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Report

Subject : Joint Direction of Travel Report

Report to : The Cabinet

Date : Wednesday 28 January 2009

Author : Performance Director

Cabinet Member for Finance: Councillor Andrew Roberts

1. Report Summary:

The Audit Commission carried out its annual assessment for the Salisbury District Council's direction of travel (DoT) during November/December 2008. The final draft report has now been received and a summary of the main points is given below.

2. Background:

2.1. Members will be aware that as part of the current Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) framework the Audit Commission undertakes an annual performance assessment of each council's direction of travel (DoT). This annual assessment is an un-scored annual assessment and is reported in each council's annual audit and inspection letter.

Due to changes to local government in April 2009 within Wiltshire, it was agreed to carry out a joint audit of all 4 district councils and produce one composite report that compares performance across the districts in order to highlight any risks/issues and good practice and inform the new unitary council.

The combined report addressed 2 questions:

- What evidence is there of the councils improving outcomes
- How much progress is being made to implement improvement plans to sustain improvement.

3. The Process:

3.1. A range of documents was supplied to the Audit Commission in order for them to carry out this assessment and interviews with key officers were also undertaken.



Awarded in:
Housing Services
Waste and Recycling Services



4. Main Highlights from the Assessment:

4.1. The main highlights from the assessment for Salisbury District Council are recorded below:

- The council continues to exercise tight control of its budget with no major variations in spending patterns and reserves being strengthened. No significant weaknesses exist in financial arrangements at the council that impact on the future one council.
- An improved performance in dealing with benefits claims, with the amount of time taken to deal with new claims and the time taken to process changes in circumstances being reduced whilst accuracy has been maintained accuracy at 100%. Salisbury is amongst the best performing councils nationally for indicators associated with the benefits service.
- The scrutiny review on climate change was reported as comprehensive and it was felt that the detailed recommendations included some key areas where councils have the greatest influence. The Audit Commission felt that the report could prove very useful to the continuity authority.
- Improved performance was recorded in managing income from social rented houses and it was noted that the council has sufficient knowledge of its housing stock to help it comply with the decent homes criteria by 2010.
- There was an overall reduction in the number of complaints to the Ombudsman.
- The council is committed to delivering efficiencies and this is reflected in the way it works.
- A good approach has been taken to risk management during the transition.
- The website provides good information around consultation including what is currently underway and how to get involved. It was also noted that results of recent consultations were available and that an online tool as used to include the views of local people in budget setting and how resources should be allocated.
- The progress on work on equalities; producing a draft equalities scheme, delivery of training and the completion of equality impact assessments was also noted.
- A generally strong performance on waste, recycling and street cleanliness was recorded across Wiltshire.
- The planning figures for minor and other applications remains above average.
- Salisbury is ensuring that services are delivered during the transition and is also continuing to enhance capacity by attracting external funding eg the Stage 1 Heritage Lottery bid for Victoria Park and also the funding for sports and active recreation.

5. Recommendations: Cabinet is requested to:

5.1. Note the content of this report

6. Background Papers:

Direction of Travel Report, Wiltshire District Councils, Audit Commission 2008/09

7. Implications:

Financial : None
Legal : None
ICT : None
Human Rights : None
Personnel : None
Community Safety: None
Environmental : None
Council priorities : None
Ward Affected : All in the City