



# ***Leading Edge***

**DRAFT**

# **Corporate Plan 2006 - 2009**

## **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

*[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:

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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](http://www.darlington.gov.uk)

Email address:

[Enquiries@darlington.gov.uk](mailto:Enquiries@darlington.gov.uk)

## Executive Summary

Every year the Council publishes its plans for the medium term. This is an ongoing, rolling process that starts from the agreed long term vision for the town described in the Community Strategy. This vision was itself developed in consultation with the public and adopted by the Council and partner organisations in 2003. It sets out how the quality of life for Darlington's residents will be improved by working together.

The Council then reviews annually its contribution to the community strategy to take account of:

- What the public have told us about our services and the progress we are making against our strategy;
- How we are performing against the targets we have set ourselves in the strategy;
- What the government requires from local authorities;
- The resources that the council has available to deliver the strategy.

The results of this process are summarised in our Corporate Plan, which is a fully costed business plan that takes account of the opportunities and risks faced by the authority.

### The Community Strategy Vision

The Council shares with its partners the vision set out in the Darlington Community Strategy 'Where quality comes to life'.

*Together our community will expect and strive to achieve:*

- **An area creating and sharing prosperity** – enhancing our economy and sharing the benefits with all our community.
- **A location for learning, achievement and leisure** – raising aspirations and attainment, promoting creativity and leisure.
- **A place for living safely and well** – reducing crime, making people feel safer and improving health.
- **A high quality environment with excellent communication links** – making the most of our heritage, market town appeal and location.

### Corporate objectives

Aligned to the goals and themed aims of our shared vision, Darlington Borough Council has adopted five corporate objectives to shape its corporate and service planning.

1. **Shaping a better Darlington.**
2. **Providing excellent services.**
3. **Putting the customer first**
4. **Ensuring access for all.**
5. **Enhancing our capacity to improve.**

### What the public told us

Results from the Annual Community Survey for 2005 show that:

- General satisfaction with the Council (at 64.5%) is top quartile and has remained relatively stable in recent years;
- Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods is high overall (at 76.7%) but this is variable, ranging from rural wards (88.3%) to the most deprived areas (67.5%);
- Pleasingly 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.
- Comparison of responses from the 1999, 2003 and 2005 Community Surveys shows a largely positive trend in residents' perception on the success of dealing with the themes of the Community Strategy, i.e. improving the local economy, raising educational attainment etc.

Three services stand out from the survey as being most important to the public and most in need of improvement:

- The achievement of low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour – in response, the council has mainstreamed funding for the neighbourhood warden service after government grant expired and appointed anti-social behaviour co-ordinators. External funding was obtained to increase the number of police community support officers.
- Activities for teenagers – more money has been invested in the youth service and additional funding was attracted through the Local Area Agreement to invest in improving opportunities for children and young people.
- Clean streets – a review of street scene services was carried out leading to the creation of five area teams which will have much higher public profile. Services will be improved and efficiencies secured.

### How are we performing?

The clearest indication of how well we are performing is our independent, external opinion from the Audit Commission. In December 2005, we retained the top score for local authorities of four stars. Taken together with our direction of travel assessment of 'improving well', Darlington is now in a position where only five authorities in the country have a better rating.

The Audit Commission stated that *“Services are of increasingly good quality, supporting community and Council priorities. The Council is working well with local communities and partners to meet local needs. Adult and children’s social care, housing and benefits services have improved. The Council continues to help to strengthen the local economy and to make communities more inclusive. Major investment in education is delivering improvements. Electronic and multilingual access to services has improved and in 2004/05 more Council buildings became accessible to people with disabilities. The Council*

*has robust improvement plans. It is identifying early signs of underperformance for action, strengthening partnerships and challenging the value for money of its services. The Council currently achieves good value for money in most services and is developing a more rigorous approach to procurement ”*

We have continued our strong track record of improvement on performance indicators: achieving over 10% improvement from last year; 40% are now in the best quartile nationally and 66% are above average. This again places us as one of the best performing authorities in the country. We avoid complacency however, by continuing to identify and focus on those areas where the authority is not performing strongly. In 2006/07 we will focus on:

- Community safety – a review of the authority’s approach to community safety is underway to improve performance
- Waste – a review of waste is underway to reduce the amount of waste landfilled and constrain costs.

### **What the government expects form local authorities**

Our corporate plan has also been shaped by our interpretation of emerging trends in policy development including:

- Gershon and the need to demonstrate increasing value for money;
- Greater citizen choice in public services
- Community engagement – how councils engage with the communities they serve
- Collaboration with other authorities in the provision of services to promote economic regeneration.
- The increasing rigors of external inspection.

In addition the government has brought out white papers that will significantly alter children’s services, adult services and schools. Continued national focus on antisocial behaviour and proposed changes to police and NHS arrangements have also been accounted for in our plan.

### **Resourcing the Plan**

The council has a strong track record for managing its finances and providing value for money services. Darlington’s council tax continues to be the lowest in the region and external assessment verified that the council provides very good value for money – only 3 authorities in the country were judged to provide better value for money. In March 2005, the Council agreed a budget of just under £112 million which included provision for responding to the citizens priorities outline above.

### **Conclusion**

Looking back, 2005/06 was another successful year for Darlington Borough Council which can clearly demonstrate that it is performing well. However the authority is not complacent. There are significant challenges ahead from the numerous building and development projects that are currently underway to the continued need to identify efficiencies whilst meeting enhanced public expectations. This plan summarises how we intend to address these challenges and become a leading edge authority.

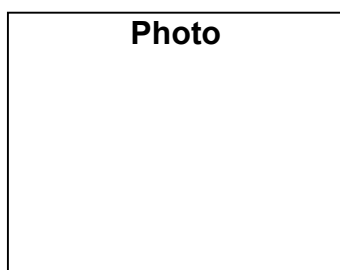
## Foreword

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.

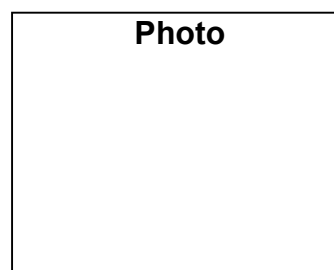
Details are presented of our performance across all services during 2005/06 so that you can see what we have achieved. This plan includes further targets to show how we intend to improve those services in future. Future plans are based on the views and priorities of the people we serve as we seek to improve the quality of life for all in Darlington.

We are proud that Darlington Borough Council is rated as a 4 Star (Excellent) 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 therefore need to have effective systems in place to measure and improve our performance, to take steps to improve any areas that are under performing and to be able to exploit opportunities for improvement.

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 ourselves an ambitious programme of ongoing dialogue with residents about the vision for the area and quality of our services, to absorb the learning from that dialogue into the design and delivery of public services, and continuously challenge and review our performance to enhance quality and drive efficiency improvements. This work is part of what the Council wants to do to further empower local people and deliver its corporate objective of shaping a better Darlington by putting the customer first i.e. to secure a bigger say and better deal for Darlington's communities by a process of meaningful engagement. There are substantial challenges ahead but the authority's track record to date should give us confidence of success.



Councillor John Williams  
Leader of the Council



Ada Burns  
Chief Executive

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## **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 Corporate and Best Value Performance Plans, and approach to Best Value generally, 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:

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Assistant Chief Executive

Chief Executive's Office

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## **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

### Our Vision for the future of Darlington

The Council shares with its partners the vision set out in the Darlington Community Strategy 'Where quality comes to life'.

*Together our community will expect and strive to achieve:*

- **An area creating and sharing prosperity** – enhancing our economy and sharing the benefits with all our community.
- **A location for learning, achievement and leisure** – raising aspirations and attainment, promoting creativity and leisure.
- **A place for living safely and well** – reducing crime, making people feel safer and improving health.
- **A high quality environment with excellent communication links** – making the most of our heritage, market town appeal and location.

### Connecting themed aims

The Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan is structured into sections based on the four visionary goals and eight connecting themes of the Community Strategy as follows.

<b>Four Visionary Goals</b>			
An area creating and sharing prosperity	A location for learning, achievement and leisure	A place for living safely and well	A high quality environment with excellent communications
<b>Eight Connecting Themes</b>			
Improving the local economy	Raising educational achievement	Promoting community safety	Enhancing the local environment
Promoting inclusive communities	Stimulating leisure activities	Improving health and well-being	Developing an effective transport system

## Strategic priorities

Whilst we intend to move forward in all areas our adopted shared priorities are:

1. ***Improving the local economy*** - in recognition of its importance to all other aspects of improving quality of life.
2. ***Raising educational achievement*** - to bring about the desired long-term investment and improvements for the area and life chances for individuals.
3. ***Promoting inclusive communities*** - ensuring everyone has the opportunity to live active lives, participating in and contributing positively to all aspects of the community.

We will target our efforts specifically on three important groups of residents:

**Children and young people,  
Older people, and;  
Those living in the most deprived wards.**

It is recognised that the life chances of young people, and options available to older people are not however aligned to one particular theme but are linked to all. We need therefore to ensure that our activities are helping to deliver quality services to meet their needs and aspirations, which are cross-cutting across the full range of themes.

## Corporate objectives

Aligned to the goals and themed aims of our shared vision, Darlington Borough Council has adopted five corporate objectives to shape its future corporate and service planning using a balanced scorecard<sup>1</sup> approach.

1. **Shaping a better Darlington.**
2. **Providing excellent services.**
3. **Putting the customer first.**
4. **Ensuring access for all.**
5. **Enhancing our capacity to improve.**

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<sup>1</sup> By analysing how we are performing across each objective we aim to ensure that we balance, for example excellent services now with enhancing our capacity to deliver in future.

## Introduction and purpose of the plan

The Corporate Plan sits below the Community Strategy that sets out the vision for Darlington shared by members of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The purpose of the Corporate Plan is to:

- Identify the Council's priorities and how they contribute to delivering the Community Strategy outcomes.
- Provide a strategic document that links to departmental and service plans containing more detailed information.
- Help drive improvement by focussing on citizens' priorities and performance information.
- Help communicate the Council's improvement agenda to staff, partners, community stakeholders and regulators.
- Provide information about the area and the Council that is relevant to the Council's choice of priorities and methods of delivery and how these reflect resident's views and priorities.

The Plan is structured into four main sections:

**Section 1** – describes the Council, its vision, aims and corporate objectives, with an overall assessment of performance.

**Section 2** – provides the context of the Council's organisational development and summarises the key elements and transition underway in this area which help shape and support our service delivery.

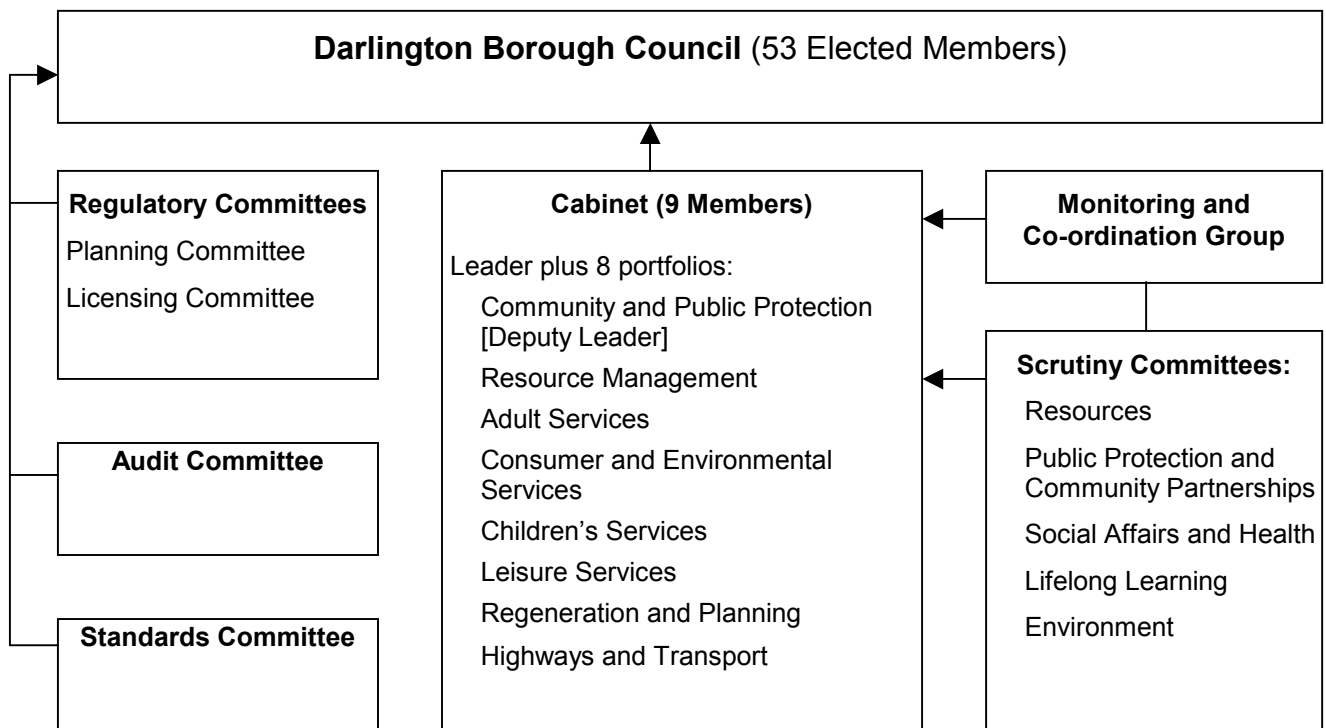
**Section 3** - sets out details of performance for the last year and our priorities and plans for improvement using the framework of the eight themes of the Darlington Community Strategy. An additional theme is added relating to overarching organisational development activities that are designed to improve the way in which we work and provide Council services - enhancing our capacity to improve.

**Section 4** – is made up of appendices that provide background detail in support of the main body of the plan; covering annual reporting against the full set of national Best Value performance indicators, government standards, local performance indicators and Local Area Agreement Reward Element targets.

## About the Council

Darlington Borough Council was formed as a unitary local authority in 1997 having formerly been a district within County Durham. The Council has 53 elected members, representing 20 urban and 4 rural wards: current representation is 35 Labour, 14 Conservative, 3 Liberal Democrat and 1 Independent. Elections for all wards are held every four years, and are next due in May 2007. The Council is Labour controlled with a majority of 35 out of the 53 councillors, operating a leader and cabinet model of governance. The executive of nine cabinet members is balanced with five scrutiny committees.

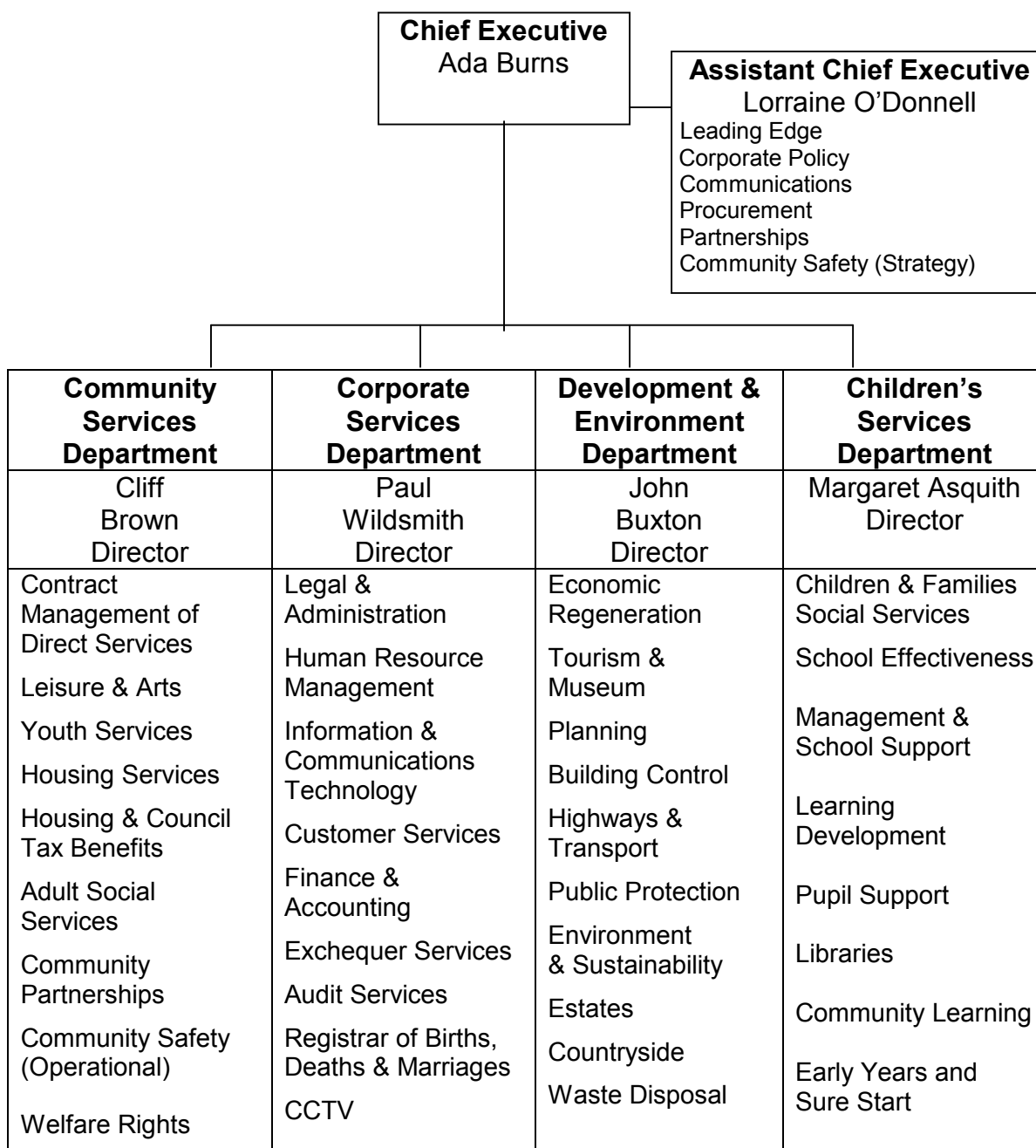
The political structure of the Council is as follows:



## Organisational Structure

The Council provides and/or commissions the full range of local government services employing just over 4,700 staff working in four main departments plus the Chief Executive's Office as follows:

### Departmental and Service Structure



## Overall performance

### Summary of key achievements 2005/06

#### Improving the local economy

- The new Argos distribution centre became operational in 2005 and has created over 700 jobs;
- A development agreement has been signed off for the £90 million Commercial Street development, with a 29,000 square metre shopping centre, 900 space multi-storey car park, cinema and leisure facilities planned;
- We have supported people into work in four target wards, working jointly with Job Centre Plus through the 'Into Work' programmes. The gap in unemployment rates between Darlington and Great Britain as a whole fell slightly during 2005/06 from 0.6% to 0.5%;
- The first businesses have taken up tenancy at Morton Palms, a £37 million investment in new office space;
- The 30-hectare Central Park development is progressing on schedule, with £170 million investment with the potential to create 2,000 new jobs.
- We completed the new Economic Regeneration Strategy and maintained our engagement with and support for private sector partners. External funding secured for Darlington projects again exceeded our target for the year. The Darlington Gateway programme has brought over 1000 jobs to Darlington, which would otherwise not have come to the Tees Valley.

#### Promoting inclusive communities

- New work placements for Looked After Children have been delivered and the number of Looked After Children has been reduced
- We have implemented the first year of the Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and delivered local action plans for all 11 Community Partnerships. The Partnerships are delivering a range of projects such as refurbishing the community centre at Red Hall, developing activities for young people, organising community events, etc. Over £350,000 external funding has been brought into Community Partnership areas, with over 120 new volunteers involved with the Community Partnerships;
- The '*Information for All*' DVD has been developed; a resource aimed at explaining how to access public services for people whose first language is not English;
- The Putting the Quality into Equality project produced an action plan highlighting areas for improvement. These included improving our approach to self-assessment, better exploitation of ICT, and improving our consultation. These issues have been addressed and the Council has secured Level 3 of the Equality Standard;
- A new Welfare Rights Service has been fully established and in January 2006 became the first of its kind in the North East to receive Legal Services Commission

(LSC) Specialist Quality Mark accreditation. There has been an increase in benefit income for Darlington residents of over £300,000;

- Over £2m of funding has been secured for improving dwelling conditions in the private sector through a new financial assistance package and disabled facilities grants;
- We have developed a new Tenants' Board, involving a broad range of tenants, which has facilitated greater tenant influence and empowerment. Residents' satisfaction with participation increased to over 70%;
- Council housing stock fully met the Decent Homes Standard by the end of the 2005/06;
- An extra £340,000 has been targeted at improvements to the Youth Service.

### **Raising educational achievement**

- We have improved performance in the percentage of pupils attaining 5 or more GCSEs grade A\* -C rising from 48.5% in 2004 to 56.8%, resulting in Darlington being named as one of the top 10 most improved authorities nationally at GCSE level;
- There has been improved performance at Key Stage 1 in all subjects at Level 2B+ with notable improvements in reading and writing which are now both in the A quartile band for year on year improvement;
- We have increased the level of Special Educational Needs budget delegated to schools, resulting in the number of statements of SEN decreasing from 516 in 2004/05 to 491 in 2005/06;
- Five out of seven secondary schools improved pupil attendance rates;
- The Darlington Education Village is now open, integrating secondary, primary and specialist schooling all on one site;
- New primary schools have opened at Skerne Park, Harrowgate Hill and Middleton St George. £24.5 million has been allocated from the Government's Targeted Capital Fund to improve facilities at Carmel and Hummersknott Schools.

### **Stimulating leisure activities**

- South Park's £3.9 million refurbishment and restoration project has been completed;
- Neighbourhood leisure and arts plans have been developed, with activities including activity classes for older people, breakfast and after school clubs, etc. Over 2,000 local people have participated in physical activities in the first year of the project;
- Swipe card technology is now available to provide data to identify which activities people take part in, allowing us to provide the activities that local people want;
- A £5 million facelift for the Dolphin Centre is underway to bring the venue into the 21st century. Work will be completed by January 2007 and will include new changing facilities and a new Register Office and Marriage Hall;

- Refurbishment of the Arts Centre has commenced and will include accessible dressing rooms, an extended studio theatre space, improved customer facilities, a plaza for public art performance and an outdoor cafe area. The work will be completed by March 2007;
- We have increased the number of school children taking part in sport and physical activity for at least 45 minutes beyond the school day;
- We have committed extra funding to the Youth Service to expand opportunities for all young people to have a voice in decisions, resulting in a Youth Service which is now focused more around young people's priorities;
- We have expanded the '*Get Everyone Motivated*' (GEM) project into the community and implemented the action plan for the GP referral scheme, resulting in nine new GEM classes, enabling many more elderly people to participate in gentle exercise and leisure activities.

### **Promoting community safety**

- Youth Offending Service ranked in the country's top fifteen authorities;
- Extension of award winning CCTV service;
- An Anti-Social Behaviour Team has been developed, complementing the work of the uniformed wardens by providing support to victims and taking the appropriate action against those who cause problems for others. This has resulted in increased levels of working with the community to tackle a wide variety of cases;
- The Hawkeye Initiative has been re-launched, which aims to reduce offences of theft from vehicles by raising awareness amongst vehicle owners who leave property unattended and on display on the seats of their vehicles. 256 vehicle owners have been given appropriate advice on preventing vehicle crime;
- We have continued to expand Drug & Alcohol Treatment and delivered by a number of drug and alcohol services. There is now a greater awareness and take up of treatment services available for those individuals suffering from drug misuse and support services for families/parents and carers;
- There are a wide range of initiatives now in place to deal effectively with domestic abuse and develop services for victims and their families. There has been an increase of services and support services available to victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse.

### **Improving health and well-being**

- We have developed an Access and Contact team to enable people to access information about social services and receive an assessment of their needs more easily and speedily. This has resulted in a speedier response to the assessment of needs, with 97% of all care plans being sent out compared with a previous year's total of 91%;



- We have maintained zero waiting times for people requiring occupational therapy assessments and improved our performance on delivering equipment and adaptations within 7 working days. We have also delivered changes in the in-house home care service delivery to improve customer satisfaction and quality of service. 196 additional people have been supported to live safely and independently within their homes;
- We have increased opportunities for people to increase physical activity by promoting walking and cycling as viable transport options. We have delivered the Town on the Move project that has led to “Local Motion” which examines travel needs and is opening up more opportunities to the people of Darlington. We have won the National Cycling England competition to make Darlington one of 6 nationally designated cycling towns, resulting in an additional £3 million investment in the infrastructure of Darlington for cycling. In Darlington, approximately 25% of trips are undertaken by walking;
- We have actively promoted Direct Payments to ensure that people are offered Direct Payments as an alternative way to meet their needs. The number of people using a Direct Payment to meet their needs has increased from 65 in 2004/05 to 107 in 2005/06; giving people greater flexibility and control over the way that their needs are met;
- New services for older people have been delivered, including shopping, befriending and social support by working in partnership with the voluntary sector. Older people now have access to a greater range of services to support them to remain independent and have a voice as to how services are developed in the future.

### **Enhancing the local environment**

- The West Park development, comprising of a £100 million investment in 600 new homes, school and hospital has won a national sustainable development award;
- Innovative new street scene services have been created, developed to improve service standards to the community. Whilst developing this structure we have continued to deliver the ‘In Your Hands’ litter initiative. There has been a 45% improvement in the cleanliness of streets and open spaces between 2004/05 and 2005/06;
- Streamlined arrangements to deal with abandoned cars are now in place, with all abandoned cars removed within 24 hours;
- An extra £2.5 million has been invested in road maintenance, with condition of roads amongst the top 25% in the country;
- The household waste and recycling site has undergone a £750,000 refurbishment and is now the biggest recycling centre in the North East;
- 76% of new homes have been built on re-used land;
- Improvements to the repairs and maintenance service have resulted in a new appointments system, hand-held information technology for quick, mobile working and multi-skilling the workforce, leading to more efficient and faster ways of working;

- A pavement maintenance programme, based on public priorities, has been incorporated in the £2.5 million 'Let's Get Cracking' project;
- We have delivered improved performance with the speed of planning decisions, whilst also improving the quality of service and maintaining satisfaction levels.

### **Developing an effective transport system**

- £12.5 million funding has been secured for the Darlington Eastern Transport corridor;
- We have delivered improved condition of roads, with all classes of road now amongst the best in the country in terms of independently measured condition;
- £2.5 million of prudential borrowing was secured in 2005/06 to invest in further improvements, with a particular focus on residents' concerns and priorities, established through consultation in late 2005. This has formed the basis of the 'Let's Get Cracking' road and footway improvement programme launched in April 2006;
- We have continued to work in partnership with Darlington Association on Disability (DAD) to provide wheelchair accessible routes, crossings with facilities to assist disabled people, and enhanced disabled access information.

### **Enhancing our capacity to improve (Organisational Development)**

- The council achieved a 4-star rating in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and has been classified by the Audit Commission as 'improving well' as an organisation. We have strengthened our approach to value for money and efficiencies, ensuring that we strive to provide high quality cost-effective services;
- Darlington has the lowest Council Tax in the region, with collection rates improving on last year's figures;
- Local Area Agreement worth £8.3 million has secured investment for children and young people;
- The state of the art £0.9m Contact and Customer Service Centre is now operational, providing a single point of contact for our customers;
- Level 3 of the Local Government Equality Scheme has been achieved, with enhancements to service accessibility and raised profile of equalities in service provision;
- We continue to hold corporate Investors in People status and remain committed to achieving other quality awards including Charter Mark to improve our service delivery;
- There has been an overall improvement across all non-financial Best Value performance indicators of 10.15%, further demonstrating that our services are improving, and that the Council is using its resources efficiently and effectively.

## Assessment of performance for 2005/06

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, though there are many other consultation methods used across the authority;
- (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 (BVPIs);
- (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) customer satisfaction remains top quartile for the authority as a whole and the majority of our services;
- (b) our community strategy and corporate plan are both on track;
- (c) we improved our BVPIs by over 10% so that 40% are now top quartile with 66% above average;
- (d) we are a '4 stars, improving well' authority – only five councils are rated better;
- (e) we scored 3/4 for value for money – only three councils are rated better;
- (f) we demonstrate sound and improving corporate health - 85.4% of council employees believe the authority is a good organisation to work for and sickness absence reduced by 2.4 %.

### Customer satisfaction

Results from the Annual Community Survey for 2005 show that:

- General satisfaction with the Council (at 64.5%) is top quartile and has remained relatively stable in recent years;
- Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods is high overall (at 76.7%) but this is variable, ranging from rural wards (88.3%) to the most deprived areas (67.5%);
- Pleasingly 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.
- Comparison of responses from the 1999, 2003 and 2005 Community Surveys shows a largely positive trend in residents' perception on the success of dealing with the themes of the Community Strategy, i.e. improving the local economy, raising educational attainment etc.

Three services stand out from the survey as being most important to the public and most in need of improvement:

- The achievement of low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour – in response, the council has mainstreamed funding for the neighbourhood warden service after government grant was withdrawn and appointed anti-social behaviour co-ordinators. External funding was obtained to increase the number of police community support officers.
- Activities for teenagers – additional funding has been invested in the youth service and additional funding was attracted through the Local Area Agreement to invest in improving opportunities for children and young people.
- Clean streets – a review of street scene services was carried out leading to the creation of five area teams which will have much higher public profile. Services will be improved and efficiencies secured.




## 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 whether progress is being made. Of course we wish to retain the flexibility to 'drill down to look at any one of hundreds of indicators which are presented in Appendix 1. However it is important to assess high-level performance. The Council uses *PerformancePlus*, a software package to do this and high level performance is presented in tables, known as scorecards.

The two scorecards below show aggregated performance from *PerformancePlus* for the Community Strategy themes; which is the Council's contribution to achieving the Community Strategy 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. Indicators only appear in one theme and one objective so there is no double counting. The detailed performance for key indicators in each theme is shown in Appendix 1. 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. When reading these it needs to be borne in mind that overall performance is on target and improving strongly in most services.

**Summary of achievement by Community Strategy Theme for 2005/06**  
**BVPIs and Local BVPP performance indicators**

<b>Community Strategy Theme</b>	<b>Overall status</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Improving the local economy	▲	There was an improvement (narrowing) in the gap between Darlington's rate of unemployment and the national rate. Indicators performing below target are cost per job created, the gap in unemployment and the number of jobless helped into employment.
Promoting inclusive communities	●	Good performance maintained from previous year with significant improvement in most benefits indicators. Homelessness indicators require improvement but the numbers involved are small. The target for pedestrian crossings adapted for the disabled was not met due to a combination of changing PI definition and local policy agreed with the local disability group.
Raising educational achievement	●	Performance for the percentage of children achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grade A*-C was much improved with Darlington amongst the 10 most improved authorities nationally. Areas requiring action are some attainment indicators and those measuring school attendance.
Stimulating leisure activities	★	Overall good performance. Attendance was above target for many leisure activities/facilities. However satisfaction levels for leisure and arts were below target along with pupils participating in sport beyond the curriculum.
Promoting community safety	▲	Important PIs measuring burglaries, domestic violence and vehicle crime are falling short of target. A key factor is the change in police reporting methods nationally. Targets were met for indicators relating to dealing with the effects of drug misuse.
Improving health and well-being	★	Overall performance improved from the previous year. Targets were not achieved for environmental health and trading standards enforcement best practice (although both are at 90%) and percentage of social care equipment delivered within 7 days. Targets achieved were for stability of looked after children placements, intensive home care for older people, older people helped to live at home and the average cost of repairing council houses that reflect the very good condition of the housing stock.
Enhancing the local environment	★	Performance down from previous year but still good. Indicators on household waste recycling and conservation areas need to be improved. Excellent performance on the speed with which planning applications are processed, two out of three PIs now being best quartile. Good performance on streets and other land being free of litter and detritus.

Developing an effective transport system		Good performance maintained from previous year particularly in road maintenance that was an improvement priority for 2005/06, and road safety. However, bus use continues to decline and the number of days of temporary controls exceeded the target and is now worst quartile.
Corporate Health - all themes		Good performance in most corporate health indicators including employees retiring early due to ill health. Only concerns are percentage of top earners from ethnic communities but small numbers, employees retiring early (excluding ill-health) and complaints information.
<b>DBC</b> 'Where quality comes to life'		<b>Overall a very satisfactory achievement against the Community Strategy themes.</b>

The scorecard above shows achievement against targets for Community Strategy themes. The worst performance (against target) is for improving the local economy at 21.71% below target whilst the best is for Improving health and well-being 55.81% above target. Overall the Council's contribution to the top objective *where quality comes to life* is on target (blue circle). Although the overall position is favourable there is a need to improve performance (against target) in two themes: improving the local economy and promoting community safety. Management actions will focus on these areas in the current year.

The scorecard below shows achievement of targets for the five corporate objectives. Performance is on or above target for all five objectives with the best performance being for shaping a better Darlington (21.69% above target) and worst for putting the customer first (3.41% below target). Overall the Council's performance against its top objective *Leading Edge* is on target (blue circle).

**Summary of achievement by Corporate Objective for 2005/06**  
**BVPIs and Local BVPP performance indicators**

<b>Corporate Objective</b>	<b>Overall Status</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Shaping a better Darlington	★	Overall good performance. Targets for some educational attainment indicators were not achieved but performance for the percentage of children achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grade A*-C was much improved. Participation at some leisure outlets was well above target.
Providing excellent services	●	Excellent performance on the speed with which planning applications are processed, two out of three now being best quartile. However the number of days of temporary road traffic controls exceeded the target and is now worst quartile. Overall good performance.
Putting the customer first	●	Performance still good but down from the previous year. Satisfaction levels for leisure and arts were below target.
Ensuring access for all	●	Performance generally on or above target for the basket of indicators, performance needs to improve for school attendance. Significant improvement in most benefit indicators. Visits to museums increased due to the successful <i>Curiosity Shop</i> in the town centre.
Enhancing our capacity to improve	●	Performance down slightly from the previous year. Collection of domestic rates is now worst quartile. Improvement in sickness absence rate.
<b>DBC</b> 'Leading Edge'	●	Overall performance slightly down from the previous year but still good particularly for the shaping a better Darlington objective.



## Performance on PIs

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

- 1. Are we improving over time?** In 2005/06 we improved performance for non-financial BVPIs by 10.15%. We have demonstrated a consistent track record of improvement over time.
- 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 best quartile has increased to 40% in 2005/06, although the percentage in the worst quartile has also increased to 17%. Comparisons show that this is very good performance.

<b>Number and percentage of BVPIs in all English authorities' quartiles</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Best Quartile</b>	<b>Middle Half</b>	<b>Worst Quartile</b>	<b>Number of BVPIs</b>
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

- 3. Are we improving fast enough?** As shown in the answers to questions 1 and 2 we continue to deliver high levels of performance improvement year-on-year and increase the percentage of BVPIs that are best quartile and thus are improving at a better rate than English authorities in general.
- 4. Are we meeting our targets?** In 2005/06 we achieved our targets for 76% of indicators. This compares with 63% of targets for BVPIs achieved in 2002/03. Since we continue to set challenging targets, this represents good performance.
- 5. Are we improving the right things?** There have been significant improvements in service areas that are citizens' priorities including the condition of roads and other important services such as some key education attainment indicators and social care indicators.

We have continued our strong track record of improvement on performance indicators: achieving over 10% improvement from last year; 40% are now in the best quartile nationally and 66% are above average. This again places us as one of the best performing authorities in the country. We avoid complacency however, by continuing to identify and focus on those areas where the authority is not performing strongly. In 2006/07 we will focus on:

- Community safety – a review of the authority's approach to community safety is underway to improve performance
- Waste – a review of waste is underway to reduce the amount of waste landfilled and constrain costs.

**External assessment**

Under the new CPA framework for 2005 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 are value for money.

**Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2005**

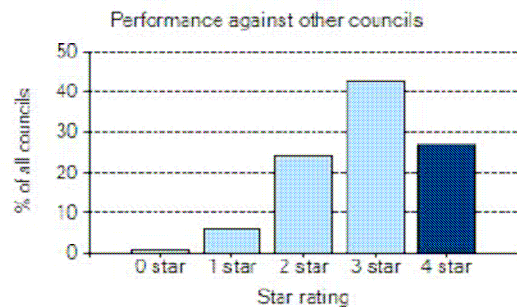
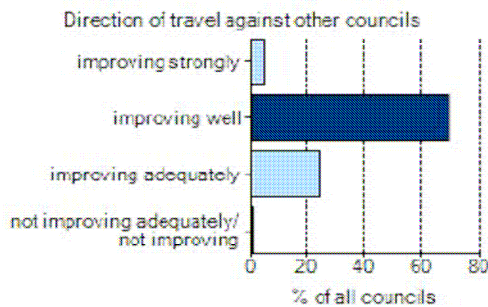


**Darlington Borough Council 2005 scorecard**

**Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)**

**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 “Services are of increasingly good quality, supporting community and Council priorities. The Council is working well with local communities and partners to meet local needs. Adult and children’s social care, housing and benefits services have improved. The Council continues to help to strengthen the local economy and to make communities more inclusive. Major investment in education is delivering improvements. Electronic and multilingual access to services has improved and in 2004/05 more Council buildings became accessible to people with disabilities.

*For further details on CPA contact – Andrew Robinson in the Council’s Policy Unit. Tel (01325) 388014 [Internal Ext 2014] or visit the Audit Commission’s website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk).*

## **Value for Money**

In the 2005 Comprehensive Performance Assessment the Council scored 3 out of 4 for use of resources, which included a value for money assessment. Only three authorities nationally were rated 4 out of 4.

'The Council has robust improvement plans. It is identifying early signs of underperformance for action, strengthening partnerships and challenging the value for money of its services. The Council currently achieves good value for money in most services and is developing a more rigorous approach to procurement' as rated by the Audit Commission.

Quarterly reporting on the MTFP has been reviewed and timely Cabinet reports were submitted on both revenue and capital spend throughout the year.

Procurement savings continue to be identified. The use of collaborative contracts led to a £24,835 rebate in the last 6 months 2005/06. This is in addition to saving in the region of £30,000 over a 3 year contract by joining the NEPO contract for library books and saving an estimated £125,000 over 3 years by utilising the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation contract for photocopiers.

## **Corporate health**

We have delivered the Positive Action Strategy, which sets out how we will recruit and retain more disabled people and people from minority ethnic groups. We have made improvements in reducing sickness absence by 2.4% overall from the previous financial year. 85.4% of council employees believe the authority is a good organisation to work for.

We have delivered level 3 of the Equalities Standard in March 2006, and have made a commitment to achieve level 4 by March 2008. We have published our second Race Equality Scheme.

We hold corporate Investors in People status and continue to achieve and retain other quality awards including Charter Mark.

Eight of the twelve LPSA targets ended in March 2006, with over 70% performance reward grant achieved for those eight targets.

## **SECTION 2 – ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Leading Edge**

Leading Edge is the next stage in Darlington Borough Council's organisational development. Our previous phase of organisational development, Striving for Excellence consisted of a number of areas of improvement, requiring work over several years to achieve its goal. Successful implementation of Striving for Excellence has enabled us as an organisation to move forward, and importantly to learn as we now enter the next stage of our development. Leading Edge has evolved from Striving for Excellence, and has been designed to:

- (a) build on organisational strengths, i.e. the successful implementation of Striving for Excellence;
- (b) address the changing national context, and;
- (c) ensure the authority continues to serve the people of Darlington well.

Darlington has many strengths and we intend to build on these. It is our ambition to become a leading edge authority, one that can rightly claim to lead the way. We have drafted a statement of what it means to be leading edge, which we are communicating through stakeholders via focus groups and other methods of employee and stakeholder engagement. The draft defines a leading edge authority to be one that:

- (a) has an ongoing dialogue with its people about the vision for the town/borough and quality of public services;
- (b) absorbs the learning from that dialogue into the design and delivery of public services (those we deliver, or commission, or seek to influence in our community leadership role);
- (c) continuously challenges and reviews its own services to enhance the quality and drive for efficiency; benchmarking and drawing from others to identify scope for improvement;
- (d) provides leadership to the community, nurturing the engagement of all public services, of business and the voluntary sector in delivering prosperity and equality;
- (e) is totally customer focussed in its interactions with the public;
- (f) promotes and celebrates the town as a place to live, invest in, visit and move to; and;
- (g) acknowledges that the organisation cannot succeed without a committed, well trained and highly motivated workforce that is clear about its purpose and our vision.

## **Leading Edge – the next Organisational Development Strategy**

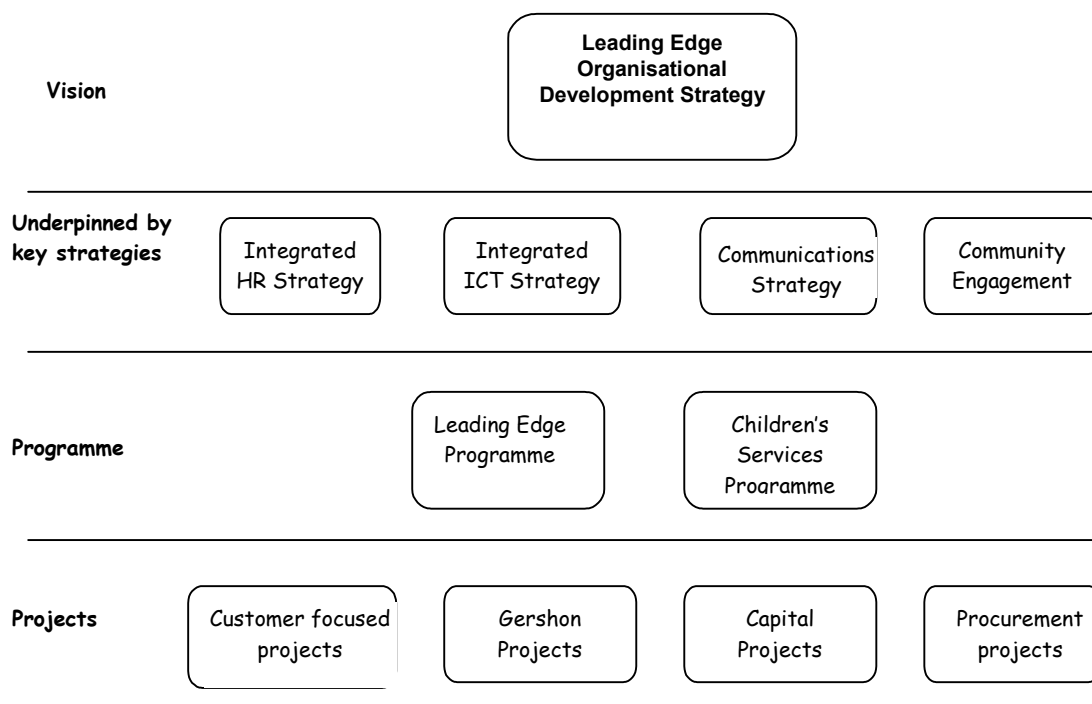
In order to continue our direction of travel and address the context described above, a change management programme has already been defined and is underway. This programme of projects, commonly referred to as Leading Edge, consists of major pieces of work, which have been prioritised corporately and require strategic management to ensure that development is in line with the definition of Leading Edge.

Of course, successful implementation of the Leading Edge projects will not, in isolation, enable us to become a Leading Edge authority. Work has started on developing integrated HR, ICT and communications and engagement strategies to support the delivery of change. These strands are all explicitly linked to our vision, i.e. making Darlington a Leading Edge Council.

Our new organisational development strategy therefore encompasses five strands:

- a) transformational change projects, chosen to address specific service weaknesses and/or national policy shifts, e.g. improving the value for money offered by our Street Scene services, ensuring that our children's services meet the Every Child Matters requirements, etc;
- b) an integrated HR strategy recognising the role employees play and encompassing the continued need for strong, effective and inspirational leadership, enhanced workforce planning, and development planning including skills audits, capacity building designed to develop a workforce that can respond to the changing environment;
- c) an integrated ICT strategy to help articulate the means by which we can envision and implement new ways of working;
- d) an integrated communications strategy ensuring that on the one hand the public are aware of the council's vision and ambitions and are enabled to contribute, and on the other, that employees, members, and other stakeholders are able to contribute to and actively engage in the Leading Edge programme;
- e) a new community engagement strategy, documenting and extending current mechanisms for dialogue with the public and partners on the future of the town and public services.

**The Leading Edge Organisational Development Strategy can therefore be represented diagrammatically as follows:**



### Key elements of the Leading Edge Programme

**Vision and strategy** – as published in this plan and forms the cornerstone of the Programme.

**Key strategies** - underpin organisational development.

**Change Programmes** – made up of a number of projects which are selected and defined to ensure that collectively they meet the overall aims and objectives of the programme, e.g. the Children’s Services Programme is made up of a number of projects all designed to deliver improved services to children and young people.

The desired outcomes of the programme are found in the Blueprint for Change. This describes what the changed organisation should look like.

**Individual projects** - the means by which the Blueprint for Change is translated into reality, e.g. in order to deliver the Children’s Services Blueprint, projects include:

- School Improvement;
- Enhanced safeguarding and specialist support services;
- Restructuring of Education/Social Services department’s into a single Children’s Services department, etc.

## **Our Approach - Programme and Project Management**

In order to effectively control and monitor progress in respect of such a large and ambitious programme of change, a rigorous and robust governance methodology is in place. Darlington introduced Programme Management to the change programme in 2005 and has spent the past year embedding and consolidating this approach into the organisation. The Programme Office offers support to individual projects, and promotes learning in project management methodology, as well as administering all change projects.

## **The Leading Edge programme of change**

The rigours of project management methodologies are being applied across a wide range of service areas. Below is a summary of some of the projects and programmes included in Leading Edge, all of which will transform our organisation including service delivery and cost effectiveness over the next 2-3 years:

### **Customer focused projects**

- **Customer Contact Centre** – Re-engineering the authority's services around the needs of the customer;
- **Children's Services** – a programme of work in its own right, re-engineering children's social services and education around the needs of the child;
- **Stockton/Darlington Partnership** – co-locating and integrating a number of back-office services such as HR and IT into a single service centre supporting both authorities;
- **Street Scene** – fundamentally reviewing the authority's street scene services, improving service delivery to the customer, increasing efficiencies and demonstrating value for money
- **Local Area Agreement** – a programme of change, delivering improved services to children and young people, with the emphasis on partnership working.

### **Gershon projects**

- **Administration Review** – identifying areas of possible duplication and increasing efficiencies;
- **Accommodation** - Maximising use of space by implementing an estates strategy reflecting the changing needs of the community and workforce.

### **Capital Projects – a programme of Capital Works**

- **Programme of Capital Works** - projects include delivering large-scale capital projects such as Pedestrian Heart, Dolphin Refurbishment, etc.

### **Procurement projects – enhancing the council’s approach to procurement**

- **Waste Management** – Procuring waste management services able to meet the long-term needs of the people and the environment in which we live;
- **Repairs & Maintenance** – re-engineering the authority’s council house repair and maintenance services;
- **Depot Relocation** – Relocation and re-engineering of the authority’s depot services, i.e. Central stores provision, fleet maintenance and bulk storage as part of a major regeneration initiative.
- **Purchase to pay** – Re-engineering our procurement processes.

### **Governance arrangements**

Each change programme has a programme manager, to co-ordinate the work of the constituent projects, working under the direction of a programme sponsor. The projects themselves have project managers and sponsors assigned to them, tasked with ensuring outcomes are delivered to the required time, cost and quality. Projects are subject to regular monitoring and review. A framework is in place which enables Members and senior managers to assess progress and give strategic direction.

#### ***Street Scene – a case study***

**What did we do?** – We undertook a 20-week review of street based services, utilising existing staff coached in project management by external consultants, using new project management methodology We fundamentally reviewed services including refuse, recycling, street care, highway maintenance, grass cutting, etc.

**Why do it?** – It’s a national and local priority area, and street scene services had not been reviewed for some time. We believed there were efficiencies that could be made, and that service provision could be improved

**How did we do it?** – We collected and analysed data, and re-engineered processes to deliver a new concept for street scene services – an area-based approach with generic working and community engagement at the centre of the re-defined processes. We involved front line staff and ensured that staff development was an outcome of the process.

**What difference is it making?** – The new service goes live in the summer of 2006. £1.5m savings have been identified over the coming three years and incorporated into the medium term financial plan. Service standards will increase and customer satisfaction monitored.



## **The benefits of Leading Edge**

Other Leading Edge projects are now benefiting from the success of the Street Scene approach and applying the same rigour and dedicated resources to other projects. For example, a comprehensive review of the procurement process has resulted in a team redesigning the whole invoice management process in a matter of only 8 weeks, cutting out inefficiency and waste and delivering new workflows for incorporation into our financial management system. A review of administrative procedures, using the same approach will examine and redesign all council administrative processes, such as word processing, form completion, diary management, data entry etc. and deliver more cost effective ways of working that will revolutionise our approach to routine clerical tasks, all within the space of 20 weeks.

### ***6 Sigma Purchase-to-Pay Redesign – a case study***

**What did we do?** – We reviewed and redesigned the authority’s procurement administration processes, starting with placing orders, through goods receiving and invoice processing, to making payments. Using the Six Sigma process improvement methodology we collected and analysed data, using lean techniques to design a better process.

**Why do it?** – We believed there were efficiencies that could be made, and that service provision could be improved by challenging the current processes. The Stockton/Darlington Partnership offers an opportunity to develop leading edge public sector shared services; the process redesign supports this by supporting the convergence of Stockton and Darlington’s working practices.

**How did we do it?** – We worked in partnership with Cummins, one of the borough’s major employers, to share use of Sigma. Cummins provided extensive training and ongoing support, sharing their expertise and experience. Two teams of staff worked on the project, the redesign work being completed by a dedicated team within six weeks.

**What difference will it make?** – In addition to reducing administration costs and the need for filing, the new process will support budget management and procurement work by providing better management information about our current spending.

These are exciting and demanding times for Darlington Borough Council and the determination and ability exists for us to maximise our potential and remain at the forefront in terms of change and innovation.

## Community engagement

This year, the Council will be working hard to secure a bigger say and a better deal for our communities. We will achieve this through the delivery of a new Community Engagement Strategy. The key aims of the strategy are to:

- Clarify the Council's thinking in the area of consultation and engagement;
- Make better use of the corporate intelligence gathered;
- Agree some common principles for community engagement;
- Share details of existing good practice;
- Articulate the improvements that the Council needs to make.

An important part of our vision is to establish some common principles for engagement so that the Council can see what it needs to do to become an organisation that is even more focused on its customers. These principles will also help us to understand how our customers can be involved in quality control and how we can create the right vehicles for accommodating their feedback.

This work is part of what the Council wants to do to further empower local people and deliver its corporate objective of "putting the customer first". It will also help us to meet our obligations under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment – the Harder Test. This assessment places a new emphasis on user focus, engagement with the voluntary and community sectors and listening and responding to those groups whose voices are rarely heard.

At the time of writing, a draft mission statement for the strategy has been developed:

### **To ensure a bigger say and a better deal for our communities.**

A number of innovative approaches to engagement have already worked. In 2005/6:

- we asked every household to help identify and prioritise repairs to roads and pavements as part of the £2.5m Let's Get Cracking project;
- over 120 new people became involved in Community Partnerships in Darlington's eleven most deprived wards;
- we transformed turnout figures for the youth parliament elections;
- we enjoyed face-to-face conversations with people whose voices are rarely heard. We talked to learning disabled adults, looked after children, people from minority faith groups and unemployed people about what the Council could do to improve things for people like them. And we delivered these actions through "All Together now: A Social Inclusion Strategy for Darlington".

A twin-track approach this year will see short-term improvements being secured at the same as the longer-term strategy is being developed. The work dovetails with the delivery of “All Together Now: A Social Inclusion Strategy for Darlington” and Darlington’s Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and also helps to bring a community focus to the Council’s work on efficiency and value for money.

### **Community Survey Results**

Since 1998 Darlington Borough Council has carried out an annual Community Survey seeking the views of residents on overall satisfaction with the Council, their neighbourhoods and satisfaction with individual services, and priorities for improving services.

Results from the Annual Community Survey for 2005 show that:

- General satisfaction with the Council (at 64.5%) is top quartile and has remained relatively stable in recent years;
- Satisfaction with local neighbourhoods is high overall (at 76.7%) but this is variable, ranging from rural wards (88.3%) to the most deprived areas (67.5%);
- Pleasingly 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.
- Comparison of responses from the 1999, 2003 and 2005 Community Surveys shows a largely positive trend in residents’ perception on the success of dealing with the themes of the Community Strategy.

Whilst the Community Strategy gives the overall strategy context for our medium term financial planning in accordance with good practice, the council’s annual independent residents survey asks what the most important issues are for local people and what is most in need of improvement. The survey is statistically representative of the borough’s population and is conducted through face to face interviews to avoid exclusion on the basis of literacy levels.

Three services stand out as being ‘most important’ and ‘most in need of improvement’ amongst the total sample:-

- (a) The achievement of low levels of crime and anti-social behaviour (58.4% important, 37.5% improvement i.e. almost two thirds of residents see it as important for Darlington, just over a third think it needs improvement).
- (b) Activities for teenagers (43.2% important; 44.7% improvement).
- (c) Clean streets (50.7% important; 30.6% improvement).

These headlines, in addition to the wealth of information about trends on individual services are fed into the authority's service and financial planning mechanism. For many years the authority has proactively sought information from residents and used this information to critically challenge our approach to service improvement and resource planning. Being mindful of the needs also to keep council tax low in a relatively low waged economy, the authority is seeking to meet residents' needs whilst maximising external funding and continuing to improve value for money. This holistic approach is explained in relation to the top three service improvement needs of residents listed above.

### **Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour**

The authority is mindful of the fact that Darlington has traditionally performed well on comparative national indicators and spends above average on this area. Nevertheless, perception is clearly extremely important. To respond to residents' views in the current MTFP :-

- a) The authority has mainstreamed funding of the very popular and effective neighbourhood warden service.
- b) New anti-social behaviour co-ordinators have been appointed.
- c) Following successful lobbying, the authority has received Safer Stronger Community Funding (SSCF) of £3.7m over the next four years. Residents' views will be instrumental in deciding how this is allocated.

### **Activities for teenagers**

There is a clear linkage for residents in the need to address anti-social behaviour and to provide activities for teenagers. It is extremely important not to demonise young people and to ensure that all of the authority's activities serve to foster tolerance between generations. However, the authority recognises that there is room for improvement in its services for young people which extends beyond activities for teenagers. It recognises furthermore, that value for money can be improved through additional investment in the youth service. The MTFP includes provision for:-

- (a) Increased investment in the youth service of £320,000 per annum. This will enable development of outreach work, community liaison and a much improved strategy for engagement of young people across all council services.
- (b) 'Pump priming' grant of £850,000 has been obtained over the next 3 years through negotiation of the Council's Public Service Agreement linked to our Local Area Agreement (LAA) with a focus on children and young people.
- (c) The LAA is a mechanism for engaging partners in improving services for young people and joining up responses to issues such as anti-social behaviour. In this respect the actual 'initial' investment goes beyond the pump priming identified above.

### **Clean streets**

In recognition of residents' views and the need for improvement identified internally the authority invested in 2005/06 in a Street Scene project which will pay dividends in 2006/07. This was in recognition of the fact that although the authority was a relatively high spender on street cleansing, results were below average. The authority commissioned a Street Scene review which was grounded in residents' views and the MTFP as a result :-

- (a) Will improve performance whilst making efficiencies within the service i.e. improving value for money.
- (b) Will be organised on an area-basis which will permit much improved community communications and is intended to feed resident opinion into service improvement on a faster and more sustainable basis.
- (c) SSCF will also enable the authority to direct external resources to meeting resident's needs.

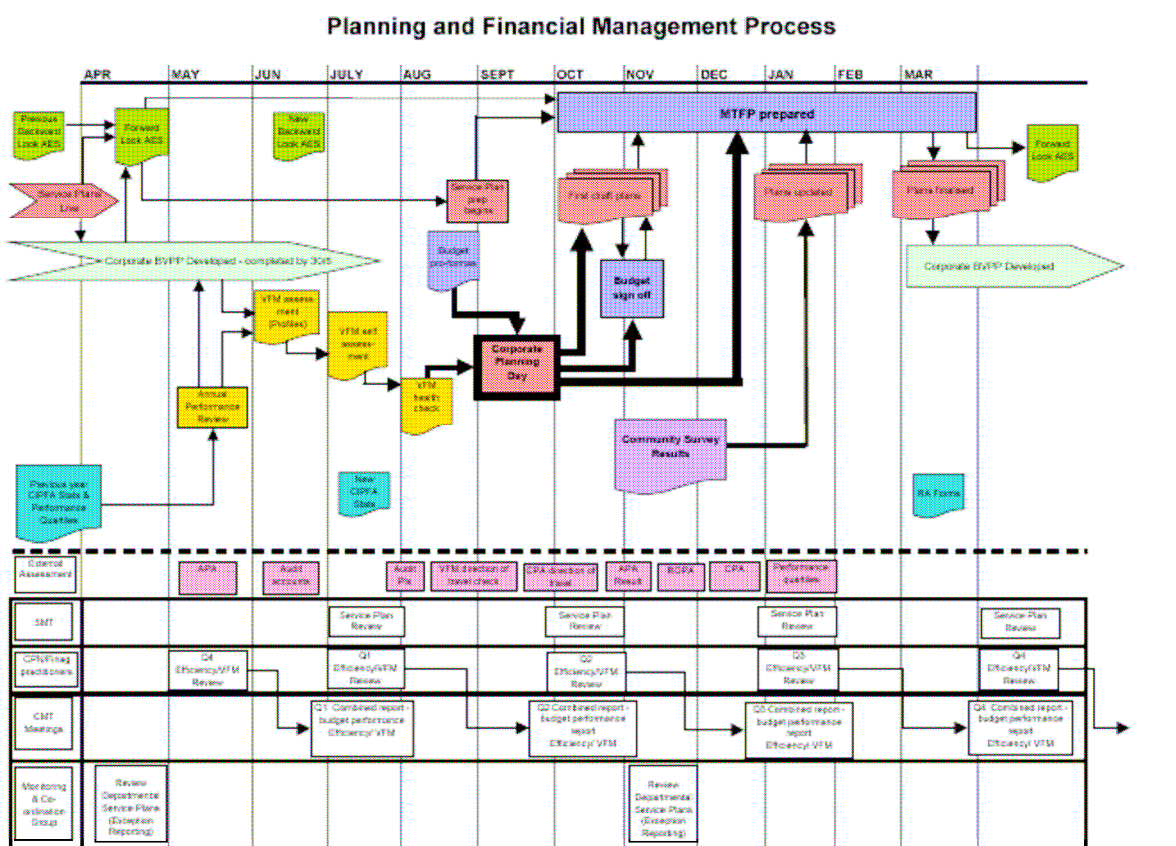
## Service planning and performance management

### Introduction

The Performance Management Framework has continued to be developed, with an enhanced framework that includes efficiency and value for money reporting. This new format includes financial and service performance reporting, integrated in a single report for presentation to Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Cabinet. Using this data the report gives an ongoing assessment of Value for Money that will be used as a guide to both enhance service delivery and deliver efficiencies.

Service planning is integrated with financial planning, allowing for a coherent assessment of how financial resources are utilised and the way in which this relates to the service performance achieved.

Our integrated approach to planning and financial management is demonstrated by the following flowchart:





### Service Planning in the Performance Management Framework

Both service planning and the management of performance within the Performance Management Framework have reached a level of maturity in the Council, delivering sustained performance against the Council’s priorities. Value for Money has been integrated into effective financial and performance management arrangements. The service planning process itself has been reported on extensively in previous plans, and the philosophy continues to be one of plans being produced by service departments using an agreed framework that includes a predefined timetable, linked to financial planning.

Service planning employs a corporate template that ensures consistency and completeness of application. Each department’s contribution to the achievement of the aims in the Community Strategy is clearly understood, so that service plans are part of the service planning hierarchy, with a golden thread of planning starting with the Community Strategy, through to the Corporate Plan, Service Plans and directly to plans for individual employees, arising from individuals’ Personal Development Reviews. The service planning process results in a series of plans being produced, summarised by posters which clearly demonstrate the hierarchy:



Service departments manage their performance to an agreed corporate framework. This includes a timetable, forms, guidance and integration of *PerformancePlus*, the Council’s performance management software.

## **Efficiency planning and value for money (vfm)**

Revised and new procedures have been developed to ensure that the authority increases service efficiency and that value for money is further enhanced. These procedures are an integral part of the Performance Management Framework and there are two key areas of delivery:

1. Analysis of Council spend relative to service performance in comparison with unitary authorities using the CIPFA budget headings to identify areas for review;
2. A combined integrated financial and service performance monitoring report.

### **1. Analysing Council spend**

The value for money comparison with other unitary authorities is done on an annual basis and initially uses CIPFA estimates and Audit Commission quartile data. Estimates are used, since actual outturn data is not readily available in the same format though the availability of this is being investigated. The output of the data analysis is a series of graphs that shows the performance and cost percentile for each budget head. The percentile is simply where Darlington Borough Council sits in a list compared to all other unitary authorities and provides a powerful tool for management review.

The graphs, with accompanying explanatory text are used by Corporate Management Team and Cabinet in planning budgets where value for money may be an issue either due to relatively high much spending, inadequate service performance or a combination of the two.

### **2. Integrated financial and service performance reporting**

The second aspect of the Council's value for money and efficiency work is a combined integrated financial and service performance report, submitted to Corporate Management Team and Cabinet on a quarterly basis. The report uses the Council's budget headings as the primary division and then allocates service performance indicators against these headings, allowing for spend against budget and service performance against target to be tracked throughout the year and a value for money ratio calculated.

Our aim is to enhance the value for money that the Council achieves in delivering both customer facing and internal services. Furthermore, this enables resources to be better allocated to reflect citizen and Council priorities. In the 2005 Comprehensive Performance Assessment the Council scored 3 out of 4 for Use of Resources, which included a value for money assessment. Only three authorities in the country were rated 4 out of 4.



### **An intervention based service review methodology**

In last year's Corporate and Best Value Performance Plan, we outlined how previously the methodology of selecting reviews for inclusion in the best value review programme was based upon performance, local/national priorities, etc. However, with the Council now undertaking its *Leading Edge* programme of change, it has been necessary to change our approach in light of changing approaches to prioritisation, new forms of service delivery and modern approaches to procurement. The 4Cs (challenge, compare, compete, consult) are still inherent in our change programme. Of course, not all service areas are included in the *Leading Edge* programme of change. Therefore, the integrated financial and service reporting allows for assessments of performance to be made against each major service area. This judgement, reported to Corporate Management Team, allows for an intervention based approach to service review, with the degree of intervention depending on the cost-effectiveness, performance and procurement options of the service in question.

## 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 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 2006 exceeded £12 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 2006/07 to 2009/10 includes indicative allocations of resources to services which reflect the Council's priorities to increase funding for Children Services and Adult Social Services. From 2006/07, over the following three years, spending on Children Services is planned to increase by £9.452 million (14.2%) and on Adult Services by £1.917 million (10.6%). The Council has also decided to increase resources for 2006/07 in line with citizens priorities identified via consultation, details of which are set out under the community engagement section (see page 28).

The following table identifies how the Council's budget for the period 2003/04 to 2005/06 was allocated compared to the eight community strategy themes:

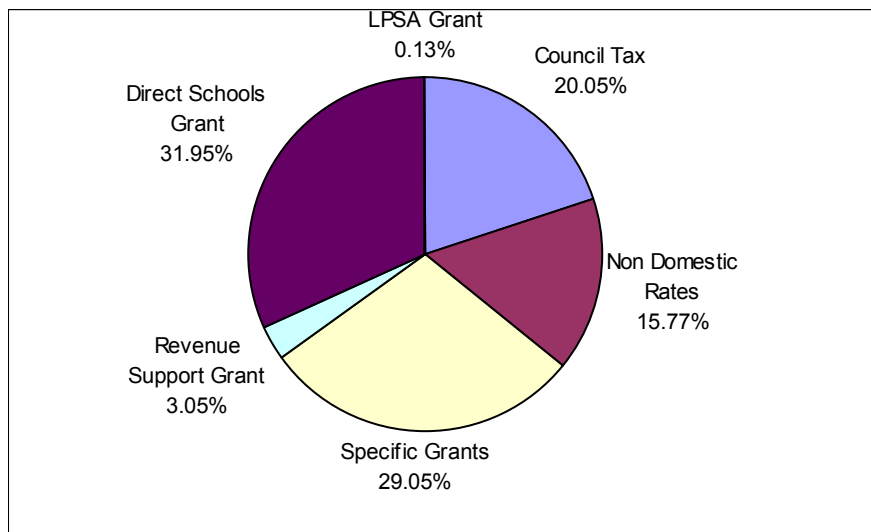
	<b>2003/04 £m's</b>	<b>2004/05 £m's</b>	<b>2005/06 £m's</b>
Improving the Local Economy	2.0	2.2	2.4
Promoting Inclusive Communities	5.3	5.7	6.1
Raising Educational Achievement	59.8	64.4	69.5
Stimulating Leisure Activities	2.2	3.2	4.0
Promoting Community Safety	0.3	0.5	0.7
Improving Health and Well-Being	29.5	30.9	32.0
Enhancing the Local Environment	7.8	8.7	9.1
Developing an Effective Transport System	2.6	3.1	4.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>109.5</b>	<b>119.1</b>	<b>128.2</b>

The analysis demonstrates that additional resources have been allocated to all eight community strategy themes, with significant increases in the three shared priority areas of Local Economy, Inclusive Communities and Educational Achievement.

<b>The Council's Revenue Budget 2006/07</b>	1		2		
	Net	Specific	Total Net	Notional	Total
	Expenditure	Grants	Expenditure	Capital	Cost
	£m	£m	£m	Charges	£m
<b><u>Department</u></b>					
Children's Services	66.572	11.671	78.243	9.238	87.481
Community Services	28.536	35.813	64.349	2.257	66.606
Development & Environment	11.014	1.625	12.639	2.710	15.349
Corporate Services & Chief Executive's	9.336		9.336	0.764	10.100
Joint Bodies	0.581		0.581		0.581
Financing Costs	3.588		3.588		3.588
Service Planning	0.426		0.426		0.426
Single Status	2.500		2.500		2.500
Leading Edge Efficiencies	(0.240)		(0.240)		(0.240)
Contribution to/(from) revenue balances	(2.389)		(2.389)		(2.389)
	119.924	49.109	169.033	14.969	184.002
<b>Financed By:</b>					
Council Tax			33.885		
Non Domestic Rates			26.658		
Specific Grants			49.109		
Revenue Support Grant			5.159		
Direct Schools Grant			54.002		
Other			0.220		
			<u>169.033</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.



## Revenue Budget 2005/06

In March 2005 the Council approved a budget for 2005/06 of £111.868 million. Financial performance compared to budget is reported regularly to Cabinet and Resources Scrutiny Committee. The financial results for the year 2005/06 were reported to Cabinet on 6th June 2006.

The Council's revenue reserves at 31st March 2006 were £12.698 million, which was £0.580 million better than planned.

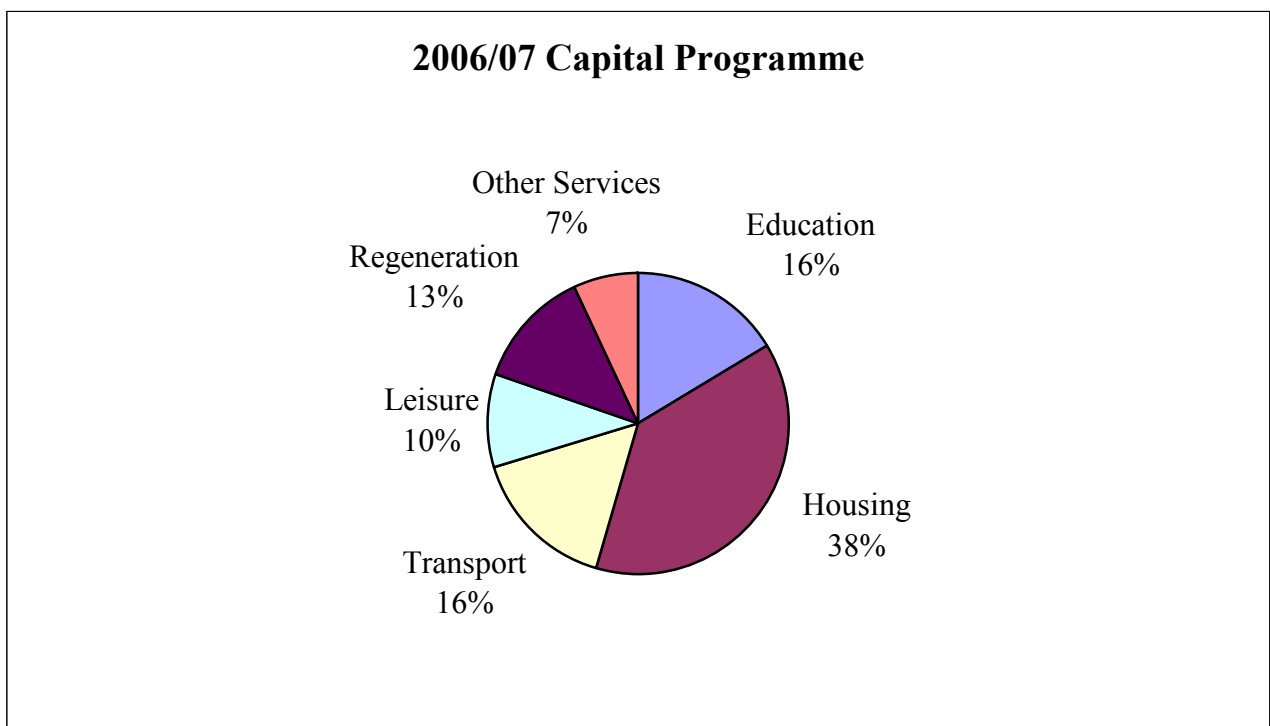
## Capital Expenditure

The Council's capital investment plans are an important part of delivering both the needs of the community and supporting Council services. The Council's spending plans are contained in the Capital Strategy and the Asset Management Plan. These in turn are informed by other council plans including the Housing Investment Plan, the Local Transport Plan and the Education Asset Management Plan.

Capital investment of £37.2 million was expended in 2005/06 spread over Children's Services £11.0 million, Housing £10.3 million, Transport £4.5 million, and other services £11.4 million.

2005/06 was the second year of the prudential code, which includes new freedoms for capital investment and borrowing. Local authorities are now able to borrow without Government approval subject to affordable, prudent, sustainable limits. The Capital Medium Term Financial Plan has embraced the additional freedoms and as a result has brought Capital and Revenue financial planning much closer. Prudential Borrowing is financing four spend to save schemes and has also been used to finance assets worth £0.6m which previously would have been financed via Operating Leases.

The Council's spending plans for 2006/07 are £25.3 million in total, which includes Children's Services £5.5 million, Transport £2.9 million and Housing £11.1million. Other capital schemes relate to Community £1.0 million, Regeneration £3.0 million and other services £1.8 million. Schemes approved within this programme have been assessed against the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan and included in the Medium Term Financial Plan for Capital.



## Risk Management – Corporate Risks 2006/07

The Council's Risk Management Strategy recognises that the function is an essential part of effective and efficient management and planning. It is a fundamental part of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework on Corporate Governance, which was adopted by the Council in 2002/03 through the Local Code of Corporate Governance. Risk Management is also an integral requirement of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and as such is an important element in demonstrating continuous improvement.

A key element of the service planning process is that areas of potential risk that could adversely impact on the ability to meet objectives are identified together with the officer responsible. These risks are plotted onto a standard likelihood and impact matrix with reference to management controls in place and working. The shaded part of the matrix signifies the area above the 'risk appetite line'. Risks in this region require further specific management i.e. are priorities for improvement and appropriate Improvement Action Plans are outlined.

Identified corporate risks for 2006/07 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.	<b>Description:</b> This impacts on our forward planning – we need to plan ahead for future funding, and plan accordingly for any changes. <b>Our actions:</b> We have robust capital programme arrangements in place, subject to regular monitoring by officers and members.	C3	J. Buxton
2	To meet the demands of the white paper 'Every Child Matters', Children's services must ensure continuing quality of service delivery occurs during reorganisation.	<b>Description:</b> The 'Every Child Matters' agenda demands service reorganisation, with existing Education and Children's Social Care services coming together to provide single service provision, with the child at the centre. It is vital that service provision continues to be delivered to the highest possible standards, during this period of intense change. <b>Our actions:</b> Children's services has been identified as a change programme, and is being project managed, with regular monitoring and review mechanisms in place.	D2	M. Asquith

3	The Council works hard to attract capital investment to the borough, and often has many capital projects ongoing at any one time.	<b>Description:</b> We need to ensure effective project management of these schemes and minimise disruption to service users. <b>Our actions:</b> We have a robust capital programme in place, subject to regular monitoring by officers and members. However, it is imperative that an effective project management methodology is in place.	C2	J. Buxton
4	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 during reorganisation.	<b>Description:</b> <i>Leading Edge</i> is the Council's Organisational Development Strategy. It is a change programme, and needs effective communication. It is vital that service provision continues to be delivered to the highest possible standards, during this period of change <b>Our actions:</b> <i>Leading Edge</i> is managed via a Programme Board, with regular monitoring and review mechanisms in place.	D2	L.O'Donnell
5	There has been a major review of employee terms and conditions through job evaluation/single status	<b>Description:</b> Employees terms and conditions have been amended across the whole authority. <b>Our actions:</b> Job evaluation has been carried out with thorough consultation with key stakeholders including trade unions, and is subject to a vote from Union members. An appeals process is in place.	C3	P. Wildsmith
6	Possible reorganisations to neighbouring or nearby PCTs and/or Police could impact on existing working relationships and approaches to joint working	<b>Description:</b> Although we have kept a co-terminous PCT in Darlington, these have not been maintained elsewhere in the region. There is an expectation that savings need to be made; with possible changes to the way services are provided. <b>Our actions:</b> We are working with our LSP partners and the PCT to ensure that we promote the best interests of Darlington residents.	D2	A. Burns

## Darlington Borough Council

7	Adult Services has recently become part of the Community Services Department. Continued quality service delivery is needed during reorganisation	<p><b>Description:</b> There has been key staff turnover within Adult Services. This and combining with the Community Services Department has meant that the priority has been a smooth transition to new working arrangements so that users and carers remain unaffected.</p> <p><b>Our actions:</b> Management arrangements have been put in place, with new structures agreed. Vacant posts are being filled, with reorganisation ongoing.</p>	D2	C. Brown
8	A flu pandemic could affect delivery of key services	<p><b>Description:</b> Flu pandemic can result in key employees, suppliers, partners, etc. being unavailable. This can affect key service provision such as Adult &amp; Children's Social Care.</p> <p><b>Our actions:</b> 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.</p>	D2	J. Buxton
9	Street scene services have been reviewed and it is essential that seamless provision of service occurs during the change to new practices	<p><b>Description:</b> Street Scene services are customer facing high priority services, including refuse, street cleansing, road maintenance, grass cutting, etc. These services have been substantially reviewed and it is vital that a constant level of service provision is maintained during the change period.</p> <p><b>Our actions:</b> The street scene project has been project managed from inception, and new teams have been established prior to working arrangements being changed. Change will be managed, monitored and reviewed.</p>	D2	C. Brown
10	The current waste management contract is due to expire in 2008 and it is essential that the authority procures an effective solution	<p><b>Description:</b> The council is working to an effective solution for waste management, to reach statutory targets and meet requirements of customer need.</p> <p><b>Our actions:</b> The council is examining its waste contract in terms of cost, quality, and performance and this is being project managed.</p>	D2	J. Buxton



The risks have been plotted on the risk appetite accordingly:

<b>LIKELIHOOD</b>	<b>A</b> V. High				
	<b>B</b> High				
	<b>C</b> Significant		1,6	3	
	<b>D</b> Low			2,4,5,7,8,9,10	
	<b>E</b> V. Low				
	<b>F</b> Almost Impossible				
		IV Negligible	III Marginal	II Critical	I Catastrophic
		<b>IMPACT</b>			

As per the matrix, nine of the ten 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

<b>Risk no.</b>	<b>Actions required</b>	<b>Current risk score</b>	<b>Target risk score</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
3	Strategy for strengthening project management methodology with external organisations	C2	D2	J. Buxton	Sep. '06

*For further details on Risk Management, contact: Brian James, Chief Internal Auditor. Tel (01325) 388140 (Internal Ext 2140).*

## Procurement

In September 2004 Darlington adopted a revised Procurement Strategy. Progress since the adoption of the strategy includes: -

- Working closely with Economic Regeneration to deliver a number of e.procurement workshops to assist local small to medium enterprises (SMEs) to engage with the authority electronically.
- Publishing a guide to 'Doing Business with the Council' on the Council's website. We were ranked as one of the best in the North East for this.
- Publishing a contract log on the website containing all the details of the Council's current contracts.
- Developing a Code of Practice for officers involved in procurement.
- Developing a Code of Practice for equalities in procurement.
- Working closely with and contributed to the work of the Regional Centre of Excellence.
- Achieving savings through improved contractual arrangements.

In addition, the Gershon spending review requires efficiency gains in Local Government of 2.5% per year. In support of this requirement Darlington Borough Council plans to identify and release up to £5.4million worth of efficiency savings by the end of the 2008/09 financial year. This will ensure the Council meets its Gershon target, but more importantly eliminate the deficit within the Medium Term Financial Plan. A significant contribution to the target savings will come from improvements in the way we procure goods and services.

The implementation of the Procurement Strategy is now a major project within the Leading Edge Programme and as such is being managed using corporate project management methodology. The procurement project is designed to look at the whole of procurement across the authority, from identifying service need to the payment of invoices. The objectives of the project are to: -

- Streamline procurement working practices, reducing inefficiency and waste to a minimum
- Analyse, streamline and re-design the purchase-to-pay process
- Identifiable savings realised through more efficient procurement practices, which can then be channelled into priority services.
- Incorporate a combination of innovative thinking and best practice into the authority's procurement processes and procedures.
- Reduce transaction costs.
- Implement an appropriate e-procurement solution in line with the e-government programme.

- Implement a corporate approach to contract management incorporating whole life costs; sustainability and performance indicators.
- Develop a corporate contract procurement forward plan from the contract log and spend analysis.
- Ensure corporate project management methodology is employed in procurement activity.
- Optimise savings and improve spend control through an increase in the number of available corporate contracts.

*For further details about procurement contact - Susan White, Procurement Advisor in the Chief Executive's office. Tel (01325 388019) [Internal Ext 2019]*

## Partnership working

### Local Strategic Partnership

Darlington Partnership was established as the LSP for Darlington in 1999 following its earlier role as an interface between the Council and the private sector. Its structures were established soon after and the Community Strategy was developed in 2002 and published in 2003. The development of a robust Action Plan, performance management framework and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy have followed.

The ODPM consultation on the future of LSPs in December 2005 focused on a number of key issues. The overriding one was that LSPs should be the 'partnership of partnerships'. Darlington Partnership has always held this status and so this criterion is fulfilled locally. In the consultation, however, there is an assumption that the new Children's Trust and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership will come under the auspices of the LSP as themed groups whilst also acknowledging that the LSP will not have the same statutory status as these groups. Darlington partnership has reviewed its structure and functions. The revised structure is presented below.

<p><b>Darlington Partnership Board</b></p> <p>Chair: Alasdair MacConachie                  Managing Director - Sherwoods of Darlington</p>				
<p><b>Economy &amp; Environment (&amp; Transport Group)</b></p> <p>Chair:                  Mike Airey                  Regional Director                  Barclays Bank</p>	<p><b>Children's Trust</b></p> <p>Chair:                  Margaret Asquith                  Children's Services                  Director, DBC</p>	<p><b>Crime &amp; Disorder Reduction Partnership</b></p> <p>Chair:                  Peter Davis                  Area Commander                  Durham Police</p>	<p><b>Health Improvement &amp; Social Inclusion Group</b></p> <p>Chair:                  Colin Morris                  Chief Executive                  Darlington PCT</p>	<p><b>Learning and Culture Partnership</b></p> <p>Chair:                  David Heaton                  Principal                  QE Sixth Form                  College</p>

A further expectation is that Community Strategies will become Sustainable Community Strategies and will include spatial development through the Local Development Framework (LDF). This has already been done in Darlington as issues of sustainability are included in the Community Strategy and the LDF has been developed with the themes of the Community Strategy as its starting point. Whilst this augurs well there is a need to undertake a review of the Community Strategy; 2007 will be its fifth anniversary and will afford us the opportunity to be explicit in meeting Sustainable Community Strategy requirements.

In a fundamental review of the LSP in May 2006 the following key actions were agreed in order to maintain the high reputation and effectiveness of the partnership to date:

- Changes to the themed structure to be made (as set out above) to incorporate the Children's Trust, Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) and a new Learning and Culture Partnership.
- Membership of the Board be extended from 27 to 31 members to incorporate new partners whilst maintaining a balance across sectors.
- A replacement Sustainable Community Strategy be created in 2007 and incorporate the Local Area Agreement into the Sustainable Community Strategy Action Plan.

*For further details on the Community Strategy and/ or Darlington Partnership contact – John Bosson in the Council's Policy Unit. Tel (01325 388016) [Internal Ext 2016].*

## Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA)

The Local Public Service Agreement signed with Government in 2004 committed the Council to deliver agreed levels of performance in return for a reward grant. The achievement of these targets contributes to the achievement of national objectives. Of the 8 LPSA targets that have now ended, four have been fully achieved, three have been partially achieved and one target has failed to achieve the desired target. The minimum reward grant that the Council can now achieve in total is 48%, with a possible maximum grant of 73% still achievable. This maximum figure is calculated taking into account the fact that half of the sports target and half of the attendance targets are not now achievable. This gives a total reward grant to date, with four targets still to be calculated, of £1,122,884. This is out of a possible £1,568,000 available for the 8 targets, or 72% of the reward available.

LPSA Local Public Service Agreement (YTD)					
YTD	Alert		Actual	Target	YTD
●	-20.00 0.00 20.00	☐ LPSA Local Public Service Agreement : Status	91.77	100.00	-8.23
●	-20.00 0.00 20.00	☐ LPSA01 Help older people live independen : Status	97.61	100.00	-2.39
▲	-60.00 0.00 60.00	☐ LPSA02 Reducing vehicle crime : Status	40.88	100.00	-59.12
●	-10.00 0.00 10.00	☐ LPSA03 Pupils with 5+ A*-C GCSEs : Status	99.65	100.00	-0.35
★	-30.00 0.00 30.00	☐ LPSA04 Improving condition of highways : Status	127.55	100.00	27.55
▲	-50.00 0.00 50.00	☐ LPSA05 Schools unauthorised absence : Status	51.39	100.00	-48.61
▲	-45.00 0.00 45.00	☐ LPSA06 Disadvantaged employment : Status	59.02	100.00	-40.98
●	-20.00 0.00 20.00	☐ LPSA07 Improving cost-effectiveness : Status	107.41	100.00	7.41
●	-20.00 0.00 20.00	☐ LPSA08 PE beyond school curriculum : Status	106.69	100.00	6.69
★	-30.00 0.00 30.00	☐ LPSA09 Improving the street environment : Status	125.97	100.00	25.97
★	-30.00 0.00 30.00	☐ LPSA10 Improving private sector housing : Status	125.93	100.00	25.93
★	-115.00 0.00 115.00	☐ LPSA11 Increasing intermediate care : Status	212.41	100.00	112.41
●	-20.00 0.00 20.00	☐ LPSA12 Speed & accuracy of benefits proc : Status	93.92	100.00	-6.08

For further details on LPSA contact – Andrew Robinson in the Council’s Policy Unit.  
Tel (01325 388014) [Internal Ext 2014].

## Local Area Agreement ‘Young People – Our Future’

A Local Area Agreement (LAA) is a three-year agreement that sets out the priorities for an area. These are agreed between central government, represented by the regional government office, and the local area, represented by local authorities and their partners working through the local strategic partnership (LSP).

The primary objective is to deliver better outcomes for local people by strengthening partnership working and changing the way that some government funding is paid into an area, to enhance efficiency and allow a clearer focus on local priorities.

In Darlington, the LAA was developed through the Darlington Partnership, which is the LSP for the borough and brings together the Council, other public services, the voluntary and community sector, and private businesses. The projected total funding available to the LAA is £8.353 million over the three years and is a combination of new and existing aligned funding.

Darlington's LAA was signed in March 2006 and is about improving the lives of young people in Darlington. The LAA commits the Council and its partners to use funding in innovative ways to improve the lives of children and young people and, in turn, benefit the whole of the community.

Over the three year period 2006 –2009 Darlington's LAA will focus on:

- Improving educational opportunities for children and young people to give them the best start in adult life;
- Reducing crime, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Improving the health of children and young people;
- Ensuring all public and voluntary services in Darlington can work together to benefit young people, families and the community;
- Creating a way of improving services that can be applied to other areas of the Council's work;

Local Area Agreements are split into four different areas – called blocks as follows:

Children & Young People	Safer and Stronger Communities	Healthier Communities	Economic Development and Enterprise
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Darlington's LAA has fourteen key outcomes split across the Government's four LAA blocks and for which 81 detailed targets have been set. These targets make whole elements or individual parts of the performance indicators that will be used to assess the effectiveness of the LAA and ultimately determine whether we have met the goals we set out to achieve. In addition the LAA includes our second generation Public Service Agreement, now known as the Reward Element of the LAA. A reward grant in excess of £2.8 million is available if all 12 stretch targets are achieved. Within the overall total of PIs set out above, a subset of 23 targets are elevated to make up the 12 key Reward Element Targets [set out in full at **Appendix 2**] and upon which Reward Grant will be determined.

*For further details on the Darlington Local Area Agreement contact – John Bosson in the Council's Policy Unit. Tel (01325 388016) [Internal Ext 2016].*

## **SECTION 3 – Council performance and Plans for Improvement**

- **Improving the local economy**
- **Promoting inclusive communities**
- **Raising educational achievement**
- **Stimulating leisure activities**
- **Promoting community safety**
- **Improving health and well-being**
- **Enhancing the local environment**
- **Developing an effective transport system**
- **Enhancing our capacity to improve**