

CABINET– 19 JANUARY 2010

COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT 2009

Report by Head of Strategy

1. Introduction

This report serves two purposes: -

- To summarise Oxfordshire County Council's results in the recent Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).
- To suggest areas for action planning for 2010, to ensure we show improvement in areas which have been specifically highlighted.

The CAA lead, Rob Hathaway, is in attendance at the meeting, and will give further information on the process and outcomes of the assessment as required.

2. Background

2009 was the first year of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, which replaced the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). As the name suggests, the focus is on an 'area' rather than the performance of one organisation. The joint inspection - conducted by six inspectorates, including the Audit Commission, Care Quality Commission and Ofsted - examines how well councils are working together with other public bodies to meet the needs of people in a particular place. Assessments are available publically on the 'One Place' website, which was launched in December 2009.

The CAA is divided into two parts:

- 1) an Area Assessment for Oxfordshire, and
- 2) an Organisational Assessment for Oxfordshire County Council.

3. How we performed

3.1 As an 'Area'

In the Area Assessment, green flags are awarded for exceptional performance that others can learn from; red flags are used to highlight significant concerns where action is needed. Oxfordshire received no red flags or green flags. Oxfordshire was praised for a number of strengths including:

- protecting the environment for future generations
- good partnership working to keep young people out of trouble
- responding well to the summer floods in 2007 and 2008

Overall the Audit Commission indicate that people in Oxfordshire get good value for money from their public services. Oxfordshire's social care services get a specific mention.

Specific areas for attention were also cited. The Audit Commission would like to see the pace of action quicken in relation to work to address the cycle of deprivation. Educational attainment was also flagged as an area that requires further partnership working. Congestion on Oxfordshire's roads was also mentioned, as was provision of affordable housing particularly in rural areas.

3.2 As an organisation

In the organisational assessment, Oxfordshire County Council was rated as 'performing well', achieving 3 out of 4 for 'Managing Performance' (this replaced the Direction of Travel element of CPA). To put this in perspective, across the country, only 14 authorities achieved a maximum four out of four in the CAA, whilst 11 were rated one out of four. Strong political and managerial leadership in delivering on priorities was praised, especially in the areas of improving core services and delivering efficiency savings.

Achievement of '3 out of 4' was common across the piece:

- Ofsted rated our children's services as performing well (3 out of 4).
- The Care Quality Commission assessed Oxfordshire's adult social care services as performing well (3 out of 4).
- The Council scored 3 out of 4 for use of resources, citing "strong financial management" and efficiency in using tax payers' money.
- Oxfordshire's Fire & Rescue Service was audited separately and came out as performing well. In its group of 13 comparative Fire authorities, Oxfordshire came out on top with a rating of 3 out of 4.

4. Action Planning for 2010

4.1 Partnership

The areas highlighted for improvement provide no surprises for the Council, and plans are largely in place which address the issues raised by the inspectors. Noted in the report is our current and planned partnership work to improve performance in areas such as:

- Reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill
- Reducing the numbers of people going into hospital by improved preventative work
- Fear of crime
- Teenage conception

There are specific areas for which the inspectors have said they wish to see a change in pace. These are: -

- Oxfordshire Economic Partnership – to ensure delivery
- NEETs – to follow through on plans
- Educational attainment – to see evidence of improvement

There are also areas where the Audit Commission and other inspectorates intend to do specific follow up work next year. They will seek evidence of a quickening pace to address the cross-cutting priority of breaking the cycle of deprivation. They will also turn a spot-light on:

- How successful we have been at meeting our carbon reduction targets
- Provision of affordable housing particularly in rural areas
- Community cohesion in Oxford and Cherwell
- Reducing the impact of alcohol consumption especially in Oxford City.

4.2 Oxfordshire County Council

As an organisation, the Council needs to play its part in the prioritised areas for partnership working. In addition to those already highlighted, also mentioned were:

- Skills and educational attainment of some people
- Relative number of people helped to live independently
- Make sure people are placed in good residential care settings
- Improve aspects of some adult safeguarding measures and help older people achieve independence through rehabilitation and intermediate care
- Ensuring older people get a say in how services are provided for them
- Provision of more extra care housing

Oxfordshire County Council performed well this year, however, we must ensure we act on the areas we have set out to improve. It would be positive to attain some green flags next year, and we have been asked to consider what areas we would wish to promote for possible green flags. Our CAA Lead has suggested:

- access to Oxford
- value for money
- youth offending
- the preventative agenda.

5. Best practice

The Audit Commission have recommended we look at green flag best practice to further inform our action planning for 2010. The policy unit has begun research into areas that other authorities received green flags for this year and officers will be following this up in the coming months.

6. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to:

- (a) Celebrate Oxfordshire's areas of good performance from the 2009 assessment**
- (b) Note the areas highlighted for follow up work next year**

TRACY LUCK,
Head of Strategy

Background papers: Oxfordshire Area Assessment
 Oxfordshire County Council Organisational Assessment

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December 2009