for young people  
• Work with local groups  
• Crawley Youth Council established  
• Arts team works with young people  
• Partnership with schools  
• Outreach at community centres  
• High satisfaction levels with leisure  
• Child Protection Policy |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Public space diagnostic assessment judgement |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                  | B                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

**Scoring key**

For each of the key areas looked at within the diagnostic assessments the need for improvement, based on the risk of service failure and poor outcomes, is identified using the following scale.

- a = very low
- b = low
- c = high
- d = very high
Appendix 3 - Appointed auditor assessment

Appointed auditors are asked to score five areas which relate to the statutory code of audit practice. When scoring each area a range of issues are taken into account. These issues and the score that has been given in each area are set out in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area for auditor judgement</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Issues included in this area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial standing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Setting a balanced budget&lt;br&gt;Setting a capital programme&lt;br&gt;Financial monitoring and reporting&lt;br&gt;Meeting financial targets&lt;br&gt;Financial reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems of internal financial control</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Monitoring of financial systems&lt;br&gt;An adequate internal audit function is maintained&lt;br&gt;Risk identification and management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards of financial conduct and the prevention and detection of fraud and corruption</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ethical framework&lt;br&gt;Governance arrangements&lt;br&gt;Treasury management&lt;br&gt;Prevention and detection of fraud and corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial statements</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Timeliness&lt;br&gt;Quality&lt;br&gt;Supporting records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legality of significant financial transactions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Roles and responsibilities&lt;br&gt;Consideration of legality of significant financial transactions&lt;br&gt;New legislation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scoring key
1 = inadequate
2 = adequate overall, but some weaknesses that need to be addressed
3 = adequate
4 = good
Appendix 4 - Benefit Fraud Inspectorate assessment

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) has undertaken the assessment in this appendix as part of the CPA process. The assessment covers two aspects, the current level of performance and the council’s proven capacity to improve. Each assessment is measured on a five-point scale (poor, fair, fair to good, good and excellent).

Current Performance

Overall, we found that Crawley Council’s HB and CTB service is currently providing a Fair performance. Crawley Council’s current performance demonstrates strengths such as:

♦ an accessible customer caller point that provides a one stop service. This includes collecting, validating and providing advice to claimants on the types of evidence needed to support their HB and CTB claim.

♦ an approach to evidence gathering soundly based within the Verification Framework

♦ effective recruitment procedures that include background checks

♦ an increasingly effective counter-fraud team that complies with the council’s benefits fraud prosecution policy, applying administrative penalties and prosecuting offenders.

♦ effective recovery of HB and CTB debt.

There are also a number of areas where Crawley Council needs to develop further to meet the BFI/Department’s Performance Standards. These include:

♦ introducing policies, strategies and written procedures that cover all aspects of HB and CTB administration

♦ introducing and systematically monitoring targets that are aligned to Performance Standards

♦ speeding up the processing of new and renewal claims and changes of circumstances to consistently meet the requirements of Performance Standards

♦ improving its internal control mechanisms, in particular its post opening, IT security and cheque dispatch arrangements

♦ more closely monitoring its effectiveness in recovering outstanding debt.
Proven Capacity to Improve

199 We assessed Crawley Council’s proven capacity to improve is Fair towards Good. It was able to demonstrate the following positive aspects:

- Member and senior management commitment to improve, demonstrated by its decisions to increase investment in the Benefits service
- Early successes in reducing work backlogs and improving claims clearance times
- Increased supervision and management control of the benefits caseload
- Undertaking a Best Value review and an independent external evaluation of the Revenues and Benefits service’s performance management systems during 2002/03
- The successful planning and introduction of a major upgrade to its Benefits IT system in December 2002.

200 Crawley Council has responded positively to the BFI first inspection and to its own reviews of the Benefits service. Progress made since January 2003 is encouraging. However, at the time of this assessment, the following points led us to question the extent to which Crawley Council was able to prove its capacity to quickly improve towards the achievement all 7 areas of Performance Standards:

- It did not yet have the range of strategies, policies or operational targets in place to drive continuous improvement
- Over the past 3 years, there is no history of sustained or continuous improvement
- It was too early in the life of the improvement programme to assess its likely success over time.

201 We would like to thank Crawley Council staff, particularly the Revenues Business Manager, for their assistance and co-operation with the assessment process.

202 This report has been produced pursuant to powers contained in sections 10 and 11 of the Local Government Act 1999.
Appendix 5 - Framework for Comprehensive Performance Assessment

203 This comprehensive performance assessment was carried out under the Local Government Act 1999. Local councils have a general duty under Section 3 of this Act to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. Section 10 gives the Audit Commission the power to inspect councils’ performance of the general duty of improvement.

204 The main elements of the assessment were:

◆ a self-assessment completed by the council;
◆ accredited peer challenge to inform the council's self-assessment;
◆ a corporate assessment of the council’s overall effectiveness in supporting services to deliver improvements;
◆ an assessment of the council’s service delivery performance through two diagnostic assessments on:
  ◆ management of public space;
  ◆ contribution to developing a balanced housing market;
◆ Benefit Fraud Inspectorate’s (BFI) assessment of benefit services;
◆ appointed auditor assessments of performance on each of the main elements of the code of audit practice; and
◆ audited performance indicators, inspection reports and plan assessments.

205 The assessment for Crawley Borough Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 3 to 7 February 2003.

206 This report has been discussed with the council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission’s assessment. This report will be used as the basis for improvement planning by the council.