

Service Inspection Report

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# **Cultural Services Inspection**

**South Derbyshire District Council**

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For further information on the work of the Commission please contact:

Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Tel: 020 7828 1212 Fax: 020 7976 6187 Textphone (minicom): 020 7630 0421

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## Service Inspection

This inspection has been carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 and is in line with the Audit Commission's strategic regulation principles. These principles embody the objectives of our Strategic Plan and Strategic Regulation. They also reflect the principles from *The Government's Policy on Inspection of Public Services (July 2003)*.

Audit Commission service inspections should:

- focus on public service outcomes from a user perspective;
- act as a catalyst to help inspected bodies improve their performance;
- concentrate inspection work where it will have most impact, so that it is proportionate and based on an assessment of risk;
- be based on a rigorous assessment of costs and benefits, with a concern for achieving value for money both by the inspected organisation and within the inspection regime itself;
- be, and be seen to be, independent of the inspected organisation;
- report in public, using impartial evidence to inform the public about the performance of public services so as to enhance accountability;
- involve collaborative working with other inspectorates and external review agencies to achieve greater co-ordination and a more holistic approach to the assessment of performance by audited and inspected bodies;
- share learning to create a common understanding of performance that encourages rigorous self assessment and better understanding of their performance by inspected organisations;
- be carried out objectively by skilled and experienced people to high standards and using relevant evidence, transparent criteria, and open review processes; and
- enable continuous learning so that inspections can become increasingly effective and efficient.

We assess services using published key lines of enquiry (KLOE) to inform our judgements. The KLOEs can be found on the Audit Commission's web site at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk).

This report is issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under Section 13 of the 1999 Act.

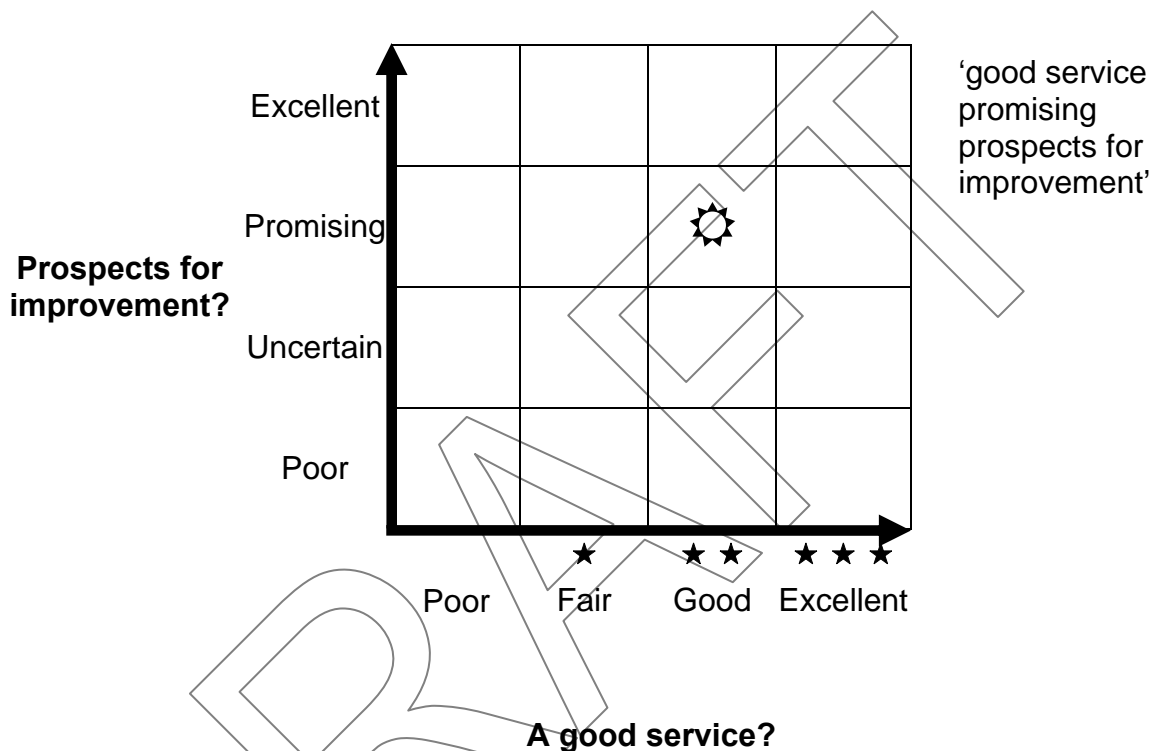
## Summary

- 1 South Derbyshire District Council provides **good** cultural services which have **promising** prospects for improvement.
- 2 Cultural services are important to the council. There is strong political and corporate leadership for culture and it is clear that cultural services contribute to corporate and community aims and to local and national priorities.
- 3 Cultural services are improving the quality of services offered. Good consultation and meetings with local communities enable the service to respond to identified needs. Over the last two years there has been an investment in play areas, parks and sports facilities. The Council has particular strengths in providing activities for young people and in actively encouraging young people to engage positively with their communities. Investment in tourism is having increasing impact on local quality of life and economic vitality.
- 4 The Council has successfully positioned its cultural services to deliver on key agendas such as crime reduction and improving health. Work within the Crime and Disorder Partnership is having an impact on anti-social behaviour and more young people are engaging in sport. The Council has a well established practice of working with health partners to address health inequalities. It has worked with the Primary Care Trust on promoting healthy lifestyles through GP referrals and Walking the Way to Health projects.
- 5 The service has a good track record of improvement and capacity to continue to improve is good. It has responded to challenge and addressed identified weaknesses to improve services. It is good at attracting external funding to improve facilities and cultural opportunities to meet local priorities and objectives, including new facilities such as Rostiston Forestry Centre and Sharpes Pottery Tourist Information Centre, and the restoration of public spaces such as Maurice Lea Memorial Park. Cultural services are well led and have significant strengths in partnership working. Investments in capacity and funded future plans position the Council well to continue to improve.
- 6 However, target setting does not yet relate to outcomes for all services, and therefore the Council cannot consistently show how its investment impacts on the lives of local people. It does not always have a strategic view of the work undertaken in partnership to meet shared priorities and so the Council cannot always be clear about what it is achieving through this investment.
- 7 The Council's approach to diversity is underdeveloped. Access for people with disabilities is mixed and the needs of diverse communities have not been assessed. There is no strategy to use pricing to maximise participation. Customer service standards are developing but have yet to be used to comprehensively improve services.
- 8 The Council is not yet taking a fully effective approach in managing and delivering value for money. It has yet to fully explore the relationship between costs, quality and satisfaction. The use of benchmarking is not consistent across cultural services.

## Scoring the service

- 9 We have assessed South Derbyshire District Council as providing a good, two star service that has promising prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

**Table 1 Scoring chart<sup>1</sup>**



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- 10 The service is a good, two-star service because:
- It consults well and is responsive to local needs;
  - There is a good corporate understanding of the challenges facing the district and how cultural services can help achieve corporate aims and objectives;
  - The Council has positioned cultural services to deliver on other agendas such as health and crime and understand the contribution made by culture;
  - It works well with partners to build capacity and influence cultural provision;
  - It makes effective use of external funding, cultural partnerships and provides grants for cultural activity to maximise the use of available resources;

<sup>1</sup> The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a service that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent service (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

- Children and Young people are a focus of the plans and strategies and have been involved in the design and provision of services; and
- There is a range of good quality cultural opportunities across the district.

However

- The approach to diversity is under-developed, and whilst some progress is being made the Council is not monitoring the impact of its approach. Physical access to cultural activity for people with disabilities is mixed;
- Service standards are still developing, and currently local people are not aware of the level of service they should expect;
- Targeting is limited and pricing and programming of services has not yet been used to maximise access to services for all; and
- The Council is not clear if it is routinely achieving value for money in cultural services.

11 The service has promising prospects for improvement because:

- Cultural leadership is effective and the Council has strong partnerships to enable and deliver further improved outcomes;
- The Council is good at attracting external funding and directing resources at cultural priorities;
- It has a good recent track record of improving the range and quality of cultural opportunities;
- The number of people participating in cultural activities is increasing;
- It has strengthened capacity with new resources and posts; and
- Cultural plans are well integrated with corporate and partner strategies.

However

- Performance management does not focus effectively on the impact on local people;
- There is no consistent approach to using cost and quality information to manage and improve value for money;
- Information is not used effectively to drive service improvement;
- Capacity to meet the challenges of future population growth is not certain.

## Recommendations

- 12 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the council. In addition we identify the approximate costs<sup>2</sup> and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context the inspection team recommends that the Council should do the following.

- R1 The Council should clearly show the extent to which cultural services contribute to improving quality of life of all local people by:*
- using measures and evaluation techniques that show the outcomes and impact for local people;*
  - undertaking impact assessments across all cultural services to help identify barriers to access;*
  - improving its use of information to target services and initiatives more effectively;*
  - introducing clear measurable quality of life indicators that address the needs of all diverse communities; and*
  - ensuring that contributions made to partnership agendas are reported corporately.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- the Council and local people will be able to judge the impact and the value that the Council is achieving from its investments in cultural services;
- a greater focus for cultural services to enable them to more effectively contribute towards strategic objectives;
- more engagement in cultural activities by wider ranges of the community;
- the removal of barriers to participation and therefore improved access for people with a diverse range of needs;
- improved satisfaction levels of residents; and
- improved quality of life for vulnerable groups.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by December 2007

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<sup>2</sup> Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 percent and high cost is over 5 per cent.



*R2 Improve value for money and its management by:*

- *Assessing the balance between costs and service outcomes;*
- *Using benchmarking to establish a baseline and compare with other similar services;*
- *Evaluating partnerships more rigorously; and*
- *Setting targets to improve value for money within the performance management framework and integrating them into plans.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- An improved understanding of value for money and how it will be measured; and
- Improved value for money for local people.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented by December 2007

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# Report

## Context

### The locality

- 13 South Derbyshire covers an area of 338 square kilometres and is a district council within the county of Derbyshire. The area has an average population density and is classified as 'accessible rural' by Natural England.
- 14 South Derbyshire is also at the heart of The National Forest, Britain's biggest long-term environmental project. More than seven million trees have been planted in over a decade, transforming the area into a new landscape for work, recreation and wildlife.
- 15 With a population of about 87,680 South Derbyshire has been the fastest growing district in the County for almost two decades and one of the fastest growing areas nationally. Inward investment by companies such as Toyota, Bison, Nestle and JCB is creating many new high quality work opportunities. Tourism has become a key industry generating a total spend of £116m, resulting from 3,636,950 visitors and supporting the equivalent of 2,060 full-time jobs. The principal town is Swadlincote (population of 33,000). Major investment is transforming the town, with many new businesses moving onto the modern business parks. Outside this urban core there are 33 parish councils.
- 16 On the indices of multiple deprivation the area ranks 213 out of 354, where one is the most deprived. There are no areas which fall into the 10 per cent most deprived areas in England. Anti-social behaviour indicators are below average, but fear of crime is an issue locally, and there are above average levels of some other types of crime.
- 17 There is a higher than average proportion of white British population (95.9 per cent compared with 87 per cent nationally), with Asian/Asian British: Indian being the largest other ethnic grouping (Census 2001).
- 18 Earnings in South Derbyshire are lower than the regional and national average, with gross weekly pay at £423 compared with £427 and £450 respectively. GCSE success indicators from 2005 are below the England average at 53.4 per cent compared to 56.3per cent
- 19 Life expectancy for males and females is around the same as the national average. Mortality rates from cancer and circulatory diseases are lower than the national averages. While the community is relatively healthy there is evidence that some areas have lower life expectancy than others, and the incidence of coronary heart disease in men is above average. The district also has relatively high numbers of teenage pregnancies.

## The Council

- 20 At the time of the inspection the Council was Labour controlled and based on the traditional main council and committee structure. Cultural services report to the Housing and Community Services Committee and to the Environmental and Development Services Committee. There are also three corporate committees, a standards committee, an overview committee, two scrutiny committees, an independent remuneration panel and six area meetings.
- 21 The Council employs 369 staff across 3 sites in Swadlincote.
- 22 The Council achieved a CPA rating of 'Fair' in May 2004 and scored a Level 3 (performing well) in the most recent Use of Resources Assessment

## The Council's cultural services

- 23 The majority of cultural services are contained within the Leisure and Community department, with three leisure centres and over 250 hectares of managed recreation and open space. Cultural services are delivered by a range of partnerships with a variety of public, private and voluntary sector organisations.
- 24 The Policy and Economic Regeneration Unit manages Tourism and Creative Industry support, and Planning Services have responsibility for Heritage and Open Space policy and ensuring 576km of public rights of way are accessible.
- 25 The Leisure and Community Development Service was established in 2004 through a review of the Council's senior management. Since then, the service has been subject to further reviews covering sports development, community safety and grounds maintenance. These have resulted in the establishment of three specific service units: Leisure Services, Partnership and Development and Safer Communities.
- 26 The Council has two principal leisure facilities, Green Bank and Etwall Leisure Centres. Green Bank is managed by Sport & Leisure Management (SLM) on behalf of the Council through a 10-year management contract arrangement. Etwall LC is managed through the school Joint Management Committee (JMC). Both facilities are old and in need of upgrading or replacement. Finance is now in place for the redevelopment of Etwall Leisure centre through the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and other external and council funding. Green Bank leisure centre is in Swadlincote town centre, which is subject to regeneration plans, which in turn will impact on any changes to leisure provision.

## How good is the service?

### What has the service aimed to achieve?

- 27 The Council and partners clearly see culture as key to delivering the Community strategy. In 2001, the Council was one of nine Derbyshire authorities that developed a cultural strategy. The strategy defines the role of culture to meet local priorities and has been taken on by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) theme group 'Lifelong Learning and Culture'. The focus has been to develop more facilities to engage young people, more opportunities to choose healthy lifestyles and increase the number of arts and leisure opportunities through development of major cultural sport, arts, tourism and countryside projects.
- 28 The Community Strategy is explicit about how cultural services will impact on priorities for example:
- Priority: to tackle the causes and effects of anti-social behaviour through partnership working and involving communities. This will change through more facilities and activities to engage young people and keep them from getting involved in anti-social behaviour.
  - Priority: better access and opportunities for everyone to improve their health and wellbeing. - this will change through improved information and more opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles.
  - Priority : to increase the number and range of arts and leisure opportunities. This will change through the development of major cultural (sport, arts, tourism and countryside) projects.
- 29 Cultural services are also integral to the corporate plan priorities which are:
- Safer and healthier communities
  - A cleaner and greener South Derbyshire
  - More efficient, customer focussed services
- 30 The Leisure and Community Development Service plan 2006/09 sets out its purpose as;
- 'to improve the social, economic and recreational quality of peoples' lives by supporting the development of a healthier, safer and socially inclusive community'.
- There is a clear focus on meeting the needs of young people within the plan.
- 31 Strategic plans are in place for some aspects of cultural services which take into account local, regional and national priorities including a Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity Strategy and Crime and Disorder Strategy. There is no equivalent strategy for the arts.

## **Is the service meeting the needs of the local community and users?**

- 32 Culture covers a wide scope including arts, museums, heritage, sport, play, recreation, and tourism. Cultural service inspections cover the whole service including elements which the Council may not directly provide. They consider its contribution to cross-cutting issues such as social inclusion, sustainable communities, health, economic regeneration, quality of life and the impact and outcomes for local people.
- 33 A key issue is the role of the Council in relation to its partnership work, its relations with other sectors, and its cultural planning role. Its community leadership role involves securing a balance between direct provision, procurement and working in partnership with others to identify and respond to community needs.

## **Access, customer care and community focus**

- 34 Cultural services are responsive to local needs and take a community focussed approach to the development of activities and facilities. Through parish councils and area meetings the Council is able to understand the needs of those in rural areas and take a supportive and responsive approach. Through the 'ideas into action' programme it has directly responded to what local people have said is important by funding local schemes to enhance villages. For example the Council in partnership with Parish Councils has installed six multi-use games areas and six children's play areas. The service is increasingly involving the voluntary and community sector in the design and delivery of these services. A noticeable improvement has been experienced by groups and organisations such as the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) and Parish Councils.
- 35 Councillors, managers and staff have a good corporate understanding of local challenges such as the rapidly growing population and the split between rural and urban parts of the district. A study of outdoor space (PPG17) was completed in 2005 to identify needs and gaps in provision. This is being used to help focus contributions from developers (Section 106 funding) for the development of leisure facilities, which are needed due to the rapid increase in the population of the district. For example, Hilton village has been identified as the location for the bulk of the area's population growth. Section 106 is the main funding for the village plan which was developed through the 'Hilton Leisure Group'. Facilities being developed include a village hall, skateboard park and football pitches. This means that the Council is responding to the local needs and addressing issues arising from the developing populations and rural areas.
- 36 Investment in tourism has provided some good quality facilities that have had an impact on the economic vitality of the area and peoples lives. For example there is a focus for heritage and tourism within Sharpes Pottery and the National Forest attracts large numbers of visitors to the area, making a substantial contribution to the local economy. Both of these are valued locally and are well used by local people.

- 37 The service uses robust consultation and research to help drive strategies, The Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity Strategy is based on information and recommendations from the Citizens' Panel, the Youth Needs Survey 2004, Junior Needs Survey 2005 and sport specific focus groups. Other strategies such as the Play strategy for Young People and the Youth Facilities plan have also been based on these robust consultations. This means the Council is planning to meet the identified needs of the community.
- 38 The Council is proactive and effective in procuring, supporting and working with others to enhance and influence the cultural market place. There are formal arrangements such as the management by private companies of Rosliston Forestry Centre and Green Bank Leisure Centre. The Council also supports community organisations such as The Old Post Regeneration Association Ltd, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee which owns and manages the Old Post Centre in Newhall providing a wide range of activities and facilities for the local community. Other examples of approaches include the service level agreements with Peoples Express to deliver arts projects, and Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire to provide environmental regeneration and community development projects. By developing such a mixed economy the Council is maximising its ability to increase cultural opportunities for local people.
- 39 The development of service standards is at an early stage and is not yet having an impact. A service standards booklet has recently been produced to publicise the levels of service users can expect. However, although the Council consulted on them after their publication, it did not engage local people in their development. Performance in delivering them is not monitored, and the Council does not know whether it adheres to most of them.
- 40 The Council does not have a strategic approach to pricing and programming to improve access. Many activities, such as healthy walks, are free, whilst there are charges for others. The concessionary scheme is not applied consistently across all services. The lack of a strategic approach means that pricing is not being used effectively to increase access by those most at need in the community.
- 41 Cultural services do not make the best use of technology for improving access to services and customer service. Electronic accessibility of services is inconsistent. Rosliston Forestry Centre has its own website, and it is possible to make some bookings for events by telephone with the Council's customer service centre, 'Customer First'. The leisure centres have not provided online booking and cultural services are not promoted effectively on the council's website. This lack of a promotional focus and effective use of technology to increase access may mean that the activities fail to reach new customers or increase uptake of the services.
- 42 Only 57.7 per cent of council facilities are accessible for people with a physical disability which is below the median. Access to facilities at all Council buildings has been audited and capital investment has taken place at Green Bank Leisure Centre and Rosliston Forestry Centre to make improvements. However, plans and resources are not fully in place to address all the weaknesses and as a result, some people with physical disabilities may find themselves excluded from using certain facilities.

## Diversity

- 43** Corporately, diversity is an area of comparative weakness for the Council. It is achieving only minimum standards in some key measures of diversity, such as level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, and is amongst the worst performing councils in performing its duty to promote race equality.
- 44** Diversity, equality and human rights are not integrated into the planning and delivery of cultural services. Impact assessments have not been undertaken to inform the development of services or to understand whether they discriminate or create barriers to participation.
- 45** However cultural services are responsive to the needs of their communities and some targeting takes place, particularly for young people and those in rural areas. There has been robust consultation to support developing strategies and projects and the development of youth engagement as a priority area of work has enabled
- The establishment of a football league with youngsters previously disengaged from sport;
  - The delivery of extreme sports sessions across the District through mobile skateboard, climbing and laser game equipment; and
  - Community dance sessions targeting inactive girls.
- As a result of becoming more engaged, young people have submitted their own successful funding bids to the Derbyshire County Council Youth Opportunities Fund.
- 46** Arrangements for consulting with 'hard to reach' groups are developing. The CVS have been commissioned to work with those groups who are seldom heard, in order to inform the social inclusion agenda. The service has used information from research to help them to meet the needs of some harder to reach groups such as a play area for a travellers' community. They are also working with community groups to embrace their diversity and support their engagement and sense of place, for example supporting the Chinese community to celebrate Chinese New Year at Rosliston Forest.

## Service outcomes for users and the community

- 47** The Council provides a good range of quality cultural services that are helping to improve the quality of life for local people. It works well in partnership to achieve agreed objectives and is delivering outcomes which demonstrate an impact in priority areas. However some facilities remain in need of improvement. The two leisure centres are both old and run down, and some play equipment is in need of updating. Plans are in place for these improvements to be made but have yet to be fully implemented.

- 48 Cultural Services are using external quality accreditations well to drive improvements in their services. Greenbank Leisure Centre has been registered with QUEST, the UK quality scheme for sport and leisure, the 'Get Active in the Forest' project is accredited through ILAM (Institute of Leisure and Amenity Managers) and the GP referral scheme is accredited nationally through the British Heart Foundation. This means that some of the services and projects are meeting nationally recognised service standards ensuring that customers experience quality services.
- 49 The focus of this inspection is to examine the contribution cultural services make to the national priorities of Safer and Stronger and Healthier Communities.

### **Safer and Stronger Communities**

- 50 The Council has a good understanding of the role cultural services play in developing safer and stronger communities. Staff, managers and councillors are aware of the priorities to reduce anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime and how cultural services can contribute to achieving this through engaging young people in sporting and recreational activity. The Council is the lead partner in the well regarded Safer South Derbyshire Partnership. There are regular meetings to plan and evaluate youth engagement work involving the Police Youth Involvement Officer, Partnership Anti Social Behaviour Officer, Sport and Youth Development Manager and Community Sports Coach. This close working has resulted in improved awareness of issues and the sharing of information to measure impact and plan further improvements.
- 51 There is a robust crime and disorder strategy. The targets set are challenging and measurable and there are clear links to the activity expected to achieve them. For example the partnership is making good progress on the target to reduce the number of South Derbyshire residents feeling a bit or very unsafe when alone in their homes at night from 11 per cent to 8 per cent by 2007/08. It does this through projects such as Liberation Day, a community safety based event which attracts over 700 elderly residents to a day of entertainment and education. The day is important for consulting on this community's needs, and there is evidence that it is reducing the fear of crime.
- 52 Anti social behaviour has been reduced through engaging young people in sport. The Youth Needs Survey of over 2,200 local teenagers identified reasons for not participating in cultural activities and what provision they would like. As a result the partnership developed the Youth Engagement Through Sport Project with a Youth Facility Plan and a community sports coach. Mobile equipment such as a skateboard park, inflatable laser game and climbing wall is used which means that the community sports coach can deliver a flexible outreach programme to meet identified needs. The impact of such projects is measured through proxies such as numbers of calls made regarding anti-social behaviour during outreach events and participation rates for events and in school activities.



- 53 Cultural services make use of information to target diverse sectors of the community. For example the sports development team use the community safety mailing list to target individuals at risk of offending. They send them information about sports opportunities that they may not get because they are not in school, and monitor take up of activities and the impact this has on their attendance at school and anti-social behaviour.

### **Healthier communities**

- 54 Cultural services are working well in partnership to improve health. The corporate priority for 'healthy communities' is planned through the 'Healthier Communities' theme group of the LSP and linked to the Leisure and Community Development service plan 2005/08 and the Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity action plan 2007-2010. Better access and opportunities for everyone to improve their health and wellbeing is a priority of the group. It is achieving targets such as increasing the hours per week of physical activity for 7-13 year olds and the percentage of residents participating in 30 minutes of moderate activity a week.
- 55 The Council is improving health through delivery of its Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity Strategy and action plan. Cultural services work closely with a wide range of organisations and partnership such as schools, national governing bodies of sport, the Primary Care Trust, and Safer South Derbyshire Partnership to deliver the aim of 'working in partnership to improve the sporting, recreational and physical activity opportunities across the district'. As a result, participation in healthy activity has increased. For example, in 2005/06 there were over 2,000 participations in the 'Get Active in the Forest' scheme, around 1,800 young people took part in play schemes and over 120 girls participated in dance sessions per week.
- 56 Cultural services focus on outputs and are developing outcome measures. There is some evidence of positive outcomes for people participating in health initiatives. For example, a pilot 'Out and Active' programme to tackle obesity in children was evaluated and showed increased physical activity; more healthy eating habits; better parental involvement; improved self esteem and improved body mass index (BMI) among participants. The Healthier Communities plan focuses on output targets such as the number of GP surgeries hosting referral groups and the number of girls participating in the dance project rather than outcomes. This lack of outcome focus means that it is not always clear what impact the projects are having.
- 57 Opportunities to improve health have increased through the proactive use of external partnerships and funding. For example, the Council has provided two new youth facilities at Midway and Gresley and is contributing to a new artificial turf pitch at Swadlincote. More young people are involved in physical activity through sport, play and dance. Parks improvements and exercise programmes in the National Forest offer increased opportunities such as walking and cycling. Increased participation in these services means the Council is having an impact on encouraging a healthy lifestyle within communities.

- 58 Cultural services do not effectively use information to target those most in need. The Community Strategy and the Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity Strategy reference that parts of the district have lower life expectancy than other areas; the incidence of heart disease in men is above average; and the number of teenage pregnancies are comparatively high. However, it is not clear from the action plan how health inequalities information is being used to inform targeting of service delivery, and as a result the projects may not be reaching those most in need.

### **Is the service delivering value for money?**

- 59 Overall, the Council provides adequate value for money (VFM) through its cultural services. It spends comparatively little on cultural services but has successfully attracted external funding to increase the cultural marketplace. Satisfaction with services is mixed which reflects the mix of old and new facilities. However usage is increasing through a range of new opportunities and projects.
- 60 Spending on cultural services is comparatively low. Compared with all districts and with similar councils, spending on culture overall is amongst the lowest 25 per cent of councils. Funding for tourism has been increased in line with priorities. Leisure centres are run at a low cost to the council but relatively low usage means that they do not currently provide good value for money.
- 61 Levels of satisfaction are in the average range across cultural services according to the most recent comparable information. In 2003/04 satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities was above the average, but below average for parks, open spaces and museums/galleries. Satisfaction with arts venues was relatively poor. The 'Active People' survey 2006 showed that 67.7 per cent of adults were fairly or very satisfied with sports provision in their local area compared with national figure of 69.5 per cent.
- 62 Cultural services work well with partners to maximise resources, including Section 106 funding, to increase the cultural offer in the district. The council has successfully attracted external capital funding and has reviewed the value of this to the council in terms of a leverage of £9 attracted for every £1 Council investment.
- 63 However cultural services cannot consistently demonstrate good value for money across all services. They do not have appropriate information or a consistent approach to assessing whether their services are providing VFM. For example the Council has ring fenced £100k for voluntary organisations to bid into, on the basis of contribution to priorities but does not yet have mechanisms for ensuring and managing the VFM provided for most of its investment in the voluntary sector.
- 64 Benchmarking to assess value for money is underdeveloped which means that comparisons with similar authorities are not routinely being made to assess and improve VFM. Plans do not include targets for improving value for money. As a result cultural services are unable to demonstrate to the public that they are offering good and improving value for money to local people.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

### What is the service track record in delivering improvement?

- 65 The Council has a good recent track record of improving the range of cultural opportunities available to local people. It addresses weaknesses, implements change to meet community needs and works effectively in partnership to improve. It cannot demonstrate improvements in VFM.
- 66 The Council is improving the range and quality of cultural and leisure opportunities. It has extended the successful 'Walking the Way to Health' initiative to a 'Get Active in the Forest' programme, increasing the range of ways for various groups to increase their physical activity. It is systematically upgrading the district's play facilities. It has secured external investment and provided new multi-use games areas, youth shelters, play equipment and skateboard parks, and mobile facilities to improve access in rural areas. It has restored Maurice Lea Memorial Park using lottery funding and supported 'Swadfest', which it has committed to making an annual event. An all-weather pitch has been opened at Pingle School funded by the Council, the school and external grants, and is being well used by local groups and teams.
- 67 There is a strong recent track record of responding to community views with new or improved services and facilities. For example, following the Youth Needs Survey the Council established a community dance project to engage young girls who would otherwise not participate in sport or organised activity and possibly be at risk of teenage pregnancy. This has secured good participation which is exceeding targets and continuing to increase. Based on this success, further investment is enabling sessions to be established at a range of venues and times to increase accessibility and success. A range of improvements have been made in direct response to the 'Ideas for Action' initiative and 'Safer Neighbourhoods' groups, and following development of a Village Action Plan with the Hilton community the Council has used S106 to provide community facilities in this rapidly growing area.
- 68 Participation is increasing. During 2005/06, there were more than five times as many visits to Sharpe's Pottery as there were in the previous year, and visitor numbers continue to grow ahead of expectations. The number of pupils participating in 2 hours of sport in school increased from 49 per cent to 62 per cent between June 2005 and June 2006. The number of visits to Rosliston Forestry Centre continues to increase significantly each year, as does participation in 'Get Active in The Forest'. The number of swimming and Banana Fitness members at Greenbank Leisure Centre have both seen big increases since 2004/05.

- 69 Through effective investment in tourism the Council is enhancing the economic vitality of the area. It has increased both the number of visitors and the amount that they spend. The strategy of linking with the National Forest 'brand' has enabled the Council and its partners to sell the area more effectively, and the unusual provision of cabins at Rosliston has contributed to a rapidly growing number of overnight stays in South Derbyshire. The new Tourist Information Centre (TIC) at Sharpe's Pottery has improved visitor services and electronic access to information has been enhanced. The most recent comparative information from STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) shows that between 2003 and 2005 tourism growth in South Derbyshire was generally stronger than elsewhere in Derbyshire or the wider East Midlands. For example, employment supported by tourism, increased at more than 3 times the rate across the East Midlands as a whole, and the amount of money spent by staying visitors was more than double the increase in Derbyshire and 4 times that in the East Midlands.
- 70 The service is contributing to improvement in safer, stronger and healthier communities, although the Council is unable to quantify the direct impact. The Council works effectively across partnerships such as the School Sports Partnership and the Safer South Derbyshire Partnership to provide targeted diversionary opportunities. There is anecdotal evidence that individuals have been diverted from anti-social behaviour as a direct result of, for example, becoming involved in a five-a-side league, and levels of crime have substantially reduced over the last 3 years. Growing participation in 'Get Active in the Forest' and walking initiatives is supporting greater physical activity and therefore improved health.
- 71 The service has been externally verified as improving. Using the Sport England 'Towards and Excellent Service' model in 2005 the service area assessed itself as 'fair'. It took a range of actions to improve how leisure and community development services are led, managed and delivered. The recent further self assessment and external validation as a 'good' service validates the improvement over the last 18 months.
- 72 Recent information shows a mixed picture of improvement in satisfaction. Following capital investment in urban parks such as Maurice Lea, and new play facilities, local people are more satisfied with parks and open spaces in 2006/07 than they were in 2003/04. However, they are less happy with leisure facilities, reflecting the need for investment in buildings, and satisfaction with museums has also declined. The Council does not systematically gather information about satisfaction levels locally.
- 73 Physical activity levels in the area are relatively low. The first Active People Survey shows that the level of participation and volunteering in sport is lower than the national average. It has been used to set a baseline for participation levels and some challenging targets have been set. Targets include:
- To increase the rate of adults spending 1 hour per week on voluntary work in sport by 10 per cent annually; and

- To increase the number of young people at risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour and crime taking part in sport development sessions by 1 per cent annually.
- 74 The service cannot show improvement in the accessibility of services to all the community. The Council has made slow progress corporately with diversity measures and this impacts on cultural services' ability to know that its services are non-discriminatory and equally accessible. It has not yet undertaken impact assessments and the Council does not gather information about the people who take up services and participate in activity in a systematic way.
- 75 Progress in adopting and using service standards has been slow. Leisure and Community Services have recently set out a range of commitments to local people about the standards of service they can expect, but has not yet involved local people themselves in defining these. The Council recognises that the standards are of mixed value, and is not yet monitoring how well it performs in meeting them..
- 76 The Council is often unable to show the outcomes of its range of cultural provision and activities. Its responsiveness to local views, together with the need to respond to the rapid growth and changing nature of the local population means that the Council changes, adds to and improves provision without always clarifying and quantifying the intended outcome. Weak evaluation and a reliance on anecdotal feedback or individual 'good news stories' limit the evidence that the Council's investment is having an impact.
- 77 Linked to this, the Council cannot demonstrate a track record in improving VFM of cultural services across all areas. VFM is improving corporately and the Council has exceeded its efficiency targets. VFM in tourism has improved. In 2005/06 the Council had the lowest net spend on tourism in its comparator group, but the second highest ratio of visitor spend to the Council spend, according to UK figures. However, in other areas VFM is not actively managed. There are examples of savings, such as through the recent move to a preferred supplier arrangement for procuring play equipment, and a range of areas in which the Council attracts funds to increase VFM, but understanding of the VFM of its current range of provision and procurement is still developing.

### **How well does the service manage performance?**

- 78 Political and managerial cultural leadership is strong, and improvement planning is well integrated with corporate plans and strategies. There are weaknesses in performance management and SMART<sup>3</sup> planning, and as a result the service finds it difficult to measure the extent to which it is meeting corporate objectives.

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<sup>3</sup> Specific, measurable, with attributed responsibility, realistic and with timing indicated

- 79 Cultural leadership is active, visible and effective and is recognised by staff, partners and other stakeholders. There is political and corporate management commitment to the role of culture and heritage in delivering priorities and improving local wellbeing. Partners are positive about cultural leadership and also the clarity that the service brings to how cultural activity supports local priorities. Operational management is good, and staff are motivated by the leadership style, increasing their commitment to the quality of the services they provide.
- 80 The Council has cohesive corporate and community plans that recognise the role cultural services play in delivering local priorities, although there are some weaker areas in the framework of future plans for culture. Corporate strategies address national and local priorities, align well and are well informed by consultation. They include high level measures of success for cultural priorities such as targets to improve satisfaction and increase the proportion of local people who are active. However, plans to improve arts provision and health outcomes are weaker.
- 81 The corporate approach to performance management has improved. Progress with key strategies, plans and performance measures are reported to committees quarterly, using a traffic light system to identify progress and areas of concern. Action is taken in response to performance problems. Financial reporting is also timely, robust and leads to necessary action. As a result of this effective monitoring, improvement plans and strategies for culture are being implemented according to plan.
- 82 However, information is not used effectively to drive improvement in cultural services. Target setting is weak and not well-informed by current performance levels, future resourcing levels or comparative performance. Benchmarking is limited, except in tourism. Service standards are not embedded or monitored. To address these weaknesses in performance management, evaluation and learning the service has recently appointed a performance and marketing administration officer.
- 83 The Council's performance management framework has not been effective in measuring the impact of cultural services on local people, because it lacks a robust focus on outcomes. The service vision has been translated into aims and objectives that aspire to improve local experience, but improvement plans are not SMART and there is a lack of clarity about sustainable outcomes for the longer term in many areas. Evaluation is inconsistent. This focus on action rather than outcome means that the Council cannot always judge whether its investment is having the desired effect on improving quality of life.
- 84 Similarly, monitoring of partnership outcomes and performance is inconsistent and the effectiveness of partnerships is not routinely evaluated. Corporate and service plans and strategies are monitored separately, and partnerships report internally, meaning that there is no one place in which information is brought together to paint a full picture of how partnerships are delivering outcomes. This means that the Council cannot assess the value it achieves through partnership, and it recognises the need to review the VFM secured through its partnership investment more robustly.

- 85** Information about cost and quality is not used rigorously to manage and improve VFM. Although some improvements in VFM have been achieved through, for example, the new approach to procuring play equipment, these do not arise from any consistent and informed approach. Information about service costs and quality standards is not used fully to compare and challenge levels of spend and achievement.

Does the service have the capacity to improve?

- 86** The service has good capacity to improve. It has significant strengths in partnership working and securing external resources, has good financial management and is well led. It is investing in staffing capacity and has committed funding for planned developments.

- 87** The capacity of cultural services is significantly strengthened by wide-ranging and effective partnerships with public, private and voluntary sector organisations. Examples include:

- Core funding of People Express to support arts development and provision, and Sharpes museum to protect, promote and preserve the local heritage;
- Partnership with the National Forest and Aurora, a private company, at Rosliston forestry centre to offer a range of cultural, leisure, tourism and educational opportunities;
- The provision of office space, advice and support to The Old Post Centre in Newhall to support it in providing a valued and expanding community resource in a deprived area;
- The Schools Sport Partnership, with shared objectives and staffing, that has already brought about significant improvement in participation in sport at school;
- The National Forest and Beyond partnership and Visit Peak District and Derbyshire to increase tourism in pursuit of the Council's economic regeneration objectives;
- Groundwork Derby and Derbyshire to work with local people to improve play facilities; and
- The contractual partnership with SLM for management of Greenbank Leisure Centre.

All of these enable a much more significant contribution to local wellbeing than the Council could achieve alone.

- 88** The Council's approach to working in partnership at all levels is consistently valued by partners. They cite strong and effective leadership to partnership projects from both officers and councillors, openness about objectives and creativity of approaches as notable strengths.
- 89** Firm and funded plans are in place for further improvements in services and facilities. For example, the planned £6.6m leisure facility at John Port School in Etwall is almost fully funded, and capital investment of £130k a year is committed to youth and play facilities in line with the relevant strategies.

## 24 Cultural Services Inspection | What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

**90** The Council directs resources effectively at cultural priorities. It has robust 3-year financial planning and an effective priorities-based scoring scheme for capital and revenue developments, and there are many examples of this being used to enable leisure and cultural developments. Financial management is good and the Council has achieved significant corporate efficiency savings. These have been used to fund developments such as the community dance scheme. The current review of funding for the voluntary sector aims to ensure a more secure and transparent link to the Council's priorities, including cultural priorities, and to provide longer-term financial security for projects run by third sector agencies. Through the Community Partnership Scheme the Council gives capital grants to upgrade community facilities such as Rickman's Corner Community Centre. This ensures that cultural priorities are resourced.

**91** The council is very effective at attracting and using external funding, resources and sponsorship to improve facilities and increase cultural opportunities. For example,

- Youth Engagement Through Sport has secured £70k in grants from the County Council for mobile climbing wall, skateboard and laser games facilities. It has annual funding from the Safer South Derbyshire Partnership and the police for its youth diversionary work and 50 per cent funding for 3 years for a community sports coach;
- Sharpes pottery was founded with £1.9m of Heritage Lottery funding secured by the Council;
- More than 90 per cent of the cost of delivering the 'Walking the Way to Health' and 'Get Active in the Forest' schemes has been externally funded;
- A local company sponsors the environmental education programme at Rosliston; and
- The TIC, Rosliston, play areas and youth facilities have also been made possible through significant external investment.

Overall, Leisure and Community Development attracts more than £1m annually in grants and commercial sponsorship. This strong track record gives confidence that the Council will continue to secure the resources it needs to improve cultural opportunities.

**92** The Council uses S106 monies to deliver community benefit by extending leisure and cultural opportunities. As well as the new and planned provision at Hilton, the Council has developed the 'leisure pot' concept to enable contributions to bigger projects such as the new leisure centre at Etwall, and developers have contributed to play and open space provision across the district.



- 93 The Council is improving its capacity to deliver its objectives for leisure and community development. It has secured new jointly funded posts in priority areas such as healthy lifestyles and anti-social behaviour, as well as making successful internal bids to establish a Community Sports Coach in response to the youth needs survey, and an Open Space Development Officer. It has established a permanent manager to link school sports partnerships and local sports networks to develop the role of sports development. All of these increase capacity to tackle priority areas.
- 94 Good people management is enhancing staff capacity. Staff are motivated by the leadership style, committed to partnerships and service quality and positive about job-related training and development opportunities. Appraisals identify and address development needs, although are not consistently used. This means that an important way of harnessing staff's efforts is not being fully exploited.
- 95 Procurement is improving. A procurement manager has added value to procurement in Leisure and Community Services, such as in the preferred supplier arrangement for play equipment. The Council's corporate procurement strategy is being reviewed and it will renegotiate its contract for Green Bank Leisure Centre soon, along with all other corporate contracts.
- 96 Capacity to meet the significant challenge presented by local population growth is uncertain. The local population is growing by 11 per cent a year compared with a national average of 4 per cent and this places pressure on services in terms of increased demand for services, and the need to secure additional open space and leisure provision. The Council recognises this risk and plans as far as possible to meet the challenge, but this is inevitably impacting on the capacity of L&CD to plan for and to meet local cultural needs into the future.

