

# Use of Resources

Ribble Valley Borough Council

Audit 2008/09

Date **November 2009**

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# Contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Use of resources judgements</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Use of resources 2009/10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix 1 – Use of resources key findings and conclusions</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix 2 – Action plan</b>	<b>22</b>

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## Status of our reports

The Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by the Audit Commission explains the respective responsibilities of auditors and of the audited body. Reports prepared by appointed auditors are addressed to non-executive directors/members or officers. They are prepared for the sole use of the audited body. Auditors accept no responsibility to:

- any director/member or officer in their individual capacity; or
  - any third party.
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# Summary

**This report summarises our key findings from our assessment of how Ribble Valley Borough Council is managing and using its resources to deliver value for money and better and sustainable outcomes for local people.**

- 1** Our assessment of how well the Council is managing and using their resources to deliver value for money and better and sustainable outcomes for local people is now complete. The basis of the assessment has changed in 2009 and defines use of resources in a broader way than previously, embracing the use of natural, physical and human resources. It also places new emphasis on commissioning services for local people and achieving value for money.
- 2** The Council received an overall score of 2 for its use of resources which means the Council meets minimum requirements and is performing adequately.
- 3** Our detailed findings are shown in Appendix 1.

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# Introduction

- 4 This report sets out my conclusions on how well Ribble Valley Borough Council is managing and using its resources to deliver value for money and better and sustainable outcomes for local people and gives scored use of resources theme judgements.
- 5 In forming my scored theme judgements, I have followed the methodology set out in the [use of resources framework: overall approach and key lines of enquiry \(KLOE\) document](#) and the use of resources [auditor guidance](#). For each of the specific risks identified in relation to our use of resources work, which were set out in our audit plan, we considered the arrangements put in place by the Council to mitigate the risk and plan our work accordingly. This work is now complete.

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## Use of resources framework

- 6 From 2008/09, the new use of resources assessment forms part of the [Comprehensive Area Assessment \(CAA\)](#) and comprises three themes that focus on:
  - sound and strategic financial management;
  - strategic commissioning and good governance; and
  - the management of natural resources, assets and people.
- 7 The scores for each theme are based on the scores reached by auditors on underlying KLOE. The KLOE are generic and applicable equally to all organisations subject to use of resources judgements under CAA. This promotes consistency, demonstrating all organisations within a CAA area are treated in the same way, and to the same standards.
- 8 The Commission specifies in its [annual work programme and fees document](#), which KLOE are assessed over the coming year.
- 9 Judgements have been made for each KLOE using the Commission's current four point scale from 1 to 4, with 4 being the highest, please see Table 1. Level 1 represents a failure to meet the minimum requirements at level 2.

## Introduction

**Table 1**      **Levels of performance**

<b>Level 1</b>	Does not meet minimum requirements – performs poorly
<b>Level 2</b>	Meets only minimum requirements – performs adequately
<b>Level 3</b>	Exceeds minimum requirements – performs well
<b>Level 4</b>	Significantly exceeds minimum requirements – performs excellently

Source: [use of resources framework: overall approach and KLOE document](#)

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# Use of resources judgements

## Scored judgements

10 Ribble Valley Borough Council's use of resources theme scores are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2** Use of resources theme scores

Use of resources theme	Scored judgement
<b>Managing finances</b> How effectively does the organisation manage its finances to deliver value for money?	2
<b>Governing the business</b> How well does the organisation govern itself and commission services that provide value for money and deliver better outcomes for local people?	2
<b>Managing resources</b> How well does the organisation manage its natural resources, physical assets and people to meet current and future needs and deliver value for money?	2

## Managing finances

- 11** The Council is able to demonstrate strong links between service planning and financial planning. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out the Council's mission and ambitions over the long term and the financial resources needed to deliver this. This approach contributes to achieving objectives, for example, delivering the three stream waste collection resulting in improved recycling rates.
- 12** The Council has a good understanding of its overall costs and the costs of individual services. It uses these, along with performance information to support planning and decision making. The Council understands how local factors impinge on costs, and decisions take account of quantitative and qualitative factors. The Council regularly reviews costs as part of its benchmarking and value for money approach. The Council uses partnership working to help reduce costs. It consistently meets and exceeds efficiency targets.
- 13** The Council needs to extend its current approach to make better use of information from partners and other stakeholders to assist in its decision making and

## Use of resources judgements

commissioning. The Council should be able to demonstrate such decisions are based on a full understanding of the needs of the community.

- 14 The Council sets a comprehensive and balanced budget including the achievement of realistic savings. Budget monitoring information is produced on a timely basis and addresses variances with prompt action. The Council is able to manage spending on emerging issues so there is no impact on service delivery. The Council produces services plans which link to service priorities and the budget, and include the relevant performance indicators for each section.
- 15 There is evidence of engaging with the local community, but it is not clear that this is comprehensive. There is potential for improvement in terms of accessibility of the website and key documents.

Recommendation	
R1	The Council should ensure it is able to demonstrate that engagement with the local community is comprehensive and across all sections of the community.
R2	The Council's website needs to make clear the different formats documents are available in and advertise the availability of these formats in an accessible way.
R3	In using cost information to inform decision making, the Council needs to extend its approach to make better use of information from partners and other stakeholders to assist in its decision making and commissioning.
R4	There is scope to improve the Council's external reporting by including environmental and social information, with an analysis of the council's environmental footprint.

## Governing the business

- 16 The Council has good procurement procedures which support the priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Partners and the community have some involvement in discussions and planning for commissioning revised/improved services although there is scope to extend this. The Council considers alternative delivery options and implements these where appropriate, leading to value for money savings and improved quality. The Council needs to demonstrate a greater awareness and understanding of the full range of community needs in relation to its procurement and commissioning plans and activities. The Council should ensure it is able to demonstrate how it is addressing the needs of the community and delivering effective outcomes and impact.
- 17 The Council has adequate arrangements in place to ensure relevant and reliable data quality. The Council has procedures in place with partners who provide data to the council but needs to demonstrate more effective arrangements and outcomes with regard to partnership data and information. Financial and performance information is integrated and underpins planning and strategic decisions. There is scope to improve the procedures for collection of data relating to local Performance Indicators and to demonstrate they are embedded and effective.

- 18** The roles and responsibilities of Councillors, the Chief Executive and senior officers are clear. There is a constructive working relationship between members, Corporate Management Team and staff. The MTFs and CIPF both highlight the Council's vision, mission and ambitions and these are used to drive the business. There are constructive working relationships between the Council and its partners.
- 19** Expected governance arrangements are in place. The work and role of the Standards Committee has been highlighted via Ribble Valley News which is sent to all households in the area. The complaints procedure is detailed on the Council's website. There are formally documented governance arrangements with the Council's significant partnerships.
- 20** The Council has a comprehensive risk register and risks are managed at an appropriate level by named owners. Members and senior officers receive appropriate training on risk management and members provide a good level of scrutiny. An anti fraud and corruption policy is in place and has been communicated to staff. The housing benefits team are proactive in identifying and investigating fraud. There is an audit committee which provides challenge to officers and standing orders, codes of conduct and the scheme of delegation are reviewed and updated regularly.
- 21** The Internal Audit section appears adequate for the Council's needs and the Council is in the process of ensuring Internal Audit fully complies with all CIPFA standards. Counter fraud arrangements should be assessed against best practice and take into consideration guidance around money laundering/counter terrorism.

Recommendation	
<b>R5</b>	The Council needs to demonstrate a greater awareness and understanding of the full range of community needs in relation to its procurement and commissioning plans and activities. The Council should ensure it is able to demonstrate how it is addressing the needs of the community and delivering effective outcomes.
<b>R6</b>	The Council should strengthen its data quality arrangements with partners demonstrate more effective arrangements and outcomes with regard to the use of partnership data and information.
<b>R7</b>	There is scope to improve the procedures for collection of data relating to local PIs and to demonstrate they are embedded and effective.
<b>R8</b>	Ensure Internal Audit fully complies with the CIPFA standards.
<b>R9</b>	Consider assessing counter fraud arrangements against best practice.

### Managing resources

- 22** There are arrangements in place to identify the development needs of staff and to provide training and development to address these. Sickness levels are the lowest in Lancashire, 5 days per year per staff member, and staff turnover is low. The Council's staff satisfaction scores are good.



## Use of resources judgements

- 23** An annual workforce profile is produced which feeds into the Organisational Development Plan. This identifies staff turnover, retirements and future needs but there is scope for improvement in terms of identifying specific knowledge and skill requirements. There is little evidence of monitoring or evaluating the effectiveness of training and development activity. There is evidence of good engagement with staff via a variety of forums depending on the issues.
- 24** The Council has a strong support system for staff including flexible working and health schemes. However, in terms of the outward facing diversity approach this is more limited with staff not always being aware of the true picture of need and diversity across the community. This is however improving with Equality Impact Assessments beginning to be used to informing service planning.

### Recommendation

**R10** The Council needs to evidence a more comprehensive workforce plan over a 3-5 year period, which is actively supporting future service changes and improvements and identifies specific knowledge and skill requirements.

**R11** The Council should be able to demonstrate improved and effective skills and competences with regard to staff's working practices in diversity and equality related areas.

**R12** The Council needs to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training and development of staff.

### Detailed findings

- 25** The key findings and conclusions for the three themes, and the underlying KLOE, are summarised in Appendix 1.

# Use of resources 2009/10

**26** The key lines of enquiry specified for the assessment are set out in the Audit Commission's work programme and scales of fees 2009/10. My work on use of resources informs my 2009/10 value for money conclusion. In my letter of 23 April 2009 about the audit fee for 2009/10, I identified one key risk in relation to my value for money conclusion. For any risk identified, I consider the arrangements put in place by the Council to mitigate the risk and plan my work accordingly.

**Table 3 Initial risk assessment**

Risk	Planned work	Timing of work
Managing natural resources - this is an area which has not been reviewed in detail previously.	We will review the Council's arrangements for managing natural resources and monitor progress throughout the year, as part of our work on Use of Resources.	November 2009 - April 2010

**27** As set out above, an additional KLOE, 3.1 - Natural resources will apply to District Councils for 2009/10. I also considered whether there were any additional risks arising from my 2008/09 value for money conclusion and have not identified any additional risks which would impact on my 2009/10 value for money conclusion.

# Appendix 1 – Use of resources key findings and conclusions

28 The following tables summarise the key findings and conclusions for each of the three use of resources themes.

**Table 4** Theme 1 - managing finances

<b>Theme 1 score</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Key findings and conclusions</b>	
<p>The Council are able to demonstrate strong links between service planning, the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan. The MTFS clearly highlights the Council’s mission and ambitions over the long term and the financial resources needed to deliver this. This approach contributes to achieving objectives, for example, delivering the three stream waste collection resulting in improved recycling</p> <p>There is evidence of engaging with the local community, but it is not clear that this is comprehensive. There is potential for improvement in terms of accessibility of the website and key documents. The website needs to make clear the different formats documents are available in and advertise the availability of these formats in an accessible way.</p> <p>The Council has a good understanding of its overall costs and the costs of individual services. It uses these, along with performance information to support planning and decision making. The Council understands how local factors impinge on costs, and decisions take account of quantitative and qualitative factors. The Council regularly reviews costs as part of its benchmarking and VFM approach. The Council uses partnership working to help reduce costs. It consistently meets and exceeds efficiency targets.</p> <p>The Council needs to extend its current approach to make better use of information from partners and other stakeholders to assist in its decision making and commissioning. The Council should ensure such decisions are based on a full understanding of the needs of the community.</p>	

## Appendix 1 – Use of resources key findings and conclusions

<b>Theme 1 score</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>The Council sets a comprehensive and balanced budget including the achievement of realistic savings. Budget monitoring and forecasting information is reliable, relevant and understandable. Budget monitoring information is produced on a timely basis and addresses variances with prompt action. The Council is able to manage spending on emerging issues so there is no impact on service delivery. The Council produces services plans which link to service priorities and the budget, these also show the performance indicators relevant for each section.</p>	
KLOE 1.1 (financial planning) score	3
<p><b>Key findings and conclusions</b></p> <p>The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is produced based on the details provided within the Corporate Performance and Improvement Plan (CPIP). This takes into account risks areas and the controls in place to mitigate each risk. The CPIP underpins the service plans for each service area and there are clear links back to the MTFS. The service plan for each area sets out resources currently in place and what is required to ensure objectives are achieved. Action plans are put into place for each service area which explicitly link to the ambitions and priorities of the Council and ensure resources are focused on achieving these priorities and service delivery objectives. These are realistic plans produced by managers and focus on service reality. This system clearly contributes to the achievement of service priorities. An example of this is the three stream waste collection, leading to improved recycling results and good customer satisfaction levels. When required the Council is able to prioritise and redirect resources in order to ensure objectives are achieved without any detriment to services.</p> <p>The Council sets and approves a comprehensive balanced and realistic budget which includes the achievement of realistic savings. The budget working group acts to ensure there are resources available to meet requirements. Members and CMT work well together and all accept responsibility of financial matters. Financial reports are detailed and explain issues clearly to members so they can understand them.</p> <p>There is evidence of engagement with the local community and specific examples of feedback from stakeholders being acted upon but it is not clear that this is comprehensive. Excellent results in the Government's Place Survey - not just for the Lancashire area, but for North West and nationally.</p>	
KLOE 1.2 (understanding costs and achieving efficiencies) score	2
<p><b>Key findings and conclusions</b></p>	

## Appendix 1 – Use of resources key findings and conclusions

<b>Theme 1 score</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>The Council has a good understanding of its overall costs and the specific costs of individual services and has benchmarked these costs. It uses these, along with performance information to support planning and decision making. The Council is able to link the anticipated benefits of proposals and the desired improvement of performance to the investments being planned.</p> <p>The Council understands how local factors impinge on costs and is able to explain why some expenditure is higher than planned. The Council understands the issues of rurality and how they effect its communities. It benchmarks against SPARSE to compare with others that have similar problems. Decisions take account of quantitative and qualitative factors for example the three stream waste proposals and the reaction of customers to fortnightly collections.</p> <p>The Council regularly reviews costs as part of its benchmarking and VFM approach. Costs are commensurate with the level of service provided given the rurality and sparse population of the area. The Council uses partnership working to help reduce costs. It consistently meets and exceeds its efficiency targets.</p> <p>The Council needs to extend its current approach to make better use of information from partners and other stakeholders to assist in its decision making and commissioning. The Council should be able to demonstrate that such decisions are based on a full understanding of the needs of the community.</p>	
KLOE 1.3 (financial reporting) score	2
Key findings and conclusions	
<p>Budget monitoring and forecasting information is reliable, relevant and understandable. It is produced on a timely basis throughout the year and addresses variances with prompt action. The Council is able to manage spending on emerging issues through the year so there is no impact on service delivery. Internal forecasting information is consistent with the financial information reported at year end.</p> <p>The Council produces services plans which link to service priorities and the budget, these also show the relevant performance indicators for each section. The Council produces performance data in terms of performance indicators and all information is included on the Covalent system and reports are produced for the CMT and committee. Reports to committee contain financial and non financial information where necessary and provide a detailed commentary to explain the underlying position.</p> <p>The Financial Statements working papers are of an adequate standard and no material errors were identified during the audit of the accounts. Some non-trivial errors were identified. Closedown arrangements are sound.</p> <p>The Council publishes performance information on its website - BVPIs quarterly, complaints related PIs and statistics, performance</p>	

<b>Theme 1 score</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>tables, the Corporate Performance &amp; Improvement plan and so on. These reports are understandable and give a picture of performance through the year.</p> <p>The Council needs to clearly demonstrate how performance data and financial reporting is used to shape outcomes for the community. There is potential for improvement in terms of accessibility. It is not clear what other formats information is available in, for example large print, electronic or audio, languages other than English. Where documents are available in alternative formats, for example audio, the advertisement of this on the website is not clear. There is scope to improve the Council's external reporting by including environmental and social information, with an analysis of the council's environmental footprint.</p>	

**Table 5**      **Theme 2 - governing the business**

<b>Theme 2 score</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>Key findings and conclusions</p> <p>The Council has good procurement procedures which support the priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy. Partners and the community have some involvement in discussions and planning for commissioning revised/improved services although there is scope to extend this. The Council considers alternative delivery options and implements these where appropriate, leading to value for money savings and improved quality. The Council needs to demonstrate a greater awareness and understanding of the full range of community needs in relation to its procurement and commissioning plans and activities. The Council should ensure it is able to demonstrate how it is addressing the needs of the community and delivering effective outcomes and impact.</p> <p>The Council has adequate arrangements in place to ensure relevant and reliable data quality. The Council has procedures in place with partners who provide data to the Council but needs to demonstrate more effective arrangements and outcomes with regard to partnership data and information. Financial and performance information is integrated and underpins planning and strategic decisions. The Council consults with the users of the information. There is scope to improve the procedures for collection of data relating to local Performance Indicators and to demonstrate they are embedded and effective.</p> <p>The roles and responsibilities of Councillors, the Chief Executive and senior officers are clear. There is a constructive working relationship between members, CMT and staff. The MTFs and CPIP both highlight the Council's vision, mission and ambitions and</p>	

## Appendix 1 – Use of resources key findings and conclusions

<b>Theme 2 score</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>these are used to drive the business. There are constructive working relationships between the Council and its partners. Expected governance arrangements are in place. The work and role of the Standards Committee has been highlighted via Ribble Valley News which is sent to all the households. The complaints procedure is detailed on the Councils website. There are formally documented governance arrangements with the Council's significant partnerships.</p> <p>There is a risk management system in place and a comprehensive risk register. Risks are managed at an appropriate level by named owners. There is good scrutiny by members and senior officers and appropriate training is provided. The anti fraud and corruption policy has been communicated to staff. The housing benefits team are proactive in identifying and investigating fraud. There is an audit committee which provides challenge to officers and standing orders, codes of conduct &amp; the scheme of delegation are reviewed and updated regularly.</p> <p>The Internal Audit section appears adequate for the Council's needs and the Council is in the process of ensuring Internal Audit fully complies with all CIPFA standards. Counter fraud arrangements should be assessed against best practice and take into consideration guidance around money laundering/counter terrorism.</p>	
KLOE 2.1 (commissioning and procurement) score	2
Key findings and conclusions	
<p>The Council has good procurement and commissioning procedures which are based on and broadly support the priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy. However the Council's understanding of the whole picture of the community needs and the equality and diversity issues that this raises is somewhat limited, which may limit the effectiveness of some of its activities.</p> <p>At times of specific service change the Council does consult well with service users. Partners and the local community have involvement in the discussions and planning for commissioning revised or improved services, for example in revising its waste management services or the transfer of housing to an RSL. The Council has used IT based and other new technologies to improve services and deliver environmentally friendly solutions.</p> <p>Along with other East Lancashire councils it has been progressive in use of e-procurement options. The Council seeks to influence the supply market by supporting voluntary and third sector groups, and makes its procurement information available to potential suppliers. It uses an option appraisal approach to considering alternative delivery or supply methods. The Council carries out service reviews,</p>	

<b>Theme 2 score</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>considers alternative delivery options and, as required, implements them leading to some VFM savings or improved service quality. The Council's approach to procurement is based on sound procedures and means it has an adequate approach to procuring and delivering services, and is able to demonstrate the impact of its activities as measured by quality of service e.g. the Ribblesdale Pool, or containing costs at times of commissioning new contracts e.g. sweeper hire. It has recently effectively managed the transfer of its housing stock to a RSL.</p> <p>The Council needs to demonstrate a greater awareness and understanding of the full range of community needs in relation to its procurement and commissioning plans and activities. The Council should ensure it is able to demonstrate how it is addressing the needs of the community and delivering effective outcomes.</p>	
KLOE 2.2 (data quality and use of information) score	2
Key findings and conclusions	
<p>The Council has arrangements in place to ensure relevant and reliable data quality and also has agreed procedures in place with partners who provide data to the Council. The last external audit report on data quality suggested these arrangements with partners should be strengthened.</p> <p>The Council provides information to its decision makers in a variety of formats and integrates financial and performance information within its reporting procedures. It consults with the users of the information in order to ensure the presentation and style is suitable for their needs. The information provided is used for planning and strategic decisions and also for monitoring of performance, this helps the Council deal with specific issues of underperformance, where a "performance clinic" approach is used.</p> <p>While the Council has adequate arrangements in place for data collection and reporting of national performance indicators it cannot always demonstrate the same rigour for its local indicators. The Council should examine its procedures for collecting such data and ensure they are robust and capture all valid data. It should ensure that staff are effectively trained in the use of these procedures.</p> <p>The Council has sound arrangements in place for data security and risks associated with information management. It regularly reviews its procedures and operational systems to ensure compliance with good practice. It uses the Government Secure Internet system and is compliant with the security requirements necessary to join that network.</p> <p>The Council needs to demonstrate more effective arrangements and outcomes with regard to partnership data and information, and</p>	



## Appendix 1 – Use of resources key findings and conclusions

<b>Theme 2 score</b>	<b>2</b>
also show that procedures for collection of data relating to local PIs are embedded and effective.	
KLOE 2.3 (good governance) score	3
Key findings and conclusions	
<p>The Council publishes the Constitution which describes the roles of the Elected Mayor, other councillors, scrutiny function and Chief Executive and senior officers. Members are clear on their role within the Council and wider community and offer a good level of scrutiny to the Council. The Constitution also details the scheme of delegation and reserve powers. It provides details of the matters which are reserved for approval by the full Council.</p> <p>There is a constructive working relationship between members, CMT and staff with regular meetings between senior officers and members in order to discuss priorities and ensure services are being delivered to a high standard to the community. Members receive induction training and a member development framework is in place including individual personal development plans for members.</p> <p>The MTFS and CPIP both highlight the Councils vision, mission and ambitions for the borough and these are used to drive the business. This vision is also shared with the Local Strategic Partnership. There are constructive working relationships between the Council and its partners and there is good evidence that this is beginning to have real outcomes for the local community.</p> <p>Service delivery is integrated with the Council's priorities for the community and there is evidence of good satisfaction levels with council services within the community. The Council's ambitions and priorities link through the objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy to the themes of the Local Area Agreement enabling a joined up delivery of priorities and outcomes for the local area. The Council is actively involved in the Community Safety Partnership and crime levels are low for the area.</p> <p>A code of conduct has been adopted for members and staff. All council members are required to sign up to the code and have received training on this. A whistle blowing policy is in place to investigate allegations of breaches and is published to staff via the staff handbook and intranet site. Contract documentation requires contractors to abide by all council policies and specifically mentions the whistle blowing policy.</p> <p>There is a Standards Committee in place - the work and role of this has been highlighted to the community via Ribble Valley News which is sent to all the households within the borough, and via notices on parish and town council notice boards. There are strong arrangements in place to ensure compliance with laws and regulations. The complaints procedure and required form are detailed on the Councils website. Any complaints are reported to the Corporate Management Team and are monitored as they progress and assessed</p>	

## Appendix 1 – Use of resources key findings and conclusions

<b>Theme 2 score</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>for lessons to be learned.</p> <p>Significant partnerships have formally documented governance arrangements although these vary depending on the partnership. Arrangements are set out in either a partnership constitution, terms of reference or protocol. Each partnership has been reviewed to ensure members are clear about their roles &amp; responsibilities and to ensure it is made clear to all partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisation to partner decisions.</p>	
<b>KLOE 2.4 (risk management and internal control) score</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Key findings and conclusions</b>	
<p>There is a risk management system in place and a comprehensive risk register. Risks are assessed for likelihood and impact and are linked to service actions, and to the Council's ambitions and priorities. Service managers maintain and update the risks every 1, 3 or 6 months depending on whether the risk is classed as red/amber/green.</p> <p>Corporate business risks are reported to members and senior officers on an appropriate basis. The Risk Management Working Group meets on a quarterly basis to review areas of risk management. There is member involvement via a 'member champion' from the overview and scrutiny committee attending the working group and the Chief Executive also attends.</p> <p>There is risk management training provided at an appropriate level to all members of staff involved in risk management, including service managers and those who are promoted to relevant roles. There is an overview of risk management provide to new starters. Members have received training on the GRACE system, and risk management training forms part of the member induction. Service managers are required to identify risks with regards to partnerships allocated to them as appropriate to their area. These risks are added to the GRACE risk management system. Service managers are responsible for managing and updating these risks.</p> <p>There is an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy in place and approved by the Policy and Finance Committee. The policy has been reviewed by the Accounts and Audit Committee. It is communicated to all staff at induction and is available on the intranet.</p> <p>Internal Audit assess the risk of fraud when planning their work and have appropriate reporting arrangements in place.</p> <p>The housing benefit team are proactive in identifying and investigating instances of fraud. The benefits section undertakes regular data matching exercises and has taken advantage of DWP's capacity to undertake surveillance on a number of occasions. Ribble Valley has recovered 46% of housing benefit overpayment in comparison with the national average of 12%. Ribble Valley's stance on benefit fraud is published on their internet site, and also included as part of contracts. The website contains an online form where residents are able</p>	

## Appendix 1 – Use of resources key findings and conclusions

<b>Theme 2 score</b>	<b>2</b>
<p>to submit details of suspected frauds.</p> <p>All new employees have been required to provide a copy of their passport or other proof of identification. Employee's data forms part of the NFI data return.</p> <p>The Council has an Accounts and Audit Committee who deal with internal &amp; external audit, as well as corporate governance such as standing orders, codes of conduct &amp; the scheme of delegation all of which are in place and regularly updated. The Annual Governance Statement for 2007/08 included three issues which have been identified as improvement opportunities. Progress on these three issues was reported to the Accounts and Audit Committee after six months.</p> <p>The Council needs to ensure Internal Audit fully comply with all CIPFA standards. Counter fraud arrangements should be assessed against best practice and take into consideration guidance around money laundering/counter terrorism.</p>	

**Table 6**      **Theme 3 - managing resources**

<b>Theme score</b>	<b>2</b>
<p><b>Key findings and conclusions</b></p> <p>There are arrangements in place to identify the development needs of staff and to provide training and development to address these. Sickness levels are the lowest in Lancashire, 5 days per year per staff member, and staff turnover is low. The Council's staff satisfaction scores are good.</p> <p>An annual workforce profile is produced which feeds into the Organisational Development Plan. This identifies staff turnover, retirements and future needs but there is scope for improvement in terms of identifying specific knowledge and skill requirements. There is evidence of good engagement with staff via a variety of forums depending on the issues.</p> <p>The Council has a strong support system for staff including flexible working and health schemes. However, in terms of the outward facing diversity approach this is more limited with staff not always being aware of the true picture of need and diversity across the community. This is however improving with Equality Impact Assessments used to informing service planning.</p>	

## Appendix 1 – Use of resources key findings and conclusions

<b>Theme score</b>	<b>2</b>
KLOE 3.3 (workforce planning)	2
Key findings and conclusions	
<p>Ribble Valley is a small district council with limited staffing resources, at times it can suffer from capacity problems, especially if key posts remain vacant for any length of time. Historically it has used a traditional approach to service delivery with relatively small sized departments delivering from within the Council's own infrastructure, but is now utilising alternative delivery options and has recently outsourced its housing stock to a RSL.</p> <p>The Council has arrangements in place to identify staff's development needs, it then provides the required training and reports on the activity. However, there is little evidence of monitoring or evaluating the effectiveness of training and development activity. Staff sickness levels, at less than 5 days per year per staff member, are the lowest in Lancashire and the fourth lowest in England and the Council has good staff satisfaction scores in its staff survey. Staff turnover is below 2 percent which is significantly below the level in many other councils and less than the RV target of 3.5 percent.</p> <p>The Council does not have an overall organisational wide workforce plan, instead it uses a bottom up approach, at service level, through its business planning processes to identify future workforce issues and skills and training needs. It does produce a workforce profile each year and uses this alongside the service plans to produce an annual Organisational Development Plan. This examines issues such as staff turnover and planned losses due to retirements in the medium term, and identifies in broad terms the future needs for staff in the Council. However this does not clearly identify specific knowledge and skill requirements for each staff group. Agency staff costs have been reduced over the past year through the use of a partnership working arrangement with other local councils.</p> <p>The Council has appropriate arrangements in place for ongoing communication with staff, and uses specific actions at time of service change e.g. the housing service going to a RSL, waste management changes or the Longridge sports centre changes. It uses regular staff surveys and develops action plans to address issues raised. Staff receive feedback on the survey results and the actions planned but there is little evidence of the Council monitoring the progress of these actions for impact or outcome.</p> <p>The Council has a strong system of support for the well being of staff, e.g. walking club, discounted swimming and healthy eating/smoking cessation events. It also has a variety of flexible working options which it utilises to support staff as and when the requirement is there. Their outward facing diversity approach is limited, with staff not always being aware of the true picture of need and diversity across the community however actions have now started to be taken to deal with this, for example recent use of EIAs to</p>	

## Appendix 1 – Use of resources key findings and conclusions

<b>Theme score</b>	<b>2</b>
inform service planning The Council would need to be able to evidence a comprehensive workforce plan which is actively supporting future service changes and improvements, and identifies specific knowledge and skills requirements. The Council should be able to demonstrate improved and effective skills and competences with regard to staff's working practices in diversity and equality related areas. The Council needs to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training and development of staff.	

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# Appendix 2 – Action plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
7	The Council should ensure it is able to demonstrate that engagement with the local community is comprehensive and across all sections of the community.	3	Corporate Policy Officer	Yes	As highlighted within the Use of Resources self assessment, the Council engaged the services of Greenfield Training, who have provided the council with a comprehensive demographic analysis of the borough across all key equality strands. This information can now be used to inform future community engagement.	Demographic Analysis - Completed  Community Engagement Strategy - within the next 6 months

## Appendix 2 – Action plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
					A Community Engagement Strategy is to be developed and this will also be shared with the Local Strategic Partnership	
7	The Council's website needs to make clear the different formats documents are available in and advertise the availability of these formats in an accessible way.	3	Service Managers and Equality & Diversity Steering Group	Yes	As highlighted at the time of the Use of Resources audit, the Council's website has undergone a major review and been completely rebuilt. It includes settings that can be changed for accessibility. The Council is working towards ensuring that all documents for download are in	New Website went 'live' 15/10/09 Equality Impact Assessments on Policies and Procedures - an ongoing process over the next 24 months as recommended by

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
					<p>Adobe PDF format, which themselves include further accessibility functionality such as readers and magnifiers.</p> <p>Within the Self Assessment it was stated that the Council had engaged the services of Greenfield Training in order to develop its Equality Impact Assessment process and implementation plan. The council is in the process of drawing together a timetable for the review of its</p>	Greenfields Training



## Appendix 2 – Action plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
					policies and procedures.	
7	In using cost information to inform decision making, the Council needs to extend its approach to make better use of information from partners and other stakeholders to assist in its decision making and commissioning.	2	Corporate Policy Officer	Yes	The development of the Community Engagement Strategy will better enable this.	Community Engagement Strategy - within the next 6 months
7	There is scope to improve the Council's external reporting by including environmental and social information, with an analysis of the council's environmental footprint.	2	Financial Services Manager  Corporate Communications Officer	Yes	It is felt that the Council's annual report does cover aspects of reporting on the Council's social impact. However, we will look at the possibility of including further information on the Council's environmental footprint in future editions.	End December 2009

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
					The Council's three larger premises - the council offices, Ribblesdale Pool and Salthill Depot - each have an energy efficiency rating certificates and so details of the ratings of these premises can be included in the next annual report.	
8	The Council needs to demonstrate a greater awareness and understanding of the full range of community needs in relation to its procurement and commissioning plans and activities. The Council should ensure it is able to demonstrate how it is addressing the needs of the community and delivering effective outcomes.	3	Corporate Policy Officer	Yes	As with recommendation one - the development of the Community Engagement Strategy will assist in achieving this recommendation.	Community Engagement Strategy - within the next 6 months
8	The Council should strengthen its data quality arrangements with partners	3	Corporate Policy Officer	Yes	A copy of the Lancashire	End December

## Appendix 2 – Action plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
	demonstrate more effective arrangements and outcomes with regard to the use of partnership data and information.				Partnership Data Quality Strategy was provided at the time of the Use of Resources audit.  A Ribble Valley Data Sharing Protocol has also been developed and will be implemented over the coming weeks once it has been signed by all partners	2009
8	There is scope to improve the procedures for collection of data relating to local PIs and to demonstrate they are embedded and effective.	2	Corporate Policy Officer	Yes	Corporate Services staff are reviewing all local performance indicators with service managers in order to establish detailed guidance	January - March 2010

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
					<p>for LPI collection to a similar standard as that provided for the national indicators.</p> <p>This guidance will then show on the Council's Covalent performance management system to enable clearer calculation and checking guidance and enable easier auditing.</p>	
8	Ensure Internal Audit fully complies with the CIPFA standards.	3	Financial Services Manager	Yes	This has already been actioned as part of the recommendations that were made under the Internal Audit Review	Completed - with ongoing review

## Appendix 2 – Action plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
8	Consider assessing counter fraud arrangements against best practice.	2	Financial Services Manager  Principal Auditor  Revenues & Benefits Manager	Yes	Currently reviewing the Audit Commission document Protecting the Public Purse and the recommendations contained within it. The checklist contained within the document will be incorporated within the 6 monthly review of the Annual Governance Statement.  The Principal Auditor and Senior Auditor have also been on recent training courses in respect of fraud	Ongoing

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
9	The Council needs to evidence a more comprehensive workforce plan over a 3-5 year period, which is actively supporting future service changes and improvements and identifies specific knowledge and skill requirements.	3	Human Resources Manager	Yes	Information was provided during the audit of the self assessment, including copies of forms, of the work that was already underway at the Council on the development and enhancement of its workforce plan.	End December 2009
9	The Council should be able to demonstrate improved and effective skills and competences with regard to staff's working practices in diversity and equality related areas.	3	Human Resources Manager	Yes	Within the Self Assessment it was stated that the Council had engaged the services of Greenfield Training in order to develop its Equality Impact Assessment process and implementation	Initial training of Directors and Service Managers - Completed (with further training planned)  Equality Impact Assessments

## Appendix 2 – Action plan

Page no.	Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
					plan.  Training was carried out by Greenfield Training for Directors and Service Managers on Equalities	on Policies and Procedures - an ongoing process over the next 24 months as recommended by Greenfields Training
9	The Council needs to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of training and development of staff.	2	Human Resources Manager	Yes	The Council will consider initiatives to support more specific evaluation of the impact of training activity on overall organisational performance.	Actions to be incorporated in the HR service plan for 2010