

# **Environment - Environmental Services**

**Great Yarmouth Borough Council**

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high-quality local services for the public. Our remit covers around 11,000 bodies in England, which between them spend more than £180 billion of public money each year. Our work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services.

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## Service Inspection

This inspection has been carried out by the Audit Commission under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999 and is in line with the Audit Commission's strategic regulation principles. These principles embody the objectives of our strategic plan and strategic regulation. They also reflect the principles from *The Government's Policy on Inspection of Public Services*' (July 2003).

Audit Commission service inspections should:

- focus on public service outcomes from a user perspective;
- act as a catalyst to help inspected bodies improve their performance;
- concentrate inspection work where it will have most impact, so that it is proportionate and based on an assessment of risk;
- be based on a rigorous assessment of costs and benefits, with a concern for achieving value for money both by the inspected organisation and within the inspection regime itself;
- be, and be seen to be, independent of the inspected organisation;
- report in public, using impartial evidence to inform the public about the performance of public services so as to enhance accountability;
- involve collaborative working with other inspectorates and external review agencies to achieve greater co-ordination and a more holistic approach to the assessment of performance by audited and inspected bodies;
- share learning to create a common understanding of performance that encourages rigorous self-assessment and better understanding of their performance by inspected organisations;
- be carried out objectively by skilled and experienced people to high standards and using relevant evidence, transparent criteria, and open review processes; and
- enable continuous learning so that inspections can become increasingly effective and efficient.

We assess services using published key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) to inform our judgements. The KLOE can be found on the Audit Commission's website at [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk).

This report is issued in accordance with the Audit Commission's duty under section 13 of the 1999 Act.

## Summary

- 1 Great Yarmouth Borough Council provides a 'fair', one-star, environmental service that has promising prospects for improvement.
- 2 The last full inspection of the Council's environmental services took place in February 2002. This found the Service to be 'poor' with uncertain prospects for improvement. Since then there has been significant improvement. Most of the borough's streets are now clean and tidy. Recycling and aspects of waste minimisation have improved rapidly. So too have play areas, and parks and open spaces are better maintained. Services are low cost and deliver adequate, and improving, value for money. In addition, the Council does a better job of consulting with local residents.
- 3 But there is more to do be done. Resident satisfaction has been too low. There is not effective deterrence, to help clean up the remaining fly-tip hotspots. Aspects of customer service are weak. The Council does not take the diverse needs of all its residents fully into account. Communication, especially with the media, is too reactive. Above all, the improved performance has not yet closed the gap with other, similar authorities.
- 4 However, the building blocks for future improvement are now largely in place. Environment has a strong lead from councillors and senior officers, backed up by a skilled and enthusiastic workforce. Recent investments, such as new refuse collection lorries and recycling bins should pay dividends for years to come. The Council has built up a good record of attracting external finance, but future improvement is not conditional upon it. The increasingly effective partnership between the Borough Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Services (GYBS) gives scope for a more responsive, accessible and effective service. So too does the strong emphasis on partnership working, community involvement and neighbourhood renewal.
- 5 If all this can be brought together in a coherent medium-term strategy backed up with improvements in customer communication and care, and enforcement, the future prospects for improvement are promising.

## Scoring the service

- 6 We have assessed Great Yarmouth Borough Council as providing a 'fair', one-star service that has promising prospects for improvement. Our judgements are based on the evidence obtained during the inspection and are outlined below.

**Table 1 Scoring chart<sup>1</sup>**

Prospects for improvement?	Excellent					'a fair service that has promising prospects for improvement'
	Promising		⚙			
	Uncertain					
	Poor					
			★	★★	★★★	
		Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	
		A good service?				

Source: Audit Commission

<sup>1</sup> The scoring chart displays performance in two dimensions. The horizontal axis shows how good the service or function is now, on a scale ranging from no stars for a service that is poor (at the left-hand end) to three stars for an excellent service (right-hand end). The vertical axis shows the improvement prospects of the service, also on a four-point scale.

7 The service is a one-star service because:

- resident satisfaction with services remains comparatively low;
- until 2005 recycling and waste minimisation performance indicators have mostly been among the worst performing 25 per cent of councils;
- some problematic environmental crime hot spots remain to be addressed in a financially sustainable way;
- the Council has not been living its own environmental sustainability messages;
- parks and open spaces are tidy and well-maintained but are not meeting today's needs for functionality and access;
- equality and diversity issues are not being robustly addressed;
- enforcement is not sufficiently visible to maximise a deterrent effect to enviro-crime or convince the public the Council will take the action required;
- there is an underdeveloped understanding of what the Council needs to do to improve resident satisfaction with services; and
- costs are low and overall value for money is adequate.

8 However:

- fly-posting, fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles are dealt with efficiently resulting in 90 per cent of the borough being clean and tidy;
- the waste infrastructure now in place is providing a better service and is meeting government targets for recycling;
- some services have improved in response to consultation, complaints and expressed user need; and
- partnership working at county, borough and local level is productive and focused on improving what matters to local people.

9 The Service has promising prospects for improvement because:

- services on the ground have improved significantly over the past three years;
- value for money is improving;
- major weaknesses from past inspections have been addressed;
- the essential foundations are in place to sustain improvement: clarity of purpose, clear leadership, satisfactory investment, appropriate partnerships and a motivated and committed workforce;
- partnerships are well embedded, improving and share an agenda for change;
- the Council's external delivery partnership with Great Yarmouth Borough Services is a powerful engine for continued improvement; and
- learning from this inspection has already been integrated into the Service's 2006/07 plan of action.

10 However:

- while the necessary strategies and plans to cement success are almost in place, these have not yet been integrated into a fully costed medium-term plan; and
- some corporate weaknesses, such as incompatible IT systems, an ineffective customer contact centre, lack of strategic communications, and performance management support are holding back the pace of service improvement.

## Recommendations

- 11 To rise to the challenge of continuous improvement, councils need inspection reports that offer practical pointers for improvement. Our recommendations identify the expected benefits for both local people and the Council. In addition, we identify the approximate costs<sup>2</sup> and indicate the priority we place on each recommendation and key dates for delivering these where they are considered appropriate. In this context the inspection team recommends the Council should do the following.

### **Recommendation**

*R1 Target enforcement to maximise its deterrent effect by:*

- *focusing and developing internal capacity to deliver an effective 'catch and convict' approach to enforcement;*
- *implementing a resourced plan of campaign with multi-agency partners to target persistent cases for high impact enforcement; and*
- *integrating the communications strategy into service policy formulation and delivery, in a timely, targeted and co-ordinated way.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are a sustained reduction in enviro-crime incidents and a more sustainable delivery of a clean street scene.

Implementing this recommendation will have high impact with low costs. This should be implemented by September 2006.

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<sup>2</sup> Low cost is defined as less than 1 per cent of the annual service cost, medium cost is between 1 and 5 percent and high cost is over 5 per cent.

**Recommendation**

*R2 Tailor services to improve access and ensure they meet the diverse needs of local communities by:*

- *engaging communities, including hard-to-reach groups, in service design, delivery and evaluation;*
- *conducting equality impact assessments for all key services;*
- *publishing service standards to users, residents and specific communities;*
- *analysing the 'waste' in the system by monitoring the underlying reasons for users contacting all points of the service, then minimise it through process benchmarking and re-design; and*
- *developing policies that ensure job opportunities within the Service are made widely available to all sectors of the community.*

The expected benefits of this recommendation are improved resident satisfaction, a more cost efficient service, and a more accountable service as users and residents will better understand the level of service they can expect to receive.

Implementing this recommendation will have high impact with medium costs. This should be implemented by December 2006.

# Report

## Context

### The locality

- 12 Great Yarmouth Borough Council is situated on the coast of Norfolk in East Anglia. The main town of Great Yarmouth is flanked by Caister-on-Sea and Gorleston-on-Sea. The borough also includes 21 rural parishes. The number of residents under the age of 16 is slightly below the regional and national averages, but the number of pensioners is over 5 per cent higher than regional and national averages. The population of the borough is 92,400 living within 43,900 households. Three per cent of the population are from black and minority ethnic communities, against a regional figure of 9 per cent.
- 13 Great Yarmouth is one of the most popular British seaside resorts and has over 100,000 available bed spaces, caters for over six million visitor nights each year and as a collective industry is worth £500 million a year. In the summer months the population effectively doubles. This places huge demands on a wide range of environmental and waste services.
- 14 There is heavy dependency on the tourist industry and 85 per cent of the jobs in the borough are service-based. Unemployment is fairly high but reducing. It stood at 5.5 per cent compared to the national average of 2.4 per cent (as at March 2005). Average earnings are 21 per cent lower than the national average.
- 15 From the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister indices of multiple deprivation 2004 figures, Great Yarmouth is the 70th most deprived area out of 354 council areas. There are pockets of severe deprivation, especially in the Nelson and Regent wards in the centre of Great Yarmouth. The borough has received both single regeneration budget and neighbourhood renewal funds to address the problems of deprivation. High levels of deprivation have had an impact on the health of local people. Life expectancy is lower than the regional and national averages. There are high, but reducing, levels of teenage pregnancy.
- 16 A local public service agreement (LPSA) has been agreed between the Council and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) with the aim of improving the delivery of local public services. A resident survey undertaken in 2005 shows road and pavement repair, activities for teenagers, removal of graffiti and sports and leisure activities to be the public's priority areas for improvement. These are closely followed by removal of abandoned vehicles, recycling facilities, parks and open spaces and local bus services.

## The Council

- 17 The Council is Conservative-controlled. Of the 39 seats the Conservative party has 25 seats, 13 seats are held by the Labour party, and one is held by an independent Conservative councillor. The business of the Council is governed by an executive with six Conservative councillors and supported by a single overview and scrutiny committee that was formed as a result of the recent merger of four thematic sub-committees (which included the environment). The chair of the scrutiny committee was previously chair of the environment sub-committee.
- 18 The Council employs 527 full-time and part-time staff across all services (equivalent to 461 full-time). The net revenue expenditure for 2004/05 was £15.6 million.
- 19 The Council has adopted as its own, the goal of the 2020 community vision.
- 'We want our community to offer a high-quality of life and a secure future for all our residents.'*
- 20 This is supported by four top-level objectives:
- a prosperous and dynamic economy;
  - a clean and safe environment;
  - a healthy and cohesive community; and
  - improved and co-ordinated learning activities.

## National context

- 21 Councils are expected to support the UK sustainable development strategy, Securing the Future, 2005. Indeed, many local authorities are at the forefront of efforts to achieve greater social, economic and environmental sustainability. District councils are expected to use their powers as planning, housing and waste collection authorities, as well as their general wellbeing powers and community leadership, to achieve sustainable development. This includes working with others to promote energy conservation and efficiency, protect wildlife habits and promote biodiversity, reduce and mitigate climate change, and promote more sustainable patterns of development.
- 22 The Government has promoted the Cleaner, Safer, Greener agenda and many local authorities have adopted similar aims.
- 23 Councils have a duty to keep their land clear of litter. The Environmental Protection Act 1990 (EPA) gives a local authority power to deal with litter-based problems affecting its area, including issuing fixed penalty tickets to people who commit an offence by dropping litter. A Code of Practice, issued under the Act, recommends a 'clean as necessary' approach and specific levels of cleanliness for various environments. Under the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act, an authority has the power to issue a notice to a private landowner to clean up their land and to undertake the cleansing itself if the landowner fails to act. The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2003 has strengthened councils' legal powers for keeping the area clean.

- 24 The Government has set statutory performance standards for local authorities to reduce the amount of waste that is collected and to encourage more recycling. The Government is currently consulting on setting councils a recycling standard of up to 30 per cent by 2007/08. In addition, the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme provides a powerful financial incentive for local authorities to minimise waste sent to landfill.
- 25 The planning and compulsory purchase act 2004 introduces a number of changes to the development system including the replacement of structure and local plans with a local development framework, and requires a local development scheme which sets out a work programme for the local development framework to be adopted by 2010.
- 26 Promoting biodiversity is an objective of the UK sustainable development strategy. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are of particular importance. Section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) states that public bodies must 'take reasonable steps, consistent with the proper exercise of their functions, to further the conservation and enhancement of SSSI'. The Government's Public Service Agreement target is for 95 per cent of SSSI land to be in 'favourable' or 'recovering' condition by 2010.
- 27 Reducing energy consumption and promoting use of energy from renewable sources is important for reducing fuel poverty and climate change. There are specific legal and policy commitments for national and local governments, including:
- Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 - this requires local housing authorities to promote energy efficiency in the local housing stock (public and private), with a target of 30 per cent improvement by 2010;
  - Kyoto Protocol – The UK is committed to a 12.5 per cent cut in greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 2008/12;
  - UK-wide targets – the UK government has itself set a target of reducing carbon emissions by 20 per cent from 1990 levels by 2010 with the ultimate goal of achieving a 60 per cent reduction by 2050 (Energy White Paper and UK Climate Change Programme); and
  - UK Renewables Obligation – a target has been set for 10 per cent of all electricity generated in the UK to be from renewable sources by 2010.

## The Council's Environmental Services

- 28 The scope of the inspection centred on managing waste and the natural environment. Services which fall under the scope are as follows.
- Waste: removal of abandoned vehicles, domestic waste collection, fly-tipping, home composting, recycling and reuse, street cleaning and trade waste collection.
  - Open and green spaces: parks, gardens and public open spaces; recreation grounds and outdoor sports facilities; young persons play areas, cemeteries and churchyards, and beach cleaning.
  - General environmental sustainability issues.
- 29 Since 2003 most Environmental Services in the borough are delivered through a public-public partnership with Norfolk County Council. The Council provides strategic direction and Norfolk County Council, through their trading organisation, Norfolk County Services (and by an owned subsidiary, GYB Services Ltd (GYBS)) the frontline services.
- 30 Approximately 200 full-time equivalent posts are employed across environmental services and GYBS. The total budget for services within the scope of the inspection for 2005/06 was £5.75 million.
- 31 In February 2002 we inspected the Council's Environmental Services and judged it to be a poor 'no star' service with uncertain prospects for improvement. A follow-up inspection took place in December 2002. This found some cleaner streets, quicker removal of abandoned vehicles and fewer complaints about grounds maintenance. However, fly-tipping and litter on the streets remained a problem, recycling initiatives had been delayed, and the competitiveness of the service had not been demonstrated. Performance against targets was weak and the timescale for delivering some improvements had slipped.
- 32 The comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) of the Council in November 2003 found the Council had a high need for environment improvement. It had not shown community leadership about the wider environment. The quality of the local built and natural environment had not been a priority. Parks, play areas and open spaces were not being maintained to a uniformly high standard with some looking neglected and unattractive. Open space was limited. Environmental complaints were not being dealt with swiftly or proactively. Green waste was not being addressed adequately.
- 33 However, the CPA assessment found the Council recognised the environment had been an area of weakness and was starting to address this.
- 34 As part of the methodology, for this inspection, the Council undertook a self-assessment and facilitated a tour of the borough for the inspection team. It also engaged constructively with the team to develop the key issues emerging from the inspection and shape the recommendations.

## How good is the service?

### What has the service aimed to achieve?

- 35** The purpose of Environmental Services (the Service) is, in essence, to provide and maintain sustainable enforcement and environmental services that are effective, well informed and best value. In achieving this, the Service seeks to work through the Norfolk Waste Partnership and other partnerships to deliver a safe and sustainable environment for the borough.
- 36** Key objectives and targets in the community strategy, corporate statement and service plan task the Council and the Service to seek, for example:
- a 50 per cent recycling level for domestic and trade waste (2020);
  - to take action to stop illegal fly-tipping and waste disposal;
  - pristine condition streets, parks and public spaces;
  - use of the local development framework to guarantee protection and enhancement of the environment, and reuse of existing developed land will be the norm;
  - to deliver a 50 per cent reduction in derelict land, an increase in biodiversity of the rural hinterland; and provide attractive gateways and river frontages and the quality of the public realm that connects them;
  - to ensure all beaches meet European bathing standards;
  - to make environmental awareness an integral part of local and national thinking; local awareness will be underpinned by preventative measures such as CCTV and neighbourhood and street wardens;
  - to make the area a national centre for alternative forms of energy production; and
  - further improvements to waste collection, street cleanliness, play areas and maintenance of public amenities.
- 37** The 2006/07 service plan links service actions effectively to the Council's priorities. Key priorities for 2005/06 included: a review of recycling bring banks and litter bins, roll-out of the twin bin scheme,<sup>3</sup> completion of the strategies for play areas and parks and open spaces, improved grass cutting and e-interaction of services, reinvigoration of the environmental forum, and completed risk assessments and staff appraisals.
- 38** Norfolk LPSA waste targets for the Council were to achieve an 18 per cent recycling rate and reduce the weight of waste collected per household to below 524 kg by end of 2006/07.

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<sup>3</sup> Alternative weekly collection of refuse and recyclables with a no side waste policy.

## Is the service meeting the needs of the local community and users?

### Access, customer care, diversity and user focus

- 39 Services are responsive but insufficiently proactive. Arrangements for consulting and engaging users and communities are well-established, wide-ranging and improving. There is a clear wish to put the needs of citizens at the heart of service design and delivery but this is not embedded. Diversity issues are not robustly addressed. Clear and comprehensive service standards with user input are not in place. Communications are too reactive and lack integration with policy formulation and delivery.
- 40 There is an underdeveloped understanding of why local people remain comparatively dissatisfied with many aspects of provision. Improving existing services has not, recycling apart, seen any significant improvement in resident satisfaction ratings. The Council has not challenged in depth if its current mix of actions to improve communications and existing services will deliver its LPSA satisfaction targets.
- 41 Equalities, access and diversity issues are not being robustly addressed across the Council or the Service. There have been recent improvements in access to play areas and in assisted collections of wheeled bins. But these are exceptions to the general rule that the Council is not in a position to prove how well service design and delivery is meeting the diverse needs of local communities. It has not undertaken any equality impact assessments and it is not analysing its customer contacts to check if any equality or diversity issues exist. Moreover, make-up of the workforce is unrepresentative of the local population. Equalities and diversity training is lacking. The Council has only gained equalities standard level one.
- 42 Access to services is mixed. The corporate contact centre currently provides a poor service and the Town Hall reception is not welcoming and customer friendly. Many calls to the corporate telephone contact point go unanswered, resolution rates at first point of contact are low and little useful intelligence is being passed back to services to guide improvement. The Council has now re-installed a priority environmental telephone number, and increased call centre capacity. In contrast, access via GYBS, who has a responsive and customer-focused contact team, and its own dedicated hotline number, is good.
- 43 The Council does not have a clear set of customer or service standards which it clearly communicates to residents, routinely monitors and uses to improve service delivery. The Council is rectifying this through its customer services work, putting people first initiative and engagement processes such as that with parish councils.

- 44 Engagement with the local media has improved but the Council's approach to communication remains too reactive and defensive. The Service's communications strategy is not forward thinking or integrated enough with environment policy formation or delivery. This limits the Council's ability to shape public perceptions and gain sufficient credit for the service improvements it has made.
- 45 Physical access to play areas, parks and open spaces is adequate but access in several areas is hindered by poor signage, information and community involvement. The roll-out of the parks and open spaces and children's' play ground strategies is tasked to address issues of inclusivity, access and community engagement.
- 46 The Council addresses access issues when designing new services. For example, the twin bin scheme where assisted collections, location of communal bins and choice of bin has provided a considered response to a variety of need. Some existing practices ease access for users, such as beach adapted wheelchairs, but no comprehensive review of service access has been undertaken.
- 47 The Service is responsive to, and takes action on, comments and complaints such as grass cutting but does not routinely analyse its customer contacts to check how to improve services. The Council has responded positively to complaints that rural parishes did not receive the same standard of service as Great Yarmouth. But 'service requests' are not analysed to identify where and why service delivery is not meeting residents' needs. This is a missed opportunity to reduce waste in the system, improve value for money and tailor services to resident need.
- 48 The Council's website is easy to navigate and informative about environmental issues. Residents find it easy to make and have action taken on their complaints.<sup>4</sup> But public access to GYBS is primarily by telephone which hinders the delivery of a seamless service with the Council.
- 49 The Council shapes its service priorities and investment by extensive borough-wide consultation and spending priority modelling.<sup>5</sup> Increased investment in recycling, playground equipment, street cleaning and community safety followed this high-level engagement and decision-making process.
- 50 Engagement with community groups, parish councils and forums are all helping to shape delivery priorities and to a lesser extent service design. Play area provision, housing estate management and Britain in Bloom are leading the way in engaging communities in service design. Specialist teams, such as the Deep Clean Squad and neighbourhood action teams, together with initiatives like Nightsafe, clear car and environmental action days, are all engaging local communities and taking action to improve the quality of people's lives.

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<sup>4</sup> MORI Residents' Survey 2005

<sup>5</sup> For example, 2004 Research for Today SIMALTO modelling.

## **Waste hierarchy - refuse, recycling and waste minimisation**

- 51** The Council has a reliable refuse collection service but has been slow to address recycling and waste minimisation issues. Overall resident satisfaction with services, while improving in some aspects, remains low. Performance against best value performance indicators (BVPIs) remains weak (see Appendix 1). The Council has provided an effective lead on county waste issues but has not been living its own environmental message. Its new waste collection and recycling infrastructure has resulted in less waste going to landfill during 2005/06 and parts of the service are now performing well.
- 52** Recycling has improved significantly but remains comparatively low. The Council met its statutory minimum standard for recycling in 2004/05. Unaudited data signals the 18 per cent standard for 2005/06 was met. But the 2004/05 recycling and composting rate of 12 per cent was among the lowest 25 per cent of councils
- 53** Satisfaction with recycling was poor in 2003/04 and was low in comparison to the Council's nearest neighbours but has significantly improved with the introduction of the 'twin bin' alternate weekly collection during 2005/06. A recent survey shows satisfaction with recycling improving from 54 per cent to 74 per cent. Residents have widely welcomed the policy to collect unlimited amount of recyclable material at the kerbside. There is an acceptable network of recycling sites; while most are clean and tidy some are continuing eyesores.
- 54** The Council has been slow to reduce waste produced in the borough but 2005/06 has seen some improvement. The amount of waste collected per household was among the highest 25 per cent of councils in 2004/05, and was projected to increase sharply in 2005/06. Until 2005 all waste was collected in black sacks, with no limits on the amount collected and all green waste going to landfill. The twin bin policy with no collection of side waste and the roll-out of the home composting initiative, together with effective promotion and participation in re-use and recycling initiatives such as Furniture Aid and real nappies, has resulted in less waste going to landfill. However, while the Council has rectified the upward trend in the total amount of waste collected per household, the total amount collected during 2005/06 remains above its 2004/05 level.
- 55** The Council has not fully engaged local businesses to embrace recycling and optimise waste minimisation. GYBS offers a free collection of recyclables waste from schools but commercial waste recycling is at its formative stage with only about 60 businesses contracted into the NORWRAP (Norfolk Waste Recycling Assistance Project) commercial recycling scheme. Community-based re-use facilities are underdeveloped although there is some good work with the ones that exist such as Furniture Aid. The Council has not tapped the full potential of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) economic forum to engage business on environmental issues. There is a long way to go before the Council achieves its 50 per cent commercial waste recycling target.

- 56 The Council provides a reliable refuse collection service and quickly returns to empty missed bins but overall satisfaction with the service remains low, with net satisfaction steadily decreasing from 2001/05. The Council is unsure why this is the case. For example, it has not appraised if its charging policy and zoning of its bulky waste collection rounds has addressed the needs of the 28 per cent of residents dissatisfied with this part of the service in 2005.
- 57 Good promotion and active management has resulted in increasing amounts and low contamination of collected recyclables. County figures for 2005/06 show the Council has the lowest contaminated recyclable material in the county.
- 58 The Council has taken a valued and effective lead on the county waste partnership. Partners speak highly of the Council's lead on waste issues. It has delivered its contribution to LPSA targets early, has proactively explored issues such as the possible location of an incineration site within the borough, and has shared its home composting and educational promotion successes with partners.

### **Keeping the district clean**

- 59 The borough is predominately clean. Well-organised enforcement (and promotional) activity has seen fly-tips, abandoned and fly-posting removed quickly and incidents declining. However, the Council fails to convince residents that it will take the necessary 'catch and convict' enforcement action to address the problems in its hot spot areas. Satisfaction with cleanliness is low, even after adjustment for the borough's level of deprivation.
- 60 The area is predominately clean throughout the day. Performance against the national cleanliness indicator was among the best councils in 2004/05. The Council's 2005/06 data shows most areas meet or exceed minimum acceptable standards and our reality checks confirmed this. The cleanliness of the town centre and seafront is of a high standard. Estates such as Middlegate, are much cleaner than found by the Commission's follow-up inspection in 2003. But the daily cleaning regime in some hot spot areas is resource intensive, and, in the long-term, unsustainable.
- 61 The 2002/05 Litter Reduction Strategy has largely achieved its aims although it has not broken the cycle of littering in some hotspot areas. It has met its challenging targets to reduce fly-tips, abandoned cars and fly-posting and incidents are typically removed within a day. Graffiti is not a noticeable problem in most areas although performance is below the Council's own target. Environmental ranger reports show fewer environmental crime incidents, cleaner streets, damaged and overflowing bins. ENCAMS<sup>6</sup> sees the strategy as a good practice model.
- 62 Initiatives such as Car Clear, Nightsafe and Spring Clean have delivered many improvements. These, with action by the environmental rangers, Deep Clean Squad, and housing estate environmental maintenance teams have resulted in an improved quality of life in many deprived areas of the borough.

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<sup>6</sup> An environmental charity that campaigns directly to the public; best known for its Keep Britain Tidy campaign.

- 63 There is a largely effective prevent, deter and restore enforcement regime in place. The regime is responsive and takes a suitable risk-based approach that is in line with the Council's enforcement concordat. Partnership working with external agencies such as the Fire Service and the Police are well developed. CCTV, community litter wardens, gating of alleyways and joint action with housing environmental health and planning are tackling environmental crime issues.
- 64 But the Council's enforcement polices are not visible enough to maximise their deterrent effect. There is not enough emphasis on catch and convict. Latest figures show few prosecutions or payments of fixed penalty notices. The Council has not convinced the public it will take and continue the necessary action to address the 'known' persistent offenders and tackle the recurring incidents of littering and fly-tipping in its hot spot areas.
- 65 Services are increasingly being tailored to meet local need. Recent liaison work with parish councils has started to clarify what the Council needs to do to improve services to rural areas. The Seafront Partnership and emerging neighbourhood management arrangements are progressing this in the urban areas.
- 66 Work with partners to ensure the cleanliness of highways and roundabouts and maintenance of verges and pavements within the borough, has met with mixed success. For example, the Council's lobbying of the Highway Agency to improve landscaping on the main trunk roads, and discussion with the county to improve the control of weeds on pavements.
- 67 Resident satisfaction with the cleanliness of the district is low. Both the 2004 Citizen Panel and the 2005 residents' survey highlighted continuing dissatisfaction with parts of street cleaning. For example, a sizeable minority of people remain dissatisfied with the frequency of cleaning and the bulky waste collection. As with dissatisfaction in other areas of the Service, the Council has not explored in depth why this is the case. This limits its capacity to improve. For example, it does not have a good understanding of how rubbish strewn on land outside its control, around some heavily used sites such as supermarkets, is affecting its satisfaction ratings.
- 68 Street cleaning is not always proportionate to need. For example, street cleanliness in some areas has suffered from resources being deployed to those who 'shout loudest' resulting in rounds becoming imbalanced. This has promoted the recent review of street cleansing. The review is seeking to bring rounds and frequencies up-to-date with need, reintroduce round sheets and obtain better information on any failings in service delivery that need to be addressed.
- 69 The Council has been slow to improve the condition and placement of its litter bins. The long overdue review of litter bins, originally set for 2003, has not yet been completed. The Council now knows the number, location and condition of its bins but has not yet completed its baseline assessment of placement against need.

## Play areas and open spaces

- 70** The Council has some way to go to deliver its emerging vision of a network of easily accessible, safe, attractive and welcoming parks, open spaces and play areas which meets the needs of everyone. Resident satisfaction is low. Provision is adequate rather than 'pristine'; it is improving and has some good features. But the quality, functionality and access to provision is inconsistent and poor in parts. The Council's approach has been more maintenance than management plan led. It recognises this and has spent the last eighteen months, with support from partners, developing a set of strategies to deliver a new vision for its play, parks and open space provision.
- 71** Satisfaction with parks and open spaces is low. It was worst quartile in 2003/04 and in 2001/02. Consultation in 2005 highlighted that residents felt parks and open spaces are well kept, landscaped and attractive, and appreciated the many family oriented children's playgrounds. But they did not like the litter, dog fouling, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and vandalism; and had a wish for more enforcement, bins and activity facilities for children and youths.
- 72** The quality of the borough's parks and open spaces in terms of general maintenance, conserved structures, landscape quality and appearance is mostly adequate or good. The majority (95 per cent) of these areas are meeting acceptable maintenance standards. Grass is cut efficiently although it is not yet fully integrated with litter picking; there is little graffiti. But as the Council's 2005 audit highlighted, litter and dog fouling was only rated fair to poor in 28/40 sites and sustainable management practice was poor in 31/40 sites. Few parks and open spaces rated good overall.
- 73** Most significantly, the Council's parks and open spaces are not addressing today's needs. They are not attracting enough users as many have poor access, signage and information. Anti-social behaviour (ASB) is major problem preventing access in some areas. Cultural, health and educational use is underdeveloped, as is community involvement. The quality of general park facilities is rated by the Council as fair to poor with only four receiving a good or better rating; few areas are rated well for design or special facilities. The Council's play and open spaces strategy has been developed to address these issues and engage local communities in reshaping service design and management.
- 74** Excluding beaches as open space, there is a shortfall of open space across the borough. On a spatial basis, there appears to be a significant shortfall in formal (pitch) provision (although that which exists is sufficient to cater for existing and projected outdoor sports use within the borough),<sup>7</sup> and an excess of children's play and informal park space. Twelve wards have a shortfall of formal and informal space, ten a shortfall of formal space, six a shortfall of informal space and only three with a surplus of both. It is acknowledged that the use of ward boundaries as a basis for measurement does not necessarily reflect a lack of reasonable access to open space by residents in those wards with an identified shortfall.

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<sup>7</sup> Strategy for playing pitches and other outdoor sports facilities.

- 75 The Service provides a positive contribution to the regeneration and tourist aims of the Council. Some villages, sites and parks are kept to an exemplary standard through effective partnership working and local commitment and pride. For example, Cherry Road Community Centre, Filby and Winteron. Britain in Bloom success has followed and has been lasting. Beacon Park provides an excellent gateway to the borough, with natural planting and landscaping designed to provide a green pathway to bring wildlife into an urban area. The East England Tourist Board Destinations Benchmarking report 2003 showed a high-level of visitor satisfaction with the standard of parks, flower beds and street cleaning. The Council has no Green Flag awards for open space but plans are in train to access funds to develop two sites to this standard.
- 76 The quality and quantity of the Council's provision of play areas is good and quickly improving but there is a lack of facilities for young children and teenagers in the urban areas. The previously slow response to play area maintenance has been rectified, 90 per cent of requests are now met with time standards, all from within existing resources. Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) assessments are regularly conducted and acted on. The Council has redirected resources to create and design new play areas and improve existing ones in association with local communities. Twenty-two playgrounds have been installed or refurbished since October 2003.

### **Environmental sustainability**

- 77 The Council undertakes some good work across departments and with its partners to promote energy conservation and efficiency, promote biodiversity, reduce and mitigate climate change and promote more sustainable patterns of development. But is only just establishing its environmental management system and has yet to determine a comprehensive set of environment sustainability measures and targets or complete assessment of its baseline position.
- 78 The Council and its environmental forum partners are performing well against their set of 'liveability' performance indicators. For example, beach and water quality is good, 100 per cent of bathing waters meeting national standards and Yarmouth Central and Gorleston beaches have attained national awards<sup>8</sup>. CO2 emissions displaced due to energy efficiency installations are rising. The area has a high level of sustainable energy production and a good level of overall energy efficiency. 80 per cent of SSSI sites are in favourable condition. However, the extent of the Council's contribution to the delivery of some of these indicators is unclear.

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<sup>8</sup> ENCAMS Seaside Award Winner and Blue Flag Winner (well managed beaches, with excellent facilities and good water quality).

- 79 The Council's has a mixed performance against other environment-related indicators in its Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and Annual Monitoring Report. For example, the current level of Greenfield development is high (although the 2001/20 average for brownfield development is calculated to be 64 per cent) and the average density of development in the borough has declined to below the Regional Spatial Strategy Target. But the Council's energy rating for its dwellings is among the best 25 per cent of councils, it has an increasing number of conservation areas all of which are in favourable condition and no planning permissions in 2004/05 comprised flood defence considerations or water quality issues.
- 80 The Council has provided a good and much valued lead to external environmental partnerships and has been proactive in its engagement of national bodies such as ENCAMS and CABA Space.<sup>9</sup> For example, the Council chairs the Norfolk Waste Partnership and shares the lead of the Norfolk and Waveney Waste Enforcement Group. Partners are extremely positive that joint working has improved because of this lead. The Council was one of only 30 councils CABA Space selected for its Strategic Enabling Scheme to develop a parks and open space strategy.
- 81 The Council is working with its partners to address key local environmental concerns such as coastal erosion and flooding. For example, it is consulting on a shoreline management plan covering North Norfolk, Great Yarmouth and Waveney and has undertaken a joint strategic flood risk assessment.
- 82 The Council and its partners are active in their protection of key wildlife habitats such as the tern colony at North Denes.
- 83 The Council is not actively living its own environmental message. It is not doing much internally to reduce, re-use or recycle waste. Internal mechanisms to encourage and address issues such as green procurement are in their formative stages. No environmental 'footprint' or baseline assessment has been undertaken. This could undermine its credibility and efforts with others to act in more sustainable ways. However, it has recently approved an environmental management system and will deploy staff to develop this agenda during 2006/07.

### **Is the service delivering value for money?**

- 84 Services are now generally low cost and efficient and overall provide adequate and improving value for money. However, resident satisfaction is low and at odds with some good performing 2005/06 PIs. Partnership working, especially with GYBS, is beginning to deliver to good effect and achieve outcomes that meet local need. Investment follows consultation outcomes and priorities. But monitoring and review arrangements whilst improving are not yet rigorously or consistently using comparative cost information and benchmarking to improve value for money.

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<sup>9</sup> Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment

- 85 There is clear and accurate information on many but not all key areas of service cost and how these services compare with others. But the reasons for differences are not always clearly understood or suitable adjustments made. Benchmarking is only just being used to improve value for money.
- 86 Service costs are below average. Street cleaning and waste collection costs are below average (nearest neighbours group 2004/05). In 2004/05 the cost of waste collection per household fell to among the lowest 25 per cent of councils (all similar councils).
- 87 Overall, the Service, as measured by audited BVPIs (2004/05) presents a below average service, with poor resident satisfaction, for a below average cost.<sup>10</sup> All BVPIs were in the worst performing 25 per cent of councils, except street cleaning and cost of waste collection.
- 88 Benchmarking undertaken by a consultant for the Council using Public Services Network (PSnet) data shows a low cost, efficient environmental (GYBS) service, where costs are well controlled and sickness rates are low. Management and labour, vehicle maintenance and running costs per mile are low, as are charges for bulky collections. Charges for trade waste are average but spend on grounds maintenance is above average.
- 89 Resources follow priorities. Areas where the Council has high costs, or where costs are estimated to rise, reflect recent consultation and policy decisions. For example, grounds maintenance costs rose to improve the service in response to the high level of complaints received in 2004. The Council's 2004 Research for Today spending priorities modelling and consultation, identified recycling, playground equipment, street cleaning and community safety as priorities for investment. Growth in the Council's expenditure has followed these priorities.
- 90 The Council has made good use of its partnership with GYBS to improve service quality while delivering cost efficiencies. GYBS's improved management control has delivered surpluses on its operations to the Council of £50,000 in 2004/05 and £120,000 in 2005/06. This includes an element of profit generated from GYBS trade waste activities. The Council has re-invested the surpluses enabling GYBS to significantly improve services, such as grass cutting, street lighting and street cleanliness, while keeping its cost base stable.
- 91 Other options for joint procurement are acted on to deliver benefits to the Council. For example, a football club in the borough, in return for a long-term agreement on tenure and discounted fees, has taken on preparation of pitches and management on match days.
- 92 External challenge is used constructively to help the Council gauge and improve the value for money being delivered. For example, its use of consultants, working with GYBS staff, to carry out BV199 inspections and undertake the current review of street cleansing.

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<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 1.

- 93** Effective project management allows capital projects to be delivered on time and within budget, such as, establishing GYBS and implementing the twin bin scheme.
- 94** Improving management arrangements are empowering GYBS to use its budgets more flexibly to deliver agreed outcomes and meet community needs. GYBS are using its staff flexibly and empowering them to take a 'pride in your patch' across street scene services. Developments with the Seafront Partnership have seen deployment of resources delegated to the community with GYBS co-ordinating service delivery along the seafront.

## What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

### What is the service track record in delivering improvement?

- 95 The Service has built up a strong track record of delivering improvement in its target areas: street cleanliness, fly-tipping and abandoned cars, grounds maintenance, recycling and responsive maintenance to play areas and street lighting. The many weaknesses identified in previous inspection reports have been addressed. Most environmental performance indicators improved in 2004/05. And that trend of improvement has been deepened and broadened in 2005/06, including improvement in some local waste minimisation indicators. But this improvement is not matched by any consistent increase in resident satisfaction, and progress in some areas has been slower than planned due to a lack of capacity.
- 96 The Council has brought about this step change in service delivery since the Audit Commission's last inspection by making significant improvements in internal and external partnerships, and by increased and sustained investment.
- 97 Internally, the Service has teamed up across the Council, and most notably with housing and planning, to create and deliver joined-up policy. Internal investment in the Service has been increased, with most going to improving play areas, grass cutting and street cleansing. Fifty per cent of the total council 'growth' spend for 2005/06 was committed to removing abandoned cars and improving provision in rural areas. The key partnership between the Council and GYBS is increasingly productive and efficient.
- 98 Externally the joint working with the Police and other local stakeholders has intensified through the Safer Communities schemes, environmental action days and the 'War on Litter'. The Council networks of rangers and wardens and the Deep Clean Squad have added value to the implementation of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) projects across the borough. The Environment Forum of the LSP has tied local community groups more closely to the achievement of the Council's environmental aims. The Local Plan and the LDF have both supported the Council's environmental focus by giving priority to landscape in planning considerations. And new external funding has been channelled into both service improvement and ongoing major regeneration projects.
- 99 Due to Council's improvement work recycling has improved markedly but efforts to reduce the amount of waste generate have met with less success. Recycling rates have risen from around 6 per cent in 2002 to meet the current DEFRA target of 18 per cent. Satisfaction with recycling has increased significantly. The roll-out of twin bins and a doubling of the Council's network of Bring Banks has led to a diminishing amount of waste going to landfill, and low contamination rates. Waste collection rates per household are now the second lowest in the county, although they remain above the Council's 2004/05 level and are well short of its 2005/06 target.

- 100** The street scene is much improved. Average response times to remove fly-tips and abandoned cars have dropped to just over 24 hours. This has probably contributed to a sharp fall both in the numbers of abandoned cars (more than halving between the summer of 2004/05 and the same period in 2005/06) and fly-tips (down from 2,951 in 2004/05 to 1,976 in the first 11 months of 2005/06). Areas of multiple deprivation, such as Middlegate, are noticeably cleaner and more attractive environmentally. The number of litter hot spots has been driven down to a dozen or so. The public has already recognised some improvements. For example, the 2005 MORI poll found only 9 per cent dissatisfied with the fly-tip hotline service, compared with 22 per cent in the 2004 Citizen's Panel survey.
- 101** Play areas have been another area of significant improvement. The number of play areas conforming to national standards has been rising steadily, from 18 per cent in 2001 to 45 per cent in 2003 to 80 per cent in 2004. But the most obvious improvements have been delivered by the Council's ambitious new Play Strategy. This was a model exercise of community participation and partnering. Thanks to the unusually high levels of external funding the Council attracted, 16 new facilities in 12 new areas have been installed five years early.
- 102** There have been parallel improvements in open spaces. Maintenance of these has been raised to a generally good standard. Good progress has been made in achieving the six acre standard for local play areas and parks, with the large shortfall in space in 1991 being turned into a surplus by 2005.
- 103** The Council has also championed energy efficiency and anti-pollution measures. From 1996 to 2004, there was a 20 per cent improvement in local domestic energy efficiency. However, there is some considerable improvement required before Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA, 1985) target of 30 per cent by 2011 is met.
- 104** Value for money is improving. In 2002/03 at the time of the last inspection services were poor and did not provide value for money. This is not now the case. The partnership with GYBS has undoubtedly made a difference, with many improvements made at no additional cost. Internal procedures have also been refined. The Service delivered almost the entire Gershon efficiency saving for the Council in 2004/05. Budget and performance mechanisms for the recently reunified Scrutiny Committee have been reviewed and improved. And a greater degree of comparability is now being worked into cost projections for the Service.
- 105** This strong track record has not yet been fully recognised by the public. The 2005 MORI poll showed the public saw improvements in parks and doorstep recycling. But overall satisfaction with the Service remained poor, with net satisfaction in some areas, such as waste collection, having continuously fallen since 2001. While there may be some 'lag effect' to satisfaction improving, dissatisfaction may also reflect concerns both at the pace of progress in some areas and at the way the Council as a whole, rather than Service itself, is perceived.
- 106** Performance in some areas has not matched the overall positive trend. For example, the review of litter bins, scheduled for 2002, is only now being completed and the implementation of an environmental management scheme is late.

## 28 Environment - Environmental Services | What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

- 107 A lack of capacity to move forward on all fronts has slowed progress in some areas. Key resources such as environmental rangers, have been drawn into the struggle to complete the scheduled roll-out of the twin bin scheme. And some service issues in the corporate assessment improvement plan, such as strategic planning have moved ahead much slower than planned.

### **How well does the service manage performance?**

- 108 The Service has generally good performance management, with a strong track record in leadership at the Norfolk County level, in adapting the Service to address the key issues of local concern, and in staff appraisal and development. But some corporate weaknesses are holding back service improvement.
- 109 The Council has made the environment one of its four key priorities. This is reflected in the LSP, whose environment forum is beginning to make a contribution to policy. But it also cascades through the community strategy, the corporate strategy and the best value performance plan. The Council has taken the leading role in developing a joint waste management strategy which is due to be discussed shortly in the Norfolk Waste Partnership. It has also provided a valued lead in the Norfolk and Waveney Fly-Tip forum which acts as a clearing house for best practice across two counties. The Council has been prominent in the successful county-wide efforts (WRAP and NORWRAP) to take the recycling message to local schools, communities and small businesses. And the new Council strategy on parks and open spaces, now out to consultation, is designed to dovetail into the new Local Development Framework.
- 110 The Council has significantly improved performance in all its target areas. The focus for activity is on things that matter to local people. It has met its key public objectives for the last two years – improved recycling, street lighting, ‘presence on the streets’, grass cutting and responsive repairs to children’s play areas. To achieve this GYBS has made several changes to both structure and delivery. Examples include employing a dedicated play engineer, installing microchips in twin bins to better monitor performance; setting up a Deep Clean Squad and altering the frequency of refuse collections in some areas.
- 111 Alongside its many remedial efforts, the Council is trying hard to bring about a heightened sense of civic pride in both residents and its employees. The SHARP<sup>11</sup> project has been developed to address visual amenity decline in an area of empty and multi-occupied properties bordering to the seafront. The approach to neighbourhood renewal is geared to empowering local community groups wherever and however possible. One example is the extension of the Council’s support to local Anglia in Bloom contestants to estates in Yarmouth. The workforce at GYBS is also being encouraged to develop a ‘pride of patch’ approach to it work.

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<sup>11</sup> A project to rejuvenate a significant area of Secondary Holiday Homes adjacent to the Great Yarmouth Seafront.

- 112** The Council has recognised the differing needs of its communities and is increasingly engaging them in service design and delivery such as with play areas. It has factored these needs into its new planning and progress tracking mechanisms. The differing needs of a town which attracts up to six million visitors each summer have also been more widely prioritised. The seafront partnership spearheaded by the local Tourist Board with the full support of the Council is an innovative approach to the challenges of upgrading and maintaining a busy seafront environment. A GYBS manager has already been seconded to the site; together with over £500,000 of the Council's revenue budget.
- 113** The Council is also developing closer links between planning and environmental improvement. The emerging parks and open spaces strategy is designed to link across to the LDF and get better environmental enhancements from section 106 agreements. Major regeneration projects, such as the Urban Regeneration Company and InteGREAT<sup>12</sup> have been designed to bring about improvements in access, open spaces, parkland, and the planting of shrub beds. The Draft Sustainability Appraisal objectives provide an evolving and challenging set of targets to reduce the effects of climate change, maintain and enhance biodiversity, enhance the quality of landscapes and minimise the loss of undeveloped land.
- 114** Performance management techniques have improved and are being embedded. Learning from others and benchmarking is becoming the norm. The most recent staff survey makes clear the right guidance, training support and information is coming down from managers. The newly established service development team at GYBS is developing the analytical skill to further improve the transmission of strategic policy-making into results on the ground. Service delivery by GYBS is supported by an extending network of service level agreements with the Council. Business planning by the Service is critically challenged, leading to year-on-year improvements in format and content.
- 115** Challenge processes are improving. The Scrutiny Committee has taken a close interest in environment issues, the chair having been chair of a previous environmental subcommittee, and made a solid contribution to the new play strategy. Additional internal peer review has been introduced in the form of the service performance review board, which is chaired by Chief Executive.
- 116** But the need for improvement in performance management remains. For example, a set of longer-term strategies are almost complete but have not yet been combined into a medium-term plan with specific goals and timelines. Service standards are incomplete and poorly communicated. The new service performance review board needs further work, to be both more challenging and productive.

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<sup>12</sup> InteGREAT is a capital investment programme, designed to improve the special characteristics and features of Great Yarmouth that will contribute to the improvement of the local economy.

## 30 Environment - Environmental Services | What are the prospects for improvement to the service?

- 117 The collection of performance information has improved but is not yet comprehensive or robustly analysed to challenge the effectiveness of policy delivery. The Annual Monitoring Report shows a good baseline against core issues but lacks an adequate range of quality of life indicators. Performance is not related enough to data on public need and satisfaction. More important, existing data should be made relevant to future policymaking by more rigorous analysis. A fresh look at the effectiveness of the existing range of enforcement measures is an obvious starting point.
- 118 Corporate weaknesses hold back service improvement. IT systems across the Council are incompatible. There is no network platform for the TEN performance monitoring system, which diverts data on to spreadsheets instead of desktops. Training budgets are limited, and lack a coherent strategy. Performance appraisal is still not a matter of routine, though the Service outperforms other Council departments. Communication internally has improved, thanks to innovations such as 'learning hours'. Externally, the appointment of a part-time press officer and the decision to revive the in-house magazine are positive moves. But the need to bring the approach to external communications closer to the heart of the wider policy-making process remains.

### **Does the service have the capacity to improve?**

- 119 The Service has good access to the necessary skills, tools, partnerships and finance to drive future improvements in a service that will continue, despite its tight budget position, to be a major priority for the Council.
- 120 Recent improvements in service delivery have been helped by the development of an enthusiastic, hard-working and increasingly skilled workforce. Changes in demand, both public and statutory, have driven training and recruitment and restructuring policies that have created extra capacity at both the Council and GYBS. The fact the Service has managed to deliver service improvement in so many areas with an accelerated roll-out of a twin bin scheme bears witness to this. Now that twin bin roll out now almost complete, strategic and enforcement capacity at both ends of the partnership is set to increase. The environment strategy section in the Council, which has already developed several new medium-term strategies, will be the main beneficiary of this. At GYBS, the service development team, which is at the forefront of efforts to improve the quality of both policymaking and delivery, will be reinforced.
- 121 The necessary tools for future improvement are also in place. Over the past two years, the Council has developed a network of partnerships that will deliver into the medium-term. The new Norfolk waste strategy will take waste management in the county onto the next stage by developing new plants, both large and small, for treatment of waste. These should deliver significant savings in landfill taxes and transport costs, as well as energy. The recycling architecture now in place across the borough is planned to push local recycling rates to well beyond 30 per cent, based on experience elsewhere in the county.

- 122** The 'putting people first' programme should soon begin to produce real benefits to local people in terms of customer access and service. The move of most Council staff to the eco-friendly Integrated Service Centre in 2008 is geared to improving access to services. Major regeneration projects now underway could produce environmental improvements to the borough for years to come. Areas of deprivation will continue to be beneficiaries of this, and of other neighbourhood management schemes that are being put together by a broad-based, council-led partnership. Current procurement strategies, already working well at both local and county level, seem set fair for continued results. The new IT-based performance management systems being rolled out in GYBS and GYBC, such as 'Great Plains' and OCELLA, will make it easier for the two partners to work together more efficiently and effectively.
- 123** The Service has been innovative in seeking to secure improvement. For example, GYBC, Encams and the local community empowerment network (CEN) have embarked on an ambitious new partnership designed to further engender local civic pride. By training CEN members to check performance on BV199, local residents will have the tools to both assess and reshape future delivery choices. The street cleaning review and liaison work with parish councils will re-model provision to meet community need in rural areas.
- 124** The Council has been successful in recent years in attracting large sums of external money for environmental services. This provides a sound foundation on which to sustain improvements.
- 125** The Council has comprehensible ambitions for the medium-term. The latest version of the medium-term financial plan makes it clear future improvement is not conditional on extra external funding. Past investments in recycling, in waste collection, in play areas, and in regeneration will continue to deliver well into the future. The need to mainstream some external funding in the future, such as DERT,<sup>13</sup> has already been embedded into planning. But more generally, the Council is focused firmly on making better use of existing resources. It has achieved this through increased partnership working and a re-engineering of processes and services; to which will be added a significant proportion of any growth in corporate revenue funds. This latter amounted to £50,000 (50 per cent of the Council's total growth investment) in 2005/06.
- 126** Yet there remain some further corporate and service capacity constraints and challenges. Internally the lack of resources available for training, IT systems, performance management and communications could hold back the pace of future improvement in the Service. The failure of the Council to live its own message on reducing, reusing and recycling waste could progressively reduce its impact. Some technological gaps which limit the flow of information between GYBC and GYBS and between GYBS and local residents, including parish councils, remain to be bridged. Above all a more reflective, more strategic approach to policymaking is needed to complement medium-term financial planning. Two years ago internal scrutiny reviews pointed to a lot of strategic thinking and not much action. Now the Council needs to guard against the risk of the pendulum swinging too far the other way.

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<sup>13</sup> Dynamic Environmental Response Team funded through Neighbourhood Renewal Fund 2006/08

## Appendix 1 – Environment best value performance indicators (BVPIs)

Indicator	Result 2002/03 and quartile position	Result 2003/04 and quartile position	Result 2004/05 and quartile position	Projected result 2005/06
BVPI 82a and b Percentage of household waste recycled or composted	7% *	11% *	12% *	18.7% Third quarter figure
BVPI 91 Percentage of population served by a kerbside collection of recyclables	14% *	37% *	54% *	90%
BVPI 90b Resident satisfaction with recycling facilities - percentage satisfied	47% (2000/1) *	52% *	Not collected	74% (Residents' survey)
BVPI 84 Kg of waste collected per head	401 ***	390 ***	449 *	482 3rd quarter figure
BVPI 86 Cost of waste collection per household	£28.95 ****	£33 ****	£34.53 ****	Target is £37.87
BVPI 90a Resident satisfaction with waste collection - percentage satisfied	79% (2000/1) *	76% *	Not collected	69 (Residents' survey)

Indicator	Result 2002/3 and quartile position	Result 2003/4 and quartile position	Result 2004/05 and quartile position	Projected result 2005/06
BVPI 199 Percentage of land significantly littered	Not collected	24% **	10% ****	9%
BVPI 89 Resident satisfaction with standards of cleanliness - percentage satisfied*	48% (2000/1) *	43% *	48% (Citizens' survey)	38% (Residents' survey)
BVPI 119 Resident satisfaction with parks and open spaces	52% (2000/1) *	57% *	Not collected	68%

*Key to quartile positions is as follows: \* = worst quartile; \*\* = third quartile; \*\*\* = second quartile; \*\*\*\* = best or lowest cost quartile.*

*\*The 2004 and 2005 satisfaction with street cleansing data is not comparable with 2003/04 data for BVPI 89*