

Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

March 2008



Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

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Appointed auditors act quite separately from the Commission and in meeting their statutory responsibilities are required to exercise their professional judgement independently of both the Commission and the audited body.

Status of our reports

This report provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council, drawing on audit, inspection and performance assessment work and is prepared by your Relationship Manager.

In this report, the Commission summarises findings and conclusions from the statutory audit, which have previously been reported to you by your appointed auditor. Appointed auditors act separately from the Commission and, in meeting their statutory responsibilities, are required to exercise their professional judgement independently of the Commission (and the audited body). The findings and conclusions therefore remain those of the appointed auditor and should be considered within the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission.

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- addressed to members or officers and prepared for the sole use of the audited body; no responsibility is taken by auditors to any member or officer in their individual capacity, or to any third party.

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Our overall summary

- 1 This report is presented by Clive Portman, the Audit Commission's Relationship Manager and the Council's Appointed Auditor. It provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. It draws on the findings and conclusions from the audit of the Council and inspections that have been undertaken in the last year. It also draws on a wider analysis of the Council's performance and its improvement over the last year, as measured through the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework.
- 2 This report is addressed to the Council and, in particular, it has been written for councillors. It is, however, a public document that is available to stakeholders, including members of the community served by the Council. We will publish this letter on the Audit Commission website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk. In addition the Council is planning to publish it on its website.
- 3 The main headlines from the detailed sections of this report, are as follows.
 - The Council needs to strengthen its corporate financial capacity.
 - The Council maintained its overall level of two stars under the Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework.
 - The Council's rating under the Commission's annual Direction of Travel assessment reduced from 'Improving well' last year to 'Improving adequately' this year.
 - Children's' services were assessed as adequate with a good capacity for improvement in the most recent Annual Performance Assessment (APA) by Ofsted.
 - The Oldham/Rochdale Housing Markets Renewal Pathfinder, Partners in Action, was assessed as performing well overall with a significant need for continuing investment.
 - The Adult Social Care performance judgements delivered by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) showed that outcomes in this service area are good and the capacity for improvement is promising.
 - The Council retained its level two rating within the Commission's Use of Resources judgement, but with a deterioration in performance within that score.
 - Although we gave an unqualified opinion on the accounts before the statutory deadline of 30 September 2007, the quality of the accounts and working papers was again poor. We also gave a qualified conclusion on the Council's arrangements for securing value for money.

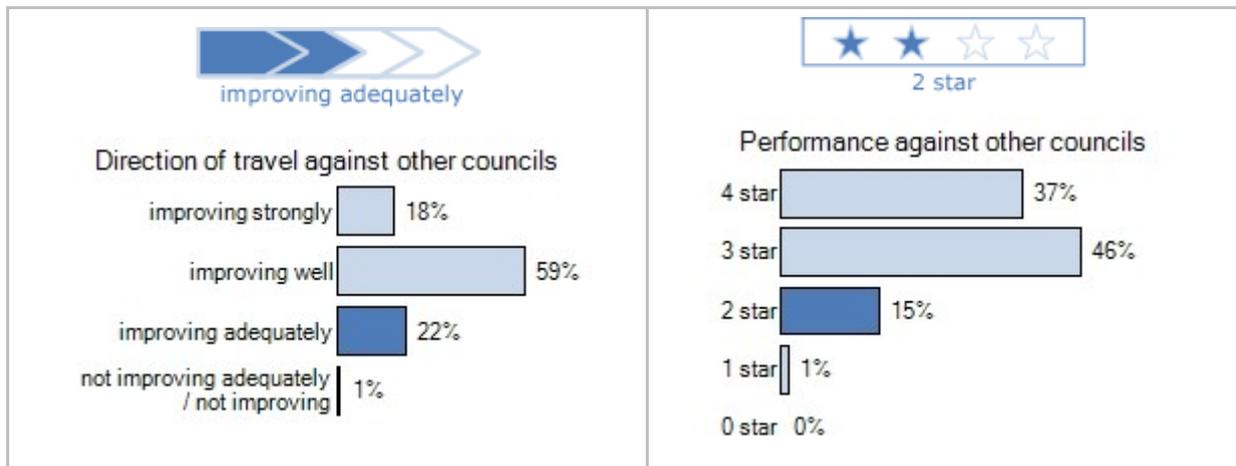
Action needed by the Council

- 4 Detailed reports and action plans have already been agreed to implement improvements identified from our work. However, it is important that the Council maintains its efforts, particularly in the following areas.
 - Ensuring that adequate resources are in place to cover both the introduction of the new financial ledger system and the prompt and accurate production of the 2007/08 statement of accounts.
 - Ensuring that improvements in processes for reconciling key control accounts are secured and maintained in practice.
 - Ensuring focus is maintained on improving the Council's Use of Resources.
 - Strengthening action planning to ensure all key strategies and plans are supported by robust action plans.
 - Working in partnership with others to narrow the gaps in health inequalities.
 - Ensuring that Performance Information presented for audit is robust.

How is Oldham Council performing?

- 5 The Audit Commission's overall judgement is that Oldham Council is improving adequately and we have classified Oldham Council as two star in its current level of performance under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment. These assessments have been completed in all single tier and county councils with the following results.

Figure 1



Source: Audit Commission

- 6 The overall CPA assessment derives from various judgements made about the Council during the year, by the Commission and other inspectorates. These are shown on the following 'scorecard'.

Table 1 CPA scorecard

Element	This assessment	Last assessment
Direction of Travel judgement	Improving adequately	Improving well
Overall	2 out of 4	2 out of 4
Corporate assessment/capacity to improve	2 out of 4	2 out of 4
Current performance		
Children and young people*	2 out of 4	2 out of 4
Social care (adults)*	3 out of 4	3 out of 4
Use of resources*	2 out of 4	2 out of 4
Housing	2 out of 4	3 out of 4
Environment	2 out of 4	3 out of 4
Culture	3 out of 4	3 out of 4
Benefits	3 out of 4	3 out of 4

*(Note: * these aspects have a greater influence on the overall CPA score)
(1 = lowest, 4 = highest)*

- 7 Oldham MBC is improving adequately. The Council is making progress in improving services and continues to make a positive contribution to community outcomes. Over half of performance indicators improved in 2006/07 but this is below national averages and Oldham's own recent performance. However, notable positive outcomes were achieved in adult social care, youth offending and educational attainment, with GCSE and A level results improving faster than most authorities nationally. Performance in benefits administration and contact centre call answering has recovered after earlier slippage. Performance deteriorated in some aspects of child protection and waste collection. Rent collection remained low and the average time taken to complete non urgent repairs and to re-let properties needs to be reduced further. Public satisfaction has risen substantially but remains low in relative terms. The Council has good plans to improve customer access and is leading nationally on promoting community cohesion. Plans are being implemented to improve the Council's overall use of resources, particularly in the areas of financial reporting and internal control. Further efforts to achieve planned efficiency savings are required to meet medium-term financial plans.

The improvement since last year - our Direction of Travel report

- 8 The Council and its partners continue to make a positive contribution to improving quality of life in Oldham. The Oldham Partnership has made a significant contribution to developing and enhancing the quality of the Local area Agreement. A majority of targets in the Local Area Agreement are on track to achieve full reward grant, with good outcomes in relation to neighbourhood renewal, educational attainment and, latterly, crime reduction. However, economic and employment development outcomes are behind target and performance in several areas cannot yet be measured.
- 9 The Council has made reasonable progress in improving its own services over the last year, but the rate of improvement has slowed and fallen behind the national average for single tier authorities. Just over half of all BVPIs improved during 2006/07 but there was a lack of progress in certain key areas, notably child protection, waste collection and benefits administration. Contact centre telephone performance has recovered after earlier slippage.
- 10 Public satisfaction continues to improve at an above average rate in most service areas, although more than half of satisfaction scores are still in the lowest two quartiles. Satisfaction with waste collection declined substantially. Overall satisfaction with the Council rose by nine points but, at 40 per cent, remains the lowest in Greater Manchester.
- 11 The Council has maintained a strong focus on community cohesion and effectively promotes access to its services. An impressive array of community and cultural activities are helping to increase participation of minority or potentially isolated groups in the life of the Borough. In addition, the Council has increased support to young carers and victims of hate crime. The Council is aware of the need to further strengthen the role of equalities in business planning and decision-making.
- 12 Crime indicators are improving but at a slightly lower rate than the average for Greater Manchester. Crime is falling in most major categories and the CDRP is on track to meet its 2007/08 crime reduction target. However, last year's reduction in violent crime has not been sustained and Oldham remains in the poorest performing quartile for burglary, robbery and vehicle theft.
- 13 Children's services have made progress in a number of areas but remain at an overall score of 2 in the Annual Performance Assessment. Targeted intervention has successfully raised some aspects of pupil attainment beyond those of similar authorities. However, achievement levels remain behind statistical neighbours at Key Stage 1 reading and at Key Stage 3. The Council performs well in promoting healthy lifestyles and achieving economic well-being. Young people receive good advice to prepare for moving on from school and the number making use of the online prospectus to register for vocational courses has increased to its highest ever level. However, the number of 16 to 19 year olds not in education, training or employment, which had been falling in recent years, has begun to rise.

- 14 There have been good reductions in youth re-offending and in the number of first time entrants into the youth justice system. However, services for vulnerable children have not progressed: the percentage of child protection referrals that are re-referrals rose during the last year, while the speed at which assessments are completed continues to lag behind national averages. Ofsted has expressed concern about the security of some processes in relation to safeguarding children. Management of children's services remains good and plans are underway for integrated commissioning of services.
- 15 Adult social care continues to deliver good performance. The timeliness and completion of assessments improved once again. Admissions to residential care have reduced and the level of support provided to carers has increased. The Council is seen as a national leader on the Individualised Budgets pilot. Provision of equipment and minor adaptations has improved but waiting times for major adaptations are rising.
- 16 The Council's progress on housing management and homelessness is mixed. The number of homes in non-decent condition continues to reduce at a rate well in excess of the national average. However, repairs performance and rent collection levels have slipped. Unfortunately, last year's fall in the number of people in temporary accommodation has not been sustained. Both numbers of households and average lengths of stay in hostel accommodation increased substantially during 2006/07.
- 17 Delays in implementing the new waste collection strategy led to disappointing performance during 2006/07. The recycling rate and availability of kerbside collections both fell and are well below lowest quartile thresholds. This performance was reflected in a significant decrease in public satisfaction and increased waste collection costs per household. The Council is confident that better promotion and changes to services will bring improved performance in the year ahead. Good progress has been made in improving the cleanliness of the local environment, through reductions in littering, graffiti and fly-posting, reflected in public satisfaction with cleanliness increasing to 51 per cent.
- 18 Oldham's improved cultural facilities are proving popular with local people. Visitors to the Library and Lifelong Centre more than doubled during its second year of operation. Public satisfaction with libraries has risen to 76 per cent and satisfaction with museums and galleries rose to 58 per cent – both well into the upper quartile of performance. The Academy for Sustainable Communities awarded Oldham its top award for cultural contribution in 2007 for a project entitled Art for All; All for Art, using the Borough's ethnic and cultural heritage to inspire people to get involved in the arts.
- 19 The Council was again assessed as performing well by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate, but performance deteriorated in two of the four assessment areas. User focus and administration of claims were found to be only meeting minimum requirements. However, there is evidence of improving performance in claims administration during the first two quarters of 2007.

- 20 The Council has clear and ambitious plans for further improvement and is broadly on target to deliver these. It has responded positively to the recommendations in the IDeA Peer Review report of June 2007. Performance management systems have been further developed to include the identification of key PIs, helping to ensure that scrutiny is directed towards those measures most critical to delivering the Council's priorities.
- 21 There remains a need to strengthen corporate capacity and financial arrangements. Our Use of Resources audit identified significant weaknesses in the areas of financial reporting and internal control. In addition, our data quality review uncovered errors in the calculation of a number of key performance indicators. Sickness absence fell below 11 days per employee for the first time during 2006/07 but has risen again since and remains in the lowest performance quartile nationally.
- 22 Our assessment of the Council's use of resources concluded that value for money is not greatly improved and a much more systematic approach to efficiency gains will be required if the medium term financial plan is to be delivered.

Service inspections

- 23 An important aspect of the role of the Relationship Manager is to work with other inspectorates and regulators who also review and report on the Council's performance. Relationship Managers share information and seek to provide 'joined up' regulation to the Council. During the last year the Council has received the following assessments from other inspectorates.
- 24 **The Adult Social Care** performance judgements delivered by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) showed that outcomes in this service area are good and the capacity for improvement is promising. Further detail is given in the following table.

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded
Delivering Outcomes	Good
Improved health and emotional well-being	Good
Improved quality of life	Good
Making a positive contribution	Good
Increased choice and control	Excellent
Freedom from discrimination or harassment	Good
Economic well-being	Good
Maintaining personal dignity and respect	Good

Capacity to Improve (Combined judgement)	
Leadership	
Commissioning and use of resources	Promising
Star rating	Two

- 25 Ofsted** has assessed the overall effectiveness of Oldham council's children's services as adequate (Grade 2) with a good capacity to improve (Grade 3).
- 26** The council has made good progress in a number of important areas in the last year but weaknesses remain in some aspects of enjoying and achieving and in staying safe.
- 27** The views of children and young people are routinely sought and incorporated into plans. The council restructured its Children's Services in 2006 and was proud to be runner up in the Local Government Chronicle 'most improved council' awards.
- 28** The Oldham Children and Young People's Partnership as well as the Local Safeguarding Children's Board have become well established and are beginning to play a more significant role in establishing joint partnership working.
- 29** The Council's **housing benefits service** has maintained its rating of three out of four from the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate. While maintaining the same overall performance as in 2005/06, the council's Claims administration and User focus performance deteriorated in 2006/07.
- 30** The council's score for Claims administration fell from Good in 2005/06 to only meeting minimum requirements in 2006/07. The average time taken to process new claims had increased from 38 days in 2005/06 to 61 days in 2006/07. However, the council's reported performance for the last quarter of 2006/07 showed some improvement from the poor performance in the second and third quarters, at 46 days.
- 31** The User focus Performance Standards theme score was Excellent in 2005/06 but only met minimum requirements in 2006/07. The council's performance against all three User focus performance measures had deteriorated, with performance against performance measure PM19 (percentage of appeals submitted to the Appeals Service in three months) failing to meet minimum requirements.

Table 2

Theme	2006	2007	Change
Claims administration	3	2	↓
Security	4	4	=
User focus	4	2	↓
Resource management	4	4	=
Overall score	3	3	=

- 32** The **Audit Commission Housing Markets team** published its report on the Oldham/Rochdale Housing Markets Renewal Pathfinder, **Partners in Action (PIA)** at the end of February 2008. PIA was assessed as performing well overall with a significant need for continuing investment.
- 33** We found PIA to be performing well because it has a range of strengths including:
- detailed monitoring of market change;
 - a strong approach to master planning and raising the quality of new developments;
 - evidence based policies for the mix of homes required in new developments;
 - understanding of community cohesion issues and programme responses; and
 - the procurement of lead developer partners.
- 34** However there are some areas which require improvement. These include:
- achieving greater impact on the housing markets of Oldham and Rochdale by bringing forward new developments and intervening in further areas;
 - further contributing to the joint economic development strategy; and
 - ensuring coordinated and holistic investment plans and service delivery in priority neighbourhoods.
- 35** PIA has a significant need for investment because:
- there continues to be a significant gap between house prices in the pathfinder and other parts of the North West;
 - differential population growth between Asian heritage and white heritage communities puts pressure on neighbourhoods in the inner towns and creates an imperative to find new housing options and improve community cohesion more generally;
 - continuing domestic out migration and low predictions of overall population growth in Oldham, well below regional growth rates; and
 - local economic performance is extremely poor and incomes are low.

- 36 However, there are a number of other factors mitigating this need, including:
- private sector vacancy rates at local authority level are now below regional averages, although are higher in pathfinder areas; and
 - rapid house price growth and growing problems of affordability in line with regional rates of change.

The audit of the accounts and value for money

- 37 As your appointed auditor, I have reported separately to both the Audit Committee and the Cabinet on 27 and 28 September 2007 respectively, on the issues arising from our 2006/07 audit, and have provided:
- an unqualified opinion on your accounts
 - a conclusion to say that your vfm arrangements are adequate except that the Council did not have adequate arrangements in place:
 - for the management of its asset base;
 - to maintain a sound system of internal control; and
 - to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of its business; and
 - my report on the best value performance plan confirming that the Plan has been audited.

Key issues arising from the opinion audit

- 38 Although I issued an unqualified opinion on your accounts, my Annual Governance Report highlighted the continuing weaknesses in the accounts preparation processes and I recommended that the year end and qualitative processes for producing the financial statements are improved to ensure the accounts presented for approval are free from significant errors and supported by a robust set of working papers.
- 39 I also pointed out that the introduction of the new ledger system will take place at the same time as the preparation of the 2007/08 statement of accounts and recommended that members ensure that adequate resources are in place to cover both the introduction of the new system and the prompt and accurate production of the 2007/08 statement of accounts.

Use of Resources

- 40 The findings of the auditor are an important component of the CPA framework described above. In particular the Use of Resources score is derived from the assessments made by the auditor in the following areas.
- Financial reporting (including the preparation of the accounts of the Council and the way these are presented to the public).
 - Financial management (including how the financial management is integrated with strategy to support council priorities).
 - Financial standing (including the strength of the Council's financial position).

- Internal control (including how effectively the Council maintains proper stewardship and control of its finances).
 - Value for money (including an assessment of how well the Council balances the costs and quality of its services).
- 41** For the purposes of the CPA we have assessed the Council's arrangements for use of resources in these five areas as follows.

Table 3

Element	This assessment	Last assessment
Financial reporting	1 out of 4	1 out of 4
Financial management	2 out of 4	2 out of 4
Financial standing	2 out of 4	2 out of 4
Internal control	1 out of 4	2 out of 4
Value for money	2 out of 4	2 out of 4
Overall assessment of the Audit Commission	2 out of 4	2 out of 4

(Note: 1 = lowest, 4 = highest)

The key issues arising from the audit

- 42** The Council's overall arrangements for managing its use of resources are adequate which is assessed as delivering the minimum requirements. The overall score is 2, although two themes with a score of 1, Financial Reporting and Internal Control, show inadequate performance.
- 43** The Council's performance has deteriorated since our 2005/06 assessment, and in particular, in the key area of internal control. We are also concerned about the lack of improvement in last year's inadequate performance on Financial Reporting and Asset Management.

- 44 The Council has already recognised that it must make significant improvements in this area and has introduced arrangements designed to improve its use of resources. Specifically:
- the Final Accounts Excellence Group is tasked with implementing good practice and the recommendations from our Annual Governance and Final Accounts reports;
 - a detailed UoR action plan has been drawn up and a working group tasked with achieving the plan;
 - a high level UoR action plan has been drawn up and the Chief Executive is chairing the UoR group which is monitoring this plan; and
 - council officers and Audit Commission staff are working closely together to ensure that areas for improvement are addressed effectively.
- 45 However, whilst we are working closely with officers and recognise the high level commitment to the improvements which are necessary, previously planned actions to improve performance in this area have not delivered the required improvement. For that reason I decided to make a number of statutory recommendations pursuant to section 11(3) of the Audit Commission Act 1998 to emphasise the fact that significant improvement is now required.
- 46 The Council considered my recommendations at its meeting on 20 February 2008 and unanimously agreed to fully accept the recommendations as follows.

Statutory Recommendation	Response
R1 The Council should monitor the implementation of recently agreed action plans and receive progress reports at regular intervals.	The Audit Committee and Cabinet will monitor progress against the action plan at least once in each cycle.
R2 Where agreed actions are not being implemented the Council should take any necessary further steps to ensure implementation of actions to deliver the required improvements.	That in the event action is not being implemented the Chief Executive and Executive Director of Strategy and Resources promptly reports proposed remedial actions for Cabinet approval.
R3 The Council should ensure that the actions being taken remain appropriate to deliver the continuous improvement in performance required in this area.	That the Use of Resources Steering Group be tasked with ensuring actions remain appropriate, and that any areas of concern be drawn to the attention of Cabinet.

Local risk-based work

- 47 During the year we undertake work in specific areas of the Council's activities. This is done to inform our overall use of resources and VFM assessments, and in response to audit risks identified locally or nationally. The overall conclusions and key areas identified for improvement have been reported during the year and are summarised in the following table. Plans are in place, or are being developed, to tackle the issues identified below.

Table 4 Outcomes from specific reviews

Area	Main conclusion
National Fraud Initiative	<p>The National Fraud Initiative is a computerised data matching exercise led by the Audit Commission, designed to identify overpayments to suppliers and benefit claimants and to detect fraud perpetrated against public bodies.</p> <p>Referrals from the current exercise were released to participating bodies in January 2007, and Internal Audit has made good progress to date in reviewing over 2,200 cases relating to Housing and Council Tax benefits. 225 cases have been processed resulting in overpaid benefit of £4,880 with two cases being passed for formal caution.</p>
Data Quality	<p>The council's overall management arrangements for ensuring data quality require improvement. A comprehensive data quality policy has recently been introduced and this should help to improve arrangements and reinforce the message that accurate data is important. However, the significant problems with PI data that were highlighted by our detailed reviews of indicators confirm that the arrangements are not yet embedded and are not operating satisfactorily across the Council.</p> <p>Our detailed review of six PIs found two indicators which were unfairly stated and another two which required a significant amount of work to provide further supporting evidence to enable us to conclude that the indicators were fairly stated.</p> <p>It is clear that there is significant scope for improvement as the majority of PI data presented for audit had not been properly checked to confirm its quality and accuracy.</p>

- 48 Work included in the 2006/07 audit and inspection programme on Access to Services and Service and Financial Planning has been delayed in agreement with officers, and will be reported on over the next few months:

Cross-cutting work

- 49 A key component of the Audit Commission's national strategy for improving the impact of local audit work and delivering strategic regulation is to carry out integrated reviews which cut across a number of public bodies and help improve the quality of life for local people. Work has been included in audit and inspection plans across the North West for 2006/07 on two key cross-cutting themes, Social Needs Transport and Health Inequalities.

Social Needs Transport Review

- 50 In 2007, we concluded our two-year review of social needs transport across the Greater Manchester area. Social Needs Transport is a vital resource in enabling mostly vulnerable people to access services, and required integrated working to deliver a high performing service.
- 51 The exact amount spent on social needs transport services across Greater Manchester is unknown but we estimate that it is between £38 million and £56 million per annum. Spend in councils where data provided during the review varied considerably across similar sized organisations.
- 52 There is a commitment to improve SNT services through greater collaboration and integration but a lack of leadership to take this complex agenda forward to improve outcomes for users and organisations. There are various working groups operating across Greater Manchester, for example IT user groups and the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) ISNT group. However, output from these groups has been limited. Several SNT pilot schemes have been initiated but formal evaluation has been limited, resulting in pilots continuing into the long term and learning not being effectively shared. The prospect is that without clear leadership in this area, improvements to SNT services are unlikely to take place. To date, activity has only resulted in incremental improvement and there remains insufficient focus on those who need the service.
- 53 The ability to make a step change in these services will be enhanced by improving:
- strategic leadership of social needs transport services across Greater Manchester and in individual organisations;
 - engagement of the commissioners of services;
 - the quality of information shared with transport service users and other appropriate organisations;
 - data and intelligence which is crucial for effective performance management and assessment of value for money including benchmarking; and
 - the realisation of integration opportunities through joint planning and procurement.

Health inequalities

- 54** The Health Inequalities review which reported across all Greater Manchester authorities and trusts in January 2007 following the Health For All conference in December 2006 is being followed up as planned during 2008, with a report expected by late spring. The work consists of a follow up of the key recommendations made, as well as focused work on alcohol, mental health and commissioning in relation to health inequalities. The work is being co-ordinated through the Greater Manchester Health Leadership Group. We are satisfied that, although improvement in health outcomes can only be demonstrated over the longer term, sufficient attention and leadership focus is now being given to this important area both within Oldham Council and across the Greater Manchester conurbation.

Certification of grant claims

- 55** During 2006/07, we certified 14 grant claims and returns from the Council. Of these, three were submitted for certification later than the date specified by the funding bodies. In addition, following our audit work, ten claims were either amended and/or qualified.
- 56** Significant sums are received by the Council in grant funding each year. These results indicate that there is further scope to improve the management arrangements in respect of grant claims and returns to:
- improve cash flow;
 - reduce the risk of errors, which could result in underclaiming of income or the need to repay grant; and
 - reduce the audit fee.
- 57** The volume of audit work on grant claims has continued to decline. In relation to 2006/07, we audited 14 returns compared with 46 in the previous year. This trend is expected to continue in 2007/08 with a further reduction in the number of returns requiring auditor certification and a corresponding reduction in the fees charged for this work.

Looking ahead

- 58 The public service inspectorates are currently developing a new performance assessment framework, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). CAA will provide the first holistic independent assessment of the prospects for local areas and the quality of life for people living there. It will put the experience of citizens, people who use services and local tax payers at the centre of the new local assessment framework, with a particular focus on the needs of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. It will recognise the importance of effective local partnership working, the enhanced role of Sustainable Communities Strategies and Local Area Agreements and the importance of councils in leading and shaping the communities they serve.
- 59 CAA will result in reduced levels of inspection and better coordination of inspection activity. The key components of CAA will be a joint inspectorate annual area risk assessment and reporting performance on the new national indicator set, together with a joint inspectorate annual direction of travel assessment and an annual use of resources assessment. The auditors' use of resources judgements will therefore continue, but their scope will be widened to cover issues such as commissioning and the sustainable use of resources.
- 60 The first results of our work on CAA will be published in the autumn of 2009. This will include the performance data from 2008/09, the first year of the new Local Area Agreements.

Closing remarks

- 61 This letter has been discussed and agreed with officers. A copy of the letter will be presented to the Audit Committee. Copies need to be provided to all Council members.
- 62 Further detailed findings, conclusions and recommendations on the areas covered by audit and inspection work are included in the reports issued to the Council during the year.

Table 5 Reports issued

Report	Date of issue
Audit and inspection plan	June 2006
Statutory report on the BVPP	November 2006
Your Business @ Risk (IT staff and users)	August 2006
Accountancy and External Audit joint working	April 2007
Protocol for liaison between Internal and External Audit	July 2007
Report to those charged with governance including opinion on financial statements and Value for Money conclusion	September 2007
Final accounts memorandum	October 2007
Data Quality report	November 2007
Individual Claims Reports	Various
CPA Scorecard	December 2007
Direction of Travel	January 2008
Use of Resources report	January 2008
Annual audit and inspection letter	March 2008

- 63 The Council has taken a positive and constructive approach to audit and inspection work, and I wish to thank the Council's staff for their support and cooperation during the audit.

Availability of this letter

- 64** This letter will be published on the Audit Commission's website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk, and also on the Council's website.

Clive Portman
Relationship Manager

March 2008