

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

9 August 2005

<p>AUDIT COMMISSION COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT - CORPORATE ASSESSMENT REPORT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN</p>
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Summary

1. To provide the Members of OSB with the opportunity to consider the Corporate Assessment report from the Audit Commission and to agree the associated improvement plan.

Introduction

2. In December 2002 the Audit Commission reported the results of the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) Middlesbrough Council was categorised as good.
3. This categorisation is based on two elements; service delivery and corporate assessment. Middlesbrough Council scored 3 (out of 4) for both these elements in 2002.
4. In both December 2003 and 2004, as part of the annual re-assessment process, the Council's categorisation was renewed based on reported changes in service performance.
5. In December 2004 the Audit Commission assessed that the Council had made sufficient progress in its service performance to score 4 in the service delivery element, therefore potentially improving the Council's overall categorisation to excellent. In order to secure an overall excellent rating the Audit Commission needed to carry out a proportionate Corporate Assessment to assess the Council's internal management arrangements.
6. The proportionate corporate assessment, looked at the Council's progress against the strengths and weaknesses contained in the Councils corporate assessment report 2002 and the Council's own priorities for improvement.
7. A team of Audit Commission inspectors visited the Council in February 2005 and again in June 2005.

8. The Audit Commission Corporate Assessment team found that our corporate management systems had improved sufficiently to enable this element of CPA to score 4, therefore securing an overall categorisation of excellent.
9. Middlesbrough Council is one of only 22 Councils (out of 150 Nationally) to score 4 in both elements of the CPA.

Evidence / Discussion

10. The report attached as appendix 1 presents the results of the corporate assessment that incorporates the earlier Audit Commission's audit of performance management arrangements.
11. The inspectors found that Middlesbrough Council has made good progress in key areas since the 2002 corporate assessment was carried out. It has built on its strengths and made changes to address its weaknesses. Strengths identified include:
 - Council and partners have a strong vision for Middlesbrough
 - Clear priorities for improvement that underpin the ambition for Middlesbrough
 - Demonstrated ability to focus on improving service delivery, cross cutting issues and its internal workings
 - Strong political leadership and strong corporate management team
 - Clear and effective links between ambition and priorities and service plans enabling monitoring of achievement
 - Improvements delivered in priority areas such as unemployment, overall crime rates, smoking and conception rates in under 18s
 - Improved internal communication
 - Clear about what it has achieved and what still remains to be done in terms of improving quality of life of local people
 - The Council has robust plans in place to deliver the ambition for Middlesbrough
12. However, the inspectors found the Council had some weaknesses such as:
 - No overarching workforce development strategy
 - High levels of sickness
 - An inconsistent approach to the promotion of service standards
 - Performance against some key indicators has not improved
 - Systems in place to support risk management are not fully developed, embedded or universally applied.
13. The improvement plan, attached at appendix 2, has been prepared in response to the weaknesses identified in the Corporate Assessment report, which incorporates the recommendations as set out in Performance Management Arrangements Audit Report.

AUTHOR: Kathryn Stokes, Principal Corporate Development Officer
01642 729559