

Priority 1: A clean and green environment

What we aim to do:

Our commitment to the environment includes keeping the streets clean, recycling more rubbish and reducing carbon emissions. We will protect our existing green spaces in urban and rural areas, whilst continuing to invest to create parks that can be enjoyed by all. We want to create an environment where people have opportunities to take more exercise to improve their health and wellbeing. We seek to plan and deliver our services in a sustainable way to protect the environment for current and future generations.

How well are we doing?

Outlined below is performance against the 4 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'clean and green environment' priority. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'green' as progress has been made to sustain our capacity to deliver an improved environment. Performance on 8 key performance indicator measures of success can be reported this quarter – all 8 have achieved or performed above target and are rated green.

Outcome: Manage, protect, conserve and invest in our open spaces to create parks that can be enjoyed by all

We achieved our target of three green flags during 2009/10. Following the achievement of our third green flag at Hillyfields reported earlier this year, preparations are being made to re-accredit the green flags at Hillyfields, the Vine and Riverside Country Park, and to apply for additional green flags at Broomhill Park and Capstone Park next year. In addition, £300,000 has been secured for improvements at Capstone Park and £500,000 has been secured in partnership with Plantlife for improvements at Ranscombe Farm Country Park. This will be used for accessibility improvements and further land acquisition. The 2009 resident's opinion poll showed an improvement in satisfaction with open spaces from 71% to 73% since the last opinion poll in 2006.

Satisfaction with play areas from the TellUs children's survey has improved by 10% to 50.8% this year, but is still behind the South East average of 56%. However, the Resident's Opinion Poll of people over the age of 16 shows that satisfaction with play areas has declined slightly since the last opinion poll in 2006, from 56% to 53%. To improve this, this year we planned to use Playbuilder and National Lottery funding to refurbish 11 play areas. Of these, 2 were completed by 31st March, the delay in finishing the work in the other areas was caused by ground conditions due to the difficult weather conditions. An extension was agreed by Play England and by early May a further 8 play areas were completed and opened and the final one will be completed by the beginning of June 2010. For 2010/11 we have allocated £66k to provide play equipment for disabled children, to be targeted on the basis of need in local areas.

Outcome: Manage Medway's waste sustainably and reduce waste sent to landfill.

The target for the year for the amount of waste sent to landfill and for energy recovery is 818 kg per household, equivalent to 68kg per month. By the end of the year, Medway was achieving a provisional 716kg or 60kg per month. Whilst this is likely to be in part due to the economic recession, it also reflects the impact of various initiatives, including the Love Food Hate Waste campaign and Christmas campaign. The Waste Minimisation Team have also won a prestigious Green Apple award for increasing the availability of doorstep recycling to homes where normal recycling facilities are not viable. In addition, residents can also recycle more at our bring sites this year, including the introduction of waste electronics and book banks, implemented at no cost to the council. While satisfaction is high with refuse collection and recycling and targets are being met national comparisons show average performance. In part this is due to the 12 month delay in the introduction of the new waste contract. The contract will increase types of recyclable waste collection including kitchen waste recycling which should make a difference to both refuse collected and reducing waste sent to landfill. The year end figure for the amount of waste sent to

landfill is, provisionally, at 716kg per household some 6% better than the 759kg seen last year and well inside the 818kg target. 2008/09 comparative information (latest available) shows that performance is just under unitary average which is 693kg per household.

The overall recycling rate for the year is provisionally on target at 33.6%, a slight improvement from 33.3% last year. This compares to a unitary average of 35.4%. Monitoring shows 76% of households participate in recycling with 38% classed as 'avid recyclers', recycling every week. The agreement at full Council in April of the collection and disposal contracts for household waste will permit service changes that are expected to increase recycling rates towards 40% by the end of the financial year 2010/11, which would bring Medway in line with national averages. The new contracts are expected to start in September 2010. Satisfaction with waste and recycling is high, with residents reporting 90% satisfied with refuse collection, and 85% satisfied with recycling facilities. 86% were satisfied our household waste & recycling centres.

Outcome: improving the local street scene

Street cleaning and cleanliness has previously been highlighted as an area of concern for residents, with satisfaction at just 55% in 2006, and the council has worked hard to tackle this since. Satisfaction has improved significantly to 74% in the latest 2009 poll. Improvements were made to the way street cleaning is done earlier this year, following the disappointing first set of street cleanliness results in July 2009. Teams now operate in two different ways, one focussing on street sweeping and one focussing on litter picking. Additional street cleaning areas have been included in the new contracts. As a result of these initiatives, street cleanliness results for the year show 5% of streets had unacceptable levels of litter, down from 8% in July, hitting our target and better than the unitary average of 6%. The proportion of streets with unacceptable levels of detritus has also fallen from 14% in July to 6% in March, giving an overall performance for the year of 8%, meeting our target and unitary average performance.

We continue to make progress on the reduction of flytipping, with the number of recorded incidents down from 4,061 last year to 3,897 this year. The 60% increase in enforcement activity (to 1,916 actions) has made a significant contribution to reduction. The proportion of streets with unacceptable levels of graffiti declined from 6% in July to 0% in March, giving an overall year average of 2%, achieving unitary top quartile performance and ahead of the 4% target. Flyposting is proactively monitored and removed as soon as it is reported so that flyposting does not feature as a problem in our street surveys. It has remained a consistent 0% throughout the year.

Outcome: reduce the carbon footprint and foster sustainable development in Medway

Latest figures (for 2008/09) were published during 2009/10, showing the council's carbon footprint on its own buildings to be 38735 tonnes, a reduction of 6% on the 2005 baseline. The government has also released the third report on the total carbon dioxide emissions for whole of the Medway area, and whilst relating to 2007, it is the most up to date information available. Performance has improved from 5.02 tonnes of carbon dioxide per head of population in 2005 to 4.89 tonnes per head of population in 2007, a reduction of 2.7%. Whilst positive, there is still some way to go to achieve the LAA target reduction of 13.9% by 2010. As part of the Multi Area Agreement signed in quarter 2, Medway has agreed a target to further reduce carbon emissions by 16.7% by 2014.

The breakdown of the area's carbon emissions, shows there has been an increase of 1% in emissions due to transport but a reduction of 2.8% in domestic reductions, an indication of the impact of the council's Medway Our Planet campaign to help residents reduce their energy bills and carbon emissions. This 3 year campaign has supported residents to install 6,638 home insulation measures, preventing 93,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide being released, surpassing our target of 82,000 tonnes.

Throughout the year, the authority has participated in the Energy Saving Trust's 1-1 support programme which supports the council in its community leadership role to reduce the carbon emissions. The Trust noted our strong progress to date, ranking us 5th out of 150 participating

authorities. The programme entered its action planning phase during the fourth quarter, focussing on those gaps in our current approach which offer the greatest opportunity to save carbon. This year two significant grants have been secured totalling £880,000 to work with businesses to reduce their ecological footprint. Community engagement work, targeted at those most vulnerable or at risk of fuel poverty, continues to help residents reduce their energy consumption. As a result the proportion of low income household living in homes with a high energy efficiency rating has increased from 20.9% to 24.6%, exceeding the target of 21%. However the proportion of low income households living in the lowest energy efficient rates homes has also increase from 10.2% to 13.4%, behind the target of 10.1%. These homes will be tackled through our 'In Focus' project to identify these homes and target improvements to their efficiency.

Medway's schools have been particularly actively involved in this work. In partnership with the charity Groundwork 61 (57%) of schools are taking part in the Eco Schools campaign. Of these, 42 schools have achieved awards. All new Medway schools are designed to achieve a sustainability standard of 'very good' and every school in Medway is using the recycling service.

Summary

Highlights:

- Residual waste sent to landfill has reduced to 12% below target
- Satisfaction with street cleanliness significantly improved.
- Improved young people's satisfaction with play facilities.

Areas requiring development / key risks

- Continue to increase recycling in the coming year to 40% by end 2010/11.

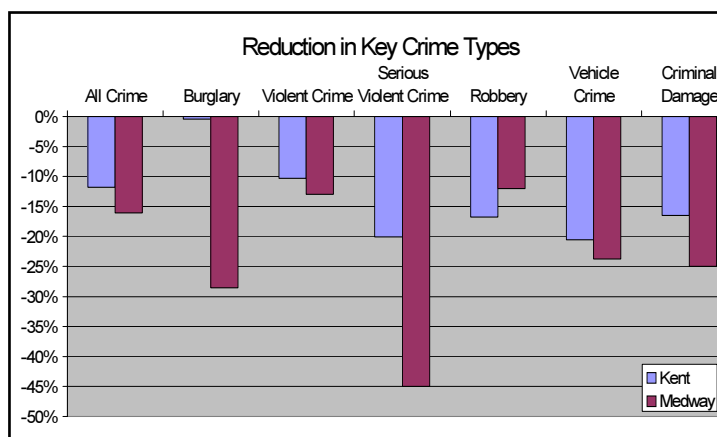
Priority 2: Safer communities

We want people to be safe in Medway, and as important, to feel safe. Medway residents' perceptions of safety lag behind the actual levels of crime and disorder and we want to change that so people feel safe and confident. The council has an important contribution to make, working in partnership with the police, to reduce crime and the causes of crime, and increase confidence and pride in the area. We will continue to work in partnership with the police, focussing on tackling serious violence, reducing antisocial behaviour and reducing domestic violence. We want to build safe, strong and cohesive communities.

How well are we doing it?

Outlined below is performance against the 5 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'safer communities' priority. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as green. Performance on 7 key performance indicator measures of success can be reported this quarter – 6 (86%) have achieved or performed above target and 1 (14%) is below the annual target but within acceptable variance limits.

Overall crime rates, as reported by the police, have dropped by 16.1% for the year when comparing to the previous year, exceeding the drop seen in Kent of 10.9%. This includes a drop in burglary of 28.6%, serious violent crime down by almost a half and robbery down by over 15%.



Outcome: build strong communities by improving community cohesion

One million pounds of external funding has been secured to support a programme of community cohesion, designed to assist the integration of new migrant communities and to achieve closer understanding and stronger relations between communities from different backgrounds in the Luton and All Saints neighbourhoods of Medway. This is a new programme of activity, which will continue to be delivered to the end of March 2011. The programme will be used to:

- Deliver cultural awareness training to both new migrants and existing communities, service providers and employers so that they understand each other's cultural identities and the protocols of daily living in Medway.
- Set up evening youth development programmes for young people from both the existing community and new migrants
- Provide advice to private landlords and to tenants from migrant communities to ensure that housing standards are being adhered to.
- Deliver English language training to new migrants and to train new migrants as qualified interpreters to improve communication with new migrants
- Deliver a survey of residents to ascertain the extent which people from different backgrounds get on well together and to identify corresponding improvements.
- Support the integration of migrant pupils at Medway Community College.

The council has also secured external central government funding to support the PREVENT (preventing violent extremism) agenda. An important part of this work has been an independent assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of communities in Medway.

Outcome: reduce antisocial behaviour, criminal damage and youth crime

The perception of antisocial behaviour being a problem is 8% according to the Kent Crime and Victimization survey, down from 15% in September 2008, slightly higher than for Kent as a whole at 6%. Within this, 'teenagers hanging around' and 'rubbish and litter lying round' are the most common types of antisocial behaviour viewed as a problem. Five school attendance sweeps have been undertaken in partnership with the Kent Police, resulting 13 children being returned to school. Diversionary activities are key to reducing antisocial behaviour, and partnership work with the police as resulted in a ball park in Wayfield.

The council monitors the 417 CCTV cameras in Medway. These are a useful tool in assisting the policing of public areas such as detecting vehicle crimes, violent crimes and criminal damage. Similarly the 'alleygating' programme supports the numbers of repeat crimes in areas residents feel are unsafe.

111 young people were involved in the youth justice system, bringing the 2009/10 year total to 428. Whilst these figures are still provisional, they are ahead of the target of 514 and the youth offending team is on target to achieve the reoffending target of less than 3.5%. Early intervention for young people at risk of criminal activity is an important element of prevention. This has been achieved through successful Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes (ISSP) and also intensive work with, and support for, parents and families. There have been 12 referrals (high risk clients) for ISSP this Quarter, bringing the total to 29 for the year. The number of young people receiving custodial sentences is reducing and just four young people involved in the Youth Inclusion and Support Panel went on to receive final warnings or court appearances.

The developing work of the Medway Family Intervention Project (FIP) will start to reduce the impact of anti-social behaviour, with Luton & Wayfield, Gillingham North and Chatham Central being wards in which work will be targeted. The FIP is also placed under the management of the YOT. The participation of the YOT within the Medway Anti Social Behaviour Forum, has also lead to the promotion of Acceptable Behaviour Agreements as opposed to ASBO's and a targeting of resources on a minority of problematic young people and adults to reduce overall levels of anti social behaviour and crime.

Outcome: reduce repeat occurrences of violent crime, such as repeat offenders, location and victims

There has been a slight increase in the rate of repeat incidents of domestic violence over the course of the year, from 41.7% in 2008/9 to 44.9% this year. The housing solutions service has secured £45,000 of funding to provide an independent domestic violence advice service. This means victims are able to access domestic abuse advice, information and advocacy services through a number of different methods. This year 44 households were given assistance to prevent homelessness due to domestic abuse, and 400 households were given advice. 56 households were referred to sanctuary schemes, and 82% of these referrals were provided with a safe refuge to live.

High risk domestic abuse cases are managed through the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process which ensures a coordinated response by all agencies involved in a case by case basis. Nearly 11% of cases managed through MARAC are repeat victims – this compares to 23% nationally. Lower risk cases are tackled through the Domestic Abuse forum. The council is looking to review and develop this area of work over the next year.

The re-offending rate for prolific and priority offenders is down by 65% when compared to the same period in the previous year, comparing well to the target reduction of a 25% This has been achieved through the multi-agency Integrated Offender Management Unit, which has targeted those few repeat offenders that disproportionately commit the majority of crime and breaking the link between drugs and crime, combined with the drug treatment successes explained below. This

has been noted as an area of strength for the community safety partnership and has been recognised by a Green Flag by the Audit Commission in the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Outcome: reduce substance misuse including alcohol

Overall for the year 17 test purchase operations involving 28 illegal sales were conducted these have been dealt with through the use of Fixed Penalty Notices and formal advise to licensed premises. Six Members of the Trading Standards Team are now trained and accredited to give penalty charge notices for underage sales of alcohol. All 57 licensing applications were considered within timescales this year.

Evidence suggests that our alcohol control zones are having a positive effect this year, with the perception of drunk and rowdy behaviour as being a problem dropping from 19.2% last year to 16% this year, according to the Kent Crime and Victimization Survey. Perception of drug dealing as being a problem has also reduced from 19.3% to 14.0%.

This year saw the launch of a specific Drug and Alcohol Action Team for Medway. Previously the service had been delivered on a Kent wide basis. The latest data for the number of clients in effective treatment at the end of the year was 700, exceeding the target 2620 comfortably. This figure represents a 15.5% increase against the 2007/8 baseline figure, and is 8.2% above the national average. In part this is due to good performance in waiting times, with 97% accessing treatment within 3 weeks, which is essential to ensuring drug users are treated whilst their often chaotic lifestyle permits. In addition all new clients have had a care plan in place consistently through the year. The Safe Exit Scheme has targeted those involved in prostitution to tackle their drug addiction, and whilst only introduced in January, achieved some good earlier outcomes for its clients.

There are currently 82 young people in drug and alcohol treatment, 67 of which are under 18. There were 51 referrals into specialist treatment for young people's substance misuse. Medway's most common referral route into treatment (49%) is from criminal justice services via the Youth Offending Team.

Outcome: reduce the fear of crime and improve public confidence

From the Kent Crime and Victimization survey, the proportion of people who feel safe in the daytime is 97%, and at night is 63% which compares with the Kent wide average of 98% and 67% respectively. However, results from the Tell Us survey of children and young people are lower at 77% feeling safe. This is an improvement from 68% last year, and a reduction in the gap with the national average from 7% to 3%, although the question was asked slightly differently last year.

The proportion of people who think that the Council and Police are dealing with the issues that matter in the area is 72%, which has remained steady throughout they year. The council's Residents' Opinion Poll has shown a 64% satisfaction level for the Safer Communities Team, a 30% increase from the 2006 ROP

To provide a visible presence to improve feelings of safety the safer community officers are linked to neighbourhoods covering the whole of Medway. In addition to this in conjunction, with the police and other partners, the council has been involved in a number of high profile projects focused on geographical locations such as Gillingham High Street. Another successful operation involved the Environmental Enforcement Team, Safer Communities, The UK Border Agency, Kent Police and Trading standards. In all over 100 properties were visited and resulted in several arrests being made, action being taken against inappropriate uses of non-residential accommodation by Kent Fire Rescue Service and the identification of Houses of Multiple Occupation and residential accommodation. This approach is now being rolled out across a wider area with plans to repeat throughout the next 12months.

Important in improving confidence is the council's role in improving the local street scene, clean and tidy streets look and feel safer for residents. In addition the first phase of a marketing

campaign - 'with you every step of the way' was carried out and ran in conjunction with the Kent Police campaign 'You said we did'. Both were aimed at increasing feelings of safety to match the reductions in crime levels noted above. The Community Safety Partnership website has been re-launched and includes a blog by the chair of the partnership so that residents and partners can keep up to date with developments. Operation Vision has also been conducted in 3 wards this quarter, delivering reassurance visits, carrying out environmental audits and monitoring, to address the priorities raised at the Community Safety Partnership day held earlier in the year and the Partners And Communities Together meetings.

Summary

Highlights:

- Crime levels have fallen for key crime types
- Reoffending rate of prolific and priority offenders down by two thirds
- Perception of antisocial behaviour as a problem down by 7%.
- Reduction in perception of drugs and alcohol as being a problem

Areas requiring development / key risks

- Review domestic abuse service to ensure they are best meeting the needs of residents.
- Continue to increase feelings of safety to improve performance in crime levels.

Priority 3: Children and young people having the best start in life

What we aim to do:

We want children and young people in Medway who are:

- safe and cared for,
- succeed in learning and
- thrive.

This will be championed by a confident and competent workforce and we will have arrangements in place to ensure:

- effective safeguarding
- integrated services and support
- timely and targeted interventions

How well are we doing?

Outlined below is performance against the 4 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'children and young people having the best start in life' priority. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'green'. Performance on 42 key performance indicator measures of success can be reported at the year end – 19 (45%) have achieved or performed above target (rated green), 5 (12%) are below the annual target but within acceptable variance limits (rated amber), and 18 (43%) have performed below the target and are rated red.

Outcome: Children and young people are safe & cared for

Children's care services in Medway, as in other areas of the country, have faced a challenging year as the number of referrals made to them has continued to rise following Baby Peter's death in Haringey and the Laming report on the state of child protection services in England, published in early 2009. Over the year referrals were up by 13%, there was an increase of 30% in the number of vulnerable children becoming subject to child protection plans, with the result that the total number subject to plans had increased by the end of the year by 39% to 238 children. The number of looked after children totalled 350 by the end of the year, an increase of 13%. The caseload increase does not yet appear to be abating, either locally or nationally, as March saw the highest number of monthly referrals ever experienced in Medway, generally referrals are increasing in volume and complexity.

The council's approach this year has had two strands:

1. to ensure children's safety is not compromised by the increases in caseloads we have reconfigured existing resources and devoted extra resources to the children's services who support the most vulnerable children in greatest need:
 - An extra £700k was invested in three senior social workers and 10 family support workers as well as 3 additional administrative support to minimise social workers' time spent on administration. This has given additional capacity but we are still experiencing challenges in recruiting permanent social work staff. We are using interim support which is not desirable in anything other than the short term. More recruitment is currently taking place.
 - Based on a locality assessment of levels of need across Medway, we realigned the boundaries of the integrated area teams to ensure need and caseload was supported by appropriate staff resources.
2. With partners in the Children's Trust, we are developing a preventative strategy which will be agreed next financial year aiming to work with children and families to prevent their needs escalating to a higher level.

We assess our own effectiveness in safeguarding children through regular quality assurance, case file audits and supervision. We also look at the timeliness of key processes which we follow to assess the risk to children and respond to their needs. We are currently developing mechanisms

for gathering feedback from children and young people, carers and professionals on their satisfaction with and views on the effectiveness of our safeguarding activity.

The council will take whatever action is required to ensure children's safety. We had agreed an Local Area Assessment target aiming to make children subject to a child protection for a second time in no more than 14% of cases. This year 45 of the 260 children who became subject to a plan had had one to protect them previously – 18%. This is higher than the 10.5% for 2008/9 but all cases have been analysed and we believe decision making to remove the initial plan and subsequently start another was the safest course of action for the children concerned.

Stability of placements for our looked after children is an important factor contributing to longer term positive outcomes. Stability remains very good with 80% of looked after children in the same placement for more than 2 years. Another key outcomes for children leaving care is their ability to continue into employment, education or training. 17 children out of 34 of the appropriate age group are currently in employment, education or training – this equates to 50%. Placing young people has been made more difficult by the recession, but the council is encouraging looked after young people into its own apprenticeship scheme, is increasing the number of care leavers with personal advisers, and developing a pre-apprenticeship course to help young people get prepared for work.

Over the year there has been a 24.4% increase in the number of initial assessments completed compared to 2008/09 and a 7.8% increase in the number of core assessments. Overall performance on timeliness of key processes has been affected by this increased workload. We have not met our targets on 4 out of 6 timeliness indicators (see appendix). The focus on initial assessments is very important because it identifies whether a child is at risk and what level of further assessment is needed. Timeliness of initial assessments has improved to 78% from 73% at the end of 2008/9. Although the focus should remain on initial assessment, the council remains equally concerned about the timeliness of core assessments. These should help to determine whether children need high level support. The percentage completed within the target 35 days reached a low of just over 55.5% in October. While the additional investment in staffing and reconfiguration of team boundaries has helped to drive improvement, with year end performance at 70%, we are performing below the target we had set ourselves. The current climate of increased referrals continues to impact significantly on our ability to meet timescales. The result of this is that sustaining improvement is challenging and performance in the last two months of the year has dipped. We will continue to monitor our performance closely in the coming months and anticipate that this, coupled with the nationally extended timescales for completing initial assessments, will help to improve core assessments completed to time. To give capacity to improve timeliness of other key processes, at budget setting for 2010/11 a further £96k was allocated for a childcare lawyer and to increase capacity to chair reviews for looked after children and child protection conferences which will help to increase timeliness in those areas.

In addition to our monitoring we also had an unannounced inspection by Ofsted of the council's contact, referral and assessment arrangements in the last quarter of the year. It reported in February 2010. This type of inspection identifies areas of strength, areas for development, and, where there are weaknesses – areas for priority action. Three areas of strength were identified – importantly, the management response to (previous) inspection and audit resulting in significant improvements, good staff commitment and morale, and professional support and supervision for staff.

There were areas for development which included the timeliness of core assessments, recording children's views expressed in reviews, ensuring services meet cultural, religious and ethnic needs and staff shortages and the use of temporary staff, although the inspectors noted that the council had taken steps to address this. There were no areas for priority action. Improvement plans on the areas identified have already been put in place.

The council is a key member of the Medway Safeguarding Children Board. Under guidance of the new independent chair (the second independent chair), in the latter part of 2009/10 the Board has developed a new set of strategic aims for 2010/13:

- to ensure the effectiveness of the work of local partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- to ensure the co-ordination of local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- to promote continuous learning and development of staff working to safeguard children
- to promote the well-being of vulnerable groups of children.

The Board received feedback from Ofsted in January 2010 on its first serious case review which was completed in July 09. The review was judged to be 'good'. A multi agency improvement plan has been put in place to ensure lessons are learnt. These include ensuring all professionals working with adults also take account of needs and potential risks to children.

Providing good quality residential care for children and young people is important in enhancing their life chances. During the last year two inspections have taken place. In June 2009, Old Vicarage received an Ofsted inspection and was rated "Good". A follow-up inspection in October 2009 occurred whilst the residents and staff were relocated to temporary accommodation whilst building work was being undertaken. Despite the relocation, the team maintained their grades on all inspected criteria. All recommendations from the inspections have been actioned. The young people and staff are now back in their newly refurbished and extended home.

Aut Even Community and Respite Centre was inspected in April 2009 and achieved an overall "Satisfactory" rating. A key issue preventing a "Good" grading was that at the time there was no unit manager in post. A new unit manager came into post in January 2010 and all recommendations from the inspection have now been actioned.

Outcome: Children and young people succeed in learning

We measure success on this outcome through children's attainment results and standards in schools. Attainment results in 2009 were mixed. The improvement trend in GCSE and foundation stage was sustained, and these results compare favourably with national results, but key stage 2 results were very disappointing. As a result we have reviewed how we prioritise the level of support and challenge offered to schools by our School Improvement partners and the wider team making sure the support given is tailored to need. The type of support offered include: 1-2-1 tuition funding; the improving schools programme; generic personal development packages; specialist consultancy for particular groups of learners; and induction training for newly qualified teachers, head teachers and deputy head teachers. A rigorous target setting process has taken place starting from individual pupils and aggregating up to school and the local authority.

More generally, the council has put in place a range of strategies to improve primary school performance. In order to reduce the number of transitions children make between schools, which can impact on their achievement levels, the council has been consulting on closure and amalgamation of some infant and primary schools. Consultations on closures are now complete, and Cabinet decided two closures, although one of these has been referred to the adjudicator. The statutory notice periods have ended for all 7 amalgamation proposals. No objections have been raised for four of these, but the remaining three have been referred to the adjudicator.

The council has introduced a number of programmes to raise the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools, and more support is being given to improve the standards of teacher assessment. It has refocused its school improvement and advisory service to give greatest support and challenge to schools judged to be at greatest risk. Recent Ofsted monitoring visits have rated council support in raising achievement as effective. We also commissioned a review of improvement services by the National Strategies team. This took place in March 2010 and will report shortly. It identified as strengths the council's commitment to raising standards for children and schools, but said that building on our changes to date and in a tighter financial climate we need to focus even more on sustainable improvements including enhanced risk management of

schools' performance and tighter performance management of the school improvement partners to ensure their effectiveness.

Key stage 2 tests are taken in May, with provisional results known later in the year. External monitoring shows that there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in our most challenging schools.

In September 2009 a new Ofsted framework, which sets higher criteria to achieve satisfactory or better judgements was introduced. The introduction of this framework has led to a national increase in the proportion of schools in Ofsted categories. There were 5 primary phase schools in Ofsted categories at the end of 2009/10. This is too high, results from the most recent monitoring visits show a mixed picture for progress since inspection, with two out of four schools monitored achieving at least satisfactory progress and two inadequate progress at the first visit since inspection. Commentary on local authority support shows it to be well planned and is supporting schools to have an impact on their key issues. There were 2 secondary phase schools in Ofsted categories during 2009/10 however, by year end, one school was removed from special measure. Results from monitoring visits to the other school show progress to be good since the last visit.

Looking at achievement across all stages, we continue to develop children's centres which have contributed to raising foundation stage results, and particularly to closing the gap between the lowest performing children and Medway averages. At the end of the year, Medway had 19 Surestart children's centres. These provide full coverage for all of Medway. Unlike many other areas nationally this programme has been delivered to the planned timescale and significantly within budget.

To support standards at secondary levels this year has seen the council consult on an ambitious programme of work, one of the biggest in the country. By September 2010 five secondary schools will have closed and been replaced by three new academy schools. In order to sustain these schools and continue to raise standards the three schools are co-sponsored by the council and partners including Canterbury Christ Church University, University of the Creative Arts, University of Kent and the Church of England. Strood Academy opened in September 2009, and both Bishop of Rochester and Gillingham academies remain will to open in September 2010. Funding agreements are in place for the Brompton and Bishop of Rochester Academies.

Judgements on behaviour in schools to encourage and enable learning are moving in a positive direction, with a high proportion of schools rated good or better. At the start of the new academic year there was a 4-point increase in percentage of students remaining in full time education beyond the age of 16. To support this the diploma programme, aimed at giving young people alternatives to academic study, continues to expand with 13 available from September 2010 and a further two from September 2011. The proportion of young people achieving a level 3 qualification by age 19 has shown a steady increase to 43.7% from 41.2% two years ago, but short of the 48% target. Data suggests that children currently studying are already showing a strong improvement and will therefore show an increase towards the target when they filter into next year's results.

The council gives extra support to the most vulnerable children to help them achieve. However, the proportion of looked after children reaching level 4 at Key Stage 2 Maths has dropped from 37.5% to 25%, but with just 8 looked after children taking the tests this year, the difference represents one child, nevertheless the achievement of children in our care at each stage remains a priority. More positively 88% of looked after children made at least 2 levels of progress between Key Stages 1 and 2. In addition, the proportion of looked after children achieving 5 A*-C grades at GCSE including English and Maths has also fallen from 18.8% to 12.9%, behind the target of 25.9%. This is being tackled by increasing the number of children with quality Personal Educational Plans, as well as increasing take up of Personal Educational Allowances, which allow looked after children to access additional educational support.

We have developed the Special Educational Needs Strategy during 2009/10 to improve local provision for children with additional needs as well as encouraging children to continue in

mainstream education where this is appropriate. As local provision is developed fewer children will be placed in expensive, independent out of authority provision, meaning children can continue their education in the area where they have good, established, support networks.

Outcome: Children and young people thrive

The council's focus for this outcome over the past year has been on reducing risk factors that can prevent young people from thriving. These include reducing teen conceptions, reducing youth unemployment, ensuring young people with mental health problems have quick and easy access to services to meet their needs and providing young people with things to do – to keep them healthy and keep them out of trouble.

Reducing the level of teen conception remains one of the biggest challenges facing the council and its health partners. We have seen an improvement in the last year. Figures released by the Office of National Statistics in February 2010 show the teenage pregnancy rate in Medway fell by 8.7 per cent between 2007 and 2008. However, this remains 4.4% above the 1998 figure, which is the baseline figure the indicator is measured against. The data shows there were 238 conceptions (44.2 conceptions per 1000 girls aged 15-17 in Medway) in 2008 compared to 258 (or 48.4 per 1000 in the previous year). Our focus continues to be on information and advice to young people at greatest risk, including swift and easy access to contraceptive and sexual health services and improved relationship and sex education for young people.

We have achieved the PSA2 target for the proportion of 16-18 year olds not in education employment or training (NEETs) of 5.8% and the target for those young people for whom the destination is unknown of 6%. This is particularly encouraging given the recession and that just a year ago the figure for NEETs was 9.8%

Following the move to the single point of entry for children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) which has been piloted this year, clients are experiencing an improved initial response and all new cases are seen within 10 days. Referrals meeting Tier 2 criteria (targeted services for children who have moderate additional needs) have increased by 50% as a result of clients being referred to the most appropriate service to meet their needs. Those within Tier 2 thresholds are receiving an earlier service as a result, however there remain concerns regarding waiting times for specialist CAMHS services. CAMHS has significantly improved its score under the Vital signs indicator

During this year, Government Office for the South East have surveyed local authorities to identify the range of activities on offer in a particular week. In Medway this identified 220 youth groups offering 445 sessions and involving over 10,000 young people. Satisfaction with facilities for young people has seen a significant improvement from 35% to 52%, reflecting the work we have put into these areas.

Outcome: effective multi agency partnerships delivering improved outcomes for children

The Early Intervention Preventative Strategy for children's services continues to be developed and the specification has been agreed. A comprehensive needs assessment has been commissioned, in addition to a resource mapping exercise across the children's trust to map resources to priorities. The Trust is also piloting area based working in Luton and Wayfield, one of Medway's more deprived areas, to improve the quality and co-ordination of partnership working.

Work has continued throughout the year to implement the Common Assessment Framework, which ensures all vulnerable children are assessed in the same way and deciding how they should be met. This is aimed at better coordinating work between the different agencies that may be involved with a child's needs. This includes awareness and training for practitioners, briefings for headteachers and community health workers. In particular community groups have also been targeted for information about the CAF to ensure minority groups are aware of the changes.

Summary**Highlights:**

- Key Stage 4 performance continues to improve with 51.7% of students attaining 5A*-C including English and mathematics
- Teenage conception rates have reduced for the first time in 3 years – but we are not complacent and will continue to work to sustain this improvement

Areas requiring development / key risks

- The sustained increase in referrals to Children's Social Care continues to impact on performance. The safety of children is paramount for the council. We will continue to track the impact of the extra investment made to ensure necessary resources are focussed on this important priority.
- Performance at Key Stage 2 has dropped and is significantly below the England Average.
- Timely access to mental health services for young people with the highest level needs

Priority 4: Older and vulnerable people maintaining their independence

What we aim to do:

We aim to encourage and support healthy lifestyles and well being for all. We also aim to improve the quality of life for our residents. We have a key role to play in helping older and vulnerable people and their carers maintain their independence and exercise choice and control over their care. The safety of vulnerable adults is also a key priority for us.

Outcome: Transform our services in line with the principles of Putting People First to ensure people receive social care support in the way they choose

Outcome: Partnership working within Medway to deliver independence and choice to the customer

Outcome: Disabled people achieving economic wellbeing

Outcome: Maintain the safety and dignity of vulnerable adults

Outcome: Improve the health of Medway's residents and promote healthy lifestyles

Summary

Highlights:

Areas requiring development / key risks

Priority 5: People travelling easily and safely in Medway

What we aim to do:

We have a key role in supporting the development of a transport system that supports the planned physical and economic regeneration of Medway. Our focus is on tackling congestion, delivering improved public transport services, monitoring the condition of our roads, and encouraging alternatives to the car.

How well are we doing?

Outlined below is performance against the 2 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'people travelling easily and safely' priority. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'green' as progress has been made on key actions. Performance on 9 key performance indicator measures of success can be reported this quarter – 8 (89%) have achieved or performed above target (rated green) and 1 (11%) has performed below the target and is rated red.

The Local Transport Plan is our 16 year strategy for improving transport in Medway, sitting alongside the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Development Framework. It has been developed during the year and agreed by Cabinet for public consultation. Detailed work will now commence on 3 yearly Implementation Plans, to ensure delivery of the strategy. The final strategy and implementation plans will be agreed by Full Council by the end of the next financial year.

Outcome: limit the growth of traffic and tackle congestion, responding to the travel demands resulting from regeneration

We are investing in Medway's roads and transport infrastructure to ensure we can respond to travel demands resulting from regeneration. Such extensive works inevitably bring disruption which we have tried to minimise. We combine this with effective enforcement to reduce congestion.

This year has seen improvements to the Chatham road infrastructure, including the completion of the demolition of the Sir John Hawkins Way flyover. The construction of Waterfront Way is almost complete and proposed to be opened in May 2010. Plans for the bus facility are behind schedule due to scheme changes before securing planning consent. However, planning permission has now been given and it is expected that the contractor will be able to reduce the delay once they are appointed. The redevelopment of the bus facility has been controversial but is essential to deliver transport improvements and pave the way for the redevelopment of the Pentagon Centre. The improvements already underway have resulted in a major food store registering initial interest in investment and location to Chatham.

The Council has secured £4.9 million funding from the Department of Transport for improvements for the Medway Tunnel, including the upgrade of CCTV and environmental management systems. The contract has been awarded and test trials are underway for the systems. This is in addition to the almost £5m secured following the transferral of ownership of the Tunnel from the Rochester Bridge Trust to Medway Council at the start of the year for ongoing maintenance costs.

The council continues to ensure that, where appropriate, developers make contributions to support the delivery of good roads and infrastructure to support Medway's regeneration. Over £2m has been secured this year from such contributions

On site works commenced at the Fenn Corner section of the A228, following submission of the planning application and appointment of the contractor earlier in the year. It is due to be completed by July 2010. For the Stoke Crossing improvements, the National Grid have been granted planning permission for commercial space on their land, also giving S106 contributions towards

the improvements. Developers are required to contribute to the costs of putting infrastructure and public services in place.

Following the £1m secured for developments at the CEMEX facility at Halling and at Municipal Buildings earlier this year, an additional £100,000 has been secured for public realm improvements at Knight Road, Strood, and £180,000 to contribute to a new Park and Ride Facility in Strood and £80K for rail station improvements in Halling.

To reduce congestion and make it safe for people to travel in and around Medway active parking enforcement though sometimes unpopular is essential. A second parking enforcement CCTV vehicle was purchased in spring 2009 to provide a more cost effective and flexible enforcement tool for the highways. Together both vehicles have issued a total of 6593 Parking Charge Notices for this quarter and our foot patrol officers has issued a total of 4631 PCNs, a total of 11224 PCNs overall. The year total is 51931, an increase of 9.5% from last year. The service has won a National Parking award for the best street enforcement team. Improved online access to parking services are being developed, including permit applications, and the ability to view parking contravention photos online, reducing the amount of appeals.

The project to improve Gillingham station is progressing to improve the approach to the station, with prior approval being submitted to Medway Council as planning authority. Contractual agreements are being finalised, with an anticipated completion date of March 2011.

Following installation of new monitoring equipment in the first half of the year, journey times in Chatham town centre remain below 4 minutes per mile, but peaked at 3.94 minutes in January, although this could be related to bad weather. By March, it had dropped back to 3.56 minutes. However, a full year's baseline is yet to be established for this indicator, and seasonal variations may yet affect the outcome. The scoping phase for Urban Traffic Management Control system is complete and approved by the procurement board. The system will link all traffic systems together with real time monitoring of traffic flows to allow the proactive management of congestion. The delivery plan for this project has now been prepared, with a completion date of March 2011.

Data on the condition of roads in Medway shows a further decline in the proportion of roads requiring maintenance, with only 4% of principal roads requiring work, which is a decline from 5% last year and a continuous decline from 8% in 2006/7, reflecting the additional resources put into this area. The proportion of Non principal classified roads (i.e. 'B' and 'C' roads) has remained static at 11%. This is positive given the adverse weather in this winter, which would have been expected to affect road quality. Note that the additional resources would not be expected to affect the non-principal classified figure, since most work on non-principal roads has been carried out on un-classified roads to date. However, in the new financial year, further B and C roads will be included as maintenance work progresses. This has been indicated in survey results, with residents satisfaction low, but improving this area, reflecting the increased investment we put forward in the last council plan, with satisfaction rising from 38% to 44% over the last 3 years.

The Highways Service was severely stretched during the early part of the year due to adverse weather and this impacted on highway condition and the repair process is still ongoing. Closer management of the contractor is being achieved through performance targets for the contractor being set, and 3 out of four being achieved, the remaining one improving to on target by the end of the year. Customer satisfaction surveys are being conducted following 54 footway schemes and 49 carriageway improvements this year, showing an overall 77% satisfaction rate. The council is also conducting a thorough inventory of all its highway assets, and once collected this data will be used within the CONFIRM system to better manage and maintain the highways.

The transport procurement unit (TPU) manages a range transport services for which the council is responsible, including adult social care minibuses, yellow school buses and subsidised routes. Satisfaction surveys with these routes conducted this year indicates 87% of users say the service is of good quality and meets their needs, and 88% say the staff are polite and friendly. 79% considered it was easy to use the buses and 76% said they were clean. Since it's introduction in

September 2003 the numbers of Yellow Buses has increased from two buses to seven buses. Three new buses procured have also increased in size and have 70 seats. A particular success has been the number of children's use of concessionary transport, where use is increasing steadily. Figures for this year are not yet available but between 2008 and 2009 the number of half fare tickets issued rose from 29,776 to 87,862.

Outcome: keep people safe on our roads and reduce the number killed and seriously injured in road crashes

Road Safety has been extended to the youngest children through the Clever Feet programme for infant school children, in the form of a learning pack and CD Rom for teachers. 40 walking bus routes are in place, up from 36 at the beginning of the year, involving over 740 children and 23 schools are signed up to the Green Footsteps initiatives.

The target for the number of killed and seriously injured on Medway roads was 77 for the year, and year end showed 73, and a reduction from 81 last year. Young people aged 17-24 remain over-represented in accident figures, and are a target group for road safety campaigns. The License to Kill theatre production aimed at getting 16-18 year olds to consider the impacts of dangerous driving has been delivered to over 2000 Medway pupils this year. Partnership with BAe systems has delivered road safety awareness education to 34 young employees. Other campaigns include our Christmas anti drink-drive campaign, and the Be-Bright, Be Seen competition to raise awareness amongst children of being visible in the darker winter months.

Summary

Highlights:

- Data for the average journey time per mile remains within the LAA target.
- £4.9m secured for improvements to Medway Tunnel
- Chatham Road infrastructure projects continue on track, to support delivery of the wider regeneration of Chatham,

Areas requiring development / key risks

- Maintaining investment in roads and pavements
- Improvement plans to the Chatham Road network impacting on congestion over the next 12 months

Priority 6: Everyone benefiting from the area's regeneration

What we aim to do:

We remain committed to developing the area so that all residents, businesses and visitors can benefit from regeneration, with social and economic regeneration and protection of heritage and the environment accompanying physical change.

How well are we doing it?

Although the council is responding well, the economic recession is still impacting on this regeneration priority. The impact is particularly felt in terms of the pace of delivery of the regeneration performance, the social and economic impact on residents and the affect on council income in terms of numbers of people unemployed, claiming benefits and requiring housing support.

Following the positive Regeneration Inspection the council continues to implement the improvements identified. The particular focus has been ensuring services can demonstrate the difference that is being made and improving the way we communicate with residents so that they are aware of the changes and benefits for the area. We are now tracking residents' perceptions about the delivery of our regeneration priority, and this will be used to measure the effectiveness of future communication work.

Outlined below is performance against the 5 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'everyone benefiting from regeneration' priority. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'amber'. Performance on 26 key performance indicator measures of success can be reported this quarter – 11 (42%) have achieved or performed above target (rated green), 7 (27%) are below the annual target but within acceptable variance limits (rated amber), and 8 (31%) have performed below the target and are rated red.

Outcome: Decent homes and living environments for all

This year in March, the Audit Commission recognised the unprecedented improvement in our Strategic Housing Services, which improved from 0 to 2 stars in under two years – the first authority to achieve this rate of improvement. The Commission highlighted some examples of good work, such as 40% of all new homes being affordable despite the recession and a 'proactive approach' to tackling poor quality housing rented by private landlords. This is important as affordable housing was identified as the second most important priority for our residents. For the year to date the Council has secured £21,383,838 towards new affordable housing delivery from the Homes and Communities Agency. 849 affordable homes have been completed as of 31 March 2010 of which 422 were completed in 2009/10, exceeding our annual target of 245 by 55%. The number of HomeBuy units completed has increased by 15% from last year to 104.

Managing council owned homes well is important, to ensure they provide good standards of accommodation, as of the 31st March the percentage of housing stocked deemed non decent was 13.8%. When properties need repair our tenants deserve a quick response. We have developed our processes this year to ensure that we now monitor the timescales from customers reporting a repair, including any pre-inspection, to when the repairs are actually completed by the contractor. This process has been in place since December 2009 and has had an impact on our performance on average time for non urgent repairs (whilst 2009/10 performance has decreased to 17.7 days from 15.1 days in 2008/09, performance in the final quarter saw an improvement on the previous quarters) and has allowed us to identify and work to improve areas of performance to ensure the whole customer experience in repairs being completed meets our published service standards. The proportion of urgent repairs completed in time was 97.9% on a total of 3,064 repairs, just behind the target of 98% (this represents just 63 repairs which were out of time).

We now have a housing improvement plan in relation to council housing stock, to ensure we meet the new standards set by the Tenant Services Authority.

The average time taken to re-let council dwellings has shown a significant improvement from 37.2 days to just 30.6 days over the last two quarters. However the year end figure of 31.3 is still a slight increase from last year's outturn of 30 days, and behind the target of 21 days. A business process review was completed in March and an action plan has been developed to help us improve performance in this area.

Maximising best use of existing homes is important to increasing the availability of housing. This year 292 empty homes have been returned to occupation or demolished, both exceeding our target of 55 homes, and giving us unitary top quartile performance for latest published figures. The percentage of private sector homes vacant for over 6 months is 1.4%, a significant improvement on the year end target and previous year, both of which were 1.6%.

Preventing homelessness has been an important priority this year, particularly in the context of recession and increased repossessions. Following the slight increase in the number of people in temporary accommodation reported last quarter, a concerted effort to improve has resulted in the figure being reduced to just 120 at the end of the year from 151 last year. We have already achieved the government's target of a 50% reduction in temporary accommodation, but we have not yet met our internal target of 100.

The percentage of homeless decisions made within 33 days has increased to 72% this year, a significant improvement from last year's position of 44%, but our target was 90%. Encouragingly, quarterly data reveals that performance hit 98% decisions on time in the final quarter of 2009/10. There have been no cases of repeat homelessness this year, indicating the service is resolving housing problems for clients the first time.

The number of planning applications has remained relatively stable in 2009/10, dropping only 1% compare to last year. Development Management has met or exceeded all its targets for the times taken to process planning applications. But the number of appeals upheld has increased from 36% to 41%, above the target of 30%. An IDEa peer review was held for our planning service to help it respond to a decrease in funding with the end of the planning delivery grant. The report was received in March and action planning is ongoing.

Outcome: Medway as a 21st century riverside city and destination of choice

This year an exclusivity agreement was signed with developer Crest Nicholson for the Rochester Riverside site, and will allow planning to move ahead for the first 600 homes on the site, with construction expected to start on site during 2010. This is a significant step forward given the impact of the recession on the housing market. Discussions with developer Land Securities have also been ongoing in relation to the proposed new community of 5,000 homes at the former Ministry of Defence site at Lodge Hill.

Funding for the regeneration programme has been confirmed by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for the next financial year. However, beyond March 2011, funding is unclear, dependent on the next Comprehensive Spending Review, which, in turn, is dependent on the priorities of the new government. Medway Renaissance are continuing to examine opportunities for continuing funding beyond 2011, including EU funding. There is currently work on funding packages being carried forward as part of the 'Single Conversation' for North Kent.

At the 'Making of Medway' conference for stakeholders and investors Medway launched its bid for city status in 2012. The campaign has just begun but research shows high levels of support.

Outcome: Quality jobs for local people

In the first half of the year we launched our 10 point recession busting plan, to support businesses through the difficult financial times for the next 3 years. This identified 10 initiatives as part of a comprehensive package of support, and progress against these is as follows, together with the target for March 2012:

- 1) 32 business start up grants awarded or being processed, out of a target of 75 jobs created
- 2) 5 Partners for Growth loans either issued or being approved, target 18
- 3) 6 Graduate placements against a target of 30
- 4) Apprenticeships scheme launched in January 2010 at a Medway Innovation Centre Business Breakfast event. Two apprentices have already been placed in businesses.
- 5) Launched Employ Medway in August, which has already provided employment support, advice and signposting to 680 people against a target of 185. However, due to a reduction in funding announced by the funder SEEDA, only 25 out of the target 40 businesses have been supported.
- 6) Maximising the occupancy of council managed business units, with occupancy at 80% for Pier Road, Hopewell Drive at 52%, and the Innovation Centre at 50%
- 7) Made workspace improvements at our Hopewell Drive business facility three new business tenants are now set to move in.
- 8) Launched the retail ambassadors scheme, with 88 participants against the target of 75 for the year.
- 9) Supporting the Creative Industries sector to bring new jobs
- 10) Achieved £880,000 funding for Eco-Advantage and Lo-C-US projects, which help them become more competitive and reduce costs by becoming more eco-aware.

There are signs that these initiatives are taking effect. The rise in unemployment in Medway is less than elsewhere – an increase of 106% compared to 125% across Kent. Vacancy rates on empty commercial properties in each of our town centres are better than the national average. A total of 845 new jobs have been created in Medway, as a result of new investments, and this excludes the last quarters data which is not yet available, and exceeds our target of 400. A total of 99 businesses have received advice, above the target of 80. In addition a total of 873 new jobs have been created in 2009-10 thanks to new business investments and our Seeds for Business Growth programme (Partners for Growth loans and business start up grants). Despite these initiatives, however, the recession continues to impact the number of people on out of work benefits, up from 11.3% to 12.5% this year, and behind the target of 10.55%

Outcome: Realising everyone's potential

The proportion of working age people with Level 1 (basic) qualifications now exceeds the national average, and the proportion who have advanced (level 4) qualifications is growing 3 times faster than the national average. We have achieved our target of providing employment support services where they are needed in our nine most deprived areas. In addition the NHS has purchased land and identified resources to create a new Healthy Living centre in Chatham, supported by social and physical regeneration teams.

Outcome: Culture & leisure for all

Medway's new regional centre for sporting excellence, Medway Park, has been completed on time and on budget, in time to host the Modern Pentathlon World Cup in April. This is a considerable achievement given the size of the £11m project.

Latest data from Sport England shows that sports participation has improved this year. There was an increase from 14.1% to 17.3% last year in the percentage of the population participating in 30 minutes of sport at least 3 times a week, but this is still 6% below the LAA target. Our local and more extensive monitoring shows performance to be at over 40%. Due to the work of the sports development team, Medway now has the most clubs of any authority in the county accredited at Clubmark, the national standard for clubs working with children and young people.

The free swimming initiative has been a huge success in 09/10 with swimming for adults up by 108% compared to the same period last year and swimming for juniors up by 82%. Memberships across all leisure facilities have increased by 7% during 09/10, which is especially positive in the current economic climate.

Satisfaction with cultural facilities is high, at 72% and 76% satisfied with museums and theatres respectively, an improvement from 65% satisfied with cultural facilities in the previous poll. An independent visitor survey undertaken at the end of 2009 showed 95% indicated that the Guildhall museum met or exceeded their expectations – one of the highest rates recorded in the South East region. Museum visits overall have fallen from 280.2 to 265.4 this year, but visits overall to attractions in Medway are up 6.6% to 772,446, above the target of 750,000.

During the fourth quarter the IDeA was invited to Peer Review the Library Service to confirm that our approach to the libraries service was right for Medway. The report was positive, concluding that there was strong political and managerial leadership, impressive commitment across the staff group, and a shared vision for developing libraries into community hubs. The number of active borrowers has increased slightly from 19% to 19.2% and the number of physical visits has increased by 2.5% to 4264 per 1,000 population, but behind the challenging target of 4759. Libraries has the highest satisfaction rate of all our services amongst users with 90% of residents satisfied with our libraries, which is a marked improvement from 82% satisfied with libraries 3 years ago.

Summary

Highlights:

- Delivery of affordable homes to meet need.
- Medway Park completed on time and budget.
- Skills rates are improving.
- Meeting empty homes target

Areas requiring development / key risks

- Increase in job seekers claimants, but below regional comparators.
- Improving adult participation in sport

Our Core Values

1. Putting our customers at the centre of everything we do

What we aim to do:

We aim to deliver the services our customers need and want, in the way that they want. Central to achieving this will be improving how we communicate with our customers and listening to their views.

How well are we doing it?

Outlined below is performance against the 2 outcomes set out in the council plan under the 'putting the customer at the centre of everything we do' core value. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'amber'. Performance on 6 key performance indicator measures of success can be reported this quarter – 2 (33%) have achieved or performed above target (rated green), 3 (50%) are below the annual target but within acceptable variance limits (rated amber), and 1 (17%) has performed below the target and is rated red.

Outcome: Continue to deliver our services in a fair and equal manner, recognising the diversity of our local population

The council remains committed to making sure that staff at all levels of the organisation understand their roles and responsibilities in delivering fair and appropriate services. Council customers come from a variety of backgrounds and have a wide range of different needs. The council recognises that understanding the local community is essential to providing effective and efficient services and give value for money. The council has been working to review its equality and diversity policies to streamline information and reduce bureaucracy. Work has been done to bring together all of our work in this area and a draft of the new Single Equality Scheme is now completed and out for consultation. It will be considered by Cabinet later in the year. The Equalities Bill has now been enacted and the council is in a good position to respond.

The council is committed to reaching the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework for Local government to demonstrate its commitment to providing fair and inclusive services. As the Single Equality Scheme sets out the council's overall strategic framework for equality and diversity the inspection for the equality framework has been deferred this year and will be undertaken when the scheme has been finalised. The framework offers an excellent opportunity to review with services how they are providing efficient and effective services to meet the needs of Medway's community and to provide support to any services which are finding this challenging.

The council recognises the importance of using external local experts to both support and challenge in this area. During the course of the year we have used these processes to review the new Sustainable Community Strategy, the Safeguarding Board and the Single Equality Scheme. The approach of using residents and community groups to challenge our work and to represent different community interests has been recognised as good practice.

During the year the Housing service received funding to produce a Toolkit that will be used across the South East Region to help organisations provide services that are fair and meet the needs of the whole community.

Two initiatives have been developed in Medway to ensure that children and young people actively support the work of the Medway Children's Trust. Medway Young Commissioners programme was launched earlier this year as part of the national Youth4U Young Inspectors programme. Children and young people between the ages of 8 and 19 (and up to 25 for those with disabilities and/or learning difficulties) from all backgrounds across Medway are helping to shape the services that young people use. Some young inspectors are specially recruited from challenging

backgrounds and so have had personal experience of the services involved. They help by evaluating specific services, seeking the views of current service users, and reporting their findings to the Medway Children's Trust and Department For Education.

Following the tragic Pilkington Case in Leicestershire, the council supported a Kent and Medway Disability Hate Crime Conference. The conference has produced a good practice action plan to assist public authorities to recognise and prevent this type of crime.

Outcome: Continue to improve the customer experience and deliver value for money.

Providing an excellent customer experience continues to be driver for the council, this means that the council must listen and respond to the views of its customers, limit unnecessary contacts and respond to complaints as quickly and effectively as possible. Many services undertake individual customer satisfaction reviews and use them to monitor current service provision and direct future service redesign. The proportion of customer contact that is avoidable has increased from 30% to 34.9% this year, behind the target of 28%, but quarterly figures show that a significant improvement was seen in quarter 4 following staff re-training. However, we are looking at more effective ways of monitoring these issues for next year.

The council uses a residents' opinion poll as one of the methods of getting feedback from customers. This is a face-to-face survey with a group of approximately 1500 people who are representative of Medway's demographic. The Residents' Opinion Poll was carried out during quarter 3. They show that 68% of residents were satisfied with the way the council runs its services. This is compared to 65% in the Residents' Opinion Poll 2006 and a significant improvement on the Place Survey results from earlier this year. Important services for residents were identified as waste and refuse, recycling facilities, road maintenance, parks and open spaces, secondary schools, street cleaning, transport, and sport and leisure. These findings have been distributed through the council to assist services with service planning.

Of customers that had contacted the council, over three quarters found it easy to make contact (78%) with the majority satisfied with each of the following aspects of the service they received:

	% satisfied
How easy it was to find the right person to deal with	68%
The length of time the person contacted took to deal with the query	66%
Any information given	67%
Competence of staff	74%
Helpfulness of staff	77%
The final outcome	63%

Complaints responded to within timescale is below target for stage 1 and 2 complaints. The number of ombudsman complaints has increased to 79 from 56 last year with higher numbers relating to Housing and Children's and Adults service areas. Factors such as improved customer literature and clear advice to customers regarding their choices on taking their complaint further may have influenced these figures. Improvements resulting from our response complaints has included a new interview space at Chatham Contact point to reduce waiting times for housing customers and improved processes for residents on issues relating to the Medway Test.

The project to deliver a new website is on track for launch by November 2010. Informed by leading edge technology, a new design and an extensive public consultation programme, it will be more user-friendly and interactive and allow users to tailor web content and receive council web services through their mobiles – the fastest growing web access channel.

Summary

Highlights:

- Improvement in satisfaction with council

Areas requiring development / key risks

- The proportion of contacts that were avoidable is behind target at 46.4%.

Giving Value for Money

What we aim to do:

Providing high-quality, value-for-money services is central to the council's work. Managing our finances well is essential if we are to achieve that. We are proud that council tax levels are among the lowest nationally and that we want to continue to be independently judged as providing good value for money and as having good budget setting and monitoring systems. Through the course of this year the economic situation has highlighted that the measures we originally identified for this area of work are no longer fit for purpose and they are being reviewed and will be amended for 2010/11 to look more effectively at the issues the council is currently facing.

How well are we doing it?

Outlined below is performance against the 1 outcome set out in the council plan under the 'value for money' core value. We have rated our achievement of planned actions and outcomes this quarter as 'amber'. Performance on 5 key performance indicator measures of success can be reported this quarter - 1 (20%) has performed above target (rated green), 1 (20%) is below the annual target but within acceptable variance limits (rated amber), and 3 (60%) have performed below the target and are rated red.

During the year the Council has been reviewing its approach to Value for Money (VfM) and in September 2009 approved a VFM Strategy as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). VFM brings together both how effective the service is in meeting customers needs and its efficiency – how much it costs. The strategy sets out a '4 step' approach to both enhance our understanding of the value for money we currently provide and to thoroughly embed continuous improvement in VFM in the culture of the organization. In summary those steps are:

- Step 1 – Carry out independent review of data/benchmarking of services.
- Step 2 – Complete service reviews and commission new programme.
- Step 3 – Employ 'change agent' to assist with implementation of findings from earlier steps.
- Step 4 – Develop ongoing VFM self-assessment.

We have engaged PWC to partner the Council in delivering their 'Perfect Storm' analysis. This is a cross-cutting review of all of the council's core processes to reduce duplication of effort, whilst improving and maintaining customer service. This forum is an important part of the strategy. Experience elsewhere suggests that it is effective even in authorities that are comparatively low cost and also high performing.

Outcome: Improve efficiency and deliver value for money for our residents

The 2009 resident's opinion poll showed that 53% of our residents feel we provide good value for money. This varied from 49% of residents in Chatham to 55% in the Rainham and Strood areas. Older people are more likely to feel that we provide value for money – 62% of residents aged 55 or over compared to 46% of those aged 16 to 24. Our Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment graded the council as "performing well" in terms of how we use our resources.

Finance

The Council Plan has a council-wide target of delivering £16.5m of efficiencies by March 2011. However, in order to achieve the revised Government targets of 3% for 2009/10 and 2010/11 this will rise to £20.2m. The individual target for 2008/09 was £6,522,550 and the final outturn amounted to £6,739,990, however, as part of the verification process this has reduced to £6,424,133. At this stage the outturn figure for 2009/10 needs to be calculated but it is anticipated that the cumulative target for 2008/09 and 2009/10 of £13,262,518 will be achieved.

Some of the more notable achievements in 2009/10 that have yielded both savings and service improvement include:

- Substantial improvements have been made to those services provided to the more vulnerable sections of the community – adults in need of social care services, looked after children and those with special educational needs - whilst at the same time reducing unit costs. Creating additional SEN capacity within Medway schools, has meant that we can bring children with special needs back into the borough, where they will receive a much better service at greatly reduced costs, relative to their independent sector placements, saving the council £1.3m in total;
- In the area of children's care, an innovative outreach service is helping vulnerable young people to remain living independently and out of expensive fostering or residential placements. A great deal of work has gone into helping younger disabled adults, in moving out of their residential placements and back into their own supported accommodation;
- The 'Shared Lives' scheme continues to yield efficiencies. More people are having a greater say over their care provision, through increasing numbers of direct payments and it is envisaged that the imminent roll out of personalised budgets will yield further efficiencies, as people think more creatively about ways of meeting their own care needs;

Further smaller savings of £3.7m have been achieved through a variety of initiatives, including reorganizing our staff to ensure they're best placed to deliver services (£0.5m), reducing our energy consumption (£0.2m), carefully managing the impact of inflation (£2.6m), reviewing residential learning disability placements (£0.2m), and generating income from our new CCTV car (£0.2m).

Almost a half a million pounds of additional funding was secured during quarter 4, bringing the year total to over £1.5 million. This involved 17 different bids, 10 of which were for the council, but 6 were for voluntary organisations in Medway. This represents excellent value for money, because £11 is generated from these bids for each £1 spent on developing these bids. This funding helps the council achieve its priorities, and examples include

- Children and young people getting the best start in life - family support services for children with autism;
- Everyone benefitting from regeneration - funding to support adult learning opportunities;
- Clean and green environment and Medway's LAA target on reducing carbon emissions - support to small businesses to reduce their carbon footprint In terms of return on investment

In addition, we also maximise the funding available available from the European Union. In the past year we have secured over £3.5 million in EU funding for six projects and there are eleven EU projects up and running in Medway in the last two years worth up to £4.7 million of EU funds. The following three projects have been highlighted by the EU as among the 5 highest quality project put forward:

- Project SUCCESS - £421,000 of European Regional Development Fund to invest in consolidating and expanding our local employment support services via Employ Medway, in partnership with organisations from France and Belgium. We will also be able to expand our "outreach" services in target neighbourhoods.
- Project INSPIRE - £995,604 of European Regional Development Fund to deliver a programme of urban environmental improvements in target disadvantaged neighbourhoods (housing renovation, greenspaces improvements, recycling and waste management improvements etc). We will be responding to specific neighbourhood improvement priorities identified by residents in the neighbourhood action plans.
- Project Heroes 2C - We have advised and support successfully the Medway Queen Preservation Society to secure £907,448 of European Regional Development Fund. This will finally refurbish and return to Medway the Medway Queen paddle steamer, establishing it as a training venue in construction and engineering skills, benefiting in particular local young people / apprentices.

Council Tax collection rates completed the year at 91.4% compared to 91.8% last year. This is a creditable achievement given the impact of the recession and is disappointing given that we were ahead in collection rates for most of the year. However, a significant proportion of councils are seeing significant reductions in Council Tax collection as a result of the recession. The recession has also affected local business rates collection, with the effect felt more severely and collection at 90.2% compares to 96.4% at the end of last year. This is the worst collection rate ever recorded by the council, and although it should be judged in the context of the recession, is subject to review and improvement planning.

Partnership

Sharing services between other public bodies is key to improving efficiency in the sector and the council and partners have been exploring different possibilities for effective joint working. For example during quarter 3 the council started to provide switchboard services for NHS Medway through the Customer First Centre.

The development of the Sustainable Community Strategy, a vision for the next 16 years shared across all members of the Local strategic Partnership has been one of the most important pieces of work carried out this year. The Strategy sets out a number of key priorities for the future and a number of key principles recognising the importance of all partners sharing a similar approach to delivering services in the area.

These are:

- Sustainability: will our actions work as well for tomorrow as today?
- Narrowing the gap: will our actions contribute to improving the lives of everyone so reducing the gap between deprived and more affluent areas?
- Fairness: do our actions take account of all sections of society ensuring that everyone benefits from the regeneration of Medway?
- Self-help: will our actions encourage people to take responsibility themselves to make things better?

This has now been agreed, will be formally launched in July and monitoring will begin on delivery.

During the year the regional data centre, where public sector providers are sharing IT space, has been officially opened at Gun Wharf. All Medway Council servers have been relocated to the centre, and some servers from other providers, such as Kent County Council, are now also fully operational. Work has continued to develop the new council website, due to go live in November 2011. Utilising IT to improve council efficiency is ongoing and, the IT Strategy is being updated to reflect current requirements and future developments.

Following increased claims, poor performance in the speed at which benefit claims were assessed was identified at the start of the year. It was agreed that additional resources were required to address this, funding was secured from the Department of Work and Pensions. Following the additional resource performance has improved significantly from a peak of 32.1 days down to 23.2 days for the year, consisting of 39.5 days for new claims and 16.1 days for change of circumstances. This was despite a 12.7% increase in claims, but remains behind the 17 day target.

14 sanctions were issued for Housing Benefit fraud in the quarter - 11 successful prosecutions and 2 cautions bringing the annual total to 64 sanctions, against revised annual target of 65. The target was revised due to staff vacancies. Fraudulent overpayments detected for the year were £1,148,303 comprising Medway Council benefits of £595,048 and DWP paid benefits of £553,255.

Income from leisure remains behind target, although showing a slight increase from last year. This should be compared against the position reported from the private sector which is showing a 23% drop in leisure centre membership. By contrast there has been a reduction in waste collected, which has saved the council a £1.2million. However, this is most likely to be due to the recession,

with residents purchasing fewer new products, with the resultant decrease in packaging and discard of old products. This decrease is therefore not likely to be sustained.

The economic recession also continues to affect our corporate property, with potential development sites proving difficult to sell. In addition small business unit tenancies have fallen, from fully occupied with a waiting list, to a 32% vacancy rate. However, vacant units started to fall from 38 to 36 in the last quarter of the year. Overall all commercial property had a long term void rate (over 6 months) of 4.8% for the year compared to 4.6% in 2008/09, although this has fallen from a peak of 6% in July.

Workforce

The Workforce Strategy was produced this year and action planning for its delivery is being finalised. The council recognises the importance of supporting our workforce so they deliver effective and efficient services. This is an area of strength for the council as recognised in our IIP interim assessment. Medway Council has decided to aim for the advanced Gold Status, the initial review in October 2009 demonstrated that the council is already operating at the silver status and has achieved 115 indicators. Internal reviewers have been trained and are working across the council to put in place action plans for those services that do not meet the Gold standard at the moment.

Current data for staff sickness relates up to the end of February 2010 and shows sickness to be at 6.66 days against a year-end target of 8 days for 2009/10. This is due to the time delays in sickness forms being returned and processed. This figure suggests that the Council will be very close to the 8 day target.

The focus on supporting young people into finding employment continues. Recent figures show that 33 apprenticeships are now in place, with six already completed, and five of those six have gained employment in the council.

Summary

Highlights:

- 53% of residents believe the council provides value for money.
- CAA rating of “performs well” for Use of Resources.
- £16.5m of efficiency savings made.

Areas requiring development / key risks

- Business rate collection behind when compared to last year, as a result of the recession.
- The time taken to process benefit claims has almost halved – this improvement needs to be sustained in the economic recession.