

City of York Council

Organisational Assessment (Summary version)

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Provided under embargo



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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.

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/>



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