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WARDS: All

AGENDA

ITEM NO

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

SELECT COMMITTEE - CULTURE AND RECREATION - 26 JANUARY 2004-01-15

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

REGULAR PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (RPA) - CULTURAL SERVICES

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 To consider the submission to the Audit commission of the Regular Performance assessment on Cultural Services.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Since the 2002 Comprehensive Performance Assessment, Councils have been identifying their top priorities for the purposes of Improvement Planning and Reporting. Auditors and Inspectors (from the Audit commission and the other local government Inspectorates such as SSI, Ofsted and the BFI) have worked together to ensure that, in light of these priorities, their work with authorities is co-ordinated and resources are targeted to help deliver improvement where it is needed most.

2.2 To assist with this activity for 2004/05, Regular Performance Assessments (RPA) are being introduced by the Audit Commission, RPA's will provide a sound basis on which to assess progress in those services for which the Audit Commission has responsibility for inspecting, namely housing, environment and culture services.

- 2.3 Initially, for 2003/04, RPAs are required for services where a previous inspection has 'time expired', in other words, where:
- There has not been a substantive service inspection in the past three years; and
 - There is not a relevant inspection due to take place and report by 31 October 2004.
- 2.4 As Members may be aware the last substantive inspection within Cultural Services was the inspection of Sport and Recreation in October 2001 which means that there would not have been another substantive service inspection within the appropriate timeframe and as a result the original inspection would no longer be eligible for inclusion in the Council's CPA improvement report in December 2004.
- 2.5 In order to ensure that Cultural Services score (Leisure and Libraries) is not ignored and RPA assessment has been undertaken and the results from this will either 'ratify' that the service score should stand (which was 2 out of 4) or, alternatively, it will recommend that an inspection is carried out this year.
- 2.6 The primary purpose of the assessment is to track performance change at service level as part of the on-going CPA process and the key feature is that the Council is required to complete a self-assessment of the service which compares the Council's assessment of its own performance against the baseline established in the CPA (Culture score).
- 2.7 As noted above the last substantive inspection was of the Council's Sports and Recreation Service principally the 6 main leisure venues and sports development. The RPA assessment requirement is clearly much wider than this and includes Libraries, Museums, Public Halls, parks and Open Space, Archives and Tourism in addition to Sport and Recreation.
- 2.8 The self-assessment submission is attached at Appendix 1 and consists of four sections:-
- Overview and Introduction
 - Quality of Service - achievement of quality
 - - investment
 - Achievement of improvement
 - Capacity to improve.
- 2.9 For each section the Audit Commission provided specific guidance on the amount and nature of their contents. For example in respect of the 'Quality of Service - Achievement of Quality' section the assessment was required to detail:-
- The impact of the services work on quality of life for local people with specific reference to young people, families at risk and older people.

- How satisfied are local communities, users, and stakeholders with the quality of services they are provided with? What mechanism does the Council use to identify public satisfaction and what are the trends over the last three years?
- What is the quality of the council's built assets in the sector and what is the Council doing to address poor quality buildings and access to cultural opportunities.
- How well does the Council provide full, open and inclusive access to cultural sector activities, programmes, information and resources, particularly for minority and hard to reach communities?
- How well does the council use its cultural services to promote cultural diversity and with what effect?
- To what extent does the Council comply with the DDA in its cultural services?
- How well does the Council use its cultural services to enable vulnerable children and young people to fulfil their potential? What is the quality and range of cultural opportunities available to children and young people, particularly those at risk?
- What is the evidence that cultural services in the Council, and funded by the Council, are user focused?
- What impact and benefit does the Council's work with cultural partners and stakeholders bring? What is the Council's contribution to these partnerships?
- How do cultural services contribute to improving healthier communities and with what effect?
- How do cultural services contribute to the creation of safer and stronger communities and with what effect?
- What is the contribution of cultural services to regeneration and what is the impact of this?
- How do cultural services contribute to environmental improvements and sustainability, and what effect do they have?

2.10 As Members will note from the scores attached to the submission the self assessment has concluded that the 2 out of 4 status, as recorded in the CPA, has been upheld which if verified by the Audit Commission will mean that further inspection work of Cultural Services is unlikely in 2004. The verification and analysis work is scheduled to be finalised by the end of February at which point the Council will be advised of the outcome.

2.11 In summary the self assessment process has identified a number of positive aspects of service development since the last substantive inspection principally:-

- i. Growing evidence of the impact of Cultural Services in relation to the Council's priorities and the shared priorities of central and local government.
- ii. A significant numbers of examples of effective partnership working leading to increased activity within the cultural sector.
- iii. An ability to attract external funding to support cultural services within the Borough.
- iv. Increased utilisation of specific services and activities following actions undertaken as part of Service Continuous Improvement Plans.

2.12 However, the self assessment has also identified certain weaknesses that need to be addressed if the service is to progress further, including:-

- a) The ageing Cultural Services building stock which poses a significant problem with regard to compliance with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act.
- b) Marginal reductions in usage and customer satisfaction in certain service areas, which is directly linked to the issue at (a) above. In addition there is a need to engage more effectively with 'hard to reach' and low participant groups in order to address their service needs.
- c) Given the resource implications of DDA compliance, the increasing profile of parks regeneration, the playing pitch strategy and the review of Leisure Centres there is going to be a need for some prioritisation of investment and on-going revenue funding within the service.
- d) Whilst the service planning and performance management framework has been introduced to the service there is a need for cleaner targets that are 'outcome' based. These need to be closely aligned to the priorities of the Council Plan.

3.0 PROPOSALS

3.1 That the Committee supports the RPA submission for Cultural Services.

3.2 That an RPA Action Plan be prepared and reported to a future meeting of the Select Committee.

4.0 FINANCE

4.1 There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.

5.0 LAW

5.1 Section 19 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 empowers the Council to provide recreational facilities in its area.

5.2 Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972 enables the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions under the 1976 Act.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

6.1 The proposals in this report do not adversely affect the equal opportunities policies of the Council.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 That the proposals set out at Section 3 above be approved.

Director of the Urban Environment:

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Background Papers Used in the Compilation of this Report

- Comprehensive Performance Assessment
- Best value Inspection Report - Sport and Recreation
- Letters from Audit Commission: 20/10/03; 5/11/03