

Report of the **Chief Executive**

Corporate Assessment response and action planning

Purpose of Report

1. This paper presents the results and judgements of the council's CPA Corporate Assessment which was conducted in January. The report goes on to consider the council's response to the recommendations and their impact on corporate improvement planning.

Background

2. Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is a government framework for assessing the quality of councils, an element of which is the Corporate Assessment. This and other component judgements form an overall rating according to the CPA scoring model.
3. Earlier this year, the council underwent its first Corporate Assessment since 2002. The assessment focussed primarily on the council's systems and processes and scored the organisation in 4 categories; ambition, prioritisation, performance management and capacity as well as according to the quality of some key service areas. The Corporate Assessment was conducted alongside Ofsted's Joint Area Review of services for children and young people, the outcomes of which will be reported separately.
4. The judgements reached in the Corporate Assessment are based on the evidence gathered in a 2 week site visit during which a government inspection team met with senior managers, members and partners, worked with staff in focus groups and reviewed the council's key strategies. The inspection team's resulting judgements were published in the form of a final report on the 3rd June.
5. The council intends to use the impetus provided by the publication of the Corporate Assessment to make a fresh commitment to improve in a number of areas. The proposed areas of improvement are set out in this report and whilst reflecting the judgements of the Corporate Assessment, they have also been drawn from other influences including staff survey results and other audit judgements. The intention of bringing these things together is to simplify the council's approach to improvement.

Consultation

6. The judgements presented here about the council's improvement priorities for the next 12 months have been developed by Corporate Management Team, who were also consulted on the draft of the Audit Commission's report.
7. The author will be seeking the views of York's local lead inspector at the Audit Commission over the content of this report and will report back verbally on his comments at the Executive.

Corporate Assessment, score and judgements

8. Overall, York's CPA score remains 3 stars out of 4 and improving well. The Corporate Assessment report confirms that there has been good progress and it contains much that is positive. Recent improvements are recognised, as is the dedication of staff and the quality of the services they provide. It also comments that the council has a strong awareness of the city's needs, works well in partnership and represents good value for money.
9. The Corporate Assessment argues that improvements need embedding and to be made consistent across the organisation. And It is for that reason that the subsequent improvement planning is being led by CMT who are committed to ensuring that it is sustained, shared and properly implemented. It is for this issue of 'embeddedness' that the Corporate Assessment judged the council's systems and processes as 'adequate' rather than 'good'.
10. The Corporate Assessment report emphasised the need for stronger internal collaboration and corporacy and for progress in this area to be sustained
11. The headlines from the Corporate Assessment below are all quoted from the Audit Commission's executive summary and this section of the report is reproduced as annex 1. The full report is available online by following the address below and navigating to the page for York

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa/>

- Community leadership is good and there is a clear vision for the area.
- Political leadership is effective and decision making is based on joint working across parties.
- There is a positive direction of travel but there is still much to do to ensure that there is a consistent approach across all services and partnership areas.
- Most costs are low compared to other councils and performance is generally good.
- The new Chief Executive and management team are providing strong leadership and have developed a 'York Business Model' to ensure better corporate working.

Areas for improvement

12. The report goes on to specify a number of areas, with recommendations, in which the council needs to make improvement.
 - Improving the approach to diversity and equality
 - Ensure that scrutiny is effective.
 - Member training
 - Human resource management
 - Ensure that the performance management framework for all LSP delivery partnerships is more consistent

Improvement Planning

13. The council's Corporate Management Team has taken a fresh approach to how it considers and organises corporate improvement work and recommends using the mandate that the Corporate Assessment provides to develop a plan for progressing high level corporate improvements.
14. A recent and significant addition to the council's corporate planning has been the development of the York Business Model, and the Corporate Assessment notes the potential of this to facilitate better corporate working and mainstream improvements.
15. The Business Model describes
 - i) What the council is seeking to achieve i.e. the Corporate Strategy
 - ii) How the council will work to achieve these priorities i.e. the processes, systems and policies which will be applied consistently across the council
16. As the Corporate Assessment and other critiques focus on the improvement of systems and processes, it presents a good opportunity to ensure that our future improvement planning is couched within the Business Model. As well as the Corporate Assessment, the council receives advice from a number of other sources – Use of Resources assessment, Annual Audit Letter, Staff Survey, Senior Managers. Rather than respond separately with action plans for each, CMT recommends putting together a single plan for corporate improvement. This will add simplicity and focus.
17. It is important to note that the things in the single improvement plan are already recognised as very important areas of work and ones in which there is already ongoing work - equalities and health & safety are examples. The improvement plan clarifies and formalises therefore where most focus will be brought, but it does not follow that other corporate improvement work will not still progress.
18. Below are the recommended areas for improvement which the Executive are asked to approve. CMT recommends these because they appear in key inspection documents (often more than one and/or are important to staff). All the areas for

improvement drawn from the Corporate Assessment feature in the list below, including the recommendation to improve the consistency of performance management arrangements across the city's delivery partnerships. For whilst this isn't named explicitly as an improvement priority, it does fall within the scope of the project to ensure better alignment between the Community Strategy, LAA and Corporate Strategy

19. CMT have recently assigned a management team lead for each one of the topics below. Initial work on these projects has identified for each the scope of the work to be undertaken, how success for each will be quantified and the milestones in the supporting projects for the first 12 months. Each of these project outlines has been developed by the CMT member responsible, with reference to related work already underway, and are presented in outline in annex 2.

Area of improvement	Where recommended	Rationale for inclusion
Improve the Council's approach to <u>equalities and diversity</u> . This will include progressing work on equality impact assessments of services and policies, improved access to services across the community, tackling inequality in outcomes and development of an engagement and customer strategy	Annual Audit Letter 2008 Use of Resources 2008 Corporate Assessment Annual Governance Statement Staff Survey	Senior management recognise equalities as a key priority and one which requires significant improvement work to meet both the needs of council staff and customers of the council to ensure a fair outcomes for all
<u>Improve HR management</u> Initial actions will focus on the improved and consistent use of appraisals and Personal Development Plans as well as the development of new policies to support major programmes of work	Annual Audit Letter 2008 Corporate Assessment Staff Survey	This was also identified as an issues in the staff survey and senior managers workshops
<u>Improve attendance management</u>	Annual Audit Letter 2008 Annual Governance Statement	Staffing costs represent 50% of CYC's day to day expenditure and we wish to create a good working environment that limits stress and work related illness
Improve <u>Health & Safety</u> procedures and culture - raising the profile of H&S across the council	Annual Governance Statement	A recent HSE report following an investigation and prosecution highlighted the need for major improvement in this area
Ensure that <u>councillors are trained</u> and equipped to carry out their roles by improving attendance at training programmes	Corporate Assessment	This has been noted in previous inspections and the council is aware that uptake of training provision is presently underdeveloped

Area of improvement	Where recommended	Rationale for inclusion
Improve alignment between <u>community strategy, LAA and corporate strategy</u>	Use of Resources 2008	This is fundamental to achieving clarity of focus and understanding of the councils direction. Better alignment also helps demonstrate our commitment to achieving the wider city vision
Introduce improved <u>budget setting process</u> which better aligns priorities to budget allocation and efficiencies. Initial work will include scoping what improvement can be achieved before September and prior to the next budget round	Use of Resources 2008 Senior managers	It is highlighted in a number of places that the Medium Term Financial Strategy needs to show clear links to priorities which also protects their investment in a more systemic way
Improve <u>budget monitoring arrangements</u> to ensure significant variances are reported more frequently, allowing budget holders to respond to issues in a timely way	Annual Audit Letter Use of Resources 2008	This will increase mangers capacity to respond to the rapidly changing environment through the provision of good management practice
Make improvements to the council's <u>capital programme</u> to ensure it is completed on time and on budget, and delivers outcomes which are fit for purpose. The intention is to use this work to improve and standardise project management across the authority	Use of Resources 2008	This covers areas of high spend and high risk for the council e.g. Hungate, York stadium and schools modernisation. Greater assurance is sought of performance in this area, with the hope that best practice may be shared
Improve the <u>accuracy and reliability of data</u> to support the performance management and decision making needs of the organisation. Subsequently implement effectively an IT performance management system to improve the timeliness, accessibility and analysis of performance data and reporting	Annual Audit Letter Use of Resources 2008 Corporate Assessment	The issue of data quality has been raised over a number of years by the Audit Commission. Provision of accurate data and its effective management are fundamental to the effective running of the council
<u>Review scrutiny arrangements</u> to ensure that they are effective, add value and contribute to better policy making and performance management	Use of Resources 2008 Corporate Assessment	This has been singled out for particular attention in the corporate assessment and is significant in demonstrating effective democratic accountability
Improve the effectiveness of the council's <u>consultation and engagement with York's citizens</u>	Corporate Assessment Staff Survey	Improving our understanding of the needs of a diverse customer base is key to ensuring that our services are suitably designed to meet the needs of the city

Implementation and next steps

20. Returning to the issue of 'embeddedness' and the observation that improvements need to be consistently made throughout the organisation, CMT recognise that key to the success of this work will be not just to develop improved processes in the areas identified but to implement, roll out across the council and sustain them. Therefore
- CMT leads will continue to provide leadership for each area of work in the plan
 - They will be responsible for implementing the programme for the next 12 months set out in annex 2
 - Progress made in their areas will be monitored via the joint Executive/CMT corporate performance monitor sessions
 - Improved processes and systems will be implemented in the council-wide Business Model as they are adapted as new corporate practice, replacing what was there before
 - Audit and performance assurance work will check on consistent implementation across the organisation to ensure that the Business Model remains the key point of reference for how things are done
 - CMT will be provided with this assurance on compliance across the council

Corporate Priorities

21. The single improvement plan is complimentary to our existing framework of improvement activity. It's focus on improving the systems and process of the council will facilitate the achievement of the Corporate Strategy. These two elements; what the council is seeking to achieve and how it goes about achieving them, are brought together in the Business Model.

Implications

- **Financial** – There are financial implications in that 2 of the areas for improvement identified will facilitate enhanced future budget setting and monitoring
- **Human Resources (HR)** – There are HR implications in that several of the areas for improvement will facilitate enhanced HR processes
- **Equalities** - There is a specific focus on equalities which enhance the council's approach to equalities both internally and externally
- **Legal** – There are no legal implications
- **Crime and Disorder** – There are no crime and disorder implications
- **Information Technology (IT)** – There are no IT implications
- **Property** – There are no implications for property

Risk Management

22. The single improvement plan identifies areas of priority for the council to improve. There is strong alignment between these and the topics identified in the council's Annual Governance Statement which shows significant corporate risks for the organisation to address.

Recommendations

1. Members are asked to note the result and judgements of the CPA Corporate Assessment
2. Note and approve the areas for improvement set out in the proposed single improvement plan and the associated project plans outlined here
3. Agree to receive further updates on the development of the plan

Reasons – to initiate a clear set of improvement priorities based on the council's Business Model

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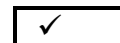
Report
Approved



Date 18th June 2008

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

- 1 CPA Corporate Assessment 2008 Executive Summary
- 2 Single improvement plan project outlines

Background Papers

CPA Corporate Assessment 2008