

LONDON BOROUGH OF HARROW

Agenda item:

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Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny
Date:	25 November 2003
Subject:	Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Progress Report
Key decision:	No
Responsible Chief Officer:	Executive Director (Organisational Development)
Relevant Portfolio Holder:	Strategy & External Affairs
Status:	Part I
Ward:	N/A
Enclosures:	Appendix A CPA/IDeA Improvement Plan – Progress Report Proforma

1. Summary/ Reason for urgency (if applicable)

- 1.1 This report provides a progress report on the action taken to implement the Council's Improvement Plan in response to the Improvement & Development Agency's (IDeA) and Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) reviews of last year. It also advises the Committee of the Corporate Assessment process for 2003 and 2004.

2. Recommendations (for decision by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee)

- 2.1 That the Committee note the progress report proforma attached as appendix A.
- 2.2 That a further report be made to the Committee in the New Year, detailing progress over the next quarter.

REASON: To assess progress against the CPA/IDeA Improvement Plan.

3. Consultation with Ward Councillors

Not Applicable

4. Policy Context (including Relevant Previous Decisions)

4.1 The Improvement Plan is closely related to the decisions involved in setting up the New Harrow Project, as agreed by Cabinet in July 2002. Cabinet at its meeting on 17th December 2002 agreed (Minute 35) the plan as a working draft and that progress be reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis. Cabinet on 18th March (Minute 215) agreed an updated version of the plan. Overview and Scrutiny on 23rd September (Minute 101) considered the first quarter progress.

5. Relevance to Corporate Priorities

5.1 This report is relevant to all of the vision and the strategic corporate priorities as agreed by Council in May 2002.

6. Background Information and options considered

CPA Action Plan

6.1 During 2002, the Council underwent two external assessments – the IDeA Peer Review and Comprehensive Performance Assessment. Both reports reached similar conclusions, that Harrow had both strengths and weaknesses and that there was room for improvement, particularly in some areas of delivering services to customers. CPA assessed the Council as ‘weak’ overall.

6.2 Attached as appendix A is a proforma which details the action taken to date against the nine priority areas contained within the Improvement Plan. The proforma identifies the priority area, the Chief Officer and Designated Portfolio Holder responsible for that priority area, the task to be completed, the officer responsible for the task and, in the final column, progress to date.

6.3 Significant action has been taken on all priority areas although further work is required to complete the following:

- Recruitment to Senior Management Structure
- Performance Management Systems
- Review of Financial Regulations
- Community Strategy for Harrow
- First Contact Review

CPA Improvement Reporting 2003 and 2004

Reporting Arrangements 2003

The CPA service scorecard for 2003 will be published on 18 December 2003. This will be accompanied by a qualitative assessment which takes account of any progress made in addressing our improvement priorities since the 2002 CPA. The purpose of the qualitative assessment is to take account of activities that have not been reflected in changes to CPA scores or our CPA categorisation by 2003. The qualitative assessment will also inform audit and inspection programmes for 2004/5.

However, the qualitative assessment is not scored and does not impact on our CPA categorisation although we will receive a 150 word summary as part of the service scorecard and a written report which will be brought together with the annual audit letter into one 'audit and inspection letter'.

Progression Arrangements 2003/2004

Councils have two main routes for progression through CPA categories in 2003 and 2004:-

- (i) By improving core service scores so that the Council crosses the 2002 core service threshold. To move up a category in this way, the Council must increase their core service score by at least 3.
- (ii) By having a corporate assessment which will be carried out in 2 or 3 phases in 2004.

Councils may apply for a corporate assessment when they are confident that they have improved sufficiently to address corporate assessment scores. In Harrow's case this is that:-

- Having scored 2 on this Council already need to score at least 36 points to move up a category (score was 24 in 2002).

To apply for a corporate assessment we must:-

- Be confident we can achieve this score.
- Ensure have agreement from relevant council decision making bodies.

Eligibility for Corporate Assessment 2004

We will be automatically eligible to have corporate reassessment if our core services score in December 2003 is 39 or above (currently 36). Service scores and eligibility for corporate assessment will be confirmed on 18 December 2003.

If we are eligible on this basis and would wish to have a corporate assessment, we must notify the commission as soon as possible with an indication of when we would like the corporate assessment to be carried out. The Audit Commission must receive notification by 31 January 2004.

If we do not meet this specified core service score but can demonstrate improvement in services we may apply to have a corporate assessment in 'exceptional circumstances'. The deadline for receipt of this case is also 31 January 2004.

Exceptional Circumstances

To apply for a corporate assessment should we fail to achieve the increased service score we will need to:-

Stage 1 - December 2003 - January 2004

- Make a submission comprising:

- A covering letter with a brief reference to the grounds for application.
- A self assessment of no more than 4 pages setting out improvements since the 2002 corporate assessment was carried out - plus areas that have not improved or got worse.
- The self assessment must provide evidence of achievement through improvement in real outcomes for service users and local community not just changes to internal processes or procedures.

Stage 2 - February 2004

- Evidence in self assessment will be judged by an Audit Commission panel comprising:-
 - Senior Member Audit Commission CPA Team
 - Senior Member of Audit Commission staff from the relevant region
 - A Peer
- Assessment will look at:-
 - evidence of what services are improving
 - evidence of what services are not improving
 - evidence of improvements in priority areas
 - evidence that communities and service users would recognise improvements
 - evidence on how much progress the Council has made
- The Panel will make a decision about whether the Council qualifies for a corporate reassessment.

Stage 3 - February/March 2004

- The Audit Commission will notify the Council whether the application has been agreed.
- Where an application is rejected, reasons will be given.

Stage 4 - March 2004

- Where application has been rejected the Council will have the opportunity to appeal.
- Appeals will fall into two categories:
 - disagreements with assessment process
 - disagreements with the judgement.

Appeals will be heard by the Managing Director of Local Government of the Audit Commission whose decision is final.

Stage 5 - May or September 2004

Where application has been agreed, the commission will undertake the corporate assessment in May or September 2004.

The Cabinet is asked to consider whether it wishes to apply for a 'corporate reassessment' under the exceptional circumstances rate should we fail to meet the revised core service score in 2003.

7. **Consultation**

- 7.1 Within the process for the IDeA review and the Corporate Assessment element of the CPA, a wide range of partner organisations were consulted by those carrying out the assessment. For the reviews and inspections contributing to the core services, which were included in the CPA, consultation was a key part of Best Value Review and was incorporated by inspectors within their new agreed frameworks.

8. **Finance Observations**

- 8.1 Any costs will need to be contained within the Medium Term Revenue and Capital Budget Strategy.

9. **Legal Observations**

- 9.1 The CPA has been put on a statutory footing by the Local Government Act 2003. It is believed that the relevant provisions will come in to force on 18th November 2003.

10. **Background Papers**

- 10.1 Improvement & Development Agency Review (May 2002)
Comprehensive Assessment (July 2002)
Improvement Plan for IDeA Review & Comprehensive Performance Assessment
Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee 10 July 2003
Minutes of Overview & Scrutiny Committee 10 July 2003

11. **Author**

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