

Report for Resolution

Report to Executive
11 June 2008

Report of Director of Transformation

Subject End of year 2007/08 – Performance Monitoring Report

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Purpose

This report provides monitoring information on performance for the year 2007/08 (1 April 2007 – 31 March 2008) in the following areas:

- Achievement against Corporate Plan Strategic and Cross Cutting Objectives and Short Term Priorities
- Council priorities (Big Five)
- Statutory Best Value Performance Indicators and local PIs
- Service plan priorities
- Aiming for Excellence
- City Care Contract
- Steria Contract
- Audit Inspection recommendations

Recommendations

That Executive :-

- (1) notes the content of this report and the proposed actions contained within it.
- (2) confirms that officers undertake the actions required to tackle those areas of underperformance identified in this report.

Financial Consequences

There are no direct financial consequences from this report.

Strategic Objective/ Service Priorities

Performance management underpins all of the council's corporate objectives and service plan priorities. In addition, performance management is one of the themes of the Aiming for Excellence improvement programme and services have each nominated a performance champion.

Executive Member: Resources and Governance

Ward: All.

Contact Officers

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Background Documents

Introduction

1. This report provides a comprehensive overview of Norwich City Council's performance during the 2007/08 financial year (1 April 2007 – 31 March 2008).
2. This report covers 3 main sets of information as in the following appendices:
 - Appendix A showing achievement of performance as measured by the basket of key performance indicators. Those statutory best value performance indicators and local performance indicators that are not part of the key indicator set are only reported on an exception basis (i.e. performance well above or below target);
 - Appendix B showing an assessment of the status at the end of the year of the service plan priorities (as agreed by Executive on 21 February 2007). Only those service plan priorities assessed as Red or Amber at year end are included.
 - Appendix C showing the CityCare Partnership Contract Monitoring Report.
3. In addition, there are sections dealing with performance in relation to Corporate Plan Strategic and Cross Cutting Objectives and Short Term Priorities, Council big five priorities, Aiming for Excellence, Steria Contract, Peer Review and progress with performance in relation to Audit Inspection recommendations.

Progress against our strategic objectives and short term priorities.

Strategic objective 1

To provide strong and ambitious leadership to make the city proud of its council.

Short term priorities 2007/08 and key achievements	Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achieve unitary status<ul style="list-style-type: none">- core bid rejected July 2007- Ministers agree to Boundary Review- Boundary review commenced	√ on track
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver the Norwich Improvement Plan phase 2<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Aiming for excellence programme launched- Performance Management Improvement Board set up- Successful peer review	√ on track
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Robust financial management<ul style="list-style-type: none">- No improvement in use of resources score- But independent research by PriceWaterhouseCoopers shows a positive direction of travel- Key appointments made to new finance structure	√ on track
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhance internal and external communications	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New internal staff newsletter introduced - Press releases doubled 	√ on track
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Strategic objective 2

To build a successful economic future for Norwich and secure sustainable growth

<p>Short term priorities 2007/08 and key achievements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver growth and development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater Norwich Development partnership established - Joint Core Strategy published - Public consultation completed - Key projects (e.g. Barrack Street and St Andrews Plain) delivered • Maximise the use of the council's assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Premises Review group established - Asset Management plan in place • Promote environmental sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft strategy produced - Climate Change Panel set up - Joined Local Authority Carbon management Programme 	<p>Progress</p> <p>√ on track</p> <p>√ on track</p> <p>? more work needed</p>
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Strategic Objective 3

To make Norwich safe and secure, building strong and proud local communities.

<p>Short term priorities 2007/08 and key achievements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve community safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reducing levels of crime achieved - In 9/10 crime types, Norwich now measured as average or better than comparator cities • Set up safer neighbourhood teams and forums <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Safer Neighbourhood Teams set up across the city 	<p>Progress</p> <p>√ on track</p> <p>√ on track</p>
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Strategic objective 4

To ensure the city has a clean and healthy environment

Short term priorities 2007/08 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the integrated waste strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Phase 1 of Alternate Weekly Collection complete - Successful trial for green waste collections implemented - recycling and composting rate up to 25.9% in the second half of the year • Prepare for re-let of City Care contract <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - options being explored 	Progress √ above target √ on track
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Strategic objective 5

To develop our services on a neighbourhood basis

Short term priorities 2007/08 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the re-let times for empty properties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduced from 56 days in 2006/07 to an average of 33 days in 2007/08 as a whole and just 28 days in the second half of the year • Improve rent collection rates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rent collected now up to 97.58% (from 96.61%) - Rent arrears halved since 2002 • Deliver more affordable homes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 279 completed this year - Government consent received to access £60m grant for new affordable homes 	Progress √ above target √ on track √ on track
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Strategic objective 6

Putting culture at the heart of everything we do.

Achievements 2007/08 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - successful Norfolk and Norwich Festival 2007/08 - increased visitor numbers to Norwich museums - City of Norwich Partnership conference focus on cultural planning 	Progress √ on track
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Strategic objective 7

Tackling deprivation and disadvantage

Achievements 2007/08 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £2m of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding invested into poorer parts of the city - £11.2m of local Enterprise growth funding to develop smaller businesses in the city - road safety action plans adopted 	Progress ? more work needed
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- 4 In conclusion, progress against the majority of priorities has been good, although perhaps a stronger focus on environmental sustainability and tackling deprivation is needed in 2008/09. However, the IDeA peer review team has also commented that the City Council has too many priorities and should consider reducing the range, and concentrate on making real progress in a smaller number of key areas. This will need to be reviewed as part of preparing a new corporate plan for the 2008-2010 period.

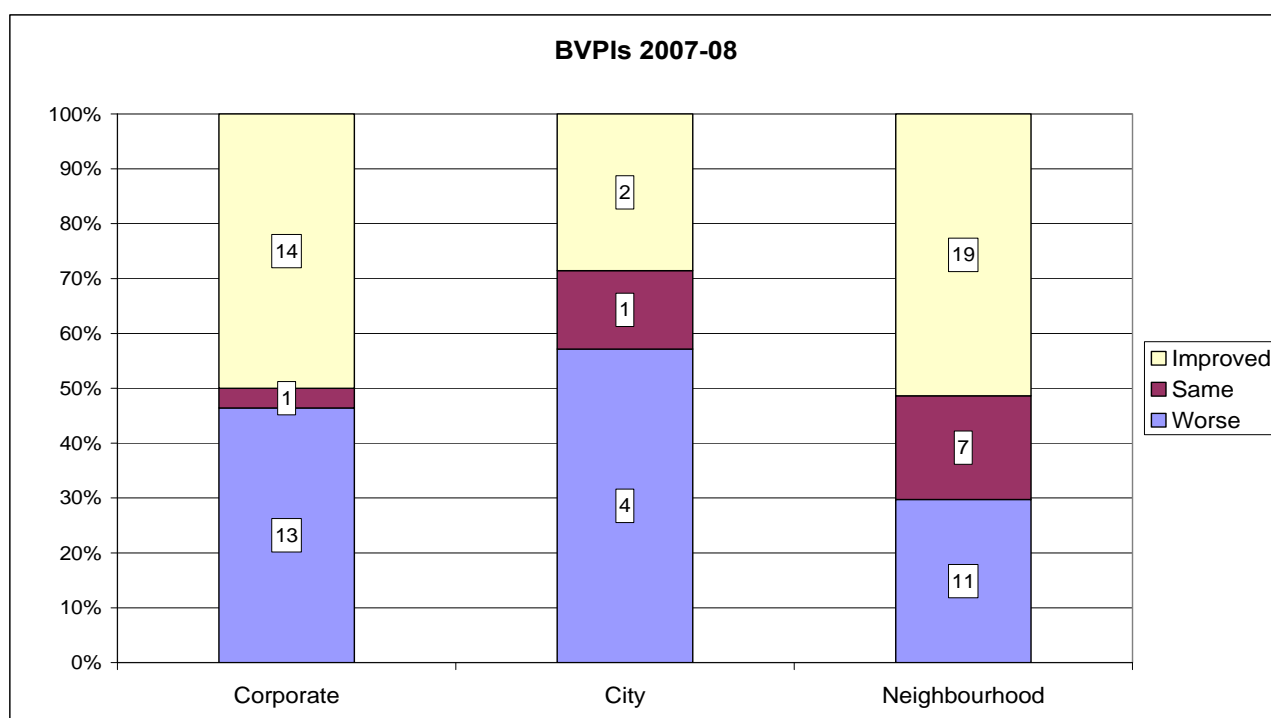
Performance - Best Value Performance Indicators

- 5 The overall performance for the BVPIs compared with 2006/07 shows (excluding 1 BVPI):

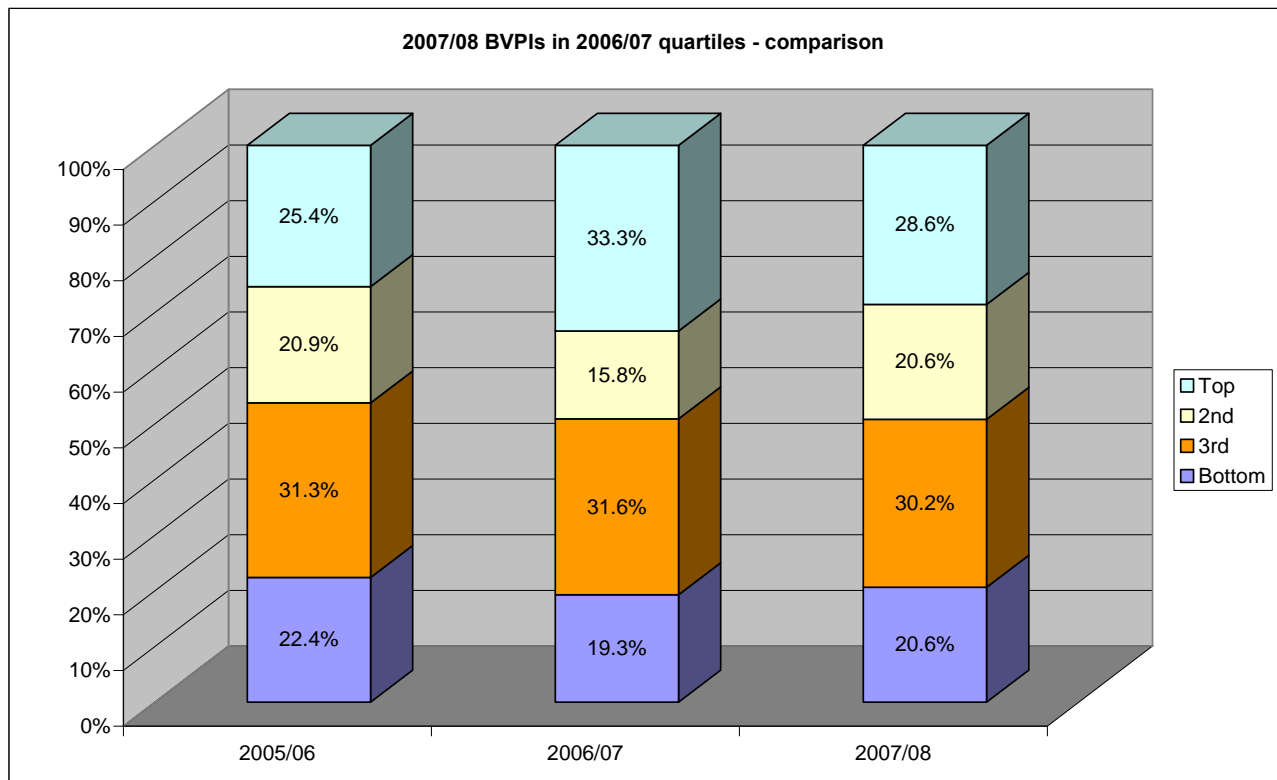
	2007/08		2007/08 Key PIs		2006/07	
BVPIs	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Better performance	35	49%	10	42%	43	45%
Stayed the same	9	13%	3	13%	33	35%
Worse performance	28	39%	11	46%	19	20%
Not applicable	3	-	-	-	11	-

(2006/07 figures include the triennial user satisfaction PIs. 8 PIs that relate to District Councils have been dropped from the set for 2007/08 by the DCLG)

- 6 Graph 1 shows the proportions of BVPIs that have improved, stayed the same or where performance has deteriorated by hub:



- 7 Graph 2 shows the proportion of 2007/08 BVPIs in 2006/07 quartiles and compares that with the previous two years (N.B. In this graph the user satisfaction PIs are excluded from the 2006/07 figures):



- 8 There have been notable improvements in performance in indicators relating to payment of invoices, accuracy of benefits calculations, environmental health best practice checklist, conservation areas with up to date character appraisals, average days taken to re-let Council homes, rent collection a range of community safety measures and the numbers of vacant non-Council dwellings re-occupied as a result of our intervention.
- 9 13 best value performance indicators are still areas where performance needs to be improved as they are in the lowest quartile. These are:
- BV9 percentage council tax collected
 - BV79b(ii) percentage all recoverable housing benefit overpayments recovered
 - BVs 109a-c percentage major, minor and other planning applications determined within set timescales
 - BVs 199a & b percentage land with unacceptable levels of litter & debris; graffiti
 - BVs 82b(i) and (ii) percentage & tonnage of household waste composted
 - BV91b percentage of households served by kerbside collection of at least 2 recyclables
 - BV127a violent crimes per 1,000 population
 - BV184b percentage reduction in the stock of non-decent Council homes
 - BV66d percentage of tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears
- 10 Further detail on performance against all BVPIs is given later in this report and in Appendix A.

Service Plan Priorities

11 Service plan priorities are measured using a traffic light system. This is:

- Red = programme is not deliverable, resources are not allocated or significant opposition from partners
- Amber = some concern regarding programme and/or budgets, partners may not be on board fully
- Green = all on programme, within budget and resources allocated, partners engaged.

12 Performance against Service Plan Priorities is as follows:-

- 142 of the Service Plan Priorities (84%) are on target (Green).
- 26 of the Service Plan Priorities (15%) have shown some slippage (Amber).
- 2 Service Plan Priorities (1%) are shown as Red.
- 19 service plan priorities were deprioritised during the course of the year.

13 The following priorities within the Service Plans are shown as red for 2007/08:

- **Planning** - Produce monitoring report on housing completions.

Comments: Limited resources mean this has not been completed for the past 2 years. However, data is still assembled and reported in the Annual Monitored Report. This complies with requirements on the Council and it is likely that requirement to produce separate commentary on housing completions will be deleted from future service plans.

- **Customer Contact** - Develop robust and informative customer satisfaction surveys.

Comments: Limited work to establish the type of systems available has been undertaken. This remains a priority and is an issue that has been highlighted in recent inspection reports. This will be pursued in 2008/9, and work is currently underway to scope this. The expected completion date is now October 2008.

Progress against political priorities 2007/08

14 The council also adopted five political priorities for 2007/08. Progress has been good and is summarised below;

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CCTV<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 11 cameras installed/ in the process of installation in residential areas- 7 additional cameras to be sited in non-residential areas• Improved recycling rate<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 22% target now exceeded and continuing to improve• Introduce park rangers<ul style="list-style-type: none">- submission to Big Lottery Fund complete- Scheme launched at Gildencroft with Wardens, Parks and Open Spaces Staff and City Care- wardens now more visible in parks	<p>✓ on track</p> <p>✓ above target</p> <p>✓ on track</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1000 new affordable homes by 2009 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 293 completed in 2006/07 - 279 completed in 2007/08 - now exploring potential for a 'special purpose vehicle' to deliver others • Start work on Memorial Gardens by 31/03/08 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Project team formed and preparatory work underway - a delay in being able to obtain sufficient access for survey work has moved the proposed start on site date to March 2009 	<p>✓ on track</p> <p>? more work needed</p>
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Director's reports

Corporate Resources

Overview

- 15 In 2007/8 all of the services in the Corporate Resources Directorate have Service Improvement Plans to focus effort and resource into improving performance.
- 16 There have been improvements in some key service areas e.g. amount of NNDR collected, time taken to process change of circumstances (HB/ CTB) but others have fallen back e.g. percentage of council tax collected, average number of days of staff sickness.
- 17 The customer contact teams have shown some improvements in their performance measures but this has been below the targets set.

Areas of strength

- 18 The following service areas have made good progress in 2007/08:
- Finance – a new chart of accounts; restructured Finance Team; improved financial reporting.
 - Procurement implementing the new Purchase to Pay system; savings of £60k in 2007/8 with a further £200k identified for 2008/9 (in Pool Cars, Telephony, Energy, Insurance etc), improvements to the management of the City Care contract.
 - HR – establishing the Central Training Programme and a Leadership Programme for all managers, reletting the Payroll contract.
 - Customer Contact – co-locating the Customer Contact Teams, improving the Customer Contact Centre; bringing customer enquiries from CityCare to Norwich City Council.
 - Legal and Democratic Services – Food Safety Team shortlisted for an MJ Award, Improvements to the administration of elections, development and implementation of new Health and Safety Policies and procedures.
 - The accuracy of calculation of housing benefit and council tax benefit claims is 100% for 2007/8, which is a significant achievement.
 - The Environmental Health Services have made a significant improvement in their score against their best practice checklist (now 100%), and

- by catching up on backlogs in relation to food premises inspections have exceeded their targets for 2007/8.

Areas for improvement, and focus in 2008/09

- 19 Council Tax Collection and recovery of overpayments are below target. A Service and recovery of overpayments Improvement Programme for the Revenues Service has been developed and approved by the Performance Management Improvement Board. We expect to see the impact of this in 2008/9.
- 20 The average days for processing Housing Benefit Claims has increased and is below target. In quarter 3 there were a significant number of system failures that adversely impacted on the performance of the service. Even with this dip in service we still anticipate that our performance will be above the England Average.
- 21 The performance of the Customer Contact Teams has improved, but has still not reached the target set for 2007/8. The improvements in 2008/9, in particular the introduction of new telephony functionality with the introduction of an 0844 telephone number scheduled for June should enable sustained improvement to be achieved. There have been some recent activities that have caused significant 'churn' for the Customer Contact Teams, in particular, transfer of the waste enquiries from CityCare, the roll out of Brown Bins across the city, and issuing of new bus passes.
- 22 In terms of staffing, the average days of sickness has increased slightly, but is still below the national average. This is an issue that will be carefully monitored in 2008/9 to see the trends at an early stage.

Regeneration and Development

Overview

- 23 The directorate has been undergoing senior management reorganisation since the last quarterly report to provide better coordination and delivery across the Council's regeneration, development and neighbourhood services and to give added impetus to its corporate objectives.
- 24 A new director post with responsibility for these combined services has been created and the successful appointee will commence duties shortly. Two new assistant director posts have also been created with responsibility for city development and neighbourhood services respectively. The latter is already in post and the former will commence duties shortly. Good progress has also been made in recruitment to posts where the scarcity of human resources has previously been identified as an area of concern and a barrier to increased performance.
- 25 The existing directorate has a relatively small number of statutory performance indicators and service plan targets remain important indicators of overall performance. Good progress has been made in a number of service areas with targets exceeded or achieved. This should not mask remaining areas of concern identified below, although success in recruitment of vacant posts will begin to have a positive impact as the year progresses.

Areas of Strength

- 26 City Hub key performance indicators available at the year end where targets have either been exceeded or achieved are as follows:
 - Percentage of conservation areas with an up to date character appraisal: 2007/8 target of 47% achieved.

- All roads maintenance local PIs: 100% targets achieved
- 27 There has been a generally strong performance in achieving service plan priorities across departmental functions. The majority are “green” status showing programmes on track and within budget. This includes the relevant capital improvements and maintenance to highways services within the City Care contract. Despite some delays beyond City Care control, for example over-running or late works by statutory undertakers, performance has been on or ahead of target.
- 28 There are seven priorities with “amber” status, including preparation of several planning briefs or studies and consultation exercises. Lack of staffing resources has been the cause of slippage to those programmes and is being addressed through staff recruitment.

Areas for Improvement and Focus in 2008/09

- 29 A priority area for improvement is to substantially increase performance in the authority’s determination of planning applications. This has been highlighted previously in the preparation of the service improvement “PIP 1” programme for planning services. All 4 key PIs for speed of determination of planning applications continued in a downward direction in 2007/08 and did not achieve service targets. This was particularly true of the target of major application determinations within 13 weeks with approximately 35% determined against a target of 60%.
- 30 The recruitment of key posts to the service, including a new head of planning, has been achieved on target in the final quarter of 2007/08 and in accordance with the improvement plan. The second phase of service improvement (PIP 2) is now being developed and will respond to the recommendations arising from the recent Audit Commission inspection of planning services. The priority is likely to remain clearing the backlog of work and whilst this will continue in the short term to impede improvement, the trend for later quarters in the year should show a sustained upward trend.

Communities and Neighbourhoods

Overview

- 31 A generally positive direction of travel with notable improvements in key service areas such as recycling and composting, rent collection and days taken to re-let council homes.

Areas of strength

- 32 The following service areas show a good progress during 2007/08:
- Recycling and composting - recycling and composting levels have increased significantly over the last year from 18.37% to 23.41% (combined rate). The implementation of the integrated waste strategy and in particular the start of the roll out of alternate weekly collections (AWC) has contributed to this increased performance. The AWC roll out has limited the amount of waste being collected for landfill and increased opportunities for people to recycle as well as the range of materials collected. Phase 2 of the roll out is now being implemented with the first collections due in June. A successful trial garden waste collection scheme was held in Crome and Eaton wards resulting in the scheme being extended to all residents in the coming year. The advent of both schemes will see the council build on its performance over the coming year with significant steps being taken to reach its stated target of recycling and composting 32% of household waste by

2010.

- Proportion of rent collected - the 2007/08 target for this indicator was met and has moved us up to the lower median quartile. The percentage of current arrears at the year end was the lowest since 2000. The success of strategies put in place to counter the fall off in payments seen during March last year (2007) and the implementation of the arrears action plan contributed to this success.
- Average re-let time for council homes - a concentrated effort by all housing services involved meant that performance improved month on month throughout 2007/08. The outturn of 33 days represents an improvement of 23 days (over 40%) on last year. This should improve our position by two quartiles to above the national median. Monthly live performance for March was 22 days. We aim to achieve 26 days as an outturn for 2008/09 which should ensure top quartile status.
- Performance on community safety BVPI's - the majority of performance indicators relate to the work of the Safer Norwich Partnership and are therefore not in the direct control of the Council. There has been a continued improvement in performance during 2007-8 with 2 performance indicator (domestic burglary and robbery) better than target and vehicle crime on target. The performance indicator for violent crime is currently unavailable from the Police but is anticipated to be at or close to target. The number of racial incidents reported to the Council has increased. This is generally viewed as positive as it is accepted that racial incidents are currently under reported. The Safer Norwich Partnership undertook a publicity campaign during the summer to encourage reporting and this may have led to the increase. Quarter four also saw the completion of the three year crime reduction targets contained in the Norwich Community Safety Strategy 2005-2008. This had a target for the reduction of all crime of 21% against the baseline of 2003-4, and the Safer Norwich Partnership achieved a reduction of 22%.
- No. of non-local authority owned vacant dwellings re-occupied or demolished as a result of Council action - the number of empty properties brought back into use as a result of the Council's actions has increased significantly from 19 in 2006/07 to 68 this year. This has largely been brought about by employing an effective "carrot and stick" approach which combines robust enforcement with the offer of our Private Sector Leasing Scheme. Of the 68 homes brought back into use, some 45 are in this scheme and being used to house people who are at risk of homelessness.

Areas for improvement, and focus in 2008/09

- 33 The proportion of tenants over 7 weeks in arrears was up (5.92%) compared with last year (5.36%). However, the implementation of the arrears action plan and campaigning by arrears officers prior to the 'rent free' weeks ensured that a reduction in the number of tenants over 7 weeks in arrears was seen over the latter part of 2007/08. The success in reducing the actual number of tenants in arrears has had the effect of increasing the overall proportion of tenants in arrears who have had an NSP served. 85 evictions were served for rent arrears during 2007/08 compared with 64 the previous year.
- 34 Performance on appointments made as a % of routine repairs has declined. This performance indicator measures appointments made against priority R1 (20 day repairs) only. The indicator has been amended to account for all repairs for 2008/09. Poor performance earlier in the year meant that to achieve the year end target of 70% was difficult. Although performance during quarters 3 and 4 exceeded 80% the target was not achieved. It is expected that 2008/09 performance will achieve and

exceed the 70% target.

- 35 Overall 17.7% of streets were found to be below standards which was 7.7% over the target of 10%. The fall in cleanliness standards is a combination of factors (see Appendix C, City Care report). The Contracts Unit team is being re-organised into a contracts monitoring unit which will involve taking the existing four posts and altering the job focus. The jobs will link to the Neighbourhood Agenda to ensure services are delivered where the need is greatest and where it is required by our local communities. Part of this work will require the officers to undertake a minimum number of inspections per week independently of the contractor and over and above the requirements of the current PMS contract inspections. This will be used alongside the PMS system to performance monitor the contract and highlight where work is not been done to the contract specification so that this can be put right. The aim is to implement the re-organisation by 1st June 2008.

Transformation Directorate

Overview

- 36 This directorate only came into existence in October 2007 to reflect the unitary programme, but from 1 March 2008 has grown to take in the Policy and Improvement services (Policy, Performance, Partnerships and Environmental Strategy). The new directorate is therefore still settling down, but the early signs are very positive, and these services should particularly be able to work increasingly closely together as the unitary agenda gathers pace.
- 37 The directorate has very few statutory performance indicators to measure performance, and progress is therefore mostly measured against service plan targets. Most service plan targets for 2007/08 have been achieved, and progress is expected to accelerate in 2008/09 with the arrival of 2 new appointees (Partnerships Manager - April 2008, and Environmental Strategy Manager - May 2008).

Areas of strength

- 38 The drive for unitary status continues to be on track. The Boundary Committee recommenced work in Norfolk on 3 March 2008, and the Council submitted an enhanced conceptual business case on 11 April 2008. The case for a greater Norwich unitary council is now accepted by the majority of other councils in Norfolk, and is reflected in their own proposals.
- 39 During 2007/08 the Policy and Performance team has achieved a number of significant milestones:
- publication of the Council's first Corporate Plan
 - setting up the Performance Management Improvement Board (PMIB) to focus on key areas where improvement is needed
 - a new Gender Equality Scheme and a revised Race Equality Scheme. Work is expected early in the financial year to improve and update the Disability Equality Scheme in partnership with disability groups
 - completed negotiations with the County Council on a core set of 35 indicators for the Local Area Agreement - the next steps will be to set targets for the 35 LAA indicators.
- 40 After some time with staffing shortages, the Partnerships team is shortly to reach a full staffing complement. In the last quarter major achievements included:

- we held a very successful City of Norwich Partnership conference on cultural planning
- completed an annual report on progress against the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).

41 In relation to Environmental Strategy, despite staffing vacancies we have:

- established a member Climate Change Working Party, which met for the first time in March 2008
- been accepted onto the Local Authority Carbon Management Programme.

42 Once the new manager starts in May 2008, work will start to baseline the Councils carbon footprint, and determine actions to reduce it over time.

Areas for improvement, and focus in 2008/09

- 43 Staffing vacancies in key management positions have meant that progress in some areas has been slower than expected. However, these will now be filled shortly.
- 44 A key area for more progress in 2008/09 will be achievement of Level 2 of the Equalities Standard. We expect this to be achieved by September 2008.
- 45 Following the Governments radical review of the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) regime, we will need to review all of our performance indicators and decide which ones we want to keep using to monitor our performance. This is an opportunity to refocus onto a smaller but vitally important set, so that we measure the most important issues and areas.
- 46 The recent IDeA peer review report highlighted the need for the Council to invest in an electronic performance management system to simplify the collection and analysis of performance data. This is being urgently explored, but it will be important to procure a system that meets both our current needs and the needs of a new unitary council for greater Norwich.
- 47 On the unitary front we expect the Boundary Committee to shortly declare its preferred option for Norfolk. This will then enable the City Council to begin more formal preparations, including developing a "blueprint" for the new council, and starting to consult on how a new council might deliver key service areas such as children's and adult services. 2008/09 will therefore be more focussed on implementation planning.
- 48 In parallel 2008/09 will also see more robust partnership working to support a new unitary council and essentially a more effective LSP that fits with the new Council arrangements. A new Sustainable Community Strategy will be developed reflecting local needs and priorities, which is evidence led and grounded in local community engagement. This will link directly to developments in neighbourhood management, improved consultation processes and better performance management. The new Strategy will include a vision for the future of the city and begin to clarify where a new unitary council would focus its attention and priorities (e.g. through a dedicated Local Area Agreement for the whole city area).

Aiming for Excellence/ Peer Review

- 49 The Aiming for Excellence programme is progressing well with the Performance Management and Improvement Board taking an overview of the key areas in which the Council need to make progress. They are monitoring approximately 48 areas of activity to ensure progress is being made and are taking particular interest in any

areas falling behind schedule. The Board have also been monitoring performance on key indicators and identifying areas where improvement can occur in the short and medium terms. The indicator set is changing and the Board have also commissioned some work to understand the implications of this.

- 50 Members will be aware that the Council commissioned a peer review from the Improvement and Development Agency to assess the progress it had made upon its improvement journey and what more needed to be delivered. The report has now been received and it paints a picture of positive change with a focus upon further improvement being required.
- 51 This report summarises both the positives outlined in the report and areas for further development. The team stated that the City Council has achieved significant progress since CPA in 2003 & has made positive progress on its improvement journey – "the team recognises and commends the significant improvement achieved over the last two years" and believe that by further harnessing the motivation, drive & determination that exists in the Council it will be able to continue to succeed. Positives the team identified were:
- The Council was starting to address performance improvement across the whole council & there were clear examples of improvement
 - The Council is well led with strong political and managerial leadership & positive officer/member working relationships
 - There is an ambitious and shared vision for the city
 - Relationships amongst partners have significantly improved & the perception of the Council amongst partners had improved
 - There is a commitment to put the needs of customers first
 - External and internal communication has improved
 - The Council is working towards improved financial management
 - The building blocks are in place to deliver performance improvement
 - There is evidence of focussed outcomes based on community needs e.g. neighbourhood investment & focus on outcomes and achievements for local people
 - There is a clear ambition to achieve unitary status
 - Staff are motivated and up for change
 - Priority is being given to meet equality and diversity standards
 - There is a culture of learning and development in the Council
 - Significant funding has been attracted into the City and that
 - There is a track record of delivering good services and facilities to residents of the city
- 52 The review identifies a range of key areas for improvement, and a programme of actions is being developed to respond. In summary the main areas for improvement were as follows:
- Strengthening the "Golden Thread - the team thought that linkages between the sustainable community strategy, the corporate plan and political priorities was not easy to understand.

- Unitary Status should not be seen as an end in itself and should not distract from the Council's improvement journey.
- Consultation and Community engagement - this has been recognised as an area for improvement in the Aiming for Excellence programme
- Prioritisation - the team felt that there were too many priorities and that their articulation was unclear
- Financial Management - there remains a need to continue to focus on improving our use of resources score and implementing the action plan
- Councillor training - the team were not clear training was meeting the needs of all members
- Customer care – further work is needed to implement the Customer Contact Strategy and to engage the champions in each service
- Communications – the most notable area for improvement highlighted was that of communication between services
- Performance Management – the review team have identified a number of areas for improvement and we will be delivering an action plan to make sure all these are addressed.

53 Overall this was a positive report and did not identify any areas for improvement which we were not already aware of and addressing. The Aiming for Excellence programme is being reviewed to focus upon these issues and other key issues emerging from inspection reports and this will be a focus for the current year.

City Care Contract performance

- 54 Appendix C gives details of the monitoring of the City Care contract. The main points of note are:
- The percentage of repairs where an appointment is made has increased from 57% in 2006/07 to 71% in 2007/08. In the last three quarters the percentage of appointments was 82%
 - 97% of tenants were satisfied with performance in relation to their kitchen and bathroom installation
 - Around 90% of highway services capital improvements and capital maintenance schemes were completed on or ahead of schedule
 - Grounds maintenance has shown a general improvement in performance compared with 2006/07 but planted area maintenance remains an area for focus

Steria Contract performance

55 Appendix D sets out Steria performance against the key deliverables within our Partnership agreement:

Actions arising from recommendations in Audit and Inspection reports

- 56 During the past 12 months the Audit Commission has completed inspections on the following topics:
- Culture Services
 - Norwich Connect PFI

Additionally inspections have been carried out in relation to:

- Data Quality
- Performance Management

Further, there has been a) a Norfolk wide inspection of Health Inequalities.

57 Annex E shows the detail of what actions have been taken to address the recommendations arising from the Culture and Norwich Connect audits. Final reports on the other audits are still awaited.

Corporate Plan and priorities 2008-2010

58 In the light of the peer review recommendations, the key messages arising from inspection reports, and the emerging priorities of the new political administration, the City Council is now in the process of reviewing its priorities for the period up until 31 March 2010 (when we anticipate new unitary arrangements will come into place).

59 The Council is required to publish its corporate plan (Best Value Performance Plan) by 30 June each year. This plan will summarise the Council's priorities and plans for 2008-2010, and this will be brought before members during June 2008.