

**REPORT FOR: OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting:	23 February 2010
Subject:	Comprehensive Area Assessment
Responsible Officer:	Tom Whiting, Assistant Chief Executive
Scrutiny Lead Member area:	Corporate Effectiveness and Finance - Councillors Stanley Sheinwald and Mark Versallion
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – CAA results across London Appendix 2 – Harrow’s Area and Organisational Assessments

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out Harrow’s results for the first Comprehensive Area Assessment, published on 9 December 2009 by the Audit Commission, and follow-up actions being taken.

Recommendations:

The Committee is requested to

- i) note the outcome of Harrow’s first Comprehensive Area Assessment
- ii) consider and endorse the actions in hand to address issues highlighted in the assessment and to learn from both the Council’s own experience in round one of the CAA and from other authorities’ best practice, as described in “Next Steps” below
- iii) (if desired) receive a report at a future meeting to review the detailed improvement plans.

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

Members have requested this report, which follows two made to Performance and Finance Sub-Committee (16 November 2009 and 19 January 2010) on the Use of Resources Improvement Plan and the first outcomes of Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), which has replaced the previous Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The latest assessment shows a much improved picture.

The results of the last CPA were published in March 2009. At that point, the Council improved its Direction of Travel rating from “Improving Adequately” to “Improving Well” and saw improvements in Children’s Services, Housing, Culture and Use of Resources. The Benefits Service continued to be graded 4 out of 4. However the Council remained 2 stars overall.

This level of performance improvement was also recognised in the PWC benchmarking of Councils which rated Harrow as the 2nd most improved in London and the 6th best performing Council in London. The Council was also a finalist in the MJ Best Achieving Council Award in 2009.

The CAA was introduced in April 2009. Compared to CPA, the CAA is more focussed on outcomes than processes, and represents a change in the approach by reviewing how well local public services are delivering for local people and how likely they are to improve in the future. CAA has two main elements, which inform each other:

- The **Area Assessment** is an unscored narrative that looks at how well local public services are working together to deliver the area’s priorities in relation to three questions:
 - How well do priorities for Harrow express community needs and aspirations?
 - How well are we performing?
 - What are the prospects for future improvement?
- The **Organisational Assessment** is scored from 1-4 (the higher the better) and is Council focussed, comprising these elements:
 - Use of Resources – a judgement against defined Key Lines of Enquiry by the external auditors
 - Managing Performance – a joint assessment by all inspectorates involved with the Council

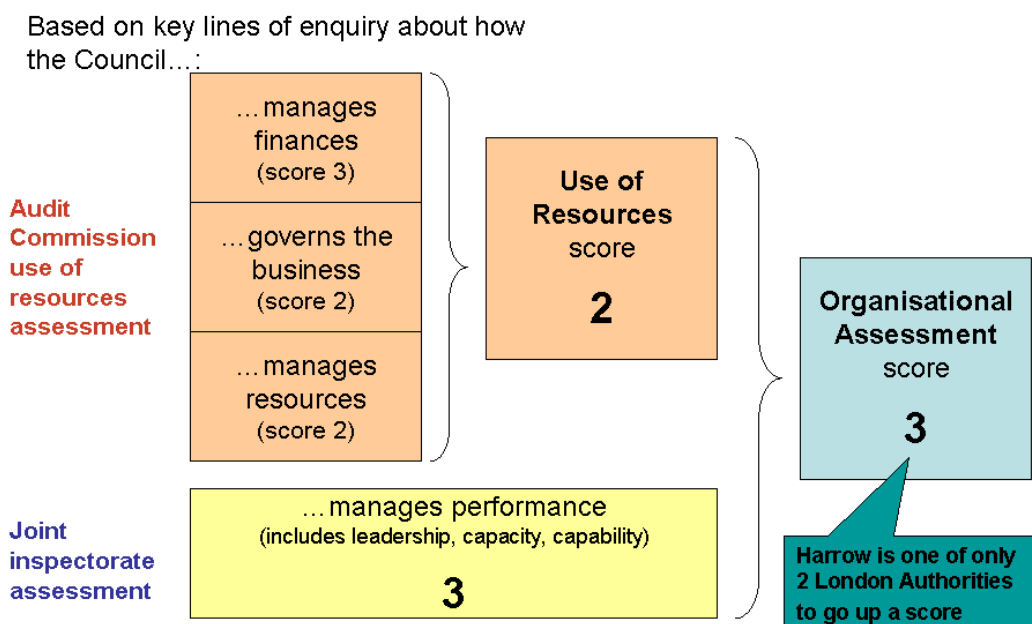
Background

Organisational Assessment

Under the new CAA regime Harrow has moved up to an overall score of 3 (out of 4) for the Organisational Assessment, which is the highest score the Council has ever achieved under CAA or CPA since the latter started in 2002. This means that overall the Audit Commission has judged Harrow to be an

organisation that is performing well. This is a clear demonstration that the Council has continued its rate of performance improvement in the last year.

The component scores are illustrated below:



The judgement highlights the following factors contributing to the improvement:

- much improved leadership and staff performance
- good value for money provided by services and clear priorities which reflect the things residents want to see improved
- financial position strengthened and substantial savings achieved while at the same time allocating extra money to priority areas
- improved understanding of residents' needs and communication with residents
- improved performance across a number of services – 63 per cent of performance measures improved

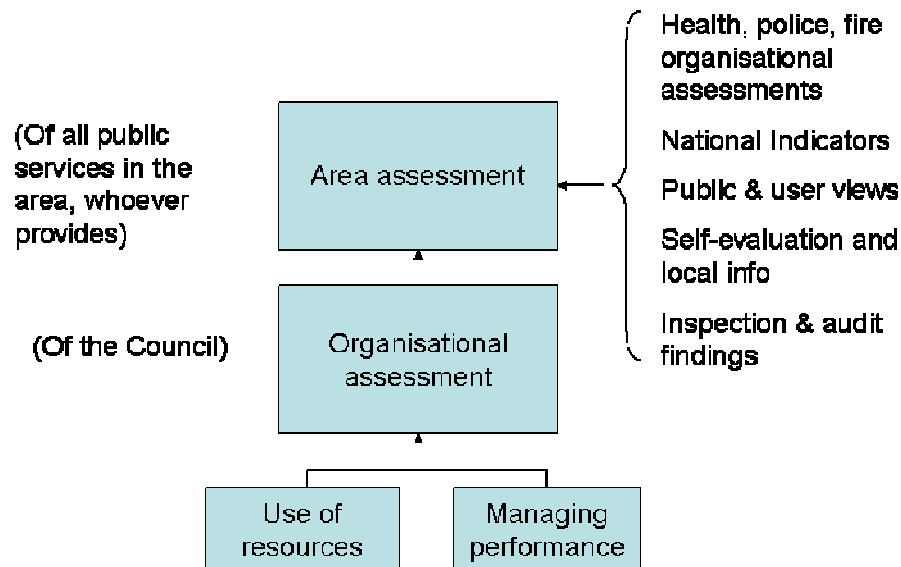
In addition, improved service performance has been key to the Managing Performance judgement and has benefited from:

- Adult social care achieving an improved rating of 'performing well' (3 out of 4) from the Care Quality Commission (CQC). This is the first star rating improvement in Adult Social Care in eight years and represents a major achievement for the service. CQC recognised a "step change in performance," "strong leadership" and a "clear strategic direction". CQC also noted strong improvement in personalisation and carers' services and that service users "noticed a difference", particularly those with learning disabilities.
- Children's Services retaining a score of 3 out of 4 in Ofsted's annual assessment. Ofsted confirmed this rating based on a review of indicators and inspection results. This means that Children's Services continues to be rated as excellent for Making a Positive Contribution and Achieving Economic Wellbeing for children and young people, and good for all other outcomes, including safeguarding children

- Benefits continuing to be recognised by the Audit Commission as an excellent service (4 out of 4)

Area Assessment

The Area Assessment component of the CAA highlights the work that the local public services are doing to work towards the common vision for Harrow as described in the Sustainable Community Strategy and brings together the following elements:



The report recognised that partnerships were working well across Harrow and delivering good outcomes for residents.

The Audit Commission can apply red or green flags to particular elements in the Area Assessment: red to highlight where something more or different is needed to address the most important challenges, or green, where public bodies are achieving exceptional outcomes in priority areas, or something innovative, that others can learn from. No flags of either sort were applied to Harrow.

The Audit Commission recognised in particular:

- The high quality services for children and young people in Harrow
- The low numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training
- The good support provided for young people with learning disabilities and/or disabilities and in need of protection
- The good progress that is being made on transforming services for adults who need additional care
- The above average life expectancy in Harrow and the low levels of drinking, teenage pregnancy and levels of drug misuse in comparison to the rest of England
- The cross agency work that local organisations are doing to tackle the economic issues through supporting employment locally

- The broad range of agencies who work together to further develop a 'sense of community'
- The low crime levels in Harrow as a result of effective partnership working resulting in fewer people now having a fear of crime
- The work that is taking place to improve the Harrow environment including having one of the best recycling performances in London.

The following matters, however, have been identified by the Audit Commission as issues in the Area Assessment. Harrow Chief Executives have referred each of the issues to the group, organisation or department indicated for consideration and a report back on the action that needs to be taken to address them is required for the HCEs' performance meeting on 22 February 2010

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Referred to</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary groups within Harrow have a low sense of being able to influence decisions, particularly of the health service 	NI 7 Group ¹ ; Voluntary and Community Sector Forum ² ; Community Cohesion Management Group ³ ; NHS Harrow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is significant challenge to reduce carbon usage and pollution 	Sustainable Development and Enterprise Management Group ³
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of people who take regular exercise is lower than elsewhere in London or England 	Adult Health and Well-being Management Group ³ , Community Cohesion Management Group ³ ; Sustainable Development and Enterprise Management Group ²
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One in five adults in Harrow is obese and this is worse than the London average 	Children's Trust ⁴ ; Adult Health and Well-being Management Group ³
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harrow has a high level of car usage and one of the highest rates in London for people driving their children to school 	Sustainable Development and Enterprise Management Group ³ Children's Trust ⁴
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been an increasing trend in wounding, interference with vehicles and more recently a slight increase in burglaries 	Safer Harrow Management Group ³
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There remains a large gap between the lowest achieving children and the 	Children's Trust

¹ a group from Community and Environment and the voluntary and community sector considering how to address the findings of the survey of third sector organisations in which they were asked how local statutory bodies influence their organisation's success

² a Partnership Reference Group

³ one of the five Management Groups of Harrow Strategic Partnership taking forward the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement

⁴ acts as one of the five Management Groups of Harrow Strategic Partnership

rest at Foundation stage

• The gap between children with learning disabilities and/or disabilities and children without learning disabilities and/or disabilities is well above average at the end of secondary school	Children's Trust
• Permanent exclusions from schools are above the national average and similar areas	Children's Trust
• Tooth decay for children aged five or under is a continuing concern	Children's Trust

At the time of writing the responses of these groups are awaited and a verbal update will be given at the meeting.

The picture across London

In their Organisational Assessments,

6 scored a 4

24 scored a 3 (including Harrow)

2 scored a 2

1 scored a 1

Only Harrow and Hillingdon improved their scores compared with the last CPA. All others remained the same (17) or dropped a score (14).

It is difficult to compare Area Assessments as they are not scored. In terms of flags:

22 green flags were applied to 18 London authorities

5 red flags were issued to 4 London authorities

Nationally, 74 green and 62 red flags were issued.

Lists of the scores and flags in London are in Appendix 1. Further details of flags and scores nationally are published on the CLG's OnePlace website at <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk>. It is the intention to source best practice learning from authorities identified in this way, who have either green flags or scores of 4 in any of the Use of Resources elements. Capital Ambition have started work to facilitate this learning across London.

Next Steps

A comprehensive Use of Resources Improvement Plan has been drafted and revised, with the aid of workshops facilitated by Deloitte Touche. This, together with an updated self-assessment currently being drafted, is directed towards achieving an overall 3 for Use of Resources next time. Auditors expect to start work on the next assessment in mid March.

For the 2011 round, work has started on identifying how the Council can achieve 4 stars in its Organisational Assessment and what needs to be done to improve further the ratings for Adults' and Children's Services.

As noted above, identified challenges in the Area Assessment have been forwarded to the appropriate individual organisations and partnership groups to develop action plans on how these issues will be addressed. Actions against these areas will be monitored through the Harrow Strategic Partnership and Harrow Chief Executives Group.

Like all councils, Harrow will need to deliver ambitious savings over the next three years. The Audit Commission has acknowledged the programme that the Council has put in place. "The Council has started to address these challenges and has launched an ambitious "Better Deal for Residents" programme to look at new ways of delivering services and new ways of working with local partners and residents." This will be through sharing staff, buildings and increasing efficiency over the total public spend. The programme aims to help the Council balance its medium term budgets, deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy, work well with residents and maintain its current rate of performance improvement.

The full versions of the Area and Organisational Assessments are at Appendix 2.

Members may wish to revisit this subject at a future meeting, once the detailed improvement plans for Use of Resources (Council) and Area Assessment (Harrow Strategic Partnership) have been finalised.

Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications. The Use of Resources Assessment scores the Council's financial management processes and internal governance. This is reflected in the Council's Use of Resources Managing Finances sub-section where a score of 3 out of 4 was achieved.

Performance Issues

This assessment recognises the advance in performance and performance management made throughout the financial year 2008/09 and further into 2009.

Environmental Impact

There are no direct environmental impacts. Harrow's performance on environmental impact is assessed through the Use of Resources judgement and the Area Assessment.

Risk Management Implications

There are no risk management implications.

Corporate Priorities

This report covers performance across the Council and the Harrow Strategic Partnership and therefore touches on all three Corporate Priorities.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Not required for this report.

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Martin Randall, Senior Performance Officer, 020 8424 1815

Background Papers:

Area Assessment and Organisational Assessment 2009 for Harrow, available at <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk>