

COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT RESULTS

To: Cabinet

Date: 26 January 2010

From: Corporate Director: People, Policy and Law

**Electoral
division(s):** All

Forward Plan ref: Not applicable **Key No
decision:**

Purpose: To report to Cabinet the results of the first Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) inspection for both the County Council and Cambridgeshire as a place, indicating how these compare to other authorities across the region and nationally.

Recommendation: Cabinet is recommended to:

- Note the positive outcomes arising from the first CAA judgements and the opportunities for further improvements to be achieved in the future.
- Note the arrangements already underway to prepare for CAA during 2010.

<i>Officer contact:</i>		<i>Member contact</i>	
Name:	Keith Bowman	Name:	Councillor John Reynolds
Post:	Corporate Policy Manager	Portfolio:	Resources and Performance
Email:	keith.bowman@cambridgeshire.gov.uk	Email:	John.reynolds@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
Tel:	01223 699155	Tel:	01223 699173

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Comprehensive Area Assessment, or CAA, became the formal inspection methodology for local authorities and other public bodies within defined geographic areas with effect from 1 April 2009, replacing the prior regime of Comprehensive Performance Assessment, or CPA. Consequently, the seven Joint Inspectorates, led by the Audit Commission, formally published the results of the first year of Comprehensive Area Assessment inspection in late 2009.
- 1.2 Comprehensive Area Assessment consists of two separate elements of inspection activity. The first element of the inspection is an Organisational Assessment of the County Council as an individual authority. The second element of the CAA methodology relates to an assessment of Cambridgeshire at a County, or area level, and assesses the collective activity across the key public authorities including local authorities, police, fire and health undertaken on behalf of the communities of Cambridgeshire.
- 1.3 The results for both the organisational and area assessment were published on 9th December 2009. As a part of the publication of CAA results, the Audit Commission established the Oneplace website at <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>. This website enables the public and other interested parties to review the details of the overall Area Assessment and the Organisational Assessment of their principal council(s), fire authority, police authority, and primary care trust. The website also includes links to the specific assessments undertaken in respect of children and young people's services and adult social services.
- 1.4 For organisational assessments, councils receive a range of scores covering two major elements: Managing Performance and Use of Resources. The relevant inspectorates jointly agree the overall organisational assessment score for the Council, based upon these two major elements. The overall judgement that an organisation can achieve ranges from a 'Performs Poorly' rating to a 'Performs Excellently' rating. The individual elements for Managing Performance and Use of Resources receive a separate score judgment upon a 1 to 4 scale, where a score rating of 4 is considered to be excellent performance.
- 1.4 By contrast, the Area Assessment about Cambridgeshire is a narrative report, with no formal score being determined, recognising the unique challenges faced in each area. However, each Area Assessment has the opportunity to allocate Flags in respect of some of the outcomes being achieved in each geographic area. The flags that can be allocated recognise 'exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from'; such recognition is delivered by the allocation of a Green Flag. Where areas of significant concern exist within an area, which the inspectorates consider are not being adequately addressed by partner authorities, then a Red Flag can be allocated. Where performance and delivery of outcomes for communities is considered sufficient, then no Flag would be allocated. On that basis, it is possible that the inspectorates could determine not to allocate any flags to an area because no concerns or exceptional performance has been identified.

2.0 CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ORGANISATIONAL ASSESSMENT RESULTS

2.1 Cambridgeshire County Council received an overall Organisational Assessment score of 3 out of a possible 4, and was therefore judged by the Inspectorates to be 'performing well'. For the two underpinning elements of the Organisational Assessment judgement, the County Council also achieved scores of 3 out of 4 for Managing Performance and Use of Resources.

2.2 Based upon the County Council's Organisational Assessment Report, which provides a greater narrative to underpin the judgements and scoring, some summarised commentary, is set out as follows:

2.3 General Comments

Overall, Cambridgeshire County Council performs well and achieves what it sets out to achieve. The Council provides good value for money. Services are good and many are improving and expenditure is comparatively low. Good information helps councillors to make better decisions and monitor performance. Value for money is achieved when buying goods and services. The Council's level of self-awareness is praised, noting that major projects and programmes are kept on track and the Council sets itself challenging but realistic improvement targets. Leadership from Councillors and senior managers is regarded as strong, and Councillors have shown a clear commitment to supporting communities. Councillors are also praised for effectively championing community issues.

2.4 Children and Young People's Services

A number of aspects of children's services were praised, with the report saying "children get off to a good start". A higher than average proportion of childminders and childcare settings, and nursery and primary schools, is good or better and Educational achievement at the age of 11 and 16 is high and overall achievement at 19 is good and a high proportion of young people are engaged in education, employment or training. The report does highlight that some opportunities exist to improve secondary school and sixth form provision further. Performance in fostering and adoption is good and provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable is satisfactory.

2.5 Adult Social Services

Services for adults who need care are performing well and have demonstrated improvements. Support for carers has increased and adults have more choice about the care services they receive. This represents further progress in respect of the performance of adult social services, building upon the improvements achieved in the prior year.

2.6 Equality and access to services

The Council treats people fairly. Residents enjoy good access to Council services and this is improving - the contact centre has been recognised as the best public sector call centre in the country. The Council's website has

improved and there are an increasing number of on-line services. It is recognised that further improvements can be made to address inequalities by Council services, however it is recognised that work in this area is already underway.

2.7 Sustainable communities

The Council works well with partners to deliver growth. The Council is ensuring new communities will have the facilities they will need, with provision for new libraries, schools and health and community facilities in growth areas. The Council is successfully encouraging people to use public transport; with a website providing better information and a higher proportion of rural parishes being served by regular public transport. The Council promotes alternatives to car usage to tackle congestion. Waste is well managed; high levels of waste are recycled and composted and the amount of waste going to landfill is reducing. New facilities offer the opportunity to increase recycling further.

2.8 Promoting improved skill levels and economic prosperity

The Council is focussing upon the local economy, and has responded to the recession by making economic prosperity a specific objective for 2009/10. Prompt action has lessened the effect of the recession on local businesses and communities. New businesses registration in the County is achieving council targets. The Council has begun to address low aspirations in young people in less wealthy areas. Effective advice and guidance on employment is given to disadvantaged groups, in partnership with other councils and the voluntary sector.

2.9 Meeting the challenges of climate change and enhancing the natural environment

The Council is clear about how it will address climate change, and has developed some of the necessary policies to address climate change. Some good work is reducing carbon emissions, although more is needed. More schools have travel plans, and the number of children travelling to school by car has reduced by 1.6%. The natural environment is better protected, and the Council now manages 166 sites to increase the diversity of plants, animals and insects found there, exceeding its target of 155.

2.10 Organisational Assessment: Identified Areas for Improvement

The organisational assessment suggests a number of areas where the opportunity to demonstrate further improvement for next year's inspection will be required to enable the maintenance or enhancement of the 2009 inspection judgements, such areas identified include:

- For children and young people, how the Council is addressing inequalities in access to education, and improvement in special schools, pupil referral units and children's homes.
- How the Council is improving access to services to enable older people to remain in their homes;

- How action to address inequalities within Cambridgeshire has been developed and implemented by Council services;
- How the Council is improving access to transport information;
- How the Council is continuing to focus upon reducing injuries on the County's roads;
- How the Council is supporting people receiving Jobseeker's Allowance, and further preparing the County for economic growth following the recession.

2.11 These identified areas for improvement and the opportunities to address them are being considered through the Integrated Planning cycle for 2010/11.

3.0 CAMBRIDGESHIRE AREA ASSESSMENT RESULTS

3.1 The Area Assessment for Cambridgeshire reviewed how Cambridgeshire Together partners were working together to meet shared priorities for Cambridgeshire, as identified in the Countywide Sustainable Community Strategy. Cambridgeshire received one 'green flag', recognising "exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from". The green flag was awarded for efforts to manage waste and recycling issues and noted that the ReCAP partnership was "key in reducing waste". The county, as an area, did not receive any red flags and was therefore not considered to have any significant areas of concern to be addressed.

3.2 Drawing upon the detailed Area Assessment Report, which provides a greater narrative to underpin these judgements, some summarised commentary is set out as follows:

Equality and inclusion

3.3 In terms of equality and inclusion the overall picture of life in Cambridgeshire is positive. Many people are healthy, well educated and have good incomes but there are some differences within the area. Partners are aware of these differences and services are being put in place to help people to live healthier lives. Local politicians are committed to ensure that available money is directed to help those who need it and have moved funds from more wealthy areas to less well off places.

Economic prosperity

3.4 Cambridgeshire's economy is one of the strongest in the country and until the recession many local people benefited from a long period of growth. But people in some areas do not have the same chances as in more wealthy areas as jobs are less well paid or transport links are not as good. Many young people are well prepared to benefit from prosperity in the area. Education results are generally good and more young people are staying in education to improve their prospects. Action is being taken to improve results for children in poorer families who do less well at school and has been identified as a high priority by partners.

Safer and stronger communities

- 3.5 Although crime in Cambridgeshire is higher than in similar places it did reduce last year. Action was being taken collectively and the report praises the creation of the violent crimes task group to tackle excessive drinking in Cambridge. Police and partners are working well to tackle domestic abuse.

Environmental sustainability

- 3.6 Successful partnership working means that well over half the waste collected is for recycling and the amount of waste created is also reduced. Good work is being carried out to educate people and encourage businesses to recycle more. The report praises partners for working together to keep the local environment attractive and healthy. It highlights the fact that air quality has improved by using cleaner buses and pollution has reduced because more people are using public transport.

Managing growth

- 3.7 The report recognised that organisations are working together well to manage the significant housing and population growth. The report concludes that funding has been secured to help ensure house building continues during the recession, but it is not growth at any cost. It says partners have learned from past experiences and are making sure new housing has the necessary facilities, such as schools, when they are needed. It recognises that congestion is a problem and will get worse and the longer term solutions rely on Government funding. But it says that partners have successfully encouraged local people and visitors to use public transport.

Areas for improvement

- 3.8 Cambridgeshire received no red flags in the Area Assessment, in recognition of the work being done by partners to address priority areas in the County. However, in the following areas, the Partnership will need to consider how it has continued to address inequalities and improve outcomes:
- Reducing inequalities across the County, particularly around rural isolation, education and health. Partners are all taking action to address this, and there are a number of projects emerging from Making Cambridgeshire Count Project that should help to improve outcomes.
 - Reducing crime in Cambridgeshire to a level at least equivalent to similar areas. Alcohol abuse and domestic abuse are particularly highlighted in this regard. The report recognises that work is being carried out on excessive drinking in Cambridge; and that the Making Cambridgeshire Count Project was aiming to significantly improve co-ordination of services for victims of domestic abuse.
- 3.9 The Area Self-assessment for 2010 will reflect these areas for improvement and identify what action is being taken to address them. This will also need to appropriate recognition within the revised Countywide Sustainable Community Strategy, or Cambridgeshire Plan, as this is developed across partners.

4.0 REGIONAL AND NATIONAL COMPARISONS

Organisational Assessment Results

- 4.1 Nationally, only 15 organisations were judged to be “performing excellently”: 4 district councils, 3 County Councils (Hampshire, Kent and Leicestershire), 7 single tier authorities and 1 Fire and Rescue Service. 212 organisations were considered to be “performing well”, 150 organisations were “performing adequately” and 12 organisations were “performing poorly”.
- 4.2 Of the District Councils within Cambridgeshire, three authorities were judged to be “performing well”: Huntingdonshire, Fenland and Cambridge City. East Cambridgeshire and South Cambridgeshire were both judged to be “performing adequately”.
- 4.3 Regionally no organisation, at any level, received an overall score of 4 for their Organisational Assessment, or an individual score of 4 for either Use of Resources or Managing Performance. Of the other County Councils in the East of England, Hertfordshire, Suffolk and Norfolk all scored 3 out of 4 for both Managing Performance and Use of Resources, and were “performing well”. Essex County Council was judged to be “performing adequately”.
- 4.4 For Single Tier Councils, Southend on Sea was “performing well”. Thurrock, Luton and Peterborough were “performing adequately”. No results were available for Bedford Borough or Central Bedfordshire Councils. Of the districts authorities in the East of England, 23 were “performing well”, 17 were “performing adequately” and one district, Brentwood, was “performing poorly”.

Area Assessment Results

- 4.5 For the area assessment, a total of 74 green flags were issued across England and a total of 62 red flags were also issued.
- 4.6 According to the County Councils’ Network (CCN), recurring themes for green flags being allocated included: work to improve independence, quality of life or access to services for older people; improving skills; tackling the recession and promoting recovery; and tackling climate change. Recurring themes for red flag allocation included the provision, quality and availability of housing (and affordable housing in particular), and the safeguarding of children and young people.

5.0 2010 COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The timetable for the second year of CAA is considerably tighter than the first. The Audit Commission has issued a consultation on some proposed changes to the CAA methodology for the second year of operation, although these proposals are minor adjustments.

Use of Resources

- 5.2 The draft audit report on the Council’s Use of Resources score for 2008/09 was received in November. This was circulated to officers leading on each

Key Line of Enquiry (KLoE) so that learning from the report can be reflected in the 2009/10 submission as appropriate.

- 5.3 To meet the new timescales for CAA, the final Use of Resources submission to the Council's external auditors will be complete by the end of January 2010. Indicative scores will be available in April, and final scores for this element of the Organisational Assessment by the end of July 2010. This year, a new KLoE for upper tier authorities has been added to the assessment covering Workforce Planning. District Councils were assessed against this KLoE in 2009.
- 5.4 To achieve a score of 4 for the Use of Resources element of the Organisational Assessment, the County Council will be required to demonstrate 'innovative', cross-KLoE initiatives linking customer needs to specific outcomes to address them. The Audit Commission are encouraging liaison and collaboration, internally and between partners, customers and suppliers.

Managing Performance

- 5.5 The deadline for the Council's Managing Performance self-assessment, last year submitted in June, will be March 2010. As less than a year has elapsed since the production of the last self-assessment, it has been agreed with the Audit Commission's CAA Lead for Cambridgeshire that the self-assessment should be updated rather than completely rewritten.

Area Assessment

- 5.6 The Area Self-Assessment will be prepared to the same timescale as the Managing Performance self-assessment, to be submitted by the end of March 2010. As with the Managing Performance submission, this self-assessment being less than a year old means that the Audit Commission's CAA Lead for Cambridgeshire has also agreed to an updating of the 2009 self-assessment for these purposes/

6.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The significant implications arising from the contents of this report relate primarily to the identified areas for potential improvement from both the Organisational and Area Assessment reports. The detailed assessment of these implications and actions to mitigate or address such issues is being incorporated into the Integrated Planning cycle for 2010/11 and by reference to the relevant partnership groups within Cambridgeshire.

Source Documents	Location
Cambridgeshire County Council Organisational Assessment Cambridgeshire Area Assessment Audit Commission CAA Guidance	Corporate Policy Team, Room 219, Shire Hall, Cambridge