

# Cultural Services

**Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council**

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high quality local services for the public. Our remit covers around 11,000 bodies in England, which between them spend more than £180 billion of public money each year. Our work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services.

As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we ensure that public services are good value for money and that public money is properly spent.

### **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 0845 056 0566.

© Audit Commission 2007

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

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

# Contents

<b>Service Inspection</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Scoring the service</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Report</b>	<b>11</b>
Context	11
The locality	11
The council	12
The council's cultural services	12
<b>How good is the service?</b>	<b>13</b>
What has the service aimed to achieve?	13
Is the service meeting the needs of the local community and users?	14
Access, customer care and community focus	14
Equality and diversity	16
Service outcomes for users and the community	17
Healthier communities	18
Safer and stronger communities	19
Is the service delivering value for money?	20
<b>What are the prospects for improvement to the service?</b>	<b>23</b>
What is the service track record in delivering improvement?	23
How well does the service manage performance?	24
Does the service have the capacity to improve?	26

## 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 website 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 Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council provides 'good' cultural services that have 'promising' prospects for improvement.
- 2 The Council directly provides a range of cultural services including libraries, arts, parks and open spaces, and sports development. Its leisure centres are provided by Trafford Community Leisure Trust and it also provides projects and events in partnership with other organisations. The Council spends £8.62 million annually on these services.
- 3 Trafford residents have access to a range of well-managed cultural facilities, and user satisfaction with the quality of services provided is high. Participation rates are increasing.
- 4 Cultural services have a good knowledge of the make up of local communities, consult well with service users and make changes to services as a result. They are less successful in engaging with non users and so may be unaware of barriers to access.
- 5 The Council has worked well to improve access for diverse communities. Physical access to facilities is good and services have made changes to increase access. 'Active Trafford', the Council's concessionary scheme, has been reviewed to include a wider range of potential users. However some barriers remain and limitations in communication, transport and cost prevent services being fully accessible to all of the borough's diverse communities.
- 6 Cultural services have a range of activities in place to improve participation from more deprived parts of the borough. Innovative projects include Lets Go Global (LGG) based in Old Trafford and the Trafford Youth Orchestra which has been successful in reaching young people in targeted communities.
- 7 Service standards are not in place, so users do not currently know what level and quality of service to expect and whether services are performing well.
- 8 Cultural services have been successful in improving health and community safety through targeted initiatives, most of which are delivered jointly with partners. However for some of its activities, cultural services are unable to demonstrate how successful they have been in securing positive outcomes such as improved health or reduction in the fear of crime and crime rates.
- 9 The Council can demonstrate that its cultural services provide good value for money. If services are delivered at below average cost, they are generally well used and user satisfaction is high.
- 10 Prospects for improvement are promising because the Council is well-placed to deliver future improvements in cultural services. The contribution of cultural services to corporate and community priorities is clearly articulated through the community strategy and local area agreement. Cultural services have the appropriate skills, finance and other resources in place to deliver improved services.

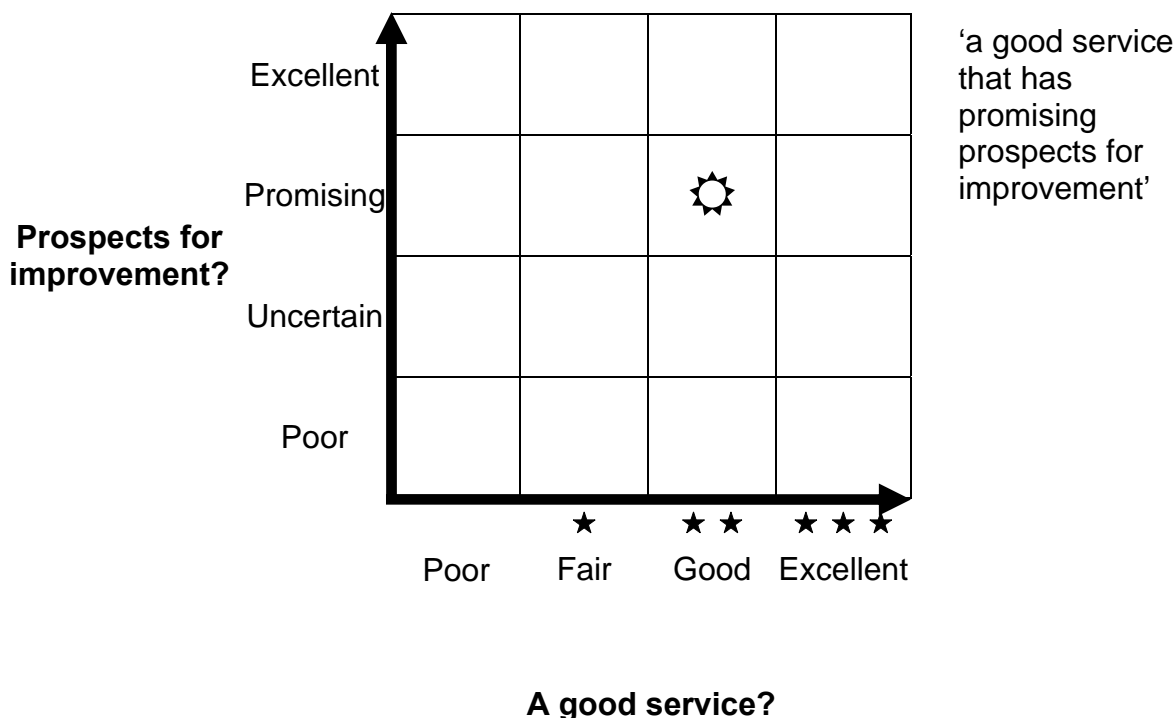
## 6 Cultural Services | Summary

- 11 Cultural services have a track record of improvement and work well with partners to increase capacity. Trafford residents' satisfaction with most elements of cultural services is improving. Value for money in cultural services continues to improve.
- 12 Performance management within cultural services drives service delivery and improvement but is not yet underpinned by comprehensive baseline information that informs service planning and target setting. Cultural services have a significant role in delivering community plan and Local Area Agreement (LAA) priorities and a new service planning framework links cultural services outcomes to community plans. For most elements of cultural services future plans are realistic, but the vision for the Waterside Arts Centre (WAC) lacks clarity.
- 13 Communication within and outside the organisation is not always fully effective, and this impacts on local people's understanding and perceptions of cultural services, and on the sharing of learning within the service.

## Scoring the service

- 14 We have assessed Trafford Metropolitan Borough 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>**



Source: Audit Commission

- 15 The service is a good, two-star service because:
- a wide range of cultural services is on offer across the borough, many of which have positive external accreditation. These provide some measures of quality and reassurance to local people;
  - cultural services engage well with users, including targeted consultation on specific issues or developments, and changes the way it plans and delivers services as a result;
  - there are good examples of initiatives which have led to improvements in health and community safety;

<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.

## 8 Cultural Services | Scoring the service

- participation rates and user satisfaction levels are generally above average and improving; and
- combined with the above, the Council's below average cost cultural services mean that cultural services provide good value for money.

However, there are areas to address:

- current limitations in communication, for example marketing of Active Trafford, prevent services being fully accessible to all of the borough's diverse communities;
- for some of its activities, cultural services is unable to demonstrate what impact it is having against planned outcomes;
- cultural services lack information about who uses their services, so can not be sure that they are meeting local needs; and
- customer service standards are not yet in place.

**16** The service has promising prospects for improvement because:

- the contribution of cultural services to corporate and community priorities is clearly articulated through the community strategy and local area agreement;
- there is a good track record of improvement in services, and in value for money;
- user satisfaction is improving;
- staff skills and knowledge of cultural services are good;
- leadership within the service is strong, and there is clear organisational commitment to cultural services; and
- the Council has a track record of attracting external funding, and of working effectively with partners to increase capacity.

However:

- although improving, performance management is not yet underpinned by comprehensive baseline information that informs service planning and target-setting across all areas of cultural services. Some local performance indicators are not effective measures;
- good practice and learning is not routinely shared across cultural services; and
- the vision for the WAC is not clear.

## Recommendations

- 17 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,

### **Recommendation**

*R1 Develop a comprehensive picture of usage of cultural services to enable service planning and target setting. This includes:*

- *putting in place management systems to enable service areas to measure usage by residents from targeted areas;*
- *identifying barriers to participation; and*
- *using this information to improve access and inform target setting and service planning.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- service planning and target setting takes account of non users; and
- usage by residents from targeted areas increases.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by March 2008.

### **Recommendation**

*R2 Improve communication with local communities. This includes:*

- *developing a consistent approach to using mechanisms for enhancing communication eg language line;*
- *identifying new methods of communication to engage non users eg use of digital media to engage young people; and*
- *developing customer service standards for all aspects of cultural services which are communicated to users and delivered by the Council's contractors and external partners.*

<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 per cent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

## 10 Cultural Services | Recommendations

The expected benefits of this recommendation are:

- engagement of local people will lead to better knowledge of their needs and their increased participation in cultural services; and
- local people will be better informed about cultural services.

The implementation of this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by March 2008.

### ***Recommendation***

*R3 Develop a vision for the Waterside Arts Centre so its role in contributing to Corporate and LAA priorities is clear. This includes:*

- *evaluating how WAC activities currently support Council and LAA priorities; and*
- *determining measurable indicators linked to Council and LAA priorities so that WAC's contribution is clear.*

The expected benefit of this recommendation is:

- the WAC will contribute more fully to delivering Council and community priorities.

The implementation of this recommendation will have medium impact with low costs. This should be implemented by March 2008.

# Report

## Context

### The locality

- 18 The borough of Trafford is located on the south west of the Greater Manchester conurbation. It is an area of contrasts, from the densely populated areas of Old Trafford in the north to the rural south and west. It contains the internationally recognisable homes of Manchester United Football Club, Lancashire County Cricket Club and the Imperial War Museum North. There is good access to important transport routes including the M62 and M60 motorways, the Manchester Ship Canal and Manchester Airport.
- 19 Overall the borough is relatively affluent. It has relatively low levels of unemployment (1.7 per cent against a regional average of 2.1 per cent), free school meals among secondary school pupils (12 per cent against a regional average of 20 per cent) and receipt of benefits (12.2 per cent against a regional average of 15.8 per cent). It is ranked 136th out of 354 in relation to the most deprived districts in England. However, this picture masks considerable inequalities; 16 per cent of the population of almost 213,000 in the borough live in the most deprived wards in the country.
- 20 There is a long history of significant economic activity in the borough. Trafford Park was established as an industrial park at the end of the 19th century and now provides employment for over 40,000 people. Manufacturing, engineering and logistics continue to be important but the focus is now on food, drink, paper and printing rather than traditional industries. Fuel storage and distribution facilities within the borough mean that it has strategic importance for the region. The Trafford Centre was opened in 1998 and is an important regional shopping centre.
- 21 Approximately 13.1 per cent of the borough's population are from a wide variety of ethnic groups other than white British. This is higher than the regional average (7.8 per cent). The borough's black and minority ethnic (BME) population tends to be concentrated in the three most disadvantaged wards.
- 22 Educational attainment in the borough is the second highest in England. Levels of crime have fallen in recent years but fear of crime remains an issue, particularly in relation to anti-social behaviour.
- 23 Health outcomes are improving in Trafford, particularly in comparison with the North West region. However health inequality remains a problem; there is a difference in life expectancy of ten years between the most and least affluent parts of the borough.

## The council

- 24** The Council has 63 councillors representing 21 wards. Currently the Conservative Group has control of the Council with 40 seats. The Labour Group has 20 seats and the Liberal Democrats 3. The current administration was elected in June 2004. The executive consists of eight councillors drawn exclusively from the Conservative Group; the leader of the council and seven portfolio holders. There are four scrutiny committees chaired by non-executive councillors.
- 25** The Council employs 5,148 people (full time equivalent) excluding school based staff. The Council's net revenue budget for 2006/07, set in February 2006, is £136.9 million. The last Corporate Assessment of the Council in 2006 categorised it as a 'fair' authority, and the latest judgement on the Council's annual assessment and direction of travel improved the score to 'good'.

## The council's cultural services

- 26** Cultural services in Trafford are delivered through the Prosperity Planning and Development and Community Services and Social Care directorates. The Community Services and Social Care directorate includes libraries, arts and cultural development, community learning, the schools music service, and sports development. Tourism, parks and countryside services are included within the Prosperity Planning and Development directorate. Leisure centres are managed by a community leisure trust.
- 27** In 2006/07 the net budget for cultural services is £8.62 million. The service employs 212 full time equivalent staff.
- 28** Cultural services provide:
- leisure facilities including playing pitches, parks, allotments, play areas and a golf course;
  - sports development and sports event programmes aimed at encouraging participation in sports at all levels;
  - the Waterside Arts Centre;
  - 14 static libraries and one mobile library;
  - the schools music services, including two music centres and five mini music centres;
  - tourism services; and
  - a number of outreach activities that are not based around cultural facilities.

## How good is the service?

### What has the service aimed to achieve?

- 29 The Council has clear aims for cultural services that are broadly linked to local, regional and national priorities. The community strategy for Trafford sets out a vision for the borough as ‘thriving, prosperous and culturally vibrant. A borough at the heart of the Manchester City region celebrated as the enterprise capital of the region and home to internationally renowned cultural and sporting attractions’.
- 30 The Community Strategy is organised around four themes of live, learn, work, and relax, with these underpinned by high level actions and success measures. The ‘relax’ theme includes targets to raise the profile of sports, arts and culture, celebrate cultural diversity, increase participation in cultural activities and promote healthy lifestyles.
- 31 The Trafford Partnership has recently (March 2007) agreed a Local Area Agreement which contains 11 reward element targets. Two of these include increasing participation in sport and recreation by children, young people and adults.
- 32 The Council knows that the corporate plan does not fully reflect the themes of the community strategy and has plans to revise this as part of the business planning cycle. The plan does include a medium term corporate objective to improve access to sports, arts and leisure facilities with targets for increasing participation. The Cultural Strategy ‘Lifestyle Trafford’ was developed in 2004 and is reviewed annually. Three of its five priorities explicitly reflect the Community Strategy themes of developing networks, raising the profile of the cultural sector and increasing participation. The remaining two priorities relate to making best use of resources and encouraging new investment. A number of supporting strategies are in place. The Waterside Arts Strategy has a mission to provide ‘a unique resource to positively engage with local communities through arts and creativity’ aiming to complement other local provision and develop specialist areas of programming.
- 33 Service improvement action plans are linked to the corporate plan and community strategy themes. They evaluate previous performance and include detailed actions for further improvement.

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

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

- 34** Overall, cultural services have a good understanding of local community needs and priorities based on research, survey results and consultation. As well as using community profiles, cultural services gather knowledge through a range of methods including friends groups in parks, the cultural partnership, and user feedback. The Council has good knowledge of cultural provision through a mapping exercise carried out to inform development of the Cultural Strategy.
- 35** Cultural services engage well with users of services and are responsive to suggestions for improvements. Consultation with community and voluntary sector organisations, young people and older people has been used to inform services and policy development, such as planning for new play areas, revising library opening hours and the design of the new library facility in Urmston. The service has involved users and non-users in identifying what this new library should offer, effectively gathering the views of young people. This means that the Council can be confident that the needs of citizens and users are at the heart of the service the library will provide.
- 36** Parks and countryside services engage effectively with local people to design local parks and facilities. Local communities have influenced the Japanese design of Walkden Gardens, and schemes to improve community safety. This approach is effective in increasing community ownership and reducing anti social behaviour in the area.
- 37** Consultation and engagement with non-users is less developed. The Council is making some efforts to understand the reasons for non use of services through, for example surveys with lapsed library users and the 'Active Trafford' leisure scheme, which enables tracking of participation by disabled people and people on low incomes. However, there are gaps in cultural services' knowledge base overall and the Council does not gather comprehensive information about non-users of its leisure or arts facilities. This means that, although the service can be confident that it is taking into account reasons for non-use when it seeks to improve some services and facilities, it does not yet have a comprehensive picture of non-use across all elements of cultural services.
- 38** Elements of cultural services work well together to provide services that meet the needs of local communities. Leisure and parks services provide comprehensive cross service support to Friends Groups, joining up service provision and making good use of enthusiastic volunteers to provide activities for local people; for example in providing basketball and football kit and training volunteers to coach basketball. However cross directorate working relies on informal networks. This means that the Council cannot be sure that linkages between service areas are systematically made.

- 39 The Council has made improvements to physical access in many facilities, and the majority of these are fully accessible to all of the borough's diverse communities. A Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) library survey was completed two years ago and the recommendations from this have been implemented with all but two library buildings now DDA compliant. In these cases, modifications to access have not been made because library provision is to be moved. A comprehensive equality audit was completed in the Council's parks 18 months ago; improvements have been made as a result of this including the introduction of tactile signage and interpretation at each site. The Waterside Arts Centre (WAC) is fully accessible.
- 40 Cultural services are making strong efforts to increase access and participation, particularly from deprived geographical communities and disadvantaged groups. New council buildings are designed to be welcoming and customer focused. Sale Waterside contains several services within a modern and attractive building. Other examples of work to improve access include reviewing and adding stops to the mobile library service and adopting a flexible approach to use of the home library service which is available for use by anyone who struggles to get books home. Tactile boards have been put in place in parks to improve access for people with visual impairments. These approaches ensure that services are able to be used by a wide cross section of residents.
- 41 However there are some barriers to access. For example, although some services use language line to improve access to services, this is not used in leisure facilities. Not all libraries are providing users with a choice of books that meets their needs and some users would prefer longer opening hours.
- 42 Physical access to cultural venues in Trafford from some parts of the borough such as Partington is difficult due to poor transport infrastructure. The Council supports some community transport provision in Partington but cultural services cannot be sure that everyone who wants to access services is able to do so.
- 43 The Council has measures in place to make services more affordable for residents on lower incomes. The concessionary leisure scheme has been reviewed and the Active Trafford pass encompasses a wide range of users. Usage of the scheme has increased significantly. This means that local people are less likely to be prevented from taking part in cultural services' activities because of cost. However the scheme is not well communicated, so some residents who could make use of the scheme are not aware of what is on offer.
- 44 Customer service standards are not yet in place, but plans are in place to produce these. This means that service users do not currently know what level of service they can expect from cultural services.

- 45 Cultural services make efforts to communicate activities to local communities with mixed results. Services use a range of mechanisms to communicate events to local people including the Council newspaper, leaflets, and websites. Good use is made of the extensive cultural partnership network to distribute information and of Trafford Partnership TV and Lets Go Global (LGG). LGG is accessible through 'viewing stations' based in local libraries and community centres as well as through personal computers. It is an effective means to consult and communicate with young people. It has held successful on line debates and consultation exercises in the past including debates on the future of Longford Park and the housing needs of young people.
- 46 However cultural services do not have a common approach to ensuring information leaflets about arts and leisure facilities and events are accessible to all communities. Some leaflets include information about availability in other formats or languages but others lack this detail. This means that access to information about services and events can be limited for some potential participants.

### **Equality and diversity**

- 47 The Council is at an early stage of developing its approach to equality and diversity. It achieved level 1 of the local government equality standard in September 2006, and has established a cross-directorate working group to focus on setting equality standards. It has up to date race and disability equality schemes in place.
- 48 Cultural services do not have a fully comprehensive approach to addressing diversity. Services do not routinely gather data on the levels of participation in cultural activity by different groups and so do not know whether their activities are reaching all communities. However there are imaginative programmes in place aimed at promoting equality and improving participation from deprived neighbourhoods.
- The community learning service ensures that residents from more deprived neighbourhoods and from black and minority ethnic groups (BME) are able to participate in its activities through effective outreach and targeted provision. It has worked well with 16 to 19 year old mothers to improve their self confidence. Courses are accessible and held at a number of different community based venues; crèche provision means that parents with young children are able to attend.
  - The Trafford Youth Orchestra is highly effective in working with local communities to ensure equity in take up. Historically seen as elitist, it has worked to improve access through music centres in targeted areas, for example in Partington and Stretford, to provide lessons and instruments at low cost. Through tracking participation rates, it knows that 25 per cent of orchestra membership now comes from deprived areas in the borough.

- LGG is accessible to local diverse communities in Old Trafford. It is physically located within a housing estate and is well used by local people. It works with a wide range of volunteers and groups including asylum seekers and older people to provide them with experiences in dealing with new media and developing skills for life. It has significant impact with volunteers getting jobs in the media or going on to media training.
- 49 Cultural Services can demonstrate success in increasing participation by people from target groups in a number of initiatives. However overall, services cannot systematically demonstrate how well activities and initiatives are used by targeted communities.

### **Service outcomes for users and the community**

- 50 Cultural services reflect national, regional, community and corporate priorities. The community strategy and the Local Area Agreement explicitly identify cultural services as central to delivering against priorities. This means that the strategic role that cultural services play in contributing to community and Council priorities is clear both within services and across the Council. Feedback from stakeholders in the regional cultural commentary is positive regarding partnership working with the council's cultural services.
- 51 Levels of user satisfaction with cultural services are generally high, demonstrating that cultural services provide services that meet user needs. Satisfaction with staff is high with users viewing them as helpful and approachable. Independent surveys show that satisfaction with libraries, sports and parks are in the top quartile, and satisfaction with arts venues is third quartile. Usage of parks and open spaces, sports and libraries is in the top quartile, and usage of theatres is in the mid-quartile.
- 52 Cultural services perform well against a range of external quality standards. Its leisure facilities are QUEST accredited, it has 14 green flags for parks, which is the highest number for any council outside of London, and in 2005/06 it met seven out of ten public library service standards. It has Investors in People accreditation.
- 53 To assess the contribution of cultural services to meeting local, regional and national objectives, the following two areas of focus were agreed in advance with the Council:
- Healthier communities; and
  - Safer and stronger communities.

## Healthier communities

- 54** Cultural services demonstrate good examples of initiatives to improve health. These have contributed to a 25 per cent reduction in circulatory diseases in the borough. Health initiatives include:
- a 'Books on Prescription' service is available in all libraries. GPs prescribe self-help books available through the borough's libraries, thus empowering people by enabling them to understand their illnesses. The impact of this scheme is being monitored by using feedback from GPs about reductions in medication for users;
  - library services have developed links with nutritionists at the local hospital, who recommend books on diabetes, weight control, and heart disease to be stocked in libraries and give talks on health and well-being; and
  - the Active Trafford leisure pass includes referrals from medical centres. Leisure centres also deliver junior weight management programmes.
- 55** Partnerships are used effectively to deliver initiatives which support service aims around health and well being. These include:
- the blueSCI Broome House service works closely with individuals to offer creative and social opportunities for people with emotional or psychological distress. The impact of its work is measured through individual 'recovery outcomes' including improved motivation and individuals accessing education, volunteering, arts and culture activities;
  - Freedom in Dance, a community based dance company, provides dance activities for older people and contributes to healthy living objectives, and aims to help with falls prevention, maintenance of mobility and strength, and promotion of well-being;
  - Future Visions, a registered charity set up and run by people with learning disabilities, which works closely with the Council to deliver drama workshops;
  - work with the Imperial War Museum North to create displays in libraries around remembrance days; and
  - the schools music service contributed to the healthy eating agenda through their 'healthy eating rap' event. The best entries in a competition for local schools met and performed for a Manchester United FC footballer who talked to them about the physical benefits of eating healthily.
- 56** The Council also runs healthy living courses for large employers such as Manchester United and Kelloggs in return for promotion of the courses. Joint working with the Primary Care Trust is effective with joint posts in place to focus on developing initiatives including healthy walks. Partners are clear that joint work is having a positive impact on health outcomes including reducing coronary heart disease (CHD) levels in the borough. The Council is on track to meet Healthier Nation targets to reduce deaths from cancer by 20 per cent and CHD by 40 per cent by 2010.

## Safer and stronger communities

- 57** Cultural services have a range of initiatives which succeed in making communities safer and stronger. Community safety initiatives have resulted in reduced offending and increased satisfaction with local environments. For example Crossford Bridge sports centre had a history of community safety issues because of its isolation. It was tidied up and renovated, more staff were placed there, opening hours extended and more sports and community groups based there. It is now better used with the result that it has become a safer place to be. Crime reduction surveys in parks show that improvements to the layout and the introduction of community safety officers have resulted in reduced fear of crime.
- 58** Cultural services and the youth offending service work well together to deliver Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP). This is a national programme which supports young people at risk of social exclusion and of committing crime. It provides diversionary and developmental sports, arts and cultural activities which equip them with new skills and improve their self esteem. For example, focusing young people's anger into sport has led to some achieving qualifications in football coaching and canoeing. Feedback from young people and their family groups is positive in terms of improved behaviour and self esteem, and there are strong positive outcomes, particularly in improved behaviour and learning. Research done by PAYP nationally shows a strong correlation between this type of support to young people and a decrease in crime rates and anti-social behaviour.
- 59** The Urban Leisure project at Stretford Leisure Centre provides a variety of youth-focused activities aimed at reducing youth nuisance on Saturday nights. It is funded by Stretford Crime and Disorder Group and staff are provided by TUF-C, an Old-Trafford based enterprise, comprised of local young people with strong links to the community who organise events such as holiday sports schemes and provide sports coaching. Reduction in crime and youth nuisance in the area has not been monitored; however anecdotal evidence indicates that vandalism has reduced locally.
- 60** Sports development services provide effective diversionary activities in areas of youth nuisance. Y-street is a prevention project run in areas of youth nuisance identified by the police and through neighbourhood forums. It provides open access indoor and outdoor activities at the Old Trafford sports barn in response to demand from young people. Activities include sports coaching provided by TUF-C and coaches from MUFC, and others targeted more towards young women, such as a fashion show. There are some examples of young people whose interests have developed into careers, for example one young person was given the funds to go on a sports coaching course on condition that he worked 12 hours a week with Y-street; this has now developed into a career.

- 61 Cultural services are working with other agencies to make communities safer and stronger.
- Through LGG a live internet TV debate was held as part of the 'Guns and Gangs' project which addressed the issues around gangs and guns in the Old Trafford and Moss Side areas.
  - Cultural services are working with a local university to develop intergenerational activities to improve the well being of both younger and older people through cultural activities.
  - Cultural services work with a range of partners to celebrate Black History month with a wide ranging programme of events across all service areas including displays, music and theatre events.
- 62 However cultural services cannot comprehensively measure the impact of its activity on reducing crime and fear of crime in all instances. This means that it does not know in all cases how effective it is in improving the quality of life for local people.

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

- 63 The Council overall provides good value for money in comparison with others. It provides low cost services with generally above average performance, and can demonstrate a positive relationship between costs and outcomes. It has improved its use of resources score from 2 in 2005/06, to 3 in 2006/07, demonstrating that it has effective financial processes in place and can demonstrate a balance between the cost and quality of its services. The corporate value for money strategy includes reference to targeting resources towards meeting the needs of local people.
- 64 The Council's cultural provision provides good value for money in comparison with others. Expenditure on all aspects of cultural services is lower (best) quartile except for parks and open spaces which is in the next quartile. Satisfaction with sport and leisure facilities and parks and open spaces is best quartile and libraries are top quartile. Theatres and concert halls are second quartile. Usage of sports facilities, libraries and parks and open spaces in the last six months is in the best quartile and theatres are in the third quartile. Low cost, high satisfaction and high usage indicates good value for money.
- 65 Within individual service areas there are good examples of value for money.
- The community leisure trust exceeded its financial targets in its second year of operation (2004/05) achieving a surplus of more than £110,000. Overall the total visits during the 12-month period were 128,000 below the target of 1.76 million. In 2005/06 it achieved a surplus of more than £242,000 (£181,000 above target). Total income increased from £5,503,461 in 2005/06 to £6,428,748 in 2006/2007, this was almost £300,000 above target. Total visits in 2005/2006 were 290,000 above the 2004/05 figure and 180,000 above the target of 1.65 million.

- The parks and countryside service is improving its ability to demonstrate value for money through identifying efficiencies within its management structure as well as improving performance. It has appointed consultants to identify savings of £1.3 million over three years and in the first year has identified efficiencies of £510,000. It is on target to meet its three-year target.
- 66 Resources are allocated in accordance with policy decisions, for example money has been disinvested from maintaining green flag status in some parks in order to allow more investment in poorer performing parks. The medium term financial plan (MTFP) funding allocations are based around corporate priorities. Financial monitoring is strong with service budgets discussed at a number of forums on a regular basis.
  - 67 The Council effectively uses asset management to increase value for money in libraries. Some libraries that were under-used have been placed within other facilities such as Stretford leisure centre, Altrincham library has been renovated to improve its condition and increase usage, Lostock library had an unsuitable building so was moved into a school and the old building given to a local scout group who wanted it. These decisions have made savings and met community needs.
  - 68 Service level cost information is used to identify potential issues and inform spending priorities. For example additional funding has been allocated to LGG to enable it to access European funding.
  - 69 The corporate procurement strategy reflects good practice, incorporating findings from an IDeA fitness check in 2004. It seeks to improve value for money in line with Council aims and objectives through a range of methods, including partnership working and has links to national and local priorities.
  - 70 Cultural services use a variety of procurement methods effectively in order to deliver outcomes that improve value for money for local communities. Recent procurement exercises include the transfer of leisure centre management to Trafford Community Leisure Trust, the Greater Manchester book purchasing consortium and the Sale Waterside Private Finance Initiative scheme. These have resulted in financial savings and increased usage of facilities. Music centres also provide value for money for local communities. They are funded by the Council and the standards fund and provide music lessons (individual and in schools) and instrument hire at low cost. This means children's' access to learning music is not adversely affected by cost.

## 22 Cultural Services | How good is the service?

- 71 The Council uses partnerships effectively to improve the value for money of its cultural services.
- The Council has achieved better value for money by working with Marketing Manchester (MM) to provide its tourism services. It works closely with MM to develop The Quays which is planned to be Trafford's key tourism destination. MM are supportive of the Council and target press activity. They also provide visitor information (STEAM figures) which they co-ordinate on behalf of greater Manchester; this is benchmarked and reliable information. This means that the Council has close links with other local authorities, can share learning and work jointly to create efficiencies (for example with Salford on the Quays development).
  - Using the expertise and business acumen of MUFC procurement process enabled the Sports Barn to be built for the comparatively low sum of £600,000 in a short period of time.
- 72 The Council makes effective use of developer contributions from the private sector in order to improve cultural provision. These include improvements to parks and play areas which have resulted in green flag accreditations, funding for sports equipment in Old Trafford over ten years and the planned new library building at Urmston.

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

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

- 73** Cultural services in Trafford are improving in terms of the quality and quantity of opportunities to participate in cultural activity. Usage levels have increased across the service, as has performance against recognised standards. User satisfaction is rising and the services have improved their cost effectiveness.
- 74** Cultural services have made improvements that have contributed to the achievement of their aims and priorities, for example:
- the library service has reached 92 per cent of eligible babies with the bookstart scheme compared to 79 per cent nationally, making particular effort to reach babies of asylum seekers;
  - sports and leisure activities have contributed to a 25 per cent reduction in circulatory diseases and the Council is on target to meet Healthier Nation targets to reduce deaths from cancer by 20 per cent and CHD by 40 per cent by 2010;
  - participation by KS1 and KS2 pupils in sport and physical education has improved from 12.3 per cent and 23.6 per cent in 2003 to 72 per cent and 82 per cent in 2006;
  - investment in facilities includes the construction of a skate park, multi use games area and trim trail in Partington; the refurbishment of pavilions in three parks and improvements to all but one of the Leisure Trust facilities; and
  - Lets Go Global has been recognised as an example of good practice by the Association of Greater Manchester Councils and has accessed substantial grant funding to help other councils develop similar services in the next two years.
- 75** The Council can demonstrate an improving trend in usage levels for specific events. The range of events and participation in the annual four weeks of culture events has increased with 50 events and over 96,000 participants in 2006, up from 20 events and 3,000 people in 2005. Increasing numbers of people take part in sports development events with participation up from 10,500 in 2004/05 to 39,116 from April 2005 to October 2006 and a predicted full year increase of 22 per cent for 2006/07.
- 76** Cultural services provide services that meet user needs. Five of the cultural indicators in the 2006/07 triennial user satisfaction survey have improved from the last survey (library users able to find a book or information, satisfaction with sports and leisure, libraries and parks and open spaces). Resident satisfaction with libraries overall and with arts activities and venues has fallen. User satisfaction with libraries has also fallen by 2 per cent in line with national trends.

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

- 77 Economic impact research shows that that the Council has been effective in achieving an increase in economic vitality through tourism with a 4 per cent increase in visitors and a 2 per cent increase in revenue over the period between 2004/05 and 2005/06.
- 78 The Council is able to demonstrate improvements in value for money in cultural services, for example:
- through training and empowering local friends groups to deliver activities, such as friends of parks delivering basketball training;
  - efficiency savings on book procurement through the Greater Manchester Book Purchasing Consortium;
  - using cultural services to draw in a substantial level of external funding (over £1.3 million in 2004/05 and £1.2 million in 2005/06);
  - a review of parks and open spaces has identified savings of £1.3 million over three years which the service is on target to meet; and
  - the transfer of leisure centre management to the community leisure trust resulted in financial savings and increased use of facilities.

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

- 79 The Council is good at performance management overall, and has a clear vision for the future of its cultural services which is articulated through the community plan and the local area agreement (LAA). The Council has a good understanding of the contribution cultural services can make to delivering priorities of the LAA and community plan. Cultural services have a significant role in delivering stretch targets for children and young people and health and older people. They also link to other theme areas, for example there are plans in place to address domestic violence using theatre based activities. The LAA provides the council with a measurable framework against which it can assess the success of its activities.
- 80 Cultural services have effective performance monitoring arrangements with performance monitored against national and local performance indicators. Performance management is not yet underpinned by comprehensive baseline information that informs service planning and target-setting across all areas of cultural services. However a residents' survey in summer 2007 will provide baseline information about resident satisfaction and usage of facilities. A strong focus on continuous improvement is in place. Each service area has a rolling three-year service improvement plan with annually-established priorities. Service improvement plans are monitored quarterly by corporate directors. All staff have personal review and development plans which are linked to service priorities.

- 81 A new corporate approach to service improvement planning links future service outcomes to corporate and community outcomes. The Council understands the needs of different neighbourhoods in the borough and has clear aims to narrow the gap between affluent and deprived communities. Service improvement plans for 2006/07 reflect the need to develop cohesive communities for the future. Risks are identified and managed through the Service Improvement Planning process. Directorate and Service Improvement Plans also reflect the service contribution to the sustainability agenda and future planned activity, together with a section devoted to Equality and Diversity, and the priority action, target groups and outcomes expected.
- 82 Cultural services have realistic future plans to drive improvement for local people, for example:
- the Council is maximising on the opportunities that bringing the BBC into the area can offer. It has major public realm enhancements planned and plans for tourism within Trafford that, if successful, would help to significantly improve the local environment and the quality of life of local people and visitors;
  - future plans for LGG are ambitious but realisable for providing local people with skills to access jobs in 'media city'. LGG has been successful in being identified as a local community partner with the BBC. As a result of this it will be able to access skills training and employment opportunities for local people; and
  - the Council's future plans for parks are aimed at ensuring that all parks will benefit from the council's investment. It is not planned to maintain all 14 green flag parks recognising that better use of these resources could be made to improve those of lesser quality. As a result more people within the community can benefit from improved parks and open spaces.
- 83 However, in other areas, such as the WAC, which is a relatively new facility, the Council's full vision is yet to be developed. The WAC potentially has a role to play in supporting the economic regeneration of Sale town centre as well as providing services targeted at deprived neighbourhoods across Trafford. The Council acknowledges that it needs to demonstrate the role of the WAC in delivering the Council's key priorities and objectives.
- 84 Cultural services have tools to deliver improvement in meeting efficiency targets and value for money. There is a dedicated budget monitoring system and variances over £5,000 are investigated and explained by budget holders. Remedial actions are put in place if necessary, for example income targets for libraries and the WAC will be amended next year to allow for changes in service provision which have made current targets unachievable. The WAC is maximising use of the centre and improving its approach to value for money with a better focus on reducing risk. It has done this through ensuring risks are borne by promoters for music and comedy events and through improved management of invoicing and hire arrangements. This approach means that it is likely to reach its income generation target in the coming year.

- 85 Political leadership of cultural services is strong, with members providing effective challenge. Members provide challenge to the executive member and service managers for culture and sport through the policy group before policies are taken to full Council meetings. For example discussion of the library strategy led to better use of the Greater Manchester book purchasing consortium, increased library automation and stopped the abuse of library services (photocopying) by other council services. In addition, the library reorganisation was called to scrutiny, but was accepted with no library closures; the policy group attributes this to their pre-emptive challenge of the policy before it went to scrutiny.
- 86 Cultural services do not have systems in place to enable them to learn from experience or external good practice. For example sharing of learning for community learning services is undeveloped; with the exception of libraries the service does not benchmark its performance with other Greater Manchester councils. Good practice in using new media to communicate and consult is used by LGG but is not currently applied across other services. This means that the service is unable to fully evaluate its own strengths and weaknesses and use knowledge to inform future planning. The Council does, however share its learning with other authorities; it is actively sharing the good practice established through LGG, by supporting other local authorities in developing similar schemes and rolling out the model to other greater Manchester councils. There is commitment to using new media more widely in the Council.

### **Does the service have the capacity to improve?**

- 87 The Council is increasing its capacity to improve. It has an adequate MTFP which matches resources to services, and has appointed performance partners to examine how it can further improve services and generate efficiencies. It uses innovative procurement processes, engages with partners on a strategic level to ensure new cultural services come to the borough, and officers have close business relationships with portfolio holders.
- 88 The Council is proactive in maximising resources to deliver services. It has developed a commissioning approach for delivering community learning programmes and is integrating sports development staff with the Leisure trust to ensure sustainability, strategic direction and better use of resources. Services are innovative in the way they ensure they have sufficient resources. For example, cultural services use community groups to increase their capacity to deliver services. Friends of parks groups hold events in parks; the Stamford Park bridge opening ceremony was organised and run by the friends group with support from the Council and the fire service. Friends groups also talk to park users and therefore make parks seem more safe, friendly and welcoming.
- 89 Cultural services work effectively in partnership with VCAT (voluntary community action Trafford) to increase the capacity of the community and voluntary sector to provide and sustain cultural services. The Council is unable to provide a large financial contribution to the voluntary and community sector, but instead invests staff time and energy. Examples include its participation in the cultural partnership and its contribution to 'cash for action' days where community groups are invited to identify opportunities for potential joint working, and bid for funding.

- 90 Cultural services currently have the people and skills they need to deliver services. Culture staff and managers are dedicated and passionate about service delivery and committed and positive about making a difference to the lives of Trafford communities. Training and development is well resourced and linked to the Personal Review and Development Process (PRDP). Management development training within the parks and green space services has resulted in service improvements. All managers have received leadership training, including consultation skills, which have resulted in identification of efficiencies such as improved recycling. Sickness absence is low within culture and sport services, at less than four days a year.
- 91 Workforce planning is at an early stage; services have baseline data but are not able to predict future skills needs as this will be affected by corporate work currently underway with the Council's performance partner. This means that the Council cannot at this stage know that it has the right staff with the right skills to deliver its ambitions around cultural services. A management skills audit, in conjunction with a new workforce plan, will result in a management development programme being in place by spring 2008.
- 92 The Council is improving leadership capacity through a joint councillor officer leadership development programme. Events take place across the authority and include coaching and peer support. Staff have identified opportunities to improve customer services and community cohesion.
- 93 Cultural assets are well managed and are used effectively towards achieving service aims. Asset management objectives include the development of libraries as centres for lifelong learning, the development of sports, leisure, arts and museum facilities, investment in parks to achieve green flag status and investment and encouraging awareness of heritage assets.
- 94 The Council uses integrated facilities and partnership working in order to improve access to services and rationalise its assets. Examples include libraries in leisure centres and integrated facilities. The old Trafford one stop shop combines a library, community centre and other facilities. Altrincham Trafford direct combines a library, tourist information centre, Citizen's Advice Bureau, hub office and community room.
- 95 Cultural services have a good track record of attracting external investment for capital and revenue projects. It maximises opportunities to lever in external investment through good use of its cultural assets such as Old Trafford, the Imperial War Museum and Trafford Park. It engages well with partners to ensure that local issues are addressed and additional resources are generated. This has resulted in successfully attracting new businesses into the area and stimulating the local economy. This is also so for smaller scale projects, for example grants from the New Opportunities Fund for establishing learning centres, Stretford Youth Theatre grant for a youth performing arts programme, and contributions from local rugby clubs for a rugby development officer post. This supplements internal funding in order to improve service provision.

- 96 Cultural services have a strong working relationship with regional tourism organisations, including Marketing Manchester; one of five sub-regional tourist boards for the North West, and the regional tourism forum, of which Trafford's tourism management development officer is the chair. The Council's chief executive is the AGMA lead on tourism. This means that the Council is influential in exploiting the tourism potential of the local area. It is investing in joint ventures which will contribute to improved tourism and economic development in the borough and Greater Manchester. In particular The Quays, a joint venture between Trafford and Salford which includes the BBC's new media village, will increase the tourism offer already present at the Quays.