

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE CABINET

03 JUNE 2009

COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT REPORT

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Roger Hollingworth, Leader of the Council
Responsible Head of Service	Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive and Deb Poole, Head of E-Government and Customer Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report formally reports the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Report to Cabinet, in particular, the recommendations made by the Audit Commission and the planned actions in response to each of these.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:-

1. Notes the significant improvement in our rating, from Poor to Fair in under two years.
2. Recognises that Fair is average and our vision remains “working together to build a district where people are proud to live and work, through community leadership and excellent services”; and therefore, we still have a considerable journey to take, in order to deliver our vision.
3. Notes the recommendations made by the Audit Commission and approves the steps being taken to deliver these improvements.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.4 The Audit Commission recommendations and our planned improvement actions are set out below:-

R1 A culture of customer focus should be fully established at all levels within the Council.

- Update of Customer First Strategy to June Cabinet which will include new section on customer access.
- Continued support for the Customer Service Centre and further service migration, in particular, the planning service.
- Employment of lean systems specialist.
- Evaluate neighbouring council’s pilot of Mosaic, a customer

insight tool, with a view to procuring or sharing a license for this software.

- Customer First Part 3 training for each team, which will involve a diagnostic of their customer satisfaction levels, customer experience, customer literature, complaints data, mystery shopping data etc., with individual customer improvement plans for each team.

R2 Strategies, contracts, project specifications and business plans and accompanying action plans need to have clearly identified outcomes that the public would recognise, to deliver the outcomes intended.

- Continued roll out of National Indicators.
- Adoption of Corporate Performance Management Strategy (March Cabinet), which includes a focus on new requirements of Comprehensive Area Assessment.
- Fundamental review of Community Strategy (although it has already been updated with the new LAA targets).
- Template changes to the Council Plan and Service Business Plans to increase focus on outcomes.
- Development of Inputs, Processes, Outputs and Outcomes matrix to ensure key deliverables have the full set of measures.

R3 Develop further its workforce planning by undertaking a comprehensive skills audit to identify and address any gaps.

- This project was suspended at the business planning stage for 2008/2009 in order to ensure sufficient capacity for the HR&OD team to deliver Single Status. A project plan is now in place and CMT started the process in early February.

R4 Undertake routine evaluation of all projects, initiatives and partnerships to ensure that the Council's resources make the most impact and deliver the best value for money. The Council has a clear project methodology, usage of which was audited by the Council's Internal Audit Team during 2008/2009. The recommendations have been implemented and a Programme Board established to oversee the Council's main projects. The Council was subject to an inspection of its project management arrangements in late January. Our arrangements were described as "sound" and "becoming increasingly embedded". The Council will need to consider how to improve the project management of partnership working, as part of the fundamental review of the LSP and community strategy this year.

- Training was undertaken for March and April for approximately 40 managers on the project management methodology and it should be a relatively straight forward task to encourage managers to complete lessons learnt and project closure reports, which include project evaluation.
- There is an issue of scale and the statement that "All" projects need this level of recording. The Audit Commission do need to

be cognisant of the fact that recording everything can slow an organisation down. A balance needs to be struck. Subsequent discussions with the Lead Inspector have confirmed our approach of concentrating on the major projects (20% of projects account for 80% activity is acceptable.

R5 Strengthen the scrutiny function to ensure robust and constructive challenge of performance, plans and decisions, including the direct and indirect consequences, so that priorities are delivered fully and not unintentionally undermined.

- The Council has recently changed its scrutiny arrangements, splitting the Scrutiny Steering Board into an Overview Board and a Scrutiny Board. The former has a focus on policy development and the forward plan, the latter on call ins and reviews of performance and decisions.
- Budget Full Council also agreed to a review of the scrutiny staffing structure and whether there is a need for an additional officer. More recently an enhanced role for PMB has been agreed.

R6 Improve external communication by regularly checking that the community understands the Council's messages and information. This will help the public know what services are offered by the Council and allow the Council to highlight what it has achieved.

- The Council has made considerable efforts over the last 18 months to improve the quality and level of community engagement. The report comments favourably on this. This forward focus has meant less focus on evaluation and feedback of community engagement exercises. This should not be difficult to address and probably require a small process change in the Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team to ensure this happens.

R7 Improve external communication by providing, clear and regular information updates on progress, especially for longer term projects such as the town centre.

- Again, the Council has improved in this area, but linking projects to the communications team remains problematic. The Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance team is currently being restructured (within its existing budget) to bring new skills into the team, to help address this recommendation.
- In addition, communications will now be a standing item for major project agenda meetings and a member of the Communications Team attend for that item.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Some of the proposed actions will require business cases and budget bids for the 2010/2011 budget cycle.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 CPA has now been replaced by Comprehensive Area Assessment under the Local Government and Involvement in Health Act (2008).

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

6.1 All objectives and priorities.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

7.1 The Corporate Risk Register (KO17) includes:

- Ensure the Council achieves at least a CPA fair rating and is prepared for CAA.
- Responsibility: CEO and Assistant CEO

7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

- Delivery of new improvement plan (July Cabinet).
- Away day for CMT (08 May) to consider process of delivering excellence.
- Away day for Cabinet/CMT (July).

8 CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 A key recommendation in the report is to put the customer at the heart of what we do. See separate report on Customer Access Strategy.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Equalities and Diversity are an integral part of the Council's approach to customer service and delivering excellence.

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Value for Money will be critical to delivering our Vision, in particular, the need to recycle savings into improved services for our customers.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues: No.
Personnel Issues: Yes, workforce planning.
Governance/Performance Management: Yes, scrutiny, Member behaviour.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act 1988:

No.
Policy: No.
Environmental: Climate change is now a priority of the Council and one we need to improve on most.

12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	At CMT.
Chief Executive	At CMT.
Executive Director (Partnerships & Projects)	At CMT.
Executive Director (Services)	At CMT.
Assistant Chief Executive	Author
Head of Financial Services	At CMT.
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	At CMT.
Head of Organisational Development & HR	At CMT.
Corporate Procurement Team	No.

13. WARDS AFFECTED

'All Wards'.

14. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Bromsgrove District Council, CPA Report, Audit Commission (March 2009).

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Bromsgrove District Council, CPA Report, Audit Commission (March 2007).

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