

TITLE: AUDIT COMMISSION PROGRESS ASSESSMENT – SELF ASSESSMENT

TO/ON: THE CABINET / 7TH DECEMBER 2005

BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

LEAD MEMBER: LEADER OF COUNCIL

STATUS: FOR PUBLICATION

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek endorsement of the self assessment of the Council's position prepared to inform the Audit Commission's Progress Assessment Review.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the draft self assessment attached to this report be endorsed.

3. REPORT AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS AND TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 3.1 As part of the ongoing development of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) system the Audit Commission is to undertake annual Progress Assessment Reviews (PAR's). A similar "direction of travel" assessment was undertaken in some, though not all, District Councils last year. The intention of this process is to allow Councils and citizens to understand the rate of progress within the organisation and how far it still has to travel to achieve excellence.

3.2 In Rossendale the PAR is part of a range of work by the Audit Commission leading up to the Council's next full CPA under the new "harder test" methodology. This programme covers:

- Use of Resources / Value for Money – A new annual assessment process which is currently underway.
- Follow up to previous work in relation to financial management and performance management.
- Annual Progress Assessment Review.
- Inspection of Environmental Services, scheduled for the first quarter of 2006. This will cover a very wide range of activities and consider how the Council is addressing the broadly defined "crime and grime" agenda and its wider social impacts.
- Annual Audit and Inspection Letter, which is scheduled for March 2006. This summarises all the work undertaken by the Commission during 2005/06.
- Inspection of the Strategic Housing function, which is likely to be in December 2006. This will focus on how well the Council has adapted to its changed role in relation to housing following the completion of the Stock Transfer process.
- Comprehensive Performance Assessment – While a date has not been formally set for this it is hoped that it will be carried out during the last quarter of 2006. However, ultimately the timing is in the Audit Commission's hands. This represents the first opportunity for the Council to be re-categorised and it is important that we fully take advantage of such an opportunity.

3.3 This programme of work gives us, members and officers, the chance to tell the story of the Council's improvement journey, while still continuing the "day job" of delivering and improving services.

3.4 The attached draft self assessment sets out the story of the progress made by the Council in the last 12 months and, equally importantly what we plan to do next. It is important that members are comfortable with both the description of the Council's journey and the picture of the organisation set out in the self assessment. Consideration of the document by both Overview and Scrutiny and the Cabinet allows this to be confirmed.

3.5 The self assessment provides a useful opportunity to reflect on and celebrate how far we have come, while acknowledging how much further we have to go. What is encouraging about the process this year is that some of what we can see in Rossendale stands as equal to the best in local government.

4. CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

4.1 FINANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1.1 The improvements in the Council's financial standing and financial management and the way in which risk management has been embraced form key elements of the improvement story set out in the draft self assessment.

4.2 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.2.1 The willingness of members to set priorities and stick to them is critical in providing the leadership and direction that the organisation requires. Similarly the willingness of members to engage in development activity represents a significant positive development for the Council as a whole.

4.3 HUMAN RESOURCES

- 4.3.1 A critical aspect of the improvement journey to date and of the Council's future journey is the ability to secure and deploy appropriate skills to address the issues which the Council faces.

4.4 ANY OTHER RELEVANT CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 4.4.1 There are no specific issues arising from this report.

5. RISK

- 5.1.1 As identified in the report, the approach to risk management has and is central to the journey on which the Council is engaged.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS ARISING FROM THE REPORT

- 6.1 There are no specific legal issues arising from this report.

7. EQUALITIES ISSUES ARISING FROM THE REPORT

- 7.1 There are no specific equalities issues arising from this report.

8. WARDS AFFECTED

- 8.1 All

9. CONSULTATIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet Members, Heads of Service, Local Community via Area Fora, Stock Transfer process, Master Planning and the Customer Satisfaction survey.

Background documents:

For further information on the details of this report, please contact:

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