

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

22ND MAY 2008

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Leader – Councillor K Lupton

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT RESULTS AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

1. Summary

This report provides Cabinet with the results of the Council's corporate assessment which took place in December 2007. The Audit Commission published its report on the Council in April 2008. Stockton Borough Council achieved the highest corporate assessment rating of any council inspected to date outside London.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet are recommended to

1. Note the content of the report and in particular the Audit Commission's report which can be found at Appendix 1
2. Note the areas for improvement and receive progress updates as part of future performance monitoring reports

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

The Corporate Assessment report represents a major assessment of the council's performance and as such it is important that Cabinet consider its content and the actions that need to be taken to further improve the Council's performance

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

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DETAIL

1. In 2005 the Audit Commission introduced Comprehensive Performance Assessment – the Harder Test. The new model consisted of
 - A corporate assessment (carried out once between 2005 and 2008)
 - Service blocks (Children, Adult Social Care, Housing, Environment, Culture, Benefits)
 - Use of Resources (including a Value for Money assessment)
 - Direction of Travel
2. Each of these elements (and many of their constituent parts) is scored on a 1-4 basis with 4 being the top score. These scores are then combined to create the council's overall CPA score which for Stockton was:
 - CPA 2005 – 4 stars improving well
 - CPA 2006 – 4 Stars improving strongly
 - CPA 2007 – 4 Stars improving strongly

3. CPA is reported each year and until our “harder test” corporate assessment could take place our corporate assessment score from the previous CPA regime was used. This score was a “4”.
4. The new harder test corporate assessment focused on:

What is the council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?
Ambition for the community
1.1 Are there clear and challenging ambitions for the area and its communities?
1.2 Are ambitions based on a shared understanding amongst the council and partner organisations of local needs?
1.3 Does the council with its partners provide leadership across the community and ensure effective partnership working?
Prioritisation
2.1 Are there clear and robust priorities within the ambitions for the area?
2.2 Is there a robust strategy to deliver the priorities?
2.3 Is robust action taken to deliver the strategy?
What is the capacity of the council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?
Capacity
3.1 Is there clear accountability and decision-making to support service delivery and continuous improvement?
3.2 Is capacity used effectively and developed to deliver ambitions and priorities?
3.3 Does the council, with its partners, have the capacity it needs to achieve change and deliver its priorities?
Performance management
4.1 Is there a consistent, rigorous and open approach to performance management?
4.2 Do the council and partner organisations know how well they and each other are performing against planned outcomes?
4.3 Is knowledge about performance used to drive continuous improvement in outcomes?
What has been achieved?
Summary of achievement
5.1 What progress has the council made in delivering its priorities and improving quality of life for local people?
Sustainable communities and transport
5.2 What has the council, with its partners, achieved in its ambitions to develop sustainable communities, integrating economic, social and environmental issues?
Safer and stronger communities
5.3. What has the council, with its partners, achieved in its ambitions for building safer and stronger communities?
Healthier communities
5.4 What has the council, with its partners, achieved in its ambitions for the promotion of healthier communities and the narrowing of health inequalities?
Older people
What has the council, with its partners, achieved in its ambitions to promote and support the independence and well-being of older people?
Children and Young People
The Children and Young People judgements are taken from the Joint Area review of Children’s Services

5. For each of these questions, the Audit Commission publishes “Key Lines of Enquiry” or KLOE. These include descriptions of what level 2 and level 3 performance would look like but not what level 4 performance would look like as the Audit Commission has found it difficult to define this. Level 4 is described as “performing strongly – well above minimum requirements” and level 3 as “performing well – consistently above minimum requirements”
6. The inspection took place over a two week period in December with an inspection team of five, including a peer member and a peer officer. Prior to the inspection we submitted a self assessment against the Audit Commission’s published Key Lines of Enquiry together with a range of supporting evidence. The inspectors commented that they found the self assessment to be very useful and the Audit Commission has also used it as an example of good practice with other councils preparing for corporate assessment.
7. The inspection involved meetings with a range of people including:
 - Councillors
 - Senior officers, middle managers and front line staff
 - Partners from the private, public and third sectors
 - Local people
 - Regional agencies

Corporate Assessment Results

8. The results of the inspection are

Theme	Score (out of 4)
Ambition	4
Prioritisation	4
Capacity	3
Performance Management	4
Achievement	3

9. This represents a significant achievement. In comparing these results to other councils with corporate assessment reports published at the same time or before ours it is clear that few have achieved this level of performance
 - 21% councils have achieved a 4 for Ambition
 - 7% councils have achieved a 4 for Prioritisation
 - 9% councils have achieved a 4 for Achievement
10. In terms of the two themes where Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council achieved 3s, only two councils have achieved a 4 for Capacity and five for Achievement – all five councils achieving a 4 for Achievement are London Boroughs.
11. The full corporate assessment report can be found at appendix 1.

Improvement planning

12. Though these results demonstrate excellent performance it is important that we continue to focus on those areas identified by the inspectors as needing improvement. These were:

Theme	Issue
Ambition	None
Prioritisation	None
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce planning, recruitment and retention • Expansion of workplace health initiatives • Reduce long term absence • Improve proportion of BME and disabled people in the workforce • Embed community cohesion strategy • Optimise new ICT arrangements • More systematic focus on business process re-engineering and CRM
Performance Management	None
Achievement – Children and Young People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key stage 3 • Re-offending rates • Care plans
Achievement – Healthier Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol abuse
Achievement – Older People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed strategy, deliver actions and improve monitoring
Achievement – Safer Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce fear of crime
Achievement – Sustainable Communities and transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure proposals for medium term solutions to transport issues are forcibly progressed, including at governmental levels. • Sustain efforts to reduce worklessness, increase business start ups and skills development • Address council's waste production

13. These issues have been built into the Council Plan and Service Improvement Plans for the coming year. And progress against them will be highlighted in future performance reports.

The future of assessment

14. This is the last time that the Council will receive a “corporate assessment”. The CPA regime which corporate assessment is part of will end in 2009 and be replaced by Comprehensive Area Assessment. The CAA is still under development but is expected to encompass assessments not only of the Council but also of other public sector agencies working in an area. It is likely to look at how we work together to tackle local issues and make best use of our collective resources. It is likely to use the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement to assess how well we understand our communities and their needs as well as looking at our progress in improving quality of life. Further details of what the framework will look like are expected in the coming months and a member seminar will be arranged to inform members of the details of the new regime.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising directly from the report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising directly from the report

RISK ASSESSMENT

The Audit Commission's report identifies that the council's risk management arrangements are robust and effective. There are no significant risks arising from the report itself

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

The Audit Commission's report covers issues that affect all Sustainable Community Strategy themes

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Audit Commission's assessment report provides judgements about how well the council is doing in achieving equality of opportunity. As the Cabinet report highlights the Audit Commission's views rather than presenting a policy change there is no need for an Equality Impact Assessment

CORPORATE PARENTING

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

All members have received information relating to the corporate assessment

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Background Papers

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Property