

Leader and Chief Executive Introduction – Our Journey of Improvement

Since we were assessed as “Good” in our first Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2003, we’ve been on a journey of improvement, with excellence our clearly stated destination.

We have articulated our ambitions clearly. We have defined our priorities and acted on them. We have developed and enhanced our capacity, often through imaginative and innovative partnership working. We have managed and improved our performance, often from already high levels, focused on our priorities.

Our openness to external assessment has been matched only by our willingness to respond positively to ideas for improvement. We have been innovative, leading good practice in a number of areas and sharing this with other organisations.

But all of these improvements to process are nothing if they don’t result in outcomes our communities recognise. We know this and we’re proud that, working with our partners, we have delivered real and visible improvements for the Borough’s communities, focused on those issues residents have told us are most important to them.

- Overall crime is substantially down.
- There is more for young people to do and those opportunities offered are being taken up.
- Streets are cleaner and recycling rates¹ are the best in the East Midlands and fifth best in England and Wales.
- Deprivation levels have improved across the Borough.

Residents are highly satisfied with what we’re doing – we are in the top 20 nationally for overall satisfaction and satisfaction with key services is high and improving further. Residents agree that Gedling is a good place to live and over 74% think we are working to make it a better place to be.

External assessments confirm we are leaping ahead. Since the 2003 CPA, we have: -

- Secured IiP accreditation in 2004, and retained this in 2007 with improved scores assessed against a higher standard.
- Scored 3 in every Use of Resources assessment against the progressively harder test, scoring 4 in one of the VfM sub-categories for two consecutive years
- Consistently secured a positive Direction of Travel assessment.
- Secured QUEST accreditation for all of our leisure centres, with four classed as “highly commended” an excellent achievement for the first assessment of its type.

We are doing all of this from an historically low resource base, generating maximum value-for money through consistently efficient and effective use of our resources, recognised by the Audit Commission.

But we’re not content with this – we want to get better still. In 2007 we committed to a major Transformation Programme to deliver our new Organisational Vision, based on world-class customer service, maximum organisational efficiency and positive neighbourhood engagement.

This is the story of our journey.

¹ For dry recylate materials

Peter Murdock
Chief Executive

Roland Spencer
Leader of the Council

CONTEXT AND SUMMARY

Our Borough

The Borough of Gedling, formed in 1974 from the former Urban Districts of Arnold and Carlton and part of the Basford Rural District, takes its name from the ancient village of Gedling, mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086 as Ghellinge. It covers 46.3 square miles (120 sq km) at the heart of Nottinghamshire, bordering Sherwood Forest to the North, the River Trent to the South-East and the City of Nottingham to the South-West.

Our Borough mixes urban and rural landscapes. Over 76% of our 111,700¹ population live in the main towns of Arnold and Carlton (including Gedling and Netherfield), which form part of the Greater Nottingham conurbation. The remaining 24% live in our 10 rural parishes – these settlements mix former coalfield communities with relatively affluent commuter villages and cover around 80% of the Borough's area.

Overall, our Borough is relatively affluent – we rank 208th of the 354² districts nationally (where 1 = most deprived) on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Our relative position is improving - in 2004 we ranked 197. At ward level, the 2007 IMD indicates that none of our wards fall within the 10% most deprived nationally, and that 13.6% fall within the 20% most deprived, an improvement on the 16.7% shown in 2004. But we do have pockets of more severe deprivation at sub-ward and super output area (SOA) levels.

Our population rose by 1.2% between 1991 and 2001 but a predicted reduction of –5.6% between 2000-2010³ has shown little sign of materialising. Our population is ageing – we have a slightly higher than average population of pensionable age (19.6% vs. 18.6% regionally and 18.4% nationally) and a correspondingly slightly lower than average 0-15 year old population⁴. Our most deprived wards tend to have the highest under 16 populations.

7.2% of our population come from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, up from 5.1% in 2001. Our BME population is spread throughout the Borough and we have no distinct geographical BME communities. We have seen a significant increase in migrant workers⁵ registered with employers based in

the Borough, particularly from Poland, but not all of these live and work in the Borough.

Life expectancy at birth is 81.1 years for women and 77.8 years for men⁶. This represents an improvement of 18 months for women and 3 years for men since 1991 - but we have a 5 year gap in life expectancy between our most and least deprived areas. Only 1 in 10 adults have high levels of physical activity, 1 in 4 smoke and more than 1 in 5 are obese⁷.

Our working age population, at 61%, is consistent with regional and national figures⁸, but we have a higher than average proportion of economically active residents compared with national and county levels⁹. Unemployment levels are consistently low - the current overall figure for the Borough is 1.7% compared to 2.1% nationally, but ward rates vary considerably, with some at around 6%, reflecting levels of comparative deprivation.

Our economy is inextricably linked to that of Greater Nottingham, one of England's eight Core Cities. The entire Borough falls within the Greater Nottingham Functional Economic Area and there is a significant net employment outflow from the Borough to the City of Nottingham. Nottingham's prosperity is critical to the Borough's overall economic well-being. Our industrial heritage is based on textiles and coal, but both industries have now all but disappeared. Our current industrial and commercial base is broad, with manufacturing, retailing, distribution and public services all well represented.

We are part of the Nottingham Housing Market Area (HMA). At over 81%, home ownership in the Borough is the highest in Nottinghamshire and well above the regional and national average. We have a relatively high proportion of detached and semi-detached homes, reflecting our substantially suburban/commuter belt position. Affordability is still comparatively good when compared with national figures, but there is some evidence that this is becoming more of an issue as the ratio between average house prices and average incomes widens. The recent **Nottingham Housing Market Area Assessment**¹⁰ suggests demand for social housing (affordable and rented) is likely to increase in the years ahead. We will be reviewing our affordable housing planning

policies later this year once the Government response to the Regional Spatial Strategy is published.

Recorded crime in the Borough has fallen considerably recently, with a 20.6% fall recorded in 2007/08. Historically, recorded crime has been comparatively high, reflecting a pattern throughout the Nottinghamshire Police force area. This is consistently reflected in residents' views on priorities for improvement and also in fear of crime, which remains problematic and higher than absolute crime figures might justify – this is a county-wide problem, as evidenced in MORI-commissioned research¹¹. We border some of the most deprived parts of Nottingham City, with its (arguably unfair) national reputation as a crime hotspot, and this is undoubtedly a factor in encouraging fear of crime.

We have brought together a range of key characteristics about the Borough in our **Community Profiles**, which we use to inform our own work and that of the partnerships we work with¹². The Profiles have been recognised by the Audit Commission as an example of notable practice¹³. Most recently, we have drawn together a full report on the **State of the Borough**, drawing on this information, to inform our Sustainable Community Strategy Review¹⁴

Our Council

We have 22 wards represented by 50 members¹⁵. Elections are “all-out”, every four years. Our most recent election, held in May 2007, resulted in Conservative control.

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| • Conservative –
28 | • Labour – 9 |
| • Liberal Democrat – 9 | • Independent - 4 |

From 2003-2007, we were under no overall control, with Conservative and Labour each holding 21 seats for most of the period.

We use the Leader and Cabinet governance model, with a “strong leader”. Cabinet comprises 7 members and its membership is currently single party (Conservative), reflecting 2007 election results. From 2003-2007, Cabinet was multi-party, comprising 3 Labour, 3 Conservative and 1 Liberal Democrat member, reflecting 2003 election results. Cabinet portfolios were reviewed following the May 2007 election, with further

minor modifications made in December 2007. Current portfolio responsibilities are: -

- Leader/ Finance
- Direct Services and Property
- Housing and Health
- Customer Services, Efficiency and IT (postholder also Deputy Leader)
- Leisure and Young People
- Development and Economic Regeneration
- Safe and Sustainable Neighbourhoods

Three Cabinet Advisors support Portfolio Holders on issues relating to Parishes, Neighbourhoods and Regional matters. In addition, each political group appoints an observer to Cabinet, having full access to Cabinet papers, able to attend all Cabinet meetings and with permission to speak (but not vote) on any item.

We have two Scrutiny Committees covering Policy Review and Performance Monitoring. These replaced and improved upon the previous 3 committee model in place from 2002-2007. The Scrutiny Committees are each chaired by a member of an opposition party. There are also three decision-making committees, responsible for decisions outside the executive remit. These cover Personnel and Resources; Planning and Licensing.

At officer level, we are led by a Chief Executive, supported by a Deputy Chief Executive and eight Heads of Service.¹⁶ We re-introduced the post of Chief Executive in 2004 to strengthen and focus officer leadership in the wake of the previous CPA corporate assessment – before then, the role of Chief Executive had been shared between three Directors.

Our current departmental structure was introduced in April 2007 and reflects our **organisational vision** agreed in December 2006¹⁷. Delivery of that vision is set out in our radical and ambitious **Transformation Programme**, “Fit for the Future”¹⁸ scheduled for delivery over the next 2-3 years. This will further improve front-line services, strengthen customer focus, develop neighbourhood engagement and capacity and streamline corporate administration, resulting in improved achievement of outcomes for the community, efficiency and value-for-money. We have attached clear priority to the delivery of this programme, consciously delaying

other projects to which lesser priority is attached to ensure it is progressed.

We employ 691 people (529 full time equivalent)¹⁹. All major front-line services are delivered in-house (except Housing Repairs which have always been undertaken by external contractors) but in recent years we have made increasing use of partnerships to deliver services in conjunction with other agencies. Examples include payroll, procurement, sundry debtors and estates functions. We are moving towards a merged building control service (with neighbouring Newark and Sherwood district). We also procure a wide range of other services externally often to handle peaks in workload.

In March 2008, our tenants voted in favour of Housing Stock Transfer, our preferred option for the future of the stock. Ours is a negative value stock transfer and resulted from prolonged and detailed negotiation in 2007 between ourselves, CLG and New Charter (the Group to which Gedling Homes, the Borough's new Housing Association, is affiliated) to secure the funding necessary to go ahead. Transfer to Gedling Homes is scheduled to take place later this year and will bring over £41.9 million private sector and government investment to the Borough over the next five years, providing the improvements tenants want and benefits for the wider community. The transfer represents the most significant transfer of council assets and services in our history.

Our net revenue expenditure for 2008/09 is estimated at £14,415,247, including £292,150 in respect of parish precepts. Gross revenue expenditure totals £60,332,250 for the year.

" I just want to put on record my appreciation for the excellent partnership working between our respective authorities²¹"

Cllr Steve Carroll – Cabinet Member for Culture and Regeneration - Nottinghamshire County Council

Available capital resources to finance new capital investment during the year are estimated at £8,344,100 (including the Housing Revenue Account). Medium-term financial projections indicate a challenging, but manageable financial future for the Council.

We do not receive any area-based funding from government and our relative affluence makes it difficult to apply successfully for

many external funding regimes. We target our efforts to secure external funding at our priorities and have had some notable successes in recent years - we secured £325,000 from various sources to introduce CCTV; £1,014,000 to fund improvements to Arnot Hill Park from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £185,000 from the Football Foundation to provide new changing facilities for Netherfield Boys' and Girls' Football Club²⁰. We also encourage and support partners to secure funding for priority issues, accessing funds in partnership we are not eligible to apply for ourselves.

Our Partnerships

Our position in the Greater Nottingham conurbation but administratively part of two-tier Nottinghamshire presents uniquely complex partnership arrangements. Our partnerships reflect strong local preferences in the community for the Borough to remain administratively separate from the City of Nottingham, but recognise the need to work closely with Nottingham City Council, Nottinghamshire County Council and partners on conurbation issues that affect our economic, environmental and social well-being.

Around the time of our first CPA, our partnerships were in the early stages of development. Our CDRP Partnership was well respected but we were otherwise quite insular and did not really look outside our own borders. That landscape has transformed over the past five years at county, conurbation and neighbourhood level.

Across the County, we have championed the development of Local Area Agreements in 2006 and 2008 – we are the only district to take a "block lead" role. We also work well with county partners in delivering practical examples of partnership working, examples of which are evidenced throughout this document. We are members of the Nottinghamshire Partnership.

Our strong support for Nottingham as a Core City has led us to promote and become actively engaged with partnership working across the conurbation²². We had worked closely with the **Greater Nottingham Partnership** (the strategic sub-regional partnership for the area) before this, and continue to do so, but that partnership working has developed significantly in the past three years and our relationship with

Nottingham City Council in particular has flourished.

This is most evident in strategic housing and spatial planning, where we are currently working with City, County and other HMA districts to align Core Strategies and deliver Growth Point. We are also part of an executive grouping of local authorities for the conurbation area (the Greater Nottingham Executive) to co-ordinate wider conurbation development and through which we are developing a vision for Greater Nottingham.

At local level, we lead the Gedling Partnership (the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership), which is at the hub of partnership working in the Borough engaging at conurbation and county level. Through the Gedling Partnership, we support a network of theme and locality based partnerships serving the Borough, including a Borough Children and Young People's Partnership and a Borough Health and Well-Being Partnership, with clear responsibilities to support delivery of the Gedling Community Strategy. The Borough CDRP has been merged with those for Broxtowe and Rushcliffe Boroughs, to create a single partnership for South Nottinghamshire (excluding Nottingham City) coterminous with the Police Divisional boundary from 1 April 2008. It remains affiliated to the Gedling Partnership while also working closely with the Nottinghamshire Community Safety Partnership. An observer from the Nottingham City Crime and Disorder Partnership ensures alignment across the conurbation.

At neighbourhood level, we have led the development of sub-ward community development and regeneration schemes focused on our most deprived neighbourhoods (known as Area-Based Initiatives or ABIs) – these are co-ordinated through the Gedling Partnership and currently operate in Valley, Netherfield, Daybrook and Warren Hill areas, with further work in progress in Newstead Village. These build on earlier work in Honeywood Gardens, Carlton, where our work was identified as good practice in a 2003 ODPM/Home Office case study²³. Experiences here are feeding into a wider reassessment of neighbourhood working as part of the Transformation Programme.

"The senior leadership of Gedling Council have consistently demonstrated their commitment to partnership working with Nottingham City Council, putting resource and energy into a variety of developments over the last three years. It is clear that they recognise the significance of a successful City and the need for effective collaboration across the conurbation. The support they have provided has been invaluable and is expressed through formal engagement as well as informally and both at political and officer levels".

Adrienne Roberts – Deputy Chief Executive – Nottingham City Council

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT

Ambition for Gedling

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

The overarching strategic vision for the Borough, which we share with our partners, is for the Borough to be

“A community in which everyone plays their part in bringing about greater security, greater prosperity, improved health and a better environment for all. A Borough where people want to live and do business”

This is set out in the **Gedling Community Strategy**²⁴, the latest version of which was agreed in 2005²⁵. The Strategy is jointly owned by the Borough Council and its partners – the 2005 version is a refresh of our original Community Plan, agreed in 2003.

Our ambitions for the Borough, also set out in the Community Strategy, are based on five priority themes.

- A Safer Community
- A Better Local Environment
- Tackling Health Inequalities
- Action for Youth
- Building Social Capital and Pride in the Local Area

For each priority, we have worked with partners to set out clear outcomes, supported by targets and by delivery plans, aligned wherever possible with those of county-wide partners working in the area, including the **Nottinghamshire Community Strategy** “*Altogether Better*”, and increasingly with conurbation partners. Our Community Strategy Delivery Plans have been developed with the full support of county-wide partners, who have in many cases led their development. We are in the middle of a full review of the Strategy and aim to agree a new 10-year Sustainable Community Strategy by the end of 2008.

The Borough vision is complemented by our Council mission for the Borough to be “*Healthy, Green, Safe and Clean*”. Our work to deliver this mission is set out in our **Strategic Corporate Plan** (SCP)²⁶, which sets our overall direction and identifies focused priorities for improvement around which we develop annual budget and service plans.

The current SCP, reflecting the improvement priorities of the administration elected in May 2007, was agreed in April 2008. Those priorities for improvement are: -

- A high quality local environment
- A safer community
- Good health for everyone
- A good start in life for Children and Young People

We have consciously repositioned the latest SCP to complement the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). The SCS is now unambiguously at the pinnacle of our planning processes as set out in our organisational vision. The SCP now focuses on our activities and ways of working and on how we contribute to the SCS. It also articulates the improvement principles set out in our Transformation Programme, essential if we are to become the organisation we want to be in the years ahead. It will incorporate SMART targets, consistent with the Nottinghamshire Local Area Agreement once these have been finalised.

Our previous SCP was adopted in 2004 and refreshed annually thereafter, incorporating our Best Value Performance Plan. It was based around priorities for improvement to: -

- Improve Community Safety
- Develop facilities, activities and a safe environment for children and young people
- Enhance the physical environment of the Borough

Adoption and development of the first SCP and the refresh of the Community Strategy, with their clearly stated priorities, addresses one of the main criticisms raised in the 2003 corporate assessment, that we did not have a clear vision and that priorities were seen to be too all-embracing. We have further reflected learning from our first SCP in the development of the latest one.²⁷

Our local ambitions are set out in ABI Action Plans, which we have developed through close working with LSP partners and communities. These reflect local issues and concerns but also focus on LSP and Council priorities. The focus of ABIs on our more deprived areas ensures that these improvements impact on communities at most disadvantage.

We pursue a proactive and innovative approach to communication to ensure that

members, employees, residents, partners and stakeholders are kept informed of decisions about ambitions, changes to these decisions, and work and projects relating to them. Our approach is driven by internal and external communications strategies and action plans²⁸, due for refresh in 2008/09 to make sure that recent improvements are sustained and progressed further. We use an extensive range of internal and external techniques²⁹ and we plan ahead through a Forward Publicity Plan³⁰, to ensure a proactive approach to both positive and negative issues. Survey results consistently show that over 60% of residents think that we keep them well informed about our work, close to the best in Nottinghamshire.

Both the Community Strategy and SCP are available on our website – the former is included on a separate, clearly branded partnership microsite. We produce accessible **summary versions of both documents**³¹ and circulate these widely to employees, members, partners and within the community at the time of their launch. All are promoted in our magazine for all borough residents **“Contacts”**. We produce posters setting out priorities and displayed them around council buildings and produce credit-card size cards³², to reach employees, members and the public, setting out our mission and priorities. Details of our priorities review and its conclusions featured in recent Senior Management Team presentations open to all employees³³ and we include a presentation on priorities in our corporate Induction Course.

We have also communicated and consulted extensively as we developed our organisational vision, including presentations to members and employees³⁴, some of which were targeted at managers to reflect their key role in delivery of the programme. That process is continuing as the Transformation Programme is delivered, including through a regular employee newsletter **“Fit for the Future”**³⁵ and an innovative Vision Room, where employees can drop in to find out about latest progress and put forward their views and ideas.

As a result there is very high recognition of our mission, particularly amongst employees, and a good understanding of the importance of prioritisation.

Local people are clear about what we are seeking to achieve and understand when

balances have to be struck and why. This has been seen most recently in a budget consultation exercise (Autumn 2007)³⁶, in which we asked local people to prioritise service improvements and means through which they might be funded, and which generated an extremely high response. Local people consistently engage with Council consultation and decision making - response rates to consultation exercises are consistently high.³⁷

1.2 - Are ambitions based on a shared understanding among the Council and its partner organisations of local needs?

We have a good understanding of local needs, shared with our partners, which we use to inform our Community Strategy, our SCP and supporting plans and strategies.

The most significant step we have taken to understand the scale of social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities we face has been to develop our **Community Profile**³⁸. The project was identified as a key task in the Improvement Plan derived from 2003 CPA. The Profile brings together demographic and deprivation information at Borough, Ward and Super Output Area level along with Borough-wide performance information, and informs the setting of baselines, addressing a further previously identified area for improvement. It has been acknowledged by the Audit Commission as an example of notable practice³⁹.

Partners were involved throughout the development process, individually and collectively through the Gedling Partnership. Much of the information included has been obtained from partners including Gedling (now part of Nottinghamshire Teaching) Primary Care Trust (NtPCT), Nottinghamshire Police and Nottinghamshire County Council. This allows a shared understanding between our partners and ourselves and helps ensure that a similar set of cross cutting priorities and ambitions are being worked towards by all service providers throughout the Borough.

The Gedling Partnership now uses the information it provides to inform key decisions. An example of this is the use of Profile information⁴⁰ in helping the Partnership to decide on locations for its programme of ABIs targeted neighbourhood regeneration work. This allows Profile information to be used to address deprivation, as these ABIs are targeted at our more deprived neighbourhoods. We also use the profile to inform our own resource allocations⁴¹ and programmes, addressing diversity and equalities issues. The Profile is publicly available on our website.

The Profile is supported and fed by information from a range of sources, including “hard” data (such as recorded crime, housing completions, employment levels); performance data and perception measures and draws on information shared by partners, including Police, NtPCT and Nottinghamshire County Council.

We are committed to developing the Profile further, to ensure that it stays dynamic and continues to inform our ambitions and prioritisation. This is likely to include more sophisticated analysis to reflect Black and Minority Ethnic community issues, building on demographic issues, informed by our recently established Cohesive Communities Forum. We used the profile to inform our “**State of the Borough**” document, which is integral to our strong evidence based approach to the current review of the Community Strategy. We have just completed an extensive consultation programme around this, the results of which will allow us to identify further longer-term sustainable outcomes, building on the outcome-focus established in previous strategies. The findings will in turn be used to update the Profile.

We also commission joint studies with neighbouring authorities to gather evidence and to ensure new statutory responsibilities are met - examples include a jointly commissioned Housing Needs Assessment across the HMA and a Strategic Housing Land availability assessment currently in progress. We use the information gathered to set baselines against which we measure progress towards our ambitions. Baselines have been set against the vast majority of outcomes included in the current Community Strategy. In the few areas this has proved difficult, we have developed effective proxy measures. We have learned lessons from our

Community Profile shapes service provision

Our Leisure Services team used data from the community profile to benchmark usage of reduced rate leisure facilities against the ethnicity, gender and age profile of Borough residents. Results showed that, while membership levels from other minority groups were in line with the population profile, the 50+ group was underrepresented. A proactive marketing and a programme review followed, which in turn led to the introduction of a 50+ club at two Leisure Centres. The result is an increase in the average number of 50+ users from 4 to 17 each week, projected to result in 884 visits a year from this age group for this club alone.

early experiences which we are applying as we develop our new SCP and SCS.

We use effective community engagement mechanisms to develop our understanding of resident’s views⁴². Our original Community Plan drew on innovative and inclusive techniques including road shows, displays, surveys and focus groups – an approach which we have adopted again for our current refresh of the SCP. Since then, we have developed along with Partners more systematic survey techniques, including an **annual satisfaction survey**⁴³ seeking views on satisfaction with services and with the area as a whole (building on the statutory triennial BVPI satisfaction surveys). These surveys have consistently shown a strong correlation between Council/ Partnership priorities and the issues that residents say are “most important” and “most need improving” and have been influential in informing reviews of priorities and actions taken to address them. We have recently joined with the other Nottinghamshire district authorities and with Nottinghamshire County Council to access the newly formed ‘Nottinghamshire Listens’ Citizen’s Panel.

Young Peoples' views shape services

A joint review by the Gedling Partnership and one of our Scrutiny Committees included in-depth consultation with young people throughout the Borough, using face-to-face, questionnaire and focus group techniques. The resultant Action Plan significantly influenced the Partnership's "Action for Youth" Delivery Plan, and included the development of a "Drop-In" centre in Arnot Hill Park designed and progressed by young people.

We take steps to ensure engagement with hard-to-reach groups and those at risk of disadvantage. This presents challenges in a Borough with our current demographic profile, particularly if we want to gather data that is both statistically meaningful and cost effective⁴⁴. Our recently developed Cohesive Communities Forum⁴⁵ aims to address this by gathering improved qualitative information particularly from BME communities. More generally, it aims to promote awareness of different cultures and faith groups within the Borough and promote the work of partner agencies to minority ethnic groups.

We have had more sustained success in accessing the views of young people and in addressing areas of overall disadvantage at neighbourhood level. Much of the work of the Gedling Partnership's Action for Youth Sub-Group to date has been informed by an in-depth review of services for young people across the Borough, based on widespread consultation with local young people – our Children and Young People's partnership recently held a visioning day⁴⁶ to reflect on progress against identified children's needs, to both inform State of the Borough work and direct the group's developing Action Plan for 2008/09. ABI action plans are directly informed by consultation in the communities involved⁴⁷. We enjoy a positive and constructive working relationship with the Gedling District Youth Assembly and have supported its development.

We have also commissioned research into the needs of Gypsy and Traveller communities across the county, in partnership with other Nottinghamshire authorities, and have recently received the largest single award for gypsy and traveller accommodation in the county, in a partnership bid with Nottingham City Council.

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

We have made significant progress to strengthen our community leadership role since the 2003 CPA, when the Audit Commission, while recognising that some good work had been delivered, raised concerns at a lack of organisational capacity to develop this role. We now unambiguously see community leadership to be at the heart of our role, epitomised in our organisational vision. Early investment in corporate capacity followed the 2003 review when, in early 2004, we introduced a new Unit (Cabinet Office) focused on community leadership, communications and policy and research – our new vision takes this further through the new Neighbourhoods Team.

Our community leadership role is clear in the Gedling Partnership, where we bring together a wide range of partners to identify and champion the Borough's needs. We are often the catalyst for new partnership working - a recent example is the championing by the Mayor of a new Business Forum to represent and progress the interests of local businesses in partnership settings⁴⁸. Our elected members chair ABIs, emphasising their role as community champions, and we provide strong community leadership in Housing, generally and in particular recently over Stock Transfer.⁴⁹ Key stakeholders recognise that we provide strong effective and proactive community leadership, and local people also recognise this – the 2007 satisfaction survey showed 62% think we promote the interests of local residents.

We are not afraid to make difficult decisions when we need to strike a balance between competing demands. We withdrew from the Nottinghamshire Highways Agency Agreement from 2005⁵⁰ to free up resources to develop community leadership capacity. We also made tough decisions to agree our **Local Plan**⁵¹, when we had to release green belt land to meet housing demands in the face of vociferous public opposition in some parts of the Borough. The Plan had been informed by unprecedented local consultations, generating over 18,000 responses. Most recently, we ended an agreement with Nottinghamshire Police to fund extra Police Community Support Officers for the Borough, to allow us to focus our community safety spending on wardens and

CCTV improvements – this decision was also based on consultation findings but was unpopular in some quarters.

Our own culture and values are clearly and succinctly expressed. Our organisational vision clearly sets out the type of organisation we aim to be in future – we have recently agreed a streamlined set of values⁵² outlining how we work, based around our four overarching roles to provide services, lead communities, serve customers and act corporately. These are widely circulated in our main and summary SCP documents and update corporate values agreed in 2004, which were effectively communicated using various techniques.

Our active role in the sub-region and its importance to us is outlined in “Context” above. Our success in securing funding through the GNP demonstrates how we have engaged positively with the priorities of the sub-region.

2. Prioritisation

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

“The Council has set clear priorities for the area which will contribute towards improving quality of life for local people”

Audit Commission Audit and Inspection Letter – Gedling Borough Council - March 2008

We know the issues that matter most to local people and neighbourhoods and our plans and strategies demonstrate how we concentrate our efforts on them. Our ambitions and priorities have been derived from extensive consultation across the Borough and at neighbourhood level, and they align directly with those in the Community Strategy. We are clear and consistent about these and together they drive all that we do, working alone and in partnership.

Our vision and ambitions are translated into specific short, medium and long-term priorities in the SCP, the Community Strategy and in annual Budget /Service Plans. They are integrated into policy objectives and high level outcomes cascade into departmental service plans and performance targets, through project plans⁵³ and the **Budget/Service Plan**⁵⁴. The latter includes

departmental Service Objectives that demonstrate clear alignment with corporate priorities.

We are taking the opportunity offered by our recent priorities review and newly introduced national Performance indicators (NIs) to further align priorities and targets. We have adopted relevant NIs as outcome measures where appropriate and are feeding these into departmental and partnership service planning and performance management. This strengthens accountability for these key outcomes and ensures close alignment with LAA priorities and targets.

In identifying priorities in 2004 and in reviewing them in 2007, we were also clear in identifying the issues that are less of a priority. We do not believe it is helpful or realistic to expect the Council to state explicitly that an issue is not a priority but our clear positive focus on what is a priority, coupled with our priority-led budgeting process, ensures that we target new investment at our priorities and that those issues that are not priorities do not secure new investment. We keep outcomes under review, making sure that we only invest in areas where there is a need to improve performance and moving resource away when outcomes improve, even in priority areas. Our recent disinvestment in extra PCSOs for the Borough, in the light of significant reductions in recorded crime, is a good example of this in practice.

We also ensure that we target our resources in areas where our own investment can make a difference. An example of this is economic development, where we have not felt we can add any value to the Borough’s overall economic well-being by providing this service ourselves, reflecting the Borough’s relative affluence and its spatial position in the Greater Nottingham conurbation. This is not to say that economic well-being is not important to us – rather we have decided that the best and most cost-effective way to support this is by working closely with Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils and by financially supporting GNP. Through this approach, we have ensured that regeneration work has been targeted at those areas of the Borough most in need, while wider conurbation-wide economic development has benefited Borough residents who largely work in this functional economic area⁵⁵.

We understand and balance national, regional and county-wide priorities with the priorities of local communities and service users, as outlined in our latest SCP. Consultations consistently show considerable correlation between national, county and Borough priorities, particularly around community safety, but there is a stronger emphasis on environmental and “liveability” issues in the Borough as whole than in other parts of the county, reflecting the Borough’s relative affluence. Our priorities and actions reflect this.

Making the Connection between priorities Young Peoples’ Positive Moves

Young Person’s Positive Moves shows how the Council links priorities and works to address them with partners.

The scheme is an exercise referral programme developed in partnership with Nottinghamshire County tPCT, which addresses the twin priorities of action for youth and health improvement.

It is tailor made for young people aged 8-16 with a condition that can be helped by increasing their physical activity. Paediatricians refer children to the 24-week programme that includes football, gymnastics, dance, swim-fit and gym sessions.

126 young people have benefited from the scheme since it began in September 2006 and parents of children who have graduated from the course have now formed a self sufficient sub group so that their children can continue to benefit from coaching in physical activity. Feedback gathered after each 12 week course helps to improve and target future delivery.

The scheme has been showcased as an example of best practice in “Health Service Journal”.

We have recently adopted national “Every Child Matters” priority outcomes to progress our priority of “a good start in life for children and young people”. We focus our efforts on those service areas where we have lead responsibility (for example, facilities and activities for children and young people) and facilitate and support partnership activity to support delivery of the wider agenda (for example, by providing a building from which other agencies provide drop-in and advice

services for teenagers). We recognise connections between our priorities and make the relevant links across them to deliver a crosscutting programme – our work with Children and Young People, for example, impacts on health and well-being and on community safety.

The Audit Commission has acknowledged that we are “progressing well with work on diversity”⁵⁶ to take explicit account of the needs of all sections of the community when designing and delivering services. However, we recognise there is still further room for improvement.

We have in place an Impact Needs Assessment process which is the starting point for understanding the impact of our services and policies on minority groups. We recognise that this process needs to be further developed as we learn from good practice elsewhere, and take account of the changing agenda with respect to diversity and the need to include additional equality strands.

Our new Cohesive Communities Forum, developed with partners through the Gedling Partnership’s “Building Social Capital” workstream, is helping us to better understand the needs of BME groups, while our ABIs have significantly increased our understanding of the needs of our most deprived communities, which we are now actively and successfully addressing through targeted neighbourhood Improvement Plans. We seek and act on the views of young people in the development of youth activities - this includes significant consultation with local children through schools when upgrading play facilities⁵⁷.

Other examples of progress made include a high-quality Multi-Faith Calendar produced through the Gedling Partnership for three consecutive years. This has been very well received as an initiative to encourage greater community understanding of faith and belief, particularly in communities where there are relatively few BME residents – print runs have been increased to cope with demand. We produce all key publications in 12 pt minimum point size, in line with RNIB recommended good practice.

We have integrated equality objectives into our performance management framework and these are monitored quarterly by the Corporate Equalities Group and SMT. There

is a corporate equality plan in place alongside the statutory Equality Schemes. A 3 year programme for carrying out impact assessments to cover all services, policies and strategies is in place and the Corporate Equalities Group will be monitoring progress against this.

Our efforts to communicate highlighted above have ensured that there is clear and strong understanding of priorities amongst councillors and employees. Our budget and service planning processes, outlined further below, ensure that this understanding is put into practice and that councillors and officers understand the implications of our priorities for the work they do.

2.2 Is there a robust strategy to deliver priorities?

Our Community Strategy and SCP together form a robust and realistic strategy to steer delivery of ambitions and priorities for the Borough. Both include clear and agreed outcome focused targets for the Borough and for the Council⁵⁸ - where there is overlap, outcomes and targets are fully aligned. The targets are both challenging and realistic, informed by available baseline information in the Community Profiles and other sources.

"The Council has robust plans in place for improving its services "

Audit Commission Audit and Inspection Letter – Gedling Borough Council - March 2007

Our original attempts to include SMART outcome focused strategic targets in our SCP were somewhat overtaken by development of the Nottinghamshire LAA during its lifespan, which saw partners move their focus towards the new LAA targets. We reviewed and realigned targets to reflect the emergent LAA as far as practicable and have adopted a more systematic approach to LAA alignment in developing our latest SCP. Outcome targets for our new SCP are due to be considered by Cabinet in July 2008 – this will allow for LAA measures recently agreed to be reflected in our plans.

The Community Strategy and SCP are each supported by a range of equally realistic and robust service and theme-related strategies and action plans. Council plans and strategies are outlined above - Gedling Partnership leads Action Plans for Children

and Young People and Health and Well-Being⁵⁹. We are moving to a **South Nottinghamshire Community Safety Strategy**, informed by a recently completed Strategic Assessment, supported by Action and Delivery Plans at tactical level in the Borough, consistent with previous good practice. These will also link to county-wide working. The Community Strategy Action Plans are effectively the delivery plans for our ambitions while our own annual Budget and Service Plan effectively forms the annual delivery plan for the SCP. All demonstrate work with other councils and partners to deliver the ambitions where appropriate.

We ensure close links between statutory and other plans and cross-reference them effectively. We anticipated that changes arising from the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill will impact on the role and function of Sustainable Community Strategies in future and have realigned our corporate planning processes to reflect these changes. This includes bringing together key strategic planning functions in a single department⁶⁰ We are leading the way in integrating our Borough Housing Strategy within the SCS, in line with recommended best practice, and aim to do the same with our Local Development Framework Core Strategy⁶¹ in due course, though the timing of national and regional developments may prevent this from happening as early as we would like. This approach has been endorsed by the Gedling Partnership⁶², members of which are actively supporting the approach when considering their own strategic planning agenda – for example, Nottinghamshire teaching Primary Care Trust (NtPCT) is working with the Council and its partners to align its future facility planning with wider strategic planning being progressed through the Gedling Partnership.⁶³

County-wide priorities and the Local Area Agreement are also reflected in the Community Strategy and the SCP, and Borough targets are already aligned with those in the LAA.

Our budget and service planning processes are fully aligned and our SCP reflects our Medium Term Financial Strategy to provide a robust planning and delivery framework. There is also close alignment with the overall financial strategy.

We have taken steps to develop partners' understanding of roles and responsibilities in various planning frameworks. Most recently, we have engaged LSP partners to encourage shared ownership of the LDF Core Strategy, reflecting its potential position as a sub-set of the Sustainable Community Strategy, and to engage the LSP collectively in wider infrastructure planning⁶⁴. Close working with the PCT on infrastructure planning has survived the transition from a district PCT (aligned to Borough boundaries) to a county based teaching PCT, with good joint working continuing.⁶⁵

We feedback to partners when priorities change – most recently, this includes feedback to Gedling Partnership following the review of Council priorities after the 2007 election⁶⁶. Changes to priorities are also widely shared within the community, as evidenced in the recent Budget Consultation leaflet, circulated to all Borough households

"The Council is making progress in each of its priority areas"

Audit Commission Audit and Inspection Letter – Gedling Borough Council - March 2007

and to local businesses, which outlined new priorities adopted⁶⁷ and in our magazine "Contacts".

We share learning effectively across the Council and with partners. Feedback on learning from significant improvement tasks is programmed into Senior Management Team agendas⁶⁸. Learning is also shared on our active and well-used Intranet, where key policies, procedures and information items are published and exchanged. Best practice is shared between departments in cross-cutting corporate working groups, which tackle issues such as Equalities, Customer Focus and Data Quality in a joined up way. There is a strong culture of learning within the organisation, evidenced by extensive use of Action Learning and similar techniques – in 2007, liP assessors commended the Council's "well developed learning strategy" and its "innovative ways of developing people"⁶⁹.

Learning is also shared more widely – for example, we are working with partner agencies to share good practice on how we have developed specific areas of partnership work at meetings of the County LSP

Practitioner and County Consultation Practitioner forums⁷⁰. Learning from specific departmental initiatives is shared and showcased through SMT briefings⁷¹.

We consistently review and pro-actively adjust our plans to deliver priorities. The SCP is refreshed annually, to reflect changing circumstances and ensure that we remain on track, and the Community Strategy benefited from a mid-term refresh to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose as the requirements of community strategies changed. Service Plans are annually refreshed and updated. Most recently, we have adopted a fluid approach to the alignment of our LDF Core Strategy with the SCS – we had intended to consult on both simultaneously as a single exercise, but decoupled the process when it became clear that, with the delayed government response to the Regional Spatial Strategy, we could risk our Core Strategy being found to be unsound if we progress before that response is known. We are now looking to ensure our Core Strategy is aligned with those of partner authorities in Greater Nottingham.⁷²

2.3 Is robust action taken to deliver the strategy?

Our approach to priority setting and resource allocation is fully integrated. Having reviewed priorities and established outcomes with due regard to the overall State of the Borough, public and stakeholder perceptions and current performance, we feed these priorities directly into our Budget and Service Planning Resource development scoring system⁷³. This allows for capital and revenue funding proposals to be assessed against their contribution towards the priorities – the approach has been recognised by the Audit Commission as an example of notable practice⁷⁴ and ensures that priorities are reflected in all spending decisions. To illustrate this, 100% of all new revenue growth in 2005/06, the first year of the scheme's operation, was targeted at work to be carried in our three priority areas and a similar pattern has continued in subsequent years. We have refreshed the scoring matrix to reflect our revised corporate priorities to ensure robust action continues.

We move resources away from areas that are not priorities to those that are. Apart from the Highways Agency example above, Leisure resources have been moved and reallocated since 2003 to ensure a greater proportion of

spend on facilities and activities for young people, reflecting corporate priorities⁷⁵. This is also reflected at a practical level in pricing decisions for children's activities – we held junior direct debit scheme prices for 2007/08 and for 2008/09, we cut junior youth gym charges by 31% and froze prices on all other junior activities. Our Transformation Programme continues this, as it will move resource towards priorities at a strategic level. We also move resource within priorities to make sure our resources have the greatest impact on outcomes, illustrated through our decision to end funding for extra PCSOs outlined above.

Our Action Plans reflect community needs, diversity and interests. Those for ABIs reflect need at neighbourhood level, drawing on detailed consultations in the communities affected, while those for young people at Borough-wide level draw significantly on the needs and wishes of young people, also derived from consultations.

Our annual Budget and Service Plans, derived from the SCP, incorporate concise departmental Service Plans. These include a range of key Improvement Tasks, each of which is supported by a Project Plan⁷⁶. Those Project Plans define outputs and outcomes (linked back to corporate priorities) and identify lead responsibilities, resource needs and project milestones. Lead officers are also clearly defined. The project plans form the basis against which we assess progress through our performance management processes – at the project end, we also use them to share learning around how successful the project has been and what lessons have been learned from it. Similar project plans are in place for Gedling Partnership projects, adapted from this model, which also make clear the contributions required from partner organisations.

Councillors and officers maintain focus and are not distracted by minor operational matters. The Resource Development scoring system ensures that agreed initiatives have a clear purpose that fits with these priorities. Ongoing performance management ensures that progress towards desired impact is assessed and that, at the end of the project, its success in delivering the outcome(s) is reviewed.

The robust and focused action we have taken to deliver our strategy and priorities is reflected in many of our recent achievements to improve community safety, enhance the local environment and to improve facilities for children and young people. We have included these in “Achievement” below.

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

3. Capacity

3.1 Is there clear accountability and decision making to support service delivery and continuous improvement?

Our *constitution*⁷⁷ published on the internet provides unambiguous guidance on the roles and responsibilities of councillors and officers, ensuring clear accountability and decision making. Councillors also benefit from Code of Conduct training to help them further understand their role and remit⁷⁸. This helps ensure that Executive Members only take responsibility for policy and strategy and do not get involved in minor operational issues. The items for discussion recorded on Cabinet agendas and minutes evidence this⁷⁹.

We recognise the importance of a culture of openness and respect for trust to exist, and we work hard to engender this culture. Many of our communication techniques support this – of particular note are twice-yearly Chief Executive/Senior Management Team Briefings⁸⁰, at which SMT members present current issues openly to all employees.

We enjoy an excellent relationship with trade unions – there is positive, open dialogue including regular quarterly meetings held between the Chief Executive and union representatives. Monthly meetings are also being held to discuss progress with the Transformation Programme and resolve concerns as they arise.

Openness in decision-making is also evidenced in our numerous corporate working groups⁸¹. Their operation demonstrates the respect and trust from corporate management in the ability of employees to carry out work, undertake projects and make important corporate decisions without management interference. A good example is the STEPS (Supporting Training Empowering People) group, which was initially established to take us through the Investors in People (IiP) assessment process. The group achieved great success in guiding us through both successful IiP assessments and continues as a group to support development and delivery of our wider corporate agenda including the Transformation Programme.

Working relationships between corporate management and all departments are good. Interdepartmental relationships are also good and we have various examples of constructive joint working between departments to deliver priorities – a recent example is work between Leisure Services and Direct Services to introduce Muslim burial arrangements. Relationships between senior management and members are positive and mutually supportive – employees and councillors are encouraged to treat each other with respect. We have had no Code of Conduct complaints between staff and councillors.

Leadership is strong and clear at both member and officer levels. We adopted a strong leader model under executive arrangements and significant decision-making is delegated to portfolio holders. During the period of no overall control from 2003-2007, we adopted a sensible pragmatic approach to leadership, with the Leader of the Council role switching between the two major parties each year but with significant continuity of personnel, working to priorities agreed on a cross-party basis.

Decision-making is transparent, with Cabinet, Council and Committee agendas published in a timely manner and minutes clearly recorded of decisions taken and actions agreed. All are publicly available on our website, using a dedicated committee administration package⁸². The Planning Delegation Panel ensures timely decision making on development control issues at an appropriate level⁸³ Gedling Partnership bulletins, updating on latest partnership activities and developments are also publicly available on the **Partnership's separate microsite**⁸⁴.

Our scrutiny arrangements are rigorous and effective to support accountable and open decision-making, thanks largely to significant development since the 2003 CPA. Scrutiny Committees have probed a range of issues, relating to our own services and more widely at community matters. Examples of service related reviews include studies of Town Twinning, Leisure Strategies, Homelessness, budget setting, sickness absence, recruitment and retention, cemetery and crematorium facilities and the summer service of weekly collection of domestic bins⁸⁵. Wider reviews include an innovative shared review of services for young people in the Borough, working jointly with the Gedling Partnership

Setting and Sharing Good Practice

Birmingham University (INLOGOV) used Gedling BC Scrutiny arrangements as an example of good officer/member working to feed into the Scrutiny module of its Public Policy MSc course.

The short video film made in Spring 2008 and featuring the Council's Scrutiny Officer and Chair of the Performance Review Scrutiny Committee, is being used as an academic teaching aid.

Course leader Simon Baddeley said; "I'm confident the video will be a valuable contribution to our training on scrutiny, especially its application to monitoring performance".

(as evidenced above), and an exploration of the possibility of Gedling gaining "Fair Trade" status.

Reviews have often led to recommendations for action which have been acted upon and led to service improvement – the review of youth provision substantially informed the Gedling Partnership's initial Action for Youth plan, while more recently, recommendations about graffiti cleaning have been taken up. The Footpaths and Alleyways review (2005) recommended introduction of a referral protocol now widely used in addressing anti-social behaviour and environmental crime⁸⁶ while the Planning Scrutiny review (2007) devised a leaflet "How to Comment on Planning Applications"⁸⁷ which is now circulated with all standard planning consultations.

Scrutiny has shown a willingness to learn from best practice elsewhere. Senior Officers and Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs came together after the 2003 CPA to reorganise and strengthen the Scrutiny function, visiting other authorities to learn from good practice. This review resulted in the establishment of two Scrutiny Committees⁸⁸, one covering Policy Review working with sub-groups where appropriate, the second dedicated to Performance Management. The latter meets on quarterly basis to scrutinise issues arising from quarterly budget and service plan progress reports, analysing performance against performance indicators and improvement tasks – it also has the flexibility to meet on an as and when basis to challenge senior officers and portfolio holders

where reported performance is not meeting targets⁸⁹.

We produced a Scrutiny Toolkit⁹⁰ to guide members on the scrutiny process and help them deliver a structured and effective scrutiny function. We have also delivered effective training in partnership with neighbouring authorities⁹¹, well attended by our councillors.

Other recent training for councillors has covered IT, Planning, Standards, Environment and Licensing Committee issues. All new councillors attended our Member Induction course after the 2007 elections, along with other councillors looking to update their skills and knowledge. We also hold dedicated briefing sessions to update councillors on current issues – recent examples have covered the State of the Borough review and the implications of the Regional Spatial Strategy. We also offer training for Parish Councils and councillors.

Councillors are supported by a dedicated Scrutiny Officer and a Member Support Officer, whose role is to ensure improved member communication and to assess training requirements. Our new Neighbourhoods Team will provide further support for councillors in their role as local community leaders.

Our Risk Management Framework is embedded and informs key corporate and strategic planning and decision-making⁹². The Risk Management strategy forms a key part of the authority's Internal Control and Corporate Governance arrangements - its primary objective is to develop management understanding of risks, through identification and evaluation, allowing managers to make informed decisions to add value to the activities and stakeholders of the authority. We have recently introduced an innovative, focused "scorecard" approach, reviewed annually by Senior Management Team.

Our Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer promote and maintain high ethical standards. The Monitoring Officer is the Head of Democratic and Community Services, a member of Senior Management Team with a high profile within the Council. An independent member chairs the Standards Committee⁹³.

3.2 Does the Council, with its partners, develop its capacity effectively to achieve

change and deliver its ambitions and priorities?

We are aware of our capacity and recognise that, though our ambitions are high and challenging our staffing levels are low compared to similar sized authorities with similar functions and our resource base is historically small⁹⁴. But our strong culture of value-for-money and efficiency ensures that a great deal is delivered from within these comparatively limited resources. We increasingly seek out partnerships to make the most of the resource available to us and we have a pragmatic approach to procurement, supplementing in-house resource where required through use of consultants and agency staff to cover workload peaks and buying in specialist skills where we need them.

Employees lead Investors in People accreditation

We secured IiP accreditation in 2004 and retained the award, with increased scores against more challenging criteria, when reassessed in 2007. For both reviews, STEPS (Supporting Training Empowering People), an employee-driven working group, played a driving role in leading us through the assessments.

Assessors praised “continued camaraderie and high levels of motivation within the staff” and made positive comments about people management processes including a “well-developed learning and development strategy” and “innovative ways of developing people”. They also observed that the “promotion of equal opportunities is good”.

We have addressed capacity of key post holders by providing development opportunities for councillors and officers. This capacity is good and ensures consistent leadership. Development opportunities for councillors are highlighted above – we have also significantly expanded officer leadership development recently. Examples include a Leadership workshop for Senior Management Team held in 2006, Institute of Leadership and Management accredited programmes for middle managers (63 managers have so far benefited from these programmes⁹⁵) and a newly introduced Coaching programme, strongly promoted by SMT and compulsory for Section Heads. We have agreed management competencies⁹⁶ and publish

these in an accessible handbook style leaflet - they underpin annual Performance and Development Reviews for senior managers. Our commitment to training covers all employees – we have recently introduced a new NVQ training programme which saw 35 Refuse and Street Cleansing employees complete a level 2 qualification through the “Train to Gain” scheme.

Our **Workforce Development Plan**⁹⁷ sets out a systematic approach to workforce development and succession planning, targeted at delivery of our priorities and ambitions. We review this annually to identify new areas for development and where new skills are needed – this has become particularly important to ensure we have the capacity and skills to deliver our Transformation Programme.

Annual Performance and Development Reviews (PDRs) are key to delivering this strategy. We aim for all employees to receive a PDR at least annually, at which individual progress is reviewed, targets set (linked back to delivery of corporate priorities as expressed in department’s service plans wherever possible), training needs discussed and personal development plans agreed. PDRs draw on standard proformas⁹⁸ for application across the Council, ensuring a consistent approach, and have been supported by training for all managers in carrying out PDR interviews. All employees have a PDR folder⁹⁹, outlining the scheme and allowing them to track their own personal development, in a similar style to professional Continuous Professional Development. 84% of our employees had a PDR interview last year.

We have reviewed and updated all key Human Resources policies¹⁰⁰ recently to make sure they remain fit for purpose and support delivery of our priorities. We have also introduced a new Capability Procedure. Our progress here is acknowledged in our 2007 Audit and Inspection letter.

Equal pay is embedded in the organisation – we introduced single status as far back as 2002. We have in place effective mechanisms to monitor our workforce to help ensure it is representative of the community it serves – we have recently completed an Equal Pay Audit¹⁰¹ around which we have agreed recommendations for action to make sure we retain focus on this issue. Our three-year

People Management strategy¹⁰² identifies the actions we need to carry out to implement the Vision along with performance indicators to track how well we are progressing. Our annual employee conference involves employees from all departments and levels, contributing to personal development and improvements in people management.

We have recognised that sickness absence levels are comparatively high and we have taken steps to address this in recent years, through the introduction of positive and innovative sickness management policies¹⁰³, drawing on best practice. As a result, sickness absence fell by almost 22% in five years at a time when the trend for local authorities overall has been upward. Notwithstanding this, we recognise that further improvements are still required and we continue to explore and deliver new and innovative approaches to the issue.

We have a long history of providing good value-for-money and constantly seek ways to improve this further. Our approach to securing value-for-money and our achievements are set out in our Use of Resources value-for-money self-assessments.¹⁰⁴ We have consistently scored well in this category, scoring 3 overall and maximum 4 for the forward looking-element for two consecutive years.

Residents also recognise our effectiveness here – in the **2006 Satisfaction Survey**, 61% said they thought we provide good value for money, by some margin the best in the county with a net + rating of +22% some 36% better than the net average score for Nottinghamshire districts. We secured a similarly high result (58%) in the **2007 Tracker survey**.

Our overall financial effectiveness is reflected in full Use of Resources assessments. We have consistently scored 3 overall, against the progressively harder test – in our latest assessment, we scored 3 in all categories, demonstrating further improvement. We have a robust financial strategy¹⁰⁵ and sufficient capacity to support delivery of priorities over the medium term, as set out in our **Medium Term Financial Strategy**.¹⁰⁶ We consistently maintain adequate reserves.

The Council “actively manages its levels of reserves and balances and has spending plans which match available resources”

Audit Commission Use of Resources report – Jan 2008

Our bids for external funding are consistently targeted at delivering against our priorities. The recent successful bids for CCTV, Netherfield football and Arnot Hill Park have been complemented by £50,000 Lottery funding towards the cost of Park Rangers at Arnot Hill and £220,000 secured from the Big Lottery Fund in July 2007 to support various play activities through the Gedling Play Partnership¹⁰⁷. Play England have cited this partnership as “exemplary in many ways”.

We have consistently used ICT effectively to deliver objectives and service improvements, underpinned by a robust IT Strategy. We

“The Council is continuing to improve value-for-money whilst improving the quality of its services”.

Audit Commission Audit and Inspection Letter – Gedling Borough Council - March 2007

make full use of ICT to improve accessibility to services – on-line services have expanded significantly in recent years¹⁰⁸, while our website scores very well against the Government’s Web Accessibility Initiative¹⁰⁹. We have made full and effective use of IEG and external funding to deliver these improvements. Our Transformation Programme will lead to a further step-change here, through its promotion of significant channel migration with far more services available on-line.

Robust project management techniques are in place and we apply them consistently. For significant developments (such as the Transformation Programme), we use our own “PRINCE 2 Lite” project management process, described in full on our Intranet¹¹⁰, which draws on PRINCE 2 principles. Other projects use a simplified pro-forma version of the approach – these are required for all department and corporate Improvement Tasks in the Budget and Service Plan, and optional for other projects. We have recently updated the pro-forma to reflect the latest version of the PRINCE 2 Lite methodology and we briefed all Section Heads to introduce

these changes. Senior Management Team and relevant senior managers have been trained in PRINCE 2 principles.

Our **Procurement Strategy** is sound and up-to-date¹¹¹, and we use it effectively to improve services and value-for-money. Examples are set out in our latest Value-for-Money self-assessment – they include savings of £30,000 through joint procurement of refuse collection vehicles with other Nottinghamshire authorities. *Most recently, we have secured savings worth 9.5% on the procurement of small vans in partnership with the same group.* We have developed and delivered joint working and partnership arrangements with various other authorities, also described in our latest Value-for-Money self-assessment, and we are encouraging the development of more radical cross-boundary joint working across the county, including for waste collection – this is one of our key SCP Action Plan tasks.

We fund both Gedling Community and Voluntary Services (CVS) and Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire (R-CAN) to support capacity building amongst community and voluntary organisations, while our work in ABI areas has strengthened community capacity and engagement, with various community groups now taking a much more active involvement in leading action in their areas.

Our proactive approach to finding innovative ways to provide and deliver services is best illustrated in our Transformation Programme, with its emphasis on customer focus, efficiency and channel migration. The Programme is guided by a 'blue print' for services across the Council, supported by a business case which will deliver service improvements, provide for investment in priorities and contribute to efficiency requirements. We are carrying out full Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) across all services as part of the programme to facilitate the transfer of all first customer contacts to the Customer contact centre, improving customer service and freeing up front line service resource. BPR of back office services will streamline processes, increase resilience and reduce cost, by bringing various support services together in a single team. We recognise there are significant people management challenges in such a fundamental change and we are engaging employees fully in the programme,

operationally (through effective service-based training and redeployment) and culturally, (by engaging employees in the debate about new ways of working and the training and development needs to implement the programme successfully).¹¹²

4. Performance Management

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

We have a strong and embedded performance management culture, the embeddedness of which has been recognised by both the IDeA Peer Review and the Audit Commission in previous reviews and inspections. This culture continues.

We have a systematic monitoring and review process that allows for efficient and effective monitoring of performance against all relevant national and local performance indicators (including LAA measures), quarterly at a corporate strategic level through Senior Management Team and Cabinet, and more frequently in departments. Exception reports¹¹³ are presented to Senior Management Team to focus attention on areas for improvement, while full **Performance Digests**¹¹⁴ are presented to Cabinet on a quarterly basis and copied to all members to give a rounded view of overall

"The Council has a comprehensive efficiency plan and has met targets for achieving savings"

Audit Commission Audit and Inspection letter - March 2008

performance.

Further examination and scrutiny is provided through consideration of these performance digests at our dedicated Performance Monitoring Scrutiny Committee. Detailed annual performance (including LAA, national and local PIs) is reported to full Council in a year-end digest and in an overview form in our **Annual Report**, which we reintroduced in 2007 anticipating the demise of the Best Value Performance Plan. We aim to align the publication more closely with that of the Gedling Partnership in future years to give a wider overview of performance in the Borough.

Improvements to performance management introduced since 2003 include moving to a “traffic light” early warning system, introducing more targeted exception reports for senior managers and, perhaps most importantly, merging performance management with budget management in a single co-ordinated system. This ensures that performance management is integrated with the management of resources and provides a strong mechanism for sustaining focus on priority issues. We extended our resource development scoring system, already in place for some years for capital developments, to cover revenue developments to ensure that decisions on all new resource developments (cost-saving as well as developmental) are assessed against our priorities.

Most recently, with the introduction of our new priorities for improvement and the new LAA, we are ensuring that increased prominence is given to our key outcome measures within the overall performance management framework to ensure we remain focused on those issues of greatest strategic importance.

Achievements – Quest award

During 2007/08 the Council's five Leisure Centres put themselves forward for assessment under this quality assurance system and industry standard measure. Four were highly commended, scoring between 75% and 79%, very high scores for a first assessment. The fifth centre was assessed in February 2008 and also scored well. All now have the award.

We led recent development of a Gedling Partnership performance framework¹¹⁵, drawing on the good practice evident in our own framework but also building in a stronger focus on outcomes. The Partnership's performance management framework sets out high-level outcomes for partnership priorities, identifies indicators to assess progress towards these priorities and sets targets against these measures. Indicators and targets are closely aligned to Nottinghamshire LAA, Community Safety Partnership and to Borough Council indicators and targets where appropriate. Progress is reported six monthly, using a traffic light system, and an Annual Report¹¹⁶ is also produced and reported to the Partnership Board.

Where performance management identifies an area for improvement, we take action to remedy the situation. Persistent disappointing performance on crime figures encouraged our investment in CCTV and has contributed to improved performance in the town centres covered. Our CDRP routinely uses detailed performance information to target improvement at strategic and tactical levels helping it to deliver significant improvements to priority outcomes.

Lower quartile performance for a number of Housing PIs, combined with our inability to attract funds to deliver the improvements tenants want, inspired our decision to progress Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of our housing stock to bring in investment and drive improvement. Performance management has also identified and steered improvements to Benefits services¹¹⁷

We have taken the opportunity to proactively refresh our performance management arrangements in the light of the introduction of new national performance indicators (NIs), the new Nottinghamshire LAA and our own revised priorities. Our proactive work within the Nottinghamshire Partnership has ensured full alignment with the new Nottinghamshire LAA, with key Borough Council level targets incorporated in our performance management arrangements. We have agreed which former BVPIs we will retain for local application, driven by their links to council priorities and their relevance in providing valuable management information, and have included these in our latest **Budget/Service Plan**. The aim, already well in progress, is to develop a new “golden thread” linking high-level priorities with front-line activities.

We have programmed a fuller review of our performance management framework for 2008/09, to reflect new metrics arising from the Transformation Programme, confirm incorporation of new approaches arising from the new Nottinghamshire LAA and further align targets and processes with those of the Gedling Partnership. We will also take this opportunity to incorporate lessons learned from Peer Review and CPA corporate assessment. The review is also likely to introduce a new, purpose-designed, IT system for performance management for which a supplier has been identified in partnership with neighbouring districts, resulting in significant procurement savings.

We have a user friendly and well publicised complaints system, with guidance for staff and service users on how to submit a complaint or grievance provided through a number of means including the internet, intranet and staff handbook. Satisfaction with complaints handling rose sharply last year (up to 40%) and is now approaching the best in Nottinghamshire. Complaints about the Council made to the Ombudsman fell by 33% in 2007/08 compared to 2006/07¹¹⁸, with no findings of maladministration.

To assist performance management further we are working hard to develop a well understood user focus. A Customer Focus Working Group is in place and the importance of customer focus for the future is reflected in its pre-eminence in the Transformation Programme.

External Challenge – Culture and Sport Improvement Tool

In 2007/08, our Leisure Services Department began the process of self-assessment against the new Culture and Sport Improvement Tool (CSIT) developed jointly by Sport England and IDeA.

We are only the third Council in England to start this work, further demonstrating our openness to challenge and our commitment to improvement.

We are open to external evaluation and challenge and make effective use of opportunities to learn from these experiences¹¹⁹. In all instances, Improvement Plans capturing learning and improvements identified through the reviews are developed and acted upon – we have a good track record of implementing Improvement Plans and delivering benefits derived from them. The LSP Peer Challenge and the Home Office CDRP review have both been carried out in partnership with other Nottinghamshire authorities across the county.

4.2 Do the Council and partner organisations use their knowledge about performance to drive continuous improvement in outcomes?

We set challenging but realistic targets for performance improvement. At high levels, we set targets against strategic outcomes, aligned with partner agencies wherever practicable. For national and local performance indicators, we set three-year

targets where appropriate and review these annually. Integration of service and financial planning, as described above, ensures strong links between target setting and the management of resources.

We encourage cross-departmental working and corporate working groups, enabling best practice to be shared and, where appropriate, encouraging uniformity in the approach taken to improvement throughout the Council¹²⁰. These working groups are often led and co-ordinated by the corporate centre and their work links into corporate and partnership performance management. Our Customer Focus Group has developed a matrix that can be applied to all services to determine the extent to which they are engaged in improving and delivering customer focused services.

Our use of “traffic light” style reporting in both the Council and Partnerships performance reporting ensures the information is simple to access and easy to understand. We also use simple direction of travel graphics in our year-end reporting to aid understanding, important where the polarity of an indicator is not immediately clear. Quality of life information is included in Gedling Profiles, which are easily accessible from the home page of our website.

We recognise the importance of satisfaction measures as a key measure of service effectiveness to drive continuous improvement, though we try to balance these with more specific empirical measures, recognising that public satisfaction can be influenced by many factors outside the control of ourselves and our partners and is therefore an unreliable measure of council performance. We include satisfaction measures selectively amongst our high-level outcome measures and committed to carrying out overall satisfaction surveys annually¹²¹ (compared with statutory requirements to report every three years) to track progress with service satisfaction, overall satisfaction and wider quality-of-life issues. Results are presented to members in presentation form¹²² and reported in the Council’s magazine and on our website. Data can be drilled down to sub-Borough level and inform decisions on service changes. We are working with county-wide colleagues to agree an approach to future surveys with the introduction of the national Place Survey.

We use feedback from surveys to drive improvement. The latest triennial benefits satisfaction survey identified a drop in performance with regard to the telephone service – while we recognised that this would improve with the implementation of the new telephone system, in the meantime, we moved staffing resources to the contact centre to maintain standards in response to this customer feedback.

Borough-wide exercises are supplemented by local and service specific consultations. Local consultations¹²³ tend to focus on our more deprived areas, most notably in ABI areas, but draw on corporate survey questions so that comparisons can be made with the Borough as a whole. Action Plans derived from these consultations ensure that issues raised locally are addressed, as outlined above. Service specific consultations include a wide range of leisure and youth focused activities also as detailed above.

Customer feedback also drives service improvement more widely. There was extensive discussion with local Muslims in making arrangements for the introduction of Muslim burials, while customer concerns over health issues drove the re-introduction of weekly collections of non-recyclable waste during the summer months in 2007, which is to be continued in 2008/09¹²⁴.

Our strong performance management framework also plays a significant role in using knowledge to lead to improvement. We use comparative data, from the APSE used in Leisure Services and Direct Services, and from CIPFA comparative data in Finance as part of a CIPFA Benchmarking Club, to set targets for future service improvements and inform decisions on service changes, such as recently introduced changes to opening times at one of the Borough's Leisure Centres, and introduction of additional capacity to support capital accountancy and benefits work. Comparative information was a key factor in helping to secure Direct Services' recent success at the annual APSE awards.

We share external knowledge to help drive improvement and work pro-actively with partners to do so. Our strong learning culture ensures that we take opportunities to learn from successes and failures.

We report performance clearly and coherently, targeted at different audiences and using different formats. Quarterly digests,

year-end reports, the Annual Report and Corporate Plan updates are published on our website, as well as being available in hard copy form at libraries and reception points. We promote their availability in our magazine. We have recently incorporated our summary BVPP with the annual **Council Tax leaflet**, in partnership with all Nottinghamshire authorities – this is circulated to all households with Council Tax bills, and is also available on the our website. High-level performance information is presented clearly on noticeboards in the Civic Centre Main Reception.

What has been achieved?

5 Achievement and Improvement

5.1 What level of quality has the Council and its partners achieved (and/or not achieved) in relation to its services, priority areas and impact on local quality of life? And

5.2 - How much progress has the Council made?

We have delivered high quality across most of our services over a number of years and have secured improvements in often already high-performing areas. Our achievements, working with partners, have delivered real outcomes and had a positive impact on overall quality of life in the area. We have focused here on achievement against our priorities for improvement from 2004 – 2008.

Priority – Improve Community Safety

Working with partners, we have delivered exceptional outcomes against our target to reduce recorded crime in the Borough.

We have smashed the very challenging target to reduce crime by 22.5% over a three year-period, securing a 29.3% reduction. Performance over the past year has been exceptional, when we secured a 20.6% reduction, equal to 2,257 offences. Though this reduction has to be seen in the context of a reduction across the county as a whole, our performance is particularly notable as we have secured the biggest reduction in the county.

Within these figures, there has also been a significant reduction in acquisitive crime, a CDRP priority outcome. Taken together, vehicle crime and domestic burglary incidences have fallen by 48%¹²⁵ in four

years. Violent crime is also down – by 6.4% when comparing 2007/08 with 2003/04¹²⁶ but most recent trends show a more significant reduction. After an increase in the early part of the plan period, violent crime fell by 20.7% in 2007/08.

The Borough-wide picture is reflected in neighbourhoods, including in ABI areas, where crime has been an issue identified locally. Of particular note are improvements in the Carlton Valley ABI areas, where recorded crime fell by 13% during the 12 months to July 2007 (compared with a reduction of 6% across the whole sub-division for the same period), as a result of targeted action in the area. Chair of the Residents' Group in the area commented; "When the previous initiative was launched the meetings were full of people complaining about crime in the area. Crime has since come down because everybody was singing from the same hymn sheet including the police, the council and youth workers. We identified the problems and took action against it."

We have also seen reductions in recorded Anti-Social behaviour - new Police recording techniques mean that comparisons are only possible from 1 April 2006, but these show a 11.5% reduction in 2007/08¹²⁷, compared with 2006/07.

We have been less successful in addressing fear of crime – in spite of these substantial reductions in recorded crime, 56% of residents responding to the 2007 Tracker survey thought crime had got worse over the past year and reducing crime is still seen by residents as the top priority for improvement in the Borough. We have not secured the target levels for residents feeling safe that we sought in 2004/05 but survey results show that more residents feel safe in their local areas by day and by night in 2007 than they did in 2005¹²⁸, and 60% of residents agree that we are working well to make the Borough safer.

Our actions have delivered specific outcomes that have contributed to this success. We have: -

- Provided strong and focused leadership for the CDRP, mainstreaming community safety in line with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- Strengthened uniformed presence on our streets by supporting extra PCSOs when

they were most needed and developed our own Neighbourhood Warden service. There are now 7 wardens serving the Borough - working closely with local police, and taking part in joint tasking meetings with PCSOs. The wardens' work was

Effective Partnership working cuts crime

"Partners in the Gedling area were presented with a significant challenge- a reduction in crime in the area of 22.5% necessitated a strong bond to exist among the crime and disorder partners.

"Gedling Borough Council have been instrumental in setting the leadership tone for the partnership. Its wide understanding of Section 17 Crime and Disorder Act responsibilities was an excellent start point. However, recognition that Gedling's Crime problems were affected by the wider Nottingham conurbation led to the merger of three district partnerships and a strong link with the City Crime and Drugs partnership. This enabled greater leverage among key instrumental stakeholders and brought about focused effort to reduce crime.

"We have seen a true step change in performance that has now exceeded expectations and continues to impact on the quality of life for those who live and work in the Gedling area. The trend exceeds all national trends and is statistically significant. It has only been achieved through strong leadership backed up with empowerment and commitment of staff".

Peter Moyes
Assistant Chief Constable
Nottinghamshire Police

externally recognised when they secured the Warden Quality Standard.

- Adopted a tough, no-nonsense approach to environmental crime, making early use of powers to issue fixed penalty notices (FPNs) – we have issued 347 FPNs since 2003¹²⁹, 90% of which have been paid, and our work here has been recognised by DEFRA as best practice.¹³⁰
- Shared information effectively with partners through Gedling Partnership and the CDRP Partnership Strategic and Tactical Groups to obtain a comprehensive picture of local problems used to direct action.

- Made significant financial investment in CCTV, supported by external funding, which has contributed to reductions in town centre crimes¹³¹.
- Installed clear arrangements for public reporting of anti-social behaviour, including a dedicated Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinator who works closely with Neighbourhood Wardens and PCSOs and uses intelligence from all partners to identify and target hotspots.
- Pioneered the use of innovative Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) as an alternative to Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) - though we have also successfully obtained ASBOs where these are the most appropriate remedy.
- Introduced Shop and Pub Watch schemes in our main shopping centres, working closely with local retailers and landlords, backed by a radio scheme for which we secured £50,000 external funding. Reported acquisitive retail crime has now fallen, while Arnold town centre was 'highly commended' in the 'Promoting Community Safety' category of the 2005 Association of Town Centre Management Regional Awards.

Priority - Develop facilities, activities and a safe environment for children and young people

Within the overall Borough's Action for Youth agenda, we have concentrated our efforts on providing new and improved facilities and activities for young people, consistent with our priority. These facilities and activities have largely been developed in consultation with youngsters themselves to ensure the facilities meet their expressed needs. To achieve this, we have also shifted resources significantly towards children and young people over the past four years. The outcome is a significantly improved qualitative and quantitative offer for children and young people and as a result: -

- Over 7,000 Borough youngsters now hold a Gedling Leisure Card offering reduced price access to Borough Council leisure facilities. This represents 33% of the Borough's 0-16 year old population.
- There were almost 12,000 attendances by young people at our SHOKK Youth Gym at Carlton Forum Leisure Centre in

2007/08, up by 3,000 on the previous year.

- The Borough has 6 new play areas, three of which are shared with schools; 7 new ball courts, three of which are also shared with schools; 2 new skateparks and a climbing boulder facility, as well as 3 refurbished play areas¹³². The shared facilities with schools are available to the schools during the day and public outside school hours, providing valuable facilities in communities where there can be a shortage of public open space. All are designed in partnership with local youngsters and we are continually improving the way we develop these sites – the latest examples, at Jackie Bell's Field, Netherfield (an ABI area) involved using a group of artists to consult with local teenagers using video techniques; consultation with under 12s at a local junior school, again using video; and work with a local mother and toddler group to ensure the full age range was covered.
- There is extra time for young people's activities at Carlton Forum Leisure Centre following a review of opening hours and programming – this includes more sports hall time for junior sessions and clubs and extra pool time for swimming clubs¹³³ in line with our "Changing Lifestyles" strategy. Similar reviews are planned for the other four centres.
- We have attracted more young people to our sport and leisure facilities through increasing the subsidy on children's activities. For example, heavily subsidised activities and free swim sessions put on at the leisure centres over summer 2007 resulted in an extra 3,695 juniors compared to 2006. Joint working with the school sports forum to put on free after school swim has encouraged 1690 children to participate in these sessions since its introduction in September 2007.

Achievement - Redhill Disability Sports Club

This is a joint collaboration between Gedling Borough Council and Gedling School Sports Partnership (SSP) to set up and run a disability sports club within a leisure facility. Gedling Borough Council helped organise and coordinate the project while Gedling SSP fund the staff to deliver the activities as well as provide school age volunteer leaders to assist with activities. Leisure facilities, which are currently underused at off peak times, are being offered free of charge to help the programme operate. There have been 362 attendances at the sessions over a 29-week period.

We have also worked in partnership with other organisations successfully to increase opportunities for young people. Our achievements include Young People' Positive Moves (see page 9) and development of a new "drop-in" facility for young people in Arnot Hill Park, providing advice and a range of youth-related services. This is an excellent example of partnership working in action – our contribution was the building itself on a peppercorn rent; the County Council Youth Service manages the facility while various other agencies, including Nottinghamshire tPCT, provide services from it¹³⁴. The idea of a centre originates from the LSP/Scrutiny review of services for children and young people. We have also worked with partners to promote the achievements of children and young people to counteract negative perceptions of young people in the wider community¹³⁵. Other successful partnership actions include a significant reduction (almost 50%) in road traffic accidents involving children, with casualties falling by a third.

We have developed and adopted different and innovative ways of assessing our outcomes in this area since adoption of our first SCP – for example, in delivering facilities and activities for young people that meet with their expressed needs and expectations, we significantly upped our game in consulting extensively with young people before new sites are developed and more actively involved young people in the design and development process. This has been more effective and practically useful for us that the measures we had originally proposed and show that these facilities meet with young

peoples' needs and wishes and are well used. Our measures of attendance have also proved to be more robust as a means of measuring participation by young people in organised activities, while the development of our Youth Gym, particularly when its use is targeted through Positive Moves, is widely accepted as a beneficial intervention, given that exercise and fitness are key contributors to reducing childhood obesity.

We have learned from this experience for the future and in our current SCP have adopted the national "Every Child Matters" outcomes to reflect our priorities in this area. Increasingly, we see this as an issue that needs to be led through the Gedling Partnership and we have recently concentrated our efforts on developing capacity there to progress this agenda. We will encourage the Partnership to adopt relevant targets from the new Nottinghamshire LAA for application in the Borough, and will ensure that our own actions fully complement these.

Priority - Enhance the physical environment of the Borough

We have secured considerable and sustained success against many of our targets around this priority, particularly for those outcomes within our direct control, making a real difference to local people's lives.

We have surpassed our target for recycling – our figure for 2007/08 was 35.74%, significantly exceeding our 32% target. We are now the best performing authority in the East Midlands¹³⁶ for the collection of dry recyclates and one of the top 10 Councils in the country for this measure.

We've successfully reduced the amount of waste going to landfill, through our efforts to minimise the amount of waste generated. We've cut waste collected down to below 400kg per person for two consecutive years, again securing our three-year target.

Our streets are much cleaner. Levels of unacceptable littering have fallen from 23% in 2003/4 to just 5% in 2007/08, smashing our target figure of 16.5%.

Residents are very satisfied with our efforts in these areas. The 2007 Nottinghamshire Tracker shows 88% are satisfied with our kerbside recycling collection services (53% very satisfied) and 68% satisfied with street cleaning – we have sustained similarly high

Achievements – APSE Award winners

We won best performer category for the transport operations and vehicle maintenance service, and were finalists for best performer for street cleansing and most improved for refuse collection at the 2007 Association of Public Service Excellence Awards (APSE).

satisfaction levels for a number of years. Satisfaction with recycling has consistently been the best in Nottinghamshire. For waste collection, our 79% satisfaction figure for the year-round service (44% very satisfied) rose to 90% (70% very satisfied) for our weekly summer collection service introduced in 2007.

We've delivered these improvements through a range of techniques including: -

- Strictly enforced practices to reject overfilled and heavy bins, backed by a forceful publicity campaign called "Slim Your Bin" and positive promotion of recycling.
- Targeted improvement initiatives such as "Flying Skips", to discourage fly-tipping and a free graffiti removal service.
- Our tough, no-nonsense approach to environmental crime highlighted above.
- Re-introduction of weekly collections of non-recyclable waste in summer months in response to residents' health concerns, implemented successfully without impacting adversely on recycling rates.
- Clear branding and promotion of street scene services, reflecting best practice set out in the LGA's "Reputation" campaign, a single phone contact for street scene problems and rapid response to fly-tipping and abandoned vehicle reports.

Resident satisfaction with Parks and Open spaces has remained consistently high, at between 70% and 75% for the past four years. We did secure a Green Flag Award at Arnot Hill Park following £1m investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a key Nottinghamshire LAA target, and we are now using its management plan as a template for two other parks to apply for the same award. We also appointed 2 Park Rangers for Arnot Hill Park (one with lottery funding for 3 years) whose roles cut across all of our priorities including education, publicity, security and sustainability¹³⁷.

Satisfaction with the wider built environment has proved difficult to measure – less than 60% of respondents to our 2007 Tracker Survey answered those two questions - of those who did, the vast majority felt that things had stayed the same. Against this, residents' satisfaction with their neighbourhood overall remains high and we ensured that strong and effective policies around conservation were included in our Local Plan. That Plan, adopted in 2005, generated over 18,000 representations from unparalleled local consultation, ensuring community involvement in issues relating to the built environment. Key policies from the Plan have now been saved pending progression of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

Our State of the Borough report shows that most of the Borough enjoys good access to key services – but 2007 survey results suggest residents are not convinced that the key third party services such as shopping, public transport and cultural facilities have improved recently and there is a clear view that traffic congestion has deteriorated significantly.

Our support has also helped transform the former colliery lagoons at Netherfield into a nature reserve, while we continue to support for the development of part of the former Gedling Colliery/Chase Farm site as a country park.

Other priority achievements include: -

For continued provision of good quality, well-managed social rented housing, we have: -

- Securing our decent homes target of less than 12% non-decent homes by 31 March 2008 – just 8% are now non-decent.
- Increased percentage of urgent repairs completed within Government time limits – up from 97.89% in April 2007 to 99% by March 2008
- Reduced the number of families in temporary accommodation from 238 in October 2005 to 30 @ 1 April 2008.
- Prevented 23 homelessness cases in the first year of operating our new partnership First Lets¹³⁸ scheme.

To make services **more accessible and customer friendly** we have: -

Achievement - Changing Lifestyles; A Sport and Physical Activity Strategy

The Strategy aims to increase participation in physical activity. It has been developed through the multi-agency Gedling Sports & Physical Activity Partnership and has been praised for its innovation and partnership working. The Strategy has helped develop a number of successful initiatives, and has been promoted as notable best practice. Now in its second term, the strategy was rolled out following a successful pilot scheme used to identify costs, resources and other implications. Sustainability has been contributed to via a group of parents established applying for funding to extend the scheme. The scheme has been commended by Sport England and in Health Service Journal. User data shows a steady level of referrals and a good level of programme completion. It features a number of successful initiatives including a referral pathway for young people.

- Ensured 100% of IEG defined services can be delivered electronically, in line with IEG targets
- Sustained high levels of overall satisfaction with the Council – 2007 tracker results shows 67% are satisfied. Our 2006 BVPI survey result (65%) placed us in the Top 20 districts nationally and significantly exceeds predicted satisfaction levels based on deprivation.
- Increased the percentage of our buildings accessible to people with disabilities from 42.5% in 2003/04 to 96% in 2007/08.

The Transformation Programme promises further significant customer service improvement in future. It will introduce a call centre to enable a one contact resolution of queries and service provision wherever possible, reduce the number of telephone contact numbers to simplify contacting the Council for different services and allow further channel migration to the internet for service provision wherever possible.

Though we have only recently adopted “Good Health for All” as one of our own priorities, we have contributed significantly to partnership working to **reduce health inequalities**.

Recent achievements include progress towards reduction of avoidable injury, teenage pregnancy and smoking prevalence. Of particular note is “Positive Moves”, an enhanced GP referral scheme, which develops physical activity initiatives for local people managed by a steering group of health and leisure professionals, with staff employed funded jointly by the PCT and the Council. Evaluation of the scheme is being carried out to assess its effectiveness. Our “Get Going in Gedling” Health Walk Scheme has become a Natural England Walking the Way to Health Accredited Scheme and is one of the first in the County to become accredited.

Our performance for many services was already strong at the time of the last CPA – the 2003 Peer Review complimented our “flagship” core services. We have sustained and further improved services since then, as measured by national BVPIs and local BVPIs, reflected in consistently positive Audit Commission Direction of Travel assessments.

Compared to other authorities, analysis of national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) across all services from 2003/04 to 2007/08 shows we have secured consistent and sustained improvement. For 2006/07 (the latest audited figures available), 38.8% of our BVPIs are in the top quartile. This increases to 40% against 2007/08 unaudited results (when compared to latest quartile figures). For environmental performance indicators, which relate most closely to our priorities, the position is even stronger with 43% in the upper quartile in 2006/07 and 52% projected to be in the upper quartile in 2007/08.

	Top Quartile	2 nd Quartile	3 rd Quartile	Bottom Quartile
2003/04	29.5%	29.5%	29.5%	11.3%
2004/05	30.6%	24.4%	20.4%	24.4%
2005/06	36.5%	25.3%	26.9%	11%
2006/07	38.8%	24%	18.5%	18.5%
2007/08*	40%	25%	19%	16%

Table – Comparative Performance – 2003/04-2007/08

* =Vs 2006/07 quartile data

Across all BVPIs, we met or exceeded our 2007/08 targets for 67% of our indicators,

compared with 55% in 2006/07. However, this includes targets set against contextual indicators and other measures outside of our direct control. When attention is focused on priority issues, this rate increases significantly – for example, we met or exceeded our target for 90% of environment PIs in 2006/07 and for 81% in 2007/08, when we also met or exceeded our target for 86% of community safety measures.

Comparisons with our own performance also shows strong improvement. From an often high base, performance improved against 57% of BVPIs in 2006/07 and against 54% of BVPIs in 2007/08. Moreover, amongst those indicators where performance has stayed the same, some PIs are at the maximum possible performance. Improvement in 2006/07 was particularly strong against our priority environment indicators – 75% of environment PIs improved in that year – while in 2007/08 we demonstrated particularly strong improvement against community safety indicators, another priority area.

	Stayed same	Improved	Worsened
2006/07	11.8%	57.2%	30.9%
2007/08	27%	54%	24%

There are strong and positive perceptions of service improvement amongst local residents, with residents clearly thinking that services have improved since 2003. Results show a net + improvement score¹³⁹ for all district services in the Borough during the period¹⁴⁰.

Residents are also satisfied with the area as a place to live (typically around 75% in all surveys) and with the way in which the Council is working to address its priorities. We have generated consistently high levels

of agreement from residents that we are working to making their local area a better place to live; working to make the area safer and working to make the area cleaner and greener since these questions were first asked in 2006 surveys.

Improvements in many areas have been delivered through successful and often innovative partnership working, as evidenced throughout this document. The particular focus on improving community safety has ensured that our most obvious area of under-performance in 2003 has been addressed. Improvements to partnership working, including the new South Nottinghamshire Community Safety partnership, will strengthen resilience and ensure these improvements are sustained for the future.

Our work in ABI areas in particular is ensuring that accessibility, sustainability, community cohesion and the quality of life of most members of the community, including the most disadvantaged, are improving.

We are also contributing significantly to partner and County Council targets – examples include recycling rates contributing to the Nottinghamshire LAA target and recorded crime rates contributing to crime reduction targets across the Nottinghamshire Police force area.

We believe that our achievements have made a real difference for the Borough, improving quality of life for residents against those issues they have consistently said are most important to them. The achievements reflect the strong overall improvement we have made, demonstrating significant progress since our last CPA assessment as we strive for a Borough that is “Healthy, Green, Safe and Clean”.

Glossary of Abbreviations

APSE	Association of Public Service Excellence
BSP	Budget and Service Plan
BVPI	Best Value Performance Indicator
BVPP	Best Value Performance Plan
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CLG	Communities and Local Government (government department)
DEFRA department)	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (government department)
GNP Nottingham)	Greater Nottingham Partnership (the Strategic Sub-Regional Partnership for Greater Nottingham)
GOEM	Government Office for the East Midlands
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
SCP	Strategic Corporate Plan
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy
SMT	Senior Management Team

Footnotes and References