

COUNCIL - 15 DECEMBER 2008

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE RE:
COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT - FINAL REPORT

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To advise the Council of the judgement made in the final report of the Audit Commission in relation to the Council's request for recategorisation and provide a copy of that report as a guide to future activity.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- (i) welcomes the very positive content in the report of the Audit Commission and, in particular, the CPA judgement of 'Excellent' now secured by this Council.
- (ii) acknowledges the contribution of Members, employees at all levels and our partners in securing this outcome for the Borough as a whole.
- (iii) endorses the proposal that an 'Excellence in Partnership' event be arranged as early as possible in 2009 to celebrate this achievement as another stage in the continuing improvement of public, private and voluntary services across the Borough and to learn and plan for future achievements as part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Members will recall that the original CPA assessment in 2004 placed the Council at the lowest point in the 'Fair' category, since when the Audit Commission had revised the arrangements for assessment and had removed the requirement that all district councils (currently 238) be assessed. Since 2005, districts have been assessed for recategorisation at their request and only if the Audit Commission agreed that there was sufficient evidence of improvement to warrant a potential change in category. The Audit Commission has discretion also to review an authority if it has concerns about the direction and trajectory of improvement. These arrangements end in April 2009, when the Comprehensive Area Assessment begins; essentially an assessment of the contribution to quality of life made by all public and 'third sector' organisations in an area working in partnership.
- 3.2 Since 2004 the Council has committed itself at all levels to achieve significant improvement in all the areas of weakness identified in the original assessment and to maintain a positive direction of travel at a higher trajectory than before,

in order to respond more effectively to the needs and priorities of local communities, thereby justifying a higher CPA categorisation. In making this commitment, the Council set out its vision of being “a Borough to be Proud of”, as an organisation and as a place to live.

3.3 Earlier this year, Council gave unanimous approval to a submission being made to the Audit Commission for a review of our CPA category of 'Fair', with the ambition that this be uprated to 'Good' or better, on the scale - Poor, Weak, Fair, Good and Excellent.

3.4 In March 2008, the Audit Commission responded to our request, submitted in January, as follows:

"There is evidence that the Council has addressed corporate weaknesses (*identified in CPA 2004*) and there is also evidence of improvements in performance indicators since the last CPA."

Accordingly, the Commission agreed to arrange a formal onsite corporate assessment in September (15th-19th). In preparation for that assessment, officers prepared a formal Self-Assessment, approved by Council in July 2008 and shared with our many partners and stakeholders locally. That Self Assessment was able to call on all the work undertaken and improvements secured over the four year period, by the Council and its partners, and to provide clear evidence of the “embedding” of these improvements against our corporate strategic aims.

3.5 The 'onsite' work in September was fully supported by our partners, staff and Members and the CPA team clearly left with very strong, positive views of the Council and all those with whom we work for the good of our local community. These relationships have been gaining strength since 2004 and that strength was very evident to the team during their assessment interviews.

4. **THE FINAL CPA REPORT**

4.1 The final CPA report is attached to this covering paper. Members will see from paragraph 3 in the Executive Summary that the Council's CPA category has now improved to '**Excellent**' - the highest category.

4.2 Beyond that very positive headline, the report refers to a number of equally positive actions and initiatives taken and sustained by the Council and our partners to deliver continually improving services, making the Borough a better place to live and work. These include:

- * Much improved relationships between Members and between Members and officers, resulting in much clearer and more effective leadership
- * Strong managerial leadership
- * Constructive and collective leadership by councillors

- * The good progress on town centre regeneration.
- * A healthy organisational culture.
- * Good internal communications and relations with trade unions.
- * Strengthened and more effective partnerships which are producing results.
- * The “positive contribution” and “constructive and robust challenge” of the Scrutiny function, which has led to improved services.
- * Strong community leadership with the private, education and voluntary sector.
- * 'Significant improvement' to financial management.
- * 'Robust' business planning and performance management.
- * 'Significant improvements' to services to our communities.

4.3 Nevertheless, the report has highlighted that a number of challenges remain, but recognises that the Council has itself identified these challenges and is already addressing them. These include:

- * embedding Workforce Planning
- * performance management of the Local Strategic Partnership
- * strategic approach to shared services
- * some further improvement in some aspects of the Housing Service

These are detailed in paragraph 9 of the report and highlighted as 'areas for improvement' in paragraphs 10 and 11. Actions are in place also to address these latter issues and a full framework for progress will be presented to Members, as part of the budget-setting process for 2009/10 and beyond.

4.4 Overall, the report is very positive about the Council and our partners and does reflect accurately how far the Council has progressed especially in the last few years. The important issue for the Council now is to maintain that progress by responding positively and effectively to the recommendations in the report, whilst keeping focus on those areas where we have already improved; 'Excellent' does not mean 'perfect'.

4.5 We have begun our response already by supporting the Town Centre Partnership in securing a positive ballot on its Business Improvement District (BID) proposals, by being shortlisted (with the Police and other partners) for an “After Dark” Beacon award, by concluding a partnership arrangement for Steria to host a full IT service for Oadby and Wigston, to progressing the partnership development with North Warwickshire and Hinckley College to the next stage and by supporting Hinckley Club for Young People in their bid for 'My Place' funding of £4.5 million.

4.6 To achieve continued progress and to build on the firm foundations now clearly in place, Members are asked to support an event early in 2009, at which all partners operating within the Borough should be invited to showcase their own achievements, highlighting the area as a Centre of Excellence and forging stronger and more effective partnerships for the future. By this means we can collectively ensure that we maintain the area as “a Borough to be Proud of”.

5. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (SK)**

There are no financial implications arising from this report. The partnership/stakeholder event in early 2009 will be funded from existing resources.

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (LH)**

None.

7. **CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS**

The CPA report details how the Council has responded positively and effectively to our Corporate Plan priorities; in particular to our Vision of being “a Borough to be Proud of”..

8. **CONSULTATION**

The CPA report was produced after extensive consultation and interview, as detailed in the report.

10. **RISK IMPLICATIONS**

It is the Council’s policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.

It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer’s opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision/project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.

The following significant risks associated with this report/decision were identified from this assessment:

Risk Description	Mitigating Action	Owner
Improvement direction of travel is not maintained	Continue with and take action from the Quarterly Performance Management Framework meetings	Chief Executive

<p>“Areas for Improvement” from the report are not addressed</p>	<p>The Action Plan to address these areas is incorporated into the Performance Management Framework</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p>
<p>Insufficient resources are allocated to address priorities in current circumstances</p>	<p>MTFS and 2009/10 budget allocations are matched to agreed priorities</p>	<p>Executive/SLB</p>

11. **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

The impact of these recommendations is aimed at all who may be affected in the Borough, wherever they live.

12. **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community Safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset Management implications
- Human Resources implications

Background Papers: The final CPA report is attached as an appendix

Contact Officer: Steve Atkinson, ext 5606

Executive Member: Cllr David Bill