

Securing Improvements
Performance Reporting for 2006-07

Improvement Plan

Stage 2

October 2007

Contents

	Page No.
Foreword	1
Statement of Responsibility	2
Our Priorities	
Conwy's Community Strategy	3
How Will the Community Strategy be delivered?	3
The Council's Focus	4
Conwy in Figures	5
Corporate Plan Priorities	
A Healthy Place	6
A Prosperous Conwy	7
Strong & Safe Communities	7
A Quality Environment	8
Encouraging Learning & Creativity	9
Improving the Way We Work	10
Service Effectiveness	
Service Risks	11
Corporate Risks	13
Our Performance in 2006-07	
Policy Agreements	16
Service Improvement	
Service Actions	17
Corporate Actions	18
National Issues	19
Review of Our Effectiveness	
Regulatory Plan	20
Relationship Managers Audit Letter	21
Financial Accounts and Reports to those Charged with Governance	23
Expenditure for 2006 –07	
Budget Information	24
Have Your Say	
Contact Details	26

Appendices

Appendix A – National Performance Indicator Profile

Appendix B - Corporate Health, National Strategic Indicator Set

Appendix C - A Healthy Place, National Strategic Indicator Set

Appendix D - Strong & Safe Communities, National Strategic Indicator Set

Appendix E - A Quality Environment, National Strategic Indicator Set

Appendix F - Encouraging Learning & Creativity, National Strategic Indicator Set

Appendix G - Policy Agreements

Foreword

“Welcome to Conwy County Borough Council’s Stage 2 Improvement Plan. This year we have changed the way we report our performance and now produce two improvement plans: one looking forward which we published in June 2007 Securing Improvements, Stage 1 that outlined the challenges and targets that we had set for 2007-08 and this one which reviews our performance during 2006-07. The purpose of this Stage 2 report is to review whether or not we achieved what we said we would and how well we performed.

We recognise the important role that we as a local authority play in the lives of our residents. One of our main drivers in planning our services is to ensure that we identify and understand what members of the public and service users need and expect. It is not always possible for us to provide everything that people want all of the time and we must ensure that we take account of, and effectively manage, the resources available to us. Focussing on the customer is the primary driver in helping us to continuously develop the services we provide from education; street lighting; providing leisure centres; care for all vulnerable people to providing clean and open spaces. Whilst we are proud of the high standard and quality of our services there are areas where we can improve. Our commitment as a Council is to ensure that we put the needs of the customer first in all that we do.

Whilst we are the best performing Council in Wales in terms of the rate of delayed transfers of care from hospital for social care responses for people aged 75 and over, there are some areas we know we must improve our performance. This Plan details what we are doing to tackle the issues that include: reducing the number of pupil exclusions; improving the number of homes receiving kerbside recycling facilities; and improving the quality of our road infrastructure.

I am pleased that the efforts of our hardworking staff have been recognised this year in the Excellence Wales national award scheme for local government. Our commitment to achieving the highest level of performance in servicing our communities was recognised in three areas: Homelessness Services and Housing Related Support was commended for its strategic housing role; we were awarded a certificate of recognition for Plas Menai, Primary Health & Community Care Centre in Llanfairfechan; and The Social Inclusion Learning Programme is a pioneering example of how the local residents of Tudno Mostyn Ward worked with Council officers to improve their community.



This Improvement Plan makes clear what needs to be done by the Council to build upon our many successes and to continue to provide you with the best standards of service.”

Cllr Goronwy Edwards
Leader of the Council

Statement of Responsibility

Conwy County Borough Council ("the Council") is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Wales Programme for Improvement (WPI) circular 18/2002, was introduced in Wales in April 2002. It required all Local Authorities to modernise their services, to fulfill the duties placed on them under the Local Government Act 1999, and to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control that facilitates the effective exercise of its functions. The information and assessments reported within this Plan are based on this information.

The effectiveness of our control environment is reviewed as part of our governance arrangements. The Council is satisfied that the information contained within this Improvement Plan are, in all material aspects, accurate and complete and that the targets for improvement set out in the Plan are accurate.

Securing Improvements, Improvement Plan Stage 2 details our actual performance for the year ending 31st March 2007 and also sets out the Council's current risks.

Our Priorities

Conwy's Community Strategy

'Turning Ideas into Reality', a Community Strategy for Conwy, 2004-2014 was developed following widespread consultation and engagement with our communities and partners on the issues they had identified as being important. The agreed vision is

"A place of beauty, a safe community that cares for its people who have ambition for the future"



The themes of the Community Strategy are shown in the diagram above.

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has recently published a consultation document on creating revised Community Strategies. In summary the strategy must contribute to supporting prosperity, social justice and protecting the environment. Due regard should also be given to equalities, sustainability, welsh language and climate change.

The community strategy will not cover every issue but will focus on the key issues in Conwy where collaboration across the public sector is required. To further support this work, the partnerships established for each of the Community Strategy themes are reviewing their priorities and the Council is looking at the suitability of the structures in place to support them.

The national policy aims that form the basis of the community strategy will also help shape the Council's new Corporate Plan which will be developed in 2008 and which will drive the Council's vision until 2012.

How Will the Community Strategy be Delivered?

In line with Welsh Assembly Government policy, a Local Service Board (LSB) will be developed for Conwy. This will comprise of senior decision makers from the major public sector organisations within Conwy and representatives of other key areas such as business community.

The role of the LSB is to achieve better outcomes for members of the public in their local area through the joint planning and delivery of services in line with the ambitions of the Community Strategy. It will be a hub of shared leadership, local intelligence and resource with an agreed and consistent approach to citizen engagement. The LSB will need to evidence the experience of service users and local citizens, remove barriers to access, improve the integration of services and improve efficiency and effectiveness of services.

The Council's Focus

The Council's Corporate Plan 2005-08, 'Realising Potential', details how the Council is committed to playing its full part in delivering the Community Strategy. It also recognises that it has a duty to continually improve how it works to ensure it is providing services in the best possible way and fulfilling its community leadership role of

'Working with others and, building on Conwy's location at the centre of North Wales, creating a prosperous and sustainable community where people can realise their potential'.

The purpose of this Stage 2 Improvement Plan is to report on how well we have achieved what we set out to do during 2006-07 and how well we have managed the risks that may prevent us from delivering and improving services.

Conwy in Figures

Not many people are aware of the full range of services that a local authority provides. To help put the range and breadth of services in context, below is a summary of some of the services provided by Conwy County Borough Council:

The County Borough has approximately:

111,300 residents

who live in

3,895 houses rented from the local authority

47,200 owner occupied, privately rented and other tenures

2,082 rented from Registered Social Landlords

In an area that has

75 km of Coastline of which **13 km** is classified as Heritage Coast

25 Conservation Areas

1,395 Listed Buildings

124 km of Trunk Roads

105 km of Principal Roads

682 km on Non-Principal Roads

899 km of Unclassified Roads

Council services:

- Provide **6** leisure centres, **14** bowling greens, **50** multi user games areas, **9** golf courses and **33** tennis courts
- Empty almost **3 million** domestic refuse bins each year
- Sweep and pick litter from **1800 km** of road each year
- Manage **234 hectares** of parks, woodland and open space
- Repair nearly **5000** street lights every year
- Support **76** schools teaching almost **17,000** children
- Looked after **230** vulnerable children
- Give support to nearly **2000** Older People and **1000** people with mental health needs, physical, learning or sensory disabilities

Corporate Plan Priorities

The Council aims to provide citizens and service users with consistently high quality and value for money services. This section of the report demonstrates how we have worked towards achieving our priorities during the year 2006-07 in relation to:

- **A Healthy Place**
- **A Prosperous Conwy**
- **Strong & Safe Communities**
- **A Quality Environment**
- **Encouraging Learning and Creativity**
- **Improving the Way We Work**

The objectives within our Corporate Plan are listed below and we have provided examples of key areas of success, some of which include developing new services and making changes to the way we work.

A Healthy Place

Objectives:

- **To deliver services, in partnership with others, in key localities in Conwy**
- **Through these partnerships deliver flexible, innovative and quality services which promote Health & Well-being**
- **Promote healthy lifestyles and deliver a range of services and facilities which promote well-being**

Measures of our Success

- Integrated primary health and community centres bring together key professionals from social care, housing, health and the voluntary sector in one building. Plas Menai based in Llanfairfechan was the first of its kind to open in Wales and was awarded a certificate of recognition in the national Excellence Wales award scheme. Following the success of Plas Menai, the Council is committed to developing further integrated primary & community care centres within the County. Abergele and Llanrwst have been identified as sites and the Council is progressing with the plans for them to be fully operational by 2009.
- Conwy County Borough Council in partnership with Denbighshire County Council developed and rolled out a joint training programme for staff working in the field of Learning Disabilities. As the training is rolled out the Council can begin to look at how services can be remodelled to improve the quality of care provided in more efficient and effective ways.
- The Council led on the implementation of the smoking ban that came into force in April 2007.

- Over half of the schools across the County Borough participated in the Council's Healthy Schools scheme, which focussed on raising awareness of healthy lifestyle choices covering diet, nutrition and exercise.

A Prosperous Conwy

Objectives

- **To increase the provision of low cost accommodation across all tenures in rural and urban areas**
- **To support and develop the growth of higher value added business and improve support arrangements for Small Medium Enterprises across the County**
- **In partnership with others address the skills shortages across the County**
- **To promote and maintain the County Borough of Conwy as a cultural tourism destination**

Measures of our Success:

- Owner Occupation has become an increasingly unaffordable option for many households. To address this issue the Council approved the Supplementary Planning Guidance to increase the number of affordable homes. The Council has set a target for 200 affordable homes to be built in the county over a five year programme
- The Council successfully integrated the Conwy Enterprise Agency into the Regeneration Service to provide a more seamless support service to local business. We have provided support to 50 local business start-ups that have subsequently been approved
- A skills shortage in the domiciliary care sector was identified and we are working with the private providers to identify and support them in upskilling the local workforce to ensure they meet the necessary care standards

Strong & Safe Communities

Objectives:

- **Increase opportunities for children and young people to participate and be involved with their communities**
- **Protect all of the community and in particular vulnerable people: adults; children and homeless people**
- **To increase the sense of safety through rigorous community engagement and effective partnership working**

- **Work with stakeholders to strengthen and sustain local communities especially in areas of deprivation**

Measures of our Success

- To improve the way we engage with children and young people and get to understand their views, a Children and Young People's Participation Strategy was developed and put in place by March 2007
- Much work was undertaken to establish Youth Councils in schools and we also began to work with our partners to look at ways of establishing a Youth Council for Conwy County Borough. This work will continue to develop during the year
- The establishment of a Housing Options and Support Team providing positive interventions to prevent homelessness has realised reductions in the number of days that homeless households spend in temporary accommodation; 136 in 2006-07 compared to 151 the previous year.
- The Social Inclusion Learning Programme between the Council and the residents of Tudno Mostyn Ward in Llandudno was a great success in supporting local residents to have greater confidence in having a say about how their community should be managed. The programme was awarded national recognition by winning an Excellence Wales award
- Numerous visits to licensed premises have been undertaken by the Licensing Service and the Police to prevent the sale of alcohol to under aged persons and to further prevent drunk and disorderly behaviour

A Quality Environment

Objectives:

- **To improve waste management including waste reduction and recycling**
- **To improve the cleanliness of the environment**
- **To improve the awareness of energy efficiency and improve the use of green energy**
- **Seek to conserve and enhance the quality of the natural and built environment within the County Borough**
- **Work with our partners to improve the integration, reliability and use of transport**
- **To improve and maintain the highway network to an acceptable standard**

Measures of our Success:

- Kerbside recycling collections continues to be a priority for Conwy and we have increased the coverage to households. Whilst we have increased the amount of

waste that is reused, recycled or composted from 12.5 % to 15.13%, we will look to further improve these measures over the forthcoming year

- Conwy has reduced the amount of municipal waste sent to landfill by approx. 4,400 tonnes
- The Council maintained its target of purchasing 100% of green energy and continues to work towards ensuring that 100% of electricity supplied is Green accredited
- Progress was made in incorporating policies to conserve and enhance the environment within the Local Development Plan. Examples include safeguarding landscapes, habitats and sites of local importance; protecting the character and openness of the countryside and undeveloped coastline and ensuring that the efficient use of resources is a critical design consideration
- 101,909 bus journeys were made during the year, each contributing towards our commitment to improve sustainability, increase accessibility and social inclusion of our local residents and visitors
- The Council took responsibility for managing the Decriminalisation of Parking across the County Borough in September 2006

Encouraging Learning & Creativity

Objectives:

- **Ensure that all children and young people continue with education to maximise their potential by obtaining skills to increase their future life opportunities**

Measures of our Success:

- To support all pupils with the opportunity of developing their Welsh language skills the Local Education Authority facilitated a programme of teacher training to promote Welsh ethos in every Welsh second language school
- Head Teachers worked with their Primary school partners to ensure that the necessary transfer arrangements were in place in all Primary schools to support the transition plans to become operational as of September 2007
- Proactive inclusion measures such as working in partnership with Coleg Llandrillo to provide pupils with an opportunity to attend college and gain a vocation skill via the Vocational Futures programme has led to a reduction in the rate of secondary school exclusions. The number of secondary school exclusions reduced from 13 to 6 pupils in the autumn term compared to the previous year
- A review of the Library Service was completed to inform future decisions on how it could be improved and modernised
- A review of the County's Youth Service provision neared completion and consultation on providing a more integrated service based in geographical areas began. This work will be further developed during the year.

Improving the Way We Work

Objectives:

- **Customer Focus**
- **Working in Partnership**
- **Improving our Services**
- **Better Strategic & Resource Allocation**
- **Being a Good Employer**

Measures of our Success:

- We implemented a Customer Charter setting out our minimum acceptable standards of customer care across all Council services
- We began to collect and report on the number of service improvements that are made in response to suggestions from service users and members of the public
- The Council produced a consultation toolkit to assist services with effective ways of engaging with service users and members of the public
- Our approach to identifying service risk and reporting on how the risks are managed was improved
- A dashboard of performance information was introduced to help the senior managers monitor the Council's performance
- We introduced Corporate Performance Reviews to monitor progress of delivering our Corporate Plan aims
- The Council reviewed the way the budgets are allocated to services to improve the alignment between the budget and Council priorities
- Progress in achieving our efficiency targets was reported and monitored monthly by our senior managers

Service Effectiveness

Each year, together with our regulators, we produce a Joint Risk Assessment, to identify the main risks facing the Authority.

The Joint Risk Assessment is based on the regulators' audit and inspection work and the Council's own internal risk assessments.

Below is a commentary on the main risks identified and what we did during 2006 -07 to address them:

Service Risks

Quality Housing

WAG requires that all local authorities will ensure that their housing stock achieves the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2012. The standard sets minimum expectations for the structural condition of properties, internal facilities and local environment. Following the Council's work with tenants on the options for the future of its housing stock, the Council agreed to consult tenants on the transfer of Council homes to a new Independent, not-for-profit, Registered Social Landlord - Cartrefi Conwy. The ballot will take place in November 2007.

If the ballot produces a No vote then the Council will need to take some difficult decisions in order to meet the WHQS by 2012. This continues to be a major risk for the Council.

Homelessness

Homelessness was identified as a risk due to an increase in the number of homeless households and a reduction in available accommodation. The Council's policy is to protect all vulnerable people. The Council has agreed to dispose of a property in Llandudno to a local Housing Association to provide fully supported homeless accommodation for 12 young people.

The Council was awarded Excellence Wales status for its service to homeless people. The range of support made available to those suffering from homelessness and the innovative ways that Conwy works to improve long term outcomes was also recognised. The Council recognises that early prevention is far more effective than simply reacting to homelessness when it occurs, and has therefore developed the Housing Options & Support Team, providing a range of preventative services that are focussed on those groups most likely to experience homelessness, with the aim of avoiding the disruption to family life caused by temporary accommodation.

Public Protection

Concerns were raised due to the traditional delivery of the service. The WAO undertook an inspection in February 2007 and the service is currently implementing an improvement action plan. It includes developing service priorities, producing a

consultation strategy, reviewing resource requirements and developing a service wide improvement plan.

School Exclusions

An increase in the number of school exclusions above the national average across the County Borough was of real concern. The Council liaised with Head Teachers to put in place transfer protocol and arrangements to alleviate the negative effect exclusions have within the school and wider community. This had immediate effect with a reduction in the number of exclusions from 13 to 6 in the 2006 Autumn term. Work also began on reviewing the development of alternative provision at Ysgol Y Graig to ensure that excluded pupils could access 25 hours of education per week. As a result the number of pupils not receiving 25 hours of education per week fell from 36 in November 2006 to 6 in January 2007. This positive approach is continuing to be developed.

Highways & Transportation

Deterioration in the highway assets and infrastructure were identified as significant risks to the Authority. A Highways Asset Management Plan was introduced in August 2006 coupled with a Highways Inspection Programme to clearly identify and prioritise a schedule of works.

Tourism & Regeneration

There was lack of clarity with regards the role of the Regeneration Strategy to support the Councils local policy agenda. To assist in improving the integration of Tourism and Regeneration actions into other Council plans the following improvements were made: in addition to its traditional role, the Tourist Information Centre in Colwyn Bay now provides information to the public on local and regional regeneration projects. Glasdir, a rural development centre was opened in Llanrwst to provide support to the local business and communities. A new tourist website, Visit Conwy to promote the county borough as a tourist destination was also developed by the Council.

Waste Management

The rollout of the kerbside recycling scheme across the County Borough has reduced the risk of not meeting the national waste management targets. The Council also adopted the Waste Management Strategy, approved a new civic amenity site and began to construct a new waste transfer station. In addition, the Council has been proactive in working in partnership with the other local authorities in North Wales to seek further regional solutions to reduce rising costs and improve the service provided.

Disabled Facilities Grant

We are disappointed with our performance for delivery times for Adaptations where the disabled Facilities Grant process is not used, but we are confident that new procedures and working practices that we have introduced will improve performance. A disparity in the way other local authorities count the time taken to deliver

adaptations makes our figures look poor. This has now been recognised by the Local Government Data Unit and changes to the way the data is collected and reported have now been introduced. As a result of the changes in the definitions Conwy's timescales have reduced for the first quarter of this year down 202 days from 715 days as reported in 2006/07.

Corporate Risks

Job Evaluation

The affordability and financial implications of implementing job evaluation and the potential threat of equal pay claims are a high risk for the Council. To reduce the risks associated with such a scheme the Council has agreed a comprehensive action plan. Progress is steady and the Council hopes to increase the pace over the coming period.

Corporate Assessment & Improvement

The Council adopted a comprehensive change programme in response to the findings of the internal Corporate Assessment & Improvement review. The senior managers and Councillors approved a number of projects to support the delivery of the improvement agenda. The improvement work clearly sets out a range of actions to support the delivery of the 9 Key themes we wish to improve: Visionary Leadership; Focus on Customers & Community; Proud of Conwy; Systems to Succeed; Planning Effectively; Securing Improvement; Being Informed & Inclusive; Releasing the Potential and Structure to Deliver. Whilst significant progress has been made it will take a few years until the full benefit of the changes can be measured in terms of improving the effectiveness and quality of our service delivery.

Making the Connections

The Auditor General for Wales had identified Making the Connections as a national risk. Putting the customer first is a primary focus for the Council. Building on its performance strengths and relations with the Police and other partners, the Licensing Service entered into negotiations for managing Denbighshire Council's Licensing service. The innovative primary health care centre in Llanfairfechan was awarded national recognition as an example of working in partnership to meet the needs of the service user.

The local authorities in north Wales have set up a North Wales Regional Partnership Board to help drive the Making the Connections agenda. The 6 local authorities have been working together to undertake feasibility studies into assessing the potential of regional joint projects in the areas of: Decriminalised Parking; Revenue & Benefits; Telecare - providing the elderly with homecare support; Customer Contact Centre; School Transport and a regional waste facility. Making the Connections remains a risk for Conwy and other local authorities.

Performance Management

Whilst there were many examples of a sound approach to performance management within services it was not consistent across the Council therefore the Council introduced Corporate Performance Reviews. These allow the Corporate Directors to monitor progress against the Council's Corporate Plan priorities. Work also began on revising the approach to service planning and performance management with specific pilots in waste management and school catering.

Project Management

A lack of a consistent approach to project management meant that there was a lack of accountability and some difficulties in delivering projects. A corporate framework has been devised to reduce the risk of projects not delivering on time and becoming too costly. The two pilots set up proved successful and the framework is now being implemented and a training plan developed to support its roll out.

IT Projects

IT projects are complex to manage and implement. It was agreed that the Council faced risks in implementing a number of IT Projects during 2006-07 including a social care management information system and Human Resource and Payroll system. To reduce the level of risk the Council put in place strict project management structure and monitoring arrangements to support the implementation of the systems.

Energy & Water

The Welsh Assembly's energy efficiency policy agreement with local authorities requires a 14% improvement in domestic energy efficiency by 2007. The Council commissioned energy efficiency professionals to undertake a Home Energy Conservation Act audit every two years. Because of this, the Council was unable to report on a regular basis. To raise the public awareness, the Council introduced a Council Tax Energy Efficiency scheme. Since January 2007, the Council began to develop an Affordable Warmth Strategy.

Our Performance in 2006 - 07

The National Performance Measurement Framework as set out by the Wales Assembly Government provides a means of measuring how well local authorities are performing in supporting national policy initiatives.

Conwy has performed well in a number of key areas:

- ❑ We have provided 100% of carers with an assessment of their needs
- ❑ Conwy continues to be one of the best performing authorities in Wales in relation to minimising delays in transfers of care for older people (this is when older people are occupying hospital beds whilst waiting for social care)
- ❑ Conwy is reducing the rate of older people that it supports in care homes by increasing innovative support packages that keep people independent
- ❑ The Council is performing well in the processing Housing Benefit claim forms, taking 31.5 days compared to the Wales average of 37 days in the previous year
- ❑ 99.6% of Housing Benefit claims are processed accurately
- ❑ We are continuing to reduce the length of time that homeless households spend in bed and breakfast
- ❑ Conwy is improving the amount of waste sent to landfill
- ❑ Conwy approved 90% of planning applications within eight weeks

We have further work to do to improve our performance in the following areas:

- ❑ 46% of households had access to kerbside recycling collections. Whilst it appears that Conwy did not perform as favourably as other local authorities the Council had not fully implemented the scheme across the county during the 2006-07 reporting period.
- ❑ Improving the time it takes to provide care plans to service users within adult services (during 2006/07 it took Conwy County Borough Council an average of 89 days, compared to an average of 37 days throughout Wales)
- ❑ The average time taken to deliver adaptations to private tenants living in the County Borough was 461 days compared to the Wales average of 85 days

Policy Agreements

Policy Agreements are an agreement between the National Assembly for Wales and the Council. They set out what we aim to achieve within the county to contribute towards the shared national strategic priorities. Whilst eight of the measures are prescribed, and in some instances form the basis of the revised performance measurement framework; eight are local targets set by the Council. The need to collect the Policy Agreement data for the Assembly came to an end this year, however the Council will continue to measure the performance until March 2008.

Dependent on performance the Council is awarded an annual Performance Incentive Grant of £1.180 million.

Full details of our performance against Policy Agreement targets can be seen in Appendix G of this plan.

Service Improvement

The Joint Risk Assessment (JRA) is an opportunity for the Council to discuss and agree all types of risks facing it with our regulators.

The outcome of this exercise provides us with the agreed high risk areas that need to be addressed, it will inform our auditors' regulatory plan and prioritise the Council's actions for the forthcoming year.

The last JRA took place in May 2007 and identified the following Service and Corporate risk areas that will be addressed during the current year 2007/08:

Service Actions

- **Waste Management** – In order to meet the national waste targets and provide an improved service to our customers, we will identify opportunities for joint research, procurement and service delivery for Waste Management
- **Local Public Transport Services** – We will determine how well our Local Public Transport Services are being managed and whether they are meeting the needs of the local population
- **Traffic Management** – In order to manage and supervise school crossing patrols and other road safety measures, we will identify a remedial works programme in accident cluster sites, review traffic congestion, review the introduction of decriminalisation of parking, and further develop the Rights of Way Improvement Plan
- **Voluntary Transfer of Council's Housing Stock** – The Council has approved a business case and has undertaken an option appraisal for pursuing the transfer option. The Council is now planning and preparing for the ballot of tenants
- **The Number of Police Referrals from the Police to Children's Services** – We will work with the Police to gain an understanding of agreed thresholds in order to prioritise and respond appropriately to future referrals
- **Libraries** – To prevent our service standards deteriorating against Welsh Assembly Government targets, we will assess the merits of remodelling the service including rationalisation of sites
- **Sport & Recreation** – To ensure we promote a positive image of the service, we will review the maintenance priorities and identify the modernisation requirements of our leisure centres
- **Tourism & Regeneration** – We will secure the future viability of regeneration projects by maximising our European funding opportunities and continuing to develop partnerships with other organisations. We must also ensure that when we plan the way our services are delivered we have regard for regeneration initiatives
- **Arts & Culture** – We will continue to seek additional and more sustainable sources of external funding to support the service
- **Development Control** – The Council continuously reviews its current working practices and the capacity of services to improve. We have identified that the speed of determining planning applications needs further improvement

- **Highways** – The Council will develop a strategic plan for Highways that addresses the issues raised by the road condition survey and complements the delivery of the Asset Management Plan
- **Arrangements for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults** – The Council will ensure that the key services to Vulnerable Adults are effectively targeted in the face of financial changes and growing demand
- **Property and Asset Management** – Conwy recognises the need to ensure that office accommodation is adequate for staff needs and presents a positive image to the public. During 2007-08, we will ensure that we develop an office accommodation strategy to complement the delivery of our Asset Management Plan
- **Financial Statements** – We will work to support the foundation schools to ensure their accounts are prepared within the Council's framework.

Corporate Actions

It is important to ensure that the way the Council supports and manages the delivery of services is also reviewed and better ways of working identified. To ensure that we maintain the momentum of change generated by the **Corporate Assessment and Improvement Project**, we have agreed with our regulators that they undertake a follow-up inspection to assess our capacity and capability to deliver the required improvements. The Council identified a lack of consistency across the authority in our project management skills. In response, a **Project Management** Framework methodology has been developed and adopted. We must now ensure that this consistent approach is rolled out and supported corporately by the Council.

The Council needs to establish the impact of the **demographic changes** on the future planning of council services to determine the appropriate providers. We will continue to identify opportunities and clarify the benefits of **partnership working** and ensure that we have the appropriate governance and accountability arrangements in place. This will also enable us to identify further opportunities for joint working at a regional level to deliver better services and contribute towards realising the **Making the Connection** efficiency savings. The Council will also develop the **Local Development Plan** to ensure it facilitates the successful delivery of the Community Strategy.

We must ensure information from our Service and Corporate Performance Reviews are used to underpin our business planning cycle, and that our management processes for Agenda Management and Risk Management are robust and provide evidence for our **annual service assessments**. To further support this, the Council must also assess the adequacy of the support given to our **scrutiny function** and the recently implemented **Improvement Boards**. The Council must ensure that our scrutiny function and improvement boards are effective and demonstrate accountability. We will continue to identify our Strategic Management Information needs and develop an appropriate Information and Communications Technology Strategy to support this.

The Council is currently working towards developing a transparent and fair pay and reward system across all council services whilst also working with the Trade Unions to

ensure that our statutory obligations under **Equal Pay** legislation are met. Following the successful implementation of Phase 1, the Council is now working towards the implementation of the human resource functions of the **integrated human resource IT system**.

The effect of **climate change** on our coastal defences and flood plains, and the potential impact on our communities has been identified as a local risk and is monitored on our Corporate Risk Register. We must ensure that environmental considerations are integrated into our plans and programmes, in order to provide high-level protection for the environment and comply with the statutory requirements of the **Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive**. **Sustainability** is a local and national priority. The Council will work towards ensuring sustainability issues are incorporated into all our functions and policies.

During the year we will also assess the capacity and capability of the Council to deliver the requirements of the **Civil Contingencies Act 2004** and **Regulations 2005**.

National Issues

Regulatory activity has been identified within the Auditor General for Wales' Forward Programme. These studies may involve some or all Welsh councils and will be subject to separate updates. The studies have been listed below: -

- Child and adolescent mental health services (in partnership with Healthcare Inspectorate Wales)
- Sustainable Development – business decision making
- Flood risk management
- Capital investment in schools
- Integrated transport
- Annual Performance Evaluation undertaken by the Social Services Inspectorate in Wales
- Review of SEN funding for the Welsh Assembly Government

Conwy County Borough Council's Regulatory Plan 2006-07, produced by the Wales Audit Office, details all the agreed audit and inspection work and is available to view at www.conwy.gov.uk.

Major Planned Inspections

The Care Standards and Social Service Inspectorate for Wales and the Wales Audit Office will undertake a Joint Review of Conwy County Borough Council Social Services in early 2008. The purpose of the Joint Review is to inspect and evaluate how well Conwy County Borough Council delivers social services.

Review of Our Effectiveness

Regulatory Plan

The Regulatory Plan sets out the external inspection work programme undertaken by our regulators: the Wales Audit Office (WAO), the Care Standards & Social Service Inspectorate for Wales, Estyn and the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate.

Following the inspection the Council receives a report and agrees an improvement action plan to address the recommendations made. The reports are available to members of the public on our website www.conwy.gov.uk

Relationship Manager's Annual Letter (incorporating the Appointed Auditor's Audit Letter)

The Relationship Manager's Annual Letter (RMAL) sets out the key messages for all regulatory work undertaken during the previous year. It includes a summary of audit and inspection work completed, identifies the progress made against improvement plans and draws on published reports of other inspectorates to provide an annual summary to the Council.

The Council received the latest RMAL in February 2007. The report focussed on the regulatory and inspection work that took place over an extended period from 2005 and up to February 2007. It reported that "*..the Council has made significant progress in responding to the challenges it faces.*"

The key performance and improvement message reported within the Letter concluded:

"The Council has responded to the Corporate Management challenges it faces by adopting a positive, constructive and authority wide approach that with greater refinement and more effective and accountable leadership will drive continuous improvement in services"

In the annual conclusion, reached following a review of the Council's corporate performance and financial management arrangements, the Relationship Manager reported that the WAO were satisfied that the Council had arrangements in place "*..to properly support the achievement of its responsibility to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources during 2005/2006*"

The report also noted the Council's progress in responding to statutory recommendations made in previous years and recognition that the recommendations are now central to our improvement agenda. Emphasis was given to the importance of project management as a tool for effective change.

Below is the Council's response to the statutory recommendations made within the RMAL:

R1 We recommend that the political and managerial leadership of the Council, in response to previous years statutory recommendations, should ensure that the work of the various CAIPs is progressed within a reasonable timescale to secure improvements in the corporate functions of the Council

The Council has an agreed improvement work plan. A number of improvement projects have been identified and established to support the delivery of the change programme across the Authority. A project management structure is in place and projects have identified the benefits, milestones and timescales for delivery. Either a senior manager or Cabinet Member now sponsor all approved projects - this ensures there is clear accountability, senior drive and commitment for the projects to deliver the expected benefits. In accordance with our project management framework, regular highlight reports are monitored by the Improvement Boards to ensure the improvement programme is prioritised, interdependencies are identified and checked and that resource and capacity requirements are addressed as needed.

R2 Subsequent Improvement Plans should contain the required published statement on the Council's response to the auditor's recommendations with an assessment of progress against the agreed actions.

This and all subsequent Improvement Plans will detail the Council's response to the statutory recommendations.

R3 For the future, we recommend that the Council should ensure that:

- **a public summary of the Improvement Plan is published at the same time as, or no later than a month after the publication of the Plan**

A bilingual Public Summary of the improvement plan is made available via all Council buildings, county libraries and the mobile library service. It is also available on the Council's website and referred to in the Council's newsletter, the Bulletin. A public notice is published each year in the local press advising members of the public of its publication date.

- **the results of the annual business planning and risk assessment processes, the 'stage 1' information, are published no later than June each year**

Securing Improvements, Improvement Plan Stage 1 was approved by Council on the 19th July 2007 and made available on the Conwy's website.

The publication of the forward looking plan has been built into the Councils' annual strategic, service and financial planning calendar.

- **robust arrangements are in place to ensure the accuracy of the national Strategic and Core Set Indicators and reported local performance indicators**

All services complete a method statement detailing the source of the data collated and the internal validation checks undertaken to check the accuracy of the performance indicators. Quarterly performance reports detailing performance, trend and national benchmarking comparators are presented to Principal Scrutiny and the relevant Scrutiny Committee. The Council also collected and validated all indicators for submission to the Local Government Data Unit by the due dates.

- **more challenging targets are set that both measure the progress made and ensure the delivery of all key objectives**

Management information is reported on a regular basis to the senior managers and Councillors. Targets for the national and core set indicators are agreed by Principal Scrutiny and via the Corporate Performance Reviews, work has begun on developing a range of targets to measure the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

- **the annual assessments are sufficient to measure progress toward the Council's equalities/diversity and sustainability objectives; and**

All services set out annually via the Annual Operational Plans the actions they are undertaking to support the corporate initiatives of equalities/diversity and sustainability.

Our revised Performance Management Framework now requires all services to produce a Service Position Statement following their service review. This will also enable senior managers to monitor progress.

- **the responsible scrutiny committees are monitoring progress in implementing action plans agreed with regulators**

The Council has an agreed protocol on reporting external regulatory and inspection reports and action plans. The lead officer presents all reports to the relevant Scrutiny and or Audit Committee. Progress on delivering the action plans is also reported by exception to the Service Improvement Board.

Below is a list of the performance audit and inspections carried out by external regulators during 2006-07. The full reports and action plans are available on the Council's web pages on www.conwy.gov.uk

- Community Safety Partnership Inspection
- Regeneration and Tourism
- Efficiency Focus: Utilities – The Management of Energy & Water
- Review of Conwy County Borough Council's Arrangements for Implementing and Operating the New Social Care Computer System
- Corporate Improvement Inspection
- Partnership Framework
- Environmental Health & Trading Standards
- Promoting Access - Education Services

If you require any further information relating to the Council's inspection and regulatory programme, please contact Janis Martin, Improvement Review Co-ordinator
☎ 01492 576303 or ✉ janis.martin@conwy.gov.uk

Financial Accounts and Reports to those Charged with Governance

All local authorities are required to produce a Statement of Accounts by 30 June 2007 following the 31 March 2007 year end. Our auditors issued an unqualified audit opinion of our accounts, which means that they did not report any major concerns. The Wales Audit Office concluded that the **‘Council had established and maintains a sound control environment with good internal controls’**. The report also referred to the **‘high level of controls and key financial systems’** that are used in the preparation of the Council's accounts and in meeting our financial targets. Regular monthly reporting to the senior managers and Councillors was considered to be appropriate and evidence of our **‘high level controls’**. The report also concluded that suitable risk management strategies are also in place to support the way in which we manage the Council's business.

The Council is currently agreeing an action plan to respond to the recommendations made within the report. The full report can be found on the Council's website.

Expenditure for 2006/07

The Council set a budget of £163.53 million for the 2006-07 financial year.

The money we spend on services we deliver comes from financial resources from the Welsh Assembly Government through the annual Revenue Support Grant, National Non-Domestic Rates, Fees and Charges and other specific Grants and other income. The balance falls on the local Council Tax payer and is reflected in the Council Tax charges. Whilst the settlement was slightly below the average for Wales our historically low resource base means that financial challenges are still ahead of us to maintain and improve our council services.

The table below details our expenditure:

Budget Information

<i>2006/07 Net cost £000</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>2007/08 Expenditure £000</i>	<i>2007/08 Income £000</i>	<i>2007/08 Net Cost £000</i>
69,810	Education	91,353	(19,500)	71,853
40,378	Social Services	50,019	(16,922)	42,097
21,804	Cultural, Environmental and Planning	38,714	(16,404)	22,310
7,088	Highways, Roads and Transport	16,299	(9,444)	6,855
1,306	Housing (excluding HRA)	28,677	(26,978)	1,699
24,4242	Other Services	44,404	(18,231)	26,173
(1,280)	Reserves	0	0	00
163,530	TOTAL SERVICES	278,466	(107,479)	170,987

Where does the money come from?

<i>2006-07 £'000</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>2007-08 £'000</i>
106,091	Revenue Support Grant	109,713
25,381	Contribution from Non-Domestic Rating Pool	27,357
32,058	Met by Taxpayers	33,917
163,530	TOTAL FUNDING	170,987
(3,505)	BALANCES (Brought Forward)	(3,005)
(3,005)	BALANCES (Carried Forward)	(3,005)

We also invest into the development of the County Borough of Conwy. Last year the Council spent more than £25million on local regeneration schemes to help improve the everyday lives of our citizens. The following are examples of some of the major regeneration projects we have invested in:

- The completion of the upgrade of Conference and Theatre facilities at Venue Cymru, Llandudno
- The Penmaenemawr Townscape Heritage Initiative
- Further development of Tir Llwyd Industrial Estate
- Glasdir, the Llanrwst Rural Development Centre
- Continuation of the Conwy Estuary Strategic (Cycle) Route
- North Wales Regional Swimming Pool

Have Your Say

Conwy is committed to improving our services and it is important that we listen to what you say. We welcome comments or suggestions on how you think we could do better, so please let us know.

Contact:

Telephone : **01492 576087**
Minicom : **01492 576134**
E-mail : **information@conwy.gov.uk**

If you have any comments or enquiries regarding the content of this Improvement Plan, please write to:

Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager
Corporate Improvement & Development Team
Conwy County Borough Council
Bodlondeb
Conwy
LL32 8DU

Alternatively, e-mail your comments to:

information@conwy.gov.uk

Copies of this Improvement Plan can be made available through the medium of Welsh, in Braille, large print, audiotape and other languages. Please call 01492 576087 to arrange.

This Improvement Plan is also available via

All County Libraries

Mobile Library

Housebound Service

Bodlondeb Council Office, Conwy

Town Hall, Llandudno

Civic Office, Colwyn Bay

Our website - www.conwy.gov.uk

APPENDICES