

Agenda Item

Executive Board

4 November 2009

UoR Action Plan



Use of Resources Action Plan

Summary

Following initial feedback from our external Auditors, Grant Thornton, on our first Use of Resources Assessment under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) for 2008/09, officers have drafted an Action Plan to address the Areas for Improvement identified by Grant Thornton.

Recommendation

That the Use of Resources Action Plan is approved.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

Implementation of the Use of Resources Action Plan which follows this report, will address the Areas for Improvement identified by Grant Thornton, enhance the Council's position for the next Use of Resources Inspection for 2009/10 and ensure the continuous improvement of the Council.

b) Alternative Options

None.

c) Risk Considerations

A failure to make satisfactory progress in addressing the Areas of Improvement identified by Grant Thornton may lead to the Council being criticised in a future inspection and could also compromise the Council's reputation and budgets.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

The policy implications of the recommendations are set out in the main body of the report. Most of the financial implications of implementing the recommendations are expected to be met from within existing budgets but, if there are any additional financial implications, these would be brought to the attention of members separately.

e) Date for Review of Decision

April 2010.

Main Body of the Report

1. Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) replaced Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) on 1 April 2009.
2. CAA consists of:
 - An Area Assessment.
 - An Organisational Assessment.
3. The Organisational Assessment consists of:
 - A Use of Resources Assessment which focuses on the present and was carried out in March/April 2009 by our external auditors, Grant Thornton.
 - A Managing Performance Assessment which focuses on the future and was conducted in June 2009 by the Audit Commission.
4. The Use of Resources Assessment is a new Use of Resources regime; it is not merely a changed system. It is not solely management of finances; it also includes management of human resources and natural resources. The focus of Use of Resources is on outcomes for local people and the achievement of our Corporate Strategy.
5. There was no formal requirement for a Use of Resources Self-Assessment but officers thought that it would be wise to produce one addressing the 10 Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) and the 39 sub-KLOEs. The Self-Assessment also included five case studies of current Council projects covering developments in the West End, Recycling, Systems Thinking Reviews, Neighbourhood Assessments and Participatory Budgeting.
6. The Use of Resources Assessment uses the Audit Commission's current four-point scale from 1 to 4 for each KLOE:
 - Level 1 - performs poorly.
 - Level 2 - performs adequately.
 - Level 3 - performs well.
 - Level 4 - performs excellently.
7. The Use of Resources Assessment is more demanding than previous assessments. As part of the Audit Commission's continuing drive to improve standards the scoring arrangements have been adjusted so that to attain level two the council must show that it has arrangements that are consistent with established professional practice and guidance, meet statutory requirements and operate effectively.
8. To achieve a level three, councils now need to demonstrate a higher standard of performance which includes operating consistently above minimum requirements and demonstrating a forward-looking and pro-active approach.
9. This is a significant challenge and it follows that the Use of Resources scores for 2008/09 are not directly comparable with those for the previous year. The Council's 2008/09 provisional Use of Resources scores were issued to the Council by the Audit Commission on 16 October 2009.
10. Grant Thornton provided initial feedback on our Use of Resources Assessment at the end of June 2009. They identified 48 Areas for Improvement which have been condensed into 29 actions in an Action

Plan which follows this report. The actions have been split into 14 themes.

11. Actions at Level 2, performs adequately, are identified in the Action Plan by dark shading in the action number column and those at Level 3, performs well, are not shaded. We will address the actions at Level 2 whilst striving to achieve Level 3 status for the other actions.
12. Progress with the Action Plan has started because we have been advised that our Use of Resources Assessment for 2009/10 may be carried out as early as November/December 2009. The Action Plan was reviewed and updated by Lead Officers last month so the comments in the last column are up-to-date as at 20 October 2009.

Legal Implications

There are no legal observations.

Financial Implications

Any financial implications will be met from existing budgets or will be identified and reported separately.

Background Papers

The Use of Resources Action Plan starts overleaf.

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