

# Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

Lancashire County Council

Audit 2007/08

March 2009



---

# Contents

Key messages	3
Purpose, responsibilities and scope	5
How is Lancashire County Council performing?	6
The audit of the accounts and value for money	14
Looking ahead	18
Closing remarks	19

---

## Status of our reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
  - any third party.
-

# Key messages

- 1 This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. It draws on the findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council and from a wider analysis of the Council's performance including the corporate assessment inspection, the joint area review of children's services and annual performance assessments conducted by Ofsted and CSCI.<sup>1</sup>
- 2 The main messages for the Council reflect both progress made as well as highlighting areas for further development and improvement.

---

## Council Performance

- The Council continues to perform well overall. A corporate assessment inspection found much strength in the Council's overall performance. Inspectors reported that the Council is working well with partners in tackling the differing needs of diverse communities across the county with a strong commitment to building more cohesive communities through effective engagement.
- Performance in adult social care remains strong. The assessment by the Commission for Social Care Inspection found much strength in the Council's approach together with a number of examples of excellence including leadership, commissioning and capacity to improve further.
- The Council retained a score of 4 for the use of resources assessment that evaluated arrangements up to March 2008, securing further improvements in a number of areas.
- Corporate arrangements to ensure data quality remain effective and action to further strengthen arrangements is planned as there a number of areas where improvements can be achieved.
- However, the annual performance assessment for children and young peoples' services has fallen this year to level 2 - adequate - due to weaknesses in some aspects of this important service. This means that the overall CPA rating for the Council also falls to three stars.

## Accounts and Value for Money Conclusion

- We issued an unqualified opinion on your accounts on 30 September 2008 and our assessment was that arrangements in place for the production of the statement of accounts are good.
- We are required to reach a conclusion to assess whether the Council has in place adequate arrangements to achieve value for money through the assessment of 12 specified criteria. We are able to place reliance on much of our work carried out as part of the Use of Resources assessment when reaching the VFM conclusion.
- Our conclusion is that adequate arrangements are in place at the Council.

---

<sup>1</sup> Commission for Social Care Inspection

---

### Action needed by the Council

- 3 We detail below the key improvement and development areas where action is required.
- The Council should ensure that recent improvements in the fostering service and services for looked after children are sustained and supported by more effective performance management systems.
  - The level of health inequalities across the county remains a concern despite recent improvements to various organisational structures and partnership arrangements. The Council with key partners should now focus on delivering outcomes from this work and ensure that health initiatives are co-ordinated at strategic level in order to deliver greatest impact.
  - 2009 is proving to be a difficult year for all councils due to the national economic downturn. Pressures will increase further as the recession starts to bite. The Council should continue to proactively manage its finances and other resources to deal with these pressures, particularly where costs and demands for services are increasing.
  - The Council should ensure the improvement actions to further strengthen data quality arrangements are delivered.
  - The Council should prepare for the introduction of the Comprehensive Area Assessment for Lancashire by ensuring services and partnerships focus on the quality of life outcomes experienced by local people and service users.

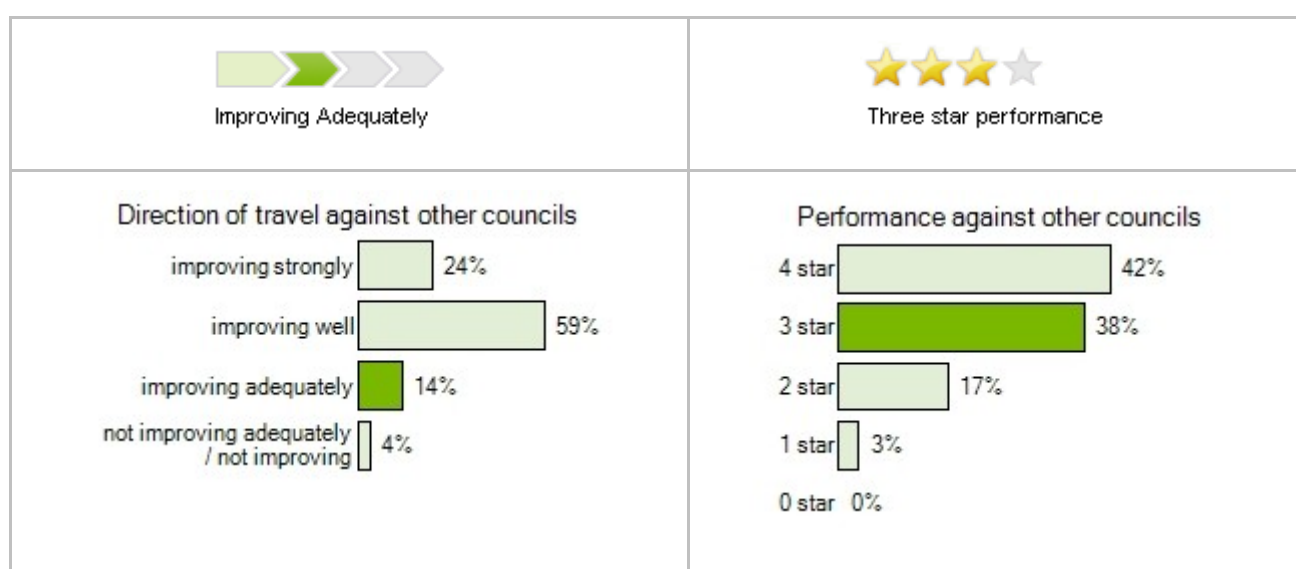
# Purpose, responsibilities and scope

- 4 This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. It draws on the most recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), the findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council for 2007/08 and from inspections undertaken since the last Annual Audit and Inspection Letter. It also includes the results of the most recent corporate assessment.
- 5 We have addressed this letter to members as it is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business and that it safeguards and properly accounts for public money. We have made recommendations to assist the Council in meeting its responsibilities.
- 6 This letter also communicates the significant issues to key external stakeholders, including members of the public. We will publish this letter on the Audit Commission website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk). In addition the Council is planning to publish it on its website at [www.lancashire.gov.uk](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk).
- 7 Your appointed auditor is responsible for planning and carrying out an audit that meets the requirements of the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice (the Code). Under the Code, he reviews and reports on:
  - the Council's accounts;
  - whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (value for money conclusion); and
  - whether the Council's best value performance plan has been prepared and published in line with legislation and statutory guidance.
- 8 This letter includes the latest assessment on the Council's performance under the CPA framework, including our Direction of Travel report and the results of any inspections carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999. It summarises the key issues arising from the CPA and any such inspections. Inspection reports are issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under section 13 of the 1999 Act.
- 9 We have listed the reports issued to the Council relating to 2007/08 audit and inspection work at the end of this letter.

# How is Lancashire County Council performing?

- 10 The Audit Commission's overall judgement is that Lancashire County Council is improving adequately and we have classified the Council as three stars in its level of performance under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. These assessments have been completed in all single tier and county councils with the following results.

**Figure 1 Overall performance of district councils in CPA**



Source: Audit Commission

## How is Lancashire County Council performing?

### Our overall assessment - the CPA scorecard

**Table 1 CPA scorecard**

Element	Assessment
Direction of Travel judgement	Improving adequately
<b>Overall</b>	3 stars
Corporate assessment/capacity to improve	3 out of 4
Current performance	
Children and young people*	2 out of 4
Social care (adults)*	3 out of 4
Use of resources*	4 out of 4
Housing	n/a
Environment	4 out of 4
Culture	3 out of 4
Benefits	n/a
Fire (relevant County Councils only)	n/a

(Note: \* these aspects have a greater influence on the overall CPA score)  
(1 = lowest and 4 = highest)

### The improvement since last year - our Direction of Travel report

- 11** Overall outcomes continued to improve in local and national priority areas during 2007/08. The Council achieved target performance levels on 32 of its 35 key performance indicators (92 per cent) and met 98 per cent of Annual Delivery Plan milestones. Key successes include the launch of a re-ablement service supporting older people following hospital discharge, which has increased levels of independence and generated efficiency savings in excess of £1 million. Against the wider basket of indicators used by the Audit Commission to measure performance, Lancashire performed slightly below the county council average, with 63 per cent of indicators improving in 2007/08. However, this gap has closed over the last three years. Only 22 per cent of indicators were in the best quartile – fewer than in the previous year and below the county average of 29 per cent.

- 12 Outcomes for children and young people are improving in some areas. Ofsted's Annual Performance Assessment (APA) rated the Council's overall performance as 'adequate' with 'adequate' capacity to improve. This rating represents a drop in performance compared to the previous APA and is largely related to weaknesses found in services for looked after children and safeguarding. A Joint Area Review (JAR) was undertaken in summer 2008: this judged services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to be good, safeguarding arrangements to be adequate and services for looked after children to be inadequate. The JAR identified that performance management systems did not secure safe outcomes and – despite firm action taken by the Council in the latter part of 2008 – the fostering service took a year to regain its 'satisfactory' status.
- 13 Despite these issues, the council has maintained its good performance in the other four Every Child Matters outcome areas. Overall standards of attainment are rising and achievement is particularly strong at Key Stage 4, where the rate of improvement is above that found nationally. The percentages of young people achieving both Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications by age 19 have improved from below to above the national averages between 2005 and 2007, but there remains significant variation across the county in both achievement at GCSE and in the levels of young people who are not engaged in employment, education or training. Most schools, including all special schools, have achieved Healthy Schools Status and this has been recognised as a 'beacon' achievement.
- 14 Partnership working is good and is leading to better outcomes, for example, improved careers education is widening children and young people's awareness of opportunities at key transition points. The Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust finalised its partnership agreement in April 2008 and has received national recognition for the way that it involves children in decision-making through schools' associate membership of the Trust Board. The youth service is reaching more young people and increasing the achievement of recorded and accredited outcomes. A robust system for tackling anti-social behaviour and crime has succeeded in reducing re-offending rates to below the national level. Appropriate support for supervised juveniles has also increased the proportion in full time education, employment or training.
- 15 The Council is ensuring that vulnerable adults get the support and care they need to live as independently as possible. As last year, the Commission for Social Care and Inspection (CSCI) annual performance assessment rated the Council as delivering 'good' overall outcomes with 'excellent' capacity to improve. Residential and domiciliary care services in Lancashire continue to be of a high standard and innovative work has increased the accessibility of voluntary and other community based services. Improved provision of intermediate care, re-ablement and intensive home care has reduced delayed hospital discharges and admissions to residential care. Waiting times for new assessment and care packages for older people increased, but performance is still better than average. The Council accepts that it needs to respond more consistently to safeguarding alerts and measures are being put in place to address this, including the appointment of Safeguarding Coordinators. Joint work with health is resulting in improvements in support for people with mental health problems. This includes the recently opened Charnley Fold Centre which provides early diagnosis and a wide range of support services to older people with mental health problems and their carers.



## How is Lancashire County Council performing?

- 16 The Council is a top performer in the area of waste management. Its work to minimise household waste levels has been nationally recognised and led to further reductions in the quantity of waste collected per head during 2007/08. Waste disposal costs increased in line with those of other councils but remain well below average. The innovative waste PFI project is progressing well and the Council has been proactive in planning ahead for the associated revenue costs.
- 17 The Council is involved in a number of initiatives to promote health in its communities, although outcomes are difficult to measure at this stage. Nevertheless, the Council is working enthusiastically to improve the effectiveness of partnership working in this area. It has responded positively to the Audit Commission's recent cross-agency review of health inequalities in Lancashire by bringing together local health organisations to develop new approaches (see also paragraph 31). This is a key area of current and future work for the Council and its partners, as statistics show health inequalities are significant and continuing to rise against most measures. Drug and alcohol treatment services continue to perform well: the number of people in structured drug treatment increased again in 2007/08, while treatment retention levels exceeded target to reach 87 per cent.
- 18 Community safety is good and improving well across the county as a whole, although there are variations in performance between districts. Crime and fear of crime fell across all major categories in 2007/08. Overall, total recorded crime within the Lancashire sub-region fell by about 9 per cent during the year to March 2008. Motor vehicle offences fell by a fifth, while domestic burglaries reduced by 12 per cent, compared to a drop of only 4 per cent nationally. The number of drug offences rose substantially, primarily due to an increase in the number of cannabis possession offences and increased enforcement action against drug dealers. LAA performance data for the first half of 2008/09 shows the partnership to be on track to meet its community safety targets. Lancashire's CONTEST Board, providing a local focus for the national counter-terrorism strategy, is amongst the first of its kind in the country.
- 19 Progress on improving road safety has been less good. Precise trend analysis is hampered by changes in how injuries are categorised, but it is clear that deaths and serious injuries from road traffic accidents within the county remain comparatively high, particularly among children.
- 20 The County Council is at the heart of activity to deliver economic, physical and social regeneration across Lancashire. In the past year, it has strengthened its input to the Elevate Housing Market Renewal programme in East Lancashire to better address multi-disciplinary issues such as community safety, cohesion and health. The Council's economic development arm, Lancashire County Developments, exceeded its 2007/08 targets for job creation and leveraged external funding equivalent to ten times its own budget. Good progress has been made against the LAA target for creating new apprenticeships within public sector organisations; the County Council now has 180 apprentices, compared to only six in 2005/06. The Council has recently initiated an economic review with partners, with the aim of increasing its influence and funding on the regional and national stage.

- 21** Access to services and information continues to improve. In the past year, the Council has introduced performance indicators to monitor access to key services by ethnicity, gender and disability. Improvement targets have been adopted and are beginning to have impact – for example, uptake of adult social care Direct Payment services among BME communities increased by 60 per cent following an awareness campaign. Overall, there is a strong focus on users with well-developed consultation and involvement mechanisms in place. Local people can access an increasing number of services online, while initial problems in the Contact Centre have been overcome to deliver improvements in both customer satisfaction and response times. The Council is supporting a working group of voluntary, community and faith sector representatives to help them re-establish a consortium capable of influencing local policies and services.
- 22** The Council is enabling local people to get more involved in decisions that affect their locality. It has increased the support it provides to the joint county/district elected member bodies known as 'Lancashire Locals' and is consulting on a new Constitution that would provide additional powers – for example in relation to approving commissioning plans for Young People's Services. Devolved funding has led to genuine benefits – for example Pendle's Lancashire Local has led joint action with other East Lancashire Locals to reduce waiting times for Occupational Therapy assessments through better co-ordination between district council Housing agencies and the County Council.
- 23** Value for money is good and the Council continues to deliver high levels of efficiency savings; £20 million in 2007/08 against a target of £16 million. Management of the Business Improvement Programme (formerly known as the Lancashire Efficiency Initiative) has been strengthened through the appointment of a Director of Business Improvement and the introduction of a more robust project management regime. However, there is scope to better prioritise business process reviews and monitor outcomes achieved. While significant improvements in VFM have been delivered within the corporate core – for example, in relation to office accommodation costs – this is to be expected for an organisation of Lancashire's size. The Council recognises that it needs to look beyond administrative efficiencies into frontline service delivery and is beginning to develop the capacity to progress this.
- 24** Business planning effectively supports the delivery of priorities. Key plans and strategies links well and it is clear what the Council is trying to achieve. The Annual Delivery Plan, now entering its third year, has proved a successful approach to bringing together objectives, priorities and targets and reporting on performance. Improvement plans are driving better outcomes – for example, there is evidence that more the implementation of the single assessment process within adult and community services is leading to more a more joined-up approach for users with health and other agencies.

## How is Lancashire County Council performing?

- 25 Tangible progress has been made in strengthening partnership working at a county-wide level and relationships with district partners. The Lancashire Partnership has now signed off the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and is developing action plans for delivery. Firm foundations have been laid for future joined-up working through the sub-regional improvement and efficiency partnership, Team Lancashire. The County Council has a clear understanding of its geographical sub-areas and clusters and is working effectively to establish either multi area agreements (MAAs) or alternative arrangements. The MAA for Pennine Lancashire has now been agreed by the Government and discussions are ongoing in relation to the Fylde Coast MAA and potential arrangements for the central Lancashire areas. Lancashire's county-wide cohesion partnership has been short listed for Beacon status.
- 26 Improved relationships with partners, combined with a positive and pragmatic leadership style on the part of the new Chief Executive, have helped to strengthen the Council's influence on wider community outcomes, such as public health and cohesion. The new Joint Health Unit, established over the past year by the County Council in partnership with the three PCTs, aims to ensure that efforts to help local people develop healthier lifestyles are better co-ordinated across different agencies. This is a particularly important initiative given the health inequalities that exist across the county (see paragraph 31).
- 27 Performance management within the council is generally good and processes within key partnerships are developing well. This has impacted positively on outcomes for service users – for example, improved call-handling in the contact centre and targeted educational support for children with learning difficulties. However, performance management failings within the fostering service contributed to weaknesses. The Council has a strong research and intelligence function and makes local socio-economic information accessible through its interactive Lancashire Profile webpage. For the first time in 2008, the Council's annual survey of residents' views is being undertaken jointly with the 12 district councils, realising efficiency savings and ensuring that consistent questions are used across Lancashire.
- 28 Organisational capacity continues to improve, making the Council better placed to sustain service improvement into the future. A revised Organisational Development Strategy has been agreed and several work streams are underway. Additional resources have been invested in the corporate Business Improvement Programme and work is beginning to 'mainstream' business process reviews into directorates. The Council has completed a full restructure of human resources functions, increasing efficiency and effectiveness. People management training has been extended and managers have access to ongoing support and guidance through the HR website and contact centre. An impressive reduction in sickness absence, equivalent to more than one day per employee, was achieved in 2007/08. The figure of 9.23 days absence fell only narrowly short of the Council's ambitious target and lifted it above the local authority average for the first time in recent years.

- 29** The Council is committed to strengthening equality and diversity and is making it easier for 'hard to reach' or minority groups to access its services. For example, it has taken the decision to focus the first two phases of its programme to develop children's centres in the most disadvantaged areas of the county. Although the Council as a whole remains at Level 3 of the Local Government Equality Standard, some parts of the organisation are running ahead of this. The introduction of performance indicators for service take-up by minority groups has helped to galvanise practical action to increase access. For example, efforts have been made to improve countryside access for those with disabilities by provision of tramper vehicles for hire and removal of unnecessary stiles. The Lancashire Partnership includes a cross-partnership equality and diversity group, comprising a representative from each of the thematic groups, to ensure that the LAA focuses on narrowing inequalities in service planning and delivery.
- 30** Progress in improving diversity within the Council's own workforce has been mixed. The percentage of staff from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities increased from 2.6 per cent to 3.4 per cent during 2007/08 (compared to 5 per cent in the population as a whole) but fell short of the target level of 4.5 per cent. The proportion of top-paid staff who are from an ethnic minority improved marginally but again fell short of target. The Council recognises the need for action to address this and is piloting ethnically diverse selection panels for more senior posts, together with local targets for BME recruitment to support the overall corporate target. In addition, it is planned to introduce a career development plan for BME staff during 2008/09.

### Tackling health inequalities in Lancashire

- 31** Over the past year we concluded a wide-ranging review of arrangements focusing on how partners work collaboratively to reduce health inequalities (HI) across Lancashire. Average life expectancies across the county are similar to those for England and Wales where the gap between the most affluent and most deprived areas is 6.8 years but parts of Lancashire show much greater variation.
- 32** Joint working is often challenging and health and local government bodies begin with different, sometimes competing, priorities. In addition, the need to develop healthier communities is closely linked to other priorities such as safer and stronger communities, sustainability and regeneration.
- 33** Our review found that despite progress in recent years, the county as a whole is not projected to achieve its Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to reduce HI, as measured by infant mortality and life expectancy at birth. Partner organisations in Lancashire have a clear commitment to tackling HI and the development of plans for 2008/09 and beyond is encouraging. However, some organisations and partnerships still lack coherent longer term strategies. These weaknesses are hampering effective partnership working and performance management. Scrutiny is inconsistently applied to health issues across the bodies we reviewed in Lancashire.
- 34** Directors of Public Health (DPH) across Lancashire are not making full use of their key strategic position and engagement with local health service providers has been limited. Community groups and service users are not consistently involved in the development of HI strategies.

## How is Lancashire County Council performing?

- 35** We have recently received a joint response from all the organisations involved in the review which refers to the significant progress made since our field work was undertaken. However performance data shows that inequalities in health remain a challenge in several areas across Lancashire. We will continue to monitor progress against this key priority for the county.

---

### Corporate Assessment Inspection

- 36** The Council was subject to a corporate assessment inspection during 2008 conducted by the Audit Commission as part of the CPA performance framework. This found the council to be performing well overall.
- 37** Inspectors found that the Council is working well with partners in tackling the differing needs of diverse communities across the county. There is a strong commitment to building more cohesive communities through effective engagement. The Council and its partners have used resources well to help create jobs, support regeneration and improve quality of life. However progress has been slower in some areas, such as health inequalities and some aspects of community safety.

---

# The audit of the accounts and value for money

**38** Your appointed auditor has reported separately to the Audit Committee on the issues arising from our 2007/08 audit and has issued:

- an audit report, providing an unqualified opinion on your accounts on 30 September 2008;
- a conclusion on your vfm arrangements to say that these arrangements were adequate on 30 September 2008; and
- a report on the Best Value Performance Plan confirming that the Plan has been audited.

## Key issues arising from the audit

**39** Our audit of the 2007/08 statement of accounts identified one material error which was amended by officers ahead of the issue of our audit opinion. Despite this error, our overall assessment is that arrangements in place for the production of the statement of accounts are good.

**40** Our Annual Governance reported a small number of relatively minor areas where action is required to further improve the quality of the financial statements. We have reported these issues to Officers within a Final Accounts Memorandum and an action plan has been agreed.

---

## Use of Resources

**41** The findings of the auditor are an important component of the CPA framework described above. In particular the Use of Resources score is derived from the assessments made by the auditor in the following areas.

- Financial reporting (including the preparation of the accounts of the Council and the way these are presented to the public).
- Financial management (including how the financial management is integrated with strategy to support council priorities).
- Financial standing (including the strength of the Council's financial position).
- Internal control (including how effectively the Council maintains proper stewardship and control of its finances).
- Value for money (including an assessment of how well the Council balances the costs and quality of its services).



## The audit of the accounts and value for money

- 42 For the purposes of the CPA we have assessed the Council's arrangements for use of resources in these five areas as follows.

**Table 2**

Element	Assessment
Financial reporting	3 out of 4
Financial management	4 out of 4
Financial standing	4 out of 4
Internal control	3 out of 4
Value for money	3 out of 4
<b>Overall assessment of the Audit Commission</b>	<b>4 out of 4</b>

Note: 1 – lowest and 4 = highest

### The key issues arising from the audit

- 43 The Council continues to maintain strong performance in the way it manages its use of resources. Arrangements continue to be strengthened in a number of areas and the Council have plans in place to address a small number of areas where further improvement is required.

#### Financial reporting

- The Council continues to have in place effective arrangements to produce the annual statement of accounts and supporting working papers are of a good standard.
- Council reports, minutes, agendas and a range of other key documents should be made available to the public, via the Council's website, in a range of formats to comply with equalities legislation. The Council was unable to fully demonstrate that these key documents were available in the range of formats required under equalities legislation, should a request from the public be forthcoming.

#### Financial Management

- The arrangements to deliver effective financial management throughout the Council remain strong and a number of notable practices are employed by the Council. This has contributed to the consistent delivery of strategic objectives as the Council has a soundly based financial position that is clearly and regularly reported to Members.
- The Council has a detailed medium term financial strategy (MTFS) in place and has a strong record in managing performance against budget whilst ensuring the delivery of services.
- The Council continues to perform strongly in the management of its assets. Processes are effective and significant efficiencies have been delivered through rationalisation and better use of property.

### Financial Standing

- The Council has an excellent record of managing its spending within available resources and strong performance has been maintained.

### Internal Control

- The Council has effective arrangements in place to maintain an effective system of internal control and strong arrangements are in place to promote and ensure probity and propriety across the Council.
- Effective risk management procedures are in place and during 2007/08 the Council completed a full programme of risk management training. The risk management policy was updated during the year and a detailed corporate risk register is in place.

### Value for Money

- The Council continues to deliver good value for money and has effective processes for managing VFM.
- Performance continues to be good in most service areas. Around two-thirds of BVPIs improved during 2007/08 and public satisfaction levels are comparatively high. However, progress in some areas of cross-cutting work, such as reducing health inequalities, has been slower.
- Efficiency savings are impressive and the past year has seen notable improvements in arrangements for measuring access to services. The Business Improvement Programme (formerly known as the Lancashire Efficiency Initiative) has been strengthened and significant savings delivered, but there remains scope for improvement in prioritising reviews and in projecting and measuring outcomes.

---

### Other work

#### Data Quality

- 44 The Council's overall management arrangements for data quality are effective and we note that specific actions to improve data quality are being taken across the Council, including addressing recommendations made in previous reports.
- 45 A continued emphasis on performance management combined with selective detailed checks of PIs for example, by Strategic Partnerships and Performance staff and PERFORM User Group is helping to ensure the accuracy of reported data. This demonstrates the Council's commitment to improving its data quality arrangements.



46 However, the Council now needs to:

- actively promote the Council's Data Quality Strategy which was launched in January 2009;
- strengthen data quality governance and assurance arrangements within partnerships, by implementing the Lancashire Partnership Data Quality Strategy;
- maintain clear audit trails and working papers in relation to all its performance Indicators; and
- update job descriptions where relevant to reflect specific data quality roles and responsibilities, and link these more clearly and consistently to staff appraisal processes.

---

# Looking ahead

- 47 The public service inspectorates have developed a new performance assessment framework, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). CAA will provide the first holistic independent assessment of the prospects for local areas and the quality of life for people living there. It will put the experience of citizens, people who use services and local tax payers at the centre of the new local assessment framework, with a particular focus on the needs of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. It will recognise the importance of effective local partnership working, the enhanced role of Sustainable Communities Strategies and Local Area Agreements and the importance of councils in leading and shaping the communities they serve.
- 48 CAA will result in reduced levels of inspection and better coordination of inspection activity. The key components of CAA will be a joint inspectorate area assessment and reporting performance on the new national indicator set, together an organisational assessment which will combine the external auditor's assessment of value for money in the use of resources with a joint inspectorate assessment of service performance.
- 49 The first results of our work on CAA will be published in the autumn of 2009. This will include the performance data from 2008/09, the first year of the new National Indicator set and key aspect of each area's Local Area Agreement.

---

# Closing remarks

- 50 This letter has been discussed and agreed with senior officers. A copy of the letter will be presented at the cabinet meeting on 5 March 2009. Copies should be provided to all Council members.
- 51 Further detailed findings, conclusions and recommendations on the areas covered by audit and inspection work are included in the reports issued to the Council during the year.

---

**Table 3      Reports issued**

Report	Date of issue
Audit and inspection plan	March 2007
Annual Governance Report	September 2008
Opinion on financial statements	September 2008
Value for money conclusion	September 2008
Final accounts memorandum	February 2009
Use of Resources report 2008	February 2009
Corporate Assessment Inspection	October 2008
Joint Area review of Children's Services	October 2008
Annual audit and inspection letter	March 2009

- 
- 52 The Council has taken a positive and constructive approach to audit and inspection work, and we wish to thank the Council's staff for their support and cooperation during the audit.

---

## Availability of this letter

- 53 This letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk), and also on the Council's website.

**Clive Portman, District Auditor**

**Tom Keena, Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead**

March 2009

---

# The Audit Commission

The Audit Commission is an independent watchdog, driving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in local public services to deliver better outcomes for everyone.

Our work across local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services means that we have a unique perspective. We promote value for money for taxpayers, auditing the £200 billion spent by 11,000 local public bodies.

As a force for improvement, we work in partnership to assess local public services and make practical recommendations for promoting a better quality of life for local people.

---

## Copies of this report

If you require further copies of this report, or a copy in large print, in Braille, on tape, or in a language other than English, please call 0844 798 7070.

© Audit Commission 2009

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

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

Tel: 0844 798 1212 Fax: 0844 798 2945 Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946

[www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)

---