

Report

Subject: : Comprehensive Performance Assessment – The Future Approach

Report to : The Cabinet

Date : 15 November 2006

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Deputy Leader : Cllr Westmoreland

1. Purpose of Report:

To update Cabinet on:

- 1.1. The Audit Commission's revised approach to Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of district councils and;
- 1.2. Progress made by the council's CPA Member Working Group.

2. Background:

- 2.1. Cabinet will recall that a CPA was first undertaken of Salisbury District Council in 2004, resulting in a rating of "good", just 3 points short of the highest rating of "excellent".
- 2.2. Following the assessment an improvement plan was approved by the council and progress subsequently monitored.
- 2.3. During 2005 and throughout the first half of 2006 the Audit Commission has been consulting district councils on the new framework for CPA.
- 2.4. Prior to the new framework being finalised, Cabinet approved the resumption of the CPA Member Working Group.
- 2.5. This report outlines the new framework and the work undertaken so far by the CPA Member Working Group.

3. The New District Council CPA Framework:

- 3.1. The serious and comprehensive consultation undertaken by the Audit Commission has resulted in a simplified framework that has generally been welcomed by district councils.
- 3.2. The new CPA framework is based on three elements. Firstly the Audit Commission will undertake a review of our 'Use of Resources'. This involves the Audit Commission annually scoring the council against a set of criteria related to four themes (financial reporting, financial management, financial standing and internal control). The fifth theme is assessed on the basis of the council submitting a response to a set of questions on Value for Money. This too is scored.



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- 3.3. Secondly, the Audit Commission will prepare an annual "Direction of Travel" Statement. This is included in the Annual Audit Letter.

Thirdly, the Audit Commission will produce annual Service Performance Information which analyses our indicators and inspection scores (the first of these was reported to Cabinet on 6 September 2006).

- 3.4. In addition to undertaking reviews of these three elements, the Audit Commission will plan and deliver corporate assessments of district councils between 2007 and 2009. There are two ways to trigger the corporate assessment.

Either the Audit Commission identifies evidence of significant deterioration in council performance and conducts a corporate assessment. Or the council requests re-categorisation and is able to demonstrate significant evidence of improvement and a corporate assessment is undertaken. Either approach will lead to a new categorisation (excellent / good / fair / weak / poor).

- 3.5. Councils who wish to consider requesting a re-categorisation can indicate their preferred slot based on a number of dates published by the Audit Commission. Earlier slots available will result in the 2005/06 performance data being utilised, whilst later slots will rely on 2006/07 data.

4. The CPA Member Working Group:

- 4.1. The working group has met on two occasions to date and has:

- Agreed terms of reference.
- Considered the latest Audit Commission framework.
- Revisited the Improvement Plan.
- Agreed to re-introduce the CPA newsletter at an appropriate future date.
- Invited Melanie Watson (Relationship Manager) to a meeting on 16 November to discuss the new framework.

- 4.2. The working group consider that good progress has been made by the council since the last CPA, including our strongest year to date for performance indicators in 2005/06. The working group also believe that a discussion with Melanie Watson will enable the group to consider any learning from those councils who have sought early re-categorisation and thereby assist the group in making a recommendation for Cabinet consideration on the tactics and timing of any future request by Salisbury District Council for re-categorisation.

5. Recommendations: Cabinet is asked to:

- i) note the revised framework;
- ii) request the Member Working Group to bring forward proposals for Cabinet consideration in early 2007.

6. Implications:

- **Financial** : None
- **Legal** : None
- **Personnel** : None
- **ICT** : None
- **Community Safety:** None
- **Environmental** : None