



CABINET REPORT

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| Report Title | Audit Commission Progress Assessment – June 2007 |
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AGENDA STATUS: Public

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| Cabinet Meeting Date: | 25 th September 2007 |
| Key Decision: | NO |
| Listed on Forward Plan: | NO |
| Within Policy: | YES |
| Policy Document: | NO |
| Directorate: | Citizens, Finance & Governance |
| Accountable Cabinet Member: | Councillor Tony Woods |
| Ward(s) | N/A |

1. Purpose

1.1 For Cabinet to consider the findings of the Audit Commission assessment undertaken in June 2007.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet receives the assessment report.
- 2.2 That Cabinet note the progress made to date.
- 2.3 That Cabinet approves the actions set out in this report in section 3.3.

3. Issues and Choices

3.1 Report Background

This new Progress Assessment reports the findings from the Audit Commission review which took place in June 2007 and which was received by this Council on 9th September.

This follows the earlier Audit Commission progress assessment published in February this year that reported that the Council had not made adequate progress in improving its performance. The report set out seven recommendations for action, followed in March by additional, specific criteria for improvement.

3.2 Issues

The Assessment concludes that the Council has made adequate progress towards implementing the recommendations contained in the February 2007 progress assessment. The report identifies a range of areas where progress has been made, together with areas for further improvement. A summary of these points follows below:

a) Areas of progress

- The Council is beginning to demonstrate stronger political leadership;
- Financial capacity and planning has improved and there are better financial controls in place;
- The Council's swift action to address weaknesses in the finance have been recognised;
- The Council has taken steps to ensure effective managerial leadership, and lines of accountability and responsibility are now clearer;
- Improvements to performance monitoring have been made and performance trends are largely positive.

b) Areas for further improvement and consolidation

- There is a need to ensure that our improvement is embedded and made resilient and sustainable;
- Corporate and service planning needs to be improved with a greater focus on the outcomes to be achieved;
- More work is needed to address forecasted budget overspends.

3.3 Action Being Taken

The Council's Improvement Plan sets out actions to address the areas for further improvement. These include:

- Continuing to strengthen political and managerial governance to ensure that progress is sustained, that new systems and processes are embedded and that decision makers have current and accurate information on the Council's performance.
- A new Corporate Planning process is underway with the aim of producing a robust Corporate Plan. Plans are in place to revise our approach to service planning in order to better reflect corporate and partnership priorities, to make targets and outcomes clearer and to make service plans more accessible to a wider audience.
- Budget monitoring is already in place and Management Board is taking action to address the issues arising.

3.4 Choices (options)

1. Cabinet accept the findings of the Audit Commission report and endorses actions required to address areas of weakness.

4. Implications (including Financial Implications)

4.1 Policy

NONE.

4.2 Resources and Risk

FAILURE TO ADDRESS AREAS OF UNDER-PERFORMANCE COULD RESULT IN REFERRAL TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

4.3 Legal

THE RECOMMENDATIONS COMPLY WITH STANDING ORDERS AND FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

4.4 Equality

NONE

4.5 Consultees (Internal and External)

Group Leaders; Management Board

4.6 How Proposals deliver Priority Outcomes

Has a direct bearing on our plans for improvement.

4.7 Other Implications

None

5. Background Papers

Audit Commission progress Assessment Reports

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