

Audit Committee – 24 June 2013

Reporting of External Inspections

1. Summary of report

- 1.1 This report sets out the types of external inspections the council is, currently, subject to and the reporting procedure for those inspections

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Audit Committee is requested to note the report and agree the reporting procedure being taken to ensure the council meets its obligations.



James Walsh, Chief Finance Officer
22 May 2013

3. Governance

- 3.1 Walsall's local code of governance has 6 key fundamental principles which underpin corporate governance. The first principle of good governance is focusing on the purpose of Walsall Council and on outcomes for the community creating and implementing a vision for the local area. External Inspections provide a valuable function in holding up a mirror to the organisation so it can see how it is performing in relation to this principle. Good inspection reports provide assurance that the council is functioning well, poor inspection reports should be seen as a catalyst for change.

4. Resource and legal considerations

- 4.1 None directly relating to this report.

5. Performance and risk management issues

- 5.1 External inspections provide a means by which the Council can objectively review its performance, be judged on how it is managing its risks and a means by which the council continues with or changes the way it operates.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 None directly associated with this report.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 The report is prepared in consultation with corporate management team.

8. Background papers – Local Code of Governance, Council constitution.

- 8.1 The remit of the Audit committee is set out in the constitution under Table 2 Responsibility for Council Functions, “To act as the council’s audit committee, the purpose of which is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the authority’s financial and non financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority’s exposure to risk and weakens the control environment and to oversee financial reporting.”
- 8.2 Specifically delegated to the audit committee is the function to consider the reports of external audit and inspection agencies.
- 8.3 The Audit Commission introduced the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in 2002 to measure how well local authorities were delivering and improving services to local people and communities. The CPA assessed the performance of local authorities across a wide range of areas to arrive at an annual performance category for each county council and single tier authority.
- 8.4 A new framework for assessing the performance of local authorities known as CPA – The Harder Test was introduced in 2005 and uses the following elements to describe performance: An overall star category (ranging from no stars to four stars; A direction of travel label and statement; A score for each of the council’s core services; A use of resources assessment.
- 8.5 In turn the Audit Commission’s CPA was replaced by the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) in 2009 by a range of independent watchdogs, including Ofsted and the Audit Commission, as a way of assessing local public services in England
- 8.6 CAA examined how well councils and other public bodies, working together, met the needs of the people they serve and tackled major issues in the area.
- 8.7 In 2010 the incoming government abolished with immediate effect the CAA.
- 8.8 Both the CPA and the CAA were informed by other inspections carried out by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. In the intervening years both these inspection regimes have undertaken significant changes in the methodology used and the focus of their inspection these service areas. Further changes are anticipated. Ofsted is currently out to consultation on the changes to the inspection framework around safeguarding and children looked after.
- 8.9 Although the inspection regime has reduced significantly over the last 3 years many aspects still continue in other forms, for example the appraisal of how the council manages its resources and achieves value for money is accommodated within the External Auditors (Grant Thornton) assessment under their ISA 260 report and their report on financial resilience. The latest financial resilience report (2011/12) was presented to the audit committee by Grant Thornton on the 25 February 2013.

8.10 The following inspections continue across different areas and will be brought to committee for consideration:

8.11 In Children's Ofsted inspect:

- Protection of Children
- School Improvement functions
- Adoption
- Fostering
- Individual Child minders
- Individual Residential Homes
- Individual Children's centres
- Individual Schools

8.12 In order to manage the workload of the committee it would seem appropriate that inspections relating to individual Child Minders, Residential Homes Children's centres and Schools should only be reported by exception i.e. only where a particular school, home etc may be judged to be failing.

8.13 In Social Care inspection is carried out by the Care Quality Commission and it focuses on care settings. The council has 6 registered settings subject to inspection these are:

- Walsall Shared Lives (Learning Disabilities Placement Scheme)
- Community Reablement and Response Service (Domiciliary Care)
- Holly Bank House
- Fallings Heath House
- Broadway North Resource Centre
- Rushall Mews

8.14 Again to manage committee time it is proposed to report by exception where settings are judged to be failing.

8.15 The Food Standards Agency carries out inspections of our enforcement services.

8.16 The Surveillance Commissioner inspects the council's use of RIPA powers.

8.17 The Information Commissioner has the power to carry out both compulsory and voluntary inspections on information governance compliance where concerns are raised either due to the volume of complaints or a result of a serious incident.

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