

# ***Promoting achievement; tackling disadvantage***

**Corporate assessment self assessment 2007**

**Draft 17.9.07**

## Context and summary

We are proud of our borough, of our council and its achievements. Stockton-on-Tees is at the heart of the Tees Valley city region, a borough of contrasts and amazing potential. In the last ten years we have driven its regeneration and year-on-year improvements to quality of life and local services. Described in 2000 as “a council which knows where it is going and how to get there” (IDeA) we have proved our vision capable of transforming both quality of place and of life.

We topped the national performance league for councils in 2006 as the only unitary council to have four stars and be improving strongly. Our service scores were the highest of the top ten councils, representing strong all round performance. Satisfying though this is, we will not rest. Our ambitions go far beyond topping a league table. We believe we can make Stockton one of the best places to live, not only in the North East but in the country.

### A vibrant, achieving borough

1. Local people are optimistic about the future of the borough. Public service improvement and sustained investment in physical regeneration are transforming quality both of place and life for local people. As a result is optimism about the future of the local economy is at a record high, and satisfaction with the Council in the top 10% of national results. For services, there are many notable successes e.g. an impressive rate of improvement in GCSE performance has narrowed the gap significantly between local and national results; overall crime levels are the lowest ever; our Borough is one of the cleanest and best presented in the country; our Youth offending, fostering and children’s services are excellent.
2. This turnaround follows a 30 year decline, which saw the local economy’s manufacturing base contract, leading to significant unemployment and deprivation. In the past, Stockton’s economy had a narrow industrial base and a consequent ‘dependency’ culture with relatively low levels of education and entrepreneurship. The physical environment was poor and largely post-industrial.
3. Sustained community leadership by the Council and its private, voluntary and public sector partners over the last 10 years has transformed this situation. The economy is stronger and more diverse. New housing, town centre facilities, businesses and residential areas around a cleaner, greener riverside represent real physical changes. Our Councillors and LSP, Stockton Renaissance, have driven a strategy to ‘promote achievement and tackle disadvantage’. Stockton is leading the Tees Valley’s ambitious city-region plans to drive a further step-change in economic performance across the sub-region. We are the largest borough in the Tees Valley and the only one experiencing significant population growth.

### A borough of contrasts

4. The borough is one of contrasts, a mix of busy town centres, urban residential areas and picturesque villages. In addition to Stockton-on-Tees there are four main townships: Billingham, Thornaby, Yarm and the new community of Ingleby Barwick.
5. Areas of affluence lie alongside areas of disadvantage. The borough is one of the most polarised in England, with 17 of our 117 Super Output Areas (SOAs) in the top 20% most affluent wards in England, and 40 within the 20% most deprived. Our success speaks for itself in areas such as education, employment and crime. But most important are the views of our residents: across the borough there is significantly more optimism about the future than in 2000 (a 23% net improvement) 26% believe the borough will improve but, remarkably, in neighbourhood renewal areas this rises to 41%.

### Stockton’s population

6. Our population is 189,100 but by 2029 we expect this to grow to 204,000. We are experiencing significant shifts in the make-up of the population, with rising numbers of older people but a decline

in children and young people. By 2029 there will be 3% fewer children but 62% more people over 65. The proportion of residents from black and minority ethnic communities is also rising, from 1.6% in 1991 to 2.8% in 2001 (over 5,000 more people) and we expect this trend to continue. We have more disabled residents (in part due to the ageing population), and a shift in population towards the south of the Borough (where the new settlement of Ingleby Barwick lies). These changes have significant implications and are factored into planning future public services, including schools, social care and health provision.

## A Listening Council

*“corporate commitment to the involvement and participation of children, families and other stakeholders is very strong” 2006 APA of Children’s Services*

7. We believe quality of life and public services can only be improved effectively in partnership with local communities, key partners and agencies. Biennial residents’ surveys since 1998 track the effectiveness of the community strategy. These, alongside other consultation and engagement mechanisms, give us a good picture of what is important to people in Stockton. In our most recent 2006 survey, key priorities matched those identified in 2004 concentrating on crime and anti-social behaviour but with an increased focus on the need to:
  - Improve public transport access, information and coverage
  - Improve town centres, particularly Billingham where progress had been slower than we would have liked.
8. Public priorities directly inform the borough’s community strategy and council’s plans. We continually seek resident and stakeholder views through a rolling programme of seminars and events helping us to balance local views with national priorities. More than 80 participants from all sectors of the community attended the most recent Stockton Renaissance stakeholder event helping to ensure that our new Sustainable Community Strategy is based on their views.
9. Stockton Renaissance and the Council continue to prioritise community safety despite record low crime levels, as tackling crime and anti-social behaviour remains a top priority for local people. Similarly, local leaders are prioritising work across the Tees Valley to improve the bus network as survey evidence shows this is becoming a significant area of public dissatisfaction, particularly amongst older people. Work with Tees Valley partners in the context of new city-region governance arrangements (whose development Stockton has led on) is leading to increasing influence on public transport provision. These city region arrangements include public transport and piloting a new national approach to improve accountability of bus operators for local bus networks and support longer term coordinated improvements.

## Partnership working in Stockton

10. Partnerships with the public, private and voluntary sectors and with local communities sit at the heart of our overall approach. Our commitment is shown through our LSP, Stockton Renaissance – a ‘partnership of partnerships’ extending beyond its main board into a series of eight thematic and four area partnerships, plus a Local Public Services Board which supports effective performance management by the LSP. Stockton Renaissance is highly effective at engaging with local people, enabling collaboration and empowering members, particularly through the strong Community Empowerment Network.
11. Our thematic partnerships are highly effective at providing leadership on thematic issues and tackling the things that matter to local people.
12. Area Partnership Boards provide a local engagement mechanism and link to neighbourhood partnerships and organisations. Each is represented on the main Stockton Renaissance Board. Extensive consultation and engagement inform the work of the partnership boards enabling their Chairs to feed the views of local people into the main Renaissance board.

## The Council

13. Stockton Council has 56 elected councillors in 26 wards. The most recent elections in May 2007 resulted in 22 Labour, 13 Conservative, 6 Ingleby Barwick Independent Society (IBIS), 7 Thornaby Independent Association (TIA) and 8 Liberal Democrat councillors. Three of the latter have since formed a new group, the Billingham Independent Association (BIA).
14. With no single party able to form an administration, (the Council had a Labour administration since its formation, albeit a minority administration for the previous period) after extensive discussions between all the groups a new 'Power Sharing' administration consisting of four Labour and four Conservative executive members was created with the Leader of the Conservative Group as Leader of the Council. In coming to such an arrangement both parties (and indeed other groups) have stressed the high degree of consensus that has always existed within the Council on policy issues and their desire to act in the interest of the Borough rather than be driven primarily by the national political scene. Membership of committees is politically balanced.
15. The new Cabinet continues to drive our ambitious community strategy which has all party support. The Council's constitution enables efficient but transparent decision-making with extensive delegations to Cabinet, which meets monthly. Each Cabinet portfolio is matched by a scrutiny committee. We have revised scrutiny arrangements twice to increase the focus on policy development, with good processes for engaging Cabinet portfolio holders ensuring that scrutiny offers strong, transparent challenge to policy development and decisions. There are seven scrutiny committees, an Executive Scrutiny Committee monitors the overall scrutiny work programme and call-in, plus Audit, Standards and statutory Planning and Licensing Committees. A Member Advisory Panel focuses on Member-related and constitutional issues.
16. At officer level the structure is organised into three main service groupings, each headed by a Corporate Director – Resources; Development and Neighbourhood Services; Children, Education and Social Care. This approach, introduced in anticipation of national change in children's services has been increasingly the model adopted by others nationally. These directors, with the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive, and Director of Law and Democracy make up the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT). Our management structure emphasises a distributed leadership approach through highly empowered Heads of Service, increasing our strategic capacity, focus on excellence and promoting integrated working.
17. Integration of all 'people-related' services in one directorate is a particular strength enabling joint developments to integrated services across both adults' and children's services, good working on health inequalities and joined-up approaches to lifestage transitions. We jointly fund a range of senior posts in adult and children's services with the PCT enabling strong partnership working. Integration of "physical" services within Development and Neighbourhood Services has enabled an integrated approach to both service improvement and our ambitious regeneration agenda.
18. Heads of Service together with CMT make up the 'Extended Management Team' of the Council, which meets monthly to steer strategy and policy development, solve problems and share knowledge. Our ongoing organisational development approach seeks to push more leadership and responsibility into the unit manager tier.
19. We externalise provision where it is cost-effective and/or gives significant opportunities to improve services. Examples include the Arms Length Management Organisation for housing (Tristar Homes Ltd), and a leisure trust (Tees Active Ltd). We have made significant progress in the development of a partnering arrangement with Darlington Council. There is an extensive mixed economy of social care provision and other services for children and adults. Other

arrangements include the privately managed theatre to a range of professional services partnering arrangements.

## A culture of excellence

20. Stockton Council is achieving excellent public services. We set high standards and address weaker performance quickly. Our ambitions and capacity to deliver are enhanced through our exceptional partnership working with public, private, community and voluntary sector partners, extending across the borough, the Tees Valley, the North East and nationally. We understand and listen to the needs of all our local communities, including harder to reach groups of children and young people, disabled residents, and residents from minority ethnic communities. Councillors are determined our work will improve quality of life for local people. We believe our present 'excellent' performance provides a platform for much greater improvement in the future.
21. Our Investors in People (2006) accreditation report describes our exceptional "culture of inclusion, innovation and empowerment". Our 2006 Annual Performance Assessment of children's services report identified the leadership culture as "excellent" with a "strong sense of moral direction and determination that no child or young person will be left behind" in the key change area of Children's Services.
22. We are self-aware and understand our strengths as well as areas that need to be improved. . Our breadth and depth of ambition, set out and developed over 10 years, with buy-in locally, across the Tees Valley, regionally and nationally puts us in a strong position to continue to transform the borough. We continuously seek ways to strengthen our services; recently focusing on planning, housing and human resources. Our sustained focus on achieving the ambition is evident, as is the culture of achievement and leadership from councillors, managers and staff. This extends from our core priorities into all services (e.g. national awards for Catering and Trading Standards). Our delivery approach is very much to put our resources into front line services, with a slim corporate centre and a distributed leadership approach.

## Self assessment scores

- **Ambition - 4**
- **Prioritisation - 4**
- **Capacity - 3**
- **Performance management - 4**
- **Achievement - 4**

## Ambition (4)

**Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is leading the transformation of our Borough. Consistently strong ambitions, focus, leadership and desire to achieve have modernised the council with the clear aim to transform local lives. Our drive is to promote achievement and tackle disadvantage, making Stockton a vibrant borough where local people realise their potential. Through a consistent focus since 1996, significant progress has been made – though we know there is more to do. A vision of this scale cannot be achieved in just ten years. We are determined to achieve our ambition, embracing our leadership role working at a national, regional, sub-regional and local level to make the borough a destination of choice to live, work and study.**

## Ambition for the area and community

23. We have set a clear and challenging long term ambition for the area and its communities. The Community Strategy's aim of promoting achievement and tackling disadvantage underpins our three part vision for the borough:

- Stockton-on-Tees driving **economic renaissance** at the heart of a vibrant Tees Valley city region.
- An **enhanced quality of place**, including renewed town centres and improved local neighbourhoods.
- Enhanced **well-being and achievement** for all adults, children and young people.

## Economic Renaissance

24. Achieving economic renaissance for Stockton is part of a wider city region approach to improving economic prosperity. We are at the forefront of the city region agenda. We have led the development of the highly successful Tees Valley city region concept and governance structure (Tees Valley Unlimited) and this has produced an investment strategy to transform the local economy over the next 20 years. TVU expects its Multi-Area Agreement to be one of the first to be agreed with government in April 2008.

25. Our strategy is to continue to build on the city region's economic assets such as:

- Our world class chemicals industry and research base and its' potential for further development both for chemicals and as a national centre for energy development.
- Our logistics infrastructure which includes major trunk roads, the River Tees and its port and the Durham Tees Valley airport.
- Our partnership with local universities (University of Durham Queen's Campus Stockton and the University of Teesside) strengthening opportunities for local people to develop advanced skills and promoting inward migration.

## Enhanced quality of place

26. Improving urban competitiveness and liveability is a vital part of our vision.

Without it we will not attract economic investment or attract and retain skilled people. We are focusing on:

- Regenerating our urban core through the Stockton-Middlesbrough Initiative (SMI).
- Improving liveability within our more disadvantaged communities through community engagement, housing and neighbourhood renewal schemes.
- improving our town centres and making environmental improvements.

## Well-being and achievement

27. Enabling and celebrating well-being and achievement is a fundamental part of our vision:

- Top class education from early years to graduation enabling children, young people and adults to achieve their full potential and contribute to the economic success of the borough and ensuring no child is left behind.
- Reducing health inequalities, narrowing the gap between our most disadvantaged areas and the rest of the borough through tackling core issues such as smoking, drugs and alcohol misuse, obesity, sexual health and teenage conceptions.
- Strengthening our communities through empowerment, engagement and consultation, increasing social cohesion, raising expectations and improving pride in the borough and the Tees Valley.

- Meeting the needs of our ageing population through enabling active, independent lifestyles.
- Making the borough safer through targeted policing and neighbourhood enforcement, the introduction of neighbourhood policing, designing out crime and working with local communities to identify hotspots.

## Ambition in partnership

*“it is absolutely clear that the ethos of the partners is focused around the borough, its people, and its future” IDeA LSP Peer Review 2007*

28. Partnership working is an essential part of our ambition and key to our approach to community leadership. Together with our partners in the public, private and third sectors we are ambitious for the borough and determined to achieve our vision. We trust each other. Our Local Strategic Partnership, Stockton Renaissance, is well established and highly effective. There is excellent Councillor representation in the partnership, with the Leader of the Council elected as Chair of the Renaissance Board and cabinet members’ involvement in thematic partnerships.
29. Renaissance members work together to develop and share a good understanding of the needs of the borough with a bottom-up approach to priority setting. We work hard through area partnerships, our children’s Participation, Involvement and Consultation (PIC) Network and in conjunction with the Community Empowerment Network (CEN) to understand the needs of different geographic areas and communities and through thematic partnerships to understand issues relating to health, community safety, economic regeneration and transport, adult care, housing and neighbourhood, arts and culture and children in the borough. Our Participation, Involvement and Consultation (PIC) Network focuses on gathering the views of children and young people through a variety of innovative approaches. This, together with analysis of socio-economic data, consultation results and performance information, informs the borough’s community strategy and various thematic strategies, determines where our neighbourhood renewal programme will be targeted, and has resulted in local area action plans.
30. Data collection and analysis arrangements are in place to support Stockton Renaissance in developing a shared understanding of need. These include the public health observatory, the information function at the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (JSU) and resources within the Council. For example, we have recently completed an analysis of available data for each of the six diversity strands. These “diversity profiles” are published on the council’s website and have been used to inform the borough’s Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-21 and the Community Cohesion Strategy. They will also be used as part of council and service planning 2008-11.
31. Our focus on data, consultation and engagement with communities including children and young people has driven the development of successive community strategies. In particular our biennial residents’ survey provides regular information about how local people feel about the borough, their quality of life and priorities for improvement. The new Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2021, has been developed to reflect changes in local people’s priorities identified through the 2006 survey as well as shifts in national policy, and the new city region approach to regeneration. The CEN led on the consultation process for the draft strategy, securing a high level of buy-in from third sector organisations.

## Ambition for the council

*“Partnership working is a strong feature of the council’s organisation and approach to commissioning.” 2006 Record of Performance Assessment for Adult Social Care.*

32. Our ambition for the council is simple – to deliver the best quality services, achieve value for money, continuously improve and provide high quality community leadership. Excellent service provision forms a solid foundation for the achievement of our economic, place, wellbeing and achievement vision. In particular, we are focusing on new models of service delivery through integrated services (both council and PCT) for children and adults, focused on early intervention and prevention; an access to services strategy; and a shared services partnership with Darlington Council to improve efficiency in support services.
33. Councillors and senior managers are prepared to take and stick to tough decisions in order to achieve our ambitions. Recent examples include decisions to close schools and care homes, successive decisions to prioritise financial resources to fund the forthcoming single status agreement and to challenge national proposals to reconfigure hospital services and restructure the police service.

## A shared ambition

*“a strong sense of all partners ‘rowing in the same direction’ with congruency of member, officer and partner views” IDeA Peer review of LSP 2007*

34. Our ambitions are clearly articulated through our planning hierarchy providing a “golden thread” from the Community Strategy to the employee appraisal process. Stockton Renaissance’s board, thematic and area partnerships regularly discuss the ambition and progress against the current community strategy and Local Area Agreement is reported twice a year to the partnership, helping to maintain focus in key issues.
35. The Council Plan translates the Community Strategy into objectives for the council to deliver. This flows through to Service Improvement Plans (SIPs), Business Unit Plans (BUPs) and individual employees’ objectives. We use Setting the Standard, Extended Management Team and a range of Member seminars to discuss and explore ambitions and projects that contribute to the achievement of the overall ambition. This collaborative approach helps ensure that staff, members and other stakeholders understand and contribute to what we are aiming to achieve.

### **CASE STUDY: Tees Valley City Region**

To be added

### **CASE STUDY: Ambition shaping with the Third Sector**

To be added



## Prioritisation (4)

Within our ambitious vision for the borough is a clear articulation of our short, medium and long term priorities. These are based on a thorough understanding of both need and impact at a community, borough and city region level. Priorities are transparent, shared and owned across the borough and local people are confident that they will be delivered.

### Priority setting

36. Effective priority setting has been critical to our success. We work with partners and local people to set the priorities for the borough and maintain our collective focus on our priorities when things get tough.

### Priority setting for the borough

*“It is a testament to the strong relationship between Stockton Renaissance and the Community Empowerment Network that we worked together to ensure that everyone had the chance to make their voice heard.” Chair of Community Empowerment Network, 2007*

37. The 2005-8 Community Strategy translates the overall vision of “promoting achievement and tackling disadvantage” into five improvement themes founded on resident needs and priorities:

- Economic regeneration and transport
- Liveability
- Safer communities
- Children and young people
- Healthier communities and adults

38. Driven by resident priorities (identified through consultation including our biennial residents’ survey and a robust analysis of relevant data about the borough) we set out detailed actions to deliver improvement. Our priority based performance framework is centred on the Local Area Agreement and a delivery focused Community Strategy. Stockton Renaissance and the Local Public Service Board (LPSB) regularly monitor performance against the Community Strategy and associated Local Area Agreement (LAA).

39. The new Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2021 developed during 2007 through extensive consultation and engagement continues this approach and sets the priorities for the next stage of the borough’s development. This regular refocusing of priorities to meet the overall ambition of promoting achievement and tackling disadvantage ensures we remain sensitive to residents’ needs, changes in regional and national policy and can capitalise on opportunities which support the vision. Our “dry run” LAA developed to help government test its arrangements for developing new style LAAs makes clear links between priorities and measures.

40. Through consultation, three additional priority areas have emerged more strongly than before as key contributors to quality of life in the borough – stronger communities, older people and arts, leisure and culture. In response, Renaissance has included these in the new strategy and will target action towards them.

41. Robust thematic plans support the Community Strategy with thematic partnerships in place to lead on the five core themes.

### ***CASE STUDY: Involving young people in planning***

Young people's views have influenced strategic planning, for example:

- Through the annual Children Trust Board children and young people consultation event, concerns about transport and about community safety have been shared between young people, elected members, partner organisations and senior officers of the council, impacting on subsequent service planning. This has been evidenced through Regional work with NERYA to influence and change private transport providers through projects such as Bus Buddies.
- Consultation with young people about homelessness led to the Youth Bus service being developed.
- Young people have a seat on the Steering Group for the Play Strategy and are being involved in the development of the Parenting Strategy. As a result of the comments made by young people the methodology for the parenting strategy was influenced, allowing them to begin the writing of this document.
- Young people have played a leading role in the planning and design of the new Youth Café.

### ***CASE STUDY: priority setting with diverse communities***

To be added

#### **Priority setting within the council**

42. Council priorities are shaped by the Community Strategy and articulated annually in the Council Plan. Our main focus is to improve the borough by delivering the community strategy and provide high quality services. Organisational objectives are also set, ensuring that the Council remains fit for purpose and has the skills and resources to deliver its outwardly facing priorities.

43. Our planning hierarchy has a "golden thread" between the priorities set in the Community Strategy and the Council Plan, and those in thematic plans, service improvement plans (SIPs), business unit plans (BUPs) and individual employees' objectives. This ensures a focus on the things that really matter to local people. Staff and other stakeholders are actively involved in priority setting and the planning process and we make good use of data and engagement with communities.

#### **Ownership and communication**

*77% employees understood council priorities and 86% were clear about service priorities. 2005 Employee survey*

44. Priorities are owned by stakeholders. Our inclusive approach to developing priorities ensures that those on whom success relies are "bought in" and committed to delivery. We communicate our priorities to residents through

summary Community Strategies, Stockton News, and Renaissance and Community Empowerment Network newsletters; and to staff through a summary Council Plan attached to every employee's payslip, Setting the Standard and team meetings. Results of resident surveys are shared across Renaissance, with all members and our senior and middle managers, ensuring there is a clear understanding of any shift in resident priorities and views.

### **Delivering priorities**

45. We deliver our priorities. Effective performance and project management coupled with strong financial planning ensure we achieve our objectives. Our Council Plan targets are challenging yet we consistently deliver around 77% each year.
46. Project management is strong. We categorise projects by significance, complexity and risk, with the most important monitored quarterly by CMT. Currently these include Building Schools for the Future, Integrated Services (both adult and children's), the Stockton-Middlesbrough Initiative and North Shore development, town centre redevelopment, housing regeneration schemes, the local development framework, waste strategy, access to services, single status and job evaluation, asset review and introduction of more flexible working, and the Stockton-Darlington Partnership. Together these projects represent the keys to continued success in achieving our inward and outwardly facing priorities. Where appropriate we use external expertise to test the rigour of our project management approaches through gateway reviews, e.g. for the Stockton-Darlington Partnership.
47. Other projects are monitored either by Service Group management teams or Heads of Service depending on their importance. All projects have a business case, sponsor, project manager and delivery team. Progress is reported to cabinet and executive scrutiny through the bi-annual council plan and SIP performance reports as well as at key stages where decisions are required.
48. Integrated financial and service planning enable the alignment of resources to priorities.. Our three year medium term financial plan (MTFP), agreed quarterly by members, compliments our inclusive budget setting process. Each year, members and officers meet to discuss priorities (including the latest views of residents), consider potential areas for budget growth, implications of efficiency targets (including our self imposed 1% inflation cap). Value for Money reviews and service reconfigurations also contribute to a pool of savings which are reallocated to priority areas. As a result, the 2007/08 budget process allocated additional resources to the Building Schools for the Future programme (£2 million), Access to Services programme (£750,000) and initiatives to tackle residents concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour (£492,000).
49. We do not limit prioritisation of resources to budget planning. Our robust service planning process considers ICT, HR, procurement and asset implications of each objective. Capital and asset, Human Resources and ICT strategies also link to the Council Plan and service improvement plans, completing the circle.

### **CASE STUDY: LAA feasibility testing**

To be added

## CASE STUDY: Building Schools for the Future

To be added

### Capacity (3)

**We have the capacity we need to deliver on our priorities and overall ambition. Our achievements to date are testament to this. Strong leadership, effective management, and a “can do” culture contribute to our ability to deliver. We take strategic risks where appropriate; have strong project management arrangements and an excellent approach to financial management. Our approach to Diversity has been strengthened and is delivering results. Delivery of new HR and ICT strategies will strengthen our capacity further.**

### Leadership and accountability

*a strong commitment to ethical standards, and an ethos of integrity throughout the organisation...amongst both officers and members inappropriate behaviour is not accepted and appropriate action is taken” IDeA peer review of Ethical Governance 2007.*

*“Leadership and management of council services for children and young people in Stockton-on-Tees are excellent” 2006 APA Children’s Services*

50. Stockton’s leadership credentials are well established. High quality politicians and senior managers focus on achieving the best possible deal for the borough. Stable and experienced managerial leadership coupled with collaborative cross-party political leadership enable us to deliver. Our “power-sharing” Cabinet, in place since elections in May 2007, hit the ground running following an early, comprehensive induction covering roles, and key regional, corporate and portfolio issues. This smooth transition was enabled by consistently engaging all parties in policy development and forward planning in previous years. The resulting stability confirms our ability to continue to deliver the Community Strategy and Council Plan.
51. Commitment to delivering the current Council Plan and Community Strategy is high, with Cabinet providing strong leadership and continuity of focus. Cabinet remains effective at taking timely, transparent and, when necessary, tough decisions such as those relating to Single Status implementation. Scrutiny is strong and focused. It constructively challenges the work of Cabinet and, while roles are separate and clear, there is an ongoing dialogue between Cabinet members and Scrutiny chairs about individual reviews.
52. Ethical standards are high. Roles, responsibilities and expectations are clear. Clear accountabilities and an open, supportive and respectful culture are the foundations of the strong partnership between Cabinet and senior managers. Heads of Service are empowered to deliver their services and to contribute (through EMT and Corporate Working Groups) to organisational development and problem solving. CMT provides excellent corporate strategic leadership. All middle and senior managers are expected to think “corporately” rather than just about their “own bit” contributing to a culture of joined-up working.

53. The organisation is fit for purpose. Our structure, systems and processes deliver an organisation that is focused on the things that matter most, operates corporately, empowers and innovates. But no organisation can stand still. We are considering how to further enhance our capacity, focusing on increasing leadership and initiative through to unit manager level and seeking to release yet more strategic capacity from senior management.

## Valuing people

*“...one of inclusion, innovation and empowerment. People have a genuine enthusiasm for the work that they do, and this is reflected in the results that are achieved” Investors in People assessment report 2006*

*“The enthusiasm and commitment of the senior management team inspires individuals at all levels” APA of Children’s Services 2006*

54. Our people are our most important asset. Our culture is strong and empowering, celebrating achievements, tackling problems collectively and setting high standards in everything we do. We invest in our employees and members through:

- A competency framework and appraisal process for all employees.
- Easy access to a wide ranging training programme organised by North East Regional Employers Organisation (NEREO).
- Supporting staff to achieve NVQs, MBAs and technical qualifications such as CIPFA.
- A management development programme for all third and fourth tier managers.
- “Setting the Standard” – our regular middle and senior managers’ conference, focusing on policy and delivery.
- Strong participation in the North East Improvement Partnership, including helping shape their programme of development events for officers and members.
- A wide range of in-house training courses covering topics such as risk management, health and safety, minute taking, report writing.
- A strong member development programme focusing on skills and topics to enable members to be effective in their roles.

55. A human resources and workforce strategy builds on our existing approach to organisational, workforce (including recruitment and retention) and skills development. It brings together service-based approaches to workforce planning and builds on the strength of our multi-agency planning for adults and children’s services. The strategy has five high level goals:

- Developing the organisation: achieving excellence in leadership and management.
- Becoming a modern and diverse employer with the ability to recruit and retain a high quality workforce, representative of the community.
- Developing internal effectiveness, ensuring HR has the skills and capacity to help Stockton achieve its objectives.
- Developing workforce skills and capacity to ensure we have employees with the right skills, qualifications and competencies at all levels of the organisation.
- Providing a safe and healthy environment and engaging with our employees through effective two-way communication.

## Diversity

56. Equality of opportunity is embedded within the council and underpins our commitment to the Community Strategy. Our approach has been to raise awareness of diversity issues through the Customer First programme including “roadshows”, information packs, criteria within the award standards, pilot equality impact assessments and cultural awareness training for members. This was effective at generating an appetite for a more strategic approach. Diversity remains a key focus within Customer First. This is complemented by advice and support to services in meeting the needs of diverse communities and a co-ordinated response to the challenging local government equality standard. Progress against the standard is good – we expect to jump from level 1 to level 3 during 2008/9 and already meet several of the criteria in levels 4 and 5.
57. Achievements in the last year include:
- Publication of two editions of our Single Equality Scheme (SES) to meet the Disability and Gender duties. The Scheme has been developed through consultation and engagement and will be updated again in March 2008 with a revised Race Equality Scheme. The SES has been praised by Trades Unions.
  - Introduction of a refreshed equality impact assessment process covering all six equality strands, including piloting, training and publication of assessments.
  - “Tell us what you think” events targeted at disabled people (2006), residents from black and minority ethnic communities (2007) and plans in place for an event focused on the lesbian, gay and bisexual community in 2008.
  - The creation of a Disability Advisory Group focused on working with council services to improve accessibility. The group also monitors the council’s progress against the Disability Action Plan in the SES.
  - Supporting the development of a BME Network within the LSP family.
  - Development of a diversity training programme for employees.
  - Consideration of equality implications in decision making.
  - Publishing “diversity profiles” analysing key data for each equality strand to provide valuable information to services and partners in carrying out impact assessments.
  - Publication of guides to effective consultation with BME residents and disabled people.
  - Development and implementation of a translation, transcription and interpretation policy including training over 400 employees in using the telephone translation service.
  - A number of outreach events such as the Middlesbrough Mela, and Tees Valley SuperGay event promoting the council’s services and as an employer.
  - Support for Stockton Renaissance’s development of a community cohesion strategy .

## Partnerships and procurement

58. Partnership working is embedded within our culture and integral to the way we work. A partnership register and health check tool ensure we have good governance arrangements in place for all our partnerships including conflict resolution. Our LSP, Stockton Renaissance, LPSB, thematic partnerships, area partnerships, delivery partnerships such as those with the PCT on joint commissioning and delivery of adult and children’s services, and with Darlington Borough Council on support services are all proving effective. Increasingly we are developing joint approaches to workforce development and working in partnership helps all concerned to achieve value for money.

## ***CASE STUDY: of Integrated Services***

To be added

### ***CASE STUDY of Stockton-Darlington partnership***

Stockton on Tees and Darlington Borough Council are neighbouring unitary councils. Both facing similar pressures and challenges around, increasing customer and government expectations, financial pressures and Gershon efficiency targets. To address this a public/public partnership was developed.

The objectives of the partnership have been defined and agreed by both Councils as:

- to jointly provide a range of corporate and transactional services to Darlington and Stockton Borough Councils;
- to secure efficiencies whilst retaining highest rated performance, building upon the knowledge and best practice, cascading this throughout,
- improve service capacity and resilience;
- to form a nucleus around which both Councils and future partners could align service delivery;
- to build capacity in partnership councils, securing intellectual capacity, recruitment and retention and sustainability;
- act as an exemplar or prototype of collaborative working for the North East;
- to ensure that the partnership is both “future proof” and expandable.

59. Our strategic approach to partnering, procurement and commissioning is effective in ensuring we use a variety of solutions to meet our needs and achieve “best value”. For example:

- In adult care services, Council and PCT officers work in a joint team to commission joined-up, coordinated care services: single contract management arrangements for residential and nursing care ensure continuity of care and maximise effectiveness.
- Officers, jointly funded by both the PCT and the Council, commission integrated services to meet the needs of children and their families. This unit recently received funding to develop regional approaches to specialist commissioning of services for vulnerable children across the North East..
- We actively procure other goods and services by collaborating with other sub-regional and regional authorities through formal and informal consortia, making the most of aggregating demand to deliver value for money. This includes waste management, vehicles and fuel, energy, some social care contracts and many low value goods such as stationary.
- Our Chief Executive chairs the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership
- Technical Services have developed good contractual partnerships with the private sector to provide significant flexibility in service delivery and access to new skills and expertise.
- Our Third Sector partners deliver almost half of our neighbourhood renewal funded initiatives including the Corner House Youth Provision (crime), Twister Arts (children and young people), specialist debt and housing advice service (housing), healthy lifestyles (health) and Stockton Online (employment and enterprise). Partners are kept informed of

contract opportunities and supported in ensuring they have appropriate governance arrangements in place.

60. Procurement contributes significantly to our efficiency savings – 27% of Gershon savings to date are via procurement. Procurement skills are spread across the council by training, using the North East Centre of Excellence and 4Ps and cascaded across the organisation.

### **Resource and risk management**

61. Our strong financial and performance management ensure value for money is embedded in our culture. Medium term financial planning (MTFP) processes are well embedded with resources targeted to priorities and reserves well managed. The budgetary control process and quarterly MTFP reports to CMT, Cabinet and Executive Scrutiny allow flexible use of planned over- and under-spends supporting service development. Our financial stability and Use of Resources score testify to our strong management arrangements in this area.
62. The MTFP has focused for 10 years on managing cost increases and making savings generating a proactive approach to efficiency including business process re-engineering, more effective procurement, income generation and innovation on an “invest to save” basis. A programme of “value for money reviews” is in place where costs appear comparatively high but on the whole services are low cost and high performing.
63. Management of capital programmes has improved following a 2006/07 review of capital and asset management – just x% of spend was off profile in the first six months of 2007/8. A new strategy takes account of assets across the Council and key partners, particularly in the regeneration area but also taking into account the Stockton-Darlington Partnership. Use of external funding is maximised, linked to priorities. We have a strong track record in attracting external funding for key strategic projects such as the iconic North Shore footbridge. The total project costs for the bridge will be c£14.7million and will be fully funded by government and European grants.
64. ICT systems have delivered efficiencies and more modern services with good use made of e-government opportunities. The Agresso financial management system has generated £xx in efficiency savings, the PSE system has made our transactional HR processes more efficient and the E-genda system has streamlined democratic administration as well as providing residents with easy access to meeting information and decision records. We use technology to innovate within services – for example, hand-held devices are used in car parking enforcement, in community safety in tackling anti social behaviour and other incidents and by the pest control service and technology is maximised in our approach to sharing information about children to improve integrated working. A new ICT strategy focuses on ensuring our use of ICT remains fit for purpose and delivers more efficiencies over the medium term.
65. Risk management is embedded across the council through our decision making, service planning and project management arrangements. We take well-managed strategic risks in order to deliver our ambition. Strong governance arrangements and project management, together with regular risk reviews mitigate against reputational, financial and operational risks. Risk assessment is embedded within our planning and decision making processes, including those approved by Stockton Renaissance. CMT and Heads of Service regularly review significant risks.



## Performance Management (4)

**Effective performance management underpins our extensive record of achievement. An integral part of our culture for over ten years, performance management at Stockton is vigorous, challenging, outwardly focused, linked to priorities and based on trust and openness. Weaker performance is identified quickly and addressed through constructive solution-focused clinics and focused interventions and support.**

### Our performance culture

66. Our performance culture is:

- Challenging: a framework with rigorous expectations supported by regular monitoring and reporting of performance at service, service grouping and corporate levels.
- Constructive: with an emphasis on mutual reflection and learning rather than criticism.
- Comprehensive: looking outwards to feedback from the public and service users, and inwards to analysis of performance indicators and progress of key projects.

67. Effective systems underpin this culture ensuring good quality performance information is collected, reviewed and challenged by managers and members. Our multi-layered approach ensures the right people consider the right information at the right time, without being “bogged down” in too much detail. CMT, Cabinet and Executive Scrutiny consider key information, such as progress against targets in the Council Plan and the corporate basket of indicators. Heads of Service review progress against business unit plans and service level key performance indicators. In addition to our strong risk and project management approaches (outlined elsewhere) there are six key features to our approach to performance management.

### Robust, integrated service and resource planning framework

68. An annual planning cycle links together the budget setting process, identification and prioritisation of service improvement objectives and non-financial resource implications (HR, ICT, procurement etc). Planning takes place between September and March starting with consideration of resident priorities and service workshops to identify areas for improvement and development, associated risks and resource implications. Members consider suggested improvements and developments alongside resident priorities and available resources through a series of seminars and surgeries. These processes result in the Council Plan, Service Improvement Plans (SIPs) and Business Unit Plans (BUPs), with the Council Plan and SIPs agreed by a special Council meeting each March. A strong “golden thread” is in place between all our plans, driven by the core improvement themes of the Community Strategy.

69. This approach results in full alignment of plans and the MTFP; early identification of financial pressures (and time to seek alternative funding before calling on council resources); and full integration of risk assessment. It has also enabled full inclusion of council-wide actions, such as those to meet equality duties and reduce sickness absence, and the development of new council-wide ICT and HR strategies. Plan objectives also feed into the individual appraisal process for employees at all levels of the council.

### **Robust performance monitoring**

70. Corporately, performance against the corporate basket of performance indicators, complaints and commendations, Gershon cross-check measures and LPSA targets is reported quarterly to CMT, Cabinet and Executive Scrutiny. Progress against the council plan and SIPs is reported twice a year. This provides senior managers and members with an overview of performance across the council and promotes debate of key performance issues and more detailed work by individual scrutiny committees where appropriate. These performance reports are also made available to residents via the Council's website and an annual performance review is published in Stockton News.
71. CMT improvement clinics form a key part of this process as a collaborative solution-focused forum where lead officers share "thorny" performance issues such as sickness absence or performance against national planning standards. Most issues are identified and resolved at service level (through a similar "clinic" process) without CMT intervention and services are empowered to address them. The Clinics also consider a thematic topic enabling focus on a range of issues. The 2007/08 thematic programme includes performance in adult services, a review of educational attainment, a review of the performance of Tristar Homes Ltd and Tees Active Ltd and consideration of the effectiveness of our approach to equality and diversity.
72. Cabinet members receive regular performance overviews from CMT, ensuring they are aware of issues emerging and their implications. A joint Cabinet and CMT Performance Board considers key performance issues in more detail and this in turn feeds the planning process.

### **Strong scrutiny arrangements**

73. Scrutiny focuses on both policy development and performance improvement. The scrutiny work programme is informed by performance issues arising from Executive Scrutiny's quarterly performance review. Reviews drill down into performance information as part of their evidence base and make recommendations on how performance can be improved. Engaging Cabinet members in the scoping and outcomes of scrutiny reviews enables recommendations for improvements to be better received at Cabinet, enabling Scrutiny to successfully contribute to improved council performance. Scrutiny committees also consider performance issues that arise outside the agreed work programme. Where Executive Scrutiny considers a more in-depth consideration of a performance issue would be beneficial but it doesn't fit with the programme, then a special meeting may be called to gather evidence and make recommendations. This results in timely scrutiny rather than waiting for a review of the work programme.
74. Scrutiny has driven a range of improvements to services to date including:
- Improvements to the access arrangements and management of Preston Hall and Park.
  - Improvements to the way consultation is planned and results shared with members and residents.
  - Improvements to the Youth service including the planned provision of a series of Youth Cafes to meet the aspirations of young people.
  - Improvements to waste management arrangements including a recently completed kerbside collection trial of plastic and cardboard for recycling.

Scrutiny has also successfully challenged proposals to relocate maternity and paediatric services out of the borough.

### **Listening to residents and stakeholders**

75. Resident satisfaction and views play a key part in our approach to performance management. Resident views inform our priority setting, service and resource planning, help us decide how to change and improve services and help us track our progress in achieving our ambition.

76. We use numerous ways to gather the views of residents and stakeholders including:

- Analysis of direct feedback such as complaints and commendations.
- ViewPoint (our 2000 member Residents Panel) – regular questionnaires to both adult and youth panels on key issues, plus focus groups to test ideas and investigate issues in depth.
- ‘Tell us what you think’ events, both around priorities and budget setting and targeted at specific groups at risk of disadvantage such as disabled people and our BME communities.
- A biennial independent residents survey.
- The national BVPI resident survey.
- A range of innovative approaches to gathering the views of children and young people through the Participation, Involvement and Consultation (PIC) network.
- Our annual conference for older people – “are you being served?”
- Ad hoc consultations on particular regeneration schemes or key issues.

77. Results are disseminated to services, members, partners and participants and included in performance reviews. Many results can be analysed by a range of different factors such as geographic area, age of respondent, ethnicity, etc. This leads to targeted action rather than wasting resources on a borough-wide improvement programme if this is not necessary. Complaints, comments and commendations drive service development. Customer First includes criteria about good quality, accessible feedback systems and ensuring that feedback is used to develop services. Performance reports at both service and corporate level provide analysis of complaints and other feedback and monitor standards such as those for responding within specified timeframes.

### **A strong partnership performance framework**

78. The Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement (LAA) are underpinned by a strong strategic partnership performance framework. Government Office North East have green-rated both the LSP and the LAA, demonstrating the strength of our approach. Members of Renaissance are heavily involved in setting the community strategy and agreeing the measures and targets of the LAA. Progress reports on the Community Strategy and LAA are considered twice a year.

79. The LPSB concentrates in LAA development and also considers the performance of the public sector bodies operating in the borough twice a year, enabling common issues to be identified and tackled together. LPSB members challenge each others’ performance, particularly where it impacts on other partners’ ability to be able to perform. Our joint approach to the commissioning and management of adult and children’s services with the PCT enables this as an ongoing process.

### Openness to external challenge

80. We invite external challenge to help us ensure we remain high-performing and learn from others' experiences. In the last year we have undergone a peer review of the LSP, an ethical governance peer review, two Gateway reviews of the Stockton-Darlington Partnership, and involved a senior officer from Sheffield City Council in an improvement clinic on housing with Tristar Homes Ltd. Our own officers regularly participate in peer reviews of other councils. This, and our participation in the Beacon Council Scheme and other award programmes such as Charter Mark, helps us share Stockton's good practice and gather ideas from others to improve our own practice.

## Achievement (4)

### Summary of achievement

**Performance in achieving outcomes for local people is strong. Stockton has an outstanding track record of success. We have transformed our local public services. Educational attainment is at an all-time high, crime at its lowest ever level and our streets are some of the cleanest and best presented in the country. We have also regenerated our town centres and the riverside area and unemployment has declined at a faster rate than the national/regional average.**

81. Our achievements are reflected in a string of glowing external assessments, awards and ratings. Since achieving 'excellent' CPA status in 2003, we have improved further, attaining the top CPA service block scores in the country in 2006. Our Direction of Travel rating of 'Improving Strongly' reflects our ongoing focus and the determination to continue to improve life in Stockton. We pride ourselves in achieving excellence across the board – not just in our priority areas as demonstrated by our awards and assessments which include:

- Top CPA rating for the fourth year running; Improving Strongly direction of travel rating; highest service block scores of any CPA top 10 council.
- Beacon status in healthier communities 2005 and emergency planning 2007.
- Shortlisted for LGC Council of the Year for the third time in five years; 2006 LGC Management Team of the Year (Horticultural and Grounds Maintenance Services); 2007 ICT Development of the Year; 2005 Finance Team of the Year (for the second time).
- Top rated Youth Offending Service. One of only 8 nationally to achieve 5 out of 5.
- Top Children's Services in the North East in 2006 (Annual Performance Assessment) - "delivering well above the minimum requirement"
- Investors in People re-accreditation against the new tougher standard.
- Winner of 2007 best Tees Valley cultural event and best in the North East for Stockton International Riverside Festival.
- Commended in MJ 2007 Councillor Development Award for "Guide to member roles".
- Winner of Best City in Northumbria in Bloom four years running

82. Public satisfaction is high. Satisfaction with the Council is at an all-time high at xx%, and higher within our more deprived communities than in the rest of the borough (xx%). Satisfaction is running ahead of national averages by a significant margin and improving faster, in spite of the significant level of deprivation in the borough. IPSOS MORI found that 'all statistically significant changes in ratings of services since 2004 have been positive'. We are particularly proud that residents

have given us a top rating on value for money, with one of the top results nationally found by IPSOS MORI and a 10% improvement on 2002.

83. This high overall satisfaction was reflected in the Autumn national user satisfaction survey, which saw Stockton attain top quartile results in half the key areas and bottom quartile in just three. This is in spite of the significantly higher levels of deprivation within the borough than many local areas nationally. The high levels of satisfaction are the result of sustained improvements in key services.
84. These results show our great performance on communicating with the public, via our award winning Council newsletter Stockton News. They also show the great strides we have made in partnership with Tristar homes to improve the quality of housing services, with satisfaction levels now running ahead of the ALMO's 2 star status, at some of the best levels in the country. It is particularly pleasing to see the success of our focus on community engagement and participation with tenants.
85. Our waste, recycling and cleanliness ratings show the fantastic turnaround from one of the dirtiest towns in Britain in 2001 (The Times) to one of the highest quality environments anywhere. The satisfaction ratings were achieved through outstanding performance on missed bins, on recycling scheme coverage and on cleanliness of streets and one of the highest levels of diversion of waste from landfill in the country.
86. Alongside these are our excellent services for children and adults and vast improvements in our town centres, local housing renewal and riverside area. Many of these are detailed in the sections that follow, but it is particularly worth highlighting here how children and young people are central to our improvement agenda. They are the future of the borough and promoting achievement for future generations has been at the heart of our strategy for the past 10 years. The results speak for themselves.
87. The 2006 Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services rated Stockton as 4 out of 4, top in the North East. We have achieved:
- Significant and sustained increases in GCSE attainment: 41% in 1999, 46% in 2004, 55% in 2005 and 60% in 2007 (provisional) with no school below floor targets, further narrowing the gap with the national position. Stockton was the most improved borough in the country in 2005 with a 9% increase on 2004.
  - Significant and sustained increases in Key Stage 2 attainment. 2007 performance was above national averages in all subjects, representing a three year improvement trend. We have been congratulated by Ministers for being one of the most consistently improved authorities in the country at KS2.
  - Significant improvements in the quality of school teaching: in 2006 96% of lessons were judged satisfactory or better, 77% good or better and 12% outstanding.
  - Two primary schools in the top 100 nationally (St Therese of Lisieux and Levendale, which scored the best results for an English primary in 2006).
  - Effective SRAS (Schools Requiring Additional Support) procedures, with very few schools falling into Ofsted categories, and effective support to enable the few schools causing concern to become self sustaining.
  - The most significant reduction in absence for Looked After Children over the past year compared with our statistical neighbours.

- Reduction in teenage conception figures from a relatively low baseline of 52 per1000 in 1998 to 46 in 2005, giving Stockton the third lowest rate in the region
- Excellent fostering service – 2007 inspection.

### **Sustainable communities and transport**

**We are fully committed to making a positive difference to people’s lives through regeneration and community development. Our exciting and progressive programme of major redevelopment is transforming the borough. Projects ranging from housing schemes and town centre development to rural conservation and river based development contribute to the most significant and ambitious regeneration programme in the borough’s history. Our community leadership role extends beyond the borough to the city region including a focus on developing the urban core of the Tees Valley in partnership with Middlesbrough Borough Council. Residents say that Stockton is improving and that they are optimistic for the future.**

### **Key achievements**

- Resident optimism about the future of the local economy is exceptionally strong at 28% (England average 11%) with residents in neighbourhood renewal areas; satisfaction with the area as a place to live is 73% (76% in Neighbourhood Renewal areas).
- Improved town centre facilities in Stockton, with schemes under way in Billingham and Thornaby; three major housing regeneration schemes underway in Mandale, Parkfield and Hardwick.
- Better utilisation of the River Tees for leisure; development complete at Teesdale with ambitious projects in place to develop North Shore including an iconic footbridge
- Employment levels above North East averages.
- Significant improvements in quality of council housing resulting in improved tenant satisfaction.
- Strong community engagement and ownership of regeneration through Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder and Neighbourhood Element.
- High performance and resident satisfaction for cleanliness; restoration of Ropner Park impacting on house prices in adjacent wards; winning Northumbria in Bloom four years running and a silver award in Britain in Bloom(2006); low levels of waste going to landfill; improvements in recycling rates.
- Improvements in road infrastructure to enable regeneration e.g. South Stockton Link Road and North Shore road access scheme; development of a Tees Valley City Region approach to public transport improvements.

### **A sustainable economy**

88. Significant improvements in employment levels are the result of our focused approach to economic development and include initiatives in our most deprived communities through successful neighbourhood renewal programmes. We actively promote business growth and our Employability Consortium ensures a joined up approach to employment issues from key agencies. We have successfully reduced the gap between employers’ needs and the skills of the labour pool through educational and training opportunities. Physical improvements have made the borough more attractive to businesses; Stockton is now a location of choice for several national and international companies, driving

up land values and further improving the desirability of the borough for business. Our ambitious regeneration strategy provides an integrated framework for developing a better quality urban environment and using physical regeneration as a driver for economic growth and diversification across the borough.

### **Sustainable housing and neighbourhoods**

89. We are transforming areas of low demand, halting decline and promoting a sustainable future. Three major housing regeneration schemes are improving housing standards and tackling actual and potential market failure:
- Unsuitable stock demolished in Mandale replaced by mixed tenure dwellings attracting higher levels of demand.
  - Hardwick's masterplan is starting to be delivered including extra care housing, a new primary school and improved open spaces.
  - A scheme for Parkfield developed in partnership with the local community, focusing on updating obsolete and unpopular town housing and meeting the needs of BME residents.
90. Council housing stock has significantly improved including performance on energy ratings. Relet times have dramatically decreased in the last three years. Work continues to improve financial assistance packages and the transfer of our sheltered housing to Erimus Housing Association demonstrates our commitment to improving provision for one of our most vulnerable client groups.
91. Our future strategy focuses on longer-term issues and includes a review of our arrangements for future management and maintenance of our stock by completing a comprehensive stock option appraisal. Housing plays a key role in our regeneration plans, including 2,500 new homes along the riverside and in Stockton Town Centre.

### **A sustainable environment**

*"Ropner Park was a real riot of colour with outstanding presentation, the town centre was amazing with outstanding floral impact, the standard of grass cutting was the best seen anywhere and the absence of litter had to be seen to be believed" Northumbria in Bloom judge 2007*

92. We pride ourselves on the quality of our environment. Clean streets and top quality parks and open spaces are important to our regeneration programme. Residents are highly satisfied with our Care for Your Area services. Our commitment to the Northumbria and Britain in Bloom programmes generates significant pride in the borough for local people.
93. 100% of the borough is covered by kerbside collection of multi-materials; all homes with a garden receive green waste collections; recycling and composting rates are improving; we have excellent rates of converting waste to energy and one of the lowest landfill rates in the country at 8.7%. We use a wide range of initiatives to promote waste reduction, recycling and composting.
94. Our Warm Zone and European waste management project contributes to improving air quality and energy consumption. Our Climate Change action plan extends our Nottingham Agreement commitment, signed in 2002. We plan to reduce resource consumption by 10% in the next five years as one of ten authorities in the Carbon Trust Management programme.

## Transport

95. We are improving accessibility, enabling people to reach their destination through a range of multi-modal infrastructure improvements across the borough and wider city region. We encourage alternatives to car use through cycle and walk ways and support an extensive concessionary fares scheme. Real time bus information has been introduced and disabled people can access all forms of public transport. Falls in bus patronage are lower than in the national average; footfall at railway stations has increased and cycle trips have risen significantly. Congestion and road traffic accidents are low.
96. Significant resources are invested in footpath, highway and environmental improvements, building on our history of investing in local safety schemes. Our cycle, pedestrian and road safety training programmes target vulnerable groups and schools within our priority neighbourhoods. School travel plans focus on safer routes to school and improved cycle networks.

## Safer and stronger communities

**Our communities are safer than ever before, with crime levels at an all time low and the lowest in the Tees Valley. Fear of crime and anti-social behaviour are reducing thanks to excellent partnership working between our award-winning Safer Stockton Partnership and “bright green” rated Drugs Action Team. In 2006 94% of residents said they felt safe walking during the day (86% in 2002) and 54% felt safe walking after dark (up from 43% in 2002).**

**We know our communities well. We listen to the views of local people and understand their priorities. Consultation and engagement feeds our approach to service development. Relationships with the Third Sector are strong, built upon long term relationships and support. Our communities are getting stronger – in 2006 69% said they felt proud of the area, 66% felt people from different backgrounds get on well together (63% in 2004) and 59% that ethnic differences were respected (53% in 2004).**

## Key achievements

- Lowest crime rate in the Tees Valley in 2007. Lowest level of dwelling burglary since 1970s; violent crime down 13%; deliberate dwelling fires down by 28%; robbery down by 29% to just 31 crimes at a time when nationally levels have increased by 4%
- Significantly fewer people feel unsafe outside during the day (down to 15% from 32%) and after dark (down by 21%) from 2002-6.
- Range of awards and external validation – eg Beacon status for Safer Stockton Partnership in 2004 and for Cleveland Emergency Planning Service in 2007; Safer Stockton Partnership in Home Office top 10%; “Bright green” rated Drugs Action Team since 2003/04; ‘Most valued contribution to Arson Prevention’ in Fire Brigade Community Safety Awards 2007.

## Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour

97. We are delivering excellence for residents. The Home Office rates the Safer Stockton Partnership (SSP) as one of the top 10%; our Youth Offending Service one of only 8 nationally to be rated at level 5, the Healthcare Commission judged our substance misuse service as excellent in 2007. Our community safety plan is founded on extensive consultation and engagement with residents. Our success lies in a sustained and effective partnership with the police and other key



agencies, resulting in joint priorities, joint targeted operations and pooling of funds to deliver. The results speak for themselves – the lowest level of crime in the Tees Valley.

98. Our ward-based approach sees council officers and Police Community Support Officers (co-funded by the council) working side by side in our flagship Neighbourhood Enforcement Service, sharing intelligence (including that gained from CCTV) and resolving local issues. Our success is founded on a joined-up approach to prevention, intervention, enforcement and support. We successfully apply our powers to tackle enviro-crime and anti-social behaviour. Using sophisticated intelligence, award-winning technology and community consultation, we analyse information, establish trends, identify hot-spots and target resources to priority areas before problems escalate.
99. We are effective at providing advice and victim support and actively promote projects and awareness raising campaigns such as reporting offensive incidents, POD (Play OutDoors) and the ROACH campaign to help children and young people become good citizens.

#### **Tackling drug and alcohol misuse**

100. Our approach to tackling drug and alcohol misuse is strong. Through partnership working we focus on education, prevention and treatment for young people and adults and on minimising availability and maximising the cost of drugs. We've been an "intensive drugs intervention programme" area since 2004. We actively promote FRANK and other campaigns and work with schools and parents in areas where there is an increase in anti-social behaviour. The Neighbourhood Enforcement Team works with other parts of the council to carry out targeted operations. Operation Tranquillity is proving effective through the introduction of night-time gating to reduce alcohol-related crime and disorder. Our test purchasing scheme is effective with targeted weekend operations and our campaign against alcohol misuse "Think B4U Drink" has won multiple awards.

#### **Emergency planning**

101. Thankfully we rarely have to use our emergency and business continuity plans. However, our approach to readiness is extensive and robust with regular exercises focusing on possible threats to the Tees Valley, including a toxic chemicals leak and pandemic flu. The Cleveland Emergency Planning Service's excellence has been recognised in a Beacon Award in 2007. Business Continuity Plans are aligned to the Emergency Plan and focus on maintaining core services no matter what the circumstances.

#### **Building stronger communities**

102. We understand the borough's communities through our extensive consultation and engagement. This, coupled with a sound understanding of data about the borough, has provided a solid foundation to develop the Sustainable Community Strategy and emerging Community Cohesion Strategy. Our approach is making a difference – more residents think the borough is a place where people from different backgrounds and ethnicities get on.
103. Our extensive approach to diversity focuses not only on our statutory responsibilities around race and disability but takes an holistic approach which underpins our "talking disadvantage" objective. Equality impact assessments are in place for new policy and strategy and are being carried out on existing services.

104. Our Compact with the Third Sector is embedded and has recently been refreshed to embrace the latest thinking. The Third Sector is heavily involved in service provision, providing around 47% of NRF schemes and services to the value of c£3.5million for children and adults.

## Healthier communities

**We are successfully improving the health of the borough. Our targeted actions, delivered in partnership, are reducing health inequalities. Regular monitoring and analysis of need supports strategic priorities and targeting of activity, particularly for vulnerable groups.**

### Key achievements

- Early death rates from circulatory diseases have improved at a faster rate than nationally (gap has reduced, based on rate per 100K population under 75 years, from 39.09 in 1996 to 18.66 in 2005).
- Exceeded stretch LPSA target for smoking cessation with over 4800 people still “quitters” after 4 weeks.
- Significant increase (47% to 88%) in proportion of drug misusers sustaining or completing treatment over the last three years.
- Sustained high levels of child immunisation, above national rates (latest data: 92.5% by 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday, compared to 84.9% nationally; and 95.4% by 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, compared to 87.1% nationally).

### Improving the health of communities

105. Life expectancy and premature death rates have improved particularly early deaths from heart disease and strokes. Infant and perinatal mortality rates have improved and remain better than national figures. These achievements reflect many effective initiatives e.g.:

- A sustained focus on smoking cessation especially smoking during pregnancy. In 2006/07 we achieved the lowest level of smoking mothers in the North East (21.6%). Key factors include smoke free environments, support to employers on implementing the smoking ban, tackling smoking in schools and targeted trading standards action focused on underage sales.
- Improving housing and tackling fuel poverty – our WarmZone programme has lifted 6000 people from fuel poverty.
- Use of temporary accommodation has decreased significantly and is now better than the national average; a high proportion of care leavers and young offenders live in suitable accommodation (88.9% and 97.6% respectively). Our work on youth homelessness has Centre of Excellence status.
- Exercise on Prescription and other healthy lifestyle schemes have contributed to a high percentage of adults participating in physical activity. 55% of schools have achieved the healthy schools standard; nutritional standards in schools have improved; an obesity referral pathway for children and young people is in place; 80% of schools have achieved our drugs action award; there are healthy lifestyle drop-ins in some schools; and 1,000 clients are on the Sports Development team’s healthy lifestyle programme. The team itself was the first in the country to be rated by Quest as “excellent”.
- Health protection measures include a higher level of immunisation than nationally and active promotion of health screening.

### Reducing inequalities and improving access

106. We target our efforts to reduce health inequalities on the communities in the most need. For example:

- NRF and Children’s Fund projects focus on healthy diets and exercise, alcohol support and health awareness training for carers in our most deprived neighbourhoods, with many delivered by the Third Sector.
- Access to health services for our most vulnerable children and young people is good. 96.4% of looked after children receive a robust health assessment – more than the national average; young offenders have access to a range of joined up health services through a dedicated advisor; young people receive timely assessments for substance misuse and mental health issues.
- The latest nationally reported data on teenage pregnancy showed improvement with rates in Stockton the 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest in the North East; we actively support teenage parents into work and training.
- SureStart centres provide a range of health related services to disadvantaged communities including targeted midwifery services, positive peer promotion of breastfeeding and parent support groups. All centres have achieved the UNICEF certificate of commitment for their baby-friendly initiatives.
- Access to information about dental care has improved following a scrutiny review.

107. Mental health services are improving, with strong performance in the 2006 assessment of services, waiting times reduced and more employment opportunities for adults with mental health needs through the STEPs project.

108. Access to health-related services being improved through the development of our locality-based multi-disciplinary integrated services for both children and adults, demonstrating our firm commitment to preventative health and social care responsive to local needs. A parenting strategy is in place underpinning our integrated approach to family support.

109. Community engagement with disadvantaged groups is extensive and includes:

- Healthy lifestyle education sessions by the Neighbourhood Management Pathfinder.
- Drug awareness sessions targeted at local BME communities and women’s groups delivered by the Stockton International Family Centre (SIFC).
- Support for young BME residents from the Corner House project focused on sexual health and substance misuse.
- Regular engagement with “hard to reach” young people on the development of services such as the Youth Bus and Youth Café.

## Older People

**Our approach to older people is based on meaningful engagement and consultation and goes beyond the traditional “care” model, focusing on the things that matter most to this increasingly large section of our population. Our well-being services for older people are delivered through cross agency partnerships and are good quality.**

### Key achievements

- Development of Older People’s Strategy covering all key public sector partners.
- Embedded approach to consulting and engaging older people.
- Exceeding our LPSA target on take-up of direct payments.
- Introduction of extra care housing and telecare.
- Increase in older people supported to live at home; decrease in older people using residential care.

## Strategic approach

110. Our draft Older People's Strategy is based on a thorough understanding of projected population change in the borough. We currently have a younger population profile than the rest of England but we know this picture is changing. By 2025 we expect there to be 60% more people over the age of 65 and 145% more aged over 85. The strategy focuses on the current and future needs of older people, aiming to ensure that all services have considered the needs of older people, and that older people can access, on an equitable basis with the rest of the Stockton population, services that meet their needs. Developed by the Adult Care Partnership through engagement with Area Partnerships and Stockton Renaissance, the strategy is based on the "seven dimensions of independence", setting out key national and local data and trends, and the implications of this analysis for the development of services to meet needs.
111. We will use the strategy to inform service planning from 2008 onwards and will regularly update it to take into account changes in population estimates, further consultation with older people, etc. The Sustainable Community Strategy considers older people's issues as one of its supporting themes, demonstrating that Stockton Renaissance is committed to understanding the needs of older people and working together to meet them. Together with health colleagues we are delivering a BME health strategy and have carried out a range of inter-generational projects.
112. There is strong political and managerial leadership on older people's issues. Both the Cabinet member and scrutiny chair champion the interests of older people and have been key in addressing independent living issues. Our approach to joined-up commissioning and service provision with the PCT ensures care services meet needs. Age is mainstreamed within our equality work with all new key policies being assessed for impact against a range of criteria including age.

## Meaningful engagement

113. Mechanisms for listening to and engaging with older people are well established and include:
- An Older People's Forum providing strong co-ordinated engagement across all service areas, not just care services.
  - An annual "Are you being served?" event involving more than 200 older people and their representatives
  - A bi-annual "Golden Guide" (directory of services)
  - A quarterly magazine is distributed to over 2,000 older people.
114. Our Third Sector partners help us engage with "harder to reach" groups of older people e.g. the dementia café developed with Clevearc; work with Help the Aged and Age Concern to consult with older people; and work with SCRAGA to improve older people's representation on Area Partnerships. Older people are satisfied with the quality of our consultation and engagement with them. Results of consultation are fed back through newsletters.
115. Consultation and engagement with older people results in real improvements such as the introduction of IT classes as part of our day services and addressing feedback from learners about adult education classes. We are also developing a home improvement agency as a result of feedback about needing a "handyman" service.

116. The council's ViewPoint residents panel and Disability Advisory Group provide an additional way of engaging older people. Viewpoint survey results, along with those for all our major residents surveys can be analysed by age group, gender, ethnicity, etc. Consultation plans and results are published on the council's website and in newsletters.

### Range of services

117. In partnership with the PCT, we commission a broad range of care and support services for older people and, through NRF support, increased independence and access to leisure facilities. Improved support for older people was prioritised in the 2004-7 LPSA with a stretch target for direct payments exceeded. Performance in minimising delays in transfers of care between the PCT and Council and in planning to manage long term conditions is excellent based on close working between health and care providers. Improved support for independent living through e.g. telecare, community matron and intermediate care programmes are having an impact. The proportion of older people helped to live at home is increasing and admissions to residential care are decreasing (Stockton is performing better than the national average in this latter measure). Some older people formerly receiving residential care are now being supported to live more independently through our extra care schemes. Our carers service has achieved almost twice its stretch target for carers breaks and other support We provide specific support for the BME community to access services.

118. Longer-term housing development meets the needs of the growing older population through improvements in existing housing stock and the development of new models such as our extra care villages. Our 2 star Supporting People programme has led to a Housing, Care and Support strategy for older people and the creation of a floating support service to help older people remain at home. Community equipment services are fully integrated across health and social care; improvements in performance are being sustained and we are exploring further efficiencies. Well developed telecare services target those most in need. Our work to develop a partnership approach to welfare benefits and finance is increasing incomes of older people on benefits.

119. We are working in partnership with the PCT to develop "Integrated Service Areas" linking operational staff across disciplines (including care management, community nursing and therapy services) to provide high quality joined-up services to older people and other adults. In addition, there are proposals for care outside hospital through step-up-and-down beds, support-to-care pathways and enhanced occupational therapy. This will build on practice based commissioning at a local level.