

audit commission

4th December 2006

Mr David Atkinson
Chief Executive
City of York Council
The Guildhall
YORK YO1 9QN

Dear David

York Prioritisation

Thank you for spending time with us on Wednesday to discuss the draft report on Deciding and Delivering Council Priorities. As we discussed yesterday it is not practical to amend the report to take into account recent progress but we have amended the factual errors.

This letter sets out our views on your progress and your response to our recommendations in the action plan.

We note that:

- You have reviewed your corporate planning framework and CMT have approved in principle the removal of the 8 corporate aims which mirror the community strategy aims. This means service plans should now link to the Council's 13 priorities and the community strategy directly.
- You have now developed a strategy for the internal communication of your new priorities. You held a launch event for the top 200 managers and have included a corporate strategy summary in the November payslips of all staff. After our discussion you agreed there is further work to do to test whether councillors and staff fully understand the new priorities through events similar to "talkabout" which you hold with the public.
- The improvement champions have almost completed their delivery and innovation plans (DIPs). It is now very important the service managers have these available before developing their service plans. Kevin has agreed to ensure the service planning process and timing allows for this.
- We also discussed the medium term financial plan which incorporates neither the old nor the new priorities and that it could not be updated until next year. David has rightly said that this should now take place as soon as possible and has asked Kevin to arrange for this with the director of resources.

In summary, we are pleased to see your progress on the action plan. We have attached the amended report – which takes account of the factual errors in the original draft. We anticipate revisiting this work very briefly next year – probably during late May or early June (dates to be mutually agreed) - to establish how the new priorities are starting to make an impact. We will contact Kevin later this month to discuss possible dates.

Kind regards

Anne Forster
Howard Nash