

Meeting of the Council – 16th April 2007

Report of the Cabinet

Comprehensive Performance Assessment 2006

Purpose of Report

1. To inform the Council of the outcome of the 2006/07 Comprehensive Performance Assessment, including the result of the delayed Corporate Performance Assessment from March 2006.

Background

2. Members will be aware that the Audit Commission is responsible for undertaking an independent evaluation of each local authority, with reference to a national performance management framework that brings together a range of judgements – including individual services, overall value for money, and corporate management arrangements.
3. This report highlights the outcome of the 2006/07 report from the Audit Commission. The key conclusion of the Commission is that Dudley Council is demonstrating a 3 star overall performance and is improving well. This outcome is very welcome and reflects the consistent improvement in Council performance during this time. The scores from the Direction of Travel are:-

How Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council's main services perform

Service Area	2005	2006
Benefits – The Council's performance in providing housing and council tax benefit services. The assessment is made by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate and is based primarily on achievement against the 2005 Housing Benefits/Council tax Benefits performance standards	4	4
Children and Young People – The Council's performance in providing children's services, such as children's education and social care. The joint assessment is made by the Commission for Social Care Inspection and Ofsted following a review of the Council's overall performance and key indicators	3	3

Culture – The Council's performance in services, such as libraries and leisure, as assessed by the Audit Commission.	2	2
Environment – The Council's performance in services, such as transport, planning and waste, as assessed by the Audit Commission.	3	3
Housing – The Council's performance in community housing and, where applicable, housing management services, as assessed by the Audit Commission.	3	4
Social Care (adults) – The Council's performance in adult social care services. The assessment is made by the Commission for Social Care Inspection following a review of the Council's overall performance and key indicators	3	3

4. The Audit Commission comment on the Council in its direction of travel assessment was:-

“The Council continues to improve its priority services and to increase the impact of its wider community role. The extent of its improvement compared to other councils is notable. The external assessment score for adult social care was ‘good’ and the assessment identified a range of significant improvements achieved. Children’s services maintained the ‘good’ rating gained in 2005. There have been significant improvements in educational achievement, including the achievements of children in care. The Council’s housing service has improved and this is reflected in improved tenant satisfaction. The service was assessed as the highest possible score of 4. The Council also achieved an ‘excellent’ rating for its housing benefit service. Good progress has been made in regeneration, transport and the environment. The Council makes a positive contribution to wider community outcomes. Strong partnership working has led to a continued decline in crime levels. The Council is good at working with diverse communities to strengthen cohesion. Satisfaction with some Council services is improving. Value for money continues to improve and the Council has the capacity to make future improvements”

5. In addition we have also received provisional confirmation from the Audit Commission that they have judged Dudley Council to be a 3 star authority in respect of the Corporate Performance Assessment. In their draft Executive Summary the Commission state “Dudley Council is performing well. Working effectively with its partners, the Council has clear and long term ambitions that are founded on the needs of its communities and which recognise the borough’s place in a wider, regional context.”
6. The overall scoring outcome of the provisional assessment is as shown below:-

Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	3
	Prioritisation	2
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	3
	Performance management	2
What has been achieved?	Achievement	3
Overall corporate assessment score		3
*Key to scores		
1 – below minimum requirements – inadequate performance 2 – at only minimum requirements – adequate performance 3 – consistently above minimum requirements – performing well 4 – well above minimum requirements – performing strongly		

7. A full copy of the report when published will be available on the Internet and a hard copy placed in the Members room.
8. This outcome is also welcomed as it endorses many of the significant steps taken by the Council since the previous Corporate Assessment in 2002, including:-
 - Working with others to develop a strong local strategic partnership, one which is responding positively to challenges such as the Local Area Agreement (LAA).
 - Developing a confident and challenging ambition to improve life in the Borough, through the work on the Black Country Study, as well as the local Community Strategy which covers the period to 2020.
 - Strong and effective engagement with local communities, through good consultation and work with the diverse communities that comprise the Borough.
 - Continuing our approach to make the most of our capacity, including the contribution of elected members, our workforce, work with partners and value for money.
 - Consistently good achievement of the Council ambitions and priorities in Regeneration, the Environment, Community Safety, Health Communities, the independence of older people and Children and Young People.
 - Sustained corporate improvement around use of IT, performance management, human resources, customer access through Dudley Council Plus and the public communications.

9. The areas identified by the Commission report for consideration include:-

- Work with the Dudley Community Partnership (DCP) to develop precise milestones and targets for improvement to underpin the priorities in the Community Strategy.

Response: *This issue has already been addressed in large part through the development of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) to be implemented from April 2007.*

- There is a need to develop a coherent strategy across the Council on how services with partners can improve quality of life in the most deprived areas of Dudley.

Response: *A joint review has already been initiated with partners in the DCP to assess future options for addressing disadvantage, including the future focus for neighbourhood management.*

- The Council needs to consistently set targets in the Council plan that are challenging and longer term.

Response: *The proposed draft Council Plan elsewhere on your agenda highlights the work done to include longer term targets throughout the Plan priorities. The Plan now also includes the stretched performance targets of the LAA to ensure that they are challenging, and linked to the objectives of our partners.*

- The Council should further improve the linkage between its financial and service plans so that longer term financial implications of its priorities are made clearer.

Response: *The Council has taken steps to enhance the integration between the preparation of the Council Plan and the development and review of the medium term financial strategy.*

- Further work is needed on the Council performance management system on defining and measuring the outcomes from policies; enhance the use of benchmarking against the highest performing councils; and ensure consistent measurement of performance in its partnerships.

Response: *The integration of the LAA targets with the Council Plan will provide a much greater focus upon community outcomes within the Performance management framework of the Council. We have worked with the DCP to ensure a consistent approach is adopted across the Partnership in the use of performance information and reporting. The use of benchmarking in quarterly reports has already been a consistent feature to date but will be reviewed to assess how this can be applied more effectively.*

10. On consideration of the information contained in the report, the Cabinet, at its meeting held on 21st March, 2007, resolved to recommend the Council to approve the proposals as set out in paragraphs 14 and 15 below. In addition, the Cabinet expressed thanks to Members and Officers who contributed to the Council in its being awarded overall 3 star status in respect of the Corporate Performance Assessment from March 2006.

Finance

- 11. There are no direct financial implications in this report

Law

- 12. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report

Equality Impact

- 13. The corporate performance assessment comments on the positive steps taken by the Council to engage all communities, while the services to vulnerable residents, Children and Young People are also acknowledged to be good.

Recommendation

- 14. That Council receive the outcome of the CPA Direction of Travel and 2006 Corporate Performance Assessment.
- 15. That the proposed response to improvement areas identified through the Corporate Performance Assessment report be endorsed.

David Caunt

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Leader of the Council