

Progress Assessment Report

December 2005



Progress Assessment Report

North West Leicestershire District Council

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Progress assessments

In 2002, Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) was introduced at single tier and county councils (ST&CCs) and at district councils in 2003/04, as a way of supporting councils to deliver improvements in services to local people. CPA brought together existing information on service performance in councils with a corporate assessment of each council's ability to improve. This was used to reach an overall conclusion about whether a council was 'excellent', 'good', 'fair', 'weak' or 'poor'.

Councils have prepared improvement plans following CPA and those councils classified as 'under performing' have received annual progress assessments by the Audit Commission. Those cases giving most cause for concern have also been the subject of formal engagement by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). Through its network of relationship managers, the Commission worked closely with lead officials assigned by the ODPM in developing an appropriate monitoring programme.

Audit Commission progress assessment work has sought to measure the impact and sustainability of improvement activity. The progress assessment work has been tailored to local circumstances to provide appropriate public assurance and to contribute to improvement reporting. It involved an evidence-based judgement on progress against the original corporate assessment criteria, but without producing a score.

The progress assessment is part of the Commission's commitment to helping councils ensure continuous improvement to services for local people. It does this in the context of its strategic regulation principles, which look to minimise the burden of regulation at the same time as maximising its impact. We are committed to working in partnership with other regulators and the ODPM in this aim.

Introduction

- 1 In May 2004 the Audit Commission published a CPA category for North West Leicestershire District Council. This assessment categorised the Council as weak. The key strengths and weaknesses from the corporate assessment are set out in Appendix 1.
- 2 This report presents an analysis of the Council's progress to date based on the Council's implementation of its improvement and recovery plan and comparison with the baseline position of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
- 3 The Council adopted its improvement plan in December 2004 following the publication of the CPA report. One of the early tasks to be completed was a revision to the corporate plan. This has resulted in a corporate delivery plan for 2005/06, and a new set of seven outward facing corporate priorities:
 - revitalise Coalville & Ashby Town Centres;
 - develop strong, inclusive communities;
 - deliver the outcome of the housing options appraisal to meet tenants' expectations;
 - increase the number of people & specific target groups' participation in healthy activities;
 - improve the safety of the community;
 - reduce, recycle and re-use waste; and
 - improve the Streetscene.There are two internal priorities:
 - support service delivery improvements through best value principles; and
 - develop into a customer-focussed organisation.
- 4 The Council has set about improving its capacity to deliver its priorities. Senior management capacity was identified as a key weakness during the CPA process two years ago, and since then, significant change has been driven through at a senior management level. The new chief executive was appointed in the summer of 2004, and four new directors have now been appointed, and three and an interim director are now in post as at the end of October 2005. Recruitment has just begun for eleven, third tier heads of service.

Summary

- 5 The Council has made progress in delivering its improvement priorities. Service improvement has been mixed but there are more recent signs in the last six months of performance picking up. The Council has clarified its priorities and is now clearer about what it is trying to achieve. These priorities have informed the Council's service and financial planning for 2005-06 and the organisational restructuring currently underway. Councillors and officers have a good understanding of the priorities and of the actions needed in 2005/06 to enable these priorities to be delivered. As a result, internal leadership is improving significantly.
- 6 The adopted 2010 vision is providing a longer term perspective for the Council. During 2005/06 the Council has remained focused on its improvement priorities and these have provided clear direction in the short term. However, the Council has not yet made progress in developing detailed medium- and longer-term plans in relation to delivery of the corporate priorities. There is a clearer direction for some priorities, such as housing and waste recycling, than for others, such as social inclusion and customer focus.
- 7 The authority and accountability of executive members is growing. Due to significant improvements in performance management councillors and officers are able to challenge performance more effectively. The integration of service and financial planning is making less progress than anticipated in the improvement plan but the Council is making reasonable progress in securing efficiency savings.
- 8 Work on developing delivery arrangements for cross cutting themes within the Council and with LSP partners has begun and is progressing. It is too early to see any direct impact on service delivery.
- 9 The Council is now improving its capacity in order to deliver its priorities. It has delivered a far-reaching management restructuring broadly to timetable. While this has been not without pain, this should serve to add capacity. Plans for restructuring of service teams below heads of service (soon to be appointed) level are to be developed.
- 10 Building blocks that will secure consistent service improvement in the future have been put in place this year. These include concluding job evaluation and the housing stock options appraisal. There are signs of recent improvement in the performance of the Council since April 2004, based on PIs. In the first half of 2005/06, less than a third of the Council's own key PIs deteriorated. However, over the preceding two years, over half of these PIs deteriorated.
- 11 There have been significant improvements in the performance of waste recycling, street cleansing, planning and sickness absence management. Sustaining improvement remains a challenge. There has been steady progress in achieving milestones in relation to the corporate delivery plan.

- 12 The Council continues to be open and realistic about its improvement trajectory; where improvement has been inadequate and where plans need to be developed and implemented. The Council is well placed to deliver its corporate priorities but the pace of change must be sustained to deliver service improvement.

Recommendations

13 It is recommended that the Council:

- actively and promptly shares the findings of this progress assessment with staff;
- takes it to an appropriate public committee meeting; and
- uses the key findings as the basis for revising the recovery plan in conjunction with any direction from the improvement board.

Context

The locality

- 14 North West Leicestershire has a resident population of 88,300 (2004). The district encompasses an area of 27,933 hectares, and has a population sparsity of about 75 per cent of the rest of the region. The district has a relatively small population from black and ethnic minorities (2.6 per cent). Although there are no railway stations in the district, it benefits from easy access to all major regional and national road networks. Nottingham East Midlands Airport is located in the north of the district and has expanded considerably over recent years, becoming a major employer and a major freight terminal.
- 15 The largest town and administrative centre is Coalville. The historic market town of Ashby-de-la-Zouch is the second largest town with the remainder of the population dispersed in smaller villages, the largest of which are Castle Donington, Ibstock, Kegworth and Measham.
- 16 Unemployment is low at 1.5 per cent. Following the very significant decline of the coal mining industry in the 1980s the district has developed a diversified economy with key areas being manufacturing, food and drink and distribution. Average earnings in the district are higher than the regional average and 98 per cent of those for England as a whole.

The Council

- 17 Over the past 20 years, the Council has been focused on the regeneration of the district in response to the devastation of the run down of the local mining industry and as a result, the local economy and environment has been transformed. In 2001 the Council changed this focus from regeneration in favour of emerging priorities.
- 18 In 1999, the Council revised both its political management arrangements and senior management structures. It has subsequently been operating cabinet-style government with separation of executive and scrutiny functions. There are two scrutiny boards – one for performance monitoring and the other for policy review and development. Since the May 2003 elections, the 38 councillors representing 20 wards comprise of 21 Labour councillors, with 12 Conservatives, three Liberal Democrats and two Independents. The net revenue budget in 2005/06 is £11.6 million. The Council employs 630 staff.

What is the Council trying to achieve?

- 19 The Council has made good progress in clarifying what it is trying to achieve. This has happened since the appointment of the new chief executive and the adoption of the Council's CPA improvement plan during 2004.
- 20 Following the adoption of the CPA improvement plan in December 2004, councillors and officers acted decisively to develop and agree a clear set of corporate priorities. These priorities reflect community aspirations as set out in the community plan and recent community surveys and were developed in consultation with staff and councillors. The nine priorities effectively incorporate the improvement focus of the CPA improvement plan. Progress was sufficiently rapid to enable these priorities to be influential in the 2005/06 budget setting process, and to then inform a more detailed Council delivery plan drafted in April 2005. The pace at which the Council has tackled this key task has enabled clear direction to be given to service planning and delivery for 2005/06.
- 21 The agreed corporate priorities are proving effective in focusing officers' and councillors' improvement effort. For example, officers and councillors demonstrate a good understanding of the agreed priorities and of the 2005/06 milestones and activities which will enable these priorities to be achieved. The priorities have influenced the choice of executive board members appointed in May 2005. The focus on priorities has shaped the re-alignment of executive portfolios, and has been a primary consideration in the designation of roles and responsibilities of the four new directors. These priorities have provided the framework for divisional and service planning for 2005/06, and have influenced staff appraisals (i.e. the 'PADS' reviews). Service heads are beginning to use the delivery of priorities as the starting point for discussions over performance related pay. These measures are strengthening the Council's internal leadership.
- 22 The Council has remained focused on what it needs to do to improve. Corporate priorities at the heart of the corporate delivery plan have recently been reviewed in preparation for the 2006/07 year. Officers and councillors retained focus and have reaffirmed the ongoing relevance of the nine strategic priorities, with a minor amendment to the housing priority. This stability is enabling the Council to embed its priorities more firmly and it will enable the Council to begin planning for the longer term.
- 23 However, the setting of long term plans and outcomes for the Council has not been tackled yet. The agreed vision for the Council provides an effective high level statement of what the district will be like in five years' time. But there remains a gap between this vision, and the Council's current (2005/06) corporate delivery plan which relates to detailed plans for one year only. The 2006/07 service and financial planning cycle is now underway and through this the Council is beginning to consider longer term outcomes and the resource implications of delivering its priorities over two, three and four year planning horizons. However, going into this process, officers and councillors have only a limited vision of what some priorities, such as an improved customer focus or improved street scene, will mean in terms of what the public will experience.

- 24 Ambitions in other areas, such as housing and sustainable waste management have been clarified significantly in the past 12 months. Housing ambitions have become more customer-focused, and waste management aims developed that balance minimisation, recycling, diversion and kerbside collection. The council is also engaging actively with other partners through the local LSP.

How has the Council set about delivering its priorities?

- 25 The Council has made steady progress in delivering its priorities but there are areas it still needs to tackle. It has improved its capacity through a fundamental reorganisation. This has been a considerable challenge. Senior management capacity was identified as a key weakness during the CPA process two years ago, and since then, significant change has been driven through at a senior management level. Four new directors have now been appointed, and three interim directors are now in post as at the end of October 2005. Recruitment has just begun for 11, third tier heads of service. Given the limited strategic management resources which the Council has retained during the past twelve months, it has done well to keep the pace of the corporate restructuring broadly in accordance with the improvement plan. The Chief Executive in particular has injected energy and drive into the process.
- 26 Officer and councillor commitment is strong to ensuring improvements in efficiency and quality will result from the restructuring of service teams. Plans for the restructuring of service teams below the eleven heads of service (soon to be appointed) are to be developed. Some of the key principles which will influence the reconfiguration of teams, for example, relating to front office activities such as customer services, or back office activities such as administration, are being discussed.
- 27 The Council's interim corporate management team has been successful in ensuring the improvement agenda is progressed overall, particularly around restructuring and organisational development. Additional expertise has been brought in and effectively applied.
- 28 However, there has been mixed success in developing clarity around delivery arrangements across all priorities. On the one hand, progress has been made in housing services to establish a clear direction and develop action plans. On the other, there has been limited progress in developing a clear direction for how the Council will become a 'customer focused organisation'. For example, where business process re-engineering has taken place, this has described existing arrangements rather than model alternatives.
- 29 The Council has made good progress in implementing its performance management framework. For the 2005/06 year, a full hierarchy of plans has been prepared, involving all managers. These plans include the corporate priorities, the corporate delivery plan, divisional plans, service plans and individual PADs across the Council. Plans are linked to other elements of the framework. The full roll out of performance management software (TEN system) has been achieved (October 2005), and this is now reporting the progress of corporate and priority level key measures in a meaningful way. Officers and councillors' confidence in the purpose and function of the framework is growing, and this is improving strategic management.

- 30** Officers and members express a strong commitment to developing openness in the way performance is challenged. There are signs that this commitment is becoming embedded. Officers and councillors are taking quarterly performance monitoring seriously. The TEN performance monitoring system is facilitating this. Portfolio lead members are working much more closely with senior officers, and there are regular one-to-ones with senior staff to challenge delivery against priorities.
- 31** The Council is making limited progress in integrating financial and service planning. During budget setting last year, close attention was paid to the resources required for the delivery of the newly adopted corporate priorities, but limited progress has been made this year in forecasting the likely resource requirements of delivering priorities in 2006/07 and beyond. The timetable for integrated service and financial planning indicated service and divisional planning would take place from September onwards. However, divisional planning has slipped and now will not be completed in time to influence budget setting. Divisional plans last year provide very limited commentary on resources. Councillors' and management team discussions in October 2005 focused on ordering priorities in the broadest of terms, and not in a way that will help councillors debate or challenge the budget in relation to deliverable outcomes.
- 32** The Council is reporting good progress in delivering improved efficiencies. This has been achieved primarily through deleting vacant posts and through improved sickness absence management. A procurement strategy has now been approved (February 2005), but not implemented. The Council acknowledges that procurement and vacancy management (ie savings through recruitment drag) are the highest risk areas for the year in delivering target efficiency savings. There remains some tension between the effect of recruitment drag on individual service delivery and achieving corporate efficiency targets.
- 33** The executive's authority is growing. There are early signs that the combination of clearer priorities, newly defined portfolios and sharper performance management is improving portfolio holders' grasp on the key issues they hold lead responsibility for. In addition officers are reporting that with improved briefing from officers, portfolio holders are becoming more confident and accountable in the policy formulation process. This is encouraging better use of resources, and improved leadership and capacity.
- 34** Limited progress has been made to ensure that services collectively deliver cross cutting priorities. There is recognition that, whilst service delivery is becoming more strategically driven, service managers are less able to take forward cross cutting corporate priorities, such as social inclusion, or customer focus. Equally so, these are priority areas where there has been limited leadership to help drive improvement and overcome managers working in service silos. This remains an area for development.
- 35** While the Council has been focused on the delivery of its corporate plan, it has made variable progress in improving the way it works in partnership to deliver wider community outcomes. Some partnerships have been strengthened, for example the crime and disorder reduction partnership (CDRP) now has a clearer focus on delivery through a newly formed performance management subgroup.

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The county sports partnership is a new Sports England funded partnership, and the Council is a leading player in the partnership in co-ordinating local sports interests to improve participation and quality through it.

- 36 Progress in relation to the local strategic partnership (LSP) has been mixed. Senior officers have been closely involved in the Leicestershire local area agreement (LAA). A fundamental review of the architecture of the LSP began in April 2005, enabled by the Council. However, this has not led to any discernable impact on partnership delivery arrangements. Area arrangements continue to be discussed but limited progress has been made in deciding how to take these forward. Councillors reflect a variable level of commitment to and understanding of the aims of the LSP. While councillors are confident in the Council's role of directly delivering services they have less confidence in the Council performing an enabling role, for example, in addressing health and regeneration aims.
- 37 Investment is taking place to improve the management of human resources (HR). There is a much stronger recognition of the value of management development, for example, with housing officers undertaking intensive housing management short courses. Most councillors have contributed to a needs analysis undertaken by IDeA in order to develop a training and development programme. Councillors and officers have recently had appraisals and personal development planning meetings. HR policies are being updated, and HR officers have supported a much more robust approach to managing sickness absence. There remains further work to do to bring all HR policies up to date, and to introduce performance related pay by March 2006.

What has the Council achieved/not achieved to date?

- 38 Service improvement has been mixed but there are more recent signs in the last six months of performance picking up. The Council is making good progress in challenging complacency about how and why Council services are provided. While commitment to the two internally facing priorities is strong (ie becoming more customer focused and improving services through best value), it is too early to see clear evidence of the impact of this commitment on service users. But there are some good developments. For example: job evaluation has now been completed (March 2005); a housing transfer is being contemplated; sickness absence management has improved; performance appraisal (PADS) is now universal and there is a commitment to introducing PRP.
- 39 Performance has improved recently based on PI data. Comparing performance over the two years between 2002/03 and 2004/05, there has been limited improvement in performance as measured by service and corporate BVPIs (46 in total). Over this period, 50 per cent of the PIs deteriorated. This covers a period prior to the CPA report being published and also prior to the appointment of the chief executive and new management team. However, according to the Council's own performance monitoring data over the past twelve months, performance in 2004/05 was better than in the previous two years in terms of the number of improving PIs and the number hitting the targets set. A more up-to-date Council report, as at the end of the second quarter, indicates two-thirds or more of the priority BVPIs the Council uses for monitoring progress have improved or stayed the same since April 2005.
- 40 The Council has made very good progress in improving its absence management. Sickness absence, previously a worst quartile performer, has fallen to close to the median for all Councils. Some divisions such as community services, and planning and environmental health, have performed very well compared to others in contributing to this improvement, equating to £114,000 in savings last year.
- 41 There has been some improvement in council tax collection although this is proving difficult to sustain. Although improving, the Council has not kept pace with improvements relative to others for e-government and accessible buildings.
- 42 The benefits service continues to perform well and BFI has recently commended the service's anti-fraud performance. However, housing PIs are not showing consistent improvement yet, with housing repairs still mostly performing poorly relative to other councils.

- 43 In relation to the environment, there have been significant improvements in performance for waste recycling. With the introduction of the green collection, recycling performance has moved from the bottom quartile to above the median for all councils. Planning speed has improved and is now at government (PSA6) standard but due to its inconsistent track record there remain doubts about sustaining this level of improvement. Street cleansing (BV199) has improved strongly, but not sufficiently to lift the Council's performance out of the bottom quartile.
- 44 In delivering the Council's outward facing priorities there has been progress against the milestones in the Council delivery plan as at the mid year point.
- **Revitalisation of town centres** – Ashby regeneration activities are progressing. Retail needs study completed, but limited progress in establishing the direction or partnership vehicle for Coalville regeneration.
 - **Inclusive communities** - social inclusion strategy drafted and being consulted upon, and Racial Equalities Strategy adopted and level 1 equalities standard reached. Progress is steady.
 - **Housing** - Option signed off after some delay and further delay to achieving FFP business plan and housing strategy. Plans being progressed for housing repairs service. Stock condition survey concluded, and transfer team established.
 - **Healthy communities** - More people are participating in healthy activities, health plan to be prepared.
 - **Community safety** - adopted CDRP three-year strategy, and visible ASB partnership activity.
 - **Attractive and sustainable environment** - Street cleansing and recycling improvements being sustained. Plans implemented for kerbside recycling collection but plans for street scene improvements have made limited progress.
- 45 The Council has made improvements to the way it communicates internally and externally, making major changes to the layout of its vision magazine and increasing the frequency of its publication. The internal vision magazine is widely read and the Chief Executive is conducting 'back to the floor' days as a means of improving communication.

In the light of what the Council has learned to date, what does it plan to do next?

- 46 The Council has made progress in learning. It is open and honest about where improvement is needed, the scale of the challenge, and what is working and what in not. The Council engaged in a full and frank discussion with the Audit Commission over the strength of the Council's approach to diversity, equality and user focus. The Council's self assessment ahead of this progress assessment highlights areas where the pace of change has been less than expected, ie:
- Street scene – re-organisation of service delivery;
 - Customer Service – embedding a customer focussed culture, developing a strategy and appropriate delivery plan;
 - Area Working – at early stages of discussion with key partners;
 - Project Management – recognition of the need to develop a corporate project management approach;
 - Service Delivery Plans – developing consistency and quality; and
 - Review of the scrutiny functions and arrangements.
- 47 Delivery of the corporate priorities is being reported clearly and openly to councillors and officers, and the Executive and corporate management team are fully engaged in responding to slippage and where proposals are unlikely to work. Officers refer to their lack of confidence in customer contact centre plans, and the need to take a step back and fundamentally rethink the direction customer services should take. There is, for example, some concern over sustaining improvements in sickness absence management following the good progress made last year.
- 48 The Council is more outward looking than it has been in the recent past. Despite the Council's single-mindedness about its own immediate improvement agenda, it is able to support the wider improvements across local government. For example, the Council leads on performance management within the Leicestershire and Rutland Improvement Partnership, and it has been very active in the Leicestershire Sports Partnership.
- 49 The Council is addressing gaps where recent lack of capacity has limited the development of future plans. New directors are leading on the development of the Council's customer focus, and a more comprehensive approach to managing streetscene improvement. The Housing Quality Network has been engaged to help develop a stronger set of housing management policy and procedures.
- 50 Commitment to councillor and officer development is good. Plans are now in place and the training provision is being organised to support these plans. Some initial training has taken place and a members' support review is planned in order to ensure these services make the most of councillors' capacity and skills.

Appendix 1 – Summary of theme scores and strengths/weaknesses as reported in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in May 2004

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Ambition	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambitious over a long period of time • Strong community leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clarity about future ambitions • Long term plans and outcomes are not clear • Inconsistent internal leadership
Prioritisation	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • De-prioritised regeneration – some resources shifted to new priority areas • Comprehensive external consultation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively new priorities • Housing stock condition data – not verified • Inconsistent communications – internally
Focus	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stayed focused on regeneration and housing investment over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mechanisms to enable focus not well developed • Scrutiny not fully focused on priorities • Executive only just beginning to focus on performance
Capacity	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training • External partnerships • Openness to alternative procurement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under resourced at director level • A number of vacant posts and short term appointments in staffing • Job evaluation implementation still not resolved • HR strategies underdeveloped • Lack of individual training needs for members identified

Progress Assessment Report | Appendix 1 – Summary of theme scores and strengths/weaknesses as reported in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in May 2004 **19**

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
Performance management	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate performance officer appointed • Service delivery plans in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance management culture not fully embedded • Lack of ownership in departments • Performance reporting and monitoring under developed • No individual performance appraisal process for staff • Service and financial planning processes not integrated • No corporate approach to procurement • No customer focused service standards
Achievement	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High quality regeneration service • Thriving tourism • Good leisure provision • 34 per cent PIs top quartile • Top quartile performance in benefits and standards of housing • Young people initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall satisfaction with Council bottom quartile • Satisfaction with many services is low • Bottom quartile performance in council tax collection, planning, waste collection and recycling
Achievement of improvement	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration has improved quality of life • Improvement in planning, waste and recycling PIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58 per cent national BVPIs not improving • Satisfaction with many services is low and declining • Few identifiable improvements in priority areas
Investment	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have invested in several corporate building blocks • Significant Inward investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 6 per cent of council buildings accessible to people with disabilities • Procurement in housing

20 Progress Assessment Report | Appendix 1 – Summary of theme scores and strengths/weaknesses as reported in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment in May 2004

Theme	Grade	Strengths	Weaknesses
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investing in recycling and successful • DEFRA challenge bid • EFQM based improvement teams • Successful IIP reassessment 	
Learning	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becoming more self aware • Some good examples of learning from others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiatives not yet impacted on performance • Knowledge not shared • Performance comparisons not challenging
Future plans	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital strategy and asset management plan assessed as 'good' • Medium term financial strategy in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate plan in transition • Some strategies and plans lack milestones, targets and real outcome measures • Housing strategy and business plan not yet fit for purpose

Scoring key:

1- Weak

2 - Weaknesses outweigh strengths

3 - Strengths outweigh weaknesses

4 - Strong

Appendix 2 – Progress monitoring against the findings of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment

- 1 The original comprehensive performance assessment was carried out under the Local Government Act 1999 and published in 2003/04.
- 2 Under section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 ('the Act'), best value authorities have a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions, having regard to the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. By virtue of sections 10 and 13 of the Act the Audit Commission may carry out inspection activity to ensure that a best value authority is complying with this duty, and may issue a report as to its findings. This progress monitoring activity and reporting to assess improvement falls within sections 3, 10 and 13.
- 3 The main elements of this progress monitoring report were collation and analysis of evidence from:
 - self-assessments of progress made, completed by the Council;
 - appointed auditor evidence from performance and financial audit activity;
 - audited performance indicators, inspection reports and plan assessments;
 - reviews of key corporate documents including performance reports, committee papers and management reports; and
 - interviews and focus groups with councillors from the executive and scrutiny functions and managers.
- 4 This progress monitoring report for North West Leicestershire District Council was collated by the Audit Commission and reflects evidence gathered over the period from May 2004 to November 2005.
- 5 This report has been discussed with the Council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission's assessment. This report will be used as the basis for reporting progress to any Monitoring Board and updating and improving any Improvement/Recovery Plan as appropriate.