

COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CPA) IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report introduces the Council's Improvement Plan for Members' consideration, comment and approval. It also deals with the corporate governance arrangements to enable the Plan to be reviewed, developed and monitored against the key milestones laid down.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Council is required, as a result of its "weak" categorisation under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), to produce an Improvement Plan that tackles the issues highlighted within the Assessment as needing to improve. In summary, these revolve around:
- Clearer articulation of our overall ambition with due weight being given to national priorities
 - Completing our key planning documents to provide us with a structured strategic framework which clearly links together
 - Reviewing and developing the Member role in the formal decision making process
 - Engagement with our public around their needs and priority setting
 - Developing internal and external capacity to deliver our plans
 - Specifically targeting our services for vulnerable people on Housing Benefit/Council tax and Homelessness to secure improvement
 - Developing our culture of performance management

- 2.2 In addition, it is equally important that the appropriate structures are put in place to oversee the implementation of the Improvement Plan to ensure that sustainable improvement is achieved.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

Improvement Plan

- 3.1 A copy of the proposed Improvement Plan is attached as Appendix A. Its content is based upon addressing the issues identified in the CPA report. Given the resources available to the Authority, it is not a quick fix approach but is one which is measured, realistic and capable of sustainability over time. It takes on board much of the “improvement” work already underway which both predates and post-dates the CPA Inspection. It needs to be viewed as a living document, which will evolve over time in response to events and the decisions taken.
- 3.2 Where additional resources are required, they have been flagged up in the Plan. The ODPM has indicated that monies are available from a Capacity Building fund established specifically for “Poor” and “Weak” Authorities, but that funding is subject to a bidding process, is one off and must lead to sustainable improvement. It cannot be used simply to plug gaps or act as a quick fix, short term solution. Subject to the Improvement Plan being approved, the ODPM will be approached to firm up on those areas where funding is appropriate and a formal bid submission will be made to resource those areas of the improvement work required.

Corporate Governance

- 3.3 It is important for Members to own and demonstrate commitment to the Plan. It needs to be formally monitored, updated and reviewed on a regular basis. Within the Corporate governance structures of the Council, it is proposed that this role be formally undertaken by the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who will monitor progress on the Improvement Plan on a quarterly basis, effectively March/April, July, September/October and December. Clearly, if closer or more frequent monitoring of progress is required, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee can do so.
- 3.4 To ensure that there is a commitment to improvement and that momentum is maintained, a Panel comprising our Relationship Manager, ODPM, our External Auditor (PKF), plus the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, will also meet on a regular basis to run through progress. Those meetings are likely to be held at similar intervals to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- 3.5 Whilst the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee will oversee the implementation of the Improvement Plan in its entirety, it is clear from the content of the Plan that other Committees will also have a role to play, where the matter under detailed consideration falls within their terms of reference.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Strategic Risk

There is clearly a risk to the Authority both in terms of management and operation, if the CPA Improvement Plan is not progressed.

4.2 Resource Risk

The resources associated with the Improvement Plan process are identified in the Plan. Clearly, given the limited resources available to the Authority, the Council would be sensitive to any grant funding decision which reduced its core capacity.

4.3 Operational Risk

The Improvement Plan is not an “optional extra”. It must be an integral part of the Council’s day-to-day business.

4.4 Reputation Risk

It is important that we succeed in implementing the Improvement Plan. In that way, we can anticipate progression at our next CPA Assessment.

4.5 Regulatory Risk

The CPA Improvement Plan is an integral part of the process.

5 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 It is recommended that the Council **RESOLVES:**

- 1) That the Improvement Plan attached as Appendix A be the basis for sustained improvement.
- 2) That the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee should have the principal responsibility for the monitoring, review and development of the Improvement Plan, to

ensure that the Council's progress in addressing the areas highlighted for improvement is maintained.

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

CPA Assessment Report – Audit Commission September 2004

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