



## **Corporate Governance Committee - 18 May 2009**

### **Comprehensive Area Assessment update**

#### **Report of Client and Performance Lead**

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Fran Smith.)

#### **Executive Summary**

The Comprehensive Area Assessment came into effect in April 2009. This new approach will radically change how public sector organisations will be assessed. This report provides an update on the Comprehensive Area Assessment for Members.

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 CAA is the new inspection regime which came into effect in April 2009. It looks at how well local services are working together to improve the quality of life for local people. For the first time, local public services will be held collectively to account for their impact on better outcomes. CAA will look across councils, health bodies, police forces, fire and rescue services and others responsible for local public services, which are increasingly expected to work in partnership to tackle the challenges facing our communities.
- 2.2 It is a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. Assessments will be made publicly available, in print and online, and provide an annual snapshot of quality of life in the area.
- 2.3 It will give people information about how well services are delivered locally, and help them make decisions in their communities, in their own use of services, or perhaps where they live.

#### **3. CAA Framework Documentation**

- 3.1 Following extensive consultation the Final CAA Framework Documentation has been published. Details are available on the Audit Commission website [www.audit-commission.gov.uk](http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk)

- The final framework remains much the same as proposed in the most recent consultation. The Council did provide a response to the consultation as agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Board on 13 October 2008.

#### **4. CAA Organisational Assessment for Taunton Deane Borough Council**

- 4.1 The organisational assessments for councils, combines the external auditor's assessment of Value for Money (including Use of Resources) and a new assessment, Managing Performance.
- 4.2 We have already submitted our Use of Resources Assessment to the Audit Commission and they are currently undertaking on-site work with us. The Managing Performance assessment due in summer 2009 will focus on two areas:
- How well is the organisation delivering its priority services, outcomes and improvements that are important to local people?
  - Does the organisation have the leadership, capacity and capability it needs to deliver future improvements?
- 4.3 We will have to submit a self assessment on Managing Performance, however we are not yet aware of the final deadline for this work. This will be a much harder test and Members should be aware that in the current environment it is unlikely that the Council will achieve the top rating.

#### **5. CAA Area Assessment for Somerset**

- 5.1 The Area Assessment reviews performance against three overarching questions.
- How well do local priorities express community needs and aspirations?
  - How well are outcomes and improvements needed being delivered?
  - What are the prospects for future improvement?
- 5.2 Underpinning these three questions are cross cutting themes though the area assessment. These are:
- sustainability;
  - inequality;
  - people whose circumstances make them vulnerable; and value for money.
- 5.3 A CAA Partnership Group has been established made up of Performance Directors and Managers from across the public sector organisations that will be involved in the CAA Area Assessment.
- 5.4 The Terms of Reference for this group have been established and one of it's main aims is to prepare the area of Somerset for the CAA Area Assessment.

- 5.5 An approach to producing a self assessment for the area is currently being agreed by the group. This assessment will look at each of the 10 areas of focus and assessment how the area is performing against each of the three over-arching questions.
- 5.6 Auditors will start working on the Area Assessment around the end of June and it is anticipated that the majority of the self assessment will be completed around this time. The Somerset Partners have secured REIP funding to provide a resource for completing the self assessment. Adrian Gladstone-Smith has been appointed to undertake this work and is based at Taunton Deane Borough Council.

## **6. CAA: Making public bodies more accountable**

- 6.1 The Audit Commission will report on the CAA for Somerset in **November 2009**. In the report they will set out for the public how effective local public services in Somerset are tackling the issues facing them. The use of green and red flags will improve accountability by giving indications of exceptional success of areas where further or different action is urgently needed. Individual organisations will still be scored, with councils and fire and rescue authorities given a rating of performing excellently, well, adequately or poorly.

## **7 CAA and the Local Area Agreement**

- 7.1 The Local Area Agreement (LAA) includes both national targets (National Indicators) for improvement and local ones. In Somerset we have agreed a single set of 35 LAA targets which form part of the LAA with the government, in addition we have agreed a number of supporting tier indicators. For each of these National Indicators in the LAA, there is a Delivery Plan and a list of actions, most of these Delivery Plans have now been finalised and all the relevant TDBC targets and actions have been incorporated in the Corporate Strategy. All the Delivery Plans on the Somerset Strategic Partnership website.
- 7.2 As part of the CAA, the government will be assessing how well local services are performing against the LAA targets for improvement. The CAA will also assess local services in terms of how well they are performing against their local priorities.
- 7.3 **Implications for Taunton Deane Borough Council**
- The CAA introduces a substantial change in how local authorities will be assessed. The focus is increasingly on how local public sector organisations work together in partnership to deliver improved outcomes for local people as well as delivering value from money services. We will need to demonstrate our part in supporting partners to achieve those key LAA outcomes.

## **8. Recommendations**

- 8.1 Members should be aware of the CAA requirements, how they affect Somerset and Taunton Deane Borough Council and raise any issues for clarification with Officers.

Contact: Ruth James  
Performance and Client Lead  
Tel: 01823 356499  
[r.james@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:r.james@tauntondeane.gov.uk)