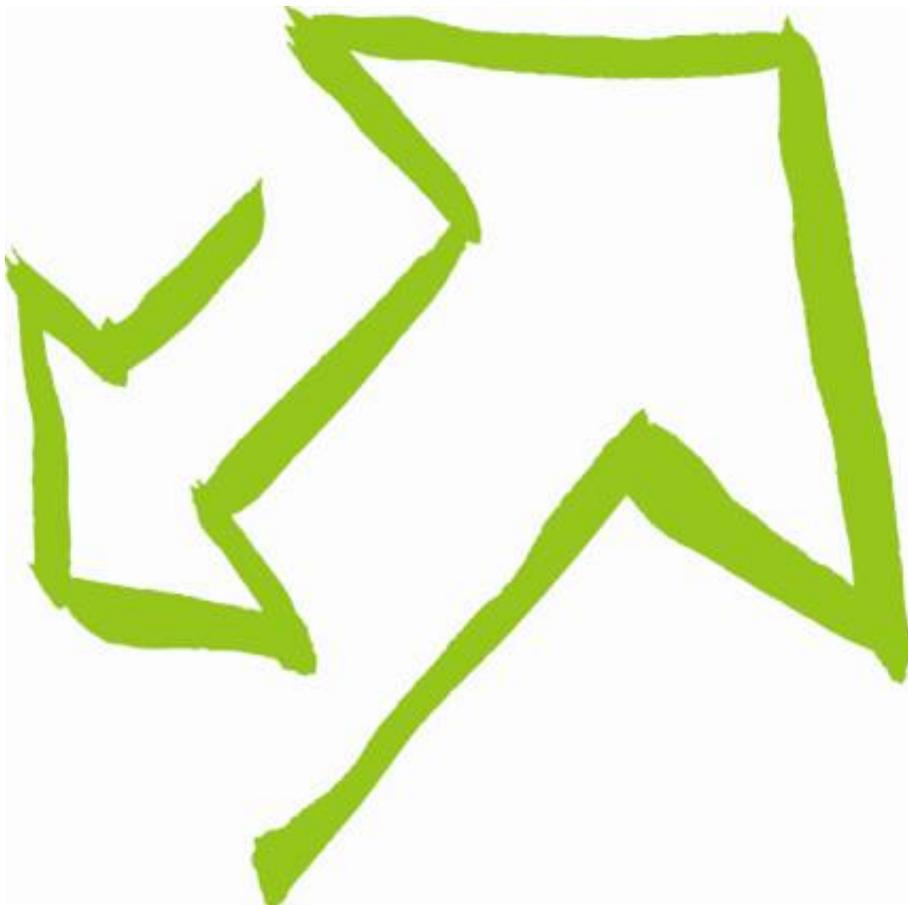


Corporate Assessment

London Borough of Sutton
November 2008



Contents

Introduction	3
Executive summary	5
Areas for improvement	8
Summary of assessment scores	9
Context	10
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	13
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	20
What has been achieved?	28
Appendix 1 – Framework for Corporate Assessment	41

Introduction

- 1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is the means by which the Audit Commission fulfils its statutory duty under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003 to make an assessment, and report on the performance, of local authorities. Corporate assessment is one element in the overall assessment that leads to a CPA score and category.
- 2 The purpose of the corporate assessment is to assess how well the Council engages with and leads its communities, delivers community priorities in partnership with others, and ensures continuous improvement across the range of Council activities. It seeks to answer three headline questions which are underpinned by five specific themes.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- Ambition
- Prioritisation

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- Capacity
- Performance management

What has been achieved?

- Achievement

Considered against the shared priorities of:

- sustainable communities and transport;
- safer and stronger communities;
- healthier communities;
- older people; and
- children and young people.

- 3 Corporate assessments are normally aligned with a joint area review of services for children and young people (JAR). In practice this means that the Council's achievements in relation to children and young people are assessed using the evidence provided from the JAR. In addition, examples of outcomes and activity, which are relevant to the other themes and which are identified through the JAR, are considered within the corporate assessment.

- 4 The JAR covers specific services for children and young people that are directly managed or commissioned by the Council, as well as relevant health and youth justice services provided by other bodies. It focuses on the contributions made by services to improving outcomes especially concerning safeguarding; services for looked after children; and services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The separate JAR report also covers the leadership and management of services for children and young people and, in particular, the way that such services work together to improve outcomes. The description and judgement in respect of children and young people in this report is summarised from the JAR report and the most recently published Annual Performance Assessment from Ofsted which covers all of the Council's children services.

Executive summary

- 5 Sutton is performing strongly. As a result of its challenging ambitions for its diverse communities, sustained focus on service delivery, and exceptional partnership working, it has achieved significant and continuing improvements in performance.
- 6 With its partners, the Council has set clear, highly challenging ambitions that address the longer term needs of the borough. Partners, stakeholders and local people are closely involved in developing and take full ownership of the ambitions which aim to ensure the long-term sustainability of the borough and make the quality of life the best in London. Ambitions are epitomised by the three key themes of making the borough fairer, safer and greener. The Council has a good knowledge of the diverse needs of its communities and together with its partners has effectively translated ambitions into long-term outcomes. Stretching long term targets, in particular those for environmental sustainability are based on the Council's impressive track record in this area where it leads by example and is changing the behaviour of local people to promote sustainability.
- 7 The Council has a comprehensive approach to early intervention, prevention, and personalisation of services underpinning the delivery of the Sutton Partnership's 'Fairer' ambition theme. This is increasing choice and independence for vulnerable groups including older people, those with learning disabilities, and disabled children, as well as addressing inequalities within the borough such as through the extensive regeneration of the Roundshaw Estate. Personalisation of services also extends to encouraging behavioural change. For example, the Smarter Travel Sutton project promotes a shift from car use to more sustainable forms of transport in order to tackle traffic congestion and improve the health of the local community. Ambitious plans for the development of the Sutton Life Centre with services to promote safety, citizenship training and education to young people both locally and regionally further extend this approach.
- 8 The Council prioritises well. Priorities reflect needs and there is a good balance between national, regional and local priorities, with priorities shared and owned by partners. There are effective linkages between the Council's vision, priorities, business and financial plans. Resources are targeted to identified priorities. There is a detailed understanding of individual needs with regard to the personalisation of services for people with learning disabilities, and in other areas, such as mental health, this level of understanding is currently being developed. The Council recognises the need to develop a better understanding of the housing needs of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities to ensure that services meet needs, and is working to address this. Action planning is SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, time-bound and realistic) with one exception. The action plan supporting the economic development strategy is currently being developed with partners as this is a newer priority but lacks specific local targets. The Council also has further work to do to ensure that prioritisation of local committee's public realm funds are based upon the needs of all sections of the community.

- 9 The capacity to deliver ambitions is good. Partnership working to deliver priorities, increase capacity, improve performance, and deliver efficiency is outstanding truly living out this core value of the Council. Financial standing is good and the Council manages its budget well. External funding is successfully secured to support delivery of priorities. The Council performs well in delivering and improving value for money (VFM), making good progress in addressing high cost services such as those for adults with learning disabilities and residential care. The Council's focus on its number one priority to increase efficiency and effectiveness is delivering significant efficiency gains to support delivery of other priorities. Savings of £12.4 million from the £18.1 million savings achieved since 2006/07 have been achieved through efficiency. These gains have helped the Council set its lowest council tax increase since 1993, and contributed to a 20 per cent increase in residents thinking the Council provides VFM since 2003. However, the Council is not fully maximising the use of ICT, its property assets and procurement, including voluntary and social enterprise (Third Sector) commissioning, to develop organisational capacity and increase efficiency to aid delivery of priorities.
- 10 Strong leadership is provided at both political and managerial levels to address national, regional and local agendas. This ranges from the high profile regional roles taken by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, to leadership provided by ward councillors for decision making on local committee public realm (environment) budgets, and in leading key projects such as the Durand Close regeneration scheme. This demonstrates a high level of commitment to addressing the needs and concerns of local people. Political leadership is strong, with a high calibre Executive forging effective working relationships with chief officers and partners. Relations between political groups are constructive which helps to underpin the Council's long term direction and strategies. Decision making is clear and difficult decisions are taken to support delivery of ambitions and priorities, such as locating the new Stanley Park High School on the Orchard Hill site. The Chief Executive is highly visible to all, and provides clear and effective leadership of the Corporate Management Team.
- 11 The Council has a strong focus on meeting the needs and preferences of its residents and has the highest customer satisfaction rating in London (81 per cent). It has a strong record of undertaking resident surveys to understand local needs. User engagement in planning and monitoring services is good. Sutton's achievement in recruiting people with learning disabilities is notable. While its workforce is generally representative of the community, there is low representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups at senior level. This is being addressed through a targeted Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) programme. The Council missed its own target for achieving level 3 of the Local Government Standard for Equality by three years, although equality and diversity have been a high priority for the past two years, with performance tracked through the Council's corporate performance monitoring system.

Executive summary

- 12 The Council's excellent sustained track record of partnership working has helped secure outstanding achievements against both national shared priorities and local priorities. The focus of both the Council and the Sutton Partnership on performance management has ensured excellent progress against LAA targets and continued improvements in service performance, where the Council performs well above national average for performance indicators in the best quartile and above the national average for the percentage of indicators that have improved during the last three years.
- 13 The Council is an exemplary partner in the delivery of both the national shared priorities and local priorities. Excellent progress is being made in delivering sustainable communities such as through the transformation of the Roundshaw Estate which has led to significantly improved outcomes for local people in terms of housing conditions, health, community safety, and the quality of the local environment. Indeed, targeted partnership initiatives to address health inequalities in this area are contributing to significant improvements in health, including a 40 per cent fall in the life expectancy gap in men in the most disadvantaged wards over the last five years compared to more affluent wards. The integrated Safer Sutton Partnership has made Sutton one of the safest London boroughs, and one where crime and fear of crime is declining.
- 14 The Council demonstrates strong performance in delivering its 'cleaner and greener' priorities where it leads by example such as by reducing its own resource consumption and its achievement of high recycling performance. The Council is also effectively securing behavioural change to promote sustainability such as through the personalised Smarter Travel Sutton project. It is making excellent progress at increasing housing supply, including for vulnerable groups, although achievement of the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) still represents a significant challenge.
- 15 Outcomes for children and young people are good overall. Sutton has some of the top exam results in the country. However, outcomes for looked after children are adequate with insufficient stability in placements and an underdeveloped corporate parenting role within the Council.

Areas for improvement

- 16 The Council should build on its strong use of community engagement to ensure that:
- decisions with regard to prioritisation of local committees public realm funds are based upon the needs of all sections of the community;
 - personalisation of services is extended in a way that better meets the individual needs of people with mental health problems; and that the Council gains a detailed understanding of the housing needs of BME communities to better tailor, prioritise and deliver services; and
 - the new third sector commissioning framework is embedded and the capacity of the sector further developed.
- 17 The Council should improve its frameworks for delivering efficiency by:
- developing a formal framework for reviewing its property and ICT assets in conjunction with partners in order to maximise their use to support delivery of ambitions; and
 - further developing its procurement and commissioning framework to ensure that procurement supports delivery of community priorities.
- 18 The Council should also ensure that action planning underpinning the economic development strategy is SMART.

Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	4
	Prioritisation	3
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	3
	Performance management	3
What has been achieved?	Achievement	4
Overall corporate assessment score**		4
*Key to scores		
1 – below minimum requirements – inadequate performance 2 – at only minimum requirements – adequate performance 3 – consistently above minimum requirements – performing well 4 – well above minimum requirements – performing strongly		

**Rules for determining the overall corporate assessment score

Scores on five themes	Overall corporate assessment score
Two or more themes with a score of 4 None less than score of 3	4
Three or more themes with a score of 3 or more None less than score of 2	3
Three or more themes with a score of 2 or more	2
Any other combination	1

Context

The locality

- 19 London Borough of Sutton (LBS) is a south-west London Borough bordering the Surrey Downs to the south of the borough, Croydon to the east, and Merton to the north. It has over 400 hectares of open space and the most trees of any London borough.
- 20 There is marked inequality between the more deprived northern areas of the borough and the more prosperous areas in the south. The northern parts - including Rosehill, St Helier and the Wrythe, along with Roundshaw and South Beddington towards the south-east - share many of the characteristics of inner-London, with pockets of social deprivation, environmental degradation and limited access to employment, social infrastructure, community facilities, housing and transport services. In contrast, the southern parts of the borough are suburban in character, consisting predominantly of relatively affluent low-density residential areas built around former Surrey towns and villages evoking South London suburbia – Cheam, Worcester Park, Wallington, Carshalton and Sutton itself.
- 21 Sutton is relatively prosperous by national standards. The government's index of multiple deprivation (IMD) ranks the borough as 234 out of 354 local authorities in England in terms of average deprivation (where 1 is most deprived). However, this masks some pockets of deprivation and inequality. For example, there is a six year differential in life expectancy, the unemployment rate in St Helier ward is twice that in Cheam, and pupils eligible for free school meals are doing less well in terms of educational attainment than those who are ineligible across all key stages. Despite these facts, the Council has not been eligible for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. As a result, improvements rely on the realignment of mainstream funding or other sources of external funds.
- 22 There are approximately 184,400 people living in the borough. Sutton's BME population is 20 per cent, which is much lower than the London average of 42 per cent and more consistent with the national average. The largest ethnic groups are: white other (4 per cent), Indian (3 per cent), white Irish (2 per cent), black African (2 per cent) and other Asian (2 per cent). The numbers of migrant workers and asylum seekers are low. Projected future population growth is consistent with that of other London boroughs, but the group which will see the greatest increase over the next ten years is 65 to 74 year olds.
- 23 The incidence of people with learning disabilities at 0.24 per cent is much higher than the London average of 0.17 per cent. One reason for this is the presence of the country's last long stay institution for people with learning disabilities at Orchard Hill. Run by the local NHS and subject of a highly critical Healthcare Commission inspection in January 2007, the Council and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) are working together to close this facility by 2009, with plans for re-provision based on individual care plans and supported living arrangements in the community where possible.

Context

- 24** The unemployment rate, at 2.6 per cent is among the lowest in London. Over 60 per cent of the resident workforce is classified as professional, managerial or skilled non-manual. Over 80 per cent of businesses are small or medium-sized enterprises; retail and wholesale is the largest employment sector, accounting for 25 per cent. The number of VAT-registered businesses in Sutton is among the lowest in London. Several opportunity areas have been identified for regeneration. They include Sutton Town Centre, six district centres, industrial locations concentrated in three areas and the regeneration of Wandle Valley Corridor. The skills levels of Sutton's residents are relatively high. The proportion of Sutton's residents with national vocational qualifications (NVQ) 3 and above is above the regional and national averages, the proportion of residents with NVQ 4 and above is higher than the national average and the proportion of residents with no qualifications is low.
- 25** There is a high proportion of owner occupied households in Sutton. As with most London Boroughs, high house prices mean that there is a lack of affordable housing and many people are being increasingly priced out of the market. The average house price in Sutton is £277,519. This is lower than the regional average, but higher than the national average. As at 1 April 2008, 43 per cent of the Council's 7,273 homes did not meet the government's decent homes standard (DHS), although over 85 per cent of registered social landlord stock currently meets the standard.
- 26** The borough has a low crime rate compared to London and England as a whole, with 54 offences recorded in the borough in 2006/07 per 1,000 people, compared to an average figure of 71 in London and 60.7 in England as a whole.
- 27** Transport links to central London are good and there is easy road access to Gatwick and Heathrow airports. However, travelling across the borough and South London is more difficult.

The Council

- 28** The Council is a Liberal Democrat controlled unitary authority which uses the leader and cabinet model. It has 54 councillors. The Liberal Democrats hold 31 seats and have been the majority party since 1986. The Conservatives strengthened their position in the 2006 local elections and now hold 21 seats. UKIP has 1 councillor, and there is 1 independent councillor.
- 29** In total there are four scrutiny committees which hold the Executive to account and contribute to policy development. The Conservatives chair the Council's Audit Committee and the Health and Well-being Scrutiny Committee. Six local committees promote community engagement and take the lead in delivering the Council's public realm programme.
- 30** The Council is organised into four groups, each headed by a Strategic Director – Resources; Adult Social Services and Housing; Environment and Leisure; and Children, Young People and Learning Services. There is also a Chief Executive's Group which includes the Safer Sutton Partnership, an integrated council and police service.
- 31** The Council was awarded four stars in the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in 2007 and assessed as 'improving strongly'.

- 32 The Council employs 6,000 people (2,432 excluding schools). Its net revenue budget for 2008/09 is £134.8 million and its planned capital expenditure is £137 million for the period 2008-11. Band D Council Tax for 2008/09 is £1418.58 (including the Greater London Authority (GLA) precept of £309.82).
- 33 The Local Strategic Partnership, the Sutton Partnership, is driving delivery of the Sutton Strategy 2008-2020 (the community strategy), and Sutton's Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets to 2011. The partnership's activities are co-ordinated by a central board - the Sutton Partnership Board - which is chaired by the Leader of the Council. Its membership is drawn from six themed partnerships: the Children and Young People's Partnership; the Safer Sutton Partnership Board; the Economic and Housing Renewal Partnership; the Sustainable Living Themed Partnership; the Community Engagement Partnership; and the Sutton Adults Partnership.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

Ambition

- 34** The Council is performing strongly in this area. Its ambitions are clear, challenging and address the longer term needs of the borough. Partners, stakeholders and local people are closely involved in developing and take full ownership of the ambitions which aim to ensure the long-term sustainability of the borough and make the quality of life the best in London. Ambitions are epitomised by the three key themes of making the borough fairer, safer and greener. The Council has a good knowledge of the diverse needs of its communities and together with its partners has effectively translated ambitions into long-term outcomes. Stretching long term targets, in particular those for environmental sustainability are based on the Council's impressive track record in this area where it leads by example and is changing the behaviour of local people to promote sustainability.
- 35** The Council has a comprehensive approach to early intervention, prevention, and personalisation of services underpinning the delivery of the Sutton Partnership's 'Fairer' ambition theme. This is increasing choice and independence for vulnerable groups including older people, those with learning disabilities, and disabled children, as well as addressing inequalities within the borough such as through the extensive regeneration of the Roundshaw Estate. Personalisation of services also extends to encouraging behavioural change. The Smarter Travel Sutton project promotes a shift from car use to more sustainable forms of transport in order to tackle traffic congestion and improve the health of the local community. Ambitious plans for the development of the Sutton Life Centre with services to promote safety, citizenship training and education to young people both locally and regionally further extend this approach.
- 36** The Sutton Strategy 2008-2020 (the community strategy) and The Sutton Plan 2008-2011 (the Council's corporate plan) clearly set out what the Council and its partners want to achieve in the longer term. Ambitions reflect national priorities, such as those for health, crime reduction, and educational attainment, as well as local priorities, such as the environment, transport, and community safety. Ambitions are reflected in the LAA targets and the Local Development Framework (LDF) core strategy. The latter helps local people to see what delivery will look like in land use terms. The Council's vision 'to build a community in which all can take part and all can take pride' embodies the approach adopted by the Sutton Partnership and the nine overriding priorities in the Sutton Plan demonstrate how the vision is applied in practice.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- 37** Clear shared ambitions are underpinned by challenging long-term outcome measures. For example, the health outcomes for 2020 include reducing the existing life expectancy gap in the borough by half. This ambition is supported by specific targets such as increasing the proportion of people quitting smoking for one year or longer from 25 per cent in 2006/07 to 40 per cent. Environmental targets to reduce the eco-footprint of Sutton residents and for a 15 per cent reduction in car trips are extremely challenging, but realistic, based on the Council's impressive track record of achievement on environmental sustainability. These long-term measures make it easy for local people to track the progress made by the Council and its partners in achieving the ambitions.
- 38** Effective partnership governance structures ensure that the Council makes strong use of community engagement to understand the needs of its diverse communities and help shape its ambitions. The Community Engagement Network (CEN) ensures effective representation from BME communities, children and families, older people, faith and belief groups, younger people, people with disabilities and carers. It is effectively influencing planning and decision making. For example, people with learning disabilities are shaping decisions on the modernisation of learning disability services. Similarly, CEN representation on the Sutton Adults Partnership has helped develop the LAA priorities such as those for meeting carers' health needs. The network also secured inclusion of the 'Active and Inclusive' theme within the Sutton Strategy and influenced associated objectives and targets, such as the LAA target for local involvement. It was closely involved in developing plans for the voluntary sector resource centre and the Third Sector commissioning strategy. This demonstrates a well-embedded approach to community engagement in setting ambitions.
- 39** Excellent partnership working ensures that ambitions are developed with, and fully owned by partners, businesses, and the local community. For example around 300 local companies and other stakeholders including Carshalton College and Jobcentre Plus have helped draw up the Economic Development Strategy. Ambitious plans for rebuilding the Stanley Park High School at the Orchard Hill site reflect the preferences of local people and the Council has actively involved pupils and staff in the design and development of the school. The Council's plans to make Hackbridge the UK's first sustainable suburb have been driven by local residents, and there has been extensive engagement with estate residents to inform plans for the Durand Close regeneration scheme. This has ensured ownership of ambitions at all levels. The strength of partnerships is reflected in the positive results from the stakeholder survey and outcomes achieved through partnership working. The Council is providing strong leadership through the Sutton Partnership itself, the integrated Safer Sutton Partnership, and the South West London Waste Partnership. Commitment to partnership working is also demonstrated by a number of joint appointments such as those for Public Health, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- 40 Ambitions are underpinned by evidence-based understanding of local needs. This understanding is achieved through partners sharing data, and research and intelligence to supplement their understanding of community concerns and priorities identified through two yearly independent surveys. For example, the Safer Sutton Partnership has a sophisticated analysis of the drivers of citizen insecurity across the borough to underpin its joint tasking approach. This aggregates community intelligence data gathered from ward based intelligence through neighbourhood security interviews (INSI) to map, for example, anti-social behaviour across the borough which is then used to target resources. This has been used successfully to reduce concerns about crime. These analyses provide a robust basis for the Council and its partners to develop ambitions and priorities.
- 41 The Council has a track record of providing excellent community leadership. It is providing leadership on key issues such as sustainability to support delivery of the ambitions to be a cleaner, greener borough. It leads by example in its approach, being the first authority to gain Eco Management Audit Scheme (EMAS) accreditation, and through the Sustainable Hackbridge initiative which is building on the BedZED carbon neutral development using economic regeneration to bring together climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. Other key projects contributing to ambitions for a sustainable suburb are well underway. These include major regeneration projects such as the Roundshaw Estate programme which is close to completion, and the Durand Close scheme.
- 42 Highly effective political and managerial leadership is provided to address national, regional and local agendas. For example, the Leader of the Council in his role of sustainability lead for London Councils, has been instrumental in bringing forward a private bill to ban throwaway plastic shopping bags. The Chief Executive played an active part in the review of the Local Government Association, and sits on the board of Capital Ambition (London's regional improvement and efficiency partnership) where he has led work to establish a pan-London benchmarking club to drive further improvement in services. Both have lobbied for the Tramlink extension to Sutton. Ward councillors also demonstrate effective community leadership through championing local issues, such as leadership on key projects like the Durand Close regeneration scheme, and development of the new library and community facility at Middleton Circle, as well as through local committees. This demonstrates a high level of commitment to addressing the needs and concerns of local people.
- 43 Councillors take difficult decisions to deliver ambitions. For example, although it would have been easier to rebuild Stanley Park School on its existing site, the decision was taken to re-locate the new school on the Orchard Hill site to better meet Building Schools for the Future priorities and to enable the size of the school to be increased to improve access and places for Sutton children as well as providing for co-location with a special needs facility for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder. This has required extensive community consultation to secure support for the scheme which will have a significant local impact.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- 44 Ambitions are clearly articulated to local people. The Sutton Residents Survey 2007 shows that nearly 60 per cent of residents feel well informed by the Council. This is achieved through high profile campaigns, such as those for 'community safety', and to 'reduce waste', the annual Take Part Take Pride festival, and communication through Sutton Scene, the Council's magazine. These are proving effective with for example, high local recognition of the Smarter Sutton Travel brand. However, there is currently no coordinated timetable of consultation events run in conjunction with partners to ensure that the Third Sector is not overburdened with requests and that there is no duplication of effort. To enhance coordination the Council is implementing a new web-based database in autumn 2008 and has established a community of practice for consultation.

Prioritisation

- 45 The Council is performing well in this area. The priority to deliver efficient and effective services is clearly articulated and permeates all its work. Priorities reflect the needs of residents and are based on a thorough high level understanding of the area. Partners share and own priorities and there is a good balance between national, regional and local priorities. Effective linkages between the Council's vision, priorities and business plans provide clarity to councillors, officers and partners. Resources are targeted to identified priorities and the Council takes difficult decisions to deliver priorities. There is a detailed understanding of individual needs with regard to the personalisation of services for people with learning disabilities, and in other areas, such as mental health, this level of understanding is currently being developed. The Council recognises the need to develop a better understanding of the housing needs of BME communities to ensure that services meet needs, and is working to address this. Action planning is SMART with one exception. The action plan supporting the economic development strategy is currently being developed with partners as this is a newer priority and lacks specific local targets. The Council also has further work to do to ensure that prioritisation of local committee's public realm funds are based upon the needs of all sections of the community.
- 46 The Council has nine clear priorities which reflect national and local priorities. These form the centre piece of the Sutton Plan and group business plans. The top priority to be 'efficient and effective' is central and a prerequisite to everything the Council does. This priority identifies the Council's focus on delivering excellent customer focussed services that provide value for money (VFM). The other eight priorities are: to develop a cleaner greener environment; create safer communities; invest in the borough's children and young people; value the borough's older people; develop active and inclusive communities; encourage enterprise and employment; improve health and well being; and improve housing. These reflect residents' priorities from the most recent residents' survey as well as national priorities. This survey showed that transport, the environment, and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour remain the top priorities for residents, and it was used to refresh the Sutton Strategy targets such as those for crime reduction and reducing traffic congestion.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- 47 Council values and priorities are integrated into business plans, with clear linkages between the Sutton Strategy and the Sutton Plan objectives and targets through to group business plans and team plans. For example, the Services for Older and Disabled People Group Plan priorities are clearly linked to Sutton Plan and LAA targets. These include targets to complete the Belsize Court extra care project and increase the proportion of vulnerable adult service users who have person centred care plans assessed by single assessment process. These priorities clearly support delivery of the 'fairer' theme detailed in the Sutton Plan. Priorities are effectively integrated ensuring shared understanding. Examples include addressing health inequalities by tackling major risk factors to reduce deaths through circulatory diseases and cancer. Partnership plans such as the Children and Young Peoples' Plan or the Crime, Disorder and Drug Strategy demonstrate good links to the joint priorities of partners. This ensures joint ownership and wider understanding amongst partners.
- 48 The nine priorities of the Council accurately reflect findings of comprehensive high level need assessments. The Sutton Atlas, a database of key statistical facts about the borough, includes analysis of the borough's social, economic and environmental well being and is effectively used to inform local priorities around inequalities, unemployment and plans for young people with low educational attainment. This has helped shape LAA targets. As a result, there is joint ownership, commitment and consensus around the LAA targets and medium term priorities. There is a detailed understanding of diverse individual needs with regard to the personalisation of services for people with learning disabilities, and in other areas, such as mental health, this level of understanding is currently being developed. The council recognises the need to develop a better understanding of the housing needs of BME communities. It has carried out a survey, analysed the results in the context of national best practice and is now implementing the outcomes from this research.
- 49 There is clear alignment of priorities with partner organisations. For example, community safety priorities are shared with the Police due to the joint analysis of need and the full integration of the Police Community and Partnership Unit and the Council's Community Safety and Drug and Alcohol Teams. The integrated learning disabilities business plan has been prepared jointly with Sutton and Merton PCT, and the business planning framework for mental health has been tailored to suit the partnership working arrangements with Sutton and Merton PCT and South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust. Both plans align with the Sutton and Merton PCT Operating Plan and promote choice and control for citizens through greater personalisation of services. This ensures that partners are clear about roles and responsibilities within the planning framework and about their contribution towards the delivery of jointly agreed priorities.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- 50** The Council has realistic plans that relate to the priorities determined for the local area. The Sutton Plan, group business plans and plans of partnerships clearly identify the actions to be taken, responsibilities and timescales. For example, the Town Centre Partnership has developed themed short-term action plans that underpin the longer-term process to develop the Local Development Framework and capital improvements to the town centre. In general, action planning is SMART. However, action plans relating to the housing strategy and economic development strategy are new and currently being embedded through partnership working. Because there are a lack of outcome based SMART targets relating to the latter, it is difficult to see what success would look like on delivery of the strategy.
- 51** There are robust arrangements to deliver priorities through the business and financial planning framework. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) is aligned with the Sutton Plan and the VFM strategy, which are all reviewed as part of a well-established annual process. This sets out the corporate and the financial framework through which Group Plans are set. Budgets are set within which services must work and there is a strong annual efficiency review process through the VFM strategy. Group priorities are reviewed effectively during the year. Further, focus on delivery of priorities, such as equality and diversity is maintained through effective monitoring through the Council's corporate performance monitoring system. The alignment of Sutton Plan priorities with the MTFP is best demonstrated by the shift from residential care to supported living arrangements and the personalisation agenda in older people's services and for people with learning disabilities, which is reflected in budget provision over the medium term.
- 52** Resources are effectively directed to priority areas. For example, to meet its priority of community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour, the Council is investing £540,000 over three years for a new CCTV system and capital funding of £4 million for the new Sutton Life Centre. Efficiency savings are also invested in priority areas. Examples include a £2 million investment in housing to meet the decent homes standard, £3 million for public realm improvements and £300,000 to aid recruitment and retention in planning services. The Council effectively disinvests in its own services where greater efficiency and outcomes can be achieved in partnership to deliver priorities. Examples include the disinvestment in the Council's neighbourhood warden service and parks police service and re-allocating the funding to the Police to allow creation of Police Safer Parks Teams based on the Safer Neighbourhoods model.
- 53** Priorities are effectively communicated to residents, staff and partners. The internal staff magazine, Insight, chief executive and senior managers' annual roadshows, e-bulletins and regular team meetings ensure that staff are aware of council priorities. Sutton Scene regularly features articles advocating key council priorities. Ward councillors through dedicated ward walkabout sessions play an active part in promoting council priorities.
- 54** The Council has taken tough decisions to deliver priorities such as its vision of a sustainable suburb. For example, the introduction of a £35 charge for the green garden waste collection service tested public opinion. This is an example of the Council's commitment to promoting behavioural changes and encouraging as many people as possible to compost at home.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- 55 The Council effectively engages residents in resource allocation decisions and acts on issues identified through consultation. For example, as a direct result of budget consultation, it made changes to the grants to the Citizen Advice Bureau and to local initiatives, such as 'ecolocal'. Another good example of how the council has developed more local public engagement in resource allocation is the use of local committees to allocate £3 million of public realm budget. However, there is variable level of engagement by local committees in ensuring that prioritisation of this funding meets the needs of the whole community. Local committees are well attended, but there are limited mechanisms to monitor whether the attendance is representative of the local population, and variable levels of engagement with, for example younger people. As a result the Council cannot be confident that engagement is representative of the community.

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

Capacity

- 56** The Council is performing well in this area. The Council is characterised by a culture of openness, trust and respect amongst councillors and managers which underpins outstanding partnership working to deliver tangible benefits for residents. Leading councillors and senior officers provide consistent, clear leadership and direction, and challenge and support across the Council. Scrutiny is making an active contribution towards policy development. Financial capacity is good and the Council effectively accesses external funding to support delivery of its priorities. It performs well in delivering and improving value for money, but has yet to fully maximise use of ICT, its assets, and procurement including Third Sector commissioning, to develop organisational capacity and increase efficiency to aid delivery of priorities. Workforce strategies show limited impact to date.
- 57** The Council has a strong track record and reputation for working highly effectively in partnership to deliver its priorities, increase capacity, improve performance, and deliver efficiency. For example, the innovative integrated Safer Sutton Partnership has produced efficiency savings of £300,000 in the last two years, as well as significantly improved outcomes. The waste disposal partnership with other South West London boroughs secured £5.4 million funding to build new waste treatment facilities in order to provide considerable additional waste disposal capacity for the sub-region. The Roundshaw Estate regeneration programme enabled £103 million investment to take place, improving the quality of housing in the local environment, and the creation of the Phoenix Centre. A further £15 million is being invested by Roundshaw Homes following stock transfer of the remaining 600 council properties in April 2007.
- 58** Political and managerial leadership is strong. A high calibre Executive has effective working relationships with chief officers and partners. Relations between political groups are constructive which helps to underpin the Council's long term direction and strategies. For example, there is a cross party agreement on the Smarter Travel Sutton project which has helped secure £5 million funding for the project from Transport for London (TfL). The Chief Executive is highly visible to all, and provides clear and effective leadership of the Corporate Management Team and Council staff. There is clarity amongst chief officers about roles and they work effectively with councillors and partners to deliver innovative services for residents with continuing focus on Sutton's vision and priorities.

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- 59 Decision making is clear and well understood by all those involved and underpinned by a culture of openness. There are appropriate levels of delegation, with officers able to refer delegated decisions back to members when appropriate. Decisions are reviewed, and if necessary, changed to reflect the views of the community. For example, the Council reverted to weekly waste collections following petitions from residents and opposition councillors following a fortnightly collection trial. This demonstrates that the Council listens to the local community to inform its decision making.
- 60 Scrutiny is making an active contribution towards policy development. For example, a large number of recommendations proposed by the Scrutiny Overview Committee have been accepted by the Executive to improve outcomes for the local community. Examples include the trialling of a more flexible pricing structure to make the leisure charging policy fairer, and the tendering and planning of Special Educational Needs transport to make it more efficient and effective.
- 61 There are high standards of conduct amongst councillors and officers. The Council scored a maximum score of 4 for probity and propriety in the 2007 Use of Resources assessment. The standards committee has an independent chair to provide assurance on ethical behaviour. Councillor-officer relations are based on trust and mutual respect, and reflect the collaborative way of working between them.
- 62 Councillor training and development is generally effective and based on good understanding of need although training with regard to the Council's corporate parenting role is underdeveloped. Councillor training needs have been assessed and a flexible councillor training programme is in place to accommodate a range of learning styles. For example one-hour topic-based briefings before committees are popular and well attended and there is an officer buddying scheme in place. The council has received and analysed feedback from councillors on the effectiveness of the programme in meeting their training needs. A mid term review of the programme was carried out in May 2008.
- 63 The Council provides good VFM. Management and improvement arrangements are robust with the VFM strategy integrated within the Medium Term Financial Plan and business planning. The Council achieved a score of 3 (out of 4) for VFM in its latest Use of Resources assessment. Unit costs and service outcomes compare favourably allowing for local factors. Good progress has been made in addressing high cost services such as services for adults with learning disabilities and residential care where the independence and personalisation of services agenda is being used effectively to drive efficiency gains. The Council manages its finances well and its focus on its number one priority to increase efficiency and effectiveness is delivering significant efficiency gains to support delivery of other priorities. Savings of £12.4 million from the £18.1 million savings achieved since 2006/07 have been achieved through efficiency. These gains have helped the Council set its lowest council tax increase since 1993, and contributed to a 20 per cent increase in residents thinking the Council provides VFM since 2003.

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- 64 The Council is not maximising fully its capacity through procurement and commissioning to effectively contribute to delivery of priorities. There are some examples of procurement activities delivering efficiencies through partnership or consortia arrangements and contributing to wider community priorities such as for local employment and sustainability. Examples include the neutral vendor contract for agency staff (which resulted in reduced spending by over £2 million in the first year and has delivered savings on a like by like basis of £640,000, and also provided sources of local labour), and the procurement of a green vehicle fleet compliant with the latest emissions standards. The Council anticipates saving approximately £3 million from the implementation of new commissioning arrangements associated with the personalisation of services during 2008/09. Third Sector funding/commissioning arrangements are not yet fully embedded and as a result it cannot demonstrate the sector's contribution to community priorities is being fully maximised.
- 65 Risk management is strong and well embedded. The 2007 Use of Resources assessment assessed risk management as strong. It is effectively integrated into corporate planning, business planning and performance management. Key corporate risks are identified and there are clear strategies in place to mitigate them. Identified risks include not only those to the Council's operations but also to activities undertaken by partners, such as through the Integrated Emergency Management Strategy, and the housing arms length management organisation (ALMO).
- 66 Relationships with staff and unions are excellent. This is characterised by a high degree of trust by between unions and staff and their managers. The Council has successfully introduced equal pay. The Council actively responds to staff surveys, such as through introduction of a leadership briefing system, action learning sets for those working with partners, a future leaders' programme, and the establishment of the Minority Ethnic Employees Association (MEEA). There is high commitment to staff development demonstrated through corporate Investors in People (IIP) re-accreditation, signing the Skills Pledge, and the Skills for Life and Diploma in Management Studies (DMS) programmes. Skills for Life programmes are showing some improvements in basic literacy and numeracy in waste management staff.
- 67 Overall, the workforce reflects the community, with notable performance in employing disabled people. However, workforce strategies show limited impact to date. Poor BME representation at top management level is being addressed through the DMS programme, where the next cohort is actively targeting BME employees. The Council has made slow progress on the Equality Standard for Local Government and has recently self assessed at level 3 following increased focus in this area, although it missed its 2005/06 target year for doing this.

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- 68 The Council's approach to human resource (HR) planning is adequate. The Council's performance in managing sickness absence is excellent. It is developing shared services on a case by case basis as opportunities arise. Examples range from sharing of the Head of HR with a neighbouring borough to innovative approaches to address longstanding staffing issues, such as a shortage of planners. Workforce strategies in adult social services are having a positive impact. Capacity in assessment and care management and care commissioning to meet the personalisation agenda is being actively developed on a Council wide basis. The Council is aware of the challenges posed by its ageing workforce but limited progress has been made in engaging young people through apprenticeship and work placement initiatives. There are longstanding vacancies in some areas such as the Children, Young People and Learning Services Group (24 per cent) and the Environment and Leisure Group (21.6 per cent) where initiatives to address this have shown limited impact to date.
- 69 Project management is strong with an excellent track record. For example, the regeneration of Roundshaw Estate has been effectively managed, and the programme to build the new Stanley Park High School at Orchard Hill is currently on track. Capital programmes are on schedule and effectively managed.
- 70 The Council is not yet able to fully maximise use of ICT to improve access, efficiency and organisational capacity. The Council has introduced electronic self service in a number of services to increase efficiency such as within libraries, the cash taking machine at the Civic Offices, and online access to council tax and benefits accounts that has allowed the administration of single person discount to be cut to two days from five weeks. Excellent use of handheld technology has helped integrate the streetscene system with the central customer relationship management system in order to provide real time progress reporting for street based staff and the Police. Planned improvements to the Council's website are due to be implemented in autumn 2008 although at the current time, customer access is poor compared to other authorities. The website is difficult to navigate, does not meet disability standards, and only limited use has been made of it to encourage participation. There has been limited work undertaken with partners to, for example, provide joint web portals. As a result, the Council and its partners are not maximising access to services through ICT channels.
- 71 The Council is yet to fully maximise use of its assets to improve organisational efficiency. A key ICT contract is budgeted to deliver £1 million savings between 2008 and 2013. However, until this is fully operational the Council cannot rationalise its property assets, either alone or jointly with partners. This inhibits the Council's ability to develop and extend flexible working practices such as home working which will release resources to support delivery of other priorities.
- 72 The Council effectively accesses external funding to support delivery of its priorities. Examples include the £14 million National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) Grant to fund affordable social rented housing provision and new low cost home ownership schemes particularly for key workers, £1.4 million from the Big Lottery Fund to build the new library and community centre at Middleton Circle, and £150,000 secured from the Community Investment Fund as a result of a successful bid by the Community Sport and Physical Activity Network (CSPAN) to help increase participation in sport and physical activity, particularly among priority groups including young people, the over 50s, and people with disabilities.

Performance management

- 73** The Council is performing well in its approach to performance management. There is a strong commitment to improving outcomes for the community exemplified by sustained improvement against national indicators. The Council performs well above the national average for the percentage of performance indicators within the best quartile and above the national average for the percentage of indicators that have improved during the last three years. As a result, customer satisfaction, at 81 per cent, is the highest in London. There is a clear link between ambitions and priorities through Group, team and individual targets as well as through partners' plans. The Council and the Sutton Partnership are actively focussed on performance management and good use of the Council's corporate performance monitoring system is made to sustain both the focus of the Sutton Partnership and the Council on priorities, such as delivery of LAA targets, as well as performance and improvement. The Council is a learning organisation making highly effective use of external challenge and comparison to drive improvement. Underperformance is effectively addressed. Pending the full implementation of the Third Sector commissioning framework, performance management of the voluntary sector is not consistent across service areas and not always proportionate to the service provided and the level of funding.
- 74** The performance management framework effectively underpins delivery of the Sutton Strategy, Sutton Plan, the LAA, budget and medium term financial forecast, national and local performance indicators, as well as the Council's strategic risks and targets from its Equality Scheme, which are also fully integrated. There is a clear cascade of objectives and targets through the Council's group business plans, team plans and individual plans. The measurable outcomes delivered are excellent overall. Sutton is one of only twelve Councils assessed as 'improving strongly' by the Audit Commission. Forty one per cent of performance indicators are in the best quartile nationally and 70 per cent of all indicators improved during the last three years. These figures are both above the national averages.
- 75** Both the Council and the Sutton Partnership are focussed on performance management. All partners provide updated performance information within one week of the end of each quarter and each of the themed partnerships discusses its targets within three weeks of the end of the preceding quarter. The Sutton Partnership makes good use of the Council's corporate performance monitoring system to maintain focus on priorities, performance, and improvement. For example, of 51 LAA targets set for last year, 35 were achieved, 6 substantially achieved and only 6 not achieved, with year-end information being unavailable for the remaining 4 targets. The partnership delivered in all priority areas.

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- 76** The Council takes effective remedial action to deliver priorities and address underperformance. Performance concerns are escalated through the Group Performance Review Boards, the Corporate Performance Review Board, scrutiny and the Executive. Examples of effective remedial action include action taken to deliver the Sutton Race Equality Scheme and crime reduction targets. Good use of the corporate performance monitoring system has been made to address underperformance. For example, when progress on the accommodation strategy was off track, the system was used to identify where the blockage was. This placed greater focus on delivery of a major ICT contract due its criticality to delivering plans for rationalising accommodation through enablement of flexible working practices.
- 77** The Council makes good use of financial and performance data to improve service delivery. Financial monitoring data is considered alongside performance monitoring data on a monthly basis by strategic directors, executive heads and managers. For example, performance and financial monitoring within the Adult Social Services and Housing Group identified that the service was not meeting its own target of issuing bills to users of non-residential care services for adults and that this was having a direct impact on income collection and resulting in poor customer service. Detailed investigation led to improved ICT solution resulting in improved and reliable invoice processing, better management information and increased administrative efficiencies.
- 78** The Council varies frequency of performance monitoring to address key risks and underperforming services. For example, in order to address under performance of the Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) 'Sutton Housing Partnership,' strengthened governance arrangements have been introduced. This includes supporting the board, and greater scrutiny through monthly monitoring and quarterly review of the ALMO's self assessment against good practice standards by Kensington and Chelsea in addition to the Council's improvement board, and the ALMO monitoring group. These safeguards are designed to ensure that the improvement plan is successfully delivered and the Council can access approximately £112 million to meet the decent homes standard by achieving a two-star ALMO re-inspection.
- 79** Councillors have a good track record of focused engagement in performance management. Executive Councillors meet regularly with their strategic directors and the Leader of the Council to discuss performance. There are also close working arrangements between the Executive, scrutiny and senior officers, such as through the performance Improvement Board to address underperformance in high risk areas such as Sutton Housing Partnership. Scrutiny chairs and Executive Councillors receive quarterly 'Tracker' reports and have commissioned remedial action as a consequence, such as that to address late payment of invoices.
- 80** Scrutiny is used effectively to drive performance improvement. For example health scrutiny members took responsibility for poor performance of delayed transfers of care in 2004/05-2005/06 and used this to secure strategic engagement from the acute trust and partners who have signed up to the action plan. As a result, comparative performance has improved and is now rated good. The Executive has also adopted the recommendations of the Scrutiny Overview Committee to strengthen central programme management of the capital programme to address slippage in projects. These interventions have enhanced the Council's ability to improve services.

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- 81** The Council's performance management system is well understood and accepted by staff. There is an improved awareness of priorities and targets among staff since the 2006 staff survey as witnessed during the inspection. This is due to the involvement of staff in the group business planning process, the development of the corporate performance monitoring system, and clear communication of objectives and targets from the leadership. Staff are clear about how they contribute to achievement of community and corporate plan priorities and receive regular appraisals with training and development linked to delivery of priorities. The Council's staff appraisal scheme also takes account of equality and diversity issues.
- 82** The Council makes effective use of external challenge and learning to drive improvement. For example, it has responded to the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) peer efficiency review by embedding VFM and efficiency within its planning framework. Following poor assessment ratings of the website by Society of Information Technology Management (SOCITM), the Council has invested in a range of website accessibility improvements that are due in the autumn of 2008. This will facilitate use by local people, including communities of interest and the disabled. In addition, the benefits service has progressed from 'fair' to 'excellent' over four years through effective response to the Department of Work and Pension's (DWP) CPA findings. The Council also learns from experience as typified by its review of the Anton Crescent project. These measures demonstrate that the Council is a learning organisation.
- 83** The Council makes effective use of complaints and feedback to drive improvement. For example, it has changed policies relating to access to housing for families with disabled children, introduced culturally specific swimming sessions, provided alternative overflow car parking for the Sutton Arena, and increased customer focus in parking services to bring about a 69 per cent reduction in appeals and 59 per cent reduction in complaints since 2006. This demonstrates that the Council actively responds to complaints and feedback from local people.
- 84** The Council regularly involves service users, residents and partners in monitoring services. This is evidenced by positive feedback received from the stakeholders' survey, user involvement in quality monitoring of the themed partnerships, the involvement of service users in Supporting People service reviews, and for example, the comprehensive approach adopted for older people's involvement in monitoring the performance of services they use. This demonstrates a user focussed approach to service delivery.
- 85** The Council makes good use of benchmarking and mystery shopping to assess and improve comparative performance. For example, Customer Services for London has been used to develop benchmarking and pursue projects of common interest, such as measuring and setting minimum standards for telephone and face to face services. Benchmarking has helped to drive down costs of high cost services, such as support costs in revenues and benefits. While satisfaction with Customer Services is high, call answering performance in some areas such as Council Tax is poor, with up to a 30 per cent abandonment rate.

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- 86 Performance management of Third Sector is not consistent across service areas and not always proportionate to the service provided and the level of funding. The draft Third Sector commissioning framework states that in some cases, performance management is not robust enough to ensure service delivery, but in others it is too much of a burden for a small amount of funding. In addition, many service level agreements are based on historic arrangements which do not reflect current needs, lack transparency in the award of funding, and do not always have clear expectations about what should be delivered. As a result it is difficult for the Council to assess the overall contribution of the voluntary sector service level agreements or grants to meeting community priorities.

What has been achieved?

- 87** The Council is performing strongly in this area. Its excellent sustained track record of partnership working has helped secure outstanding achievements against both national shared priorities and local priorities.
- 88** The focus of both the Council and the Sutton Partnership on performance management has ensured excellent progress against LAA targets and continued improvements in service performance. Of 51 LAA targets set for last year, 35 were achieved, 6 substantially achieved and only 6 not achieved (year-end information being unavailable for the remaining 4 targets). Sutton is one of only twelve Councils assessed as 'improving strongly' by the Audit Commission. Forty one per cent of performance indicators measured by the Audit Commission are in the best quartile nationally and 70 per cent of all indicators improved during the last three years. These figures are both above the national averages.
- 89** The Council's focus on its number one priority to increase efficiency and effectiveness, is delivering significant efficiency gains to support delivery of other priorities. These gains have helped the Council set its lowest council tax increase since 1993 and are recognised by a 20 per cent increase in residents thinking the Council provides value for money since 2003, and the highest customer satisfaction rating in London.
- 90** The Council is an exemplary partner in the delivery of both the national shared priorities and local priorities. Excellent progress is being made in delivering sustainable communities such as through the transformation of the Roundshaw Estate which has led to significantly improved outcomes for local people not only in terms of housing conditions, but also in addressing health inequalities, community safety, and the quality of the local environment. The integrated Safer Sutton Partnership has made Sutton one of the safest London boroughs, and one where crime and fear of crime is declining.
- 91** The Council demonstrates strong performance in delivering on its 'cleaner and greener' priorities where it leads by example in reducing its own resource consumption but is also effectively securing behavioural change to promote sustainability within the borough such as through the personalised Smarter Travel Sutton project. It is also making excellent progress at increasing housing supply, including for vulnerable groups, although achievement of the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) represents a significant challenge for the Sutton Housing Partnership.
- 92** The Council and its partners are making excellent progress in improving health and reducing health inequalities to help make a 'fairer' borough. Focus on the personalisation agenda is supporting high levels of independence for vulnerable adults and encouraging healthier lifestyles. Targeted partnership initiatives to address health inequalities in more deprived communities, such as in the Roundshaw/Beddington area are providing significant improvements in health outcomes, including a 40 per cent fall in the life expectancy gap in men in the most disadvantaged wards over the last five years compared with the more affluent wards.

What has been achieved?

- 93 Outcomes for children and young people are good overall. Sutton has some of the top exam results in the country. However, outcomes for looked after children are adequate with insufficient stability in placements and an underdeveloped corporate parenting role within the Council.

Sustainable communities and transport

- 94 The Council is making excellent progress in delivering sustainable communities. For example, transformation of the Roundshaw Estate has led to significantly improved outcomes for local people not only in terms of housing conditions, but also in addressing health inequalities, community safety, and the quality of the local environment. The Council demonstrates strong performance in delivering on its 'cleaner and greener' priorities where it leads by example in reducing its own resource consumption but is also effectively securing behavioural change to promote sustainability within the borough such as through the personalised Smarter Travel Sutton project. Outcomes for the local economy are more limited reflecting that this is a newer priority. The Council is making excellent progress at increasing housing supply, including for vulnerable groups, although performance in meeting the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) is currently poor and represents a significant challenge for the Sutton Housing Partnership.
- 95 Excellent progress is being made in delivering sustainable communities. The Council has recently achieved Beacon Status for developing better public places. This is exemplified by the innovative Phoenix Centre that forms the centre point for the extensive regeneration of the Roundshaw Estate in Beddington. The centre brings together a large number of public services on one site and has contributed to a number of positive outcomes for the locality achieved through the transformation of this estate. These include: jobs and volunteering opportunities for local people, refurbishment of 800 existing homes and replacement of Prefabricated Reinforced Concrete (PRC) properties with 1,000 new affordable low rise homes. It has also led to improved health outcomes and a reduction in crime and vandalism. Quality of life and overall living conditions on the estate has improved significantly.
- 96 The Council demonstrates strong performance in delivering its cleaner and greener priorities. It has led on innovative solutions for reducing carbon emissions such as the BedZED zero carbon development in Hackbridge, and has effectively reduced its own resource consumption. The Council's Environmental Sustainability Strategy and corporate Eco Management and Audit Scheme have helped drive a 50 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, a 23 per cent reduction in water use and the protection of species through the declaration of two additional nature reserves. The Council is working well with partners to deliver sustainable waste management. The recycling/composting rate, at 33 per cent, is high and the Council has worked with neighbouring boroughs to develop a waste treatment infrastructure including a green waste composting facility and a mechanical biological treatment facility to increase capacity to process an additional 110,000 tonnes of waste each year for the sub-region. As a result, the Council has achieved Beacon Status for its waste and recycling service. It has also achieved high levels of public satisfaction with street cleansing, parks and open spaces, and waste collection reflecting service performance in these areas.

- 97** With its partners, the Council has made excellent progress in reducing car trips. The Council has a strong track record of promoting travel behaviour change to more sustainable forms of transport including public transport, walking and cycling through the Smarter Travel Sutton project. All schools have an approved travel plan in place. Personal travel planning has been offered to all households within the borough with a high degree of take up, and approximately 80 businesses representing some 16,500 employees have travel plans. This has resulted in a reduction in car journeys by two percentage points (from 49 per cent to 47 per cent) between September 2006 and September 2007. A significant proportion (38 per cent) of residents report that they have reduced the amount of driving. The Council has also introduced car clubs with 70 council employees signed up with 90 members of partners and businesses. This has made a difference with on average 7 per cent car usage reduction and in some areas reduction of up to 15 per cent.
- 98** The Council successfully lobbies for public transport improvements. For example it has secured bus service and bus stop accessibility improvements from London Buses. These include the very popular 'S' hoppla bus services that cover parts of the borough that were previously some distance from a bus route, such as the Kimpton and Clockhouse estates. A programme of bus stop accessibility improvements is also ensuring that buses can get close the kerb and allow disabled and older people to access buses using the ramp. The Council is working well with its south London borough partners to lobby for better transport links with joined up plans to lobby for improved orbital links including the Croydon Tramlink extension through Sutton and St Helier.
- 99** The Council's record in addressing the area's housing need is excellent. This is demonstrated by effective use of the HomeBuy scheme to enable council and housing association tenants, key workers and other first time buyers to purchase a share of a home, converting office blocks such as Lamborn into high density mixed tenure schemes in Sutton town centre, disposal of sites to help fund new extra care developments, and meeting the needs of vulnerable groups such as homeless people. The Council is among the first boroughs in London to have achieved the national target of reducing the overall use of temporary accommodation by 50 per cent by 2010. Over 100 new private sector temporary accommodation leases were signed during 2006/08, resulting in a gradual reduction in the overall use of low quality temporary accommodation over the last three years. Working with the Housing Corporation and through Section 106 agreements, it has realised just under 900 affordable units over the four year period 2004/05 to 2007/08, of which 660 were for social rent.
- 100** The Council's record in meeting the DHS for its own stock is poor. Although Sutton Housing Partnership has reduced the proportion of non-decent stock, as at 1 April 2008, 43 per cent of Council housing did not meet the DHS. However, the Council is on track in meeting the target of vulnerable households occupying private sector housing that meet the decent homes standard. Also, 85 per cent of the 4,500 housing association homes meet the decent homes standard, with all registered landlords on target to reach the decent homes standard by 2010. The Council is actively addressing these problems through providing an additional capital investment and strengthening the performance management of the ALMO.

What has been achieved?

- 101** Although development of the local economy is a newer priority for the council and its partners, some positive outcomes have been delivered. The Council has successfully worked with developers to secure inward investment to Kimpton Park industrial estate which has boosted the local economy, created approximately 300 additional jobs, improved the quality of the local environment, and secured funding to support the Council's wider capital programme. It has also secured commitment to a minimum of 20 per cent local labour from the developer for the Durand Close regeneration scheme and had some success from joint work with partners to promote access to employment and training for disengaged groups through E2E and Jobcentre Plus funded programmes. The latter have helped 35 offenders and substance mis-users into sustained employment. The Sutton Partnership is due to commence Sutton Town Centre improvements in Autumn 2008.
- 102** The Council is effective at reducing regulation burden for local businesses as part of its support to promote the local economy. The Council's Business Regulation Service works well with the police on licensing enforcement including licence reviews and under age sales matters. It has dedicated a significant amount of effort to educating businesses and promoting compliance. Sutton serves a relatively low number of notices and takes fewer enforcement actions due to the effort invested in awareness raising and promoting compliance.

Safer and stronger communities

- 103** The Council and its partners work together in an exemplary way which has made Sutton one of the safest London boroughs, one where crime and fear of crime is declining, and brought beacon status for the partnership. The Council shows strong community leadership in this area.
- 104** The Council's core value of partnership working is best demonstrated by the integrated Safer Sutton Partnership. Focussed on the priorities agreed in the Safer Sutton Partnership Plan, all agencies work together effectively to achieve those priorities, share relevant data and agree responses to local issues. This has resulted in reductions in incidents of crime, and increased community confidence. Between January 2006 and 2007 overall crime fell in Sutton by 8.2 per cent, and violent crime by 8.4 per cent compared to 6.3 per cent and 7.2 per cent across London respectively. In the past year the basket of British Crime Survey crimes has reduced by more than 10 per cent and total notifiable offences by 14 per cent. The crime rate is low relative to London and England as a whole. Recent increases in burglary and theft from vehicles have been noted and targeted, given their significance in underpinning feelings of community safety.

- 105** The Council's approach to tackling crime and anti-social behaviour is guided by a sophisticated analysis of the drivers of citizen insecurity across the borough which underpins a highly effective joint tasking approach. This has been constructed by aggregating community intelligence data gathered from ward based INSI interviews that provide an analysis of anti-social behaviour across all areas of the borough which is then effectively used to focus resources to improve residents' perceptions. This allows the Council and its partners to target issues specific to a road/area and tailor appropriate responses, including successful diversionary activities such as those used at St Helier. The intelligence is supplemented by real time data recorded on hand held computers. Using this approach the partnership has achieved a 23 per cent reduction in criminal damage in the last year, the highest fall in London, and has also effectively reduced the fear of crime. Fear of crime has declined for all categories of crime since 2003, although concern about anti-social behaviour remains as one of the top concerns for residents. As a result of combined efforts there has been a 13 per cent reduction in residents concern about anti-social behaviour between 2005 and 2007.
- 106** The Council's contribution to the safer and stronger agenda is underpinned by Safer Neighbourhood, Safer Parks and Safer Transport Teams. The Council is developing baseline data to determine the effectiveness of the Safer Parks Teams, but there is already evidence of reduced complaints about parks, and increased arrests.
- 107** Victims and witnesses of anti-social behaviour and domestic violence are effectively supported. The Sanctuary Scheme and multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) procedures are delivering notable successes in deterring repeat domestic violence incidents. A high comparative sanctioned detection rate of 63 per cent for domestic violence offenders demonstrates the focus given by the Council and its partners to this issue. Intelligent links are made with child protection, alcohol abuse and the effects of the downturn in the economy to shape future responses.
- 108** The Council is working effectively in partnership to address drug misuse. The national target of increasing the number of problematic drug users engaged in treatment has been met ahead of schedule, and the Council is in the top ten best performing areas for the number of drug users retained in treatment to a successful conclusion. As a result of joint intelligence about the patterns and characteristics of local drug and alcohol use, the Council has agreed an alcohol reduction strategy with its partners to reduce the negative impacts of alcohol use on its population, but its impact has yet to be measured.
- 109** The Council works well with its partners to manage the night time economy in Sutton town centre, with a range of initiatives in place, including a coordinated taxi scheme to speed people's departure after a night out. The profile of the town as a problem area has reduced, as has crime – falling by 6 per cent, although this is lower than the 14 per cent achieved across the rest of the borough.

What has been achieved?

- 110** The Council is working effectively with partners to reduce accidents, particularly for vulnerable groups. Together with partners it has achieved a 30 per cent reduction in the number of deliberate and accidental fires within the home and workplace over the last three years, and a 50 per cent reduction in road traffic accidents since 1994. The Council demonstrates best quartile performance with regard to reducing road casualties, including for vulnerable groups such as children. Programmes to target areas of concern such as the increasing numbers of young people killed/injured on the roads have been implemented but have yet to be evaluated.
- 111** The Council plays an active part in the Sutton Integrated Resilience Forum, and has in place mutual aid arrangements with neighbouring authorities through the South West London Emergency Planning Group. Its emergency planning is well integrated with business continuity management, allowing it to respond to local emergencies, support partners and communicate with the public. Its emergency response plan is regularly tested, most recently in March 2008. The plan proved effective during floods in 2007, when notably all vulnerable evacuees were moved straight to alternative accommodation. The needs of vulnerable people are met by service leads who are part of any emergency response. The leads can access Council databases – including PARIS the social care database – to identify vulnerable people. The migration of council systems to the new ICT infrastructure is reducing the risks to business continuity posed by local emergencies.
- 112** The Council has taken a strong lead in building stronger communities. This is demonstrated by its mature relationship with the Third Sector, the iconic Phoenix Centre bringing together diverse communities in a respected, well managed and much used space, positive action in relation to a preacher accused of inciting religious hatred, and its support for a range of cultural activities to support cohesion and inclusion such as swimming for the Asian community, libraries work with travellers and inmates of the local prison, and the 'Imagine' Festival. The Council's work has contributed to positive residents' survey results which reveal a very high percentage (82 per cent) of people from different backgrounds feeling they get on well together.

Healthier communities

- 113** The Council and its partners are making excellent progress in improving health and reducing health inequalities. Improving health and wellbeing is a key priority for the Sutton Strategy and fundamental to achieving the vision for a 'fairer' borough. There is focus on the personalisation agenda to support greater independence for vulnerable adults and to encourage healthier lifestyles, as well as targeting initiatives on more deprived communities in accordance with the partners' commitment to reducing health inequalities and tackling the determinants of ill health. In addition, there is focus on young people in line with the early intervention and prevention approach. Overall, performance on health outcomes is impressive.

- 114** The Council's work with partners to reduce health inequalities is making a significant contribution to improved health outcomes. This includes a 40 per cent fall in the life expectancy gap in men in the most disadvantaged wards over the last five years compared with the more affluent wards. Other measures also indicate that projects such as the Phoenix Pathways project on the Roundshaw estate are having a positive impact. For instance 700 people are participating in this project, most of whom are young people, and within Beddington South, the target localities have improved their IMD ranking by an average of 1,154 places between 2004 and 2007. Infant and prenatal mortality rates have also decreased and there is good take up of young mothers in 'care to learn' programmes run by the Council's Children's Centres and the Primary Care Trust (PCT), with breast feeding initiation rates increasing from 47 per cent in 2005/06 to 80 per cent by 2007/08. This is considerably higher than the national average of 69.2 per cent.
- 115** Notable work is undertaken to improve the sexual health of teenagers. The jointly commissioned early intervention programme for 14 to 17 year olds (teens and toddlers) and sex and relationships education (SRE) have contributed to the under 18 conception rate being reduced by 20.9 per cent between 1998 and 2005 providing confidence that the 2010 will be met. Top quartile performance is demonstrated for both the number of conceptions and the percentage change since 1998 based upon the latest data (2004/05). An increase in young peoples' awareness of the need for sexual health is evidenced by a rise in drop in sessions being provided. Over the past four years new diagnoses of gonorrhoea have reduced by 30 per cent. New diagnoses of chlamydia are generally stable across south-west London, but have declined in St Helier by 23 per cent.
- 116** Sutton is performing strongly on smoking cessation using a targeted approach to address the large 18 to 34 age client group in the more deprived areas of Wandle Valley and St Helier. Of the 1,650 customers from Sutton, 53 per cent stopped at four weeks. Significantly, the service is achieving a 52-week quit rate of 25 per cent of those who quit at four weeks. This is making a positive contribution towards delivery of the LAA smoking cessation target. In addition, in conjunction with partners, the Tobacco Control Alliance has secured almost 100 per cent compliance by businesses with the Smokefree legislation.
- 117** The Council's programme to improve the health of school children is working highly effectively. Eighty-five per cent of Sutton schools have been awarded healthy schools status and there is an excellent rate of participation in physical education by school pupils with all five to 16-year olds participating in a minimum of two hours high quality physical education per week. All schools are meeting the nutritional standards for school food provision. Additionally, 70 per cent of the 160 children participating in the Health Zone (healthy eating and exercise) project at Sutton Junior Tennis Centre have had some reduction in their body mass index, helping to reduce child obesity.

What has been achieved?

- 118** The Council has worked well with the Sutton Disability Partnership for Children and Young people to ensure a multi-disciplinary model of support, and to promote choice and independence for disabled young people and their families. Services are well coordinated and integrated at the point of delivery using a common assessment framework. The number of families managing their own care using direct payments has increased from 21 in June 2005 to 106 in January 2008, and the number of children receiving family and carer services in the community has increased from 206 in 2004 to 370 in 2008. These schemes are providing flexibility of use to meet individual families' needs, greater choice, promoting social inclusion, and virtually eradicating the breakdown of family units due to the child's disability.
- 119** Good progress has been made on the personalisation agenda. The Council's plans for re-providing services for Orchard Hill residents to enable the majority to be provided with supported living arrangements in the community with better access to mainstream services are progressing well. Over 60 people have already been provided with appropriate arrangements, and there are firm plans for the remaining 40 people who are still in unsatisfactory NHS accommodation, to be moved by March 2009. This programme makes a further significant contribution to delivering the 'fairer' agenda. Additionally, as detailed previously, the Smarter Travel Sutton is positively encouraging behavioural change in local people to use more sustainable forms of transport, which will in turn contribute to healthier communities as more people choose to walk and cycle rather than using their cars.
- 120** Partnership work to help vulnerable groups into work is highly effective. For example, the Council's innovative partnership with Mencap Pathway and Remploy is offering work experience and permanent placements to people with physical and mild learning disabilities, and has produced some outstanding outcomes. The Council now demonstrates top quartile performance in employing people with disabilities. Customer services employs 29 staff with a disability in front line positions of which 9 have a learning disability. Across the Council 5 per cent of employees have a disability and over 30 staff have a learning disability. This truly demonstrates equality in employment and commitment to building a community in which all can take part and which all can take pride.
- 121** Support mechanisms for carers are highly valued. There is high satisfaction with the short break service and on call service for organising emergency respite care services, and a range of 'break' options including computer courses, gym membership, and crèches. These initiatives make a positive contribution to the well being of carers.

Older people

- 122** The Council is providing effective leadership on older people's issues. Together with its partners it has a well developed strategic approach which is making a positive contribution to improving health, wellbeing, quality of life, and the independence of older people. This strategic approach is reflected in the Sutton Strategy priorities and the 'Better Sutton for Older People' strategy that address the priorities identified by people over 55 such as safety, job opportunities, good transport, clear information about benefits and services, affordable recreation, housing, and being able to have enjoyable social lives, good social services and healthcare. Both plans recognise the growing number of older people in the borough.
- 123** There is effective political and managerial leadership and championing of older people's issues. Although the older people's champion has recently changed, the previous champion was instrumental in driving preparation and delivery of the older people strategy. The delivery plan is now effectively coordinated through the Chief Executive's Group bringing together delivery by the Council's services and those of its partners. This ensures the needs of older people are addressed in a joined up way.
- 124** There is a well coordinated and systematic approach to engagement with older people through the strategy for user and carer involvement. This is firmly embedded and ensures that older people and their carers are involved in all aspects of delivery and planning for services that affect them. This cascades from key strategies and commissioning plans, through to involvement in service provision and monitoring, to individual involvement in assessment and care planning.
- 125** Older people are contributing to wider community issues, such as place shaping. The Sutton Seniors Forum is representing the wider interests of older people and influencing the Local Development Framework including transport (bus route) accessibility, housing being built to the lifetime homes standard, and ensuring independent living needs are met such as through provision on extra care housing. Users, carers and voluntary organisations are routinely involved in the specification of services and tender evaluation of services, such as for the Belsize Court extra care facility and the new dementia day care service on the site of Franklin House. There is ongoing service user and carer involvement in monitoring the quality of service delivery such as for domiciliary care services and in-house care centres and day centres. These measures demonstrate that older people are actively involved in shaping and monitoring performance of the services that directly affect them.

What has been achieved?

- 126** The Council is working effectively with partners to promote the independence, health and well being of older people. This includes successful preventative work to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions which has been achieved through a combination of measures including: 'Keep Active Stay Healthy' exercise classes in care homes, day centres and sheltered housing to increase balance and reduce the number of falls, and targeted work with the PCT's Community matron service to support those with long term conditions. This has led to a 28 per cent reduction in hospital admissions over the last 18 months. Delayed transfers of care are also kept at a low level. This has involved joint working with Sutton and Merton PCT and Epsom and St Helier Trust and has been facilitated by the enhanced intake and re-ablement service and intermediate care service. These initiatives are preventing older people entering care and supporting people to regain their independence following hospital discharge. Together with provision of extra care housing (most recently Belsize Court) they contribute to the high number of older people supported to live at home.
- 127** Partnership work to maximise income for older people is highly effective. For example, the joint pensions outreach team with the DWP has enabled the successful claims to over £2.166 million in additional benefits during 2007. This has made a substantial positive impact on the incomes of older people.
- 128** The Council and its partners have made good progress against local public service agreement (LPSA) targets to increase physical activity by the over 65s. This is in part due to the range of exercise classes detailed above. The Council also provides a range of well-used activities for older people in its leisure centres. Evergreens clubs operate in all the Council's leisure centres providing activities for older people to keep active and opportunities for social networking. The clubs regularly have 200 to 300 participants per week. The Council has recently introduced a Club Wellness Card to increase leisure participation by the over 50s, however, it is too early to assess the impact this has had on participation levels. Similarly it is too early to assess the impact of initiatives to address the employment needs of older people.
- 129** Support for older people to exercise greater choice in care services provided is developing. Although the Commission for Social Care Inspection's Annual Performance Assessment for 2007 states that outcomes in terms of increased choice and control are 'good', and the numbers accessing direct payments are rising (currently around 70), figures are broadly in line with the national average, which means that there is more that can be done to allow older people to exercise greater choice over their care provider.
- 130** Information provided to older people on the range of services available is improving. The handbook of services commissioned from Age Concern has been received positively and has led to 36 per cent of people originally surveyed in 2005 now saying that they now feel better informed. There is also a range of user accessible information available in a variety of formats to meet the diversity needs of the community at Council buildings, clinics and surgeries. However, accessing information through the Council's website is difficult as the site is hard to navigate. The Council is fully aware of this issue and has firm plans in place to make the necessary improvements by autumn 2008.

131 Intergenerational approaches are used to improve the understanding between the young and older people. For example, the Bike Street cycle maintenance diversionary project has contributed to a reduction in the fear of crime amongst the older people involved and an enhanced understanding of historical perspectives amongst young people, and a student led gardening project by students from Cheam High School has provided Oakleigh Care Centre residents with access to a safe and pleasant outdoor space to enhance their wellbeing.

Children and young people

132 The overall effectiveness of the council's children's services is good. Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are good. Partner agencies collaborate well to safeguard children and young people through a wide range of good multi-agency early intervention and protective services. Services to and outcomes for looked after children and young people are adequate. Numbers of children who are looked after are low and steadily reducing, but short-term placements are insufficiently stable and the role of the corporate parent within the authority is insufficiently developed. Services to children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good and have effectively built on the partnership's experience as a Pathfinder Trust for disabled children. The percentage of children and young people with statements of special educational need is above average and a significant number attend independent and non-maintained schools outside the borough.

133 Service management is good. Ambitions are based on a thorough needs analysis. Children and young people are increasingly consulted, but the consistent engagement of more vulnerable groups in service planning and evaluation requires further consolidation. Priorities are good, owned by the partnership and supported by the redirection of resources to areas of need. But the pace of change in some areas has been slow. Capacity is good and enhanced by good partnership working and strong financial management. Performance management is good overall, although underdeveloped in some services. The partnership has good capacity for further improvement. While it has a good track record of improving outcomes overall, improvements for some vulnerable groups of children and young people have been more gradual. The CYPP is ambitious and priorities are clear and appropriate, but some strategies are new and have yet to impact. Value for money is good. Service managers provide strong leadership. Most services have sufficient staff to deliver plans and improvements.

What has been achieved?

- 134** The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well in schools, the Youth Offending Service and a range of public health initiatives. A very high proportion of schools have achieved Healthy Schools status. Health outcomes for all expectant mothers and their babies are good. Emergency and primary care for children are good, but the ratio of staff to children on the children's ward at the acute trust is well below the national average. Good progress is being made in reducing under-18 conceptions. However, the downward trend has recently plateaued and the teenage pregnancy strategy is not consistently embedded into other relevant strategies. Good actions are taken to ensure looked after children and young people are healthy and the needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met. The CAMHS provide a comprehensive, integrated service. Access for specialist cases is good, but can be problematic for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- 135** Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are good. Most children in the borough report feeling safe. Partner agencies collaborate well to safeguard children and young people. The range of family support is good and there is clear investment in early intervention and preventative services. The Sutton LSCB is well established and effectively provides strong strategic leadership. Good inter-agency policies, procedures and practice are underpinned by high quality training. However, the audit of practice across the partnership is not sufficiently systematic and robust and the range of information for the public on safeguarding issues is underdeveloped. Good interagency referral and assessment processes and communication are in place, but referral and re-referral rates remain high. The number of looked after children is low and reducing and most are placed with Sutton foster carers, who provide good quality care. While there are sufficient placements to meet needs in the borough, short-term placements are insufficiently stable. A legacy of high social worker vacancies and staff turnover has adversely affected relationships with some looked after young people.
- 136** The impact of local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and achieve well is outstanding. Early years setting are of good quality. Standards of attainment in all key stages continue to be above or well above average with a continuing trend of improvement. The attainment gap for many groups of minority ethnic pupils is narrowing, but this is not the case across all key stages for children and young people who are looked after. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are working at national curriculum levels make good progress. Special schools provide well for their pupils and the local authority is working with them to develop a cohesive and moderated system to track the progress of pupils who are working below national curriculum levels. Fixed-term exclusions from special schools are very high. The attendance of looked after children has improved over the last three years and is better than in similar authorities.

- 137** Children and young people are increasingly being consulted, but their consistent engagement in service planning and evaluation requires further consolidation. Children and young people contribute to the development and review of the CYPP and they have shaped some aspects of youth provision. However, the council recognise that the current depth and range of engagement is limited and does not effectively involve younger children and a sufficiently diverse range of vulnerable children and young people. There are insufficient opportunities for councillors to meet and engage with a wide range of looked after children and young people and so they are unable to effectively champion the needs of this group and to monitor outcomes. A new participation strategy is in place and a participation officer has been appointed from September 2008 to bring coherence to this area. Partnership work between the Youth Offending Team and other agencies is good and numbers of first time entrants to the criminal justice system are falling.
- 138** The contribution of local services to young people achieving economic wellbeing is good. Almost all 16-year olds continue in education at 16 and standards in GCE A-levels are high. A 14 to 19 strategy is being implemented, but progress in some areas, such as collaborative working between schools has been slow, although recently improved. The development of provision for more vulnerable groups has been challenging. The number of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not in education, employment and training has steadily decreased, but targets to improve the proportion of young offenders, teenage mothers and care leavers engaged in education, employment or training are not being met.

Appendix 1 – Framework for Corporate Assessment

- 1 This corporate assessment was carried out under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, under which the Audit Commission has power to inspect local authorities' arrangements for securing continuous improvement. The results of the corporate assessment contribute to the determination of the overall CPA category for an authority, which the Audit Commission is required to assess and report on under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2 The Council's self assessment provided a key resource in focusing the assessment activity which included consideration of:
 - key documentation, including the Council's improvement plan;
 - updated performance indicators and performance data; and
 - interviews and meetings attended.
- 3 The assessment for London Borough of Sutton was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 30 June to 7 July 2008.
- 4 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.

The Audit Commission

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