

Warwickshire County Council

Organisational Assessment

Dated 9 December 2009



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of local public services

Warwickshire County Council

Overall, Warwickshire County Council performs well

Managing performance	3 out of 4
Use of resources	3 out of 4
Managing finances	3 out of 4
Governing the business	3 out of 4
Managing resources	2 out of 4

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

Summary

Warwickshire County Council is performing well overall. It is continuing to develop its understanding of inequality across the county and is using this knowledge to narrowing the gaps. Most people like living in Warwickshire although the quality of life is generally better for people living in the south of the county than the north. Most of the Council's services perform well, are improving and provide value for money.

Warwickshire County Council scores 3 out of 4 for managing performance. Services have improved in all areas that are important for local communities.

Overall, educational attainment continues to be above the national average. Good progress is being made to lift schools out of special measures and there are better exam results at schools that do not perform as well. Children from some ethnic backgrounds are doing much better because of increased support. Children in the care of the local authority are also showing signs of doing better in their exams. Progress with increasing the number of older people living independently with support from the Council is particularly good. And the county's first extra care housing schemes opening in 2009 signals the first step towards better choices for older people who do not need more intensive residential care.

This year has seen recycling levels rise faster than anywhere else in the country. Warwickshire's homes are better protected from flooding. The Council is providing more help to Warwickshire's business although this is an area where the impact is small so far. Warwickshire is a safe place to live. Crime, anti-social behaviour is low and going down and roads are safer. More work is needed to help reduce the fear of crime, but work is underway to

help with this. And although deaths and injuries from fire are reducing, more fire prevention work is needed.

Warwickshire County Council scores 3 out of 4 for the use of resources. It has good financial plans and manages its spending well. It is able to make difficult decisions that will enable it to improve. It is making sure that money is moved into areas that are top priorities. Although its finances are being hit hard by the recession, it has shown that it is good at improving efficiency and saving money. The Council has a good handle on costs and knows how its services compare so that it can improve where needed.

However, more needs to be done to give councillors clearer information on costs and options to help with decision making. This should also help to improve the management of some areas of operational risk. Work is underway which will enable the Council to measure detailed energy use and CO2 emissions.

About Warwickshire County Council

Warwickshire is a largely rural county in the West Midlands. It lies in the centre of England with its five districts covering 1,979 square kilometres. The major towns are Leamington Spa, Warwick, Stratford upon Avon, Rugby and Nuneaton.

Its population of just under 527,000 is growing faster than in other parts of the country. Much of this is because of people moving into Warwickshire from the neighbouring urban areas of Coventry and Birmingham. The proportion of older people in the county is high and increasing; accounting for around one in five of the population. There are a higher proportion of white British people in Warwickshire than nationally. The numbers of European migrant workers working in Warwickshire's tourism and rural industries has peaked.

Warwickshire is fairly prosperous. But there are big differences between districts and neighbourhoods. Unemployment is fairly low and earning levels are high when compared to West Midlands and England averages. House prices are highest in the south of the county, with affordability below the national average. Stratford and Warwick are the least affordable areas.

The health of people in Warwickshire is better than the England average. Overall life expectancy is above the England average and early death rates have fallen. However, smoking in pregnancy and the rate of road injuries and deaths are higher than the England average.

Warwickshire County Council has 62 councillors. At the moment there are 38 Conservative councillors, 10 Labour councillors, 13 Liberal Democrats and 1 other. Warwickshire County Council has four priorities which are:

- 1.Raising levels of Educational Attainment;
- 2.Maximising independence for older people and adults with disabilities;
- 3.Pursuing a sustainable environment and economy; and

4. Protecting the community and making Warwickshire a safer place to live.

Organisational assessment

Raising levels of Educational Attainment

Exam results for Warwickshire's children are generally better than the national average. However, the average figure masks some big differences. The Council is dealing with this by putting in more support to narrow the gaps in underperforming schools and for specific groups of children. This is starting to show results. GCSE results children from ethnic minority backgrounds in particular are showing good improvement. Results at most underperforming schools are improving and there are signs that children in foster care are doing better.

Ofsted's annual performance assessment has rated Warwickshire's children's services as performing well overall. Children are receiving a good start in their care and education with good nurseries and pre school provision. Good progress is being made to lift schools out of special measures and very few schools are judged to be inadequate by Ofsted. Half of Warwickshire's primary and secondary schools are good or excellent. Further improvement is needed to increase this number to match standards in similar areas. Provision in school sixth forms and colleges is good or better than similar areas.

Provision in two thirds of special schools is good or better and satisfactory for the pupil referral unit.

Maximising independence for older people and adults with disabilities

The social care service for adults performs well; building on the improvements delivered over the past three years.

The Council is helping people to live active lives; living in their own homes as long as possible. An increased use of direct payments and individual budgets has enabled more users and carers to buy the support they need tailored to their needs. Over 16,000 people are now supported at home, an increase of 38 per cent over the previous year. This has successfully reduced reliance on residential placements by 13 per cent over the last 12 months and represents an improvement in value for money.

Better outcomes for older people and those with dementia are being targeted through use of Telecare equipment which is currently in place in all districts except Nuneaton and Bedworth. The use of alarms and monitors to trigger warnings is allowing 308 people with dementia to be safer at home, an increase of 185 during the past year.

The County as a whole lacks housing that provides older people the opportunity to live independently, but with extra support nearby. 2009 is seeing 117 extra care places being built across the county. This will help people access accommodation better suited to their housing, care and support needs and prevents the need for residential care.

The quality of residential care is improving. Nine out of the ten Council run residential homes are rated as either good or excellent compared to only three in 2008. All local authority homes and most voluntary care homes meet the required training standards although improvements are needed in private providers where achievements are lower. Overall in Warwickshire there has been a fall in the number of zero rated services from 10 in September 2008 to 3 in March 2009.

The Council seeks the views of older people and their carers and acts to make changes. A plan for carers has been set up and a respite hotel for people with learning difficulties has been established in Stratford. Other changes include setting up a county-wide guidance service for people who have to pay for their own care.

There is active promotion of activities to keep people healthy and independent. This includes healthy lifestyle projects in leisure and sport and projects in old people's homes. The service to reduce falls in elderly people is available in the south of the county and is getting started in the northern areas.

Pursuing a sustainable environment and economy

The amount of household waste being recycled or composted in the county is increasing faster than anywhere else in the country. The Council has supported three district councils in introducing new collection arrangements since 2008. The level of 43.2 per cent achieved in 2008/09 is set to soar again this year once the full effects of the new schemes are felt. Public satisfaction with recycling services is above average. However, the new collection systems were brought in before the facilities to process materials for recycling were built. Until these become operational, garden waste and materials for recycling are being transported out of the county, involving long distances and cost. Therefore the full environmental benefits of recycling are not being realised in the meantime.

The Council is committed to tackling climate change and reducing its CO2 emissions. But it currently does not know what its emission levels are. The Council is putting in new systems to help it accurately measure the amount of energy it uses. There are also many energy saving projects and improvements taking place such as more efficient heating, insulation and lighting in buildings. New developments like the North Leamington School are being built to high environmental standards. But CO2 'savings' from these improvements are not always being recorded.

The risk of homes being flooded in Warwickshire is being reduced through coordinated action by the Council and other organisations. Parts of the county suffered major flooding in 2007 and again in 2008. The County Council has been clearing road gulleys and carrying out drainage improvements. However the backlog of minor drainage schemes and blocked gulleys is still high.

Regeneration programmes continue to focus on Nuneaton and Bedworth. But despite a lot of money being invested in the area the gap between people's standard of living in the area and the more prosperous areas of the county is

growing. The district now falls within the top third of the most deprived local authorities in England, and is now more deprived than in 2000. In 2008 more than 12 per cent of the population was out of work and claiming benefits. This has risen in 2009 because of the recession. Investment in the area has provided significant help and space for business start-ups. The Pride in Camp Hill programme in Nuneaton has been in place since 2003. So far over 200 homes and a new village centre have been built, 50 new businesses have started up and nearly 282 people have achieved qualifications. The community is still dependent on significant external support which will need a continued long term effort from all organisations to see real change.

The World-Class Stratford programme continues to be a risk. Increasing the numbers of visitors to the Stratford area is the aim of the 'World-Class Stratford' regeneration programme. This is running alongside the redevelopment of the world-famous Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Parts of the programme have been controversial from the outset, attracting opposition from some local societies and groups. Proposals for a new river footbridge have been scrapped and other projects are now on hold or being scaled back because of the recession. Some funding is at risk if the project to re-model Waterside and Southern Lane is not agreed quickly.

The Council is taking action to help people and businesses in the recession. Some of this work is well targeted, but the impact this is having so far is limited. Information about the sort of help and advice available for business and people has been made widely available. There are many opportunities, support and advice for people thinking of starting their own business. In Nuneaton and Warwick there are business centres which provide start up business accommodation with on-site support. Some smaller business units have been provided in Exhall for start-up businesses unable to afford the expense of a full unit. Five of the six business 'pods' are now occupied. A full-time enterprise coach has assisted 48 people in providing bespoke business start up advice between April and June 2009. The Council is running a "Skills for Jobs" project. It is able to provide advice and support for people made redundant as well as people who are long-term unemployed. There are helpful schemes for people who can get jobs but cannot get to their place of work. This includes bus to work and back schemes in Nuneaton and North Warwickshire. Schemes to help with the cost of attending interviews and childcare are also being considered.

The Council provides over 200 industrial and commercial workspaces. Most of these are located in areas where more help for the local economy is needed. The Council is being more flexible with its leases and is looking at ways of providing more help to tenants who are struggling to pay their rents.

Protecting the community and making Warwickshire a safer place to live.

Warwickshire is one of the safest places to live. Crime levels are low and reducing. There has been a decrease of 6.3 per cent this year. Incidents of domestic abuse are taken seriously and not tolerated. The Council is working effectively with the police on this. In the last two years reported cases have doubled, successful prosecutions have gone up and there have been no deaths because of domestic violence. As well as improvements in serious

crime rates such as theft, robbery and violent crime, incidents of anti-social behaviour are also reducing.

There is large difference between residents' fear of crime and actual crime levels. The fear of crime has increased even in many areas where crime and anti social behaviour has gone down. The Council has researched the reasons for this. This is pointing to new ways in which public organisations in Warwickshire can help raise public confidence. Changes include a new system for handling incidents reported to the police entitled 'right service, first time'. This is seeing attendance times to emergency and priority incidents dramatically improve and a significant fall in the number of calls waiting to be dealt with.

There has been a significant fall in the number of young people getting into trouble and going to court for the first time. There is more early work being done with young people to stop their anti social behaviour becoming more serious. This has led to a 43.5 per cent fall in young people entering the criminal justice system compared to the same period for 2007/08. This is a much bigger fall than seen in other areas.

Deaths and injuries from fire in Warwickshire are improving. But the County's Fire and rescue service is not doing enough work on fire prevention in homes and businesses. The Council faces a major challenge in implementing the significant improvements that are needed to the fire service to help it modernise.

Deaths and injuries on Warwickshire's roads are high but numbers have reduced significantly - by more than a fifth in 2008/09. Many accidents are because of excessive speed. The Council is working well with the police and emergency services. The worst roads for accidents and injuries for motorcyclists have been targeted for action. The Road Safety Unit provides speed awareness workshops, and works with local businesses to help truck and van drivers adopt safer driving practices. It also works positively with young drivers, who are most at risk.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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