

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	19 April 2007
Subject:	Corporate Assessment
Key Decision: (Executive-side only)	No
Responsible Officer:	Paul Najsarek – Director People, Policy & Performance
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr David Ashton
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Corporate Assessment Final Report March 2007

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This reports sets out the findings from the final Corporate Assessment report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Cabinet/Committee/Portfolio Holder is requested to:

1. Note the Corporate Assessment final report (attached)
2. Request officers to develop an improvement plan for agreement at **June 07** Cabinet.

REASON:

To enable the council to respond to the improvement recommendations made through the Corporate Assessment.

SECTION 2 - REPORT

Background

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment methodology was revised in 2005/06 and is known as the 'Harder Test' – it is a more stringent assessment with greater emphasis on outcomes for local people and value for money.

In November 2006 the Audit Commission (AC) carried out the Corporate Assessment (CA) inspection at Harrow Council.

We have now received the final report from the AC based on the new methodology (see attached).

Key findings

The report has given the council an overall final score of **2 (adequate performance)** and the Joint Area Review was labelled with **good** outcomes, and a council score of **2**. These scores do not change our overall CPA position, which rates us as **2 - Improving Adequately**.

The council has opted not to appeal the score, but is taking a positive view that the findings from the report will be a key driver for change. The breakdown of scores against each of the themes are illustrated below:

Headline Questions	Theme	Score
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	2
	Prioritisation	2
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	1
	Performance Management	2
What has been achieved?	Achievement	2
Overall Corporate Assessment Score		2 Adequate Performance

The key messages from the report are:

What we do well

1. We demonstrate effective community leadership through well-developed partnerships and therefore have a good understanding of our community.
2. We take account of local people's views to prioritise and have well developed plans in priority areas. We have given priority to improving the financial situation
3. Our political leadership team provides clear direction and there are professional and positive relationships between officers and members.
4. We have a clear performance management framework and have improved areas of weak performance in a timely way, with good IT systems in place to enable effective monitoring.

5. We use innovation and have good outcomes to regenerate neighbourhoods, significant improvement in recycling and positive outcomes in fear of crime and community cohesion.
6. There are good examples of performance improvements, but from a low base
7. We have a good strategy for people
8. We make good use of partnerships to increase capacity i.e. BTP. AccordMP

Areas for improvement

1. We need to be clearer, with our partners, about the long-term vision for Harrow and build on the 'distinctiveness' of Harrow. Our priorities must be clear and contribute to this long term vision
2. We need to clarify our priorities and say what is not a priority, communicate this to local people and apply measurable targets more consistently across services using a simplified service planning process.
3. We need to strengthen our financial position and senior leadership capacity is mixed and we therefore need to provide members with more strategic development. We need to embed workforce planning across the organisation.
4. We need to increase the pace of improvement and support this with more ambitious improvement targets.
5. We need to develop service user involvement in services and member challenge in reviewing performance.
6. We need to integrate health in Harrow across council plans and extend services for older people (50+) beyond health and social care.

Improvement Planning

The findings from the Corporate Assessment and the Joint Area Review are recognised as key drivers that will contribute to the council's wider improvement programme alongside the organisation review, savings plan and fundamental service reviews.

An audit is currently taking place to identify projects and initiatives that are already taking place to address the improvement areas highlighted in the report.

Additionally, an overall improvement programme is being developed with the new Chief Executive, Michael Lockwood. The focus of the improvement programme is to making our corporate vision a reality. We are now clearer about where we need to focus resource and effort to make a real difference to the services we offer and local people.

Equalities

The Audit Commission has noted in the final report positive work on equalities.

Consultation

The Audit Commission met with the Senior Members and Officers on 23 February 2007 to provide formal feedback prior to publishing the report on 13 March 2007.

Legal and Financial Comments

Legal & Finance have cleared this report with no additional comments.

SECTION 3 - STATUTORY OFFICER CLEARANCE

Chief Finance Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Myfanwy Barrett.... Date: 29 March 2007.....
Monitoring Officer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Name: Hugh Peart..... Date: ...29 March 2007.....

SECTION 4 - CONTACT DETAILS AND BACKGROUND PAPERS

Contact: Paul Najsarek, Director People, Policy & Performance, Ext 5252

Background Papers:

Corporate Assessment Final Report – March 2007.

IF APPROPRIATE, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES
2.	Corporate Priorities	NO
3.	Manifesto Pledge Reference Number	