

Report of the Director of People and Improvement

Prioritisation – Inspection Follow Up

Purpose and background

1. This report relates to an Audit Commission follow-up inspection in August 2007 which assessed the council's arrangements for embedding its priorities and provides an update on the progress we have made in respect of their recommendations.
2. The inspection visit was a follow-up to work undertaken in 2006 in which our prioritisation plans were first assessed during development of the Corporate Strategy. The purpose of the subsequent assessment was to consider our progress against the initial recommendations and judge the impact of the strategy's launch.
3. The Audit Commission's updated recommendations are attached as Annex A. This also includes our initial comments in response (considered by CMT in August 2007) and details of progress made to date.

Inspection recommendations

4. Against the initial set of recommendations made by the Audit Commission in 2006, their follow-up work concluded that whilst we have made progress in a number of areas, this had been slower than planned and key areas for improvement remain. Many of the recommendations which emerged from the follow-up work reflect similar themes to those made after their first visit. The subsequent list, shown below, was accordingly developed by The Audit Commission to consolidate all previous recommendations.
 - R 1. Clarify responsibilities for the delivery of the new corporate strategy including the championing arrangements and build this into personal targets to drive and embed the required actions
 - R 2. Revise the performance management arrangements by:
 - integrating targets for all priorities, values and imperatives. This should also include annual tracking of the direction of travel of the Council against its own direction statements; and
 - strengthening the service planning framework and guidance to include improved measures and target setting.
 - R 3. Develop and embed decision-making and reporting mechanisms to ensure that the corporate strategy drives the actions of the Council.

- R 4. Develop medium term, internal and external communication strategies in tandem to communicate the corporate strategy refresh effectively

Progress

5. A significant amount of progress has been made towards fulfilling the recommendations above, key improvements include
- Clear responsibility and accountability for elements of the council's refreshed Corporate Strategy have been defined.
 - Action plans for priorities have been updated and agreed
 - A small number of measures to track progress have been agreed and will be embedded into the corporate performance management arrangements
 - Core processes, such as decision-making, service planning, directorate planning and resource allocation have been further developed to ensure that the Corporate Strategy and the priorities within it drive the actions of the council.
6. Further improvements are planned to take place in the next few months which will ensure that the Corporate Strategy is still further embedded in-line with the Audit Commission's recommendations
7. In overall terms, detailed responses to all of these recommendations have been incorporated into our core improvement planning, especially within the Organisational Effectiveness Programme. Account of this work has also been taken in improvement work commissioned in advance of the authority's forthcoming CPA Corporate Inspection. The above recommendations should accordingly be viewed in the context of this assessment and as part of its evidence portfolio.

Options

8. As this paper is for information to update members on progress against audit recommendations, no options have been presented with this paper.

Implications

9. **Financial:** Whilst there are no specific financial implications arising from this report, improving the way that the Council embeds and delivers its priorities potentially impacts on the way that the Council allocates its financial (as well as its other) resources. Whilst financial management is not mentioned specifically within the range of recommendations, it clearly has strong links to those related to performance management and decision making
10. **Human Resources:** There are no specific HR implications arising from this report
11. **Equalities:** There are no specific implications arising from this report – however equalities runs through each of the council's priorities and is a key cross-cutting theme within the CPA corporate assessment process.
12. **Legal:** There are no specific legal implications arising from this report

- 13. **Crime and Disorder:** There are no specific implications arising directly from this report aside for any implications for the corporate priority concerned with reducing the impact of violent, aggressive and nuisance behaviour.
- 14. **Information Technology:** There are no specific IT implications arising from this report

Risk Management:

- 15. Failure to implement the recommendations made by the Audit Commission could jeopardise the successful embedding of our Corporate Strategy and impact in-turn on subsequent inspection and audit judgements. Measured in terms of impact and likelihood, the risk score has been assessed at less than 16, This means that at this point the risks need only to be monitored as they do not provide a real threat to the achievement of the objectives of this report”.

Recommendations

- 16. Members of this committee are asked to note the progress we have made against each of these recommendations as set out in Annex A and comment accordingly.

Author:

Simon Hornsby
 Chief Executive Support Officer
 Policy, Improvements & Equalities
 Team
 Telephone 01904 551075

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Heather Rice
 Director of People & Improvement

Report Approved



Date

27/12/07

Specialist Implications Officers

Not applicable

Wards Affected: Not applicable

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

Annex A – Prioritisation recommendations action plan

Annex B- Audit Commission Prioritisation follow-up report, August 2007