

Inspection report

February 2005



Community Safety

Leicester City Council

Contents

Summary	3
Scoring the service	4
Recommendations	6
Report	7
Context	7
The locality	7
The council	7
The council's best value review	8
How good is the service?	9
Are the aims clear and challenging?	9
Does the service meet these aims?	10
How does the performance compare?	13
Summary	14
What are the prospects for improvement to the service?	15
Does the best value review drive improvements?	15
How good is the improvement plan?	16
Will the council deliver the improvements?	17
Summary	18
Appendices	19
Documents reviewed	19
Reality checks undertaken	19
List of people interviewed	20

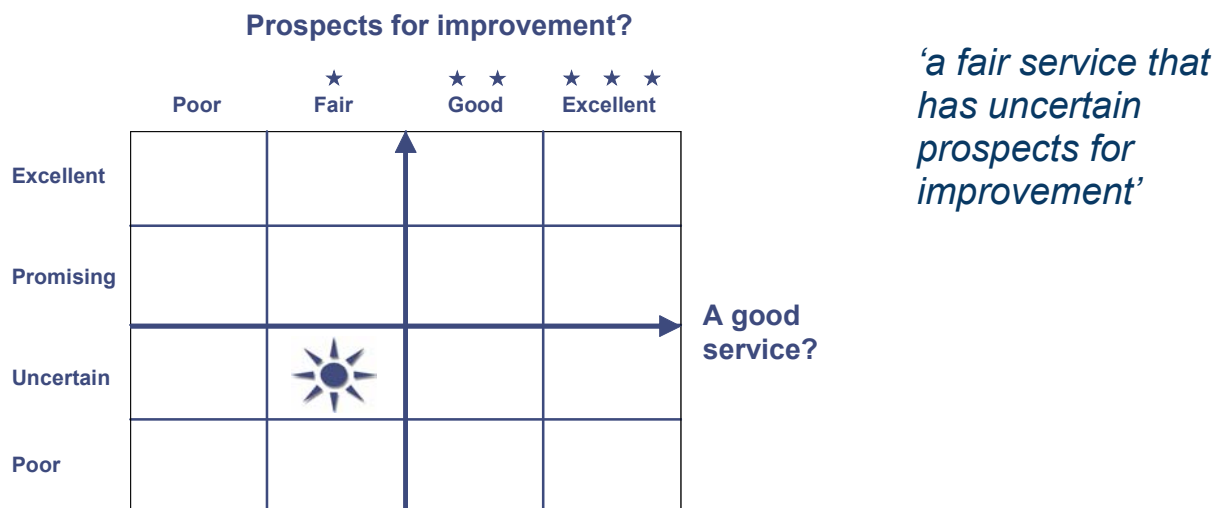
Summary

- 1 Leicester city council is a unitary authority in the East Midlands region of England. The population is 280,000 of which 36.2 per cent are from minority ethnic communities.
- 2 The council comprises 54 councillors, 9 conservative, 20 Labour and 25 Liberal democrats. No party has overall control.
- 3 The council employs approximately 15,000 staff across all services.
- 4 The community safety review covered internal structures of the service including mainstreaming activity, burglary and anti social behaviour. The service is estimated to cost £394,000 for 2004/05.

Scoring the service

- 5 We have assessed the council as providing a ‘fair’ one star service that has uncertain prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

Scoring chart¹: Leicester City Council - Community Safety



- 6 The service is fair because:
- ◆ community safety is a priority; the strategic aims of the council are appropriate and consistent with those of the community partnerships that address community safety;
 - ◆ there are numerous examples of partnership initiatives that have obvious benefits for the public;
 - ◆ some categories of crime are decreasing; and
 - ◆ the council’s community safety team has effectively supported the CDRP (Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership) and is well regarded by partners.
- 7 However:
- ◆ targets are not consistently used to ensure objectives are challenging or delivering improvements of obvious benefit to the public;
 - ◆ strategic direction and leadership offered to the crime and disorder partnership (CDRP) has been lacking;
 - ◆ the council has not comprehensively tackled its statutory responsibility to consider community safety in all aspects of its business; and
 - ◆ crimes of violence and sexual offences are increasing.

¹ 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 The prospects for improvement in the council's contribution to community safety are uncertain. The CDRP needs clear direction and focus as it approaches a period of significant change. The council has now recognised the need to increase the number of staff involved in delivering community safety however a number of weaknesses still need to be addressed. These include:
- ◆ senior council officer commitment to the CDRP has been inadequate resulting in a failure to demonstrate the community leadership expected of a key strategic partner;
 - ◆ the strategic management of the community safety function in the council is fragmented across three corporate divisions. This complexity is not well understood and the lack of a clear champion has significant potential to hinder progress;
 - ◆ action plans arising from reviews of the community safety function have not been promptly addressed; and
 - ◆ since April 2004, the instances of violent and sexual offences have been increasing.

Recommendations

- 9 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. In this context, the inspection team makes the following recommendations.
- ◆ The council should clearly identify a champion for the community safety function who has both the commitment and the capacity to support and direct the CDRP as it approaches its new three year strategy.
 - ◆ The arrangements for enhancing capacity in the community safety team (CST) should be urgently progressed.
 - ◆ An urgent review of the arrangements for ensuring that community safety is considered in all aspects of the council's service delivery and decision making should be urgently undertaken and the findings actioned without delay.
 - ◆ The action plans arising from past reviews should be reviewed. Actions should be either addressed without further delay or discontinued for considered and agreed reasons.
- 10 We would like to thank the staff of Leicester City council, particularly the staff of the community safety team, who made us welcome and who met our requests efficiently and courteously.

Amanda Craig
David Evans
Inspectors

Dates of inspection: 22 – 26 November 2004

Email:
a-craig@audit-commission.gov.uk
david-evans@audit-commission.gov.uk

For more information please contact
Audit Commission
Central Region
690 Melton Road
Thurmaston
Leicester
LE4 8BA
www.audit-commission.gov.uk
Telephone: 0116 250 4100

The official version of this report is also available on the Audit Commission's web site at www.audit-commission.gov.uk. The Audit Commission cannot verify the accuracy of and is not responsible for material contained in this report which has been reproduced by another organisation or individual.

Report

Context

- 11 This report has been prepared by the Audit Commission (the Commission) following an inspection under Section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, and issued in accordance with its duty under Section 13 of the 1999 Act.

The locality

- 12 Leicester City Council is a unitary authority located in the East Midlands. The population of the area is approximately 280,000, living in 119,000 households. 36.2 per cent of the population are from minority ethnic communities. The city has a much younger population than the Leicestershire average. 22.3 per cent of the population are aged between 0-15 years and a further 22.9 per cent are between 16 and 29 years of age.
- 13 Over half of the population work in the city, mostly in public administration, education and health and manufacturing followed by distribution and the hospitality industry. Unemployment stands at 4.5 per cent compared with the national average of 2.2 per cent. The city rates 31 out of a deprivation ranking of 354 with 1 being the most deprived area.

The council

- 14 The council comprises 54 councillors, 9 conservative, 20 labour and 25 liberal democrats. No political party has an overall majority. Currently the council operates a cabinet and leader system to govern its business. The council's overall budget for the year 2004/05 is £355.9 million.
- 15 The council's priorities as identified in the corporate plan are to:
- ◆ improve quality and equality in teaching and learning;
 - ◆ make our city's developments sustainable so that we do not close down choices for our children and grandchildren;
 - ◆ build on Leicester's history of including people from all backgrounds in a cohesive community free to pursue peace and prosperity;
 - ◆ support children and parents, especially protecting the most vulnerable children;
 - ◆ help people with disabilities and the growing number of older people to experience more independence;
 - ◆ develop a safe, clean and creative city with wider access to culture and recreation;
 - ◆ regenerate the city's housing, open spaces, public transport and access to work and services;
 - ◆ promote prosperity and new jobs, while safeguarding people's health and development interests; and
 - ◆ invest in continuous improvement in a well-managed organisation.

The council's best value review

- 16 The service under review consists of the council's contribution to community safety including the community safety team and the council's contribution to the crime and disorder reduction partnership for the city.
- 17 The budget for the service for 2004/05 is £392,900, a rise (including a growth bid of £100,000) from the previous year's budget of £234,000.
- 18 The council carried out a best value review (BVR) of the service in 2002. The review concluded that there were three key areas for improvement including:
 - ◆ enhancing the community safety team to offer support to the crime and disorder partnership (CDRP) and address the council's approach to mainstreaming community safety;
 - ◆ reviewing its partnership approach to burglary; and
 - ◆ reviewing its partnership approach to antisocial behaviour (ASB).
- 19 Councillors agreed to support the recommendations of the BVR in March 2004, a year after the review was completed. Despite financial constraints, an additional £100,000 was allocated to the budget to ensure delivery of the improvement plan which included:
 - ◆ doubling the capacity of the community safety team to better support the CDRP and the council's requirement to mainstream community safety. This includes additional posts to increase capacity. This work is ongoing;
 - ◆ establishing a lead and planning group for domestic burglary, developing a corporate burglary plan and using data effectively to identify at risk groups. This work has not been completed; and
 - ◆ establishing a lead officer for ASB, extending training to appropriate service officers to mainstream community safety work and establish a citywide ASB team and call centre. This work is ongoing.

How good is the service?

Are the aims clear and challenging?

- 20 Inspectors look to see how a council has agreed the key aims for the service being inspected, how clear these aims are to the people that receive the service and whether these reflect the corporate aims of the organisation as a whole.
- 21 Aims need to be challenging, address local needs and support national objectives. This requires the council to consider and demonstrate how a service contributes to its wider corporate aims and community plans.
- 22 The strategic community safety aims of the city council and the CDRP are set out in the community safety strategy covering the period 2002/05. The overall objective of the jointly adopted strategy is to:

'Reduce the level, cost and fear of crime and disorder in the city of Leicester'.

- 23 Specific priorities have been identified. Summarised, they are:
- ◆ reducing burglary, violent and vehicle crime in residential areas;
 - ◆ reducing crime in the city centre;
 - ◆ supporting victims of racial crimes and harassment;
 - ◆ supporting victims of domestic violence;
 - ◆ developing a seamless service for victims and witnesses of crime;
 - ◆ reducing anti social behaviour and standardising reporting and recording arrangements; and
 - ◆ protecting communities from drug and alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 24 Whilst these aims are not exactly replicated in the community plan for the city and in the details supporting the council's own corporate plan, the principle objectives that they represent are consistently aligned through all strategic documentation.
- 25 The aims address both national priorities and local issues. They were determined following consultation with the communities of the city as part of the preparation for the community safety strategy launched in 2002.
- 26 The aims are not consistently challenging. Some aims include targets, for example those supporting crime reduction activities. Where this is the case, the targets specified in the various documents are consistent and challenging. However, there are many examples where the targets relate to measures that will have no obvious impact for the public. For example, the strategy declares reducing the fear of crime and antisocial behaviour as an overall objective but offers no targets against which to measure success.
- 27 Departmental service planning is not aligned to the strategic community safety objectives of the council. The council changed its business planning arrangements for 2004/05 now requiring only directorate and divisional plans. The extent to which community safety objectives are identified and reflected in this year's plans is variable. Targets relating to community safety are few and focus largely on crime related measures.

- 28 The community safety team (CST) business plan is internally focused on developing internal capacity. The CST is a unit within the regeneration division. The team prepared a business plan for 2003/04 which is supported by an action plan with three stated priorities:
- ◆ to work in partnership to address and meet strategy priorities and targets;
 - ◆ to provide advice and support to other officers, Members, residents and agencies; and
 - ◆ project development and implementation.
- 29 There are very few examples of targeted activities that will have an outcome of obvious benefit to the public in the plan. This plan was carried forward into 2004/05.

Does the service meet these aims?

- 30 Having considered the aims that the council has set for the service, inspectors make an assessment of how well the council is meeting these aims. This includes an assessment of performance against specific service standards and targets and the council's approach to measuring whether it is actually delivering what it set out to do.

Progress against the overall strategic objective of the community safety strategy

- 31 Based on reported figures, the CDRP and council have made progress in reducing crime in a number of areas including vehicle crime and burglary. However, the lack of robust baseline data inhibits the evaluation of progress against the primary objectives of reducing the costs and fear of crime and disorder.

CDRP driven initiatives that have had an impact for the benefit of the public

- 32 The communities of Leicester have benefited from a number of initiatives delivered through the CDRP. In conjunction with partners the council has delivered, contributed to, sponsored, supported or facilitated these schemes. Many activities specifically address one of the strategic priorities whilst others make more wide ranging contributions to the quality of life for the people of the city. A selection is summarised below.
- 33 Priority 1 – domestic burglary, violent crime and vehicle crime.
- ◆ Focused vehicle crime and burglary reduction initiatives have resulted in significant reduction in the numbers of these crimes and positive progress against a public service agreement for burglary. Activities have included supplying improved security locks and Smart water property marking kits to homes within streets identified as hot spots for domestic burglary.
- 34 Priority 2 – city centre.
- ◆ Actions to address late night drunkenness, antisocial behaviour and violent offences have been undertaken with mixed results. The council initially sponsored a safe transport scheme for late night bus services out of the city centre on Friday and Saturday evenings. The scheme has been successful and has been adopted by the local transport company and extended. Enforceable dispersal zones have been introduced from which troublesome individuals can be directed and banned for 24 hours. However, violent crime in the city centre continues to rise.

- ◆ To address day time drinking the council has introduced alcohol prohibition zones and supports a wet centre location where drinking is permitted. This is regarded by all partners as significantly improving the quality of the environment in city centre areas.
- 35 Priority 3 – domestic violence.
- ◆ The focus has been on raising awareness. The council has been key in securing Neighbourhood Renewal Funding for the independent post of domestic violence co-ordinator for the city until 2006. The co-ordinator is also part of the Domestic Violence Integrated Response Project which brings together key service areas to meet the needs of victims of domestic violence. Awareness raising campaigns include activities to promote national domestic violence awareness week through interactive theatre, presentations and practitioners networking/development day. The fact that reported incidents of domestic violence continue to increase, is taken as an indication of improving confidence in the statutory agencies to respond to the needs of the community.
- 36 Priority 4 – racial harassment
- ◆ The focus has been on establishing reliable inter-agency data and raising awareness. Through the partnership, the council has contributed to establishing a standardised information recording system for victims of racial harassment and produced a toolkit to support workers with young people. Progress on the database has been positive but has yet to achieve comprehensive cover. Reported incidents have risen over the past three years but that trend does not seem to be continuing into 2004/05.
- 37 Priority 5 – victims and witnesses
- ◆ The victim support service benefits from both financial support and rent free accommodation provided by the council.
 - ◆ An innovative witness support scheme was initially developed in Eyres Monsell and has now been extended to cover the city. Operated by volunteers, the scheme supports witnesses and potential witnesses in preparing to offer evidence particularly in support of prosecutions and applications for anti-social behaviour orders. With support from the council, the scheme successfully bid for additional funding which has been used to secure staff and premises to operate the scheme. There is a focus on support to young victims through the employment of a victim liaison worker to work with the Youth Offending team.
- 38 Priority 6 – anti social behaviour (ASB)
- ◆ Beginning in 2001, the council's approach to addressing antisocial behaviour was patchy. Its service was led by the housing department and focused on the Beaumont Leys estate. Over time the service has been extended and with additional funding the antisocial behaviour unit now covers all areas of the city and all types of tenancy. Existing information suggests that in Leicester, people are almost twice as likely to suffer from intimidation/harassment and hoax calls compared to the national average; they are also more likely to suffer from rubbish/litter issues, noise nuisance, and rowdy behaviour (eg shouting/swearing, fighting, drunkenness). They are less likely, however, to experience problems with nuisance behaviour, vehicle related issues, criminal damage/vandalism, abandoned vehicles, and drug issues. In response, partnership agencies have secured a number of evictions, injunctions and 40 antisocial behaviour orders against the perpetrators over the past three years.

39 Priority 7 – drugs action group

- ◆ Progress in achieving drug related targets has been mixed. The council has been active in trying to reduce the opportunities for drug misuse through building and environmental changes and the use of CCTV. The Drugs and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) and CDRP has exceeded its target for users entering the Drug Testing and Treatment Order (DTTO) scheme and the number of scheme participants who re-offend has decreased. However, drug related crime has increased and the proportion of offenders referred to the scheme, who then enter the scheme, has decreased.

Wider ranging inter agency and inter action group activities.

- 40 The New Parks ward reassurance project was initially led by the police with Home Office funding but then extended to include multi-agency involvement. The scheme addresses the credibility gap between the reality and the perception around the fear of crime by working with key community stakeholders to respond to key crimes and incidents. Positive actions include the development of a youth café and drop in facility in the tenant's association office, clean up activities, diversionary activities for young people including graffiti art projects and offering enhanced security provisions. Interim evaluations by Home Office representatives have identified successes and some areas for improvement. The scheme will be finally evaluated in 2005 but anecdotally is regarded as successful.
- 41 Capitalising on a Fire & Rescue Service initiative, the council and other partners have mounted three environment action days. Multi agency teams have focused on specific areas to address local issues including abandoned vehicle removal, fly tipping, graffiti and increase pride in the community. One such event resulted in the removal of 40 tons of rubbish, 5 lorry loads of white goods, 12 vehicles and caravans and the clearance of 45 square metres of graffiti.

The council and the Crime and Disorder Partnership

- 42 Leadership and strategic direction in support of the CDRP has been insufficient. The elected member with portfolio responsibility for community safety has regularly attended meetings of the CDRP. This has not been the case in terms of senior officer representation from the council. The CDRP operates with a senior strategic group which should provide direction to a management group and seven supporting action groups, each one addressing a priority within the strategy. During 2003 the senior strategy group lost direction. It failed to meet between September 2003 and September 2004, and its functions became absorbed into the management group. Roles and responsibilities became confused.
- 43 Within the limited capacity available, the CST has effectively supported the CDRP and its action groups to successfully bid for funding, develop essential and increasingly comprehensive databases and prepare a comprehensive crime audit to inform the new community safety strategy for 2005 onwards. The team is very well regarded by partners. However, the focus on supporting the partnership has been at the expense of the statutory responsibility carried by the council – to ensure community safety is mainstreamed throughout the council decision making processes and service delivery (see below).

Mainstreaming community safety within the council

- 44 The council has not maintained focus on its statutory responsibility under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 which establishes a duty to ensure that community safety is considered in all aspects of its decision making and service delivery. The available capacity within the CST has been devoted to supporting the CDRP. As a result:
- ◆ opportunities to co-ordinate and collaborate upon activities across council departmental boundaries have been missed;
 - ◆ structured evaluation has been restricted to obligatory returns under bid funding guidelines;
 - ◆ procedural arrangements for ensuring that community safety opportunities are consistently considered in reporting and decision making have not been robust; and
 - ◆ it has been five years since a structured audit of service activities has been undertaken to review gaps in provision.

How does the performance compare?

- 45 In order to judge the quality of a service, it is important to compare the performance of that service against other suppliers across a range of sectors. The aim is not exact comparison, but an exploration of how similar services (or elements of services) perform in order to identify significant differences, the reasons for them, and the extent to which improvements are required.
- 46 Crime information for the CDRP area covering the city has been compared against the family of most similar CDRPs identified by the Home Office.

Vehicle crime

- 47 Vehicle crimes have been reducing and have remained consistently below average levels found in similar CDRPs. In 2001/02, 27 vehicle related crimes per 1,000 population occurred in Leicester. By 2003/04 this figure had reduced to 23.1, consistently below average levels compared to CDRP areas of a similar nature.

Burglary

- 48 Burglary offences have been reducing and have remained consistently below average levels found in similar CDRPs. In 2001/02, 29 burglaries per 1,000 households occurred in Leicester. By 2003/04 this figure had reduced to 27.2, consistently below average levels compared to CDRP areas of a similar nature.

Robbery

- 49 Robbery offences have been increasing with the communities of the city now experiencing above average levels found in similar CDRPs. In 2001/02, 3 robbery offences per 1,000 population occurred in Leicester. By 2003/04 this figure had increased to 4.2, representing a shift from below average to above average levels compared to CDRP areas of a similar nature.

Sexual offences

- 50 Sexual offences have been increasing with the communities of the city now experiencing the highest levels found in similar CDRPs. In 2001/02, 1.4 sexual offences per 1,000 population occurred in Leicester. By 2003/04 this figure had increased to 2, consistently comparable to the highest levels found in CDRP areas of a similar nature.

Violent crime

- 51 Crimes of violence have been increasing with the communities of the city now experiencing the highest levels found in similar CDRPs. In 2001/02, 21 violent offences per 1,000 population occurred in Leicester. By 2003/04 this figure had increased to 34.1, representing a shift from below average into the highest levels found in CDRP areas of a similar nature.

Summary

- 52 The council's services in support of community safety in Leicester city are fair. Community safety has been declared a priority and aims are consistently represented throughout strategic documentation. Operational support to the CDRP has been good and there are numerous examples of public facing partnership initiatives where there are obvious benefits for the public and some categories of crime are decreasing. However, targets are not consistently used to ensure objectives are challenging, strategic direction and leadership of the CDRP has been lacking, the council has lost focus on its statutory responsibility to consider community safety in all aspects of its business and crimes of violence and sexual offences are increasing.

What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

The best value review and other drivers for improvement.

- 53 The best value review (BVR) is one of the mechanisms for ensuring that councils deliver continuous improvement to the services they provide. In Leicester, other activities that have produced plans or identified the need for improvement include a self assessment of the CDRP and external reviews by Crime Concern and the Audit Commission, and the findings of the recently completed crime audit.
- 54 It is clear that the council has invested time, effort and money in reviewing the community safety function in Leicester City. It is equally clear that there has been significant slippage in progressing the actions and recommendations resulting from the reviews.

Best value review

- 55 The council commenced a best value review of its community safety function in May 2002. It took approximately 12 months to complete.
- 56 The scope of the review was agreed by elected members but was narrow and focused on only three areas of work:
- ◆ the internal structure of the community safety team and support to the CDRP, including the council's approach to mainstreaming community safety through its own services;
 - ◆ domestic burglary; and
 - ◆ antisocial behaviour.
- 57 The review made limited use of the challenge, consult, compete and compare concepts. Efforts to collate comparison and competition information were constrained as the council did not belong to any benchmarking clubs and was unable to update earlier work identifying the costs of crime to the council.

External reviews

- 58 Both the council and the partnership have used external reviewers to comment on efforts to address the community safety agenda in the city. In February 2002, the Audit Commission completed a performance review of the council's work in the CDRP. This contained a number of key recommendations including the need to improve performance management. The findings of this exercise were reinforced by the most recent such event, a partnership away day held in October 2003 and facilitated by Crime Concern. The event was a precursor to the completion of the self assessment. It identified a number of key strengths and weaknesses in the current approach to community safety and resulted in a report with recommendations for improvement.

Government office partnership self assessment

- 59 The council clearly played a key role in completing a CDRP self assessment which was submitted to Government Office East Midlands in February 2004. The assessment identified a number of key areas of work in which the partnership had to state its achievements to date.
- 60 It is unclear whether this piece of work was shared with key stakeholders in the partnership prior to submission. The inspection identified that some of the scores do not appear to have been openly discussed or agreed by all partners.

2004 Crime audit

- 61 The council and partners are currently completing the next partnership crime audit to inform the new community safety strategy to start in April 2005. The audit is well organised, comprehensive and the data being collected is robust. It is supported by key contributions from the city council, police and DAAT. Past work around the fear and costs of crime has been under developed particularly in exploration of value for money issues. The audit will therefore be used to establish a comparative baseline for future work.

How good is the improvement plan?

- 62 A BVR should result in an improvement plan that sets out what needs to improve, why, and how that improvement will be delivered. It should contain targets that are not only challenging but are also designed to demonstrate and ensure the continuous improvement necessary to put the service among the best 25 per cent of councils within five years.
- 63 Over the past three years there have been a number of internal and external reviews of community safety in Leicester City (see above). The majority of these pieces of work have resulted in action plans or recommendations for improvement for the council, the CDRP or both.
- 64 The efforts made to collate the action plans, align them to identify common themes of significance or ensure they are progressed have had limited impact.

Best value review

- 65 The best value review (completed in 2003) resulted in an action plan to address key areas of weakness in the service. The action plan was not approved by members until March 2004 but it is to the council's credit that, in a year of financial constraint, an additional £100,000 added to the revenue budget to deliver the recommendations to restructure and enhance the CST, and strengthen organisational arrangements designed to reduce burglary and antisocial behaviour (see details above).
- 66 Progress on delivery of the action plan has been slow. Little progress was achieved until summer 2004. Since then, the focus of attention has been on enhancing the CST with some action to support developments in addressing antisocial behaviour. A number of key actions have failed to meet identified deadlines. An internal audit report, commissioned as part of a review of all on-going best value reviews, has produced an amber assessment, indicating a failure to meet targets. Action to remedy the failure has been deferred, priority being given to other projects.

Government office self assessment

- 67 The partnership self assessment generated an improvement/action plan addressing key areas of weakness including partnership structure, performance management and the development of a communication strategy. The draft improvement plan covers a period of approximately 12 months through to April 2005, the start of the new community strategy and contains some key milestone targets.
- 68 The improvement plan has not been progressed.

External reviews – crime concern and the Audit Commission

- 69 The partnership and council have received additional recommendations from external reviewers around performance against the community safety agenda. In 2002 the Audit Commission completed a performance review of the council's work in the CDRP. This contained a number of key recommendations, including one identifying the need to reinforce performance management arrangements.
- 70 In October 2003, the partnership held an 'away-day' facilitated by Crime Concern, which focused on performance management.
- 71 Some progress is now evident from this work.

Will the council deliver the improvements?

- 72 Inspectors look for evidence that a council will deliver what it has set out in the improvement plan. We look for a track record of managing change within the council and, ideally, within the service itself. The plan should also have sufficient support from councillors, management, staff, service users and other stakeholders, particularly those responsible for delivering it.
- 73 The CDRP is approaching a period of significant change. Based on the findings of its ongoing crime audit, it has to launch its new three year strategy in spring 2005. To respond to previous difficulties in strategic management and to reflect the emerging proposals for the strategy, revisions to the organisational structure of the partnership are being considered. These proposals have been discussed but are generating concern and unease amongst some partners. Managing the risks associated with this transition will demand strong leadership and direction from the key partners, including the council.
- 74 The prospects for improving its community safety function and partnership involvement in this period of change is uncertain.
- 75 The council has a track record of responding positively to inspection reports and some recent developments suggest improvement is possible:
- ◆ it is now recognised that the CST has been under resourced. In a year of financial constraint, additional funds have been allocated. Plans to double staffing levels to ensure that the CDRP is adequately supported and that the council meets its statutory responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 are slowly being progressed;
 - ◆ the launch of the 'Together' programme, represents an initial step towards inter-departmental working on the antisocial behaviour agenda;
 - ◆ the council's recently adopted business planning guidelines emphasise that community safety issues should be considered in all future service plans;
 - ◆ performance management in the CDRP, an area consistently identified as requiring attention, is improving but has yet to progress beyond the monitoring stage of development; and
 - ◆ since April 2004, crime trends for vehicle, burglary and robbery offences have been downward.

- 76 However, there are significant reasons for questioning how well the council is placed to respond to this demand. These include:
- ◆ senior council officer commitment to the CDRP has been inadequate resulting in a failure to demonstrate the community leadership expected of a key strategic partner;
 - ◆ the strategic management of the community safety function in the council is fragmented and distributed across three corporate divisions. This complexity is not well understood. The lack of a clear champion has significant potential to hinder progress;
 - ◆ changes in the organisational management arrangements for the council's community safety function have hindered improvement. In recent years, the CST has endured a number of changes in line management. This discontinuity has resulted in lost focus whilst new managers and directors become acquainted with new responsibilities;
 - ◆ although the improvement plans arising from the CDRP self assessment are now showing some progress, the council has a poor track record of promptly progressing the findings of reviews of its community safety function. Monitoring processes have had no impact; and
 - ◆ since April 2004, the instances of violent and sexual offences have been increasing.

Summary

- 77 The council's prospects for improving its contribution to community safety in Leicester are uncertain. Efforts invested in reviewing the community safety arrangements have produced improvement plans and there is some evidence of actions being progressed. However, the delivery of improvement has not been consistently and vigorously pursued. Whilst it is now recognised that the CST has been under resourced and this is being addressed, there are significant leadership, direction and strategic management weaknesses that undermine confidence in the council's ability to deliver and support improvement when the CDRP is trying to manage substantial change. Against this background, success in reducing crime rates is mixed.

Appendices

The purpose of a best value inspection is to make two judgements. The first is how good is the service being inspected? The second is what are the prospects for improvement? We carried out a range of activities to enable us to reach our judgements.

Documents reviewed

Before going on site and during our visit, we reviewed various documents that the council provided for us. These included:

- ◆ Best Value Performance Plan 2004;
- ◆ Community Plan;
- ◆ Community Safety Strategy 2002/05;
- ◆ Best value Review – interim report 2002, Year Three Review and final report February 2004 with action plan;
- ◆ Corporate Directors Board papers 2003/04;
- ◆ Minutes from community safety partnership meetings 2003/04;
- ◆ Service Plans for Community Safety Team 2003/04, Environment and Regeneration 2004/05;
- ◆ Community Safety a corporate priority – report to cabinet September 2004;
- ◆ Leicester Partnership Against Crime and Disorder self assessment and improvement plan;
- ◆ District Audit Report 2002/03;
- ◆ Crime Concern Report 2002;
- ◆ Crime Concern Partnership Development Day report October 2003;
- ◆ Performance Monitoring reports to LPACD 1st and 2nd quarter 2004;
- ◆ Assorted leaflets on crime issues;
- ◆ Local policing Plan;
- ◆ New Walks Reassurance project briefs;
- ◆ YOT Business Plan; and
- ◆ Crime and Disorder Audit (draft) 2004.

Reality checks undertaken

When we went on site we carried out a number of different checks, building on the work described above, in order to get a full picture of how good the service is. These on-site reality checks were designed to gather evidence about what it is like to use the service and to see how well it works. We also followed up on issues relating to the management of the review and the improvements flowing from it. Our reality checks included:

- ◆ New Parks Reassurance Project;
- ◆ CCTV control room;
- ◆ city centre walk through;
- ◆ night time economy visit; and
- ◆ environmental observations.

List of people interviewed

We met a range of people involved with the service.

Head of Transport Leicester City Council

Head of Street Cleaning Leicester City Council

Leader of Leicester City Council

Corporate Director Regeneration and Culture

Head of Licensing

Manager YOT

CDRP Anti Social Behaviour

ASB Co-ordinator

City Centre Commander

Corporate Director Health and Social Care

Leicestershire Fire and Rescue

Director of Housing

Manager DAAT

Ass. Chief of Probation

Racial Equality Council

Domestic Violence Co-ordinator

Head of Regeneration, Leicester City Council

Head of Community Safety, Leicester City Council

BVR Lead Officer and Head of Regeneration

CDRP Manager

CDRP and City Commander

Witness Cocoon

H/O Regeneration Policy

Director PCT

CDRP City Centre Chair

City Council Community Safety Team - Focus Group

City Council Heads Of Service - Focus Group

New Parks Reassurance Project - Focus Group

Improving public services

The Government has placed a duty upon local councils to deliver services to clear standards – of cost and quality – by the most economic, efficient and effective means available². Best value is a challenging framework that is designed to improve local services. Councils are required to assess their own performance and put in place measures to ensure continuous improvement in all of their services.

Councils must show that they have applied the 4Cs of best value:

- ◆ **challenging** why and how a service is being provided;
- ◆ **comparing** their performance with others' (including organisations in the private and voluntary sectors);
- ◆ embracing fair **competition** as a means of securing efficient and effective services; and
- ◆ **consulting** local **taxpayers**, customers and the wider business community.

The Government has decided that each council should be scrutinised by an independent inspectorate. The Audit Commission performs this role.

The purpose of the inspection, and of this report, is to:

- ◆ enable the public to see whether best value is being delivered;
- ◆ enable the council to see how well it is doing;
- ◆ enable the Government to see how well its policies are working in practice;
- ◆ identify failing services where remedial action may be necessary; and
- ◆ identify and disseminate best practice.

² This report has been prepared by the Audit Commission ('the Commission') following an inspection under Section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, and issued in accordance with its duty under Section 13 of the 1999 Act.