

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Organisational Assessment

Dated 9 December 2009



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of local public services

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Overall, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead 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

The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead performs well overall. It delivers services to a high standard and seeks to improve them to provide value for money. Satisfaction levels with the services and the Council are above average for the South East as well as England.

The Council's score for managing performance is 3 out of 4 because it provides good services that meet its stated priorities. The Council is improving the way it manages itself and its value for money by seeking to improve services. It is not complacent - it continues to look for improvement even when a good standard of service is already in place. For example, the recent launch of the 'Rewards for Recycling' scheme to encourage people to recycle even more. It is aware that it needs to do more to support vulnerable people and to understand the needs of all groups living in the Borough and has appointed consultants to help understand what needs to be done.

Services for older people continue to perform well and a particular strength is support for the emotional health and well-being of older people. The way that people are kept safe needs to improve, but overall standards are good.

Ofsted has rated children's services as performing well. Most children and young people enjoy good health and do well in their education. However, the difference in performance between the majority and those children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is still too wide.

The Council scores 3 out of 4 for use of resources. It manages its finances and is governing its business well and manages its natural resources - such as reducing its use of energy - adequately. Financial planning is good and the

Council matches its budget with its priorities. It understands its costs well and makes savings by being more efficient. To help it do this the Council carried out a 'comprehensive gap analysis' across all service areas. This led to many actions, including a detailed review of its waste contract. The way services are bought is good and the Council is working with Hampshire County Council to save money and improve quality in the way it procures large building projects. However, there is room to improve how risks are communicated to all staff, and to make the way the Council manages natural resources more sustainable.

The Council focuses on maintaining and protecting the environment. It is committed to protecting the Green Belt, but more housing is needed and sites are difficult to find. The Council encourages the building of homes that people can afford, but better use could be made of the existing housing stock in the area, both private as well as public.

The Council helps people and businesses by giving information on how they can get support to deal with the credit crunch. It sponsors events to help local businesses understand how they can sell goods and services to the Council. It has created a partnership to develop plans to rejuvenate Maidenhead town centre, involving all political parties and a range of local people

Strong Council leadership focuses on improving services for residents. Performance management is strong internally, but information about performance is not presented clearly for the public. Service and Council-wide planning has improved. A new council plan, when completed should provide a better link with plans for the work of partners.

About Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is to the west of London close to Heathrow Airport. With a population of just over 142,000 people the main towns are Windsor and Maidenhead.

The population is relatively young - 20 per cent of people are under 16. Although the number of older people is slightly below the average found in England and the South East - this is increasing. Nearly 8 per cent of the people living in Windsor and Maidenhead are from black and ethnic minority ethnic groups, which is higher than the South East average.

This is an affluent area and the health of people is good. Small parts of the Borough are deprived and health is not as good. Unemployment is rising. In the 12 months to August 2009 the number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance more than doubled to 2293.

The Council is Conservative led and has 57 councillors: 36 Conservative; 16 Liberal Democrat; 3 West Windsor Residents' Association; 2 Old Windsor Residents' Association. The Council works with its partners in the Royal Borough Community Partnership which includes the public services as well as business, community and voluntary organisations.

The Council has said that the following areas are currently particularly important:

- Residents First
- Supporting children and young people
- Healthier communities and supporting adults and older people
- A thriving, cleaner, greener borough
- Safer and stronger communities
- Value for money
- Equipping ourselves for the future

Organisational assessment

Residents First

The Council responds well to the needs of residents and many Council priorities link to this aim. Progress is closely watched and all Council reports show the impact of any decision on residents. By the end of 2008/09 most targets set out in the Conservative manifesto relating to Residents First were met.

A recent survey found that just over half of local people are satisfied with the way the Council operates - better than regional and national averages. Satisfaction with most services is high - particularly for keeping the area litter free, recycling and for sports and leisure facilities and parks. For most services, satisfaction is higher than elsewhere in England. Also people feel well informed about how council tax is spent.

Customer service is improving. The customer service centre is over two years old and improving. A new approach to dealing with complaints helps identify where changes should be made and has already improved the way the customer service centre responds to enquires. Also, the Council is improving its website by acting on comments received from those using the feedback facility.

However, more vulnerable people in the area are not as well served as the majority. For example, in contrast with the rest of Berkshire, the gap in health between those living in the most and least wealthy part of the Borough is not closing. Progress to improve the benefits service, which supports more vulnerable people, is slow, and the economic downturn has increased demand. This means it is now taking longer to deal with claims. The Council knows it needs to improve services to make them more responsive to the needs of all people in the Borough, including those from minority groups and has appointed consultants to help do this.

Supporting children and young people

The rating given by Ofsted for children's services in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is that it performs well. The overall effectiveness of the large majority of inspected services and settings is good or better.

Children make a good start in life in childminding, nurseries and primary schools where the proportion of good or better provision is above similar areas and the national average. Performance of the local authority's fostering service is outstanding and the adoption service is good. Private fostering arrangements are also good. However, the picture in other services and settings is mixed. While no secondary schools are inadequate, eight of the 13 schools are only satisfactory. This compares poorly with the average for similar areas and England overall. Both pupil referral units are good, but the special school is only satisfactory. Post-16 provision is mixed with mostly good provision in school sixth forms.

Performance against most national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is above or in line with the average for similar areas and the national figures. Most children and young people enjoy good health and do well in their education. However, the difference in performance between the majority and children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable is still too wide. The gap is closing rapidly in some areas but the picture is inconsistent for different groups of children and young people.

Re-offending by young people is lower here than in similar areas; in most measures the Youth Offending Service works well. A high percentage of young people are actively engaged in education or work

Healthier communities and supporting adults and older people

Overall the Council adult social care services are performing well as assessed by the Care Quality Commission. The Council continues to provide a good level of services for eligible people. It has done some excellent work in ensuring improved health and wellbeing for people in the Borough.

The number of people who have to remain in hospital because there is no support for them when they need to leave has been reduced by the Council. It is also good at supporting people to recover at home. Overall the Council works well with its partners to support those using services and their carers. However, waiting times for adaptations to homes are too long and telecare needs more promotion.

The Council listens to people to understand what they want from services and provides support to people in residential services to help them express their views. It acts on comments made to improve services. However the Council needs to make sure people from minority communities and hard to reach groups also influence services. This would improve access for these people and make the services more responsive to all needs.

Advice and information is available to help people choose the services they receive, and to encourage people to claim their benefit entitlement. Increased awareness of personal budgets and direct payments for older people would

give them more choices over which care services they receive.

Making sure people experience good services is important to the Council and staff receive discrimination and harassment training. Training needs to increase for people not employed by the Council who provide care. Also public awareness of harassment and abuse of older people or those with disabilities needs to be raised. The Council sets a good example by employing a high number of disabled people.

People in the Borough are healthy and over four out of five feel they are in good health. Life expectancy is higher than average and increasing. The Council works with partners encouraging people to lead healthier lives. It encourages children to be more active through the Bikeability training scheme, while sports and leisure services are popular and well used. A scheme called SMILE refers people over 50 from GPs to use leisure facilities. There are new facilities such as those at Braywick Park, and improvements to play areas across the Borough have begun. The Council's free home energy survey is available to all householders and tells them how to save money on fuel bills, and how to insulate homes to keep warm. This links to the Flexible Home Improvement Loans scheme which improves warmth and safety for residents over 60.

A thriving, cleaner, greener borough

People like to live in Windsor and Maidenhead - 86 per cent of residents are satisfied with it as a place to live which is above the averages for the South East and the rest of England.

The Council is committed to delivering good services to protect the environment. A good example of strengthening already high performing services is the introduction of incentives such as the RecycleBank scheme to encourage more recycling. The amount of waste recycled is high and this scheme rewards residents with points redeemable at shops as a way of increasing recycling further. Keeping the area clean and clear of litter is a major priority and resulted in Windsor and Eton being voted as top town in the Clean Britain awards 2008/09. Bray was the runner up in the Cleanest Village award. The Adopt a Street scheme to promote cleanliness is proving to be popular with residents. A 'Zero Tolerance Policy' towards litter includes chewing gum removal and 'community blitzes' to sort out problems. Parks and open spaces are well maintained and liked by the public.

Targets for building new homes that people can afford are being met, but demand for affordable housing remains high, and the number of people on the waiting list grows. As the Council wants to protect the Green Belt, finding sites for more housing is a challenge for the future. A plan in development - the Core Strategy - will address this issue. Meanwhile, the number of properties left empty in the area is above average and the number returned to use is declining. The Council has not got up to date information on the condition of housing in the private sector, and energy efficiency is low compared with other parts of the Country.

The Council's response to the credit crunch is to provide links to advice for people who have lost their jobs or businesses in need of support. It has organised events to help local businesses sell goods and services to the

Council. The numbers of unemployed people are growing - in the twelve months to August 2009 those claiming Job Seekers Allowance more than doubled to 2293. The Council is finding out what it needs to do and how it will work with its partners to develop the area in the future. Meanwhile plans to rejuvenate Maidenhead town centre are developing through a partnership known as PROM.

Bus use continues to increase - and this contributes to the zero growth in traffic in the area. But there is dissatisfaction with local bus services and information about transport - satisfaction is well below the averages for England and the South East. The Council is introducing 'real-time' information across the Borough to help address this problem.

The Council's response to climate change and reducing its impact on the environment is slow. Some projects, such as SMART metering in Council buildings and a staff travel plan, are making an impact. A climate change strategy is being prepared.

Flooding is a significant risk for many parts of the Borough, and it is susceptible to flash flooding. Many of the population are at risk. The Council treats flooding as a high priority. Regular maintenance work to ditches etc, raising awareness of residents' responsibilities and supporting local flood teams are all part of its response.

Safer and stronger communities

Crime reduced significantly last year, but is high compared to similar places in England. The Council works well with its partners on projects such as Neighbourhood Action Groups which provide an insight into issues of concern to local people. The Council recognises the link between keeping the area clean and tidy and peoples' perceptions of their safety. It successfully maintains a clean environment free from graffiti and fly posting. Trading standards play their part combating sales of alcohol to underage drinkers and a taxi marshal scheme runs in Windsor to help reduce the opportunity for anti-social behaviour and violent crime at night.

The Borough's roads are not as safe as they were. Road casualties fell in 2008 compared to the previous year, but the number of people, including children, killed or seriously injured increased.

Residents feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect and consideration. The Council wants to improve this further and is providing extra support to the gypsy and traveller community.

Value for money

Value for money is a high priority for the Council. It prides itself on having the lowest council tax for 2009/10 in England outside London. Regular reviews check that the money used on goods and services is well spent. Reviews challenge the way services run and the use of buildings and land, to see whether they give value for money. For example accommodation for older people is being reviewed with a housing association to reduce costs and risk.

The Council makes sure local people have good access to information about how it is spending public money. It publishes payments for all supplies of over £500 on the website.

Equipping ourselves for the future

The Council is developing a new corporate plan to set out clearly what it aims to achieve. This will be ready for April 2010 and will link to a new partnership plan.

Decision-making in the Council is streamlined and a new approach to business planning is used. Better information technology and more efficient support are being introduced. The emphasis on performance management is clear. However, information for local people about how well the Council is performing is not clear. A training programme is developing leadership in the Council.

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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