

## **Cabinet – 22 October 2008**

### **CPA Corporate Assessment Action Plan**

<b>Portfolio:</b>	Councillor Arif, Procurement, Transformation and Performance Management
<b>Service:</b>	Corporate Performance Management
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Key decision:</b>	No
<b>Forward plan:</b>	No

#### **1. Summary of report**

Following Walsall Council's Corporate Assessment report being published by the Audit Commission in June 2008, work has commenced on producing an action plan to address the areas of weakness identified during the inspection. This report provides an overview of the ongoing progress being made in developing and implementing the plan and how this will be monitored in future.

#### **2. Recommendations**

That approval be given to the proposed format of the Corporate Assessment action plan.

#### **3. Background information**

- 3.1 The Audit Commission's Corporate Assessment report of June 2008 was a positive report that identified much strength in our performance since the last such inspection and the council received a score of 3 out of a possible 4 under the CPA 2005 'The Harder Test' inspection process. The CA report, as with all such inspection reports, includes areas that the Audit Commission identified where improvements could be made.
- 3.2 With the move towards Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) from April 2009, it is essential that Walsall has a strong framework for delivery of these performance and service improvements. Therefore, a robust action plan is under development through which actions to deliver improvements will be managed and monitored.

- 3.3 **Appendix 1** sets out the key comments relating to areas for improvement taken from the Audit Commission report. For ease of reference to the published report, the first column reading left to right contains the page number and paragraph from which the comment was taken. The comments have then been grouped into “headline” improvements (referred to as initiatives) and these headlines are shown in the “Initiative Headline” column along with an outline of activity completed or underway or planned. The appendix also details the corporate champion for each initiative and the services contributing towards achieving the identified improvements.
- 3.4 To monitor and track the delivery of the action plan, the initiative tracking module of PIMS (Performance Information Management System) will be utilised.
- 3.5 PIMS has been used successfully at Walsall in the tracking and monitoring of statutory and Beacon Index performance indicators for almost three years and provides a strong framework for the collection and reporting of this data. With the introduction of the National Indicator Set (NIS) and move towards CAA, PIMS is going through a phase of re-development to ensure it fully meets the needs of the authority and our partners as well as the requirements of these new frameworks.
- 3.6 As part of these re-developments, a Joint Area Review (JAR) improvement plan has been piloted within PIMS using the same initiative tracking module as is planned for the Corporate Assessment action plan. This pilot has been extremely successful, with the first quarter updates on both JAR improvement and service plan actions (for six of the Children’s Services) being completed using the system.
- 3.7 Following on from the JAR pilot, which required an improvement plan to be published within 16 weeks of the inspection report being released, the Corporate Assessment action plan is being built in the same format, although there is no statutory timescale for this. Instead the system build will be completed and monitored through use of the Walsall Project Approach.
- 3.8 Through the use of PIMS, each headline improvement (initiative) and all of the tasks and milestones which contribute to its delivery will be linked to the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and the Walsall Outcomes Framework. This will enable not only the tracking of the individual tasks and overall progress towards the achievement of initiatives but will also allow reporting of how these individual elements impact on the achievement of the Walsall Outcomes Framework and SCS. Using this as a basis for these developments within the system will allow future expansion to cover the service planning requirements of the authority and even its partners.
- 3.9 Accountable officers for all initiatives and tasks will be assigned within PIMS. These officers will be required to provide regular updates on progress towards their tasks. This will be an extremely quick and simple process, involving the officer selecting a Red, Amber or Green (RAG) status for each task, providing any associated commentary and on completion of a task, entering the date completed.

- 3.10 Reports will be generated which will allow officers and Members to view tasks and initiatives in a variety of formats and will allow users access to a set of parameters which allow them to view tasks by service, by accountable officer, by status etc. These reports will be accessible via the internet and users will not necessarily need a PIMS licence to view them.

#### **4. Resource considerations**

- 4.1 **Financial:** Financial decisions may need to be made in order to achieve completion of planned improvement tasks and initiatives, but these will be made within the budget setting framework.
- 4.2 **Legal:** Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is the means by which the Audit Commission fulfils its statutory duty under Section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003 to make an assessment and report on the performance of local authorities. Corporate Assessment is one element in the overall assessment that leads to a CPA score and category and the Council is required to address the findings of the Audit Commission report. There are no direct legal considerations for the Council as a result of this report.
- 4.3 **Staffing:** Staffing decisions may need to be taken in order to achieve completion of planned improvement tasks and initiatives under the CA action plan. These will be considered in full consultation with the services affected as part of the development and ongoing monitoring of the CA action plan.

#### **5. Citizen impact**

In making the required improvements as set out in the Corporate Assessment report and subsequent action plan, services to citizens will be developed and improved.

#### **6. Community safety**

Through implementing a set of improvement actions around the embedding of crime reduction strategies as part of the action plan, issues raised on community safety within the report will be addressed by the Council and partners.

#### **7. Environmental impact**

There is no direct environmental impact of this report.

## **8. Performance and risk management issues**

8.1 **Risk:** There are risks associated with failing to address the issues identified by the Audit Commission, particularly in terms of the Council's improvement journey. Through regular monitoring of a robust, structured action plan, risks to achievement of improvement tasks and initiatives will be minimised.

### **8.2 Performance management:**

8.2.1 The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is the current means by which each local authority is rated by the Audit Commission. Corporate Assessment is a key component of the CPA framework. It is essential that the Council reflects upon the findings of the Audit Commission and sets in place activity to address issues raised.

8.2.2 PIMS is currently the authorities' mechanism for collecting and monitoring performance data. With the implementation of the improvement plan and its incorporation within PIMS, it will be possible to track improvement initiatives alongside key corporate objectives and performance indicators.

## **9. Equality implications**

There are no direct equality implications arising from this report. It will be ensured that all staff and Members will have access to the report output from PIMS.

## **10. Consultation**

Services are continually being consulted on the ownership of initiatives and assigning contributing tasks to the headline improvement initiatives.

### **Background papers**

- CPA Corporate Assessment Report 2008 – Cabinet, 18 June 2008
- Audit Commission Corporate Assessment Report – Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council – June 2008

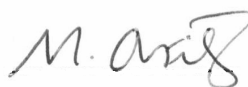
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13 October 2008



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13 October 2008