

Isle of Wight Council

Organisational Assessment

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of local public services

Isle of Wight Council

Overall, Isle of Wight Council performs adequately

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

Description of scores:

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

Summary

Overall the Isle of Wight Council performs adequately. Some things are being done well and are making a difference for people in the Island. These include looking after the care needs of older people and making sure that the Island is safe and well kept. Other things such as children's educational achievement and affordable housing, especially for rural areas, are not yet as good.

The Council recognises that some areas for improvement require more decisive action and is showing leadership in driving forward a challenging programme to tackle some deep-rooted issues. It is making steady progress in major long term projects such as school reorganisation, modernisation of the fire and rescue service and a scheme to improve roads.

A fair response has been made to the recession, including making sure people do not become homeless and providing access to advice and information. The Council is making limited progress with reducing its carbon footprint and coming up with long term plans for when its waste landfill site is full. The Planning Service is improving and it is making decisions faster.

The Council is making a good contribution to the health and well being of residents. The Care Quality Commission has rated the Council's adult social care services as performing well. The Council has helped to increase independence and reduce the care needs of people in their homes. It is effective in reducing homelessness but is not delivering enough affordable homes. It is helping to improve health through the provision of leisure services but facilities need improving.

The Council is performing well in making sure the island is safe and well kept.

Beaches and parks are well-maintained and roads and public spaces are kept clean and tidy. Roads are in poor condition but there are plans in place to address this. The Council works well with community safety partners to keep crime levels low and dealing with illegal drug use is a particular strength. Reducing domestic violence remains a challenge.

Ofsted has rated the Council's children's services as adequate. The overall effectiveness of most services and schools inspected by Ofsted is good or better, however performance in education and social care is mixed. Performance against most national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with or above similar areas. But children's education results in primary and secondary schools are below average and are not improving fast enough. To address this, the Council is on track with ambitious plans to reorganise schools across the Island. The adult and community learning service is good.

Capacity to deliver improvement is mixed. The management structure has been streamlined to improve focus on delivery and performance, and extra staff have been brought in to deliver some key priorities, such as the major highways project. But senior manager vacancies and difficulties of recruiting some key posts mean that capacity is stretched in some areas. Some corporate plans are not yet fully developed or explicit.

The Council's use of its resources has been assessed as adequate. It has satisfactory arrangements for managing its finances, and is good at medium term financial planning. Asset management has improved with the introduction of a strategic plan. Steady progress is being made in implementing plans to transform the way the Council operates. However not all targets have been met and improved processes such as for the capital programme and project management are not yet fully effective.

About Isle of Wight Council

The Isle of Wight is a rural island located about five miles from the south coast of England. Most of the coastline is of natural conservation interest and half of the island is within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The population of 140,000 is mostly white and over a quarter are over 65 years old. With no higher education on the island, many young people leave to study on the mainland and do not return. People's health is mixed and there are pockets of inequality. For example, life expectancy for both men and women living in more deprived areas is around five years lower than for those in more prosperous areas.

Average wages are a third lower than the regional average and unemployment is high. More than half of the population live in the three main towns of Newport, Ryde and Cowes, which are the base for much of the economic activity on the island. The economy is dominated by service industries, with the public sector, retailing and tourism as the main sources of employment. Over three million tourists visit the island annually, with the main resorts being Ryde, Sandown, Shanklin and Ventnor. The island also has three prisons holding around 1700 prisoners.

The Council is led by the Conservatives who hold 24 of the 40 seats. The remainder are held by 5 Liberal Democrats, 1 Labour and 10 Independents.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2008-11 includes five themes, the first four of which link to the Eco Island community strategy:

A thriving Island;

- A healthy and supportive Island;
- A safe and well-kept Island;
- An inspiring Island; and
- Modernising the Council.

Organisational assessment

How well is the organisation delivering its priority services, outcomes and improvements that are important to local people?

A thriving Island

The Council has taken reasonable action to lessen the impact of the recession, recognising that it has limited power to make a difference. It has lobbied the government over job losses at a major employer. It has set up an anti-poverty group to bring together other agencies and welfare groups to help the public and work closely with companies facing large job losses. It has issued a helpful booklet for residents. This offers information about dealing with debt, managing personal budgets, benefits available, employment issues, and a list of organisations that can help. Homelessness has reduced and people have been helped to keep their homes. The benefit claim workload has risen significantly and the Council has increased the resources to deal with it. This is enabling the revenue and benefits service to continue to perform well - the average times for processing new benefit claims and changes of circumstances have both reduced in spite of the extra work.

The Council, as part of the Island Strategic Partnership, aims to have the smallest carbon footprint in England by 2020 but this is progressing slowly. It has set out clear aims and actions in its carbon management plan and has demonstrated its commitment by employing a dedicated energy manager. A leading energy supplier is supporting the provision of subsidised home insulation from October 2009. However, a number of improvements have been delayed and there are no agreed baseline figures against which to measure future carbon reductions.

The Council's planners provide a fair service that is getting better. The service was inspected in 2008 and was judged to be providing a fair service with uncertain prospects for improvement. Since the inspection the service has improved its performance on appeals, minor and other planning applications

but performance on major applications has worsened. Progress is being made in improving enforcement of planning decisions but published performance standards are not yet being met and the backlog of cases remains long. An efficient planning service is important in keeping the economy moving forward, especially during a recession.

The Council is making limited progress on improving how it manages waste. Public satisfaction is good for refuse collection and recycling centres. The combined recycling and composting level is high though the recycled element is relatively low and not improving. Operational problems with the new gasification plant have led to key targets being missed in 2008/09. The percentage of waste used to recover energy is less than half previous levels and the volume of waste sent to landfill has risen by almost half in the last three years, to 63 per cent. The overall amount of waste produced remains high. When the gasification plant has been working at full capacity it has shown it can make a difference. However, on its own it is not seen as a long term solution and as landfill capacity runs out in 2015 a long term strategy is needed.

A healthy and supportive Island

The Council provides good social care services for adults. The Commission for Social Care Inspection has judged the service to be 'performing well'. The service has increased its focus on helping people to look after themselves after leaving hospital through staff training and provision of 24-hour cover. This has helped to increase independence and reduce the care needs of people in their homes. The service is making a helpful contribution to national policies through pilot projects such as the 'One Link' information prescription project for providing personalised information for everyone with a long term health or social care need. Another example is a study of social care for older prisoners being carried out at the Island's prison.

The Isle of Wight has done well in reducing homelessness and bringing private sector homes back into use. It is making good progress in reducing the use of temporary accommodation. The number of households in temporary accommodation has been cut by almost half over the last year, to 135 in June 2009. The average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation has reduced from 6.5 weeks to 5.8 weeks in the last year.

The Island has a good record for ensuring new house building but has not delivered enough affordable housing. In the three years to 1 April 2008, only 16 per cent of new homes on the Island have been low-cost, and in 2008/09 only 89 were delivered against a target of 130. Affordable homes in rural areas are a particular need but only 14 units have been built in the last five years. However a small scheme is planned for Brighstone and, after partner funding was withdrawn, the Council is continuing to wholly fund an officer to work with rural communities to identify housing needs and investigate possible solutions.

The Council is showing determination in trying to maintain momentum for housing development during the recession after a major developer withdrew from the Pan development. The Council has applied for kick start funding to construct the initial infrastructure that the developer was unable to deliver. It is also applying for detailed planning permission to make the site more

attractive to new developer partners. The aim is to ensure that 1000 houses are delivered with 30 per cent affordable and green design principles incorporated.

The Council provides good access to leisure activities to support healthy living. It operates a GP referral scheme with increasing participation. Junior swimming has increased as a result of free swimming and concessionary cards have improved leisure access for people on benefits. It is helping to deliver a new PCT funded initiative to improve cardiovascular health of individuals in targeted wards and currently 125 people are taking part. The 'return to sport' scheme has succeeded in getting 520 adults to take part. Also, the MEND programme is in place to reduce obesity.

However, the condition of leisure facilities needs to be better to deliver health improvement. The Council has recognised that leisure centres are not well-maintained. Deteriorating condition and lack of a fully funded preventative maintenance programme has led to an increasing number of unplanned closures, reducing residents' access to leisure and resulting in a loss of income. The Council is responding to this with a two year improvement programme costing £8 million.

A safe and well-kept Island

The Island is well-kept by the Council. It maintains its beaches well. It has 14 awards from Keep Britain Tidy (two prestigious Blue Flags and 12 Quality Coast Awards) which puts it joint top in the country. It has also achieved a Green Flag Award for Appley Park, one of 13 parks it maintains. Litter, graffiti and fly-posting levels are all at low levels.

The Council is performing well in keeping the Island safe. Overall crime levels are low, particularly as the figures do not take account of the large number of visitors to the Island. The overall volume of crime fell by 9 per cent in 2008/09, which was better than average. Most separate crime categories also improved and targets for domestic burglary and criminal damage were achieved (the latter for the first time in a number of years).

The Council is performing particularly well on reducing illegal drug use. The Council's Drug Action Team is providing excellent treatment services - part of the Drug Strategy which seeks to reduce drug related violence and crime. The National Treatment Agency has assessed the IoW partnership as one of the top two performing partnerships in the south east region. Numbers of people in effective treatment are ahead of target and completion rates are very good. Waiting times are excellent. However in a recent survey children and young people reported slightly more experience of drug and alcohol misuse than the national average. Partners are also highly effective in making the Island a 'no go' area for drug dealers. There have been a number of successful enforcement operations. For example action targeting drug abusers committing burglary to support their habit resulted in 960 arrests and 1202 drug seizures.

Assaults with less serious injury have not reduced. This is partly due to insufficient progress on domestic violence which represents about a third of the total. The Council has recognised the need for action: it has set up a specialist domestic violence abuse court and taken out a one year contract

with an experienced charity to help it to improve. Renewed efforts are being made to recruit a domestic violence coordinator after a number of unsuccessful attempts.

The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership is working better after a review in 2008. In the last year it has delivered a number of successful projects and campaigns such as SmartWater pilot, Not in My Neighbourhood Week, Thumbs Up, Know Your Limits campaigns and the MADCAP project. It has adopted a Partnership Communication Strategy to reduce fear of crime, which is high in comparison to actual crime levels. The Council works well with partners to share information and knowledge. It has introduced Environment and Neighbourhoods Officers (ENOs) to provide a uniformed presence across the whole of the Island, liaising closely with the Police, other council services and local representatives. This provides a good understanding of local areas and has helped to identify hot spots of anti-social behaviour. Flexible action is taken according to circumstances. For example the provision of a youth shelter and opening an after-school club at Freshwater has helped to reduce the number of problems reported.

The Council is making good progress in delivering its plans to improve transport. Strong areas include bus punctuality; ease of travel into Newport; travel planning in partnership with St Mary's hospital; cycle training; travel to schools; road safety and air quality. However, progress is not matching the Council's Eco-Island aims in terms of congestion, cycling and walking and there have been delays in constructing the Ryde Interchange.

The Council is making steady progress with long term plans to improve the condition of roads, which currently is poor. The Council has established the team and governance structure it needs to deliver to deliver its ambitious highway maintenance programme and is on track in submitting the necessary business case to the Government. However, targets to improve the condition of roads and footways in 2008/09 were not achieved due to delays to contracts for planned work.

The Council is improving its extensive provision of public conveniences. There is very wide coverage, with facilities provided at 70 locations on the Island, although more than a third do not have access for wheelchair users. The Council is continuing a programme of work to update facilities to modern and sustainable standards. Two of the Council's new eco toilets at have been given a four star rating in the National Loo of the Year awards.

An inspiring Island

The overall effectiveness of most services and schools inspected by Ofsted is good or better, however performance in education and social care is mixed. Most children get off to a good start in life. A high proportion of childminder, childcare and nursery provision is good or better and is above the average found in similar areas and nationally. The performance of the island's schools is mixed. Primary schools are mostly good. While none are inadequate, too many secondary schools are no better than satisfactory. In contrast, special schools and pupil referral units are all good. Post-16 provision is mixed. The general further education college is outstanding. Three of the six school sixth forms are only satisfactory and provision overall is not as good as the average found in similar areas and nationally. The fostering and adoption services are

satisfactory. The serious case review completed in 2009 was inadequate.

Performance against most national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is in line with or above similar areas and the national figures. However the council does not perform well in all areas. Standards are low in primary and secondary schools and not improving fast enough. The difference in outcomes between the majority of children and young people and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable is too wide. Staying safe indicators show areas of weak performance including the proportion of assessments and reviews completed on time for children in need and those in need of protection.

The Council is on track with ambitious plans to reorganise schools across the Island. The final stage of the decision-making process is now underway following the publication of 64 legal notices seeking representations from the public. School reorganisation is a key Council project that is intended to improve children's achievement at school which is currently mixed - although most children get a good start in early years' education, achievement of the expected level of English and Maths by age 11 is well below average and was among the lowest in the country in 2008. Achievement at age 16 is also well below average.

The Council is providing a good adult and community learning service. The service contracts with Hampshire and Isle of Wight Learning and Skills Council to provide family literacy, language and numeracy programmes, together with neighbourhood learning in deprived communities. In 2007/08 1,356 learners took arts, crafts and performing arts courses while 549 were engaged in family learning courses. An Ofsted inspection in 2009 found that the overall effectiveness of the Isle of Wight Council's adult and community learning is good, with some outstanding aspects such as family learning.

The Youth Service does not currently meet the needs of young people. This is what young people have told the Council, which is consulting on options for change. The cost of the Youth Service is above average and it reaches only 16 per cent of young people out of buildings that are not accessible and expensive to run.

Modernising the Council

The Council is making progress in carrying out its plans to improve the way it operates. The business systems improvement project was implemented on schedule in April. The Island Strategic Partnership Observatory has gone live, giving organisations providing public services the ability to share demographic and other information on the Island. A flexible working policy has been introduced together with new strategies for ICT, value for money and organisational development. However, these are relatively recent and have yet to make a significant impact. Only a third of the strategic programme was reported as being on target in 2008/09 compared to a Council target of 95 per cent. Limited resources present a risk to the successful delivery of the first phase of improvements.

Asset management has improved and is now meeting minimum requirements. The Council has recently approved a strategic asset management plan. It is progressing with building condition surveys to enable it to better deliver its

objectives. It has agreed a policy to transfer property assets to community or voluntary groups to make better use of property for the wider community. This has been used to support a shopmobility scheme in Newport. Better use is being made of the offices at County Hall as part of a rationalisation programme. In spite of these changes the condition of the Council's property remains poor. The backlog of maintenance work has increased from £45 million in 2008 to £53 million in 2009. This backlog is a very high level which represents about a quarter of the current value of the property, although about 75 per cent is in schools, which are affected by reorganisation plans.

The Council has taken action to address continuing poor delivery of the capital programme. Due to slow spending, the original budget for 2008/09 was cut during the year from £60.3 million to £44.2 million but at the end of the year only £22.5 million was spent. This means that the full planned benefits from capital spending, such as improvements to roads were not experienced by the public. To improve the situation the Council has revised the capital programme to make it more realistic and achievable.

Performance management continues to develop but needs to get better still. Performance measurement and monitoring of indicators is effective but more can be done to evaluate performance better, making more use of trends and comparative data to determine whether performance is good or not. Also the performance monitoring of strategic actions could be more effective. The Council is addressing this by an increased focus on identifying actions needed to improve performance.

The Council is not providing a satisfactory response to complaints received by the Local Government Ombudsman. The Council's average speed of response to complaints being investigated by the Ombudsman in 2008/09 was slower than the previous year and at 39 days is well over the requested maximum time of 28 days. In the same year, only nine per cent of unitary councils across the country took more than 36 days. As a result the Ombudsman asked the Council to review its procedures, which has now been done.

Does the organisation have the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver future improvements?

The Council is showing good leadership in driving forward a challenging programme of change to tackle some deep-rooted issues that have held back performance in key areas. Most of the changes, such as school reorganisation, fire modernisation and highways improvements are not short-term fixes, they require long term commitment and significant investment. The Council has been resolute in the face of strong public interest and has shown it is willing to take tough decisions such as the closure of schools and fire stations.

The Council's capacity to deliver all of its priorities is mixed. It has brought in extra resources to deliver some priorities but resources are stretched in other areas. The management structure has been streamlined to improve focus on delivery and performance. Strategic direction has been limited due to the high turnover of senior managers which has led to a continued reliance on interim external managers and acting internal managers to fill key strategic positions.

Extra staff have been brought in to deliver some key priorities, such as setting up teams to reorganise schools and pursue the highways PFI bid. The capacity of the fire and rescue service is being improved by the modernisation programme. However capacity is stretched to deliver other priorities and lack of resources is often the stated reason for deadlines being missed such as for the safeguarding action plan. Almost one in ten posts have been vacant for more than six months, partly to save costs. Some specialist roles have been difficult to fill such as a domestic violence coordinator and a crime data analyst. Also, the Council recognises that resources to promote sustainability are insufficient within the current economic climate, for example there has been a lack of capacity to develop green travel plans and other initiatives.

The Council's plans are not all fully developed or explicit. The Corporate Plan 2008-11 was reviewed in March 2009 and is due to be updated again to reflect the priorities being followed after the June 2009 election. The plan currently lacks sufficient targets against which outcomes can be measured. The Island Plan Core Strategy is not yet agreed. The Planning Inspector appointed to examine the strategy has expressed a number of concerns and has suspended the process for six months to allow the Council to consider them.

The Council's performance in its use of resources has been assessed as adequate. It has satisfactory arrangements for managing its finances, and is effective at medium term financial planning.

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

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