



Leading Edge

DRAFT

Corporate Plan 2007 - 2010

An inclusive approach

We wish to develop our future Corporate and Best Value Performance Plans in consultation with partners, residents and service users. We welcome your views and any comments you wish to make on this Plan.

If English is not your first language and you would like more information about this document, or if you require information in large print, Braille or on tape please contact the Policy Unit on 388017

Standard translations: BENGALI/ URDU/ CHINESE/ HINDI/ ARABIC/ PUNJABI/ POLISH
[If English is not your first language and you would like more information about this document please contact the Policy Unit on 388017].

Contact details

The Town Hall is the focal point for the Council and it is the main point of contact for the residents of Darlington. You can contact us here by:

Telephone - (01325) 380651

Fax - (01325) 382032

Minicom: (01325) 388088

or by mail, our postal address is:

Darlington Borough Council, Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT

Our website can be found at:

www.darlington.gov.uk

Email address:

Enquiries@darlington.gov.uk

Executive Summary

The last year has been one of continued progress for the authority.

Outcomes

Darlington looks different:

- Pedestrian Heart (the pedestrianisation of the town centre) is nearing completion, introducing new enhancements to the Town Centre and creating a quality environment;
- The state of the art Darlington College has opened, and includes a University of Teesside Centre;
- The £5 million refurbishment of the Dolphin Leisure Centre has completed; dramatically improving provision within the Centre and providing new facilities ensuring a contemporary leisure feel for customers;
- The development at Commercial Street has received planning permission with Debenhams having been secured as the key anchor store for the scheme;
- Work is well underway on the Darlington Eastern Transport Corridor;
- A new way of delivering Street Scene services is now embedded, and satisfaction levels have increased.

Our performance

In terms of performance, we have maintained a proven track record of delivery:

- Darlington has once again been externally assessed by the Audit Commission as a 4-star authority which is 'improving well';
- The contribution of the local authority's social care services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people has been assessed as 'outstanding' by CSCI/Ofsted;
- Adult Services has demonstrated improvement and is now the maximum 3-stars;
- Performance of non-financial BVPIs has improved for the seventh year in succession, with an improvement of 4.39% in 2006/07;
- The contribution of the local authority's children's services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people has been graded as a service that *consistently* delivers above minimum requirements for users;
- Single status has been successfully introduced;
- Overall, the authority has made good progress against Community Strategy themes;
- The authority has systematically used performance management to improve service provision, with the authority classed as 'performing well' for management arrangements around data quality.

What the public told us

Results from the Annual Community Survey for 2006 show that:

- General satisfaction with the Council (at 63.6%) is consistent with previous results and maintains a relatively high and stable position in recent years;
- Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods is high overall (at 78.0%) but this is variable, ranging from rural wards (89.5%) to the most deprived areas (69.7%);
- Those living in Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy priority areas were more likely than others to think things had got better in their neighbourhood over the past two years.

2006 also saw the national BVPI General Survey, a 3-year measure of public opinion across all local authorities. Of 13 indicators, 9 improved and 4 declined, including overall satisfaction. The relationship between improving satisfaction with services, and a reduction in overall satisfaction with the council is a key area for us. During 2006/07 there was major disruption caused by the refurbishment works at the Arts Centre and Dolphin Centre (which have now been completed to popular acclaim) and town centre pedestrianisation, impacting on satisfaction perceptions. We expect the positive impact of this to be reflected in subsequent surveys.

Positive outcomes reflect areas that have received targeted investment or undergone service improvement in recent years, for example:

Street Scene operational changes - the introduction of area working and greater accountability at a locality level have delivered real improvements in cleanliness and residents' satisfaction (67% satisfaction with cleanliness up 9% from 2003);

Refurbishment at the Civic Amenity Site - has delivered improvements in satisfaction with waste management and recycling. Satisfaction with waste recycling at local facilities is 71% (up 8% from 2003), and satisfaction with waste disposal at the local tip is 86% (up 5% from 2003);

The regeneration of South Park and Street Scene initiatives - has brought about improvements in the satisfaction with our green areas. Satisfaction with parks and open spaces is 77% (up 11% from 2003).

The top priorities for improvement mirror those with the lowest satisfaction. Youth services, roads and pavements received the lowest satisfaction although the latter two are improving in satisfaction year on year. The Council is using the information that the public tells us and this is reflected in targeted investment through the Let's Get Cracking initiative (roads and pavements) with similar investment through the Local Area Agreement on play areas and youth facilities. With private sector investment in town centre parking we aim to increase satisfaction in the future.

The authority agreed its first Community Engagement Strategy *A Bigger Say and a Better Deal for Communities* in April 2007 and has already commenced implementation, demonstrating our commitment to be a more inclusive and engaging authority.

The Corporate overview

We have had much success with our corporate and service planning arrangements and they have been outlined in some detail in previous Corporate Plans. Similarly, our previous organisational development strategy *Striving for Excellence* helped to direct the authority to its current 4-star rating by focusing on people management, performance management and effective communications. The Community Strategy has been in place for five years and has served Darlington well.

Whilst the Community Strategy has been very successful, the recent White Paper *Strong and prosperous communities* and previous consultation papers are powerful drivers in the Council's approach to community planning. The vision for what Darlington needs to look like to inform the long term, up to 2030 for example will be set out in our new Sustainable Community Strategy. At the same time we will develop a fresh Local Area Agreement to act as the Community Strategy's delivery mechanism. Revisions to corporate and service planning and medium term financial planning, underpinned by the implementation of *Leading Edge*, our organisational development strategy, will ensure that our vision for the future is deliverable and realistic and that we have the capacity as an organisation to evolve and remain fit for purpose.

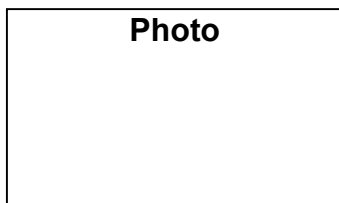
Foreword

We are pleased to present Darlington Borough Council's Corporate Plan, which also fulfils our requirements to publish a Best Value Performance Plan. It aims to present a means of assessing the Council's overall performance and sets out a clear summary of our future direction and priorities.

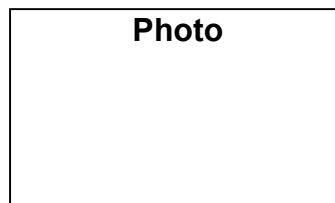
Details are presented of our performance across all services during 2006/07 so that you can see what we have achieved. This plan includes further targets to show how we intend to improve those services in future. Future plans are based on the views and priorities of the people we serve as we seek to improve the quality of life for all in Darlington.

We are proud that Darlington Borough Council is rated as a 4 star authority under the Government's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). However, the environment in which we operate is constantly changing in terms of policy, statute, expectations and aspirations of local people, partners and central government. We already know, through a period of reflecting on future demands and opportunities, that we will need to work differently in the future to provide better customer services, collaborate more with other organisations and to meet ever rising public expectations. We have articulated this as: promoting the borough and the council; influencing public services; providing excellent services and championing the needs of communities and customers. Our new organisational development strategy will help to ensure that the organisation has the capacity, capability and systems to enable it to achieve our vision.

Darlington has an excellent opportunity to continue in its direction of travel in recent years, address the national context and ensure that the Council becomes renowned as a leading edge authority. We have set out our clear commitment to meaningful dialogue and engagement with residents about the vision for the area and quality of our services in the Community Engagement Strategy. The development of a new Sustainable Community Strategy for Darlington will enable us to set the future vision for many years to come. Looking back, 2006/07 was another successful year for the Council. We continue to be high performing, but not complacent. It is a demanding year ahead. Whilst the old arrangements have served us well, it is right that we refresh them and continue to move forward to become a Leading Edge organisation.



Councillor John Williams
Leader of the Council



Ada Burns
Chief Executive

Contents

		Page
	Foreword	
Section 1	CORPORATE OVERVIEW	
	Introduction and purpose of the plan	9
	A new approach to corporate planning	10
	Organisational Development Strategy – Leading Edge	12
Section 2	OVERALL PERFORMANCE	
	Summary of key achievements by theme	17
	Overall assessment of performance for 2006/07	28
	Customer satisfaction	29
	Progress against plans	31
	Performance analysis	35
	External assessment	36
	Management of resources	37
Section 3	CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITIES	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the local economy 	44
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting inclusive communities 	45
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising educational achievement 	46
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulating leisure activities 	47
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting community safety 	48
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving health and well-being 	48
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing the local environment 	49
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an effective transport system 	51
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing our capacity to improve 	53
Section 4	APPENDICES	
	A guide to the performance indicator tables	57
Appendix 1	Best Value and Local Performance Indicators	59
Appendix 2	Local Area Agreement Reward Element Targets	77
Appendix 3	Statement on contracts	81
Glossary	Glossary of abbreviations and key terms	83
Index of PIs	Page references for performance indicators	--

Comments and feedback

Copies of this document have been widely distributed, internally to all managers and individual teams, and externally to all those agencies playing a significant role in the Borough or currently working in partnership with the Council, covering organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. Additional copies will be available for public reference at the Town Hall reception area, neighbourhood housing offices and libraries. A copy has been posted on our website.

We wish to develop our future plans in consultation with partners, residents and service users. We welcome your views and any comments you wish to make on this plan.

Please address any feedback or general enquiries to:

Andrew Robinson

Policy Manager

Chief Executive's Office

Darlington Borough Council

Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT

Telephone: (01325) 388014 Fax: (01325) 388018

Statement of responsibility

Darlington Borough Council is responsible for the preparation of this Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan and the information and assessments set out within it. The Council is also responsible for setting in place appropriate performance management and internal control systems from which the information in the plan has been derived. The Council is satisfied that the information and assessments included in this plan are in all material respects accurate and complete and the plan is realistic and achievable.

SECTION 1 – CORPORATE OVERVIEW

Introduction and purpose of plan

The Corporate Plan is the Council's high level strategy that links to the Community Strategy for Darlington. The purpose of the Corporate Plan is to:

- Identify the Council's priorities and contribution to the Community Strategy;
- Provide a strategic document linking to departmental and service plans and individual actions;
- Drive improvement by focusing on citizens' priorities captured within service plans;
- Help communicate the Council's agenda;
- Provide information about the area and the Council relevant to residents' views and priorities.

The plan is structured into four main sections:

Section 1 – the corporate overview, describing the context of the Council's organisational development and summarising the changes and transition to new arrangements;

Section 2 – how have we performed, highlighting a retrospective look at performance using the framework of the Community Strategy, including an additional theme around enhancing our capacity to improve;

Section 3 – the Corporate Plan, our high level document showing strategic objectives and actions with indicators showing how we measure progress;

Section 4 – appendices, outlining detailed data with 3-year targets. Appendix 1 reports against the full set of national Best Value performance indicators and local indicators. Appendix 2 details those reward element targets included in the Local Area Agreement, and Appendix 3 sets out a brief statement on all contracts involving the transfer of staff.

A new approach to corporate planning

The authority signalled its intention to become a more inclusive and engaging authority by agreeing its first Community Engagement Strategy *A Bigger Say and a Better Deal for Communities* in April 2007.

The Community Engagement Strategy agreed six main recommendations:

- (a) taking a planned approach to engagement, analysing future plans and deciding in advance what level and type of engagement activity is needed;
- (b) linking the outcomes into the Council's business planning processes so that we prove what difference engagement is making;
- (c) defining localities and engagement at area level;
- (d) modernising communications;
- (e) capacity building/training work with officers, elected members and stakeholders;
- (f) developing a programme of medium-term actions, which will be put forward for Council approval in summer 2007.

Much progress has already been made, primarily through the targeting of existing resources on community engagement through the establishment of the Connecting with Communities Unit and the inclusion of community engagement as a key strand of our organisational development strategy. The first recommendation to take a planned approach to engagement has already led to the prioritisation of various activities over the coming months. Progress is being accelerated around:

- (a) forging closer working relations with the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and other stakeholders in the delivery of key strategies and policy documents;
- (b) modernising communications, and;
- (c) exploring arrangements at neighbourhood level.

The Council shares with its partners the vision set out in our existing Community Strategy 'Where quality comes to life'. It has driven services and priorities for the past 5 years. Whilst the Community Strategy has served the borough well, the recent White Paper *Strong and prosperous communities* and previous consultation papers including *Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping their future* are powerful drivers in the Council's approach to community planning. Darlington Partnership is required to take an increasingly responsible, strategic role in delivering genuinely sustainable communities.

The vision for what Darlington needs to look like to inform the long term, up to 2030 for example will be set out in our new community strategy. The Council and its partners have begun working on a new Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, with robust project management arrangements in place and the involvement of all key partners. However, we realise that this is an opportunity to examine and refresh other areas of our business, and doing this at the same time maximises synergies between key areas of work.

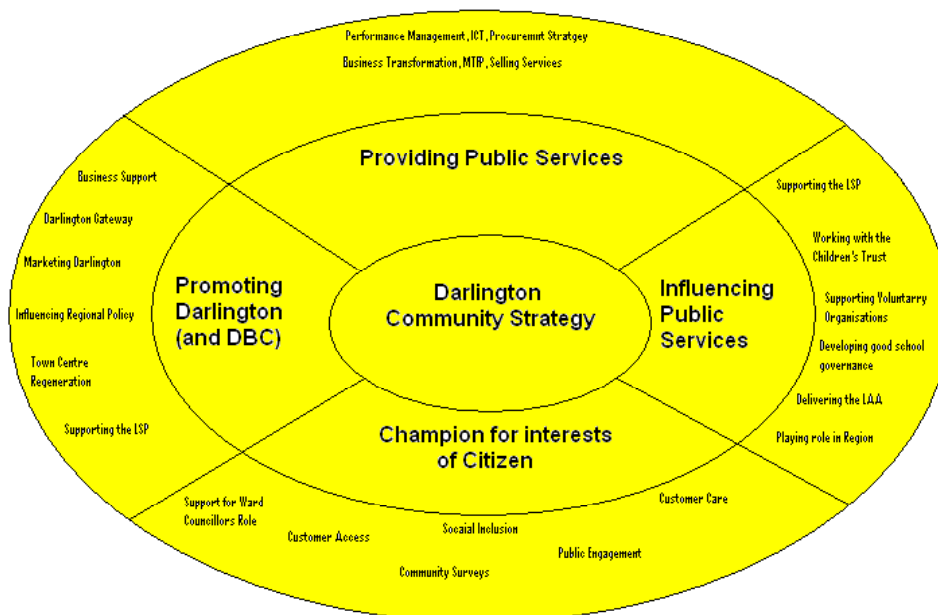
A new approach to corporate planning identifies the key plans that need to be produced prior to 31st March 2008 so that implementation can begin from 1st April 2008. Whilst there is acknowledgement that the old arrangements have served us well, it is prudent to review key aspects of planning in light of the development of a new Sustainable Community Strategy for Darlington. The successful development and implementation of these plans is critical to the continued development of the authority. Key products are:

- (a) **A Sustainable Community Strategy** – this is the vision for what Darlington will look like in the future. The Strategy needs to be suitably forward looking to inform the long term, up to 2030 for example, but also needs to deliver improvements over the short term as well. We know that we need to work differently in the future, and indeed this has already started. A long term, sustainable vision will be set in Darlington, meeting the diverse needs of Darlington's existing and future residents, improving their quality of life and safeguarding the prospects of future generations. It will build upon the good foundations laid by the current Community Strategy and will be developed along similar lines, ensuring maximum participation and engagement;
- (b) **Local Area Agreement** - a three-year 'contract' between Darlington (represented by the local authority and other partners through Darlington Partnership) and central government to deliver particular priorities as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Local Area Agreements have a key role in place-shaping – giving the Council and the Partnership more autonomy and influence to shape local plans and reconfigure services in response to community needs and aspirations. The Council and its partners together as the Local Strategic Partnership will identify up to 35 improvement targets for inclusion from a national indicator set of 200. There will also be a need to remain focused on delivering the current Local Area Agreement, due to end in March 2009;
- (c) **Refreshed service planning arrangements** – service planning arrangements underpin the Corporate Plan and our contribution to the wider Community Strategy. The corporate approach to service planning has been in operation for five years and whilst it has been successful and received recognition in external inspections, it is appropriate to assess its effectiveness and develop arrangements further;
- (d) **Corporate Plan** – this is the plan that demonstrates the Council's top priorities and contribution to the wider Community Strategy themes. In recent years this has been used to give a rolling three-year look forward and to set out our priorities and actions in the framework of the Community Strategy and the Council's corporate objectives. The Corporate Plan for this year has been revised in the light of stakeholder feedback and to keep up to date with a new administration. A greater emphasis has been placed on focusing on the top priorities for the organisation at the corporate level, giving a clear articulation of our key goals which are then supported by the detail in departmental and individual service and team plans in a clear hierarchy of operational and business planning documents beneath;

- (e) **Medium Term Financial Plan** –The Council operates a medium term approach to its financial planning, renewing the plan at budget time when it approves budget and council tax levels for the following year. It is proposed to produce a single Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan for the first time this year;
- (f) **Organisational Development Strategy** – Work is continuing on developing the five strands of the new Organisational Development Strategy, Leading Edge and is detailed below.

Organisational Development Strategy – Leading Edge

We already know through a period of reflecting on future demands and opportunities that we will need to work differently in the future to provide better customer services, collaborate more with other organisations and to meet ever rising public expectations. This is pictorially summarised in the ‘egg’ below which shows 4 key ways in which we need to work if we are to deliver the vision: promoting the borough and the council; influencing public services; providing excellent services and championing the needs of communities and customers.



What this means for us as an organisation is that:

- **Influencing services** outside of those we directly provide will become much more important in the future. For example, the proposed Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) does not inspect and rate organisations; it will examine how all organisations in Darlington work together to improve the quality of life of local people. This is a continuation of what we have experienced under best value and Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). Under best value, services and parts of services

were inspected. Under CPA, the whole organisation was inspected. The harder test CPA which we face in March 2008 adds new challenge because, in this system, we will only be as strong as our weakest link. Under CAA we will be as strong as our weakest partner. Our existing community strategy and previous organisational development strategy *Striving for Excellence* positioned us well to meet previous challenges. Our new community strategy and Leading Edge must similarly position us well for the future.

- **Championing communities and the customer** to ensure a **bigger say and a better deal** for Darlington's residents is a key driver of our community engagement strategy and a new style of working for us. We have recognised the need to do more to spread existing good practice on engagement and to consistently plan engagement thoroughly and make sure we feedback on how decisions have been influenced by resident and stakeholder involvement. At the same time customer expectations of services is increasing and we need to make sure that we can respond to changing needs and expectations to provide more personalised services. Empowerment and engagement is also required to enable citizens to meet their own needs e.g. to realise the importance of education, to take pride in their neighbourhood etc. Engagement means working in partnership with communities.
- **Promoting the borough and the council** is also something we need to do more of and better. We have good examples of this already e.g. in securing economic regeneration funding to enhance the borough's infrastructure and attracting investors to Darlington. However, as local government reorganisation changes the shape of authorities around us, we will need to do more to ensure that regional and national decision makers hear Darlington's voice.
- Our culture so far has been to "do" rather than to network or concentrate on influencing others but direct provision or **providing services** will form a smaller (though still large) part of what we do. The services we choose to provide need to be lean so that we can make the most of the capacity we have and provide excellent value for money.

Our thinking on the 'egg' diagram opposite is already influencing much of what we are currently developing or doing, for example:

- Sustainable Community Strategy preparation;
- Preparation for the new Comprehensive Area Assessment;
- Local Area Agreement preparation;
- Voluntary sector strategy;
- Establishment of the Connecting with Communities team;
- Procurement Review;
- Leading Edge projects e.g. Street Scene.

This list is by no means exhaustive. Leading Edge is not designed to capture everything that is in the sustainable community strategy or indeed in other strategies. It is a planned and coordinated programme of development to ensure that the organisation has the capacity, capability and systems to enable it to achieve our new vision.

Leading Edge will:

- Ensure that we remain fit for purpose as the environment changes;
- Make sure our aspirations are deliverable and realistic;
- Ensure we continue to evolve as a high performing organisation;
- Make the most of our capacity.

So how do we remain fit for purpose and work differently?

If we are to **promote Darlington** effectively we need a compelling unique selling point (USP) that we own with our partners. We need to spend time networking and coordinating with external stakeholders to make sure that regional and national decision makers understand Darlington's priorities. Some implications of this are:

- We need to develop a new and compelling USP that is shared and communicated widely (which has major communications and community engagement implications)
- We need to identify a new focus and skills for senior managers (HR implications)
- We need to identify and realise opportunities to work with other agencies as we are already doing in the case of the Darlington Stockton partnership and adult services integration with health (business transformation and ICT implications).

If we are to **influence other public services** in Darlington we need to ensure that our common vision is translated into the plans and performance management frameworks of other agencies. This will mean:

- We need to understand more fully the agendas of our partners (communications);
- We need to ensure that all partners understand the needs and aspirations of Darlington's residents (community engagement);
- We need to identify joint working practices and procedures (business transformation, HR and ICT).

Providing excellent services where we consistently need to do more for less requires us to:

- Know exactly what the public want and need (community engagement);
- Share this throughout the organisation (communications);
- Empower our staff to deliver (HR);
- Become leaner, more effective and efficient (business transformation);
- Exploit all technological opportunities (ICT).

Championing the needs of communities and customers requires us to....

- Equip our staff with the means of serving the public (HR);
- Focus all efficiencies on improving frontline services, for example by moving resources from processes that do not add value to the customer experience (business transformation);
- Enable customers to serve themselves wherever possible (ICT);
- Persuade the public that we mean business (communications);

- Develop the capacity in communities and within the council to translate customer requirements into delivery and to raise aspirations (community engagement).

Working in the way summarised by the egg, therefore requires us to develop new strategies and projects in the following areas which have been identified as **5 key strands** of the ODS:

- Community engagement
- HR
- ICT
- Communications
- Business transformation.

It is important to realise however that none of these strands can be developed in isolation. Bringing our growing programme management expertise to this area will help us ensure that we get more than the sum of the parts from our ODS. This is clear from the table below where we have listed the 3 main priorities for each strand.

Priorities of the 5 strands

Communications	HR	ICT	Community Engagement	Business Transformation
Develop and communicate a shared 'selling' point for Darlington	Ensure managers manage and leaders lead	Facilitate first rate intelligence through data and knowledge management	Build capacity in the organisation and communities to translate customer needs into action	Maximise the talents of our staff in the support and delivery of projects and design of services
Foster genuine two-way communication internally, externally and with partners	Empower staff to deliver excellent customer services	Support our staff to help customers through maximising mobile working	Ensure customer services become first class	Eliminate waste, duplication and processes that do not add value or are not necessary for the public
Develop a prioritised, resourced and coordinated approach to raise Darlington and DBC's profile regionally and nationally	Develop relationship management as a core competency	Increase opportunities for self service	Engage staff in the development of plans and services	Transform service areas in priority order of potential to improve value for money

Consultation on the ODS

The process of identifying these priorities involved both consultation and challenge. We consulted staff, senior managers and members in focus groups, with our priorities shaped by the outputs from these focus groups. A full day workshop on mapping the relationship between the egg and the 5 strands enabled us to identify linkages and produce detailed actions that form the action plan supporting this strategy.

SECTION 2 – OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Summary of key achievements in 2006/07

In last year's plan, we set out our goals against the themes of the Community Strategy. In this section we present for each theme a high level summary of achievement:

Improving the local economy

Strengthen the economy by supporting key economic drivers and attracting inward investment

- Many of the key outcomes targeted through Darlington Gateway have been delivered:
 - 1,300 new jobs directly attributable to Gateway since 2003;
 - National companies providing high quality, high wage jobs have been attracted to Darlington;
 - Whesoe Oil and Gas chose to relocate within Darlington, retaining 300 jobs, when the company was expected to go to the Middle-East;
 - The Home Office is to base its Vetting and Barring Scheme at offices in Darlington. The scheme will be based at Morton Palms Business Park and approximately 300 people will work at the site;
 - Clear progress has been made towards a self-sustaining commercial property market in Darlington;
 - £54 million of public sector funding has been made available since 2002, attracting more than £420 million of private sector investment.
- Completion of the Eastern development at Faverdale has provided 190,000ft² of speculative industrial space;
- Phase 2 of Morton Palms Business Park has been completed, with a high level of lettings.

Encourage the growth and start-up of businesses

- The development agreement for the £100 million Commercial Street retail development was signed, and planning permission obtained. Debenhams has been secured as the key anchor store for the scheme;
- Major planning applications determined during the year included the Durham Tees Valley Airport development as well as Commercial Street;
- The Central Park project has progressed:
 - Preferred developer selected;
 - Central Park/Haughton Road junction constructed;
 - Secured funding and procured the cycle/pedestrian bridge over mainline railway.

Share prosperity and reduce economic inequalities

- A build design and implementation portfolio of over 80 schemes has been developed worth £80 million during the year.

Promote tourism and maximise the economic impact of visitors

- £1.3 million lottery funding has been secured for £1.8 million Railway Museum development plan, with implementation work commenced;
- Darlington hosted the Great North Walk for the first time. Its success led to the event being hosted in Darlington again this year;
- A major marketing campaign has been launched to promote Darlington town centre as a quality environment and a stimulating place for living, shopping, entertainment, meeting, eating and relaxing.

Promoting inclusive communities

Work with our partners and the community to promote inclusive safe communities through the effective administration of community capacity building and regeneration initiatives and by engaging residents in the provision and delivery of services

- Community Partnerships secured £713,000 of external funding for the development of projects;
- We have increased Community Partnership membership;
- We delivered the Fair Share Community Development Worker Project, securing external funding for a further 3 years.

Improve the life chances of those experiencing or at risk of experiencing discrimination and disadvantage

- Disabled local people and Council staff have led the development of a Disability Equality Scheme in Darlington that is plain to understand and clearly committed to action;
- We have completed the refurbishment of the second traveller transit facility at Honeypot Lane Caravan Site.

Improve the corporate approach to community engagement

- The authority signalled its intention to become a more inclusive and engaging authority by agreeing its first Community Engagement Strategy *A Bigger Say and a Better Deal for Communities* in April 2007.

Improve access to legal advice and income maximisation

- Marketing campaigns have been undertaken by the Welfare Rights Team in partnership with Age Concern and Housing Benefits to increase benefit take up by £770,000.

Strengthen partnership working with the voluntary and community sector to further empower residents in service delivery and regeneration initiatives

- As part of the Council's commitment to community engagement resources have been secured for the appointment of a Voluntary and Community Sector Officer to strengthen working with the sector.

Protect public funds by prevention, deterrence, detection and investigation of fraud and error applying sanctions where appropriate

- Performance for the number of fraud investigations exceeded target.

Regenerate deprived areas to create sustainable communities by working in partnership with key stakeholders including private and registered social landlords

- A Housing Renewal Strategy was approved by Council March 2007. As part of this we reviewed and updated the Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

To deliver joined up Children's Services, focused on achieving better outcomes for children and their families

- We maintained the reduction in the number of Looked After Children and continued the reduction in rates of teenagers becoming Looked After. The number of Looked After Children in external placements reduced;
- Social Care services for children received a maximum score of 4 in external assessment;
- We collect robust attendance data and are challenging unsafe practice in schools.

Raising educational achievement

Children and young people getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood (enjoying and achieving)

- An outline business case and funding agreement for an Academy build on the Eastbourne site has been agreed with DfES and is scheduled to open Autumn 2009;
- We achieved very good key stage 2 results, with increases in level 5 Maths and English;
- There were improvements in both key stage 3 (Maths and Science) and at key stage 4 (5 GCSEs A*-C);

- A new attendance and behaviour group is developing a new Children's Services Strategy. Four out of seven secondary schools improved attendance;
- 83% of schools have now achieved the Healthy Schools Standard, with 56% working towards new Healthy School status;
- 100% of combined childcare and education inspections were satisfactory or better for early years settings.

Children and young people not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life (economic well being)

- Skills Plus has been implemented, evaluated and extended. There has been a significant impact on attendance and attainment of pupils gaining qualifications. There are currently 116 pupils on Skills Plus;
- 71% of Looked After Children are in education, employment and training. 80% of eligible Looked After Children sat GCSEs with 100% achieving at least 1 A* - G and 37.5% achieving 5 GCSEs A* - C;
- The 14-19 Trust is submitting an expression of interest to develop a 'Diploma Gateway', with the full engagement of Secondary Heads and curriculum leads;
- Darlington has exceeded its targets in respect of minimising those people not in education, employment or training (NEETS) both in terms of a sub region of a wider Connexions Tees Valley target and as a local authority.

Effectively plan, co-ordinate and manage the delivery of services and resources ensuring that they are high quality and responsive to the needs of children, young people and their families

- Seven external inspections of schools were rated as outstanding or good for staying safe;
- We have developed a Children's Trust;
- Seven new schools have opened, with improvement work to Carmel and Hummersknott;
- A Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Primary Pilot for North Road Primary secured funding of £6.5m;
- The online admissions system has been implemented, with first year targets exceeded;
- A re-tendering of school transport service has been completed and savings secured.

Stimulating leisure activities

Develop rich and diverse leisure and arts opportunities, which enhance the health and social well-being of the community, developing and implementing programmes of diversionary activities

- The Westside project, a project providing diversionary activities for young people living in priority wards, has been developed in several areas of the town (North Road, Harrowgate Hill and Lascelles);

- A diverse programme of summer activities was delivered within Leisure/Arts venues and in community settings. A comprehensive programme was delivered through the Zone Active project focused on delivery in 3 priority wards – Eastbourne, Park East and Lascelles. Planning for vacation programming for summer 2007 is now underway with a working group established including representatives from Leisure, Arts and the Youth Service;
- The events and festival programme has been highly successful with over 1530 young people taking part in events and festivals in the first quarter of 06/07;
- Following nearly a year of planning, the Tees Valley Youth Games took place in Middlesbrough on the 17th June and in Darlington on the 18th June. The Youth Games took place at Eastbourne Sports Complex and at the Education Village, where over 500 young people from across the Tees Valley took part.

Provide a wide range of stimulating leisure and arts services, which are accessible for all

- The £5m refurbishment of the Dolphin Centre has been completed to timescale, including a new wet changing village, extension of fitness suite and a bar and bistro area;
- Refurbishment work to the Arts Centre has completed, including a refurbished dance studio, fully accessible dressing rooms for artists and a chair lift;
- There are now over 800 members of the Zone Active project with a monthly throughput of 900 people of all ages participating in after school clubs, exercise classes such as Pilates and fit ball, dance classes and football and netball clubs;
- We have launched the Live Darlington discount card, designed to make leisure and arts facilities in Darlington more accessible to thousands of people with 25% off the cost of various popular activities.

To provide best value services throughout Leisure and Arts and proactively work towards recognised quality standards

- The Darlington Sport and Physical Activity Strategy is currently being developed through Darlington's Community Sports Network. The Playing Pitch Strategy is nearing completion.
- The Catering Team is working with all schools to implement the Healthy Schools standards.

Promoting community safety

Develop an intelligence led approach to crime and anti-social behaviour

- A formal data sharing protocol is now in place with the Primary Care Trust. The GIS and crime analyst post is now scheduled to be filled by July 2007, with a mobile working system implemented by September 2007. This system will provide a comprehensive multi agency intelligence led approach that is underpinned by the

provision of relevant, timely and robust data and community intelligence to support and direct partnership activity.

Enhancing our response to crime and anti-social behaviour

- An additional 4 PCSO's have been recruited and are in post and contribute to a more visible presence across the borough.
- The development of the Uniformed Warden Service continues.
- A review of the Councils Community Safety Team is complete and additional resources have been secured.
- A number of wide reaching media campaigns to raise awareness of vehicle crime and violent crime in the Borough has been carried out.
- A number of target hardening initiatives have been carried out in hotspots across the borough.
- CCTV has been further expanded via coverage into Wear Valley and also Darlington Parks and Cemeteries.

Promote young people's participation to enable them to contribute to the development of their own, and the wider, community

- A framework and mechanism has been established to promote the Youth Opportunity Fund and encourage young people to bid. The Youth Participation Strategy has been launched, consisting of 16 young people to consider Youth Opportunity bids.

Children and young people being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social behaviour

- There has been a reduction in the level of offending of Looked After Children;
- The Youth Service team has expanded and a Youth Participation Strategy has been developed;
- The Westside project providing diversionary activities for young people living in priority wards is being provided in several areas of the town in a rolling programme.

Ensure a clean, safe and well-maintained environment for the residents of the borough

- Step change in street scene services has resulted in teams working much closer with the community in a multi-skilled area based approach, leading to improvements in satisfaction. We have implemented enforcement actions working with the police whilst dog warden and abandoned vehicle services have transferred to Environmental Services to enable a more joined up approach and development of the Environmental Enforcement team.

Improving health and well-being

Ensure that a greater proportion of adult service users are supported to live safely and independently within their own homes

- Challenging targets set for assessments has been achieved, with performance in the highest banding. The Telecare pilot project helps 20 elderly people living in their own homes (10 with dementia and 10 who are at risk of falls) with assistive devices, which if activated will alert the warden service who will respond to calls. Early indications are that this has been successful, with a full evaluation being carried out;
- There is ongoing awareness raising of Safeguarding Adults, which includes the Independent Sector. Work is also ongoing with Durham County Council to reach agreement for a single countywide Adult Protection Policy.

Ensure that service users are enabled to make choices, to include access to direct payments, which improve quality of life, and to assist informal carers to continue with support or care independently for as long as they and the service user wish

- Following implementation of the common assessment documentation, the self-assessment process will be developed to enable people to make choices utilising learning from the 'in control' pilots;
- Direct Payments uptake has increased and is now considered in the Funding Panel process with publicity available in accessible formats.

Ensure strategies are in place which commission, purchase and monitor an adequate supply of appropriate, cost effective and safe health and social care provision; working with a range of partners where possible

- Person centred care plans for people with a learning disability, and care planning for mental health services are being implemented to agreed common assessment documentation across health and social care services in Darlington, Co. Durham, Hartlepool, Stockton and North Tees. Quality standards are in place for Learning Disability and Mental Health services.

Identify individuals with needs who are eligible for public support, to assess those needs accurately and consistently and to review packages of care to ensure that they are appropriate, cost effective and efficient

- Acceptable waiting time for care packages and acceptable waiting time for assessment both increased and exceeded target.

Improve life chances, employment prospects and safeguard vulnerable service users from potential abuse; ensuring effective safe guarding systems are in place for contracting, monitoring and reviewing of all services.

- Supported living options for people with a learning disability are being developed in conjunction with appropriate sections. A New Opportunities Project Board has been

established and a high level strategy written, with action planning to be developed and rolled out.

Recruit and support employees to perform and maximise their potential

- Adult Social Care and health is now classed by external assessment as the maximum 3-stars. This follows on from successful integration with Community Services and the implementation of a revised management structure.

Children and young people enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle (being healthy)

- 83% of schools have now achieved the Healthy Schools Standard. 56% are working towards new Healthy School status. The health of Looked After Children exceeded target and increased from 2005/06 performance.

Enhancing the local environment

Maintain and enhance the quality of the environment

- We have completed the £3.9 million restoration of South Park. The money has been used to restore the park to its former glory, with new gardens around the park, a restored bandstand, terracotta fountain, café and aviaries. The lake and boardwalk have been rebuilt and there are new gates and railings, footpaths, benches and signs around the park. Customer satisfaction with parks and open spaces across the borough has increased;
- Street Scene achieved a silver gilt award in the small city category at the Northumbria in Bloom competition and a silver gilt award for the entry at the Royal Horticultural Society flowerbed contest.

Manage the environment to improve 'liveability' and make it cleaner, greener and safer for residents and visitors

- Step change in street scene services has led to a radical new approach to service provision. A multi-skilled approach to working has been launched successfully bringing together refuse collection, horticulture services and street cleansing to work in a customer orientated area based approach, with five teams dedicated to five areas of the town;
- Groundwork (West Durham and Darlington) is engaged as a key partner in improving play areas, with this agenda being taken forward as members of the Play Strategy steering group. A Play Strategy is currently in development and will be submitted to the Big Lottery in September 2007;
- We are working with partners as part of our Local Area Agreement to improve smoking cessation rates, with good progress made.

Ensure a sustainable environment for future generations

- The Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document, part of the Local Development Framework, establishes an ambitious policy for provision of affordable accommodation in residential developments;
- We continue to focus on recycling rates, with more waste recycled than in previous years and less waste going to landfill. We also collected less waste overall per household in 2006/07.
- We have achieved compliance under the LATS regime for 2006/07 and up to and including 2008/09. There is good progress towards the letting of a new waste disposal contract in 2008.

Developing an effective transport system

Improve accessibility to jobs, services and other facilities

- The Central Park project has progressed well:
 - Preferred developer selected;
 - Central Park/Haughton Road junction constructed;
 - Secured funding and procured the cycle/pedestrian bridge over mainline railway.
- We have implemented new traffic infrastructure and arrangements as part of Pedestrian Heart preparatory works;
- The Council has been assessed by Central Government as 'Excellent' in delivery of the first Local Transport Plan. The Department for Transport has designated Darlington as a Centre of Excellence for Transport Delivery.

Provide well-maintained roads and footways

- We developed and delivered the £2.5 million 'Lets Get Cracking' road improvement programme in response to customer feedback and have achieved significant increases in public satisfaction with road and pavement maintenance;
- We achieved stretching road condition targets within the Local Public Service Agreement;
- Repudiation rate for insurance claims have been improved to 93% by maintaining good systems and performance on highway maintenance.

Improve public transport and promote the use of sustainable transport modes

- We reinforced the council's status as one of the few accredited centres in the UK for delivery of cycle training under the new National Standard, and a lead authority in the development of pedestrian training;

- There has been an increase of 64% in cycle trips over the life of the Local Motion Sustainable Travel Demonstration Town Project, and a 9% decrease in car driver journeys;
- The work with schools to promote sustainable transport is estimated to have saved 1000 car trips per day, with a consequent reduction of 7,333 tonnes of CO₂ emissions;
- We continue to be one of only a small number of accredited centres in the UK for delivering cycle training under the new national standard and developing pedestrian training schemes.

Enhancing our capacity to improve

Shaping a better Darlington

- Leading Edge, the council's new organisational development strategy is being rolled out;
- Leading Edge transformational projects are improving satisfaction, e.g. Street Scene;
- With partners we are developing a new Sustainable Community Strategy to set the future vision for Darlington;
- The Local Area Agreement for Darlington is progressing well, with good performance and innovation recognised by Government Office who gave the LAA the highest rating for direction of travel.

Providing excellent services

- The Procurement Strategy has delivered savings above target and has set even more challenging targets for the coming year;
- The Local PSA has completed, with 10 of the 12 targets improving service provision. Over two thirds (£1.56m) of the Performance Reward Grant was achieved;
- Successful Street Scene implementation has delivered improvements in residents satisfaction;
- We maintained our 4-star CPA rating, with the authority continuing to 'improve well'.
- Housing improved their rating from a 3/4 to a 4. No service score was below a 3; Financial standing improved from a 2/4 to a 3/4;
- The corporate approach to value for money has been strengthened and recognised in external assessment;
- Adult social care and health is now classed as a 3-star service.

Putting the customer first

- The Council's Customer Services Centre opened in November 2005. The team now deals with residents' enquiries about housing benefits, council tax and development and environment services. 4,300 people on average visit the centre each month, with over 88,000 enquiries taken in total. The Contact Centre, working alongside the Customer Service Centre have taken over 110,000 calls covering all five service areas;

- 84% of visitors to the Customer Contact Centre were seen within 10 minutes (target 80%), with an average transaction time of under 4 minutes;
- The authority has published an A-Z of all its services;
- The authority signalled its intention to become a more inclusive and engaging authority by agreeing its first Community Engagement Strategy *A Bigger Say and a Better Deal for Communities* in April 2007. Much progress has already been made, primarily through the targeting of existing resources on community engagement through the establishment of the Connecting with Communities Unit and the inclusion of community engagement as a key strand of our organisational development strategy;
- The Local Area Agreement for Darlington is delivering improved outcomes for local people;
- We are investigating methods to improve complaints and comments handling in the authority.

Ensuring access for all

- We have continued to deliver against the Social Inclusion Strategy and have developed with partners an innovative Disability Equalities Scheme, praised by both internal and external stakeholders;
- We have consolidated level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government;
- We have delivered equalities training to Community Partnership representatives to drive the council's commitments down to grass root levels.

Enhancing our capacity to improve

- We have furthered our approach to programme management and invested in effectively managing projects in a uniform and robust manner;
- We have continued to identify and realise efficiency savings;
- We received an improved externally assessed judgement for value for money;
- We continue to be rated as 'improving well';
- The organisational development strategy is being rolled out and will:
 - Ensure that we remain fit for purpose as the environment changes;
 - Make sure our aspirations are deliverable and realistic;
 - Ensure we continue to evolve as a high performing organisation;
 - Make the most of our capacity.

Overall assessment of performance for 2006/07

We assess our performance in a number of ways:

- (a) the most important assessment is customer satisfaction. We use an annual residents survey as the main corporate tool for this;
- (b) we test whether we are on track to deliver our strategic objectives as published in the community strategy and corporate plan;
- (c) we analyse our performance against national best value performance indicators (BVPs);
- (d) we learn from external, independent audit and inspection;
- (e) for many years we have demonstrated sound financial management and performance against budget. We also assess the degree to which we provide value for money;
- (f) we analyse employee morale and sickness absence information to give us a picture of our corporate health.

More details are provided below but our headline results from 2006/07 are:

- (a) In 2006 Darlington had two residents' surveys – the annual community survey and a month later the BVPI General Survey, a statutory three-year assessment of satisfaction. In the annual and face to face Community Survey, overall satisfaction with the authority was 63.6%, compared with 52% overall satisfaction from the questionnaire focused General Survey. Whilst this score was below expectations, it remains above average for unitary authorities and satisfaction for service areas remains high. It is acknowledged that there were major refurbishment and capital projects ongoing which may have caused a temporary drop in satisfaction, but investigating this difference in satisfaction is a key area of work for the Council;
- (b) our community strategy and corporate plan remain on track;
- (c) 56% of BVPIs are above average; with 31% in the best quartile;
- (d) we remain a '4 stars, improving well' authority – only 10 councils are rated better. Adult social care and health has moved from a 2* to the maximum 3* rating. Under the 2006 CPA refresh, Housing moved from a 3 to the maximum score of 4;
- (e) We scored 3 out of 4 for value for money and improved on how we manage and improve value for money. Only 15 councils are rated better;
- (f) We aim to demonstrate sound and improving corporate health. In a year of introducing Single Status, we retained high employee morale. Sickness absence rose from 9.69 days lost in 2005/06 to 10.75 in 2006/07 and remains a priority for the authority.

Customer satisfaction

The national BVPI General Survey commenced in 2000 and is undertaken every three years across all local authorities. This is used to measure public opinion in five main areas: overall satisfaction, complaints handling; cleanliness and waste management; public transport and culture and recreation. The results for the 2006/07 Survey show that of the 13 Best Value Performance Indicators – over the full period 2000 – 2006:

- only 4 have declined and 9 have improved, of which;
- 2 have improved from 2000 but dipped from 2003;
- 3 have shown continuous minor improvement (not statistically significant), and;
- 4 have shown substantial improvement.

Positive outcomes reflect areas that have received targeted investment or undergone service improvement in recent years:

Street Scene operational changes, the introduction of area working and greater accountability at a locality level have delivered real improvements in cleanliness and resident's satisfaction. Satisfaction with cleanliness has increased by 9% from 2003 to 67%.

Refurbishment at the Civic Amenity Site has delivered improvements in satisfaction with waste management and recycling. Satisfaction with waste recycling (local facilities) has increased to 71%, an 8% increase from 2003. Satisfaction with waste disposal (local tip) is 86%, up 5% from 2003.

The regeneration of South Park and Street Scene initiatives have brought about improvements in the satisfaction with our green areas. Satisfaction with parks and open spaces has increased by 11% from 2003 to 77%.

Darlington has traditionally enjoyed high satisfaction with its services and with the Council overall. Satisfaction with the majority of services is improving, however dips in certain areas and the Council's rating overall are being further analysed so that we can better understand the factors behind the differences. It is felt that disruption caused by the refurbishment works at the Arts Centre and Dolphin Centre (which have now been completed to popular acclaim) and the impact of the Town Centre pedestrianisation may have impacted on satisfaction perceptions. Work is nearing completion on Pedestrian Heart, with a major re-launch and series of public events to highlight the improvements made. Whilst we anticipate that the positive impact of this and other developments are reflected in subsequent surveys we are not complacent and the ongoing implementation of the organisational development strategy *Leading Edge* is representative of our commitment.

Results from the Annual Community Survey for 2006 show that:

- General satisfaction with the Council (at 63.6%) is consistent with previous results and maintains a relatively high and stable position in recent years;
- Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods is high overall (at 78.0%) but this is variable, ranging from rural wards (89.5%) to the most deprived areas (69.7%);
- Those who lived in Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy priority areas were more likely than others to think things had got better in their neighbourhood over the past two years.
- Satisfaction with council services indicates:

Service with the highest satisfaction levels are	Services with the lowest satisfaction levels are
Street lighting	Youth clubs and facilities
Refuse collection	Road maintenance and repairs
Civic Theatre	Pavement maintenance and repairs
Libraries	Children's play areas
Security – town centre	Car parking in the town centre




The top priorities for improvement mirror those with the lowest satisfaction. Youth services and roads and pavements have the lowest satisfaction, although the latter two have improved in satisfaction from the previous year (pavements 6.4% increase and roads 4.4% increase). This reflects targeted investment through the Let's Get Cracking initiative. Similar levels of investment are being made through the Local Area Agreement on play areas and youth facilities. Additionally, with private sector investment in town centre parking we aim to improve service provision and increase satisfaction in these areas.

Progress against Plans

The Council is committed to measuring its progress against the objectives it has set itself with partners in the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan. To simplify this process as much as possible, the Council has selected a set of indicators for each objective that can best demonstrate at a high level whether progress is being made. Full detail is presented in Appendix 1.

The Council uses *PerformancePlus*, a software package to do this and high-level performance is presented in scorecards.

The following two scorecards show aggregated performance from *PerformancePlus* for the Community Strategy themes and for our own corporate objectives. This is an assessment of performance against target using the weighted average of all the indicators that are allocated to the theme or objective. The overall status symbols are green star representing above target performance, blue circle for on target performance and red triangle meaning below target performance. The comments against each theme and objective highlight key indicators where targets are not being achieved and also some areas of very good performance. Overall performance is on target.

	Above target performance
	On target performance
	Below target performance

Summary of achievement by Community Strategy theme for 2006/07
BVPIs and local performance indicators

Community Strategy theme	Overall status	Comment
Improving the local economy	●	More jobs were created through Council-funded assistance to companies and Darlington's share of the external funding awarded to Tees Valley boroughs increased to 19%. The gap in Darlington's rate of unemployment and the national rate rose slightly from 0.5% to 0.6%.
Promoting inclusive communities	★	Good performance has been maintained from the previous year for most Housing Benefits indicators. Additionally, there has been an improvement in homelessness indicators. The target for pedestrian crossings adapted for the disabled was not met.
Raising educational achievement	●	Performance again increased for the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grade A*-C, increasing to 57.9%. Key stage 2 results in English and Maths improved. Historically we have had disappointing results in improving school attendance. However, strategies now in place are already showing a positive effect on the rates of absence and exclusions with improvement in performance in absence rates in both primary and secondary schools in the autumn and spring terms.
Stimulating leisure activities	★	Overall performance in this theme remains high, even though there was major disruption caused by some major refurbishment to facilities. Satisfaction with libraries remains high, and museum visits increased. Satisfaction levels with sports/leisure facilities were slightly below target. Young people engaging in sports development was above target, as was the percentage of school children participating in a minimum of 2 hours of PE and school sports activity.
Promoting community safety	●	There have been slight increases in domestic burglaries, vehicle crime and violent crime that the Council and its partners remain committed to reducing. There were fewer robberies per 1,000 population and targets were met for indicators relating to dealing with the effects of drug misuse. However we need to review target setting in this area, as many targets were not met.
Improving health and well-being	★	Overall performance is good in this theme. Direct payments uptake is increasing, and adoptions of children looked after exceeded target. Targets were not achieved for the percentage of people receiving a statement of their needs and for the number of pupils permanently excluded in maintained schools.

Community Strategy theme	Overall status	Comment
Enhancing the local environment	●	Rent arrears as a percentage of total tenants reduced significantly. Recycling figures increased and percentage of household waste landfilled reduced. Satisfaction with cleanliness and recycling increased. Performance in planning did not reach target and fell from the previous year.
Developing an effective transport system	★	The number of people killed or seriously injured fell and met target. Local bus service passenger journeys rose slightly, and the number of trips made by Darlington people walking or cycling both rose. Satisfaction with the provision of public transport information and with local bus services fell and did not meet target.
Corporate Health - all themes	▲	In a year of the introduction of Single Status, performance in corporate health indicators is down on the previous year, although it is acknowledged that for a number of indicators' sample sizes are small. The percentages of top 5% earners that are women, from black and minority ethnic communities or have a disability all fell. The number of working days lost to sickness rose slightly on last year's figure. There was improved performance for the collection of non-domestic rates, the percentage of economically active disabled people employed and increasing performance for the percentage of employees from minority ethnic communities.
DBC 'Where quality comes to life'	●	Overall a satisfactory achievement against the Community Strategy themes, although there remain areas for improvement

Note: Variance limited to +/- 100% of target

The scorecard above shows achievement against targets for Community Strategy themes for both statutory and local performance indicators. The best performance is for Stimulating Leisure Activities, which is 24.9% above target. The lowest performing theme is Corporate Health at 12.6% below target.

Overall, the Council's contribution to the top objective *where quality comes to life* is favourable at 5.85% above target. There is a need to improve performance (against target) in two themes: Improving the Local Economy and Corporate Health, although there remain other areas within other themes where attention is required and where management action is focused in the current year.

Summary of achievement by Corporate Objective for 2006/07
BVPIs and Local BVPP performance indicators

Corporate Objective	Overall Status	Comment
Shaping a better Darlington	●	There is solid overall performance against this corporate objective, with an increase in household waste composted and the number of private sector dwellings returned to occupation exceeding target. The performance in one indicator (percentage change in the number of dependent children or pregnant women placed in temporary accommodation) exceeded target considerably with a low cohort number.
Providing excellent services	●	The number of benefit payments written off has reduced, whilst homelessness work has assisted homeless people. The number of visits to museums exceeded target. Planning targets were not met and two of the three indicators calculating speed of applications determined are in the bottom quartile. Attendance figures did not meet target.
Putting the customer first	●	Generally, satisfaction with services remains high and on target.
Ensuring access for all	▲	Whilst performance is generally on target for the basket of indicators, overall the objective is performing below target due to the number of pedestrian crossings suitable for disabled people not achieving target.
Enhancing our capacity to improve	●	The number of benefit fraud investigations and prosecutions/sanctions exceeded targets, whilst collection of national non-domestic rates improved from last year and exceeded target. The number of council house tenants with rent arrears reduced and the percentage of housing repair appointments made and kept improved. Sickness absence rose and remains a priority.
DBC 'Leading Edge'	●	Overall solid on-target performance but with some areas for improvement.

Note: Variance limited to +/- 100% of target

This scorecard shows achievement of targets for the five corporate objectives. Performance is on or above target for four objectives with the best performance being for enhancing our capacity to improve (9.9% above target) and worst for access for all (11.25% below target). Overall the Council's performance against its top objective *Leading Edge* is on target.

Performance analysis overall

To assess our performance overall we ask ourselves 5 key questions:

- 1. Are we improving over time?** In 2006/07 we improved performance for non-financial BVPIs by 4.39%. We have demonstrated a consistent track record of improvement over time, i.e.:

2001/02	14.00%
2002/03	13.30%
2003/04	13.00%
2004/05	10.90%
2005/06	10.01%
2006/07	4.39%

This is commensurate with our setting of more challenging targets.

- 2. Do we compare well with other councils?** The table below shows the number and percentage of BVPIs in quartiles compared to all English authorities. The percentage in the worst quartile has reduced slightly from 2005/06 although there has been a movement from best quartile to middle quartiles performance overall. The years 2003/04 and 2006/07 contain the national satisfaction BVPIs.

Number and percentage of BVPIs in all English authorities' quartiles				
Year	Best Quartile	Middle Half	Worst Quartile	Number of BVPIs
2002/03	23 (32%)	43 (60%)	6 (8%)	72
2003/04	46 (36%)	65 (51%)	16 (13%)	127
2004/05	31 (32%)	56 (58%)	10 (10%)	97
2005/06	39 (40%)	41 (43%)	16 (17%)	96
2006/07	45 (31%)	78 (54%)	20 (14%)	143

- 3. Are we improving fast enough?** We continue to deliver high levels of performance improvement year-on-year as seen in (1). We have again improved performance in 2006/07, the seventh consecutive year of improvement.
- 4. Are we meeting our targets?** In 2006/07 we achieved 76% of our targets for both BVPIs and local indicators within tolerance. We continue to set challenging targets year on year.
- 5. Are we improving the right things?** There have been significant improvements in service areas that are citizens' priorities including satisfaction with a number of services including street scene, parks and open spaces, cleanliness, waste management and recycling. Some education attainment BVPIs improved well (BV40 and BV41 Key stage 2 English and Mathematics). Whilst performance is high we continue to focus on those areas where the authority is not performing strongly.

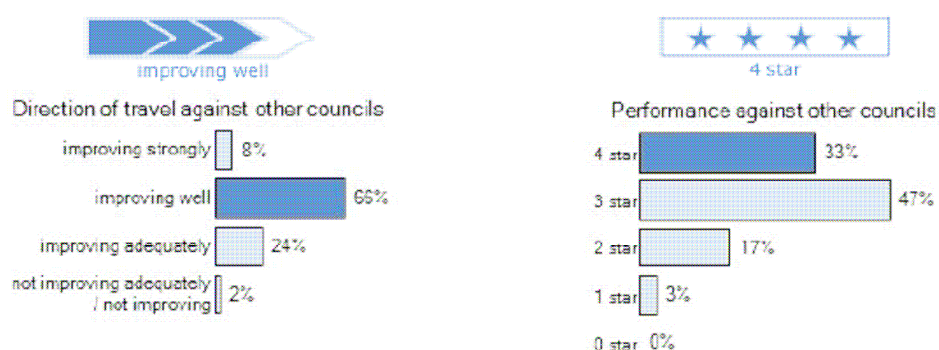
External assessment

Under the CPA framework for 2006 the Audit Commission awarded Darlington Borough Council the top score of 'four stars' and said it was 'improving well'. The CPA is an independent annual assessment of how well the Council is providing services that meet the needs of the community and give value for money.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) scorecard 2006

Overall performance for this Council

This is a Council that is **improving well** and demonstrating a **4 star** overall performance.



The Audit Commission stated that the Council has “made progress in all its key priority areas and satisfaction with services is high”.

Service area scores remain high, with no scores reducing and Housing improving from a '3' to a '4':

Service area	2005	2006
Benefits - The Council's performance in providing housing and council tax benefit services. The assessment is made by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate and is based primarily on achievement against the 2005 H housing benefits/council tax benefits performance standards.	4	4
Children and young people - The Council's performance in providing children's services, such as children's education and social care. The joint assessment is made by the Commission for Social Care Inspection) and Ofsted following a review of the Council's overall performance and key indicators.	3	3
Culture - The Council's performance in services, such as libraries and leisure, as assessed by the Audit Commission.	3	3
Environment - The Council's performance in services, such as transport, planning and waste, as assessed by the Audit Commission.	3	3
Housing - The Council's performance in community housing and, where applicable, housing management services, as assessed by the Audit Commission.	3	4
Social care (adults) - The Council's performance in adult social care services. The assessment is made by the Commission for Social Care Inspection following a review of the Council's overall performance and key indicators.	3	3

Management of resources

Spending and Service Plans

The Council has operated a medium term approach to its financial planning since 2000. In line with such an approach, the Council reviews its Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) periodically, with a major review on an annual basis when it firms up the following year, by approving a detailed budget and Council Tax level for the year. In doing this, the Council also takes due consideration of future year demands on its resources and establishes its firm proposals for the coming year with regard to prudent financial management in the medium term. The Council has a successful track record of managing its resources in this way.

The Council's medium-term financial planning process forecasts future resources and service demands for the next four years. This helps the Council to plan and manage service priorities and initiatives, linking them to the financial resources available to implement them. In setting the revenue budget the Council takes into consideration its contribution to delivering the Community Strategy, the results of consultation, the aims and objectives set out in the Corporate Plan and the impact that spending decisions have on Council Tax.

The Council has been successful in improving its financial standing in recent years. Revenue reserves at the end of March 2007 exceeded £13 million, which will help the Council to meet the substantial challenges of continuing to improve services within the available financial resources over coming years.

The MTFP for 2007/08 to 2010/11 includes indicative allocations of resources to services, which reflect the Council's priorities to increase funding for Children's Services and Adult Social Services. From 2007/08, over the following three years, spending on Children's Services is planned to increase by £8.542 million (12.3%) and on Adult Services by £2.172 million (9.7%). The Council has also decided to increase resources for 2007/08 in line with citizens' priorities.

The following table identifies how the Council's budget for the period 2004/05 to 2007/08 was allocated compared to the eight community strategy themes:

	2004/05 £m's	2005/06 £m's	2006/07 £m's	2007/08 £m's
Improving the Local Economy	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.4
Promoting Inclusive Communities	9.0	9.4	10.9	12.4
Raising Educational Achievement	64.4	69.5	72.1	79.2
Stimulating Leisure Activities	3.2	4.0	4.2	4.4
Promoting Community Safety	0.5	0.7	0.9	1.6
Improving Health and Well-Being	30.9	32.0	34.6	37.1
Enhancing the Local Environment	8.7	9.1	9.8	9.9
Developing an Effective Transport System	3.5	4.4	4.3	5.2
Total	122.4	131.5	139.2	152.2

The Council's Revenue Budget 2007/08

	1		2		
	Net Expenditure	Specific Grants	Total Net Expenditure	Notional Capital Charges	Total Cost
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Department					
Children's Services	69.246	15.847	85.093	4.655	89.748
Community Services	34.670	37.275	71.945	1.283	73.228
Development & Environment	12.088	1.707	13.795	1.089	14.884
Corporate Services & Chief Executive's	9.794	0.512	10.306	0.598	10.904
Joint Bodies	0.603		0.603		0.603
Change Fund	0.300		0.300		0.300
Financing Costs	3.343		3.343		3.343
Leading Edge Efficiencies	(0.385)		(0.385)		(0.385)
Contribution to/(from) revenue balances	(2.103)		(2.103)		(2.103)
	127.556	55.341	182.897	7.625	190.522

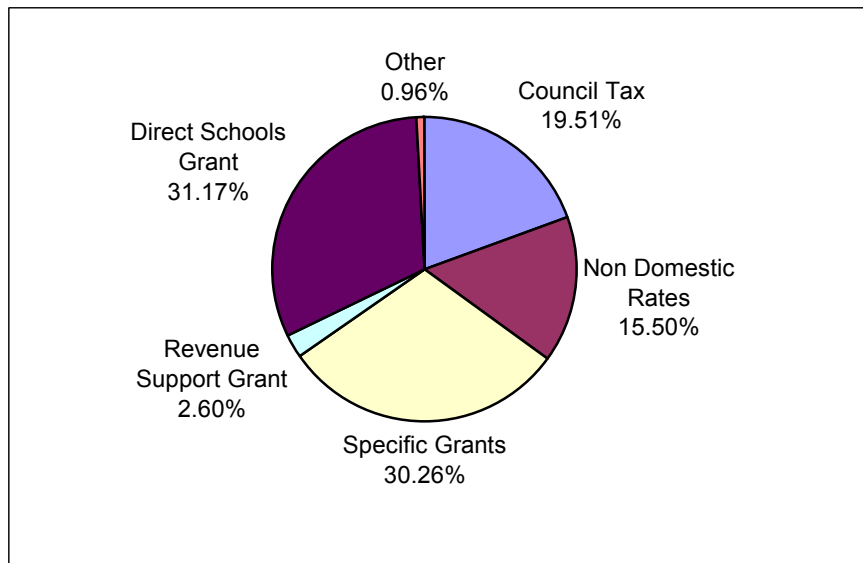
Financed By:

Council Tax	35.684
Non Domestic Rates	28.348
Specific Grants	55.341
Revenue Support Grant	4.757
Direct Schools Grant	57.007
Other	1.760
	<u>182.897</u>

NOTES

- 1: Net expenditure includes income from rents, fees and charges but excludes income from government grants. Central Government provides general grant (Revenue Support Grant) and service-specific grants.
- 2: Local Authorities are required to account for the cost of capital employed in providing services and depreciation of assets. Though these costs are notional and do not impact on Council Tax levels, they are important in determining the true total cost of providing services.

Proportion of income by source



Revenue Account Results 2006/07

In March 2006 the Council approved a budget for 2006/07 of £119.924 million. Financial performance compared to budget is reported regularly to Cabinet and Resources Scrutiny Committee. The financial results for 2006/07 were reported to Cabinet on 5th June 2007.

The Council's revenue reserves at 31st March 2007 were £13.6 million, which was £0.8 million better than planned.

Value for Money

In the 2006 Comprehensive Performance Assessment the Council scored 3 out of 4 for use of resources, improving its approach to value for money and financial standing. Combined service and financial reporting is in place and timely Cabinet reports have been submitted on both revenue and capital spends throughout the year.

Procurement savings continue to be identified. Over £159,000 of procurement savings has been achieved on contracts including stationery, bulk paper, landlines, photocopiers, etc. Further demanding targets are in place for the coming year.

The Council's Public Service Agreement ended in September 2006. Ten of the twelve target areas improved performance, with £1,553,212 (65.8%) of the performance reward achieved.

Risk management

Risk Management is an essential part of effective and efficient management and planning. It is also integral to the Use of Resources judgement, part of the wider Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework. Departmental risks are identified annually and presented in departmental service plans, with a mechanism to identify emerging risks also in place. Corporate risks are published annually in the Corporate Plan.

The corporate risks for 2007/08 are as follows:

Ref	Risk summary	Description of risk area and our actions	Risk Score	Lead Officer
1	The timing for future capital funding is not always known	Description: This impacts on our forward planning – we need to plan ahead for future funding, and plan accordingly for any changes Our actions: We have robust capital programme arrangements in place, subject to regular monitoring by officers and members	C3	J. Buxton
2	The Council works hard to attract capital investment to the borough, and often has many Capital projects ongoing at any one time	Description: We need to ensure effective project management of these schemes and minimise disruption to service users Our actions: We have a robust capital programme in place, subject to regular monitoring by officers and members. However, it is imperative that an effective capital project management methodology is in place. A Project Initiation Document has been prepared, for implementation.	C2	J. Buxton

3	The <i>Leading Edge</i> programme is delivering change to key services and we need to ensure that there is continuing quality of service delivery and that Gershon targets are met	Description: <i>Leading Edge</i> transformational projects are delivering change, requiring effective communication. Gershon targets have been identified, the realisation of which is crucial to financial planning. Our actions: <i>Leading Edge</i> is managed via a Programme Board, with regular monitoring and review mechanisms in place	D2	L. O'Donnell
4	A flu pandemic could affect delivery of key services and affect business continuity planning	Description: Flu pandemic can result in key employees, suppliers, partners, etc. being unavailable. This can affect key service provision such as Adult & Children's Social Care. Our actions: Prioritisation planning, and planning for such emergencies such as flu pandemic take place, to ensure the authority and its partners are prepared for any eventualities	D2	J. Buxton
5	The current waste management contract is due to expire in 2008 and it is essential that the authority procures an effective solution	Description: The council is working to an effective solution for waste management, to reach statutory targets and meet requirements of customer need. Our actions: The council is examining its waste contract in terms of cost, quality, and performance and this is being project managed	D2	J. Buxton
6	There is a capacity issue around how the authority can address major change	Description: Transformational change projects are changing the way that the authority does business. This requires effective leadership and a committed and suitably skilled workforce. Our actions: The council is implementing a new organisational development strategy, with one of the five elements being a revised Human Resources Strategy.	D2	A. Burns

The risks have been plotted on the risk appetite accordingly:

LIKELIHOOD	A Very high				
	B High				
	C Significant		1	2	
	D Low			3, 4, 5, 6	
	E Very low				
	F Almost Impossible				
		IV Negligible	III Marginal	II Critical	I Catastrophic
		IMPACT			

As per the matrix, five of the six corporate risks have been classified as being below the risk appetite, i.e. the current management arrangements in place are deemed satisfactory. For the remaining risk, actions are in place in order to reduce the risk score. In addition, the council has arrangements in place to monitor any emerging risks.

Action planning for the one risk above the appetite level is as follows:

Risk no.	Actions required	Current risk score	Target risk score	Lead Officer	Timescale
2	Implementation of Project Initiation Document to enable effective capital project management methodology to be in place.	C2	D2	J. Buxton	June 2008