

Meeting:	Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee
Date:	31 <sup>st</sup> March 2009
Subject:	Council Improvement Programme and Comprehensive Performance Assessment
Responsible Officer:	Tom Whiting – Assistant Chief Executive
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Paul Osborn – Portfolio Holder for Performance, Communication and Corporate Services.
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	CIP and CPA Presentation

## Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

[This report sets out the progress of the Council Improvement Programme 2008-2011 and updates on the outcomes of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment](#)

### **Recommendations:**

The Committee is requested to:

- Note the progress of the Council Improvement Programme
- Note the latest outcomes of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)
- Consider how it might contribute or accelerate progress of the Council Improvement Programme.

## Section 2 – Report

### Introductory paragraph

The aim of the Council Improvement Programme (CIP) 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 CIP is evolving and continues to map out how the Chief executives '9-Step Plan', with clear timescales and accountabilities for each project. Its focus is to drive step change in performance in order to fulfil the Council's ambitions of becoming '**one of the best London Councils by 2012**'.

This has been the last year in which Local Authorities have been assessed under the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The results announced in March 2009 were the final set of CPA assessments that will be made and measure performance for the financial year ending March 2008.

The CPA has now been replaced by the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and in November 2009 the Council and its partners will receive the first assessment of performance under the new regime, for the financial year ending March 2009.

### Background

The CIP has been in place since June 2008. At this time it consisted of 29 improvement projects covering the Chief Executives '9-Step Plan':

- Vision & Priorities
- Finances
- Performance Management
- First Impressions
- Communications
- Work life Balance
- Investment in People
- Organisational Culture
- Organisational Structures

Each project has a set of key milestones, a designated project manager and sponsor. A robust monitoring process has been put in place, alongside a council wide communications plan. The CIP has informed service delivery plans, and is high on the agenda for the Council. The programme is delivering a package of benefits, which illustrate improvement in council performance.

The Council's performance has been graded as 2 star since 2003 although the CPA Harder test was introduced in 2005.

In 2008 the Council was assessed as '2 Star Improving Adequately' for the Financial year ending March 2007. Underlying this were a number of service block assessments which were scored as follows:

- Corporate Assessment 2 out of 4
- Use of Resources 2 out of 4
- Childrens services 3 out of 4
- Adults Services 2 out of 4

- Housing 2 out of 4
- Environment 2 out of 4
- Culture 2 out of 4
- Benefits 4 out of 4

## **Programme Monitoring**

Monitoring delivery against the milestones of each project within the improvement programme takes place through a monthly meeting of the Chief Executive and all of the project sponsors. Corporate Strategy Board reviews progress on a quarterly basis. The Improvement Programme Team within the Chief Executive's Directorate maintains 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.

## **Progress**

Since the inception of the CIP, a further 12 projects have been added to the programme. These are a mixture of 2<sup>nd</sup> phase projects to those, which have already been completed, or additional projects identified as key areas of improvement through recommendations from reviews / inspections. To date 10 projects have been completed.

The attached presentation provides further detail about progress of the CIP.

In the latest CPA judgement March 2009 (relating to the financial year ending March 2008) the final CPA scores are that the Council is '2 Star Improving Well'. Underlying this the service block assessments have improved as follows:

- Corporate Assessment 2 out of 4
- Use of Resources 3 out of 4
- Children's services 3 out of 4
- Adults Services 2 out of 4
- Housing 3 out of 4
- Environment 2 out of 4
- Culture 3 out of 4
- Benefits 4 out of 4

The Council has also improved its performance against the Use of resources judgement. This year the Council has scored as follows:

- Financial Management 3 out of 4
- Financial Standing 2 out of 4
- Internal Control 3 out of 4
- Financial Reporting 2 out of 4
- Value for Money 3 out of 4

This is therefore the first year that the Council has delivered an overall 3 out of 4 for Use of Resources.

The Direction of Travel judgement on the Council was as follows:

*'Harrow Council is improving well. The rate of improvement in performance indicators has accelerated and is above the national average, with two-thirds improving over the past year. Performance has improved significantly in housing, recycling, composting and use of resources.*

*The Council has further improved in priority areas such as children's services and housing benefits. Adult social care services now have promising prospects and good progress has been made supporting carers. More progress needs to be made in services for people with learning disabilities, increasing resident satisfaction and access to services.*

*Partnerships are getting stronger and are working well to address local needs. For example, teenage pregnancy rates have reduced significantly and a jointly funded police team is a visible presence in the town centre. Levels of crime are low and fear of crime reducing.*

*Effective action has reduced costs and increased financial reserves. Value for money is good. The Council is realistic and ambitious about outcomes. Decision-making is well-informed and favours prudent, longer-term strategic solutions. Governance and leadership are strong. The Council has now focused its resources, which is enabling it to deliver its priorities.'*

## **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. The monitoring and review process picks up issues relating to resource constraints and feeds this through to CSB for action.

## **Performance Issues**

The Council faces a number of performance challenges that the CIP is directly addressing. These are also areas that are likely to be important themes under the CAA.

The following table illustrates key performance indicators that have been impacted upon since the inception of the CIP:

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>CIP Project</b>
Use of Resources	Increased from 2 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing Use of Resources score</li> <li>• Improved budget monitoring</li> <li>• Enhancing debt management</li> </ul>
Value for Money	Increased from 2 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value for Money action plan</li> <li>• Revised performance management framework</li> </ul>
Data Quality	Increased from 2 to 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Quality action plan</li> </ul>
Staff Survey	Improvements sought in 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture Change</li> <li>• Improving work life balance</li> <li>• Improved internal communications</li> <li>• Staff survey action plan</li> </ul>
Sickness Absence (BVPI 12)	Reduced from 10.34days in 06/07, to 8.97 days in 07/08 – current projection for 08/09 at 8.63 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving work life balance</li> <li>• New staff well-being programme</li> <li>• Improved monitoring, processes and targets for each directorate</li> </ul>

Indicator	Progress	CIP Project
	although aim to reduce on this further.	

Satisfaction levels with Council services are low overall, having fallen from 54% net satisfied in 2005 to 42% in 2008. A number of projects are now in place to address this indicator including:

- Improving customer service and first time call resolution
- Improving communications to residents
- Improving performance management
- Clarifying the Council's vision and priorities

The CIP directly impacts upon the Council's approach to the newly introduced Comprehensive Area Assessment. The CIP demonstrates self awareness, how the Council plans improvement with the local context of Harrow, and is a key driver to delivering improved services to the local community.

The outstanding challenges from CPA and details of the future CAA regime are included in the attached presentation

### **Legal Implications**

There are no adverse legal implications affecting the delivery of the programme.

### **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 Improvement Programme Team ensures that the register is kept up to date and mitigating actions are put in place to address issues..

### **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

NOT APPLICABLE

### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

Contact: Tom Whiting – Assistant Chief Executive  
 Mala Kripalani – Service Manager – Improvement Programme

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES