

Southampton City Council

Organisational Assessment

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of local public services

Southampton City Council

Overall, Southampton City Council performs well

Managing performance	3 out of 4
Use of resources	3 out of 4
Managing finances	3 out of 4
Governing the business	3 out of 4
Managing resources	3 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

Southampton City Council performs well. It has made very good progress on protecting the environment by making streets cleaner, reducing car use and reducing the amount of waste and carbon dioxide produced. It has expanded its innovative energy scheme, which provides heating and cooling for the city by using a sustainable, natural energy source beneath the city. It has made excellent progress on delivering affordable and decent housing, with 372 affordable homes built this year helping residents who cannot afford market-price housing. However, education results are mixed and Ofsted report that Southampton's children's services are performing adequately.

Southampton scores 3 out of 4 for managing its performance. The council is improving the economy and regeneration of the area by offering advice to local people and businesses and improving housing estates such as Thornhill. It has set up a jobs scheme to give apprenticeships to local people who find it hard to get employment. The speed and accuracy of benefits payments have continued to improve, and it has introduced initiatives and support for people who are unable to pay their rent or mortgage.

It continues to perform well with equality issues, helping to ensure more vulnerable people are not disadvantaged. For example it has increased bus travel to hospitals and improved its system for reporting racial incidents. The council has also worked with landlords to improve the standards of houses. Adult Social Care is rated as performing well by the Care Quality Commission.

The council manages its finances well in order to deliver its priorities. It scores 3 out of 4 for use of resources. It has effective reporting arrangements which helps it to maintain spending within budget. The council offers good value for money with its services, and saved £7.9 million last year. Costs are relatively low compared with other councils. Financial standing, risk and asset

management are sound, and this supports the achievement of long-term objectives. The council manages external funding well, receiving £15.6 million last year for various projects.

Political and managerial leadership is good. Councillors and officers work well together. Groups including partners have been set up by the council to address key challenges facing the city such as the local economy and carbon emissions. A councillor post for 'safeguarding children' has been created, giving the welfare of children a clear focus. It manages its risks well and maintains a good system of internal control. This helps it to deliver innovative projects effectively. It has a well-publicised awareness of fraud and corruption policies.

The council works well with partners and has many examples of how joint-working increases capacity. For example, through working together, the region has received £3.6 million in funding towards estate regeneration schemes to improve the quality of life for disadvantaged communities. The Safe City Partnership focuses on key issues of improving safety in neighbourhoods, tackling alcohol related harm and improving the safety of children and young people, which are tackled by all partners working together. The council has also worked with others to introduce an advert-based scheme used to allocate council and housing association homes for residents.

The council still has more work to do to address the city's issues, but is carrying out its plans to address these. It is working with partners to enhance cultural activities in the city and to secure the funding needed to deliver major regeneration schemes. Work to improve community safety continues to be successful, and most types of crime are reducing, but violent crimes are still too high. Education results are below average but are getting better and the council is working to effectively tackle the city's high number of young people not in employment, education or training. It is also working well with partners to reduce the high number of teenage pregnancies.

About Southampton City Council

Southampton is the largest city in Hampshire on the south coast of England, with a population of 234,600. Black and minority ethnic communities account for ten per cent of the population and this figure is increasing. The city has high levels of migrant workers and a large student population of 40,000.

The city is a large cruise and container port and its major employers include the council, the primary care trust and hospitals, the University of Southampton and Southampton Solent University.

Its night-time economy has grown in recent years and the city has 3.5 million visitors a year for retail and leisure activities. Seventy four per cent of residents are satisfied with the area as a place to live, which is the same as similar places, but lower than the national average.

The city has significant deprived areas and a fifth of households are receiving housing or council tax benefit, well above the national average. Southampton has the three worst areas in the south east for older people living in poverty,

wages are below the regional average and there are concentrations of child poverty in the inner city. The health of people in Southampton is poorer than England as a whole. The reported rate of violent crime rate is high.

The Southampton Partnership consists of representatives from local businesses, public sector organisations, voluntary and community agencies. The partnership has agreed six major challenges that it needs to tackle. More information about the partnership's priorities is available at: www.southampton-partnership.com

Southampton City Council has consulted with local people to identify its new priorities, which are:

- Providing good value, high quality services
- Getting the city working
- Investing in education and training
- Keeping people safe
- Keeping the city clean and green
- Looking after people

Organisational assessment

Southampton's priorities reflect the concerns of local people and the council is performing well in relation to most of them. It has been effective in identifying what people need and delivering good priority services, . However, some priorities are longer term and may take many years to achieve.

Providing good value, high quality services

The council is continuing to deliver good quality services. It has improved access for local people to its services but there is still more to do. The council has improved transport by increasing bus services to hospitals, reducing school journeys by car, promoting cycling (which has seen an increase of 25 per cent) and holds meetings four times a year with older people on transport issues. This, for example, has led to improved street signs and clear instructions on how to report pot holes. The council has improved access to services for minority groups, such as delivering training to Chinese restaurants on food hygiene. It has achieved level four out of five of the equality standard, and has clear ambitions to deliver services fairly to all people in the area. This has helped ensure a better representation of women and minority groups among its staff, and taking appropriate action on reported racial incidents. It has completed a project to ensure new migrants settle into the community, including delivering awareness sessions to fire service staff which led to new families taking up fire-safety checks. This is helping to ensure better services for more vulnerable people.

The council continues to achieve good value for money and improve cost effectiveness. Costs are low compared to other councils, and most of the

higher cost services are performing well and delivering good results for local people, such as the efficient waste collection service. The council has improved performance in other high-cost priority services such as leisure and council tax collection although educational results remain below average compared with other councils. The council achieved £18.6 million of efficiency savings over the last three years, exceeding its target by £3.5 million. This was achieved by various methods such as restructuring departments and working better with partners. Procurement practices have improved, for example, by reducing the number of suppliers used.

Getting the city working

Regeneration projects are achieving social and economic benefits for local people by tackling deprivation and inequality. Work in the disadvantaged Thornhill neighbourhood has led to increased employment training for residents, better homes with 2,000 new kitchens and bathrooms, and crime reduction and environment weeks. The council has received funding for a 'Future Jobs' scheme which will provide 274 apprenticeships for local people. One recent apprentice scheme for local work, such as carpentry, resulted in 200 people attending an open day. Other work to help boost the economy includes improvements to regulatory services, improving buying methods for small local businesses so that it is easier for them to do business with the council, receiving £175,000 funding to investigate marine renewable energies. It holds well-attended councillor briefings for the business community. This ensures that local businesses are aware of the services and advice that the council provides.

The council has plans to improve the economy of the city by using its cultural and leisure facilities. It is also using the forthcoming Olympics to boost the economy. It has encouraged local businesses to register on an Olympic website to win contracts from the games, and one major local company has already been awarded a contract through this. It is developing a heritage centre and has received funding as part of an Olympic project to provide public art and to open heritage sites at the weekends, helping to boost tourism. Due to the recession there are funding uncertainties for some planned major redevelopment schemes in the city such as the Southampton New Arts Centre. However, the council is working hard with developers and funders as well as exploring the use of its own assets to help ensure that these schemes proceed.

Investing in education and training

Children's services in Southampton are adequate overall. While most services and settings for children and young people are good or better, this positive picture masks continuing variation in the quality of provision across early years, education and social care. Very young children get off to a good start. Childcare and childminder settings are good and better than the average found in similar areas. By contrast, the performance of the council's schools is mixed. The proportion of good or better primary and secondary schools is above average for similar areas; however, four of the ten secondary schools are no better than satisfactory. Special schools are mostly good, but one of the two pupil referral units is inadequate. Post-16 provision is also a mixed picture which includes two good sixth form colleges and an adequate general

further education college. The quality of social care provision is variable: children's homes and the adoption service are good, but private fostering arrangements are inadequate. The joint area review in 2007 judged safeguarding and services for looked after children and young people as adequate. Three of the four serious case reviews completed since December 2008 were at least adequate. Performance against the large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving is above, or in line with, similar areas and the national figures. However, the council does not perform well in all areas. Standards are very low in primary school and a stubbornly high proportion of young people aged 16 to 19 are not in education employment and training. The gap in educational outcomes between the majority and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable remains wide and is not reducing fast enough.

The council is aware of the challenges facing the city. As a result, it has reduced its secondary schools from 14 to 12 to focus resources on teaching. It has increased its mixed-sex schools from 6 to 10. As a result more parents are choosing schools in the city than before. Substantial funds have been given by the council to rebuild five secondary schools over the next five years. The council is adding specialist learning centres to the city's schools to help children with special educational needs. Other improvements include after-school clubs, junior warden schemes, truancy patrols and adult learning courses. The council delivers a well-attended after-schools programme in partnership with a local university. This is an innovative scheme where sessions are delivered by students at low cost. Around 50 types of activity are delivered in several schools each week, such as cricket, badminton, rugby and dance. More than 430 children attend each week, showing that it is well-used. The programme has produced health and educational benefits for young people, as well as experience to the students leading the activities. The partnership has received funding to extend this scheme.

The city has a high number of 16 to 19 year olds who are not in work, education or training, many more than in similar areas. Local data suggests this is now reducing at a faster rate than other areas over the last year. The council with its partners have plans in place to help address this, such as rebuilding schools, improving colleges and personalised support for individuals.

Keeping people safe

The council has worked with partners via the 'Safe City Partnership' to once again reduce crime in the city, but some types of crime are still too high. The number of domestic burglaries, sexual offences, drugs and vehicle crimes has fallen since last year, with a reduction in overall crime of 4.8 per cent. There have been improvements in the number of drug users on intervention programmes and offenders employed at the end of supervision orders, which are key factors in reducing repeat crimes. For example, projects to enable offenders to access training and employment opportunities have reduced re-offending by 64 per cent. The council has one of the best road safety records in the region due to the low number of accidents.

However, the level of violence is high, although recent data shows improvement. The number of incidents of violence against the person fell from 8,594 to 8,210 over the past year, and serious violent crime fell from 343 to 305 crimes. The council with its partners is tackling violent crime by focusing

on the key issues of alcohol and the night time economy, particularly relating to young people, anti social behaviour and domestic violence. The council led the initiative to close certain roads on weekend nights to make the city safer, as well as introducing a 'SOS' project in city centre hotspots to help vulnerable people access emergency care. Street lighting in the city has been improved, and a recent residents' survey suggests more people feel safe after dark, although not as safe as some other places in the country.

Other partnership initiatives include the launch of weekend street pastors, development of domestic violence services, tackling knife crime, and a policy where new licensed premises or extensions to opening hours are not permitted if the changes are likely to have a negative impact. There have also been a series of high-profile awareness campaigns such as: a Know Your Limits campaign with 472 people completing scratch cards assessing how much alcohol they have drunk; Safer Nights Out where 2,500 personal safety packs were distributed via local entertainment venues; and supporting the Southampton Kids Against Alcohol event where over 600 young people attended.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are good in most services and settings but not as good in children's homes, special schools, pupil referral units and in private fostering arrangements. Teenage conception rates in the city are higher than the national average, but the council has been working with partners to reduce this, with significant improvements being shown. The number of first-time offenders entering the youth justice system and the numbers re-offending are higher than the average for similar areas.

Keeping the city clean and green

The council continues to make very good progress in improving the environment. The council has reduced the amount of waste sent to landfill from 24 per cent to 18 per cent this year, which is better than most other councils, and now uses over half of its waste to recover heat and power, rather than sending it to landfill. But recycling rates have only increased by a small amount to 27 per cent. The number of biodiversity sites, such as nature reserves, that are improving has risen from 25 to 35, the number of 'green flag' awards the council has received for its open spaces has increased and the amount of litter and graffiti has reduced again, ensuring that Southampton's streets remain clean.

The council uses natural resources well. It knows which of its services produce the most carbon and is targeting this as a key priority. CO2 reduction within the council increased from 341 to 758 tonnes this year, exceeding targets for both the council and city-wide. Refuse collection vehicles reduced their fuel use by 8,000 litres last year. A long standing partnership between the council and Utilicom provides the innovative District Energy Scheme for heating and cooling in the city. This scheme uses a natural geothermal energy source beneath the city which is piped to local buildings. It is the largest non energy from waste project nationally and is recognised as best practice by the Carbon Trust, Defra and others. This project has helped the city minimise energy consumption and cut carbon emissions by saving over 12,000 tonnes of CO2 each year. The council requires all new buildings to achieve high environmental standards with an emphasis on saving and re-using water.

Looking after people

The council continues to promote independent living for local people. Adult social care is rated as performing well by the Care Quality Commission.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted well in nurseries, schools and colleges. However, support for being healthy is not as good for children and young people in pupil referral units and children's home. One in ten children is obese by the time they start school, although this reflects the national picture. Good progress has been made in achieving a comprehensive child and adolescent mental health service. Participation in sport has increased significantly since 2005 and is now average. This has been helped by the council working with Solent University to provide specialist sports coaching in schools.

The council and the primary care trust are working well to put in place schemes to help older people and people who have a disability. These include helping more people to live in their own homes rather than in residential care homes. More adults with learning disabilities are getting help from rehabilitation teams who help people to decide themselves what support they need to live in their own homes. The council also offers services giving legal advice to individuals and what benefits they can claim. People with disabilities are helped into paid and voluntary work but the employment of adults with learning disabilities within the area is less than similar councils.

Vulnerable adults have not always been fully happy with the amount of care they receive at home. As a result of changes to the number of care providers there was an increase in complaints. Partners know that more work is needed to review the amount of time that is provided to people who receive care. Carers are supported by the council in a number of ways, including helping them to have breaks from caring. The council has a contact centre to offer advice and support to people, but people often have to tell their story more than once. There are also delays between requests for information and when the council gives the help and advice. People receiving care are also given less choice by the council on who gives them the care that is needed. The council has not met its plans for giving people their own care budget. In response to delays in assessing people's needs, the council is looking to change the way it delivers its services, for example occupational therapy. Over the last few years, the council has upgraded its day care services. For example, people with learning disabilities have more opportunity to get involved in their local communities. However, as the council increasingly agrees specific care plans for each individual, it needs to make sure that its day care services are flexible enough to meet these sometimes detailed needs.

Although most of the care services in Southampton that are provided by the independent sector are good, there are a small number that only deliver poor or adequate levels of service. The council's own care homes do not yet meet the highest standards of care. The council is committed to making sure all vulnerable people are fully protected from harm or abuse, but the amount of training it gives to its staff is far less than other councils. However, the city is investing in looking after vulnerable children. Social services has employed an extra 25 people and overhauled its systems to help ensure children are kept safe. On-going work with partners such as the Southampton City Primary Care Trust has resulted in a new 'Joint Strategic Needs Assessment' and 'Health and Well Being Strategy' to ensure that the health and social care

needs of local residents are met.

The council and primary care trust work well together to support families. SureStart Children's Centres in Southampton give good help to children through combined health, education and family support. The centres provide family nurses, educating parents about breastfeeding and smoking, and running courses to improve parents' skills to help them get work. Local data suggests that normal birth-delivery rates and low birth weigh rates are better in SureStart areas in the city than elsewhere. This is helping to the narrow the gap between the poorer and richer areas of the city. A local survey showed people using SureStart facilities are very satisfied with them.

The council has continued to improve the speed and accuracy of its benefits payments. The council has improved the time taken to process new claims from 25 days last year to 21 days this year, and accuracy of processing the claims improved from 96 to 99.6 per cent. This is a positive move during the economic recession. Work on welfare rights advice has meant a drop in the number of tenants owing rent. The recession has led to a fall in rent collections, but the council is trying to prevent this by schemes such as: giving advice on how not to get into mortgage arrears; promoting shared ownership and short term loans; and funding the Citizens Advice Bureau to give support to people who arrive at court for non-payment.

The council has made excellent progress with ensuring access to decent and affordable housing. Forty per cent of new housing over the last five years has been affordable, and 372 houses were built this year, helping many residents who cannot afford market-price housing.

Access to the housing service is good, with well-located offices, clear standards and consultation with new tenants found that 83 per cent were satisfied with their new homes. The council has helped disadvantaged groups by working with landlords to improve houses in multiple occupancy, such as enforcing safer standards for housing, having an amnesty phase for landlords to register with the council, and working in partnership with landlords and universities in an innovative scheme to improve student accommodation. This for example prevents overcrowding and ensures that working fire alarms and approved gas safety checks are carried out.

Issues raised in a housing inspection last year have been resolved, with an increase in valid gas safety certificates issued from 97.6 to 99.91 per cent, and the replacement of 50 boilers. A housing needs survey led to the development of larger homes for some minority ethnic families. Eight percent of new build completions since April 2007 have been wheelchair adapted, giving better access to suitable housing. The relet times for void properties has reduced by 6.6 days to 32.65 days, meaning that houses are not left empty and unused. But some issues remain. For example, 37.7 per cent of private sector homes do not meet the decent homes standard, mainly due to poor energy efficiency ratings. A scrutiny inquiry has been carried out by councillors on fuel poverty in the city, home improvement loans are available to residents to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and the council received an award for its work to promote the take up of the warm front grants.

Does the organisation have the leadership,

capacity and capability it needs to deliver future improvements?

The council makes decisions based on a good understanding of local needs. Consultation and engagement has led to a change in the council's priorities. Examples of consultation that have taken place include gathering views on school admissions, the budget setting process, the local plan and primary school provision. Some of this consultation has resulted in changes to services, such as more co-educational schools and primary school places. The council has also restructured its internal departments to focus more on the economy and regeneration for the longer-term future of the city.

The council has improved its knowledge about the local community. It has introduced a new ward-based website, so that people can report issues such as missed bins or pot holes, or find out about local events, their ward councillors, planning applications and how to get more involved in the community. It has also worked with partners to develop a new mapping system so that detailed up-to-date information such as education, health and crime can be used to provide better joined-up public services.

The council uses the knowledge about the area towards longer-term planning. It has embarked on a major estate regeneration programme that tackles economic deprivation and social disadvantage. Plans to improve the Hinkler Parade area will lead to new family homes and shops. Over 200 people attended consultation events and completed questionnaires for this. Other priorities include a major programme to improve local schools and £6 million to improve roads.

The council works well in partnership and has many examples of how joint-working increases capacity. For example, through working with the 'Partnership for Urban South Hampshire' (PUSH) the whole area received £3.6 million in funding towards schemes to regenerate deprived areas. The Safe City Partnership focuses on key issues of violent crime, alcohol harm and neighbourhood safety which is tackled by all partners working together. The council has also worked with others to introduce an advert-based scheme to allocate council and housing association homes to residents.

Political and managerial leadership is good. Councillors and officers work well together. New partnership groups have been set up by the council to deal with the key challenges facing the city. A councillor post for 'safeguarding children' has been created, giving the welfare of children a clear focus. Scrutiny focuses on cross-cutting issues such as NEET levels and fluoride in the city. A review of senior management has taken place, and training such as project management has been delivered. A new Assistant Chief Executive has been appointed, with a role to focus on economic development and initiatives such as estate regeneration. The council demonstrates the principles of good internal governance in the way it runs its business. It has good governance procedures in place, is well-governed with an open culture and a clear focus on the needs of local communities. The council has an excellent ethical framework and has provided support and assistance to other councils on this. It manages its risks well and maintains a good system of internal control. This helps it to deliver innovative projects effectively. It has a well-publicised awareness of fraud and corruption policies.

The council manages its finances well in order to deliver its priorities. It has effective reporting arrangements, which enables it to maintain spending within budget. Financial standing is sound, and this supports the achievement of long term objectives. It manages its resources effectively, for example with difficult decisions being made to close some of its care homes. The council also manages external funding well, receiving £15.6 million last year for various projects.

The council has a good understanding of its costs and performance. It has good comparative information on costs and performance, which resulted in £18.6 million efficiencies over the last three years - £7.9 million this year - and the achievement of its efficiency targets. Costs are low compared with other councils. Most higher cost services are performing well and delivering good results for local people. However, although the council has improved its education service and lowered its costs, there is further work to be done to demonstrate a consistent track record in reduced costs and improved results.

The council manages its assets effectively to help deliver its priorities. It has clear views on how its land and building should be used and challenges whether they provide value for money to meet current and future needs. The council and the Primary Care Trust share accommodation within the city, bringing closer working relationships and operational savings. The council also manages property which is let to third parties to support local social or economic projects.

The council has an effective performance management system for identifying strengths, weaknesses and measuring objectives. It has improved how it monitors its risk registers and automatically links its performance and financial management systems. It also uses its performance management methods to monitor the recession effectively.

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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