

CABINET

21 MAY 2003

COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB 589: Preparing for Comprehensive Performance Assessment – 5 March 2003

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report advises Cabinet of progress being made to prepare for Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and seeks approval to the draft self assessment that will form the basis of the peer review.

The report shows that the Council is on track with its preparation work but that the timetable is tight, in particular in the period between the peer review and the submission of the final self assessment to the CPA team. An additional meeting of the Principal Scrutiny Committee is being arranged during that period to allow that Committee to have formal input into the final report.

The self assessment demonstrates good practice by the Council and areas where there is scope for improvement. Key areas identified for improvement include:

- putting in place a community strategy;
- more clearly defining Member roles;
- taking forward identified service priorities;
- strengthening internal systems for project management, risk management and internal communications.

The scores proposed in the assessment would mean that the Council would fall into the 'good' category overall.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1 That the progress made against the agreed timetable for the CPA process be noted and the updated timetable be agreed.
- 2 That the draft self assessment attached as Appendix B to this report and the scores proposed therein be agreed in principle for submission to the IDeA as background to the peer review.
- 3 That authority be given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio holder for performance improvement, to amend the self assessment to reflect points raised during discussion at this meeting or to improve the accuracy and readability of the document.

CABINET - 21 MAY 2003

COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report brings Cabinet up to date with progress on the preparation for comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) and seeks approval to the draft self assessment, which will form the basis of the peer review.

2 Background

- 2.1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) brings together disparate external inspections of local authority services into one process, to give a single judgement as to how well each authority is operating. Authorities found to be operating well will be granted additional flexibility and freedoms, while those identified as 'poor' or 'weak' will be provided with additional support and inspection to help them improve.
- 2.2 County Councils and single tier authorities were inspected under this process during 2002, with the results announced in December of that year.
- 2.3 A two-year timetable for the inspection of all district level authorities has now been established, using a revised methodology that has been tested in West Sussex. All districts in each County area are to be reviewed at the same time. In February 2003, the City Council learnt that the on-site work for all Hampshire District reviews would take place in the week commencing 29 September 2003, some six months earlier than previously indicated.

3 The CPA Process

- 3.1 In April 2003, the Audit Commission issued its most recent guidance on the process that will be used in District Councils, which forms the basis for the information contained in this report.
- 3.2 There are a number of discrete stages to the CPA process, which are outlined below:
- 3.2.1 **Self Assessment:** The Council is required to assess its own performance overall and in a number of service areas with relation to a format and a series of issues that are prescribed nationally. More information about this part of the process is shown in paragraph 4 below.
- 3.2.2 **Peer Review:** Each Council is asked to undertake a 'peer review' through an accredited external organisation that tests its performance against the areas raised in the self assessment. Feedback from this review can be used to refine the self assessment. Information about the peer review for the City Council is contained in paragraph 5 below.
- 3.2.3 **CPA Review:** The CPA review process covers a 30 week period from the initial notification to the Council of the review period until receipt of the final report, with team members on site for a full week of this. Prior to the on-site week, the CPA team will hold a number of discussions with the authority to plan the work, receive and

review the self assessments and other key documentation and carry out a tour of the district. Following their on-site work, the team will prepare its report, which will go through a process of moderation and discussion with the authority, before it is published.

4 Self Assessment

4.1 The first stage in the CPA process requires local authorities to assess their own performance at both corporate and service levels.

4.2 **Corporate Assessment**

4.2.1 Each authority is required to assess its own performance against the following four questions and ten underlying themes:

- What is the council trying to achieve?
 - Ambition
 - Prioritisation
 - Focus
- How has the council set about delivering its priorities for improvement?
 - Capacity
 - Performance Management
- What improvements has the council achieved to date?
 - Achievement in quality of service
 - Achievement of improvement
 - Investment
- In light of what the council has learnt to date, what does it plan to do next?
 - Learning
 - Future Plans

4.2.2 There is a strict limit of four sides of A4 to respond to each of the four key questions and the authority is also asked to give itself a score for each of the ten underlying themes, based on the following scale:

- 4. Strong (no major weaknesses)
- 3. Strengths outweigh weaknesses
- 2. Weaknesses outweigh strengths
- 1. Weak

4.2.3 The self assessment also needs a four page introduction to the district and a single side of A4 setting out a high level action plan, indicating what the Council is doing to improve its performance in light of the issues raised in the self assessment.

4.2.4 The draft self assessment for this Council, which has been discussed by the Informal Member/Officer Group established to oversee the CPA process, is attached as Appendix B. Appendix A gives further detail on the types of issues that need to be covered under each question and underlying theme.

4.3 **Service Assessments**

4.3.1 Each authority is also required to assess its performance against two or three cross cutting areas of performance.

4.3.2 All authorities are required to complete an assessment of their management of public open space, which covers the four key areas shown below in no more than four sides

of A4. The draft response for this authority, which has been discussed with the Informal Member/Officer Working Group, is attached as Appendix C to this report.

- How well does the council contribute to the management of the physical environment?
- Does the council help keep the locality clean?
- Does the council work with partners to improve community safety?
- Does the council contribute to activities to positively engage children and young people?

4.3.3 Those authorities that still retain their own housing stock are required to complete an assessment looking at the work they are undertaking to ensure that the stock meets the Decent Homes Standard by 2010, answering the questions shown below on no more than four sides of A4. The draft response for this authority, which has been discussed in an early form with the Informal Member/Officer Working Group, is attached as Appendix D to this report.

- How well does the council know the condition of the housing stock and its compliance with the Decent Homes Standard? What is the council trying to achieve in relation to the standard?
- What are the council's actions and what outcomes have been achieved to ensure homes meet the standard?
- How does the council monitor its progress and the impact of meeting the standard, and how does this feed into future strategies and plans?

4.3.4 These two assessment are scored against the need for improvement, with each of the three or four questions being rated against the following scale (using lower case letters) and then the overall service being rated against the same scale, using capital letters:

- a/A – very low need for improvement focus
- b/B – low need for improvement focus
- c/C – high need for improvement focus
- d/D – very high need for improvement focus

4.3.5 Those authorities that do not retain their own housing stock are required to complete an assessment looking at their role in providing a balanced housing market. Authorities who do have their own stock have also been asked to complete this assessment, although it has been indicated that they will not be scored on it. The questions covered by this assessment are shown below and the Council's draft response, which has been discussed with the Informal Member/Officer Working Group, will follow shortly as Appendix E to this report.

- How well does the council understand its housing market and from its understanding has the council developed the right proposals to help balance its housing markets?
- What are the council's actions and what outcomes has it achieved in helping to balance housing markets?
- How does the council monitor its progress and impact in helping to balance housing markets and how effectively does this feed into future strategies and plans?

4.3.6 Finally, benefits services provided by all districts are separately reviewed by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI). The City Council has already responded to their questionnaire, with the response cleared by the Informal Member/Officer Working Group as it was required to be submitted by 14 May. It is understood that this will be followed up by an on-site inspection, although no details about this have yet been

received. From this work, the BFI will produce a report giving an overall rating for both current performance and for proven capacity to improve. The ratings will be based on the following five point scale:

- Poor
- Fair
- Fair to good
- Good
- Excellent

5 Peer Review

- 5.1 To comply with the guidance, the Council has organised a 'peer review' to challenge its self-assessment. This will be carried out by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and will take place from Monday 23 June to Wednesday 25 June.
- 5.2 Prior to the challenge team arriving on site, they will receive copies of key background documents, including the draft self-assessment. During their site visit, the team will be seeking evidence that allows it to make a 'reasoned' assessment against each of the 10 themes covered by the corporate self-assessment. This may come through one to one interviews with key staff, Councillors and Partners, through focus groups or through other documented information.
- 5.3 On the final afternoon of their visit, the challenge team will present their initial findings, with a formal report following within about two weeks of the visit.
- 5.4 The Council will then have an opportunity to revise its self assessment and proposed action plan in the light of issues raised through this process before it is submitted to the CPA team.
- 5.5 As will be seen on Appendix F to this report, it is also proposed to consult more widely on the current self assessment during the period between now and the end of the peer review, and issues raised will also be incorporated into the revision referred to above.

6 Overall Assessment

- 6.1 The Audit Commission is currently consulting on its approach to determining the overall assessment mark.
- 6.2 Its present proposals are that this will be based on the marks given to for the ten themes that underlie the four key questions in the corporate assessment. The marks given for the two themes that relate to achievements in quality of services and in improvement will be weighted at 5 and the theme on investment at 3, with all others given a weighting of 1.
- 6.3 The marks given for the individual themes will be multiplied by the weighting factor and added together to give the overall score.
- 6.4 Councils would then be assessed as being 'poor' (score 20 – 39), 'weak' (score 40 – 48), 'fair' (score 49 – 57), 'good' (score 58 – 66) or 'excellent' (score 67 – 80).
- 6.5 It is not clear how scores for the service assessments or the benefits service would feed in to the overall score, although it has been stated that any authorities that achieved the worst rating in these assessments would not be able to be excellent.

7 Timetable

- 7.1 Report CAB 589 contained a timetable covering preparation for the CPA process and other key actions to be covered during the same period.
- 7.2 An update of this timetable is attached as Appendix F to this report, reflecting progress against actions identified and incorporating additional information that has been received about both the peer review and the CPA processes. New entries and changes to dates are shown in bold type.
- 7.3 This timetable is based on standard dates shown in the CPA and IDeA guidance. These dates have not been confirmed for the City Council reviews and may be subject to change.

8 Corporate Strategy

- 8.1 The CPA process seeks to ensure that the Council has processes in place to both determine and deliver its corporate aims and identify areas where these could be improved.

9 Resource Implications

- 9.1 At its meeting on 5 March, Cabinet agreed that £50,000 be made available to support the CPA process. Some of this budget allocation has already been directed to carrying out additional research into Members views and providing additional support in the Chief Executive's Department. It will also be used to support additional communications with staff and to pay for the CPA team's tour of the District. The Audit Commission is grant aiding the peer review up to a maximum of £5,000, which should fully cover costs for this district.
- 9.2 Notwithstanding this, the short deadlines that the Council is working to are putting pressure on staff who are preparing self-assessment documentation and making arrangements for both the peer review and the CPA team's work. This is likely to continue throughout the summer and autumn and will be difficult to overcome, given the nature of the work involved. It may also mean that other areas of work are delayed.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Audit Commission Guidance Documents available from the Audit Commission website: (<http://www.audit-commission/cpadistrict>)

APPENDICES:

- Appendix A Summary of guidance for self assessment
- Appendix B Draft corporate self assessment
- Appendix C Draft self assessment of 'Management of Open Space'
- Appendix D Draft self assessment of 'Decent Housing Standard'
- Appendix E Draft self assessment of 'Balanced Housing Markets' (to follow)
- Appendix F Updated Timetable for CPA Process