



Corporate Service

Agenda Item No. 7

Briefing Paper

Report of: Peter Jones
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Open

Comprehensive Area Assessment

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to bring Members up to date with the Audit Commission's latest thinking on Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), which replaces Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) from April 2009.

2. Background

- 2.1 The last report to the (then) Corporate Service & Performance Scrutiny Committee in January 2008 set out the Audit Commission's initial proposals for CAA.
- 2.2 Following a number of pilot studies however, revisions have been made to some of the processes in the original model and new proposals are set out in the latest consultation paper.
- 2.3 The overall purpose of CAA remains the same: to "hold local public services collectively to account for their impact on better local outcomes...focussing on highlighting barriers to improvement and identifying successful approaches from which others can learn. In this way, CAA will provide:
 - A catalyst for better local outcomes, more effective partnership working, more responsive services and better value for money
 - A source of independent assurance for citizens, service users and taxpayers
 - An independent evidence base for central government on progress against national priorities, and
 - A means of rationalising inspection." ¹

1 CAA – Joint Inspectorate Proposals for consultation (2008) [Audit Commission]

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The proposed model is summarised in **Appendix 1** to this paper.
- 3.2 Overall there are two main elements to CAA:
- An **Area Assessment** will look at how well local public services are delivering better results in local priorities and how likely they are to improve in the future. (In two-tier areas, it is not yet clear how the balance between priorities and partnership working at both county- and district levels will be reflected in the inspection process.)
 - An **Organisational Assessment** will focus on individual public bodies. For councils this will involve Use of Resources and Managing Performance evaluations.
- 3.4 The method of reporting results is still to be finalised, but for Area Assessments, it is proposed to publish 'red and green flags' for any issues of concern or exceptional success respectively. Organisational Assessments will be individually scored to indicate whether performance is poor, adequate, above average or exceptional.
- 3.5 The new National Indicator Set, introduced in April 2008, is still the subject of discussion between councils and partners in Worcestershire (as elsewhere) to determine the best methods of collecting and reporting the data. The final guidance has now been issued by central government and the first report for the period April-September 2008 is scheduled for November 2008. We are also working with the County Council to carry out the first Place Survey imminently; this will provide data for a number of the NIs and will be undertaken every two years. A summary of the latest position with NIs is given in **Appendix 2**.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 Note that:
- Regional consultation events will be held by the Audit Commission from late October 2008
 - The final CAA framework will be published early in 2009

4.2 Review working arrangements with key partners for:

- Data-gathering and mapping of communities to provide a robust evidence base for identification of future priorities and allocation of resources
- Performance management systems and reports
- Recording and reporting the results of the new set of National Indicators

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultees: Cabinet, Corporate Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Corporate Management Team.

6. Appendices

- 6.1 CAA proposed model from April 2009

- 6.2 Summary of National Indicators for Wyre Forest District

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 Comprehensive Area Assessment – Joint Inspectorate Proposals for Consultation (Audit Commission)

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