

CANNOCK CHASE COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE

18th MARCH 2009

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

DIRECTION OF TRAVEL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2008/09

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Sub-Committee with an update of the Direction of Travel Improvement Plan that was developed following publication of the Annual Audit Inspection Letter, by the Audit Commission in April 2008.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the information and progress identified in the Direction of Travel Improvement Plan 2008/09 be considered.
- 2.2 That Members of the Sub-Committee determine whether they wish to further review or scrutinise any information presented in this report.

3. Background

- 3.1 As part of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) the Audit Commission undertakes an annual inspection called the Direction of Travel (DoT) assessment. The DoT provides assurance each year about whether a council is complying with its Best Value duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The DoT assessment asks two main questions, each of which have several sub-headings:

1. What evidence is there of the council improving outcomes?
 - Are we improving services in those areas we have identified as priorities and those areas which are priorities for the public?
 - What contributions are we making towards wider community outcomes?
 - Are we improving both access to and quality of services for all residents, particularly those who are made vulnerable by their circumstances?
 - If value for money improving as well as quality of services?

2. How much progress is being made to implement improvement plans to sustain improvement?
 - Do we have robust improvement plans which are resourced, agreed and widely communicated?
 - How well are we implementing these improvement plans? Are we achieving our key objectives and milestones?
 - Do we have capacity to deliver our plans?
- 3.2 Following submission of our self assessment, in 2008, to the Audit Commission and, the on site field work at the Council, the Audit Commission published their Annual Audit Inspection Letter in April 2008.
- 3.3 This improvement plan seeks to capture three of the four recommendations which were published within the Annual Audit Inspection Letter in April 2008 to ensure their delivery. A separate improvement plan has been drawn up for the recommendation to address the outcomes of the Strategic Housing Inspection and the Performance and Partnerships Scrutiny Sub- Committee receive this improvement plan on a quarterly basis.

Key Issues

- 3.4 2008/09 is the last year that we will undertake a Direction of Travel Assessment under the current Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime. The Council submitted its final self assessment for the Direction of Travel Assessment on the 9th January 2009 and was inspected during the 26th-27th January 2009. The Council is awaiting final publication of the Direction of Travel Assessment during March 2009 and subsequently, the Annual Audit Inspection Letter which is expected in Spring 2009.
- 3.5 From the 1st April 2009, Councils will be assessed through the Organisational Assessment component of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), which will cover how well the Council manages its finances and delivers value for money, how it governs and commissions services, how it manages resources and finally how it manages performance.
- 3.6 In keeping with the new CAA inspection framework, from April 2009, the monitoring of progress against the Direction of Travel Improvement plan will form part of the Council's Corporate Improvement Planning Framework. The Framework includes Priority Delivery Plans (PDP's) for each of the five CHASE priority areas and a Corporate Improvement Plan for issues such as governance, risk and cross cutting areas such as equality and diversity and community engagement..
- 3.7 Many of the recommendations that were published within the Annual Audit Inspection Letter 2008 have been delivered or are currently being addressed as reflected through the action plan which is attached. Paragraphs 3.8-3.11 provide a brief summary of the recommendations that were highlighted in the Annual Audit Letter and the progress that has been made to date.

- 3.8 Recommendation 1: “Continue to improve corporate capacity to deliver its improvement agenda, in particular the Council needs to further embed improved performance management arrangements to include a focus on achieving better value for money from key services”.**

To address the above recommendation the Council has reviewed its governance arrangements for partnerships, has developed an equality and diversity action plan, is developing a systematic approach to performance management and is continuing to seek opportunities with neighbouring authorities to share services. An external funding strategy has also been developed, a Value for Money methodology has been approved and a workforce development strategy is in development.

- 3.9 Recommendation 2: “Continue to work with partners to step up the pace of improvement in driving down crime in the area and improving community safety”.**

Overall levels of crime, as measured by the British Crime Survey Comparator Crime, have continued to decline across the District. Serious violent crime and serious acquisitive crime rates have reduced in the District and crime rates are lower now than this time last year. Although we are still set to achieve target for both serious violent crime and serious acquisitive crime the most recent trends indicate a slight increase in these crime rates, possibly as a result of the economic downturn.

A report is being taken to the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership on the 26th March to seek approval for the allocation of resources for a performance analyst, which would further our understanding of local crime data, and enable us to evaluate the outcomes of projects and initiatives more effectively. Plans are in place to review the operation of the Joint Operations Group and a full evaluation of the Night Time Economy Project is expected to be completed at the end of April; early indications are that this project has been successful in reducing alcohol-fuelled violence.

- 3.10 Recommendation 3: “Continue to tackle areas for improvement in strategic housing services and rigorously manage risks associated with the financial challenges it faces in meeting the decent homes standard”.**

As stated in paragraph 3.3, there is an individual improvement plan for Strategic Housing.

- 3.11 Recommendation 4: “Continue to embed improved data quality across the organisation”.**

A draft data quality policy and draft accountabilities in relation to data quality are in development to ensure that the organisation is embedding data quality arrangements effectively.

Section 1

Background

As part of the DoT assessment the Audit Commission assesses how effectively the Council uses its resources. The Council received a score of 3 out of a potential 4 for the use of resources assessment which means that we are performing well and consistently above minimum requirements.

Within the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2008, the Audit Commission recognised that the Council had made improvement in areas such as environmental services, housing benefits, partnership working and that satisfaction with individual services was high. The Audit Commission highlighted the need for continued improvement and progress in other areas such as strategic housing services, community safety, access to services, equalities and performance management.

The key areas for improvement identified within the Audit and Inspection letter form the basis of this Direction of Travel improvement Plan and are as follows:

- Continue to improve corporate capacity to deliver its improvement agenda, in particular the Council needs to further embed improved performance management arrangements to include a focus on achieving better value for money from key services.
- Continue to work with partners to step up the pace of improvement in driving down crime in the area and improving community safety.
- Continue to tackle areas for improvement in strategic housing services and rigorously manage risks associated with the financial challenges it faces in meeting the decent homes standard.
- Continue to embed improved data quality across the organisation.

To implement these recommendations effectively a Direction of Travel Improvement Plan has been produced that puts actions in place to improve service delivery.

This improvement plan marks the end of the Direction of Travel assessment under the CPA framework. From the 1st April 2009, Councils will be assessed under the Organisational Assessment component of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

The National Indicator Set is one key component in the CAA. CAA is the new local performance framework which replaces the former CPA. The National Indicator Set will be used as a key evidence source for both the Area Assessment and the Organisational Assessment which together comprise the CAA.

The Area Assessment looks at how well local public services are delivering better results for local people in local priorities such as health and community safety. The Organisational Assessment will cover how well the Council manages its finances and delivers value for money, how it governs and commissions services, how it manages resources and finally how it manages performance.

Section 2

Details of Matters to be Considered

That the Direction of Travel Improvement Plan 2008/09 attached at Annex 1 and the actions and progress contained within it are considered by the Sub-Committee.

Section 3

Contribution to CHASE

The Council's vision and objectives includes the aim of Building an Excellent Council. The continued implementation of the Improvement Plan will improve various aspects of Council performance in line with this vision.

Section 4

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications for the Council as a result of this report; any costs associated with the production of the Direction of Travel Improvement Plan are contained within existing budgets.

Section 5

Human Resource Implications

There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

Section 6

Legal Implications

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment ('CPA') was introduced by the Local Government Act 2002 and imposed a duty upon local authorities to make arrangements to secure continuous improvements. The Comprehensive Area Assessment ('CAA') has been introduced as the successor to the CPA by the Local Government and Public Health Act 2007. The 2007 Act sets out a new local performance framework within which the CAA is a key element.

By the Council improving services and service delivery and in turn its CPA and CAA assessments, it will be better placed to discharge its legal duties, responsibilities and obligations more efficiently and effectively.

Section 7

Section 17 (Crime Prevention) Implications

There are no crime prevention implications arising from this report.

Section 8

Human Rights Act Implications

There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

Section 9

Data Protection Act Implications

There are no Data Protection Act implications arising from this report.

Section 10

Risk Management Implications

The risks of not addressing the Audit Commission's recommendations could lead to further triggered inspection activity and significantly reduce the chances of improving the inspection score. These risks are mitigated by the continued monitoring and progress contained within the Improvement Plan.

Section 11

Equality and Diversity Implications

The recommendations made by the Audit Commission contain issues concerning equality and diversity. Meeting these recommendations will ensure a fair and equitable service is being provided.

Section 12

Other Options Considered

The Audit Commission recommended that an Improvement Plan be put in place to deliver the recommendations contained within the Inspection letter

Section 13

List of Background Papers

Audit Commission Audit and Inspection Letter March 2008

**Direction of Travel Improvement Plan for Cannock Chase District
Council**

Annex 1

| Recommendation | Actions/Work Areas | Outcome | Lead Officer | Key Delivery Officers | Completed By |
|---|--|---|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Continue to improve corporate capacity to deliver its improvement agenda, in particular to embed improved and systematic performance management arrangements to include a focus on achieving better value for money from key services | 1.1 Improve Capacity to Deliver The Council's Improvement Agenda: | Improved capacity in the Council's Performance management function. | Natasha Swan | | Done |
| | 1.11 People: Recruitment of a Performance Manager and Officer | | | | |
| | 1.12 Partnerships Undertake review of partnership governance and implement new structure | | Natasha Swan | | Done |
| | 1.13 Financial Budget setting process for 09/10 | Rationalising of Council priorities | Bob Kean | | Done |
| | 1.14 Employee Support and Development Workforce development strategy Grievance and disciplinary procedure | Enhanced support for employees | Anne Bird Anne Bird | HR | July 2009 April 2009 |

Direction of Travel Improvement Plan for Cannock Chase District Council

ENCLOSURE 7.8

| Recommendation | Actions/Work Areas | Outcome | Lead Officer | Key Delivery Officers | Completed By |
|----------------|---|---|---|---|-------------------------|
| | <p>1.15 External Funding Develop an External Funding Strategy</p> <p>Look at shared external funding post with South Staffordshire under Service Level Agreement</p> | <p>Clear framework for bids for external funding linked to Council priorities</p> <p>Increased capacity to seek funding opportunities to deliver Council priorities</p> | <p>Tony McGovern</p> <p>Tony McGovern</p> | <p>Tony McGovern</p> <p>Tony McGovern</p> | <p>Done</p> <p>2009</p> |
| | <p>1.16 Shared Services Undertake discussions with neighbouring authorities to investigate the feasibility of shared services</p> | <p>Reduced cost of service delivery</p> | <p>Stephen Brown</p> | | <p>2009</p> |
| | <p>1.17 Equality and Diversity Produce an equality and diversity action plan</p> | <p>Identify and address diversity issues within the Council</p> | <p>Les Trigg</p> | <p>Jan Turner</p> | <p>Done</p> |

Direction of Travel Improvement Plan for Cannock Chase District Council

ENCLOSURE 7.9

| Recommendation | Actions/Work Areas | Outcome | Lead Officer | Key Delivery Officers | Completed By |
|----------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| | <p>1.2 Embed Improved and Systematic Performance Management Arrangements</p> | | | | |
| | <p>Our performance management framework is updated, revised and communicated to officers to reflect changes in the national performance framework and developments in performance management internally.</p> <p>Produce an updated performance reporting timetable which integrates both internal reporting and partnership reporting.</p> | <p>A consistent approach to performance management is applied across the Authority</p> | <p>Katie Beeston</p> <p>Katie Beeston/ Mark Fletcher</p> | <p>PTT</p> <p>Katie Beeston/ PTT</p> | <p>March 2009</p> <p>Done - Refreshed annually</p> |
| | <p>Performance spreadsheets to be adapted to include red, amber, green rating, exception reporting, trend, etc. in line with best practice.</p> | <p>Effective performance reporting leading to performance management</p> | <p>Katie Beeston/ Mark Fletcher</p> | <p>PTT</p> | <p>April 2009</p> |
| | <p>Develop standard LSP performance reporting template</p> | <p>Consistent reporting across thematic blocks</p> | <p>Katie Beeston</p> | <p>Katie Beeston/ Mark Fletcher</p> | <p>Done</p> |

Direction of Travel Improvement Plan for Cannock Chase District Council

ENCLOSURE 7.10

| Recommendation | Actions/Work Areas | Outcome | Lead Officer | Key Delivery Officers | Completed By |
|--|--|--|---------------|--------------------------------|--|
| | 1.3 Focus on Achieving Better Value For Money from Key Services | Efficient use of resources in delivering Council priorities | | | |
| | Development of a value for money strategy | Ensure vfm is embedded into key council activities/ processes and the culture of the Council | Judith Aupers | All Senior Managers | To be reported to Cabinet March 2009 |
| | Development of a value for money methodology | Improved value for money in service delivery | | | Done |
| | Development of a programme of VFM reviews – all service areas to determine their vfm score, which will be used as part of the assessment of priority for VFM reviews | Improved value for money in service delivery | | | Programme for reviews to be in place by 1 April 2009 |
| 2. Continue to work with partners to step up the pace of improvement in driving down crime in the area and improving community safety | 2.1 Through the Strategic Assessment process the Council and its partners will identify their priorities and then a Partnership Plan will be agreed setting out how, in partnership, we intend to tackle those crime and community safety issues that pose the greatest threat to the district and drive down levels of crime and disorder. | Achieve the crime reduction targets, particularly in relation to serious violence, set by the LAA. | Nick Hackney | Steve Shilvock Kevin Lawlor | Refreshed annually in March |
| | 2.2 Performance Management Increase analytical capacity to underpin performance management and effective partnership working. Once analytical capacity is expanded, processes will be developed for the more effective collection and sharing of data. | Clear evidence of intelligence led planning and delivery | Nick Hackney | Nick Hackney | April 2009 |

Direction of Travel Improvement Plan for Cannock Chase District Council

ENCLOSURE 7.11

| Recommendation | Actions/Work Areas | Outcome | Lead Officer | Key Delivery Officers | Completed By |
|----------------|--|--|--------------|--|--------------|
| | <p>2.3 Performance Management – Embed systematic and robust performance management arrangements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure district-based disaggregated baselines and targets are set and owned by the appropriate agency • put methodology in place for the collection of quality data to evaluate progress against targets • produce regular performance reports to monitor progress towards targets and outcomes • evaluate projects and the impact of actions to determine effectiveness and value for money | Robust performance management arrangements leading to improved performance against targets and achievement of outcomes | Nick Hackney | Katie Beeston | April 2009 |
| | <p>2.4 Community Safety Structures – Review the operation of the Joint Operations Group (JOG) to ensure it is intelligence led and contributing to local targets.</p> | Partnership actions that tackle local priorities and make a real impact in reducing levels of crime and disorder | Nick Hackney | Partnership Officer (Community Safety) | Jan 2009 |
| | <p>2.5 Community Safety Structures – Embed methodology for the commissioning, re-commissioning, decommissioning and mainstreaming of partnership projects through robust project management processes.</p> | More effective utility of partnership funding to support priority outcomes and targets | Nick Hackney | Partnership Officer (Community Safety) | March 2009 |

**Direction of Travel Improvement Plan for Cannock Chase District
Council**

ENCLOSURE 7.12

| Recommendation | Actions/Work Areas | Outcome | Lead Officer | Key Delivery Officers | Completed By |
|--|---|--|---|--|-------------------|
| | <p>2.6 Driving Down Crime – The Council and its partners in the CDRP are working together on a major project to make our town centres safer places in which to work and visit. The Night Time Economy Management project will reduce crime and disorder, particularly alcohol-fuelled violence, plus make our town centres safer and more attractive places to visit through a multi-faceted and integrated programme of enforcement, prevention, education and promotion.</p> | <p>Lower levels of crime and disorder in the town centres.</p> | <p>Nick Hackney</p> | <p>Steve Shilvock Kevin Lawlor</p> | <p>April 2009</p> |
| <p>3. Continue to embed improved data quality across the organisation</p> | <p>Develop Data Quality action plan</p> | <p>Set out developments required and corresponding timeline</p> | <p>Mark Fletcher</p> | <p>Mark Fletcher/ PTT</p> | <p>Jan 2009</p> |
| | <p>Develop a data quality policy across the Authority in conjunction with officers</p> | <p>Ensure a consistent approach to data quality and compliance with CAA requirements</p> | <p>Katie Beeston</p> | <p>Mark Fletcher/ PTT</p> | <p>April 2009</p> |
| | <p>Formally assign responsibility for data quality at officer, senior officer and member level.</p> | <p>There is awareness and responsibility for Data quality across the Council</p> | <p>Katie Beeston/ Mark Fletcher</p> | <p>PTT/ DMT</p> | <p>Feb 2009</p> |