

Meeting:	Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee
Date:	15 th July 2008
Subject:	Council Improvement Programme
Responsible Officer:	Tom Whiting – Assistant Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Paul Osborn – Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services.
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – O&S Challenge Panel Report Appendix 2 – CIP Project Summaries

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the Council Improvement Programme for the period up to March 2011.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to:

- Note the content of the Council Improvement Programme
- Consider how it might add value to the delivery of the CIP through monitoring and/or quality assurance.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

The aim of the council improvement programme is to prioritise and sequence the authority's improvement activities in order to ensure it uses its resources in the most effective way in seeking to deliver improved outcomes and services for local people. The council improvement programme maps out in more detail how the Chief executives '9-Step plan' will be delivered.

Background

The 2007 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) scorecard deemed Harrow Council to be a '2 star authority' that is 'improving adequately'. In addition, the IDeA Peer Review highlighted the need for a step change in performance if the council is to fulfil its ambitions. Key issues highlighted through the CPA corporate assessment report in March 2007 and the peer review included the following:

- The challenging financial position of the council
- The short-term focus of the organisation
- The requirement for a long-term vision for the borough of Harrow
- Low levels of staff morale in some areas
- Managerial capacity and inconsistency in managerial leadership in some areas
- Key skills gaps in the organisation
- Elected member capacity
- Difficulties around the SAP/ERP system

Current situation

The peer review report cited Harrow Council as ambitious, demonstrating a strong desire to progress and having a clear sense of momentum. This is reflected in the tangible progress that has been made in a range of key areas recently, such as a clearer vision and priorities backed up by a set of flagship actions, £35million of savings delivered in the last two years, positive external judgements in Children's Services and Housing Benefits and a range of officer and elected member development activities underway.

However, this solid progress now needs to be built upon. The peer review indicated this would require concerted and sustained effort across the authority and a need for the council to ensure it doesn't get distracted from its main areas of focus. The council improvement programme responds directly to this challenge.

Developing the Programme

The council improvement programme maps out how the chief executive's 'nine step' plan will be delivered, with clear timescales and accountabilities for each project. This has been done to ensure that improvement activity is focused on enabling the delivery of the corporate priorities, flagship actions and other key outcomes for local people.

The process has involved a review of the council’s current improvement activities against the findings and recommendations of the CPA, peer review and Access to Services inspection reports and the most recent direction of travel and use of resources judgements. There have been a series of discussions concerning the programme and the projects it comprises, involving Corporate Directors, project sponsors, project managers and other stakeholders across the council. Elected members have also been involved, including the conducting of a challenge panel on the draft programme by overview and scrutiny members, see Appendix 2.

Appendix 2 provides documentation detailing the objectives, milestones, project sponsor and project manager/s for each project within the council improvement programme is attached to this report.

Delivering the Programme

Monitoring delivery against the milestones of each project within the improvement programme will take place through a monthly meeting of the chief executive and all of the project sponsors. Corporate Strategy Board will review progress on a quarterly basis and there will be regular reporting to Corporate Leadership Group and elected members. The Improvement Programme Team within the Strategy and Improvement Directorate will be responsible for maintaining an on-going dialogue with project sponsors and project managers to identify any delays or barriers to progress, support the reporting process and work with project sponsors and project managers to develop and implement mitigating actions wherever necessary to ensure successful delivery.

In order to add to the robustness of governance, due consideration needs to be given to how the committee might add value to the delivery of the CIP through monitoring or quality assurance.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications relating to the council improvement programme itself, given it mainly draws existing and already resourced activity together into an overall plan. Should any of the projects within the programme identify additional resource requirements, these will be considered through the council’s established budget planning process.

Performance Issues

The recommendations in this report directly impact the following key regulatory judgments:

Regulatory Judgment	Current Score	Impact of Proposals
Corporate Assessment	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves performance management Addresses capacity shortages in the organisation – elected member development, addressing sickness absence, management development arrangements
Use of Resources	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves procurement savings delivery and income generation to improve financial standing Improves financial management and reporting processes
Access to Services	TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses key recommendations from recent inspection
Direction of Travel	Improving Adequately	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Codifies council’s overall improvement programme to increase pace of change

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? Yes

Separate risk register in place? Yes

Discussions involving the council's risk management team have identified a number of opportunities and risks relating to the council improvement programme.

The opportunities include the potential for positive impact on the council's reputation, identification of common risks across the different projects in order to manage them more efficiently and effectively, and to bring a wider corporate perspective to issues that cut across different areas of responsibility, helping to reduce silo working.

In terms of risks, effective internal communication of the programme is vital to ensure buy-in and confidence in it and an internal communications plan has therefore been drawn up to underpin the programme. In addition, successful delivery of the programme requires robust governance, strong management, consistent and effective corporate leadership and the 'organisational appetite' necessary to ensure projects turn into a reality on the timescales committed to.

The Improvement Programme Team will work with each project manager to ensure a project plan and risk management arrangements have been established. They will also look across the programme to ensure the pressures placed upon the organisation by the individual projects, for example the roll out of new processes and systems or consultation with staff, are coordinated to spread the demands placed on services.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: ...Jennifer Hydari.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Date: 04.07.2008.....		
Name: ...Jessica Farmer.....	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer
Date: ...04.07.2008.....		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Mala Kripalani – Service Manager – Improvement Programme

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES