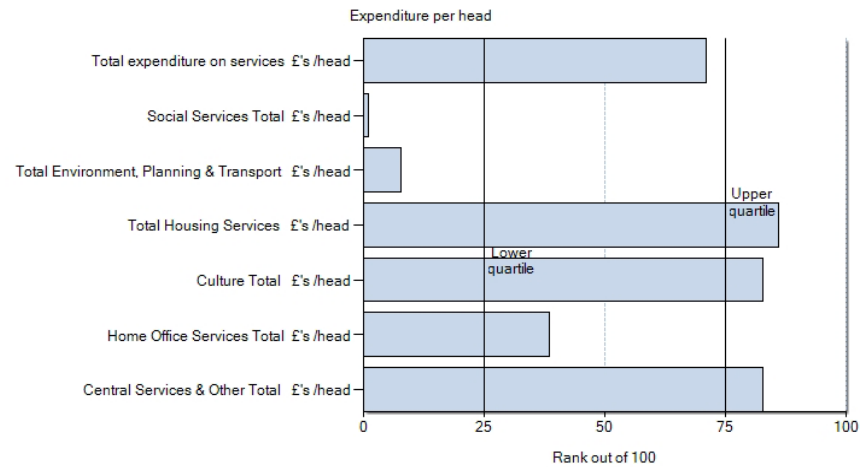


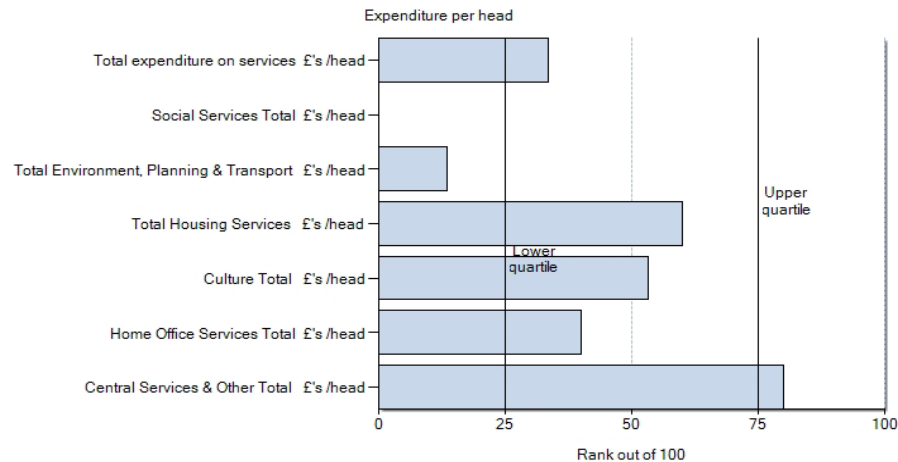
EXPENDITURE PER HEAD COMPARISONS

Comparison with Authority Group



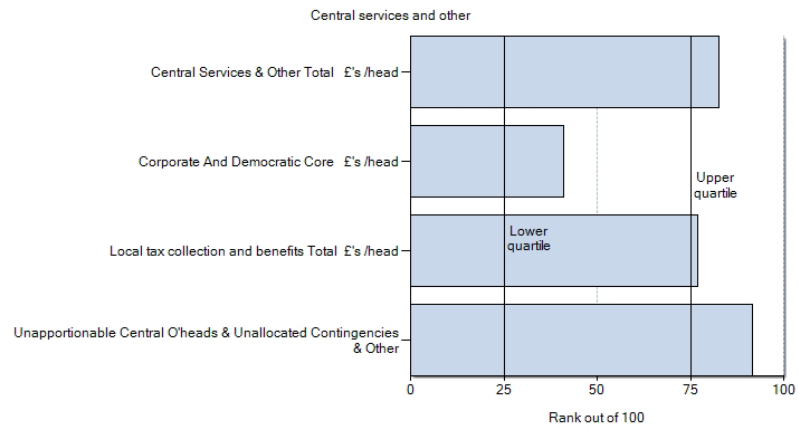
The comparison with the authority group shows upper quartile spend on Central Services, Housing Services and Culture. The comparison with the Audit Commission nearest neighbours confirms this expenditure pattern although shows expenditure closer to average for Housing and Culture. Further investigation has concentrated on these three areas.

Comparison with nearest Neighbours



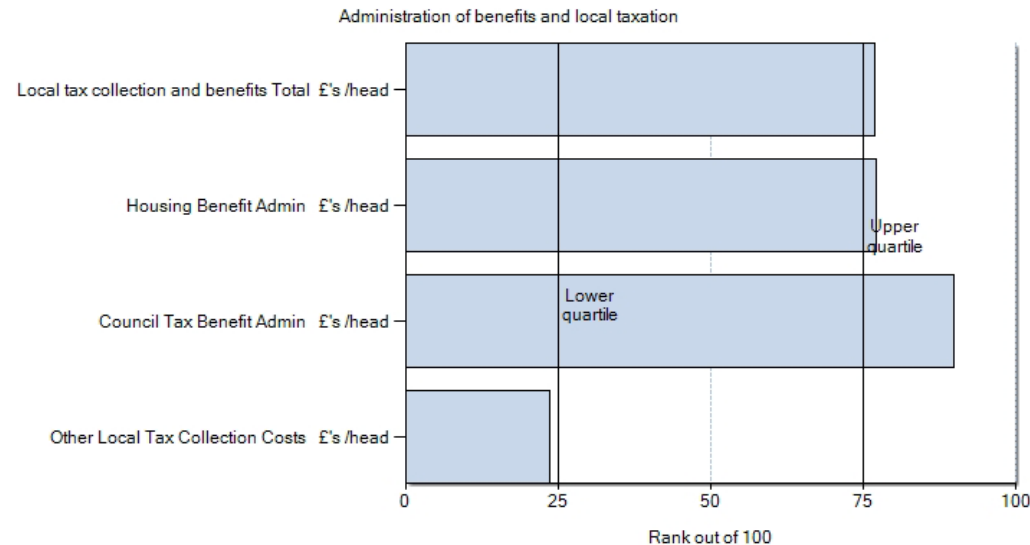
CENTRAL SERVICES & OTHER TOTAL

Comparison With Authority Group



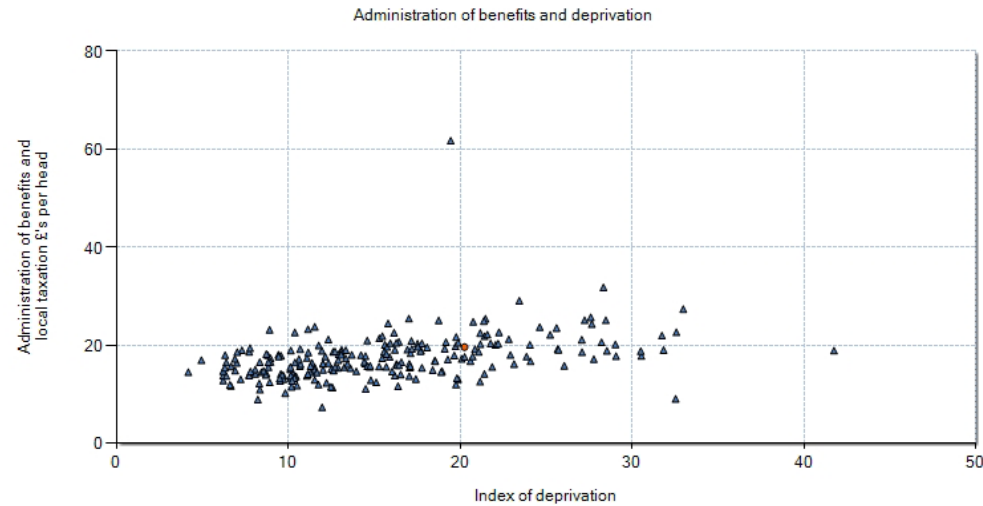
Local Tax Collection and Benefits

The Council is aware of its poor performance on benefits and is currently exploring joint working arrangements with Bedford Borough council to improve performance and rationalise business processes. This is a key area of our recovery plan and achieving performance in this area will be key to our improvement. The other local tax collection costs per head reflect our successful partnership arrangements with Wellingborough for NDR collection.

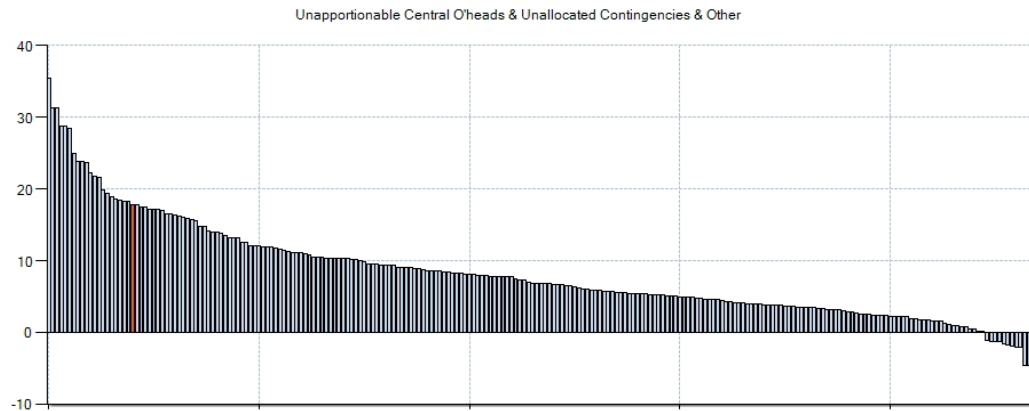


Improving quality of information received at customers first point of contact to avoid multiple handling of cases, reduction in the reliance on temporarily contracted staff and use of qualified full time NBC employees and introduction of new system will streamline processes and reduced processing times will improve the speed and quality of benefits processing. This will also reduce costs over the longer term.

When looking at costs of benefits administration mapped against deprivation our performance on cost per head is much more in line with other authorities performance suggesting that whilst we are still aiming for improvement our current value for money is better than the headline figure suggests.

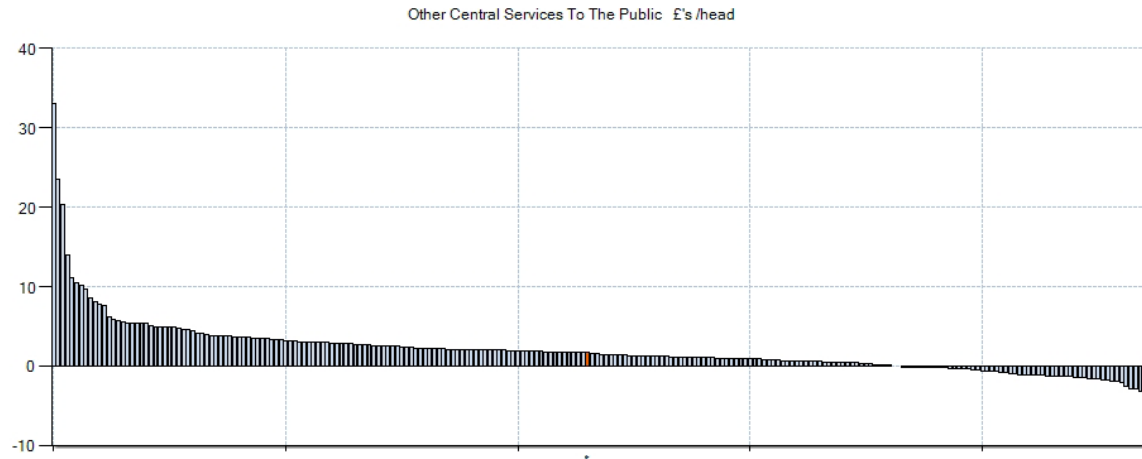


Unapportionable Central Overheads and Unallocated Contingencies



Unapportionable Central Overheads and Unallocated Contingencies are high when measured on a cost per head and cost as a % of expenditure basis. Reasons for this are thought to be.....

Other Central Services



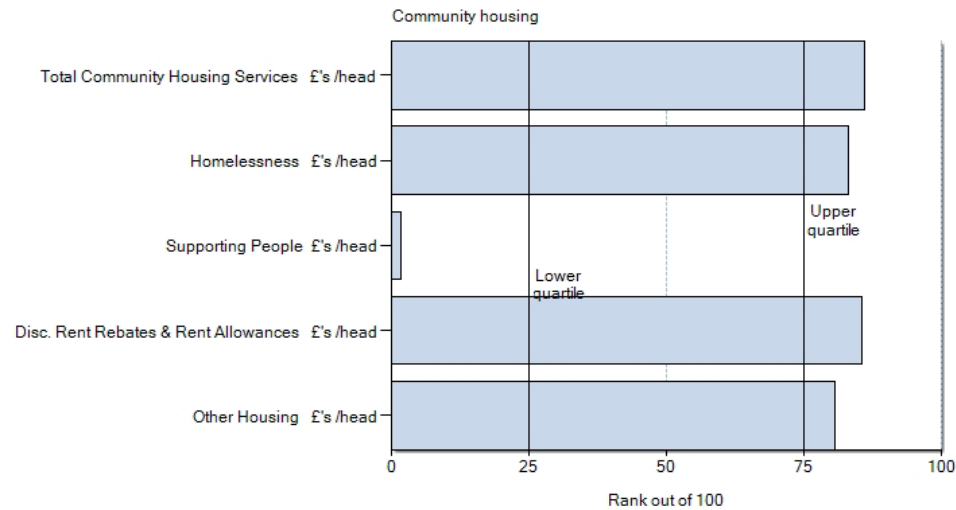
Other central services when compared to other authorities do not appear to be significantly out of line with other district councils.
Comment...

HOUSING SERVICES

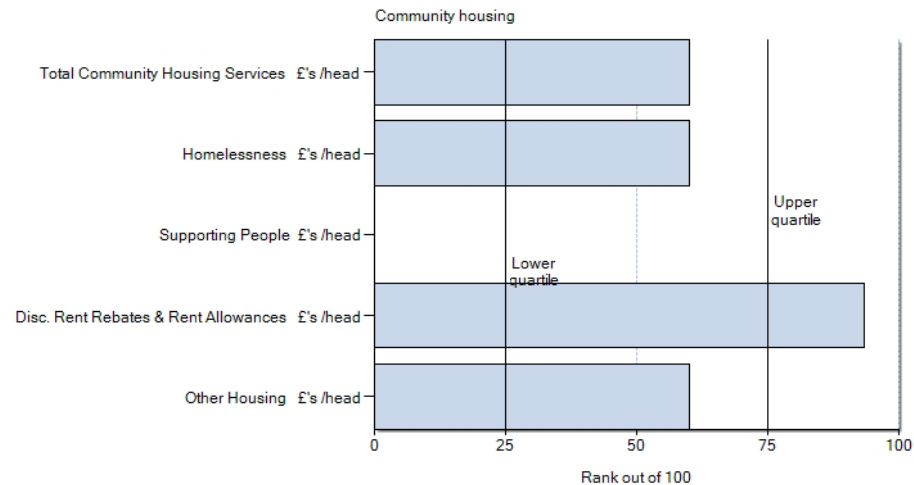
We have one of the largest remaining housing stocks in the Country. Northampton is also at the heart of the Governments agenda for housing growth providing a significant proportion of the new housing proposed under the Milton Keynes South Midlands expansion. The demands on our housing service are great and Housing forms another key part of our Recovery Plan to ensure we are well placed to meet the future challenges that will be placed upon us.

Community Housing

The graph below compares community housing costs to district councils. This clearly shows our expenditure on all services within the upper quartile.



When compared to our nearest neighbours the situation is improved but Rent Rebates and Allowances are still upper quartile

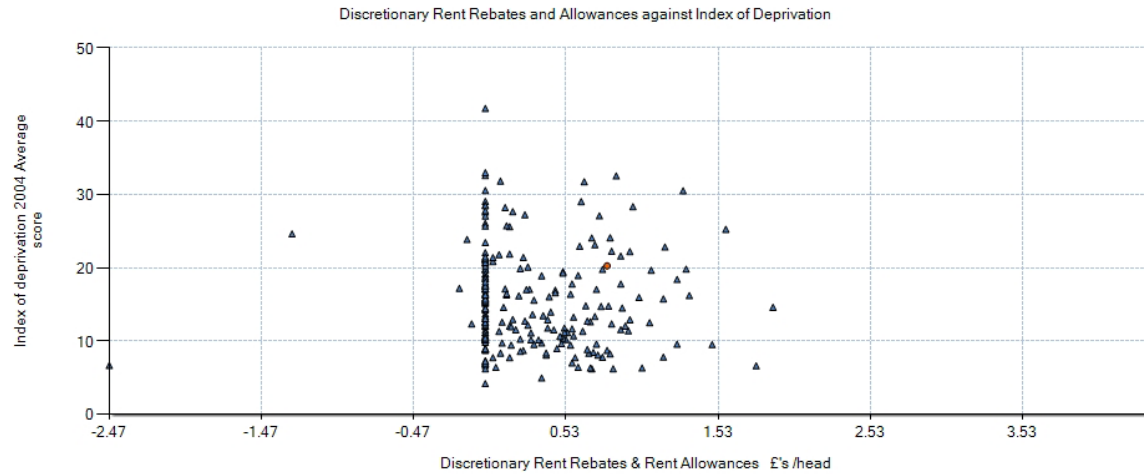


Homelessness is working to reduce acceptances against the three main causes of homelessness – parent/friends no longer willing to accommodate – end of Assured Shorthold Tenancies – Relationship Breakdowns (inc domestic Violence), target of 10% reduction year on year. To work to reduce the usage of temporary accommodation in line with ODPM targets, a 50% reduction by 2010.

Additional resources enabling the monitoring of RSLs will ensure that appropriate nomination and allocation of properties are made to tackle the increasing waiting list and homelessness problems. Increased resources will enable cross boundary work and reduced

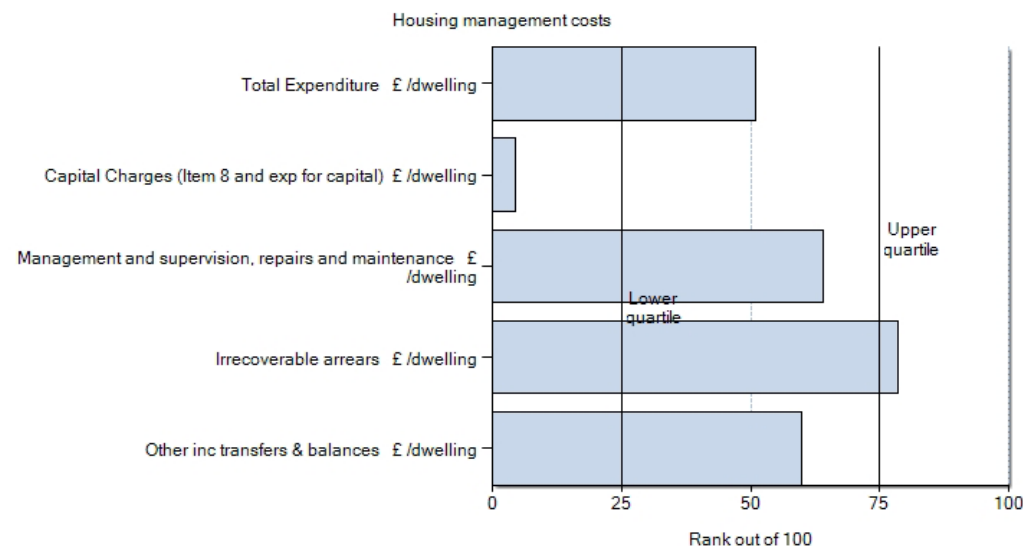
contract prices for projects – e.g. needs surveys already undertaken B&ME and key worker have accessed funding from 7 local authorities, Supporting People Team, English Partnerships and 21 RSLs.

Discretionary ...



Housing Management

Housing Management shows upper quartile costs for irrecoverable arrears and relatively high costs for housing management and supervision and repairs and maintenance.



Housing Management will deliver improvements by reducing vandalism and anti-social behaviour, introducing better information on tenancies and improved tenant engagement, reducing evictions/homelessness due to anti-social behaviour and achieving a BVPI 66a (rent collection rate) year end performance target of 97%.

Housing arrears are currently being targeted which should reduce the level of write-offs. Further awareness campaigns via media and local transport systems are being undertaken which combined with management actions and a reduction in outstanding housing benefit claims are targeted to improve the rent collection rate from 96.2% to 97% by March 2006 and reduce current arrears by 7% by March 2006.

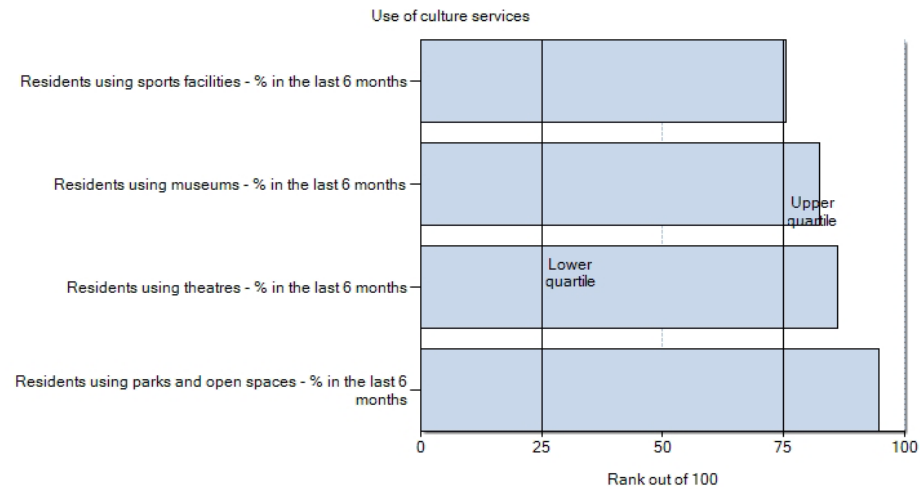
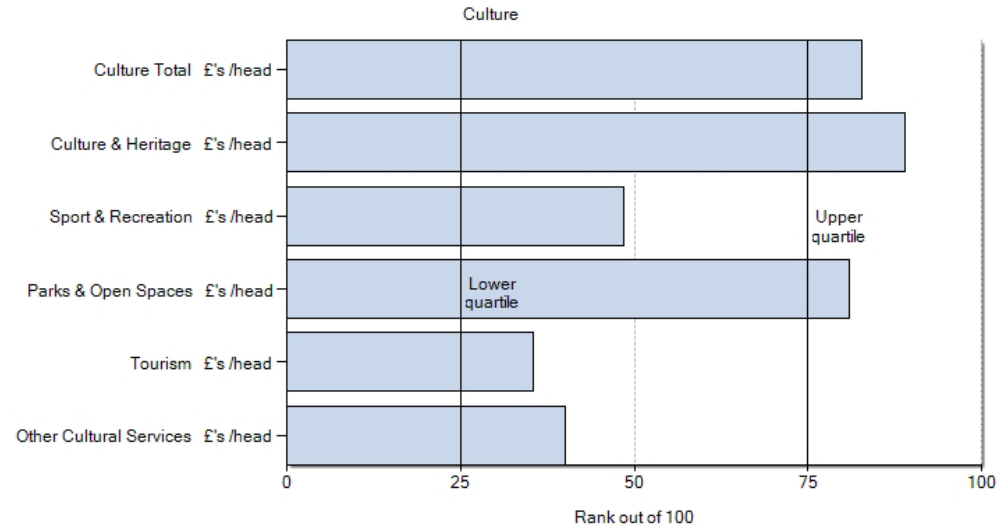
Working with Wakefield MBC on the development and implementation of a five-year Investment Plan for the achievement of the Decent Homes Standard by 2010 and beyond.

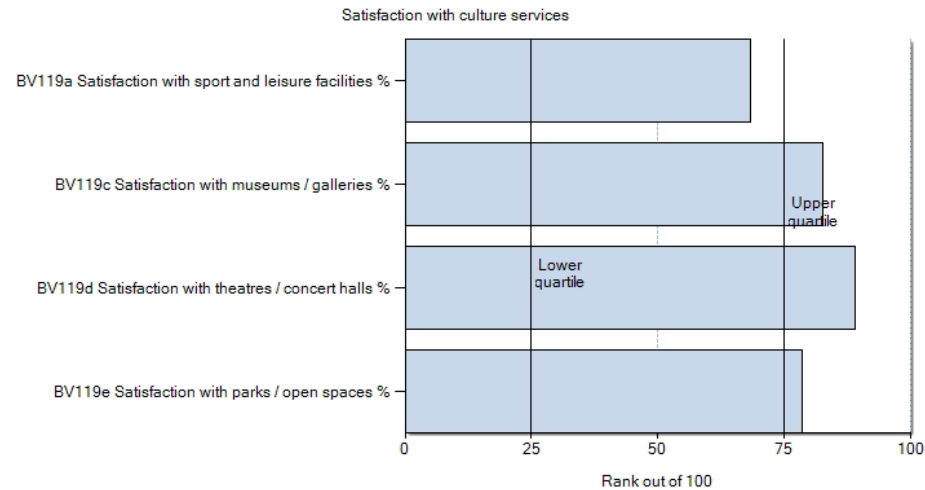
With effect from this Autumn, the National Housing Federation SOR will be used for housing maintenance, allowing direct comparisons with other Authorities and Housing Associations. This, coupled with the change from a bonus related pay structure to salaries, will enable the Council to target cost reductions, based on an SOR figure minus a percentage.

By centralising the management of planned and cyclical housing maintenance works, it is anticipated that programme overheads can be reduced resulting in a higher percentage of the available capital funds being invested in the properties.

CULTURE

Cultural Services clearly show upper quartile costs for Culture & Heritage and Parks and Open Spaces. Performance in these areas is also upper quartile both in terms of use and satisfaction.





Whilst high performance and high cost may indicate that value for money is being provided within the individual services, if these services are not a high corporate priority then they are having a negative impact on the achievement of overall value for money within the Council.

The Council is currently looking at the option of creating a trust for its Museums Service with the aim of maintaining attendance levels and satisfaction whilst reducing costs per head.

FUTURE BEST BUDGET REVIEWS

Based on the Audit Commission VFM data early targets for base budget reviews would be:

- Parks and Open spaces, to consider the impact on current high performance levels and the achievement of our corporate objectives if expenditure were reduced whilst recognising the potential impact on demand and cost/head of the growth agenda.
- Discretionary Rent Rebates and Rent Allowances, to consider whether Northampton's policies are out of line with other authorities and whether expenditure is contributing to the achievement of our objectives.

The following areas are currently being reviewed and Value For Money will form an important consideration in changing practices:

- Revenues and Benefits, to ensure joint working with Bedford BC delivers value for money improvements.
- Housing, to ensure that changes being put in place as a result of the recovery plan, changed structures arising from root and branch and improved efficiencies do improve value for money. The Council is currently working with Wakefield Borough Council to help identify and implement best practice from an excellent council.