



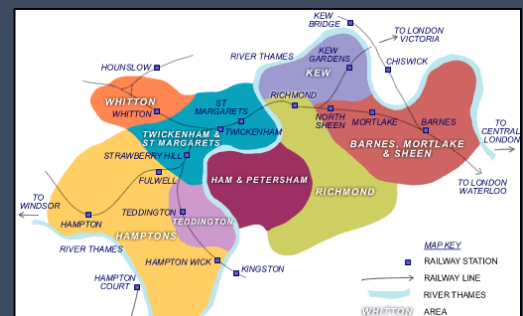
Accountants &
business advisers

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Council

Annual Audit Letter 2008/09

Report to Members

December 2009



*Local Public
Services*

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Code of Audit Practice and Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission contains an explanation of the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports and letters prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body and no responsibility is taken by auditors to any Member or officer in their individual capacity or to any third party.

Executive summary

Accounts

Statement of Accounts	We issued an unqualified opinion on the Council's accounts on 30 September 2009.
IFRS transition	The Council has developed a project plan and assessed the high level impact on budgets following the implementation of IFRS although detailed modelling on budgets has not yet been completed.

Use of resources

Managing finances	Assessed at Level 3 performing well. Financial planning arrangements are effective, there is a good understanding of relative costs and performance, and strong financial reporting arrangements. In response to the default risks following the failure of Icelandic banks, the Council amended its treasury management strategy following updated guidance issued by CIPFA.
Governing the business	Assessed at Level 2 performing adequately. There are good arrangements for understanding the needs of the community although commissioning strategies should be strengthened. The Council has plans to manage the impact on budgets of long term care for vulnerable people and has been successful in implementing self-directed support. There is little health inequality across the borough. Data quality arrangements require strengthening and further progress is required to improve the assurance processes associated with the reporting of performance data across many services. Governance arrangements and risk management arrangements are sound.
Managing resources	Assessed at Level 3 performing well. Arrangements for managing the Council's use of natural resources are effective. However, asset management could be improved through greater use of efficiency metrics and developing an integrated approach to use of assets with all partner organisations.
Overall assessment	The overall use of resources assessment was scored at Level 3 .

Value for money conclusion

Value for money	Based on the use of resources assessment at Level 3 performing well, we concluded that the Council has adequate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.
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Organisational assessment

Overall assessment	The Council has been assessed at overall Level 3 performing well based on the use of resources assessment at Level 3 and the Managing performance assessment at Level 3. The assessment found that the Council continues to provide high performing service and made progress with its corporate priorities.
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Introduction

About the Council

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Council is located in south-west London and is the only London borough spanning both sides of the Thames with a river frontage of over 21 miles.

The population is one of the wealthiest in London and many residents enjoy a very high standard of living. However, there are parts of the borough where people live in relative poverty. Richmond is well-known for its large number of parks, nature reserves, village greens and tourist attractions. These include Richmond Hill, the Thames floodplain, Kew Gardens, Richmond Park and two other Royal parks. The world-famous Hampton Court Palace and Twickenham stadium, home of the Rugby Football Union, are also in the borough. Its major town centres are Richmond, Twickenham and Teddington. As the only London borough divided by the River Thames, the area could be at greater risk of flooding because of climate change.

About 186,000 people live in the borough and the population is growing and getting older. Around 12% of residents are from a black and minority ethnic background. This is low compared with London as a whole but numbers are growing, particularly among older residents. Compared to other London boroughs, many people are over 85 years old, but the proportion is similar to England as a whole. The number of younger adults in professional jobs is higher than the average for England.

The borough ranks 309 out of 354 local authorities in England for deprivation. Many residents are well-qualified, articulate and have high expectations of public services. The average wage in Richmond is approximately £46,500 and is much higher than both London and national averages. Most residents have jobs in finance, IT and other business activities and often work outside the borough. Richmond also has good transport connections to central London and many local people commute out of the borough to work. At the same time people who are not residents come to work in Richmond each day, largely in lower paid jobs.

Richmond is one of the healthiest places in the country and most residents live longer and suffer from far fewer major diseases than elsewhere. However, there is a significant gap in people's quality of life between the most and the least deprived areas. Demand for public services in the most deprived areas, which include Ham, Mortlake, Heathfield, Hampton, and Castelnau, is higher than elsewhere in the borough.

The purpose of this Letter

The purpose of this Letter is to summarise the key issues arising from the work that we have carried out during the year. Although this Letter is addressed to Members, it is also intended to communicate the significant issues we have identified, in an accessible format, to key external stakeholders, including members of the public. The Letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk and also on the Council's website at www.richmond.gov.uk.

We have separately reported the detailed findings from our audit work to the Council and a list of reports issued during the year are shown in the Appendix 1.

We have also included the summary report of the Council's Organisational Assessment for 2009 in Appendix 2. This work was undertaken by the Audit Commission and published on 9 December 2009.

Responsibilities of the auditors and the Council

We have been appointed as the Council's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing auditors to local public bodies in England.

As the Council's external auditors, we have a broad remit covering financial and governance matters. We target our work on areas which involve significant amounts of public money and on the basis of our assessment of the key risks to the Council achieving its objectives. It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Council is fulfilling these responsibilities.

The scope of our work

Our main responsibility as the appointed auditor is to plan and carry out an audit that meets the requirements of the Audit Commission's Code of Audit Practice (the Code). Under the Code, we are required to review and report on:

- the Council's financial statements
- whether the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Acknowledgement

Our aim is to deliver a high standard of audit which makes a positive and practical contribution that supports the Council's own agenda. We recognise the value of your co-operation and support and would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the assistance and co-operation provided during the course of the audit.

Key findings

Financial statements audit

We issued an unqualified opinion on the Council's accounts on 30 September 2009. Our opinion confirms that the accounts present fairly the financial position of the Council and its income and expenditure for the year.



No material errors were identified as a result of audit work. One non-material error of £280,000 was found regarding the estimation of the insurance claim provision due to incorrect information received by the Council from the insurance claims handlers. We have also suggested that the Council review the funds set aside for potential reimbursement of charges to clients for mental health care as all known claims have been settled.

The financial systems and internal controls were found to be adequate for recording transactions although some areas for improvement have been noted in the payroll system and the arrangements for generating payments under the new Self Directed Payments system require strengthening.

Transition to IFRS



CIPFA issued guidance on the adoption of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) in March 2009. The Statement of Recommended Practice 2010/11, based on IFRS, has recently been published, requiring local authorities to obtain information to restate the 1 April 2009 balance sheet, prepare for the restatement of the 2009/10 accounts, and to model the impact on budget requirements for 2010/11 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy when setting budgets.

The Council has developed a project plan for the implementation of IFRS and a working group was established in November 2009. A high level assessment of the potential impact on budgets has been undertaken but this has not yet modelled the detailed impact arising from changes in accounting policies. The Council considers that any significant accounting changes will not impact on taxpayers or funding requirements as these will be off-set by compensating reserve adjustments put in place through legislation.

Finance and property staff have identified that further work is required around analysing plant, property and equipment, review of leases, annual leave and flexi-time commitments, group accounts and the education and social care PFI schemes. In order to comply with Treasury Whole of Government Accounts returns, the IFRS accounting standards have been adopted one year early and is likely to result in the PFI schemes being recorded on-balance sheet in the 2009/10 accounts.

Use of resources



From 2008/09 the use of resources assessment has been revised and forms part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment. The new assessment considers how well organisations are managing and using their resources to deliver value for money and better, sustainable outcomes for local people.

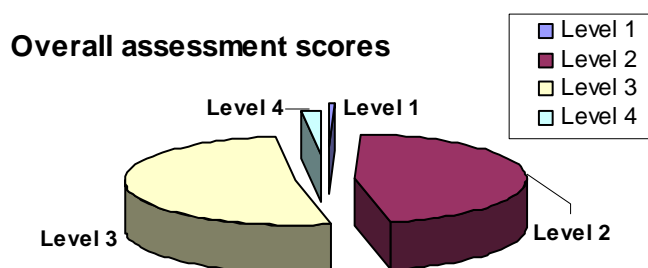
The assessment comprises three themes that focus on Managing Finances, Governing the Business and Managing Resources. Each theme consists of a number of key lines of enquiry (KLOE) that form the areas of audit focus and auditors are required to score organisations against each of the KLOE.

The new use of resources approach is more demanding than previous assessments. The KLOE are more strategic and broadly based than previously and embrace wider resource issues, such as workforce planning and in future will include the use of natural resources. The assessment also focuses more on value for money achievements, outputs and outcomes rather than on processes. Partnership, equalities and data quality themes run throughout the KLOEs.

Overall assessment

The Council was assessed as overall **Level 3** performing well.

Nationally, 1% of Single Tier and County Councils including GLA, LDA and TfL London functional bodies (STCC) were assessed as Level 1, 46% at Level 2, **51% at Level 3**, and 2% at Level 4.

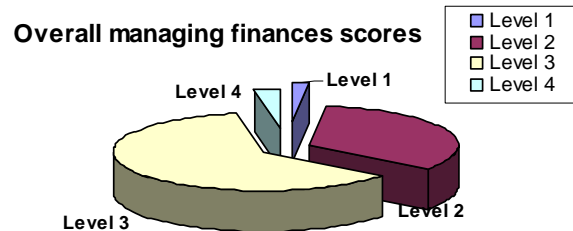


The key findings from our review of each theme, along with detailed work that we have undertaken against good practice guidance on specific focus areas, are reported as follows.

Managing finances

Managing finances	Assessment
Financial planning	Level 3
Understanding costs	Level 3
Financial reporting	Level 3

The managing finances theme has been assessed overall at **Level 3** performing well. Nationally, 2% of STCC were assessed at Level 1, 33% at Level 2, **62% at Level 3**, and 3% at Level 4.



Financial planning

The financial planning processes are effective, demonstrating a clear thread from corporate planning to financial resource planning.

There is evidence of a shift in resources to priority areas such as care services, recycling, looked after children and investment in primary school places.

The Medium and Long Term Financial Strategy supports the Council’s corporate priorities and is regularly refreshed throughout the year. This is informed by good consultation with residents via Citizens’-Panels and targeted consultation sessions with residents are held to seek views on spending priorities and budgets.

However, there remain opportunities for better joint financial strategic planning with key partners to understand the total of available resources for the area.

As part of our review of financial planning, we also undertook a high level review of the Council’s arrangements for **setting fees and charges** against Audit Commission good practice in the *Positively charged* report.



The Council was noted in the report as demonstrating good practice through public consultation in implementing tiered charging on parking permits in relation to the level of air pollution of the vehicle. We consider that the arrangements for setting fees and charges are good and support the achievement of corporate priorities.

Following the collapse of the Icelandic banks in October 2008 the Audit Commission conducted a study to examine **treasury management** arrangements in local authorities. The resulting report *Risk and Return* was published in March 2009 and in this report the Audit Commission committed to asking auditors to follow up the lessons from the report. We reviewed the Council's response to the exposure risk of default of repayment on investments. At 31 March 2009, the Council had £68.2 million in investments including £24.1 million held with maturity of greater than one year. The investments were held in banks, building societies and other local authorities. The Council had no exposure to Icelandic banks.



The Council reviewed its treasury management strategy immediately following the Icelandic banks collapse and again in January 2009 in response to guidance issues by CIPFA. The Council has a low-risk appetite for investments, and favours security of the counter-party over higher rates of return in light of current economic conditions.

There is clear and regular reporting to Members on the strategy and investments held. Approved counter-party schedules are reviewed six-monthly and updated as necessary following ratings-watch bulletins from rating agencies. At the time of the review, the Council had adequate resources in place to manage treasury management but was in the process of recruiting a vacant Treasury Manager post.

Understanding costs

The Council has a good understanding of its costs and regularly compares performance to other councils. Comparative performance with similar councils demonstrates that services are generally low cost, providing good levels of performance and some of the highest satisfaction levels in the country.

The Council has a good track record of exceeding its efficiency savings from an already low cost base and has achieved savings of £4.8 million in 2008/09 against a target of £4.5 million. It plans to achieve lowest quartile for costs in all areas while maintaining high performance scores. Areas of higher costs reflect corporate priorities.

Further efficiencies may be available by exploring shared service arrangements and obtaining a detailed understanding of unit and transaction costs for back office and administration services.

Financial reporting

Financial reporting arrangements are good. Detailed monthly financial monitoring is undertaken at service level and corporate level and financial performance at service level is challenged. Performance management could be further improved through the greater integration of performance information and financial information, linked to strategic objectives. This should allow Members to use performance information to effectively challenge overall performance across key services. The Council has performed strongly for many years in the preparation of accurate accounts and financial reporting.

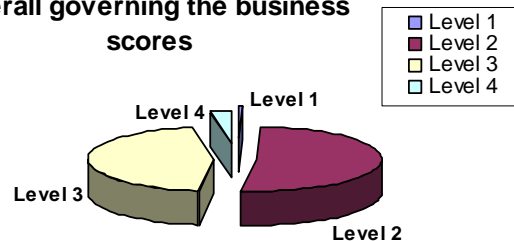
The Council publishes an Annual Report that includes general commentary on performance and summary financial information. To demonstrate best practice in public accountability, this could be improved by the inclusion of a balanced Operating and Financial Review statement to report on financial and operational performance. This should be compared to what the Council set out to achieve in the year, such as performance against the strategic priorities and key performance indicators.

Governing the business

Governing the business	Assessment
Commissioning and procurement	Level 2
Use of information	Level 2
Good governance	Level 3
Risk management and internal control	Level 3

The governing the business theme has been assessed overall at **Level 2** adequate performance. Nationally, 1% of STCC were assessed at Level 1, **51% at Level 2**, 45% at Level 3, and 3% at Level 4.

Overall governing the business scores



Commissioning and procurement

The Council has provided good examples of innovative commissioning and procurement at service level and overall arrangements are adequate. However, further work is required to strengthen arrangements at a corporate level to realise the benefits of effective commissioning across the Council. Procurement strategies also require updating to take into account good practice.

The Community Plan’s long-term vision for the future has been developed from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JNSA) and stakeholder consultation. However, the JNSA should be used to drive forward long term commissioning plans and partnership objectives, and to align resources and priorities around the areas of greatest need. There is also an opportunity for greater involvement of people who use services, partners and potential suppliers in the design of services to ensure that these continue to meet needs.

We also found that there is scope for improving the contract monitoring arrangements, with the contracts register found not to have been complete and contract standing orders having not been updated since July 2006. Officers are currently addressing these issues.

As part of our review of commissioning, we also undertook a high level review the Council's arrangements for managing **access to social healthcare services** and the impact on costs from an ageing population against the Improvement and Development Agency good practice toolkit *Making ends Meet*.



We noted that the Council works closely with the local Primary Care Trust to ensure that social care provision does not result in additional pressures on long term care budgets for vulnerable people. There are a number of actions which have been taken to improve social healthcare within the borough along with plans to reduce social healthcare demand in the longer term.

The Council has piloted self directed support for people in need of care services and has one of the highest take-up rates in London. The service aims to allow those needing care to dictate their own specific needs, to enable them to achieve safe and independent living, and therefore reduce the long term cost of their situation for the Council. The number of people admitted to hospital, and the subsequent time spent in hospital, are both decreasing.

We have also reviewed the Council's progress in understanding and **reducing health inequalities** across the borough including a high level review against the Audit Commission's *Improving health and well-being* toolkit. It should be noted that there are still some improvements that can be made such as reducing inequalities within deprived wards within the borough, where a man in the least deprived ward in the borough has an estimated life expectancy of 80.2 years compared to a man within the most deprived ward who has a life expectancy of 75.7 years.



However, we found that the Council is strongly committed to working with partners to identify and reduce health inequalities. A review of the Health Profile 2009 confirmed strong performance and low levels of health inequality. Mortality rates, heart disease and strokes, and early deaths from cancer have shown a downward trend over the last ten years. In the health analysis in the 2009 Government Office for London profile, the Council also ranks highly for many of the indicators, including top performance for low-obesity within primary school age children.

Further reduction in health inequalities will require greater co-ordination of activities with partners through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and require co-ordinated and concerted efforts to achieve Government targets.

Use of information

Adequate systems are in place for the use of information and for the collection, recording, analysis and reporting of data used to monitor performance. However, quality assurance arrangements at service level require improvement including documenting the processes and controls for reporting key performance information and implementation of action plans.

We also noted that information for some areas was not supported by formal systems for assuring external or third party data used by the Council.

Our testing of a sample of performance indicators also noted minor errors in the reported sickness absence days for staff on long term absence.

Good governance

Governance arrangements are considered to be effective. There are good working relationships between officers and Members and a high take up of ethical training for Members. The Leader of the Council chairs the Local Strategic Partnership and provides a clear vision for community priorities for the Council. The Council conducted a review of the leadership of the LSP which resulted in a number of improvements to improve governance arrangements.

There is further opportunity to improve governance arrangements by developing individual Member training plans and more work is needed on how partnerships address equality issues.

Risk management and internal control

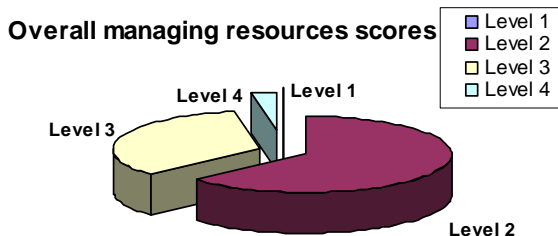
The Council’s risk management and internal control arrangements are good. There is an effective corporate risk management strategy and risk registers are in place for key partnerships. Internal Audit has undertaken a gap analysis against the CIPFA Red Book to assess the risk from fraud and corruption and the fraud risk register informs a series of proactive fraud checks.

Arrangements should be further improved with the implementation of the integrated performance and risk management system currently in development.

Managing resources

Managing resources	Assessment
Natural resources	Level 3
Asset management	Level 2
Workforce	N/A

The managing resources theme has been assessed overall at **Level 3** performing well. Nationally, 63% of STCC were assessed at Level 2, **34% at Level 3**, and 3% at Level 4.



The theme includes three KLOEs although only natural resources and asset management were assessed in 2008/09. The natural resources KLOE is the dominant weighted KLOE for the overall theme assessment in 2008/09.

Workforce will be reviewed in 2009/10 along with a refresh of the asset management assessment. Natural resources will not be assessed in 2009/10 and the current assessment score will be carried forward.

Natural resources

The Council has demonstrated that it has a clear commitment to sustainable use of natural resources and is performing well. The Corporate Plan has set a number of challenging targets for reducing the Council's energy consumption and making more efficient use of natural resources.

A Corporate Energy Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2009 and this drives a significant number of initiatives to reduce energy use such as installing solar powered parking machines and using cooking oil to fuel vehicles.

The Council has produced a good baseline assessment of energy consumed by assets and understands how this impacts on services. This information is captured in the management system which includes an inventory of all energy supplies to Council buildings and historic and current meter readings.

Across the borough, the levels of CO₂ emissions reflect a high level of consumption but there is also a high level of awareness of the impact that residents and businesses have on the environment. The Corporate Plan also includes community-based targets including reducing CO₂ emissions per capita in the local area by 10.8% by 2012 (on 2005 baseline) and reducing the amount of waste produced by each household to 553 kg per household in 2010/11 (from 679 kg in 2006/07).

However, to support the achievement of these targets, the Council should clearly link the information included in the management systems with the pipeline of planned initiatives. The impact of the initiatives should be modelled against planned CO₂ reductions and compared to target levels.

As part of our review of natural resources, we also undertook a high level review of the Council's arrangements for developing **sustainability strategies** against best practice guidance including the Government publication *Securing the future – delivering UK sustainable development strategy*.



The Council has established an Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee to oversee the natural and built environment, environmental services and transport services. The Sustainability Unit, set up in January 2007, acts to evaluate carbon management, manage energy consumption in Council buildings, promote affordable warmth to all residents and encourage action on climate change within the local community.

There are strategies in place to enhance sustainable development, including an Air Quality Action Plan and a Climate Change Strategy. These include clearly defined action plans for improvement, with measurable targets in place to be achieved by specified dates. The Council has demonstrated through its corporate priorities that sustainable development is taken seriously and is increasing public awareness of sustainable development issues within the borough.

However, while progress is encouraging, there are many examples of best practice in the guidance that the Council could adopt to further improve arrangements for sustainable development within the borough.

We also reviewed how the Council plans to improve **waste recycling rates**. Each year households in the borough produce 80,000 tonnes of waste and the Council has the fourth highest recycling rate in London at 41%. However, the Council has plans to achieve the highest recycling rate.



To further improve recycling rates, there are a wide number of schemes in place to allow people to give away unwanted items. These schemes have resulted in improved recycling rates in 2009 and projections for the full year suggests that waste will reduce to 584kg per household against target levels of 582kg.

It is acknowledged that achieving the 2010/11 target for recycled waste per household will be challenging and the Council will need to explore additional schemes and initiatives to achieve this.

Asset management

The Council has adequate arrangements for managing its assets. There is an Asset Management Working Group that has direct responsibility for implementing the Asset Management Plan and there are some examples of improving value for money in use of building assets. However, the Asset Management Plan was last updated September 2007 (although it is currently being updated) and the links between planned and building maintenance programmes and capital programmes need to be improved.

As part of our review of asset management, we also undertook a high level review the Council's current **Asset Management Plan** against guidance produced by the Audit Commission in the *Room for improvement – A review of strategic asset management in local government* report.



The Council has access to some benchmarking information on asset usage and efficiency metrics but this has not been regularly used to drive value for money in asset management. The Council should produce comprehensive and accurate information in relation to the asset base and develop benchmarking measures on asset condition, efficiencies and costs.

There is evidence of some joint asset planning with the PCT although further opportunities are available to develop an integrated approach to asset management with all partner organisations, to identify opportunities for shared use of property.

We found that the existing plan provides a strategic direction to asset management, but provides only limited operational guidance on how to implement strategies, and very little information on use of efficiency metrics for assessing value for money in asset usage. Councils should also be looking at innovative and new ways to provide services, including a fundamental review of the assets required to provide services.

Other areas of suggested improvements to the Asset Management Plan include: improving the knowledge of Council held estate, identifying areas for asset management improvement, act to motivate service managers who occupy property to use it economically, developing the capacity needed to successfully effect change, increase collaboration with local partners and actively seek opportunities presented by the recession.

Value for money conclusion

Taking into account our use of resources assessment, other reviews, and the findings of other inspectors we have concluded that adequate arrangements are in place to secure value for money. The value for money conclusion is not scored, unlike the use of resources assessment, and we are able to report an 'adequate' conclusion where the Council achieves at least Level 2 against each of the use of resources KLOEs.

We provided an unqualified value for money conclusion for the year ending 31 March 2009 on 30 September 2009.

Organisational assessment

The Audit Commission assesses the effectiveness of each council through an assessment of how well organisations deliver value for money in the use of resources and how well it manages its performance. The Audit Commission provides an overall organisational assessment for councils, based on the scores for the use of resources assessment and an assessment on how well councils manage their performance.

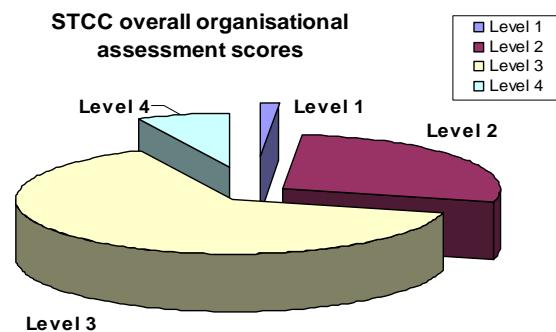
In assessing Managing Performance, the Audit Commission focuses on how effective a council is at:

- identifying and delivering priority services, outcomes and improvements
- improving the services and outcomes for which it is responsible
- contributing to improving wider community outcomes, including those set out in formal agreements such as LAAs or multi-area agreements
- tackling inequality and improving outcomes for people whose circumstances make them vulnerable
- providing the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver future improvements.

Overall assessment

The Council has been assessed at overall **Level 3** performing well based, on the use of resources assessment at Level 3 and the Managing performance assessment at Level 3.

Nationally, 1% of STCC were assessed at Level 1, 28% at Level 2, **64% at Level 3**, and 10% at Level 4.



Within London, one council was assessed at Level 1, two at Level 2, **24 at Level 3**, and 6 at Level 4.

The summary report of the Audit Commission's assessment has been included in Appendix 2. The summary and full versions can be accessed on the OnePlace website at <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk>

The assessment found that the Council has continued to provide high performing services and made progress with its corporate priorities. OFSTED has rated Children's Services as performing excellently and the Care Quality Commission has rated Adult Social Care as performing well. Councillors have a good understanding of the needs of the community and intend to refresh the community plan during 2010 to reflect the changing needs of the community. There is a strong focus on efficiency and the Council is developing its staff and managers to meet the challenges of the future by strengthening its workforce planning.

Appendix 1

Reports issued in relation to the 2008/09 audit

Report	Date Issued
Annual audit plan	May 2008
Annual governance report	September 2009
Use of resources report	December 2009
Organisational assessment	December 2009

Appendix 2

Audit Commission summary organisational assessment report

Overall Richmond upon Thames Council performs well. The Council has continued to provide high performing services and made progress with its priorities such as improving schools and maintaining a safe environment. Residents have the second highest level of satisfaction with their local area in London. Innovative schemes such as car parking charges based on emissions are encouraging more people to consider more environmentally friendly lifestyles.

Richmond remains one of the lowest crime boroughs in London and crime is falling further. Educational attainment is high and improving and vulnerable adults have very good choice and control over their care. The Council has met targets for providing affordable homes and parks and open spaces are well-maintained and have high levels of satisfaction.

The Council manages performance well and has scored 3 out of 4. Council services generally have high levels of satisfaction and have continued to improve their performance. The Council has adopted a clear planning strategy for future developments in the borough, earlier than many other authorities. This sets out how it will protect the borough's character and open spaces, balance the needs of different land uses, and meet residents' needs. The recycling level is high and the Council is considering how to reduce food waste going to landfill to achieve even higher levels. The Council is dealing with homelessness well and providing more affordable housing. Both crime and anti-social behaviour are tackled effectively by the police and the Council. Residents enjoy a very safe area and fear of crime continues to be a priority for improvement to provide the public with reassurance. The Council is tracking the impact of the recession on the area and working with partners to improve the way it supports the local economy and businesses.

The Council has strong political and managerial leadership and sound financial management. These provide clear direction to the Council, other public services, private businesses and voluntary and community groups. Councillors have a good understanding of the needs of the community. They plan to address these with partners through the community plan. This is to be reviewed during 2010 to reflect the changing needs of the community and will include specific targets to measure improvements.

The Council recognises the constraints of its funding situation and the increasing external pressures, and is maintaining a strong focus on efficiency, while also considering radical new ways of delivering its services. The Council is developing its staff and managers to meet the challenges of the future by strengthening its workforce planning.

OFSTED has rated the Children's services in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames as performing excellently. Children do well in their early years and at primary school. At age 16, the GCSE pass rate is above the national average but just below local targets. Children with special education needs are supported well and the gap in achievement between them and other children is

lower than in other areas. The Council provides outstanding services for children in the care of the Council, and those with physical or learning difficulties. Safeguarding the well-being of children, that is protecting them from abuse and harm, is also rated as outstanding.

The Care Quality Commission has rated the Council's adult social care as performing well. The Council is making good progress in providing people with greater independence and choice and control over the support and care services they receive. The arrangements with partner organisations to protect vulnerable adults from harm and abuse have been significantly improved.

The Council's use of resources is good and has scored 3 out of 4. This is because it provides good value for money for local people and has achieved its planned efficiency targets in recent years. The Council regularly reviews its costs and levels of performance. Its costs are among the lowest in London but it provides generally high quality services and with a high level of customer satisfaction. The Council is reducing energy use through a range of schemes, such as installing solar powered parking machines and using cooking oil to fuel vehicles. Arrangements for managing the Council's land, buildings and equipment are adequate and improving. It is reviewing the use of existing buildings and exploring further shared use of buildings with partners to deliver local services.

The summary and full versions can be accessed on the OnePlace website at <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk>