

City of York Council

Organisational Assessment

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of local public services

City of York Council

Overall, City of York Council performs adequately

Managing performance	3 out of 4
Use of resources	2 out of 4
Managing finances	2 out of 4
Governing the business	2 out of 4
Managing resources	2 out of 4

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

Summary

City of York Council performs adequately overall. It is improving in many of the priorities for the city it identified with partners. These priorities are to make the city thrive, sustainable, safer, a learning place, inclusive, healthy and a city of culture.

In assessing the Council's overall performance we have given particular weight to its use of resources. The Council's systems for managing its resources meet minimum requirements. They do the things they are designed to achieve. But the evidence of outcomes from this aspect of the Council's work was not consistent enough to score a 3. Areas of lower performance include financial planning, asset management and ensuring diversity and equality are dealt with consistently. Achieving its priorities will put greater demands on its use of resources as public spending comes under increasing pressure. Budget constraints held back some priority services in the past. This remains a risk now.

York scores three out of four for managing its performance. The Council's priorities reflect the City's needs. Many community groups were consulted as local priorities were identified. Groups included travellers, the homeless, single parents with young children, students, housebound elderly, and people with a physical or learning disability. Their views have led to priorities being amended giving a stronger focus on housing and homelessness, and children and young people.

Services key to the Council's priorities are doing well.

Ofsted rate services for children and young people as performing excellently. The Care Quality Commission rate services for adults as performing well. But vulnerable peoples' needs and wishes want further attention though to

ensure they are met. The Council knows this and its plans reflect its ambitions for all of York's people.

The Council has worked well with partners to support the local economy and help local people through the economic downturn. Initiatives include providing advice and support to local businesses and individuals.

The Council has also worked well with partners to improve the environment. It has updated the way it manages waste and has increased recycling - a service now well regarded by local people. Progress on managing traffic congestion is being made. The Council is reducing its carbon footprint.

Successful joint action with the police is dealing with anti-social behaviour and reducing youth offending. York is a safe city although there has been an increase in some types of crime.

Quality and choice in housing is improving. Homelessness is reducing, but remains high for young adults when compared with similar areas. Plans are in place to tackle this. Satisfaction with local recreational facilities is poor, and the lack of good quality leisure facilities may be limiting progress in increasing adult participation in sport.

The Council scores two out of four for managing its resources. Its work meets minimum requirements. The quality of many services has improved while the Council's costs remain low in comparison with similar councils. But several issues held the Council's rating down in this area of its performance.

For example, the Council's arrangements for asset management lack consistency and are not helping it achieve better value for money. It does not have all the information it needs on the assets it has available to it in every area of the city. Coupled with a lack of robustness in its asset management plans all this means the Council cannot be certain that it has the assets it needs to deliver its priorities. Enforced delays in rationalising its offices have held up savings and other improvements in how the Council works.

The Council is improving its understanding of its impact on natural resources and has taken early steps to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Plans are being developed to improve the way the Council uses its buildings to make it easier for the public to get its services and to provide better value for money.

The Council has recently developed a Fairness and Inclusion Strategy satisfying its statutory duties as an employer and service provider. But equality and diversity are not yet consistently dealt with in all Council services. The Council has listened to local people to make it more likely that their needs are met. The Easy@York project has made access to services easier. It has also improved the way it responds to local people.

The Council's financial and corporate planning processes are only partially integrated. Links between the Council's medium term financial strategy and capital, IT and workforce planning are not strong enough. Financial planning has focused on savings that do not undermine priorities rather than starting from what funding is needed to achieve those priorities.

This will need to change - the Council's costs are already low and greater

financial constraints now face the public sector. Different ways of providing services are being explored that should improve efficiency. But the medium term financial strategy is not clear about the risks that may prevent the delivery of corporate and service priorities.

The Council provides good community leadership in bringing local partners together and gives good support to joint working. More work is needed though to ensure that all councillors and officers work together consistently to achieve the Council's overall purpose and vision. Managerial leadership has been strong which has strengthened joint working across services. However, the Council is in transition following the recent departure of the Chief Executive and the arrival of his replacement.

About City of York Council

York is a historic city with an international reputation. The City and its surrounding area include the historic walled city, the suburbs and a large area of countryside. 4 million visitors each year bring wealth into the area as well as disruption and congestion. Covering an area of 105 square miles, the district of York comprises an urban area centred on the historic city surrounded by many small rural and semi rural settlements. The area has a total population of 195,400. The black and minority ethnic (BME) population is 4.9 per cent of the total. The proportion of people from BME communities doubled between 1991 and 2001 and is expected to grow further in the next few years.

The population of the district of York is increasing and is projected to increase by 4.2 per cent between 2001 and 2011 and by a further 8.3 per cent up to 2021. The four institutions of further and higher education bring the total number of students in York to around 20,000 (or about one-tenth of the population).

Population growth and an increase in smaller household is placing pressure on housing. 'Affordable' housing is scarce and house prices are well above the regional average. An average house in York costs around £200,000. The average annual wage in the city is about £19,000. Given the historic nature of the city's built environment, planning and development are sensitive issues.

For many the area provides a great standard of living. Schools are good as is healthcare. The City is popular with students and both its universities are growing. Until recently the economy has been strong with well-paid jobs in financial services as well as many other lower paid opportunities in tourism. The City has responded well to the relative decline in employment in traditional local industries (such as chocolate manufacturing and railways). These jobs have been replaced by a high-tech and science based industrial sector linked to the universities. Science City York is playing an increasingly important part in developing the city.

But some people are still not sharing the benefits that go with living in York. Owning their own home is out of reach of many residents on average incomes. Residents are dissatisfied with the choices for recreation available to them. A fifth of York's people live in poverty. This poses a major challenge to its hope of being an even more inclusive city. The Council's plans reflect the

depth of this challenge.

Organisational assessment

Thriving City

The Council and partners have worked well to soften the impact of the economic downturn on the city. Despite recent job losses, businesses still feel York is a good place to be. Initiatives involving the Council include York Enterprise Week. During the event businesses and individuals got advice and support. An enterprise fund to support new business start-ups is now in place. The Council, with its partners, has set up a mortgage rescue scheme to help people who are at risk of losing their homes. But, for all this increased support, York like other places saw significantly fewer new small businesses in 2008/09.

The city's economy is strong compared with neighbouring areas. The unemployment rate remains below those for the region and the UK. The number of people claiming job seekers allowance rose in line with national and regional trends. Interestingly - and in contrast with other trends - the number of working age people on out of work benefits fell slightly in 2008/09. The number of people of working age with qualifications has increased. Almost two-fifths have NVQ Level 4 qualification or above. This is higher than in most other parts of the country.

Housing and council tax benefits claimants are getting a better service. The average time taken to process new benefit claims fell to 15 days in 2008/09. But this is still longer than the national average. Benefit take up campaigns have been successful in helping people to claim what they are entitled to. The Council is working successfully with partners to help the poorer parts of the city. Residents are being helped into training and employment. Other people are being given advice on how to keep their homes warmer while saving money.

Sustainable City

Council action to reduce household waste has led to a 5 per cent fall in the amount collected in 2008/09. Almost half of the waste collected is now recycled. Significantly less waste was disposed of through landfill. That's good for the environment and saves taxpayers money. Soon more waste will be recycled through a new kerbside collection scheme. Alternate weekly collection of waste and recycling across the city will help achieve its target of recycling half of the city's waste by December 2010. Public satisfaction is improving and is now around the national average.

After four years of improvement standards of street cleanliness were static in 2008/09. York's standards are just below the national average but satisfaction with the standard of street cleanliness is high. The Council improved the way it manages sites of nature conservation value in 2008/09, with more of these sites now being well managed. However, the Council carried out fewer conservation area appraisals than planned.

The Council has helped manage traffic congestion. While this remains a major local issue peak period journey times in the city have stopped increasing. Plans to extend the Park and Ride network are being rolled out. People are happier with their bus services than is the case in other areas. Over the last two years the number of bus journeys in the City increased putting the City amongst the best performers nationally. Almost half a million more bus journeys were made in 2008/09 than in the previous year. But this was 1.7 million short of the target of 17 million journeys the Council had set itself.

After a successful Council bid for national Cycling City status, external funding is available to enable it to improve facilities for cyclists over the next three years. Early progress has been made in resurfacing existing cycle lanes, improving cycle access and encouraging children to cycle through events such as the Biking Viking event involving children from four schools cycling into the city centre.

The Council has made some early progress in reducing its carbon footprint. Completed projects on the Eco Depot, Yearsley Pool, school waste recycling and the use of renewable energy has reduced carbon emissions. Other projects are in progress to make schools, sport centres, street lighting and Council housing more energy efficient as the Council works towards reducing its CO2 emissions by a quarter by 2013.

Safer City

The Council's work is helping to make York an even safer city. Crime and anti-social behaviour are being tackled successfully. A high proportion of people feel that their views are considered and that issues are being dealt with effectively. Few people see anti-social or drunk and rowdy behaviour as being a problem. Serious acquisitive crime increased slightly in 2008/09 but it remains below the 2006/07 level. The increase is due mainly to a 14 per cent increase in domestic burglaries.

The Council's Youth Offending Team has worked well with young offenders, contributing to the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system falling by a third. Reoffending by young people in York is also going down but is higher than in similar areas. The percentage of young offenders engaging in education and work is also low compared with other areas.

The Council has good arrangements for ensuring children and young people are safeguarded. Children's needs are assessed quickly and families are given the support they need to help them cope. This has resulted in fewer children coming back on to the child protection register than in most other parts of the country.

The Council and its partners have also had some success in improving road safety, with a slight fall in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents in 2008/09.

Learning City

Children's services in York perform excellently. York's schools provide a high standard of education for most local children. Most schools, children's homes,

pupil referral units, nurseries and childminders are good or better. This means that almost all children and young people get good help and support. Ofsted's inspections of York's schools found most of them to be good or better more than is found in similar areas or nationally. No school in York is inadequate. York Council's adoption and fostering agencies are outstanding and children's homes are good or outstanding. Most childcare is good or better. Nursery and primary schools in York perform better than in similar areas or nationally.

Ofsted and the Audit Commission looked in December 2008 at how York's children are kept safe. They said these arrangements were outstanding. The review also looked at the services children in the Council's care receive. These too were outstanding. There has been one serious case review since December 2008 which was judged adequate.

York's performance against almost all national performance indicators for education matches or exceeds that of similar areas. The number of children achieving 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths is among the highest in the country, despite falling slightly in 2008/09.

Children from communities at risk of disadvantage do not necessarily do as well though. York's vulnerable children and young people do not do as well as their peers. Most young people get services that are good or better but one of the City's special schools and one of its units for pupils with challenging behaviour are adequate. This is in the context of good or better provision for the majority of young people.

Also, children aged 11 who have free school meals do less well than the rest of their age group. This gap is wider in York than elsewhere in the country. A similar gap exists for young people at 16 who have special educational needs. Some young people from a minority ethnic background do not do as well as their peers at 16.

The skills of the working age population are improving. About three out of every four people in the city now have at least an NVQ Level 2 qualification. This is below the target the Council and its partners set for themselves. They know more needs to be done to ensure local people are able to take advantage of new job opportunities as the economic recession ends.

As the economic downturn developed, the number of 16 to 18 year olds not in education, training or employment increased in 2008/09 to 4.2 per cent. But this is still much lower than in most parts of the country.

A smaller proportion of young people from poorer homes in York go on to higher education than is the case for those from better off families. This gap is wider than in many other parts of the country.

Inclusive City

The Council and its partners have made some improvements to the quality of services to those with specific needs. The Care Quality Commission has rated the City Council's adult social care as performing well and improvement from last year.

The Council has improved the quality of services to vulnerable older people,

but more needs to be done. Significant improvements were made in 2008/09 for older people with care needs, and the number of people being supported to live independently in their own homes increased by over a tenth.

More carers now get support. A high proportion of older people are satisfied with their homes and the local neighbourhood although many feel more needs to be done to help them live independently. In comparison with services in other similar areas, performance remains below average and the Council recognises the need to take further action to continue the improvement so far.

The Council has also reduced the time taken to carry out assessments of children with care needs. Children in its care are being moved around less which is better for them. A high proportion of parents are satisfied with the services provided to disabled children, with York coming out top of 30 authorities who took part in a survey in 2008/09.

Good progress has been made in meeting the city's housing needs. The number of homes not meeting the Government's decency standards fell by almost half to 5.7 per cent in 2008/09. There are 151 new affordable homes in the City because of the work of the Council and its partners. Although less than the Council's target it represents good progress in the current economic climate.

Work has recently started on replacing 100 prefabricated bungalows with 196 new homes across three sites in the city. These include 95 houses and apartments for affordable rent, discounted sale and sale on the open market. There will be new housing too designed to meet the needs of older people.

The Council has also been successful in dealing with homelessness, with the number of families living in temporary accommodation decreasing by a fifth, although homelessness of young adults remains relatively high.

City of Culture

The Council, with partners, has continued to provide the City of Festivals programme. This includes events dealing with different cultural activities such as dance, food and drink, literature and sport. As well as a residents' festival, some events are targeted at different groups, such as older people. Local people are closely involved in the festival programme. The festivals uphold and promote the strong sense of community for many in the city.

Cultural facilities are a key part of the attraction for visitors to the city and satisfaction with subregional cultural attractions, such as museums and art galleries, is high.

The Council has taken some actions to encourage local people to take advantage of local facilities. For examples the Council is developing the "Changing Places" project. This is opening up the city and cultural and leisure opportunities to people with more complex health and care needs.

Satisfaction with facilities provided for the use of local people, such as libraries and sport and leisure facilities, is poor despite recent improvements. There have been delays with plans to redevelop the Barbican Centre and, although

progress has been made in improving the quality of some swimming pools and sports centres, rates of adult participation in active sport and recreation are low. Targets for increasing participation in physical activity have not been met.

The Council has taken action to develop and improve play areas and the level of satisfaction with parks and open spaces is above average.

Healthy City

The Council has taken actions to improve the health of local people, although results have been mixed. The Council is joining in a local 'Altogether Better' programme focusing on healthy eating, physical activity and mental well-being and has targeted those with greater health and social care needs.

Healthy eating programmes have been introduced for older people in residential care, although these are not in place in all facilities provided by independent providers. Despite introducing a range of activities, the proportion of adults taking part in physical activity has fallen. A 'Fit as a Fiddle' programme has been introduced to encourage older people to take part in physical exercise. The numbers of people taking part are increasing and, as well as helping older people stay healthy, the programme provides older people who would otherwise have been isolated, a chance to socialise.

The Council has been successful in developing services to help older people live independently, although the number of older people being admitted to residential care remains relatively high. The Council has strengthened its arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable older people and treating them with dignity and respect. Carers now have greater choice to enable them to get personalised support that best meets their circumstances, although more needs to be done to support them.

The Council has been more successful in promoting healthy lifestyles with children and young people. Health promotion in York's schools has had a positive impact on most pupils. More children take part in PE and sport than in similar areas, although the take up of school lunches is lower. Obesity rates in primary schools remain lower than most parts of the country, although there was a slight increase in 2008/09.

Services for young people needing support for mental health issues are good and are better than most other parts of the country, although services for adults are not as effective.

Despite projects to reduce it, the rate of pregnancies in the under-18 age group has continued to increase. Unplanned and unwanted conceptions are a particular area of concern. Work is continuing on this and the Council is hopeful that the situation is now improving.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>



for an independent overview
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Audit Commission, 1st Floor, Millbank Tower, Millbank, London SW1P 4HQ

Telephone: 0844 798 1212

Fax: 0844 798 2945

Textphone (minicom): 0844 798 2946

www.audit-commission.gov.uk