

JOINT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TRANSITION BOARD
23 JANUARY 2009

JOINT DIRECTION OF TRAVEL ASSESSMENT FOR THE
WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

Executive Summary

The Audit Commission have provided for consideration by the Implementation Executive, their draft report (appended) setting out their findings with regard to the Direction of Travel of the four Wiltshire District Councils. The report reflects a 'light touch' assessment that is intended to provide the IE with assurances about services that are soon to become part of the new council, and to highlight any key challenges.

The report identifies positive contributions to the Local Area Agreement by the District Councils. Key challenges are highlighted in relation to private sector housing, and planning performance.

The County Council has been subject to a fuller assessment and scoring and the draft report is not expected to be received until at least mid January. This further report from the Audit Commission will also be provided to the IE.

Proposal

That the Implementation Executive consider the appended report and provides overall comments or queries for the attention of the Audit Commission.

Reason for Proposal

The provision of the draft report by the Audit Commission during this transition period is a helpful opportunity for the IE to consider the summary progress of the district councils as set out in the appended report, and to consider how the highlighted key challenges should be addressed.

Keith Robinson

Chief Executive, Wiltshire County Council

JOINT DIRECTION OF TRAVEL ASSESSMENT FOR THE WILTSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILS

1. Purpose

The purpose of the report is to enable the Implementation Executive to receive and consider this appended report of the Audit Commission at draft stage. Melanie Watson, Audit Commission Relationship Manager, will be present at the IE meeting to present the report and to respond to Member's questions.

2. Context

The Audit Commission first introduced CPA in 2002 for the 150 single tier and county councils. Since then it has evolved in response to changes in the operational and regulatory environment and to support continuing improvement. In 2003 it was extended to the 238 district councils and modified to produce amore 'proportionate' assessment of district councils.

The intention of CPA as defined by the Commission is to measure how well authorities are delivering services for local people and communities. It looks at performance from a range of perspectives and combines a set of judgements to provide both a simply understood rating and a more complete picture of where to focus activity to secure improvement.

CPA is currently in its' final year of operation as it will be replaced by the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) in 2009. The CAA has a strong external focus – it is an ongoing assessment that is intended to be area based, outcome focused and examines joint working in the partnership context. The new unitary authority will be subject to a CAA assessment during 2009.

3. CPA Arrangements – Transition period

A joint discussion took place with Audit Commission staff at the Joint Implementation Team (JIT) meeting on 6 May 2008. At that JIT meeting it was agreed that it was not appropriate that separate CPA assessments for the District Councils and the County Council took place during the transition period, of the type that would have taken place had LGR not been in progress.

The approach that was developed involved a 'light touch' assessment for the District Councils focussing on aspects including the achievement of outcomes to benefit Wiltshire and ongoing performance management arrangements. This assessment is the subject of the appended draft report from the Commission.

The County Council has been subject to a fuller assessment and scoring and the draft report is not expected to be received until at least mid January, as the assessment is subject to national moderation including moderation against the other County Councils that are subject to LGR. This further report from the Audit Commission will also be provided to the implementation Executive.

4. Main Considerations for the Implementation Executive

The individual District Councils may wish to comment on specific aspects of the draft Commission report. The Implementation Executive has the wider and forward looking perspective that takes into account the transition position across all five Wiltshire Councils in relation to progress that potentially contributes to fulfilling the objectives of the new unitary council. From that perspective the IE is invited to comment on the draft report.

5. Environmental Impact of the Proposal

There are no significant environmental implications arising from the attached report.

6. Equalities Impact of the Proposal

There are no significant Equalities impacts arising from the attached report.

7. Risk Assessment

The overall LGR transition process is subject to full risk assessment and mitigation – specifically in relation to this report, risks are more likely to be associated with those service areas where key challenges are identified. Further action in relation to design and develop those services should take account of those inherent risks.

8. Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from the attached report.

Appendix: The draft Joint Direction of Travel report for the Wiltshire District Councils 2008/09 is appended.