

CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

**Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, Rotherham.**

Date: Monday, 11 September 2006

Time: 10.00 a.m.

A G E N D A

1. To determine if the following matters are to be considered under the categories suggested in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972
2. To determine any item which the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency
3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15th May, 2006 (herewith) (Pages 1 - 3)
4. Response to Corporate Assessment (papers herewith) (Pages 4 - 36)
5. Next Steps following Corporate Assessment (Matthew Gladstone to report)

CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT BOARD
15th May, 2006

Present:- Councillor Sharman (in the Chair); Councillor Wardle.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Wyatt.

26. MINUTES

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting held on 10th April, 2006 be approved as a correct record.

27. JOINT AREA REVIEW (JAR) - UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 20 of this Board held on 10th April, 2006, Julie Westwood updated Members on the latest position regarding JAR making particular reference to :-

- the self assessment had been completed and submitted last week within deadline. Receipt had been acknowledged
- the lead inspector, Margaret Farrow, was already forming an opinion of Rotherham based on analysis of research information, single plan and toolkit information
- the lead inspector was going on the corporate tour and would therefore be on site from the Monday as opposed to the rest of the inspection team who would be arriving on the Wednesday
- whilst there was an initial indication of the timetable, this would change leading up to, and during, the inspection
- there was an early indication of the interviewees but these would not be confirmed until the inspectors were on site for analysis week (there would be a 'doubling up' with the corporate assessment to prevent interviewees being interviewed twice)
- on the Wednesday of analysis week the Joint Leadership Team for JAR would meet the Inspection Team for JAR and 'buddy up'
- Partnership working and interviews with partners
- potential buddying up combinations
- the update inspection team list since reporting to the last meeting
- briefing last Friday for the enhanced leadership team
- linking of JAR to CPA through the Community Strategy

- involvement of staff
- briefing sessions in June for partners, stakeholders etc.,
- links to the safe theme (meeting with Dominic Blaydon)
- LSP engagement
- production of briefing packs
- e-mail addresses and websites
- telephone hotline
- video library was almost ready
- production of showcase brochures

Resolved:- That the information be noted,

28. CORPORATE ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Matthew Gladstone updated Members on the latest position regarding the Corporate Assessment making particular reference to :-

- the updated list of interviewees
- discussions at the LSP Board
- key briefing sessions with Members (Cabinet, non-executive, PSOC and backbenchers)
- utilisation of a cross section of middle managers
- Focus groups including (a) Voluntary and Community Sector
(b) BME
(c) Crime and Disorder
- there being no major problem with the list of interviewees selected and that the timetable appeared manageable
- there was a feedback session on the key issues scheduled for 24th May at 2.00 p.m.
- Analysis week was 22nd to 24th May, 2006
- the inspectors would be on site for seven days in June

Resolved:- (1) That the information be noted.

(2) That the updated list of interviewees be submitted to the Leader's meeting tomorrow.

29. INITIAL DOCUMENT LIST UPDATE

It was noted that all the documents had been submitted as requested.

Chief Executive's Office

Eric Manns Building, 45 Moorgate Street,
Rotherham S60 2RB
Tel: (01709) 822776/7 Fax: (01709) 822792
E-mail: chiefexecutive@rotherham.gov.uk
Email the Council for free @ your local library!

Our Ref:
MHC/IES

Your Ref:

Direct Line:
01709 822770

Extension:
2770

Please Contact:
Mike Cuff

21st August, 2006

Brian Stevenson
Audit Commission
Kernel House
Killingbeck Drive
Killingbeck
Leeds
LS14 6UF

Dear Brian,

Response to draft Corporate Assessment report

Thank you for the opportunity to meet and discuss the report with myself and Matt Gladstone on Tuesday 15th August. We agreed to send you our response to the draft report together with supporting evidence in relation to some of the themes. This information is attached at Appendix 1 and 2.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your team for their professionalism shown throughout the assessment process. As stated at the meeting, we believe the report is well written and good quality, reflecting the content of our self assessment. However, following our meeting we are still struggling to understand why we did not score a 4 overall.

As you will be aware, our report is very positive and reflects the strong direction of travel of the council. Our scores also compare very favourably to other councils who have been assessed under the CPA harder test regime. This is a major achievement yet the overall process has left us feeling disappointed with the result. No major issues have been identified by the assessment, five of the six areas for improvement were identified in our self assessment and for many of the themes only two or three minor issues appear to be preventing us from scoring a 4. Comparisons with other authorities scoring a 4 on ambition also identify very little difference in terms of our performance.

One of the key issues is the apparent lack of transparency. We understand that it is a judgement call at the end of the day however the basis on which this is made is extremely unclear. This is supported by your own comments that the Commission has not decided what constitutes a four overall. Similarly you suggested that it is very unlikely that any authority will score a 4 as it is such a harder test.

We, like many other authorities, take issue with the scoring mechanism. The Commission cannot surely introduce a 4 point scale yet have no basis or intention of awarding the top score. The process is fundamentally flawed if this is the case. In addition, this approach is a major contrast with the Joint Area Review process which in our view is very open and transparent. Grade descriptors exist for the top scores, it is very clear what is expected and top scores have been given. This ensures a 'no surprises' approach which is contrary to our experience for the corporate assessment. Following your final feedback presentation we were left with the impression that we would score at least one four. For example, there were no issues identified in relation to prioritisation and overall there were no significant weaknesses or areas inconsistent with our self assessment.

In the meeting we focussed on some of the issues identified under each theme. Much of the discussion was very useful but there are still some key issues which we do not accept. More importantly we question whether some of the evidence has been triangulated as some is completely contradictory to evidence we have presented to yourselves. We feel that some issues have been taken out of context and we are being marked down for highlighting some issues in our self assessment.

Appendix 1 examines briefly each of the themes. We have focussed our comments on addressing the areas for improvement identified and also by highlighting areas where we believe we exceed level three based upon the key lines of enquiry.

Appendix 2 provides brief comments on the overall report, including the executive summary.

We believe there is a good case we should be scored a four on ambition, prioritisation and performance management. We accept a score of three for achievement and capacity and welcome your invitation for us to provide additional wording where appropriate to improve readability. We do hope you take the opportunity to present this information to a further consistency panel.

We do genuinely believe we deserve a higher score in some areas. We are a firm believer in the CPA process and have worked very closely with the Audit Commission in its development. CPA has been a major driver of change and improvement for the council and it is essential that the current model continues to motivate staff to improve.

Finally, we would also like to stress that we are looking to resolve these issues on an amicable, professional basis and do not see the need for further appeals or disagreements. We are also keen to work with the Commission in developing a framework post 2008 which will help to further improve local government.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Cuff', with a long, sweeping tail that ends in a small arrowhead pointing downwards and to the right.

Mike Cuff,
Chief Executive

Cc Gareth Davies, Northern Regional Director
Cc Sue Sunderland, Relationship Manager

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

Ambition

This section of the report is generally well written and has picked up on many of the points in the self assessment where we scored ourselves 4 out of 4. However, there are two areas where we feel the report needs to be more balanced and changed to reflect additional evidence presented.

Overall we regard Ambition to be 'performing strongly' and each of the issues raised in the draft report can be challenged and supported with additional evidence to strengthen our case. We have taken a particular interest in the Manchester City Council report which was recently published scoring a four. The published report includes a number of areas for improvement, suggests that some areas are not embedded and there are obvious comparisons that can be made to our report.

"The previous Community Strategy 2002-2012 has been revised and the current draft strategy 2006-2015 is in the final stages of extensive consultation"

"The system of ward service co-ordination, although not always consistently applied"

"In other cases outcomes of consultation have not been fed back"

"The Council is now consulting on the Mancunian Agreement, an innovative approach to community engagement"

Whilst we recognise the assessment is on Rotherham's performance we have felt it necessary to compare with reports on Newham and Manchester due to lack of clarity over what constitutes a score of four.

- 1) **Consultation activity with the different BME groups within Rotherham is extensive but there are some unresolved issues.....But some groups feel under-informed about the results of consultation exercises and the actions which follow. The effectiveness of consultation with BME communities suffers from insufficient understanding of roles between the council and REMA**

The statements above appear to be unbalanced and we feel that too much has been made of one focus group with Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA), who are one small organisation representing a very limited number. We are currently concerned about the short and medium term viability of REMA and are seeking ways in which to further its work. In addition over the last few months we have become aware of a number of governance issues, for example, a Director has been appointed without due process and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) is currently withdrawing a NRF grant from REMA due to concerns over capacity and governance.

The council has been praised for a number of years for its proactive approach to consultation and community involvement. This has been evidenced in a number of charter marks and inspections over the past two years.

"The Council has a proactive approach to consulting and including customers with special needs. Attention is given to ensuring race equality and the need to open up services to all". (Housing Charter Mark, Oct 2005)

"Your commitment to include people from diverse ethnic backgrounds is considered to be best practice. The work of the Asylum and Refugee Outreach and Accessibility Officers is commendable". (Libraries Charter Mark, Sept 2004)

"The Council operates a range of outreach activities that improve the quality of life and the environment for the diverse needs of local people". (AAIL 2004/05)

"Cultural services can evidence instances in which they have used research and consultation to inform services and policy development. Their marketing strategy is based on a comprehensive understanding of how local people view cultural services, their attitude to using services, and what people see as barriers to accessing culture and leisure activities. This information was gathered through extensive consultation with good efforts made to engage with targeted groups. For example to target people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, translated questionnaires were handed out by community-based organisations, and Asian males were further targeted at taxi ranks." (Culture Inspection draft report, July 2006)

The BME communities have been widely consulted in terms of major strategies including the Corporate Plan, Community Strategy, Older People Strategy, Town Centre Plan.

Managers also consult directly with BME organisations on service improvement issues directly. A few examples include:

- Adult Services consulted BME elders on the halal meals provided by a Bradford catering company which included a trip to inspect the company's premises and meet existing customers. Tasting sessions also organised. Resulted in larger take-up of BME people.
- Three consultation events with the BME community on emergency planning by the Council and LSP which has led to culturally sensitive reception centres, translated materials, and first contact list of BME community activists.

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

- Consultation by Neighbourhoods on the BME Housing strategy which has produced an action plan that addresses the needs of BME communities.
- CXD organises and supports the Mosque Liaison Group and BME strategy as multi-agency forum whereby all the three main statutory organisations can collectively engage and consult the Muslim and BME communities respectively.
- CXD held focus groups with the BME community in 2005/2006 on budget and older people's strategy.
- Rotherham Cemeteries and Crematorium service consulted the local Muslim community on its services and as a result introduced a Weekend Burial Service – now operate same day burial service 365 days a year. Weekend cover provided by contractors from Muslim community.

In addition we ensure our consultation is representative of the community we serve and our approach to community involvement and consultation and has recently been recognised by IDeA Knowledge as good practice.

- 2) **The use of area assemblies for community engagement has had only mixed success.....they have not been entirely successful in engaging with the full diversity of local communities and gaining local ownership.there are tensions about the implications of local partnership working among members at ward level.**

We agree with the description in the report which appears fair and was also reflected in the recent Access to Services Inspection.

“Area assemblies appear to be working well in some areas; they are well attended and provide an effective mechanism for dialogue and feedback of service issues and customer needs. In other areas, they are less well-developed and are not viewed as positively”.

(Audit Commission, Access to Services Inspection Report, June 2005)

We recognised the need to further improve the area assembly system to ensure it links with the emerging neighbourhood management agenda and completed a review of the Area Assemblies system in March 2006. Seven new area assembly plans reflecting the views of local communities, including diverse communities. Neighbourhood charters have been drafted which set out services and customer care standards that residents will receive are in place. The model is due to be launched in Autumn 2006.

Our issue is that the effectiveness of area assemblies is not an explicit focus with the key lines of enquiry. Whilst we recognise they are important, we are concerned that the current position regarding their effectiveness is being taken out of context. Engagement with local people is a national issue and all local democratic systems are having mixed successes. In addition, our direction of travel in this area has not been recognised within the report following on from the access to services inspection.

- 3) **Safer neighbourhood teams have been set up in two localities, sharing local intelligence to identify liveability hotspots but Council and police data is not yet brought together in one database.**

We feel that there is no reason for this to be raised as an issue. It should not matter whether there is one database – the point is about intelligence sharing which already happens on a regular basis. A central database is currently under development and the Central Community Information Unit which has been established made up of police and council staff ensures that all the information is available in one central point and is easily shared.

Assessment against KLOE's

1.1 - Are there clear and challenging ambitions for the area and its communities?

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
The council has developed an overarching, strategic vision and set of clear and challenging ambitions, aims and objectives for the community that promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.	We have developed a clear and challenging vision, developed in collaboration with our partners. This is recognised in the draft report as being cross cutting and challenging with SMART targets and milestones to give structure to the improvement journey.
The council communicates decisions about its ambitions, and changes in these decisions, to councillors, officers and staff; and to local people and communities, partners and stakeholders.	The Council's methodology for the way that it consults and involves the community has been stated as good practice by the IDeA. In addition the Commission has highlighted our work on community involvement as a case study in its national report "Building and Area Profile – Older Citizen Perspective" published in May 2006.

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
<p>Councillors, officers and partners are clear about their respective roles and are enthusiastic about achieving the overall ambitions which have been set.</p>	<p>The report acknowledges that the council has strong arrangements in place, as supported by the stakeholder survey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All our Councillors, officers and partners are very clear about their respective roles in achieving the overall ambitions of the council. All elected members and corporate management team members have portfolios in place and key partnerships have been commended by GO and ODPM. • There is a Comprehensive Planning Framework in place which highlights how officers contribute to the ambitions. • Alignment of LSP to theme groups to match corporate ambitions.
<p>Local people are clear about what it is the council and its partners are seeking to achieve and understand the balances that have been struck and why. There is understanding and support for the council's ambitions among the community.</p>	<p>RMBC invested and were very innovative in their approach communicating the visions to staff, local people and communities using the "Faces of Rotherham".</p> <p>The positive results from the Corporate Assessment stakeholder survey also confirmed people understand what the council is trying to achieve.</p> <p>The joint launch of the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan was also key to raising the awareness of local people, partners and staff of the ambitions.</p>
<p>Ambitions are stretching and challenging, aiming to make a real and measurable difference for local people. The council has taken steps to identify what longer-term, sustainable outcomes the council together with its partners can realistically achieve, including across authority boundaries.</p>	<p>We have been praised for the challenging agenda set by the council e.g. through recent inspections, corporate assessment. The LSP has been very effective and has been awarded a Green rating by the GOYH for 2 consecutive years. Our LAA received positive feedback from Government Office.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RCP partnership for construction, which provides a one stop shop for delivery of building projects. We were told how sustainability has been effectively incorporated into building design to deliver more efficient and effective services. In fact, environmental sustainability and consideration of whole life costs featured prominently in the construction of new builds – Beacon report 2006. • Rotherham renaissance. • PFI programmes (schools, pools, Older people etc).

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

1.2 - Are ambitions based on a shared understanding amongst the council and partner organisations of local needs?

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
Information gathered by the council is converted into good intelligence that reflects the area's demographics and this is used to develop the ambitions for the community and its neighbourhoods.	<p>The report is very positive on this area. Our ambitions are based on sound analysis of needs (para 39), consultation is extensive with all interest groups and there are innovative consultation methods with Children and Young People.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of research – many examples of high quality research e.g. State of the Borough report, children needs assessment, deprivation analysis.
The council takes active steps to share the information with partner organisations.	The community strategy and corporate plan is soundly based on shared information between partners. In addition, our research team has extensive links to a range of public and private sector organisations to help support research and information sharing.
The council has taken steps to understand the scale of the social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities it faces in the area including those related to diversity, race equality and deprivation.	Over the last two years the council has conducted intense work to better understand its community using a number of methods including State of the Borough, Rotherham Reachout, Community profiling, Local needs profiled, Local Index of Multiple Deprivation - all of these were utilised to inform the vision.
It makes decisions based on the information produced through research on local needs and engagement with local citizens, communities and partners. As a result, the council understands how its own services and activities, and those of partners and stakeholders, can contribute, and has shaped its forward planning accordingly. It is self-aware, and reviews its achievements in the light of national, regional and local policy priorities and needs. It adopts a flexible approach to building solutions.	We have extensive experience of undertaking detailed needs assessments e.g. children's and have also developed high quality community engagement strategies and approaches as confirmed by the Commission in its recent national report May 2006.
The council uses effective community engagement mechanisms to understand the views, needs, desires and preferences of its citizens (including those from black and minority ethnic groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage) as well as partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors.	Community engagement is a major strength for the council. Our approach to BME engagement is particularly innovative e.g. diversity festival, children's services and mosque liaison group. However the feedback indicated that we were less effective in consulting with BME communities and this was challenged in our response dated 22 nd June. The Commission appear to have used one focus group with REMA to judge this criteria. There are other forms of consultation used in this area. The authority has been praised in inspections and been given awards for its approach to consultation and community involvement which don't appear to be considered.
Regular consultation helps to achieve consensus and commitment for achieving community ambitions and building a vision for the area, taking into account the needs and opinions of all sections of the community, including areas of specific local importance such as rural areas.	The Council's methodology for the way that it consults and involves the community has been stated as good practice by the IDeA and has been highlighted in the Audit Commission - national report "Building and Area Profile – Older Citizen Perspective" published in May 2006.
The council is responsive to the range and complexity of service user needs and provides for greater choice in planning for these.	Equalities and Diversity has featured very highly on the council's agenda over the last few years and has subsequently gone from level 2 to level 3 of the Equality Standard - one of only a few authorities in country demonstrating that we are responsive to a range and complexity of service user needs.

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

1.3 - Does the council, with its partners, provide leadership across the community and ensure effective partnership working?

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
The council champions the needs of the area and its community by providing innovative and creative leadership to address local and national challenges, and promoting fair access to services, community cohesion, sustainable communities and anti-discrimination.	The draft report is positive about our community leadership role and our strategic approach to access, fairness, cohesion etc.
Councillors, officers and the community recognise that the council provides effective leadership. It demonstrates wider community leadership based on a strategic and robust understanding of the area's social, economic and environmental issues and how local priorities relate to regional or international aims and a commitment to the long-term future well-being of the area and its residents.	Strong leadership has been confirmed through the assessment and stakeholder survey.
Actions and targets in the community strategy promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area in a balanced and integrated way. The strategy sets out what is important for the local area and the council's ambitions for promoting sustainable, safer, stronger and healthier communities with particular focus on older people, children and young people, black and minority ethnic groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage.	There is a good balance of National and Local Priorities in all the themes within the corporate plan/community strategy. The priority themes are cross cutting and focus on inequality and those of greatest need.
In turn, the ambitions and actions for the Local Strategic Partnership clearly link to the council's key strategies and those of its partners.	The ambitions and actions for the LSP clearly link to the council's strategies the priority themes of both the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan. To demonstrate the alignment further the LSP and Council ensured both documents were launched at the same time.
Councillors and managers are willing to tackle difficult problems and to take (and stick to) tough decisions. These decisions show how balances have been struck between competing demands and expectations in the light of available resources.	The council can demonstrate that difficult decisions are made by Councillors and managers through examples such as the ALMO and PFI. Members and Officers used the Base Budget Review process which assisted in increasing our knowledge base and helping make informed decision making process and understanding of resources.
This includes achieving a balance between levels of council tax and the expenditure needed for the council to achieve its ambitions and deliver its statutory functions. The council responds to competing demands from different partnership bodies, and in promoting collaboration.	We have effective arrangements for improving and delivering VFM services. Our overall resource base is low compared to many other authorities as confirmed in the Commission VFM profile e.g. overall spend compared to metropolitan authorities – below average.
The council has articulated a strategic approach to its principles and aspirations for its own culture and values, and has communicated this approach to councillors, staff and partners. Most are clear on what are the culture and values of the council.	We have invested in innovative approaches to communicating the vision to staff, local people and communities using the "Faces of Rotherham" approach and by using the faces of staff internally to promote each of the priority themes.
Councillors and senior officers consciously adopt a range of leadership and management styles appropriate to the complex community and organisational environments in which they operate, and devolve responsibility and decision-making to officers and staff where appropriate.	Capacity at a senior level is strong as evidenced within the report which has been further enhanced through training and development, e.g. Member Development Programme.

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
Councillors and officers are committed to partnership working, and have created and maintained effective working relationships with partners based on trust, openness and constructive challenge.	We have extensive examples of partnership working with proven results and outcomes e.g. RBT partnership, crime and disorder, health/PCT, local strategic partnership, Rotherham Construction Partnership.

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

Prioritisation

Overall we regard Prioritisation to be 'performing strongly' and each of the issues raised in the draft report can be challenged and supported with additional evidence to strengthen our case.

1) **There are good service and financial planning arrangements, but there is scope for more transparency**

The council has worked hard over the last two years to integrate further service and financial planning and has developed comprehensive guidance, conducted workshops, quality assurance and revised the budget cycle resulting in high quality plans which are well embedded across the council. All of the service plans contain data on financial arrangements and all have been approved through our Corporate Management Team and Scrutiny.

We believe the process has been very transparent. The budget process included extensive consultation with residents to help inform priorities. The service plans were all approved at CMT and have subsequently been to various scrutiny panels. Finally, we have worked closely with the Chamber of Commerce in helping them to understand our budget process, our priorities and our longer term approaches for financial planning. Numerous presentations and workshops were organised by the Executive Director of Finance [details were provided during the on site phase].

2) **The council's positive financial situation means that its systems for prioritisation have not yet been thoroughly tested**

We feel that this statement is not justified. It appears to criticise our prioritisation process because we have good financial management. Indeed many authorities who mismanage their finances would have to make even tougher decisions. In the case of Rotherham, we have a good track record of financial management yet we have had to still make difficult decisions and continually prioritise our resources.

The Audit Commission's AAIL 2004/05 highlighted how the council *"looks at how the financial management is integrated with strategy and corporate management, supports council priorities and delivers value for money"*.

Our approach to VFM has been strong for a number of years and we can demonstrate many examples where we have disinvested and reprioritised resources prior to the introduction of the Budget Issue Paper (BIP) and Savings Issue Paper (SIP) model in 2005. For example, the budget process in 2004/05 included a ranking system in line with our priorities which subsequently highlighted areas for disinvestment.

3) **Some detailed schedules of budget savings and pressures are not made public in Council business papers**

This statement is incorrect. All papers were made available in CMT/Cabinet meetings and also scrutiny meetings (which the public can attend). In addition, all service plans include details of resources, BIPs and SIPs which have all been presented to various scrutiny panels as part of the service and financial planning approach. Service and financial plans can also be accessed via the council's website.

4) **The council has not yet faced some of the tough choices which have become routine in many authorities**

Over the last five years the council has had to make numerous tough decisions including the closing of pools, closing residential homes, setting up an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and the establishment of a £30m strategic partnership with BT. As detailed in our MTFS this situation is getting tougher.

We can provide a number of examples where resources (including non-financial) have been redeployed both within services and also across the council. Some of these investments have originated from efficiencies, additional funding through budgeting/income or through disinvestments in mainstream funding. Examples include:

- Customer service centres - over £500,000 has been invested in recent years to help the development and roll out of customer service centres. Resources have been allocated from the capital programme to fund the buildings and staffing/revenue resources have been transferred to help establish the customer adviser teams (example of disinvestment).
- Children and young people services - over £1m invested in recent years to fund the development of the new integrated services - we are ahead of many authorities in responding to this agenda.
- Supporting People - over £500k has been disinvested in schemes through a rigorous approach to VFM as recognised in the 2 star inspection in 2005. This has enabled funds to be reinvested in priority support for vulnerable people - a key achievement due to cuts to the budget from central government and the need to commission new services.
- RBT - in setting up the partnership we had to move resources (e.g. approx £3m ICT) from across programme areas to higher priority areas of ICT, procurement and customer services. For example, previously we did not have a procurement service as each department did their own. We now have a centralised, highly skilled, e-order epay

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

service which has achieved enormous benefits to the council (approx £2m savings per annum, better SME engagement, buy local initiatives).

- Housing Benefits - 3 years ago the service was failing. In response to investments in better ICT systems, project management and a focussed improvement plan the service is now excellent rated and is held up as good practice by the benefit fraud inspectorate (good practice inspection in 2005).
- Asset management - land and property holdings are regularly prioritised to ensure assets are required and are helping to deliver corporate priorities. This was a key strength highlighted in the Beacon award. In addition we have disposed of a number of assets as part of our disinvestment programme to help fund future developments. Capital receipts from the sale of non housing property assets totalled £13 million for 04/05 and 05/06. £4.85 million has been earmarked from the sale of former residential homes to support the construction of the two new care homes
- Residential care - we have redirected funding from residential care into domiciliary care. Investment of £3.75 m into Independent Sector residential care over a 3 year period to align fees with costs to enable a sustainable sector. Over last 2/3 years increased capacity of Independent domiciliary care. Market share moved from 90:10 to 65:35. We have also increased fees (additional £1m through disinvestment) through adjusting eligibility criteria following the base budget review last year and have also disinvested in residential care homes and are now moving towards two new state of the art facilities.
- Leisure - we have rationalised the number of pools resulting in over £500k for reinvestments. We are currently focussed on procuring a £35m PFI scheme for the provision of new, state of the art leisure centres to be located in prioritised areas.
- Education - in 2004/05 an additional £120k was allocated to the school improvement service to strengthen support for key stage 1 and foundation stage. This followed a base budget uplift in 2003/04 to strengthen support at all key stages. The results are now evident and we have narrowed the gap against the national average. In addition, we have reduced funding in certain areas of adult and community provision, in part to ensure greater equity e.g. multi-cultural centre £110k, reduction in financial support to the Rotherham Managing Agency (funded £1m over a 3 year period), pupil support releasing £250k to be re-invested in priority areas.
- Housing - the service was on the brink of Government intervention in 2002 but a sustained level of service improvement led to a '2 star' rating in the February 2006 ALMO inspection. A very strong focus on performance, capacity and action plans has led to improvement on a range of indicators including; empty property turnaround times (from 98.5 days in 2002 to 14.66 days in 2006) and % repairs by appointment (from 0% in 2002 to 94.35% in 2006).
- Local Strategic Partnership - the creation of the network model has reduced the reliance on external funding thereby enabling about £1m to be reinvested in other initiatives across Rotherham.

It should also be noted that we have successfully maintained a strong track record on prioritisation, performance, spend within budget and also ensured a low council tax level over recent years. Ensuring value for money is a key focus.

Assessment against KLOE's

2.1 Are there clear and robust priorities within the ambitions for the area?

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'consistently above minimum requirements' (level 3)
The council knows what issues matter most to local groups and neighbourhoods and concentrates its efforts in proportion to this.	<p>The draft report has acknowledged the council is performing well in this area e.g. needs analysis, good financial analysis, neighbourhoods and deprivation data, extensive consultation information. We also have active community engagement and involvement.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation and Community framework – IDeA website has highlighted our framework as an example of best practice. • Deprivation research – innovative approach in commissioning research to further understand deprivation and to develop a local indices of deprivation model. • Children's needs assessments – commended in the JAR as an exemplary document.

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'consistently above minimum requirements' (level 3)
<p>The council's vision and ambitions are translated into specific short, medium and long-term priorities. These are integrated into policy objectives, service/business plans and performance targets.</p>	<p>Under performance management and also within prioritisation, the report is very strong on the golden thread and translation into SMART targets and plans.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Plan – a very clear, SMART and comprehensive document. • Service and team plans - these are well embedded and have been quality assured each year. • Year Ahead – an innovative document which outlines short term priorities as commended in the council's direction of travel assessment last year.
<p>There is clarity about which things are, and are not, priorities and why. The council's leadership understands national priorities and the priorities of local communities and service users.</p>	<p>The report acknowledges sound arrangements are in place, including the links to MTFs. The Corporate Plan is cross cutting and links very well to national priorities, as stated in the report.</p>
<p>The council's priorities link clearly to its ambitions as set out in the community strategy, with evidence of how they will deliver the council's overall vision. These are cascaded into robust plans and strategies for promoting the economic vitality of localities, community cohesion, civil renewal, transforming the local environment, race and disability equality, tackling disadvantage, and community safety. The council recognises the connections between the council's various aims and objectives and makes the relevant links across all its priorities to deliver a cross-cutting programme.</p>	<p>The draft report acknowledges strong performance in this area e.g. alignment of corporate plan, service plans and policy refresh process.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross cutting nature of corporate plan e.g. fairness theme which picks up on cohesion issues. • Policy refresh – continual alignment and checking to ensure delivery of key plans and strategies. • Joint launch of Community Strategy and Corporate Plan to demonstrate alignment – 100% buy in and involvement from partners. • Robust planning framework/ golden thread right through to team plans which is not the case in other authorities. • Cross cutting corporate plan/priorities – Cabinet Member portfolios reflect these priorities.
<p>The council takes explicit account of the needs of all sections of the community in the design, delivery and evaluation of services and other activities to ensure these meet the needs of, and are accessible to, all. This includes black and minority ethnic groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage; and areas of specific local importance such as rural areas.</p>	<p>Report highlights good work in relation to cohesion, diversity, consultation and community involvement. Priorities are reflected in priorities of Proud and Fairness.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation and Community Involvement Framework recognised and on IDEA website as good practice. • Level 3 of the equality standard only few other authorities in country have achieved this.
<p>Councillors, officers and other staff know these priorities and, through effective and coordinated financial and service planning, understand the implications for how they work and what they do. This leadership extends beyond the council and influences the community and local partners and stakeholders to line up behind these priorities.</p>	<p>Report states there is a high level of awareness amongst staff, councillors and partners.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faces of Rotherham – innovative poster/publicity campaign to aid the launch and communication of the priority themes.

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

2.2 Is there a robust strategy to deliver the priorities?

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
<p>The council has realistic and robust strategies and plans in place which clearly and unambiguously relate to the ambitions determined for the local area. These plans set a framework for the delivery of customer-focused achievements in the longer term. Statutory and other plans clearly link together and support delivery of the council's priorities. Corporate and service strategies are linked to the medium term financial strategy to provide a robust planning and delivery framework.</p>	<p>The council has a comprehensive planning and performance framework as recognised throughout the draft report. Service planning is integrated with financial planning, including the MTFs and base budget review process.</p>
<p>The council has clear and agreed targets for improvement which are outcome-based, challenging and realistic.</p>	<p>The report acknowledges</p> <p><i>"that each priority theme has targets and milestones stretching to 2010 to give structure to the improvement journey.....</i></p> <p><i>.....</i></p> <p><i>each community theme contains 9 partnership priorities with SMART indicators and targets and named accountable body"</i></p>
<p>Partners are clear about roles and responsibilities within various planning frameworks. The council has the means to continually gather the views of partners, communities and users on whether its ambitions are being achieved, and its future priorities remain appropriate. Changes are made to priorities following consultation with partners, communities and users. The council provides regular and comprehensive feedback to partners and other stakeholders where priorities have changed.</p>	<p>The report usefully highlights that the AC stakeholder survey indicated above average performance with all aspects of service delivery. It also gives positive messages about other aspects of this KLOE.</p>
<p>The council's continual review of progress ensures that it is able to reassess plans and respond effectively to the needs of local communities, and is sufficiently flexible to adapt to user expectations. There is effective sharing of learning across the organisation and with partners.</p>	<p>The report overall shows strong performance on this aspect e.g. performance reporting, inspection monitoring and policy refresh processes, service planning quality assurance.</p>

2.3 Is robust action taken to deliver the strategy?

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
<p>The council has an integrated approach to setting priorities and allocating resources behind these. It moves resources away from areas that are not priorities and towards those that are. It actively considers the impact of resource shifts on particular groups and neighbourhoods, both within and between services. It has achieved efficiencies in its activities and allocated the gains made to its priorities.</p>	<p>The report states our approach to service and financial planning is strong, for both revenue and capital budgets. In addition, the MTFs is directly aligned to the corporate priorities, which includes a rigorous approach to assessing budget increases and efficiencies.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base Budget Review/ VFM assessment of all key services in 2005 which was praised by the Commission and included challenge from members in terms of resource allocation, delivery and priorities. • The Council is in the top 10 compared to Met Authorities and is the highest for procurement savings – we have achieved over £14m to date in efficiencies and met our target one year early.

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
<p>The council seeks ways of improving its engagement with partners, stakeholders and communities in the development, delivery and review of its ambitions and priorities. The needs of service users and citizens are mainstreamed throughout all aspects of the council's and its partners' work. Services and other activities are responsive and flexible, making the most of the opportunities for individual and collective choice.</p>	<p>The report has praised the council's approach to engagement with communities and consultation. Service plans and standards are well linked to needs assessments and consultation e.g. focus groups, reachout.</p>
<p>Action plans are shaped around and reflect the various needs and preferences of the diversity of the communities and interest groups that the council serves.</p>	<p>All service plans and team plans reflect the corporate priority of Fairness and Proud to ensure ownership of diversity issues.</p>
<p>Action plans clearly state lead responsibilities, resource requirements, milestones, and target outcomes, as well as the contributions expected from organisations, services within organisations, and staff within services. As a result, stakeholders are clear that plans are fit for purpose and achievable.</p>	<p>Action plans have been praised for their SMARTness. Service planning guidance includes specific advice on developing action plans.</p>
<p>Councillors and senior officers maintain their focus and are not distracted by minor operational matters or crises. Specific initiatives are only undertaken where there is a clear purpose which fits with council priorities, and the council sustains its focus on these to ensure the desired impact is achieved.</p>	<p>The Council has a strong track record since 2002. Direction of travel self assessments provide a good overview which has been commended externally in all services and corporately demonstrated minor operational matters and crises are not causing distraction.</p>

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

Performance Management

This section is consistent with the self assessment where we scored 4 out of 4. Performance Management is clearly a major strength for the organisation as confirmed through the corporate assessment, yet three issues have been identified which we feel the need to challenge. Overall we regard Performance Management to be 'performing strongly' and each of the issues raised in the draft report can be challenged and supported with additional evidence to strengthen our case.

Overall Performance Management is a major strength of the organisation and is demonstrated by our direction of travel. All services are performing well and improving. Inspections continue to score highly and our performance indicator trend is best in class with over 70% improvement in the last two years.

1) LSP performance management arrangements need further embedding and extending Further work is needed to ensure more challenge between partners around the levels of performance achieved.

LSP performance management arrangements are embedded and have been for a number of years and the above issues appear to contradict other external reports which praise our performance management arrangements. In 2004 a letter from the GOYH Office quoted "you have made real progress in developing and implementing the performance management arrangements for the partnership". In addition the Local Strategic Partnership has received two successive green ratings in 2004 and 2005 and scored 27 out of 28 for the assessment. This is the best in the country.

The Audit Commission's report on the Validation Review of the LSP conducted in 2004 highlights how the council met the core requirements and how the provision for challenge is evident in the existing arrangements.

"There is a test for plausibility within the PMF. There is also a means of challenging proposed actions. The adopted approach clearly outlines the need for the spoke managers and the spoke group to make an informed judgement about current performance, and the plausibility of sustaining progress towards specific targets, and if there is a cause for concern to explore the reasons, and challenge what is being done and what else could be done".

It also highlights where challenge has been undertaken

"The Rotherham Partnership director and the Rotherham Partnership board have provided further challenge over measures and targets set out within the community strategy over the past twelve months. Spoke managers and chairs are able to illustrate clearly outcomes from a challenge process at the level of the Rotherham Partnership board, the spokes and at subgroup level".

Overall this issue is not accepted. The point was raised at the recent Chief Executive group of the LSP and all partners have adamantly denied that there is a need for further challenge.

2) Health Scrutiny has been consultative rather than challenging and is not achieving expectations

We do not agree that health scrutiny is a weakness. We have also raised this point with the Chief Executive of the PCT who stated that "health scrutiny is the only organisation outside the inspection regime that the PCT takes any notice of" and he feels that health scrutiny is very effective.

We are well ahead of many other authorities in responding to health scrutiny. Formal protocols have been developed with health partners at local and sub-regional levels. A draft protocol was developed with the then Health Authority and the Primary Care Groups in anticipation of the health scrutiny powers, in 2001. This was substantially revised and updated. The most recent version was agreed with partners in 2005. Recognising that much of the work is on a sub-regional level, a joint protocol with neighbouring South Yorkshire Authorities has also been agreed. Both have led to very positive working arrangements with health colleagues.

The Health Overview and Scrutiny was established in 2003 and although we accept it may not be as developed as the wider scrutiny function this does not constitute a major issue. Since its establishment the health scrutiny function has led to tangible improvements, these include:

- A scrutiny review made recommendations that proposals to site Independent Sector Treatment Centres in South Yorkshire would not be cost effective and might negatively impact on the capacity of existing health facilities to deliver services. The review has been successful in persuading the Department of Health to reconsider whether South Yorkshire needs the suggested independent sector treatment centre.
- The Scrutiny Review of Childhood Obesity challenged a number of existing practices in Rotherham around supporting the health of children between 4-12. Recommendations such as banning junk food in school and every child having free access to drinking water in school were reinforced by the release of the Government legislation "Nutritional Standards" which reiterated the review recommendations. The review team also advised that the Primary Care Trust ratified and implemented their draft Childhood Obesity Strategy. This has been supported by the PCT
- Scrutiny has responded to a number of public petitions - including the re-location of a drugs treatment centre. These were heard at well-attended public meetings. The outcomes led to better public consultation and evaluation of the impact of the proposals.

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

2005/06 was the first year of the Annual Health Check. The Panel (in conjunction with members of the Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Panel) submitted its evidence-based comments at this 'draft declaration' stage and also later in the year as part of the trusts' 'final declarations'.

Both Panels have been consulted on major developments. Details of recent consultations are listed below:

- proposals to reconfigure and develop the Borough's community podiatry clinics, recommending that the consultation included area assemblies. The new arrangements will reduce the number of sites from 32 to 16, but will allow greater flexibility of appointments at more suitable and accessible premises.
- plans for a permanent 'walk in' primary care centre to deal with minor injuries and ailments without an appointment, the Panel supported the proposal to improve access
- Child Health Promotion Programme - the panel supported the early identification of needs of children and their families and better joint working between respective bodies

3) Completing the integration of complaints and CRM systems

The standards within the KLOE's are focussed on how councils are using complaints and feedback to drive service improvement and not about having a fully integrated complaints/CRM system. The integration of complaints and CRM was never planned to be completed until late 2006 and the council has worked hard to ensure that complaint handling was robust and effective and delivered improvement throughout our services.

We have a very strong record on complaints e.g. no maladministration cases in the last three years, extensive examples of using complaints to drive improvement and also meeting timescales for handling complaints.

Our Access to Services Inspection report published in June 2005 was rated as a "2 star" good service and recognised "The Council is analysing complaints to inform service improvements..... Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to dealing with customers efficiently".

In addition we have achieved seven charter marks in the last two years and are also working with Chartermark on a national pilot to achieve council wide status.

We believe this statement should be removed. We are always seeking to improve complaints and the Commission needs to recognise that improvement never stops. In addition, the comment linked to CRM would not apply to a council which does not have a CRM system therefore this comment is invalid.

Assessment against KLOE's

4.1 Is there a consistent, rigorous and open approach to performance management?

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
<p>Systematic monitoring and review ensures the council stays on track. There is a culture of open debate and constructive challenge, with a focus on solutions rather than blame. The council has helped to develop PM for its key strategic partnerships. This is robust, systematic and sustainable and is helping to deliver outcomes in line with priorities.</p>	<p>The report recognises our very strong direction of travel and demonstrates our ability to stay on track. Through the corporate plan, year ahead statements and ongoing performance management systems we have demonstrated our ability to stay focussed over a number of years.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent track record in staying focussed e.g. Year Ahead commitments. • Only 1 of 8 authorities to receive maximum score of 'improving strongly' and the only metropolitan authority. • rated top 10 most improved council by Commission in 2004. • Excellent proactive response to external audit/inspection recommendations – 86% achieved. • PI trend – achieved over 70% improvement in 2004/05 and 63% in 2003/04 – this level of improvement is amongst the best in the country based upon AC annual audit and inspection letters. Unaudited data for 2005/06 also shows over 70% improvement. • PM of the LSP – we are rated as green and scored 27 out of 28 for the assessment – the highest in the country in 2005. We have also been commended by GOYH for our approach to the LAA. • Inspection scores – 10 inspections in the last 2 years –

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
	<p>all of which have been rated good or better – this is an outstanding level of achievement when compared to other councils.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified in the AC National Report as Case Study 1 for our significant improvement to services in line with priorities.
<p>Councillors have a record of focused involvement in PM, through executive scrutiny or council meetings. Executive and scrutiny members make use of information to manage continuous improvement. Scrutiny is outcome-focused, working within the framework of agreed community and corporate plans. The executive and full council have clearly defined roles in PM.</p>	<p>The draft report has recognised the extensive involvement of members e.g. scrutiny, cabinet and deputy leader.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance clinics – these are well integrated across the council, have led to significant outcomes for residents and are best practice based upon the AC/IDeA performance management project. Scrutiny is very effective and we have demonstrated significant outcomes achieved. Our work has been highlighted as leading edge by the Centre for Public Scrutiny. Joint CMT/Cabinet meetings – there are numerous examples where members and officers look at performance issues together – this is not common place across other councils.
<p>The council adjusts the frequency of monitoring and review of different performance information. This takes account of risk and timescales for taking remedial action.</p>	<p>We have continually adapted our monitoring and review arrangements. For example from 2003 we were focussed on a key basket of 60 indicators with explicit focus on poor and good performance. Reporting has since been updated in 2004/05 to reflect the corporate plan measures and frequency and monitoring changed as a result.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The performance plus system is nationally acclaimed and is used by a number of excellent performing councils. We are ahead of many other authorities in our approach and are a member of the national user group. Our PM framework is well integrated with corporate risk arrangements which is examined every quarter using the RISKGEN system – this is still an area for many authorities who have not yet integrated risk with performance. Performance clinics – these are very effective and leading to change. They provide an excellent example of how frequency can be fluid depending on severity and risk of poor performing indicators.
<p>There are strong mechanisms to help sustain the focus on priority issues, including 'shared priorities'. The council has a track record of using PM to help secure outcomes for the community that reflect its ambitions and priorities. PM is integrated with the management of resources so that resources follow priorities whilst retaining the flexibility to respond to performance issues. This happens within an annual cycle that is regularly reviewed and improved.</p>	<p>The draft report has already noted our strong ability to stay focussed on priorities as recognised in our achievements to date:</p> <p><i>"the council has a consistent and rigorous approach, underpinned by a comprehensive and clearly laid out PM framework with associated guidance. These provide it with the tools to manage performance, tackle under performance and maintain a focus on improving against corporate priorities"</i></p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PM framework and budget cycles have been developed in line with good practice from the IDeA and Commission and has been praised on all inspections over the last 2 years. PM is well integrated with resources, both workforce and financial. Compared to other councils this is a major strength as shown by the Use of Resources national report.

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The base budget review process is an excellent, best practice example where resources and performance have been challenged jointly – importantly it has led to tangible improvements in service and VFM.
<p>There is a well publicised, user-friendly and supportive system for service users and staff to submit complaints, grievances or representations. The council takes seriously the need to respond to grievances and complaints about service delivery at all levels in the organisation and deals with these in a timely way. User focus is well understood and is a central driver of the organizational culture.</p>	<p>The draft report is very positive about all aspects of complaints, feedback and user focus. We are taking it a step further to ensure the effective integration of complaints and feedback with our CRM system. However we appear to be criticised that we have not completed this work – yet the KLOE does not state it has to be integrated and this point would not apply with councils who do not have CRM systems.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charter Marks in 7 areas in the last 2 years – we are also working with Chartermark on a national pilot to achieve council wide status. No ombudsman maladministration cases for last 3 years – this is excellent practice. Our 'learning from customers' initiative is innovative and has received national acclaim by the Commission.
<p>The council is open to external evaluation and challenge and makes effective use of opportunities to learn in this way.</p>	<p>The report has praised our proactive stance to external audit and inspection. We have been very rigorous in monitoring compliance and results are supported by our direction of travel and track record in inspections.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspection framework – the results achieved are amongst the best in the country. The framework has ensured a very strong and positive approach to external evaluation. 10 of our inspections have been rated as good or better and 86% of inspection recommendations have been completed or are on track for completion.
<p>The council's PM is well embedded across the organisation. Managers and staff focus on what is important, especially where performance is not meeting the council's own targets. PM is seen as part of how people work and manage proactively rather than just monitoring.</p> <p>Most senior officers set a strong example which cascades through the organisation. There are strong links between the council's overall ambitions and community and corporate plans, through to service and individual plans, priorities and targets (including value for money targets).</p> <p>Staff's, contractors' and partners' views of their own priorities are usually aligned with those of the council and they know how these contribute to delivery. The council is self-aware about the strengths and weaknesses of its approach to PM, and learns internally and from others.</p>	<p>The draft report has highlighted the performance culture across the council:</p> <p><i>"Improved performance management has had a real impact and is a major reason for the council's recent improvement"</i></p> <p>The golden thread of performance is very strong across the council. Within Rotherham it is not just about strong links between key documents but that they are 100% directly aligned to the community strategy priorities.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy refresh process – all key plans and strategies are regularly refreshed to ensure alignment and delivery. Quarterly PM reporting – there is an explicit focus on the corporate priorities – many other councils solely look at BVPI's whereas we have streamlined reporting with a strong focus on data quality, risk, VFM, finance and under performance. Service and financial planning – all plans are quality assured each year before being approved by CMT to ensure alignment, quality and ownership of actions. VFM – we achieved a strong score on Use of Resources and we are amongst the top 10 authorities for delivering efficiency gains for the last three years.

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

4.2 Do the council and partner organisations know how well they and each other are performing against planned outcomes?

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
<p>Regular, robust and balanced intelligence and information about performance is sought and produced throughout the council and key partnerships. The information produced is simple to access and understand, and is user-focused. It includes national and local performance and quality of life indicators. It includes financial, budgetary and value for money information.</p>	<p>Draft report is very positive about the strength of the PM framework which includes financial, budgetary and VFM information. PM is described as <i>"sharp, effective and has delivered real improvements."</i></p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSP Performance Management Framework praised by the Government Office and NRU. • Neighbourhood renewal – have achieved a significant reduction in deprivation and we are green rated for delivering against national floor targets.
<p>The council has a reasonable understanding of the level of importance and satisfaction that different sections of the community attach to its activities. This is a key performance measure that is assessed and used to inform improvement priorities.</p>	<p>We have an excellent understanding of the community</p> <p>Areas of particular strength include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRS deprivation research. • State of the borough report. • Consultation arrangements e.g. refreshed Reachout.
<p>The council pro-actively works with its partners and other providers to compare and evaluate processes, costs and outcomes. It uses comparison and benchmarking to increase its self-awareness and efficiency.</p>	<p>We are strong in benchmarking our performance which is used to inform decision making and achieve improvements.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base budget reviews. • Active member of Regional Centre of Excellence – involved in several initiatives. • Local area agreement – innovative approach to engaging partners in launching the LAA. • LSP network model – this was established following extensive comparison with other successful LSP's.
<p>People who use council services, staff and other stakeholders are given opportunities to influence how performance is measured and monitored and what targets are set. They have access to service standards and targets. The council reports information about its performance in a coherent and accessible fashion while meeting statutory requirements for performance reporting. As a result, the council, the community and its partners have a good picture of how well the council is performing, especially against its ambitions and priorities.</p>	<p>Our access to services inspection (2 star) confirmed a range of good practices, many of which are highlighted in the draft report e.g. service standards.</p> <p>In addition, the performance reporting framework enables the council and partners to assess progress against corporate priorities. Rotherham Matters, the council's newspaper, is very accessible and includes regular articles on performance and delivery, as summarised in the annual performance leaflet sent to every household.</p>

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

4.3 Is knowledge about performance used to drive continuous improvement in outcomes?

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
<p>The council sets realistic but challenging targets for improvement in performance, linked to the management of resources. The council allows time to monitor and compare performance information. The council uses performance information to focus on priorities and takes effective action to address areas of identified under-performance.</p>	<p>The draft report is very positive about the PM framework and our approach to setting targets for improvement.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance management has had a real impact in terms of improvement e.g. inspections, PI trends, direction of travel, neighbourhood renewal delivery • Performance clinics – a Rotherham initiative which has been recognised as best practice
<p>Cross-departmental working is well advanced and the corporate centre is able to coordinate this effectively through the performance management system. The council considers the needs of its diverse communities and in planning and delivering joined up services.</p>	<p>Our extensive cross working groups have driven change across a number of areas e.g. performance, equalities, consultation, cohesion. The corporate centre has been instrumental in leading PM approaches with support from programme areas:</p> <p><i>"Performance management is sharp, effective and leads to change"</i></p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 equalities standard - no other authority in the country has achieved a score higher than level 3. Only six other authorities have been externally for level 3 • Equality impact assessments – these have been highlighted as best practice by the Commission and Employers Organisation and GOYH • Service planning – all service plans have been quality assured for fairness and diversity issues • Race equality scheme – top quartile for race equality duty
<p>The council uses its knowledge about performance to solve performance problems at an early stage and this is widespread and systematic. Information about poor performance and problems is used to inform decision making. The council has a good understanding of the drivers of performance in all areas of activity to support this.</p>	<p>The council has shown innovation and pro-activity in the form of Performance Clinics to challenge and tackle underperformance. In addition, the base budget review process has focussed on VFM to help inform decision making.</p> <p>We have a strong proven track record of addressing poor performance, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits – gone from a 2 to 4 star inspection in 3 years resulting in a BFI good practice assessment in 2005 highlighting our significant progress • Housing – moving from a zero to two star service in three years • Level 3 equalities standard - no other authority in the country has achieved a score higher than level 3. Only six other authorities have been externally for level 3
<p>The council uses knowledge from complaints and user-feedback to drive improvement. It is developing full access to these for the diverse communities served. It also makes use of staff complaints and grievances. It has challenge and review mechanisms that ensure a thorough understanding by the council of levels of customer satisfaction and the drivers of performance in all areas of work.</p>	<p>The draft report is very positive about all aspects of complaints, feedback and user focus. We are taking it a step further to ensure the effective integration of complaints and feedback with our CRM system. However we appear to be criticised that we have not completed this work – yet the KLOE does not state it has to be integrated.</p> <p>Areas of particular strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter Marks in 7 areas in the last 2 years – we are also working with Chartermark on a national pilot to achieve council wide status • No ombudsman maladministration cases for last 3 years – this is excellent practice • Our 'learning from customers' initiative is innovative and has received national acclaim by the Commission • User focus – initiatives include video diaries for

Appendix 1: Rotherham MBC response to draft corporate assessment report

KLOE	Evidence that RMBC are 'well above minimum requirements' (level 4) and not 'constantly above minimum requirements' (level 3)
	tenants, streetpride champions, customer led inspections within housing
The council makes good use of opportunities to learn from its own successes and failures, good practice within the council, other councils, its partners and other public, private and voluntary sector organisations, and the outcomes external challenge or review .The process of learning, both internally and externally, is viewed as a positive, constructive activity by councillors and officers. It is used to develop priorities and improve value for money.	<p>The draft report is very positive on this aspect:</p> <p><i>"learning from external sources is commonplace – best practice is sought out and appropriately transferred to services"</i></p> <p>We have an excellent track record in celebrating our successes for example, six beacon awards in the last three years – no other authority has achieved such high recognition.</p>

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
6	<p>Ethical standards are upheld, though there is scope for greater transparency in some areas</p>	<p>This point is not balanced considering our Use of Resources assessment 2005 which praised our internal control arrangements, whereas over 50% of authorities failed to meet adequate standards. In addition, we have strong ethical governance arrangements having fundamentally reviewed the constitution two years ago. We also track key decisions through CMT and Cabinet to ensure efficient and quick decision making.</p> <p>We would like to see this paragraph reworded as it as a sweeping statement about ethical standards which is not balanced.</p>
7	<p>There is an effective Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), positively assessed by the regional government office, which has been further strengthened by a recent shift to a more devolved model. However, some of the consequences of this at local level have still to be worked through.</p>	<p>We assume this point reflects the development of area assemblies – we feel the comments are justified but the report could make this clearer rather than referring explicitly to the LSP. In addition the consequences of the devolved model at local level were agreed by all partners in April 2006 and as a result of our work we have been asked to present to an IDEa conference in September as we are recognised as a model of good practice.</p>
9	<p>There are examples of good services for older people but the Council does not yet show a fully co-ordinated approach across all services.</p>	<p>This point seems to relate to the fact that the older people's strategy action plan needed some more work – if this is the case we do feel that the statement needs to reflect this.</p> <p>Overall we recognise the need for more work in this area which is being led through the older people's strategy group. However we are taking account of older people needs in service planning and delivery e.g. neighbourhoods (supported housing, extra care housing scheme, equipment and adaptation), culture and leisure (arts funded projects).</p> <p>In addition, no account is taken of the Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment strategy which was agreed in 2005/06 and developed in partnership with Rotherham Social Services, Rotherham Housing Services, Rotherham Primary Care Trust and the Rotherham General Hospital's NHS Trust.</p>

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
10	<p>Challenges remain in terms of the equalisation of the quality of life across the borough itself, with only limited evidence of comparative improvement in health and educational achievement inequalities between the borough's deprived and better off areas</p>	<p>This statement appears harsh given that we have successfully helped reduce deprivation – paragraph 84 [summary of achievement] is far more positive and balanced and contradicts points made in the summary regarding health and education.</p> <p>We would like to see reference made to reflect the improvements in deprivation – a major achievement.</p>
11	<p>The Council takes its community cohesion responsibilities seriously, and an awareness of these issues is apparent across its corporate processes and in Council activities. However, some issues of strategy and engagement with the voluntary sector, and with BME communities, have still to be fully resolved</p>	<p>We challenge what this is based upon – it appears to link to REMA issue regarding BME communities but strategy point is not clear.</p> <p>We feel that too much has been made of one focus group with Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA), who are one small organisation representing a very limited number. We are currently concerned about the short and medium term viability of REMA and are seeking ways in which to further its work. In addition over the last few months we have become aware of a number of governance issues, for example, a Director has been appointed without due process and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) is currently withdrawing a NRF grant from REMA due to concerns over capacity and governance.</p> <p>We have developed strong and positive relationships with the Voluntary / Community Sector – this needs to be reflected. Page 2 of our response following the feedback presentation contains extensive examples of BME/voluntary sector engagement activity.</p> <p>The council has been praised for a number of years for its proactive approach to consultation and community involvement. This has been evidenced in a number of charter marks and inspections over the past two years.</p> <p>The BME communities have been widely consulted in terms of major strategies including the Corporate Plan, Community Strategy, Older People Strategy, Town Centre Plan.</p> <p>Managers also consult directly with BME organisations on service improvement issues directly. Examples are provided in Appendix 1.</p>
13	<p>Despite the pace of change, corporate processes are embedded across the organisation</p>	<p>We would like to see reference made to reflect how corporate internal communications has supported the improvement trend and the required cultural change.</p> <p>We are disappointed that the report does not reflect the impressive work we have undertaken to strengthen internal and external communications. Accepted good practice promoted by the</p>

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
13	<p>but LSP performance management is better on data than challenge</p>	<p>Commission and IDEa states that 'effective communications and marketing is critical to the success of a local authority's business objectives'. We have used communications extensively to help assist our improvement agenda e.g. our vision, council newsletter Rotherham Matters, staff awareness, confidence of the organisation.</p> <p>We strongly contest this statement as it is completely inconsistent with GOYH accreditation reports and the AC validation report on the LSP.</p> <p>Our track record has been solely focussed on challenge and delivery – without this we would not have achieved as much. We have delivered on our LPSA targets in partnership with others, the LAA included considerable challenge and we have been commended for our approaches to improvement planning.</p>
14	<p>The Council achieves good value for money overall, demonstrating clear commitment backed up by appropriate systems and methodologies. However, it has more to do in terms of defining its position on strategic commissioning. Although it enjoys a long term and successful strategic partnership with BT, the balance between in-house provision and external commissioning is currently weighted to the former, and more work needs to be done to assess whether this position is sustainable given future needs for cost efficiencies.</p>	<p>We agree that we have more to do in terms of strategic commissioning as articulated in the "Our Future" initiative and the White Paper on Older People and the future development of children's services.</p> <p>We challenge the point regarding in-house provision as the KLOE's do not suggest the need for greater externalisation – we question what is the correct balance? As discussed at our meeting we have many examples where services have been externalised for a variety of reasons. Over the last three years we have undertaken strategic reviews and challenged services in terms of procurement and competition as a result there are numerous services which have been procured externally examples include ALMO, RBT, PFI, Waste Management, Grounds Maintenance, aspects of leisure, transport, trading standards, construction, procurement, housing benefits and extensive procurement through the voluntary and community sector. We also have a range of pooled budget and joint management arrangements for several services within Children's and Adult Social Care.</p> <p>Commissioning is a term which is increasingly used in the context of Children and Adult Social Care. We believe commissioning is about the procurement of goods and services across the organisation. The commissioning agenda is still being defined by Central Government and we like many other authorities are being proactive in seeking to further expand commissioning with other sectors within Rotherham.</p>

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
17	<p>While Rotherham as a whole is improving its position against national averages in many key areas, the Council needs to reinforce its efforts to reduce inequalities within the borough itself</p>	<p>We accept this comment as we highlighted the need for more work in the self assessment – we are already tackling this so do not understand why it has been raised here.</p>
18	<p>Engagement with local communities on the ground should include developing a better understanding with ethnic minority groups of the scope and results of consultation.</p>	<p>This seems to link to REIMA issues again. We challenge whether this point has been triangulated as we can demonstrate extensive consultation and involvement with BME communities e.g. children's visioning event praised in JAR report, developing housing BME strategy etc.</p> <p>Page 2 of the response to the feedback presentation outlines further evidence. We have consulted [including feedback] widely on all major strategies including the Corporate Plan, Community Strategy, Older People Strategy, Children's Single Plan and the Town Centre Plan.</p>
19	<p>The council's strong partnership arrangements would be further enhanced by a focus on shared governance arrangements with the LSP and other partners. This needs to include consideration of the potential for joint commissioning; shared service provision; and more compatible ICT arrangements. Enhanced performance management and expansion of a learning culture, building on the Council's expertise in these areas, could be used to stimulate greater challenge and joint ownership of issues.</p>	<p>This paragraph covers a range of points. Governance arrangements are already shared across the LSP and partners e.g. new integrated model. Commissioning point again and shared services will be looked at in more detail with 'Our Future' initiative.</p> <p>In relation to compatible ICT arrangements the report reads as though we need to consider them - these are already under development between PCT and Adult/Children's services and in the areas of Neighbourhoods and SY Police.</p> <p>We do not understand the points regarding PM and learning culture. We do not believe this to be an issue and question the evidence used.</p>
20	<p>health scrutiny is not as effective, and achievements in this area suggest there is more scope for focusing on the health elements of Rotherham Alive</p>	<p>We believe that health scrutiny is still effective – we can point to many achievements in practice as a result of scrutiny work in this area. We do accept it is not as developed compared to our wider scrutiny role but this is marginal and we can still demonstrate we are at the forefront nationally in terms of health scrutiny work. Examples are highlighted in Appendix 1.</p>

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
21	<p>The drive for better value for money needs to inform a review of the Council's position on strategic commissioning. More work needs to be done to subject current provision to options appraisal, and to develop a more strategic approach to procurement. These considerations need to play into the current reassessment of the BT contract. The Council also needs to give particular attention to commissioning arrangements with the voluntary sector, where activity is currently fragmented. The Council also needs to embed the workforce development approach it has embarked on and consider how it can continue to address issues relating to sickness, and recruitment and retention</p>	<p>This paragraph does not add a great deal of added value – we have either highlighted these points in the self assessment e.g. Our Future or are addressing.</p> <p>We already have a strategic approach to procurement as evidenced by our Beacon status – A key issue is that your interview did not include any representatives from social care, children's or health. Our Head of Procurement covers the RBT client role and has an overview of commissioning but is not tasked with responsibility for commissioning.</p> <p>Point regarding voluntary sector – we have made lots of progress in this area already. For example, our work with Voluntary Action Rotherham, who were actively involved in procurement processes. In addition, the support given to them resulting in them receiving over £4 million from Yorkshire Forward to further this work.</p> <p>Workforce development – a lot is embedded as per other parts of the report plus recent IDeA article in June.</p>
22	<p>Council needs to press on with its agenda to improve service accessibility for rural communities, and bring the work on its rural strategy to a conclusion so that it is in a position to progress improvements</p>	<p>We were always planning to deliver rural strategy in the summer – the strategy was presented to CMT 14th August</p> <p>This statement should be deleted.</p>
CONTEXT - No major issues identified		
30	LSP reorganised recently	This was last year and is not that recent now.
AMBITION		
37	The council promotes and lives the Community Strategy across all its themes, not just at senior levels but right across the organisation.	Much of this promotion results from the work of a strengthened corporate team, an integrated approach to media and marketing functions and the Corporate Communications and Marketing Strategy. Neither of these are referenced within the report.

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
38	A new organisational model has been openly debated among partners resulting in a reshaping of the LSP.	This statement is inconsistent with the comment regarding lack of challenge within the LSP.
41	Consultation activity with the different BME groups within Rotherham is extensive but there are some unresolved issues . Relationships with the BME communities are generally good and constructive, and the Council has developed capacity in the sector through financial support. But some groups feel under-informed about the results of consultation exercises and the actions which follow. The effectiveness of consultation with BME communities suffers from insufficient understanding of roles between the Council and the Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance .	<p>This weakness is unbalanced – far too much is made of one focus group with REMA and it can be challenged in terms of triangulation.</p> <p>We challenge this statement. We question what are the unresolved issues.</p> <p>We have developed several mechanisms for interacting with BME communities. REMA is one small organisation which represents a very limited number. It does not represent the views of the larger ethnic groups or their organisations. We are currently concerned about the short and medium term viability of REMA and are seeking ways in which to further its work. In addition, over the last few months we have become aware of a number of governance issues, for example, a Director has been appointed without due process. In addition, the PCT is currently withdrawing an NRF grant from REMA due to concerns over capacity and governance.</p>
42	The use of area assemblies for community engagement has had only mixed success. While some are effective, exploiting devolved budgets and local action plans based on good quality local intelligence gathering, they have not been entirely successful in engaging with the full diversity of local communities and gaining local ownership.	<p>Overall this description seems fair and balanced. This is the position throughout the country.</p> <p>In response, we have developed 7 new area assembly plans reflecting the views of local communities, including diverse communities. Neighbourhood charters have been drafted after consultation which set out service and customer care standards that residents will receive.</p>
45	Safer neighbourhood teams have been set up in two localities, sharing local intelligence to identify liveability hotspots, but Council and police data is not yet brought together in one database .	It should not matter whether there is one database – the point is about intelligence sharing which already happens on a regular basis. A central database is currently under development and the Central Community Information Unit which has been established made up of police and council staff ensures that all the information is available in one central point and is easily shared.

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
PRIORITISATION		
47	There are good service and financial planning arrangements, but there is scope for more transparency.	Unclear what this means – transparency term is used on numerous occasions.
47	The Council's positive financial situation means that its systems for prioritisation have not yet been thoroughly tested.	This point needs to be challenged strongly. We appear to be criticised for effective financial management in the past and we can also demonstrate many examples of prioritisation which existed before the BIP/SIP model was introduced last year.
49	There is a high level of awareness of the framework among staff, members and other stakeholders and it is an important means of ensuring a Rotherham-wide focus on key areas.	We are disappointed in the lack of reference made to how communications and marketing has impacted on the high level of awareness throughout the authority and borough on the priorities of the council. We would like to see specific reference made to the Faces of Rotherham campaign which runs across all corporate documents, internal staff publicity campaigns and also our external marketing campaign.
52	The Council's service and financial planning processes for both capital and revenue budgets are good, but could show greater transparency.	Again not clear on the 'transparency' issue – need to challenge statement.
52	Although there is public involvement in the budget setting process, some detailed schedules of budget savings and pressures are not made public in Council business papers.	This is incorrect. All papers covering savings and pressures were made available at numerous meetings including cabinet and scrutiny – all of which are accessible to the public.
53	While sound systems are in place, they have not been fully tested because prioritisation decisions have been eased by the Council's positive financial situation. With extensive reserves and external funding, the Council has not yet faced some of the tough choices which have become routine in many authorities.	We challenge the point regarding prioritisation – we can demonstrate many examples of tough choices e.g. pools, ALMO, RBT, residential homes, sheltered housing. This statement is unacceptable as we have faced many pressures in recent years and the situation is getting tougher as reflected in our MTFs. The comment is more about opinion rather than objective facts. This point should be challenged as although increases currently are in line with others, the overall levels are far lower than many other authorities (VFM profile). We have also provided many examples of disinvestment.

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
	Recent Council tax rises have not been significantly below the government's maximum guideline levels, and while there are examples of resources being transferred to priorities, areas of disinvestment have been relatively few.	The way that this is worded appears that because the council has been prudent we are being criticised and if we had not managed our finances as well and had to make more disinvestments this would have been more favourable to the inspection.
CAPACITY		
59	However, there are as yet no BME partners on the board or executives group. There has been a missed opportunity to add to the capacity of the LSP and increase its credibility with BME communities.	We feel that the comment around there being a missed opportunity to add capacity of the LSP and increase its credibility with BME communities as BME involvement is well embedded within the LSP and its structure. We would like to see the report be worded "However, the LSP actively engages with BME groups through the theme boards. For example, under the Achieving theme all 3 sub-groups include dedicated BME representation. The Learning theme has a place on its Board for a BME representative and the Community Cohesion groups sits within the Proud theme.
61	However, as yet connectivity between front line and back office systems is under-developed, and some major services, are not included.	This is not uncommon compared to many other authorities – however all of the major services in terms of customer enquiries are linked to the customer services centres. Connectivity between front and back office in terms of CSC services is in place and we have an additional programme through the ICT strategy to integrate the others where necessary. Our approach was also praised in the Access to Services inspection.
62	Relationships are generally respectful and maintain professional and ethical standards	What is the evidence to show otherwise?
64	sickness levels are among the highest 25 per cent of local authorities.	We do not feel this statement is balanced. In terms of metropolitan authorities we are in line with top quartile and reference needs to be made to 2005/06 unaudited data. We are also leading a regional centre of excellence project which is looking at sickness levels across the north of England. We were selected due to our proactive approach to tackling sickness.

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
65	This is important because the Council was limited in the past by an excessive focus - not entirely eliminated - on the other South Yorkshire authorities.	We challenge the evidence on this point – we do focus on S Yorkshire for some aspects of benchmarking but we can also demonstrate numerous national and international comparisons over many years e.g. base budget review, PM framework, local area agreement, LSP network model, beacon awards. We do not feel that this comment is needed as there will always be a focus
66	Council business processes are efficient but there is scope for greater speed and transparency in decision-making.....some cabinet papers are needlessly deemed to be confidential, and improved transparency would show the Council has the confidence to take a fully modernised approach to its business.	No evidence provided regarding speed of decision making – evidence could be provided to challenge. Some papers are marked confidential – but it is questionable whether ‘some’ is a significant % of papers. We have looked at the number of exempt items and overall numbers are low e.g. 61 items for cabinet were exempt in the last 2 years. This is in line with other authorities as all authorities will exclude some items for a variety of legitimate reasons.
67	but remains in the bottom 25 per cent of authorities for the employment of disabled people.	This comment is correct based on 2004/05 data. However in 2005/06 Rotherham reported an actual of 2.65% when calculated in accordance with the PI definition places the council at 14% well above the All England bottom quartile (11.62%).
68	However, further opportunities for efficiency are still to be explored, for example there are a number of areas where outsourcing has not yet been fully appraised as a service delivery option	Cross refer to paragraph 14. We are always seeking opportunities for efficiencies as demonstrated by our track record in this area – there are also examples of outsourcing and also the RBT has certain characteristics similar to an outsourcing arrangement. Within Children and Young People’s Services there are several examples where we have outsourced services including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the provision of therapeutic services to post-abused children by the NSPCC, • a support service for young carers run by YMCA • advocacy services for Parents with Learning Disabilities provided by Rotherham Advocacy Partnerships • out of authority fostering placements handled by private fostering agencies. The CYPS Commissioning team seeks to ensure that all commissioning and procurement decisions are taken in accordance with European and domestic legislation, the Council’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, and the principles of value for money, fair

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
68	action is yet to be taken to improve on the current 'ad hoc' commissioning arrangements with the voluntary and community sector	competition and efficiency. Needs further investigation – work is ongoing in terms of procurement, base budget review and Our Future work. However within Children's and Social Care there has been extensive contracts and arrangements in place with the independent sector including the voluntary and community sector.
69	The Council is yet to further enhance its performance by completing the integration of its complaints and customer relations management (CRM) systems, improving health scrutiny and embedding and extending LSP performance management arrangements.	We never planned to complete integration until later this year – phase 2 of complaints work – therefore should not be criticised for this point [not identified as a requirement within KLOEs i.e. integration]. Health scrutiny – noted from before LSP performance management – noted from before
77	However, the role of the Council in respect of health scrutiny has been consultative rather than challenging and is not achieving expectations.	Needs to be challenged – we can demonstrate achievements – unfortunately this point seems to originate from a comment made in a focus group – we challenge how this has been triangulated. In addition, we can demonstrate significant benefits and achievements from the role of health scrutiny. Further evidence provided.
80	further work is needed to ensure more challenge between partners around the levels of performance achieved..... However, further work is still ongoing to achieve a full performance management culture across the LSP.	This point is contested – it contradicts external assessments in recent years e.g. AC report on LSP plus GOYH assessment – there is a culture of Performance Management across the LSP as demonstrated by impressive results to date e.g. neighbourhood renewal floor targets, community strategy, LSP network model and local area agreement
ACHIEVEMENT		
83	the Council's approach to older people's services is not fully coordinated.	This point seems to relate to the fact that the older people's strategy action plan was incomplete at the time of the assessment
Sustainable communities - Nothing of obvious concern		

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
Safer and Stronger		
102	However, further work is yet to be undertaken to meet identified standards and involve representatives of diverse communities in needs assessment (drug treatment).	Not sure of the context of this point – seems minor and unjustified especially as we have met LSPA target.
Healthier communities		
108	The Council and its partners recognise that, although the gap has been narrowed, there is still much work to be done to meet national targets, and there is as yet only limited evidence that health inequalities across Rotherham are being eroded.	This point is true but inconsistent with references elsewhere e.g. coronary heart disease, teenage pregnancy.
112	Pooled budgets with the PCT have not expanded beyond learning disabilities and aids and adaptations	Further information needed – we have other examples of pooled budgets within the council. In addition, the LAA is about alignment of budgets rather than pooling.
112	there remain tensions around some significant actions that could have a within Rotherham, for example the speed of progress towards a smoke-free borough.	We provided evidence at the end of the assessment to challenge this point – has been ignored – we do not regard them as tensions.
113	There are inconsistencies and some omissions in the monitoring of health issues. Within the community strategy accountability for a number of specific Rotherham Alive actions are shared between the Council and PCT, but the Council's contributions to these actions are not fully represented in its corporate plan.	This needs checking but the corporate plan, from a practical perspective, does not include every single action – many are also incorporated within the various cross cutting plans and strategies.

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
113	<p>but tracking the thread of some priorities through the published documents is more difficult than it needs to be.</p>	<p>This may be an issue for the inspectors but where is the evidence that it has had a detrimental effect on service delivery?</p> <p>It could also be argued that tracking priorities through is very simple due to direct alignment between corporate plan and community strategy.</p>
<p>Older People</p>		
114	<p>Linkages to other areas of activity are fully recognised but not always specifically monitored, for example the impact of the Council's investment in housing on health outcomes is not measured</p>	<p>This point is directly linked to the KLOEs – unclear what would be expected e.g. housing decency improves and direct impact on wellbeing and health. The Health impact of the Council's investment into housing is being measured. ALMO and Housing Market Renewal funding is relatively new but the council has challenging targets within the LSP's Public Health Strategy to meet which are aligned with the Local Area Agreement. The PCT is involved in all housing market investment decisions which reflects our commitment to ensuring housing investment impacts on health.</p>
115	<p>a coordinated approach to older people's services is not yet embedded across the Council. It is only now in the process of agreeing an action plan to bring together its activity across the sector and enable future performance monitoring. There is no coordinating post for older people's services beyond social care, and no older people's champions within programme areas other than social care</p>	<p>Accept that action plan needs more work. However there are Older People representatives from each programme area on the strategy group</p> <p>With regard to no coordinating post comment – CX's office has driven the need for an older people strategy</p> <p>Question why do we need older people champions e.g. children's do not have them but we have still embraced the need for a focus on children and older people e.g. QA on service plans. Also the government's agenda for older people is also 2 years behind the Children's agenda.</p>
115	<p>However, there is little awareness of this role among older people in Rotherham.</p>	<p>This statement should be challenged – what is the evidence and why should we expect older people to be aware of the role – never even interviewed the older people's champion.</p>

Appendix 2 Rotherham MBC: Response to the draft corporate assessment report

Paragraph	Extract from report	Comment
117	<p>Beyond care, it is difficult to measure achievement in outcomes for older people as performance indicators are not yet well developed. However, it is notable that the Council is actively engaged in improving a number of services prioritised by older people, such as crime, leisure facilities and town centre retail facilities</p>	<p>The corporate plan includes a number of specific actions which impact on older people and which are not focussed on care. In addition, individual services can demonstrate how they take into account older people issues/needs etc - although this is an area for development.</p>
Children and Young People		No issues

**Matt Gladstone
August 2006**