Appendix B

Consultation on CPA from 2005 – Rochford DC feedback on proposals

<u>Overall categories</u>

What do you think about the suggestion of moving from five overall categories to four?

We would prefer keeping 5 categories to retain consistency and enable future comparisons.

What labels would you attach to four categories?

Not applicable

<u>Scoring and rules</u>

What do you think about the scoring and rules for corporate assessment?

Clear guidelines need to be given for what constitutes a particular score in each of the categories. The system needs to be unambiguous, fair and transparent, with a consistent approach by inspectors.

Do you think they should report an overall score for achievement, in the corporate assessment, or report individual scores for each shared priority theme (sustainable communities and transport, safer and stronger communities, healthier communities, older people and children and young people)?

We would prefer individual scoring as it provides greater clarity around strengths/weaknesses and focuses on areas for improvement.

If you prefer individual scores, how do you think these should be used to determine an overall score for achievement?

If an overall score is required, then an average can be taken. However, it is unclear why an overall score for achievement has to be used. Why can the individual scores not fit into the rule-based matrix? Each of these areas of achievement are sufficiently broad and important. An alternative is to remove the achievement rating from the corporate assessment and include it with the individual service blocks where other achievements are being measured.

What do you think about the scoring and rules for use of resources?

It is unclear how this fits with Gershon.

You have not detailed a process to ensure clarity around what is being measured and how authorities can be compared. An emphasis is being placed on 'value-for-money', but no method for measuring the quality/cost relationship has been proposed.

What do you think about the rules for determining the overall CPA category?

It is very complicated and is unlikely to be understood by users. The overall categorisation needs testing.

If performance measurements are being used to rate the individual service blocks they need to be fair and valid measures with a system in place to ensure that a single weaker score does not disproportionately affect the overall rating.

What are your views on developing an annual performance assessment for district councils covering key service areas (housing, benefits, environment, culture, and community safety)?

We feel this could require too many resource inputs relative to outputs. Again it is unclear how this fits with Gershon's Statement of Efficiency.

We need some clarity on how a Statement of Efficiency produced in April or June, a Performance Plan in June and a CPA assessment in December will fit together.

If they develop an annual performance assessment for district councils, do you think that each service area within this should be scored or should there be just an overall score?

Each service area should be scored but the assessment needs to be selective and proportionate.

Direction of travel statements

What do you think about the introduction of a direction of travel statement?

It is unclear whether this will add value. Rules need to be clear, consistent, and stand the test of time.

Do you agree with the proposed labels and, if not, what labels would you suggest for these?

If we need labels, then these are as good as any.

Performance information

What is your view on their proposals in relation to each of the following:

- *The principles of using broader performance information and how this should be used to produce scores?*

We need total clarity and transparency so everyone is collecting the same thing and what is being collected is a true measure of best practice and achieved outcomes. The PIs currently in use frequently measure data rather than outcomes and do not enable a valid comparison between authorities with differing environments/priorities.

It is unclear how scores on individual elements of service delivery will feed into an overall score and how this will enable a valid comparison.

Data used for assessment needs to be measuring current performance as well as past. For an assessment in December, the first two quarters of the current year could be used but this will be unaudited.

- *The scope and content of each block (see weblink on main report, starting page 5)?*

Each block appears to be comprehensive. However the elements again measure outputs rather than outcomes, and you have given no indication as to how risk and value-for-money will fit in with these assessments.

- *How levels of required performance, for scoring purposes, should be determined?*

We need to move away from subjective judgements using a one-size fits all model. Assessors need to take better account of local priorities and needs within a district and fit national priorities in this context.

- *How local priorities should best be reflected in this approach?*

Local priorities could be identified by each authority, their validity agreed with the assessor, and some weighting applied to these when reviewing performance information.

- *Whether and, if so, how third party commentaries on performance could be used?*

It is unclear what is meant by third party. Views would need to be taken from a broad cross-section and used to validate/query the emerging assessments. In the past too much weight has been given to ad hoc statements by individuals.

- *What the impact of individual, and groups of, indicators and other performance information should be in the overall assessment for each block?*

Those that measure the authority's priorities, and identified needs within the district, should be of greater important with other indicators simply forming the bigger picture.

- *How the AC should seek to confirm that authorities are ensuring data quality?*

Through the existing mechanisms of internal and external audit.

More timely information on what data has to be collected, with unambiguous definitions, would improve quality. Removing PIs that do not deliver outcomes and those that are so complicated they need pages and pages of definition would also help.