



Report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Planning, Policy and Improvement)

Executive Board

Date: 9th December 2009

Subject: Comprehensive Area Assessment 2009

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Executive Summary

1. This report brings to the Board the outcome of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment – this is the first round of reporting under this new framework which has completely replaced the annual star rating of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The CAA reports bring together into an overall judgement a range of assessment and inspection work from the previous year including the annual performance assessments of both Adult's and Children's Services. The two reports tabled provide an external assessment of the council's performance and the broader performance of other local services. Members should note that the CAA reports are under embargo until 9th December and, therefore, will be tabled at the Board on the day of the meeting.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 This report bring to the Executive Board the 2009 Organisational and Area Assessment report for Leeds.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 The Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) is the new framework for the independent assessment of local public services in England. CAA has two main elements, which are linked and inform each other, these are:

- **Area Assessment** that looks at how well local public services are delivering better results for local people across the whole city, focusing on agreed priorities such as health, economic prospects and community safety, and how they are likely to improve in the future; and
- **Organisational Assessment** of individual public bodies which for the council comprises two scored assessments – Use of Resources and Managing Performance. These scores are aggregated to produce a single score for the organisation.

2.2 In addition, the National Indicator Set (NIS) introduced from April 2008, is also used as a key evidence source for both the area and organisational assessments.

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 The CAA is an annual assessment co-ordinated by the Audit Commission through the CAA Lead (CAAL) but incorporates the views of all relevant inspectorates (eg Ofsted, Care Quality Commission, Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary etc). The Area Assessment examines how well local services are delivering improvements and progressing towards long term goals. The Area Assessment seeks to assess the effectiveness of partnership working, and the implementation of the sustainable community strategy and local area agreement. The CAA provides the public with direct access to information on performance and an independent assessment of the prospects for the local area.

3.2 In carrying out the Area Assessment consideration has been given to three key 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?

3.3 The Area Assessment is reported as a narrative and does not receive a numerical score or other rating; instead 'red' and 'green' flags are issued in relation to the progress being made in an area. It is important to note that 'red' and 'green' flags are not the opposite of each other; they each have their own distinct purpose and criteria ie:

- Where the action being taken in an area to improve an important outcome is assessed by the inspectorates as unlikely to deliver the improvement sought, this may be highlighted as a significant concern using a red flag. It is important to note that a deteriorating outcome will not necessarily result in a red flag.

- Where exceptional performance or improvement is identified, or there are promising prospects for improvement through innovation, this may be highlighted as a source of learning for others using a green flag.

3.4 The Organisational Assessment covers the following key questions:

- Managing Finances – how effectively does the organisation manage its finances to deliver value for money?
- Governing the Business – how well does the organisation govern itself and commission services that provide value for money and deliver better outcomes for local people?
- Managing Resources – how well does the organisation manage its natural resources, physical assets and people to meet current and future needs and deliver value for money?
- Managing Performance – how well does the organisation manage and improve its services and contribute to wider community outcomes?

3.5 The first three questions are assessed in the annual Use of Resources Assessment. The Managing Performance theme is assessed by the CAAL using the National Indicator Set, judgements by other inspectorates eg the annual performance assessments on Adults and Children’s services and through an on-going dialogue in conjunction with the Area Assessment. Both the Use of Resources and Managing Performance assessments are given a score on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 4 (highest) and the overall Organisational Assessment result is a combination of the two elements using the matrix below:

		Managing performance			
Use of resources	Scores	1	2	3	4
	1	1	1	1	1
	2	1	2	2 or 3	2 or 3
	3	1	2 or 3	3	3 or 4
	4	1	2 or 3	3 or 4	4

3.6 Therefore, within this model the CAAL has some discretion in weighing up the evidence and taking account of local context in determining which themes should carry more weight. The scores represent the following descriptors of performance:

Overall [organisation x] performs poorly/adequately/well/excellently		
1	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements	Performs poorly
2	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements	Performs adequately
3	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements	Performs well
4	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements	Performs excellently

3.7 The results from the Use of Resources Assessment were released with the annual accounts in September 2009 and the council scored a level 3. The overall CAA assessment reports, which bring together a number of contributory assessments and inspections, are released on the 9th December 2009 and are under embargo until that date. Therefore, the Organisational and Area Assessment reports cannot be circulated in advance and will be tabled at the meeting on this date. The results of the annual performance assessment for Children’s Services which contributes to the overall CAA is also released on the 9th December and this report will be tabled at the meeting as well. Members should also note that the annual performance

assessment for Adult Services was released on the 2nd December and is the subject of a separate report on this agenda.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

4.1 The CAA framework has important implications; in particular, as government sees it as a catalyst for driving improvement and better value for money from local services. The CAA provides Members and the public with direct access to information on performance and an independent assessment of the future prospects for the local area. The CAA findings should be used to inform the setting of future priorities and policy for the city, directing resources and ensuring that our most vulnerable people and communities receive services which meet their needs.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

5.1 One of the clearly stated intentions of the new CAA framework is to reduce the burden of inspection; however, the experience of the first year of assessment does raise a number of questions about how effectively this has been achieved. Furthermore, in its place-shaping role the burden to co-ordinate any improvement activity arising from the Area Assessment is likely to fall to the council. The CAA is used to inform the rolling programme of inspections within specific service areas and high performing areas are likely to be subject to less frequent inspections.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The first round of the Comprehensive Area Assessment has been completed and the overall Organisational and Area Assessment reports for 2009 are brought to the board for discussion. These reports are under embargo until the 9th December therefore these reports will be tabled at the meeting.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 The Executive Board is asked to receive on the day at the Board meeting the published CAA reports.

Background Documents Used

Sustainable Community Strategy – Vision for Leeds 2004-20

Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-11

Council Business Plan 2008-11