

Cabinet – 18 January 2006

2005 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Category and Direction of Travel Statement

Portfolio: Councillor Marco Longhi

Service Area: Performance Management – corporate focus

Wards: All

Forward Plan: No

Summary of report

Walsall Council's CPA category for 2005 is **3★** and the Audit Commission's report of our direction of travel is **"improving well"**. Significant measurable improvements have been made in a wide range of services including Social Care (Children), Environment, Housing, and Cultural services, and in our corporate arrangements.

When this outcome is compared against those of other councils, it is clear that this result is a tremendous achievement; particularly given that CPA 2005 was designed to be a much harder and different test to the previous CPA model. According to the data released by the Audit Commission we are the only council to have improved from the former category of weak in 2004 to 3★ and improving well in 2005.

Recommendations

- (1) To note and comment on the 2005 CPA category and DoT statement.
- (2) To congratulate and thank all employees who contributed to this 3★ CPA category and "improving well" direction of travel.
- (3) To note improved CPA performance in a range of services particularly Social Care (Children), Environment and Housing and services covered by the corporate assessment because these services improved from 2 in 2004 to 3 in 2005.

Resource and legal considerations

Councils designated as 'best value authorities' have a statutory duty to secure continuous improvements having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Under statute, the Audit Commission (AC) inspects councils to assess how well they are fulfilling this duty. This applies to Walsall Council.

Citizen impact

Our last corporate assessment reported in April 2005 showed that our corporate governance arrangements and corporate ability are strong. The new CPA framework will continue to test out these arrangements.

Community safety

The corporate assessment includes a Safer and Stronger Communities theme. This will assess how well we serve individuals and communities in this theme.

Environmental impact

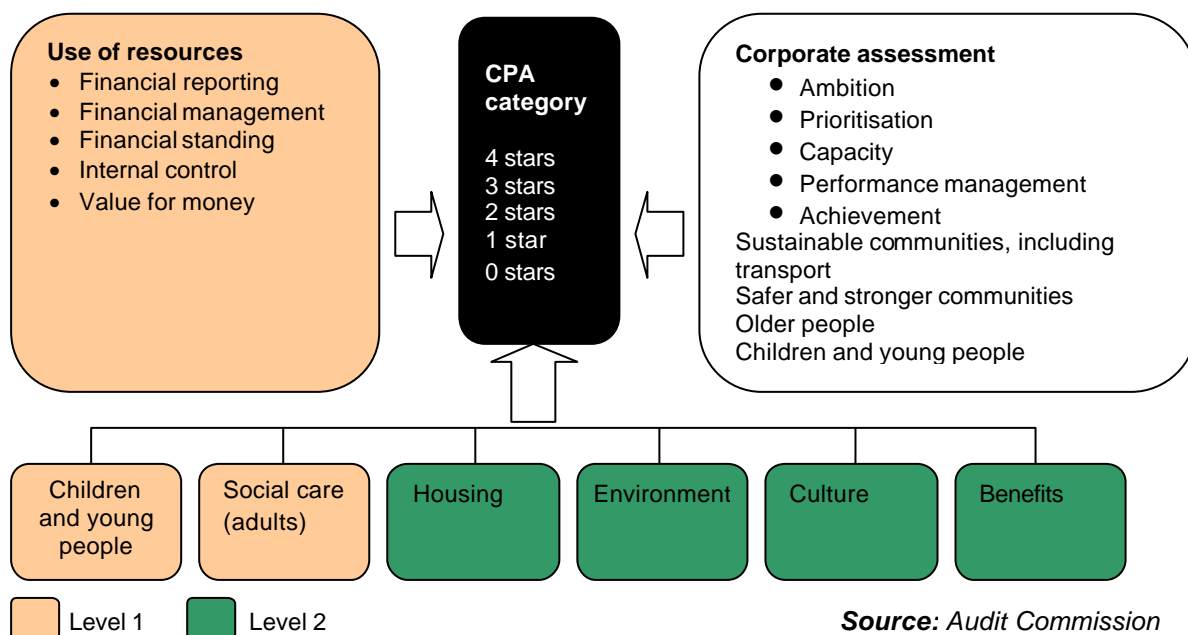
The corporate assessment includes a Sustainable Communities & Transport theme, and a judgement on environmental services, looking at data against three broad thrusts of policy:

- creating a better environment;
- managing the environment well; and
- sustaining a quality environment for future generations.

The environment service scored improved from a 2 in 2004 to a 3 in 2005. This score was determined by combining the 2004 inspection score of 2 with the 2005 PI score of 3.

Performance and risk management issues

The new CPA framework is a more stringent test with more emphasis on outcomes for local people and value for money. Councils have to attain a higher standard than before in order to achieve a particular star rating. The elements of the new framework are:



Note 1: The use of resources and service assessments are **annual**; the corporate assessment will normally take place **once** within the programme running from 2005 to the end of 2008.

Note 2: Direction of Travel scored assessments are published when CPA categories are updated.

Our December 2005 result of **3★** with a “**performing well**” direction of travel label was based on the results of our corporate assessment and results from all Level 1 and Level 2 service assessments and inspections. The individual scores are:

Level	Category	Scores
N/A	Corporate Assessment	3
Level 1	UoR	3
	Social Care Adults	2
	Children and Young People	3
Level 2	Benefits	2
	Housing	3
	Environment	3
	Culture	2

The Direction of Travel assessment seeks to recognise progress achieved in the years leading up to a new style corporate assessment and make the CPA model two dimensional by formally categorising both how well the council is performing and whether or not it is continuing to improve. These assessments provide public information about whether councils are complying with their duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The direction of travel assessment:

- assesses each council’s track record of achievement of outcomes and the robustness and delivery of its improvement plans;
- helps councils maintain momentum and focus in delivering improvement priorities;
- signals further support / improvement work to be discussed;
- informs annual audit and inspection programmes to ensure they are targeted on the right areas; and
- provides learning about good and poor practice to inform improvement planning.

Key highlights are as follows:

- Corporate assessment – increased from a 2 in 2004 to a 3 in 2005 (April 2005).
- Children and Young People – the Social Care (Children) score increased from 2 in 2004 to 3 in 2005.
- Housing – increased from 2 in 2004 to 3 in 2005.
- Environment – increased from a 2 in 2004 to a 3 in 2005.
- Culture – the PI element of this score increased from 1 to 2 although the overall score of 2 was retained.

The Direction of Travel statement said:

“The Council has continued to make significant progress in its priority services and has robust plans to continue to improve services for local people. Services for children have continued to improve, with an improved independent assessment for children’s social care. Improvements have also been made in social care for adults, but the pace of change in older people’s services needs to increase.”

The benefits service has deteriorated; it is taking longer to process claims and the overall rating has reduced. The council has plans to address this through the partnership it is entering into with an outside organisation to provide many of its customer-facing and administrative services.

The Council continues to have a clear focus on improvement, supported by a good planning framework which ensures that resources are directed towards priority areas. Its plans are based on increasingly effective community involvement, including hard-to-reach groups. The council's ability to improve is being strengthened by strong working with partner agencies and effective arrangements to monitor service performance and take any necessary remedial action. Resources continue to be well managed."

The Audit Commission published a report during December 2005 entitled "CPA – the harder test scores and analysis of performance in single tier and county councils 2005". The key messages were:

- Councils across the country are continuing to improve the services they are providing to local people. Over 70 per cent of councils are improving strongly or improving well.
- Sixty-eight per cent of councils achieve 3 or 4 star performance, demonstrating that they perform consistently well in all the elements assessed under CPA.
- There are five councils which are achieving the top category both for improvement and performance (4 star councils, improving strongly).
- However, ten councils are failing to deliver services of an acceptable standard, achieving only 1 or 0 stars.
- Councils are improving across all regions, and at least half of the councils in every region are either improving strongly or improving well. All regions contain both 3 or 4 star councils.
- Top-performing councils are improving to a greater degree than those in lower categories. This means that there is the potential for a wider gap between high and low performance to emerge in future years.
- How well councils are using their resources is encouraging but not outstanding. While 96 per cent of councils are delivering above or at minimum requirements in their use of resources, only three councils achieve top performance.
- Almost half of all councils are only achieving at (scoring 2) or below (scoring 1) minimum requirements for value for money. Councils will need to improve performance in this area to achieve the top categories in future.
- Councils have made a good start to addressing the new agenda for children's services. Over 70 per cent of councils are in the top two categories of performance for both children and young people and social care (adults) services.
- Almost two-thirds of councils with responsibility for housing are performing consistently above or well above minimum requirements. Half of councils are performing at or below minimum requirements for environment. Over 20 per cent are performing at the highest level for culture services.
- Performance in benefits service assessments is strong. Ninety-two per cent of councils perform in the top two categories for benefits and only one council is performing below minimum requirements.

The local situation is as follows:

- Birmingham improving well 2
- Coventry improving well 2
- Dudley improving well 3
- Sandwell improving adequately 1
- Solihull improving well 3
- Wolverhampton improving well 3

We will need to take action to ensure that required targets are delivered within path to excellence requirements. Regular reporting and monitoring via arrangements set out within our corporate integrated planning and performance framework (CIPPF) will help.

Equality implications

User focus and diversity is a core element of the corporate assessment with judgements throughout the key lines of enquiry covering; ambition for the community; prioritisation, capacity, performance management; and achievement. Findings on user focus and diversity will influence each theme score and contribute towards the overall corporate assessment score.

Consultation

The Audit Commission consulted widely on the proposed changes to the CPA framework. The final framework was amended based on this feedback. The consultation results used for CPA 2005 are from the Best Value statutory survey 2003/04. The next statutory survey will take place during 2006/7.

Vision

The raising of the bar and the change to categorisation based on stars require a review of CPA targets that contribute towards our vision. However, our vision of excellence has always been much broader than CPA and therefore the raising of the CPA bar is in harmony within our continuous service improvement initiatives that contribute to our commitment to become an excellent organisation.

Background papers

- Report to cabinet, 13 July 2005 – CPA Framework 2005.
- CPA – the harder test; Service assessments framework technical guidance and Direction of Travel statements guide – AC - October 2005.
- Report to cabinet 30 November 2005 – Comprehensive Performance Assessment
- Audit Commission Report December 2005 – CPA – The Harder Test scores and analysis of performance in single tier and county councils 2005.

Contact officer

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Signed:

Executive Director: Carole Evans

Date: 9.1.06



Signed:

Portfolio holder: Cllr M Longhi

Date: 9.1.06