

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

Progress Report



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September 2005

**Comprehensive Performance Assessment
Progress Report - September 2005**

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SETTING THE SCENE

1. On receiving our Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of a “weak authority”, the Council and Members acknowledged that we were at a crucial time to grasp the opportunity to improve. At our first Roundtable meeting in October we established the fundamental building blocks for the Councils branded “Journey of Improvement”. These are as follows:
 - to strengthen our corporate leadership
 - to develop a learning framework for the Council
 - to refocus and clarify our priorities and direction of travel
 - to strengthen the approach to procurement and risk management
 - to improve key services
 - to have a clear and focused approach to managing change
 - to develop a culture of performance management supported by a robust framework
 - to assist Members and Officers to perform through increased internal capacity and development opportunities.
2. The appointment of a new Chief Executive in October has been of critical importance. Her background has been in business and performance management through significant organisational change programmes. The Chief Executive together with the management team established an [Improvement Plan for October](#) to March 2005, which set out the key deliverables towards the building blocks above. The Council assessed the resourcing issues for the Improvement Plan with internal funding streams and also a [Capacity Building Bid](#) for £120,000. This bid has supported three principal strands of work, 1) undertaking a comprehensive management review of the second and third tiers, 2) development of a performance management framework and 3) building member capacity through a Member Development Programme.
3. Our organisational review has resulted in a [comprehensive management restructuring](#). This will be based on four new Directors with aligned Directorates underpinned by eleven Heads of Service posts. The organisational restructure will incorporate a review of service delivery arrangements through a structured, robust review process.
4. The Council recognises the ongoing challenges post CPA and have positively welcomed the support and encouragement from the [“Round Table” review meetings](#). These have provided positive and constructive feedback, and have enabled us to closely monitor our progress.
5. Externally, we have led a review and restructure of our Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). This has resulted in the creation of an executive group who are actively working on behalf of the LSP Board to align its work with future Local Area Agreement themes and delivering through local multi-agency teams. Whilst this work is at an early stage, this is a significant move in the Council’s leadership of the community agenda. The Deputy Leader of the Council is now a Member of the LSP and the Council’s strategic lead on the Leicestershire Local Area Agreement.
6. Based upon previous community and stakeholder consultation, members have revisited and refined the Council’s priorities for the next three years. This was achieved by an externally facilitated workshop, which also reaffirmed the Vision, Mission, Strategic Aims and overall Ambition for the Council. The Council’s ambition is to become a high performing Council within the next three to five years and ultimately an excellent Authority.
7. Just over a year since our CPA judgement much has happened. We can now show that we are progressively tackling those areas identified as our significant weaknesses. We continue to welcome external challenge on our journey of improvement, chiefly through Round Table meetings, which considers progress against our improvement plan. We have also strengthened our internal challenge through more robust planning and reporting mechanisms which is helping to ensure a sustained focused on service delivery during this period of significant change.
8. Ultimately the community, members and staff will determine the improvement of the Council. Their perception of the impact and added value of our achievements will be a crucial measurement of our success, and will be measured via our consultation mechanisms.

WHAT IS THE COUNCIL TRYING TO ACHIEVE?

9. The Council recognised that the CPA report outlined an organisation which was trying to do too much for everyone, with a lack of clarity around its ambition for the area and the priorities to focus upon. We are working proactively with our partners through the LSP to develop longer term ambitions for the area which are translated into specific strategic aims and priorities.
10. The Council's priorities for 2005-2008 reflect the local community agenda, the national agenda and also the CPA Improvement Plan. We have seven external and two internal priorities:
 - Revitalise Coalville and Ashby Town Centres
 - Develop strong, inclusive communities
 - Deliver the outcome of Housing Options Appraisal to meet tenants' expectations
 - Increase the number of people and specific target groups' participation in healthy activities
 - Improve the safety of the community
 - Reduce, recycle and re-use waste
 - Improve the street scene
 - Support service delivery improvements through best value principles
 - Develop itself into a customer-focussed organisation.
11. Following the decision of Council to adopt these priorities, work has been undertaken to identify the resourcing implications, which is reflected in the budget for 2005-2006.
12. To maintain focus and clarity it was vital to produce a new three-year [Council Delivery Plan](#), which is owned and understood by Members and Officers. The Council Delivery Plan for 2005-2008 will be reviewed and updated alongside and as part of the budget setting process for 2006-2009. The outcome of this process will reflect what has been achieved and also the Council's flexibility to adapt to the changing agendas locally, regionally and nationally.
13. Our three-year [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#) underpins the Council Delivery Plan. Financial resources are monitored and re-directed as appropriate from non-priority areas of work to key priority areas. The Council Delivery Plan sets out the Council's priorities, ambition and values. Significantly it has also established the actions, milestones, performance indicators, responsible officers and targets to deliver the priority outcomes for 2005-2006.
14. The Council Delivery Plan has provided the high-level structure to inform and facilitate the service planning arrangements. We have established six Divisional Plans – [Chief Executive's](#); [Community Services](#); [Housing Services](#); [Technical & Contracting](#); [Planning & Environment](#); [Central Support](#) – which contribute directly to the Council Delivery Plan and incorporate all the key actions and improvement measures. The six divisional plans are in turn informed by a greater number of service delivery plans. The divisional plans are at the heart of the organisation, containing the Council's Best Value and local performance indicators.
15. We recognise that maintaining our organisational focus is critical to our continuous improvement; we are putting in place the fundamental building blocks to establish an effective performance culture. The first logical step has been to implement a performance planning framework and [schedule of performance reporting](#) which has strengthened our officer and member scrutiny.
16. The Council recognises it needs the right people, with the right skills, behaviours and approach to take it forward in its "journey of improvement". The organisational re-structure clarifies roles, responsibilities and accountability throughout the Council, emphasising the importance of performance and service delivery. Three of the four director posts have been recruited with one outstanding vacancy currently being addressed. The critical third tier structure has been agreed with eleven heads of service posts created. Job descriptions and person specifications have been developed and endorsed by the East Midlands Regional LGA. During this period of change there has been a strengthening of the relationships with the Trades Unions through more regular meetings and a process of meaningful consultation. The progress to date could not have been achieved without their co-operation and support.

HOW HAS THE COUNCIL SET ABOUT DELIVERING ITS PRIORITIES?

Capacity

17. The initial task with regard to building internal capacity was to appoint interim managers to undertake key tasks relating to the CPA Improvement Plan. This resulted in an Interim Manager of Housing being appointed as a priority response to the CPA report. In addition a service manager was appointed as an Interim Corporate Director with appropriate 'back fill' arrangements implemented. There were also a variety of consultants employed in areas such as employment law, legal, human resources, various ICT projects, housing stock transfer, planning policy, procurement and risk. The work of these consultants was to bring capacity, challenge, support and development of existing staff.
18. We positively seek to create secondment opportunities for staff to take on more challenging and critical roles. A dedicated seconded team to manage the housing stock transfer project has been created. The Interim Corporate Director has added capacity to the change programme and has brought together the disparate performance and communications functions to create a single corporate support unit. This approach to capacity building has been fundamental to the Council being able to have achieved what it has to date.
19. The newly implemented [Performance and Development Scheme \(PADs\)](#) is one of the tools for achieving the Council Delivery Plan and establishing an embedded accountability and performance management culture. We have implemented this fundamental cultural change to assist us in addressing the skills, behaviours and performance of staff whilst identifying training and development needs.
20. To reduce our capacity gap and increase our skills in our planning and environmental health services we have embarked upon a "Grow Our Own" initiative. The Council offers bursaries to local students in return for their long term commitment to work for the Council throughout their degree programme, vacation periods and following their graduation.
21. To improve our service delivery we have reinforced and strengthened our absence monitoring procedures. We now monitor sickness absence levels on a monthly basis at divisional and service level through our computerised workforce system package. Through the closer working between human resources and divisions, sickness absence rates are now categorised and identified as either long or short term, this has in turn enabled appropriate support mechanisms to be established. Structured "back to work" interviews have been introduced and extensive stress awareness and management training has been provided.

Performance Management

22. The establishment and embedding of a performance culture was a critical message from the CPA inspection. Establishing that 'performance matters' has been a consistent message post CPA, supported by an enhanced performance management framework. We have recruited an experienced officer to the role of Policy and Performance to coordinate and support this process.
23. The capacity building bid has funded the purchase of the TEN Performance and Risk Management system, which provides the vehicle for a consistent and corporate approach to service planning and performance measurement. The system has now been populated; training undertaken and the second quarterly performance report will be produced directly from TEN. This process will be continually refined and developed for the 2005-2006 planning process.
24. Standardisation of all divisional and service delivery plans has ensured that we are developing the Council's "golden thread". Each improvement action contained within the Council, divisional and service delivery plans has a named officer who is accountable for its delivery.
25. All Divisional Managers have a monthly progress review with the Chief Executive and provide a formal quarterly performance report. This is underpinned by all service areas reviewing progress and performance within a structured framework, which has significantly impacted upon the culture of performance management. The formal [quarterly monitoring reports](#) are presented to the Executive Board and Scrutiny recognising the important role of Members in performance management.

26. All of our employees will have undergone a Personal Appraisal Development scheme (PADs) by October 2005. These appraisals will ensure that past performance is fully appraised with clear future objectives and targets being set and managed.
27. We have invested significantly to improve councillor capacity. The IDeA has supported a programme of [identifying training needs](#) and developing a framework to support the work plan for our scrutiny boards.
28. A fundamental review of our constitution to strengthen corporate governance arrangements is underway. Full Council considered and approved phase one of the review during on the 19th September 2005. Phase two of the review will be completed by April 2006 following the management restructure.
29. We are continuing to build upon our strong community leadership role and importantly, developing our relationships with partners and building upon our recognised successful relationship. Considering and addressing the needs for shared service provision has led to increased collaboration and pooling of financial and human resources with our key partners, which in turn has enabled an increase in capacity and a greater focus on outcomes. We are proud of our joint working arrangements with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, the Voluntary and Community Sector, Cultural (Sports, Arts & Tourism) Countywide Partnerships, Leicestershire Waste Management Partnership, and the Primary Care Trust.

Communication

30. We have enthusiastically supported the journey of improvement by investing in improved internal and external communications. Improvement initiatives include:
 - re-invigorated our 'Inner Vision' staff magazine which includes dedicated messages from Divisional Managers with regard to their services
 - introduced regular e-messages from the Chief Executive to update staff on progress
 - implemented Chief Executive "back to the floor" sessions
 - introduced regular (approximately quarterly) staff workshops with Chief Executive /management team that are interactive
 - introduced fortnightly Management Team meetings in all divisions to cascade information
 - Introduced "patch working" by the Communications Team
 - revamped our 'Vision' magazine and increased frequency to 10 editions per year. The magazine is distributed to households plus libraries and leisure centres across the district. Early feedback from readers and other stakeholders has been encouraging.

WHAT HAS THE COUNCIL ACHIEVED / NOT ACHIEVED TO DATE?

31. We have continued to maintain our strong position in relation to quality of service provision as evidenced by:

Achievement in Quality of Service

- We achieved unqualified accounts for 2003/04, a reflection of our continuing sound financial management
- We secured major external funding for our priorities - recycling, planning, housing, community safety, and member development
- Our rent collection remains in the top quartile (99.7 per cent)
- Performance for both Council Tax and Housing Benefit remains in the top quartile with 92 per cent of new claims being processed within 14 days
- Housing benefits consistently achieves top quartile performance and was rated by the BFI one of the top five per cent in the country for tackling fraud. Our Benefits Fraud Enquiry Team was further inspected in spring 2005 and praised by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate for their work and performance. This was described as "very impressive and performing at a high level", reflecting the expertise and commitment of our staff
- Attendance rates for leisure centres are on target to increase for the fifth successive year to above 12,000 per 1,000 population
- Housing services have been comprehensively reorganised in response to concerns expressed in 2004 and is on course to achieve 100 per cent Decent Homes Standard by 2010
- Our overall customer satisfaction rate remains at 85 per cent (2003-2004) and is in the top quartile.

Achievement of Improvement

- During the last financial year ending March 2005 our **BVPI trend** indicated that 74 per cent of comparable indicators maintained or improved performance (subject to final audit).
- Revenue collection services (council tax and business rates) have implemented a new and improved software system and the early indications demonstrate an improvement over last year's performance.
- Following a critical report from the District Auditor in 2004 we established a "Housing Repairs Action Group" to monitor progress against a "Housing Repairs Action Plan".
- We now process over 62 per cent of major planning applications, over 66 per cent of minor planning applications and 83 per cent of other planning applications within target timescales. These all exceed national targets and put us into third quartile for major and minor and the second quartile for others.
- We have developed and are in the process of implementing the Councils Equality Policy with a three-year implementation plan.
- We have achieved significant improvements in our combined recycling/composting rate over the past three years from 6.8 per cent in 2002/03 to 23.05 per cent in 2004/05. We are on target to exceed our 2005/06 statutory recycling/composting targets of 24 per cent by a significant margin. Thanks to Defra grant and District Council funding we expect to recycle/compost around 30 per cent.
- We have increased the percentage of households served by a kerbside collection of two or more recyclables. The 2004/05 figure is 92 per cent, which exceeds our target and has already risen to around 97% in the current year following the introduction of phase 4 of the kerbside recycling scheme.
- We have increased the number of interactions that are enabled for electronic delivery significantly in the last two years (64.25 per cent).
- Street cleansing standards, as measured by BVPI 199, have shown a significant improvement from 39 per cent in 2003/04 to 28.6 per cent in 2004/05 and 18 per cent on the first inspection in 2005/06.
- We have improved access to buildings for people with disabilities, from six per cent at the time of CPA to 35 per cent by the end of this financial year, with a further target of 70 per cent by 2007/08.

Investment

Technology

- The purchase of IBS has enabled our revenue and housing benefits sections to prevent duplication of processes and bureaucracies.
- We have recently purchased and rolled out TASK which, being compatible with TEN, has assisted us to monitor our performance.
- We are upgrading all internal PCs and our telephony system to secure greater efficiency and effectiveness

People

- We have introduced a performance appraisal scheme for all staff (PAD's) this will help embed the performance culture required within the organisation
- Risk management training and development are currently being sourced, enabling it to be fully integrated into the Council's performance management via the TEN Risk Management module
- We have provided stress awareness and detection training to managers and supervisors
- We are involved in both county wide (officers group) and national (COPE) partnerships

Business Improvements and Process

- The housing options appraisal has been completed and was signed off by GOEM in July 2005
- We have re positioned strategic human resources within the remit of the new Performance Directorate
- Building on work undertaken by external consultants, we are currently in the process of updating our risk register to reflect the new priorities and action in the Delivery Plan.
- We have established a Risk Management Group which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive
- We subject major projects to risk appraisals (e.g. Housing Options Appraisal)
- We have developed an initial [Procurement Strategy](#), which is currently being reviewed and refined to ensure we identify and implement Gershon efficiency gains
- The Leader of the Council has been appointed as "member champion" for procurement. We have successfully engaged with and developed collaborative links with the Centre of Excellence. Through these, we have been successful in two grant bids – P-Cards and Supporting People. At officer level, we have strengthened our collaborative work with LALAPO
- We have produced a 'Selling to the Council' guide for potential suppliers
- Our significant improvements in waste management have been achieved through a staged investment programme, which includes £1.1million from a Defra Waste Minimisation and Recycling Fund. This is an endorsement of the Council's Waste Management and Recycling policy and priority
- The Council has been awarded the following Planning Delivery Grant:
- Year 1: 2003/04 - £75,000; Year 2: 2004/05 - £367,622; Year 3: 2005/06 - £215,008

Culture Change

- We have implemented a robust sickness monitoring scheme and monitor sickness levels monthly at divisional and section level
- Sickness absence levels have fallen in the last year. The rate reduced to 10.1 days per full time equivalent employee in the financial year 2005 from 12.27 in 2004. A further 0.5 days reduction has been targeted for 2006 and we are seeing a downward trend based on the first quartile
- We are committed to becoming a customer focussed organisation and have laid the foundations by:
 - We have established an annual corporate "Listening Week".
 - This together with other more targeted work will be used to measure public satisfaction with the Council and our services. This information will be timely in order to direct our service planning process to ensure that our ambitions and priorities match those of our community
 - We have introduced a corporate customer complaints procedure
 - Developing and adopting an equality strategy and action plan
 - Developing a comprehensive social Inclusion strategy
 - Undertaking a review of our race Equality Scheme

32. We acknowledge we are at an early stage in our journey of improvement and many of the critical building blocks continue to be developed in order to become embedded within the organisation. In addition we recognise that we have not achieved the extent of planned progress in the following key areas:

- Street scene – re-organisation of service delivery
- Customer Service – embedding a customer focussed culture, developing a strategy and appropriate delivery plan
- Area Working – we are at early stages of discussion with key partners
- Project Management – we recognise the need to develop a corporate project management approach
- Service Delivery Plans – developing consistency and quality
- Review of the scrutiny functions and arrangements.

IN LIGHT OF WHAT THE COUNCIL HAS LEARNED TO DATE, WHAT DOES IT PLAN TO DO NEXT?

33. As an organisation we are now open in learning from our past experience. We now have a much greater understanding of the scale of improvements and changes required to assist us in the development and delivery of our priorities and ambitions, fully integrating performance management and strengthening our internal capacity.
34. We have recognised that any organisational restructuring may de-fragment a council and we are putting in place building blocks to ensure that we are “One Team – One Voice”. Staff morale together with recruitment and retention rates remains a challenge and we recognise that we need to continue to address these issues through strengthening our internal communications, recognising achievement and celebrating our success.
35. Within our planning service, we have learned to address our high level of staff turnover through the development of a ‘grow our own planner’ initiative. This uses our Planning Delivery Grant to recruit local students – paying their university fees, offering work placements during the summer vacations and guaranteeing them work at the end of their studies and training. Externally, we have shared our “Grow Our Own” proposals through the Leicestershire District Planning Forum. We intend to continue with this scheme and expand it as the year’s progress.
36. As an organisation we are learning from our past experiences, in particular, we have realised that we need to be realistic and not to over commit. An example being a re-appraisal for the requirement of a customer contact centre as the significant financial resources required could not be justified in terms of capacity or preparedness at this stage. We are learning not to be introspective and are addressing our policy towards attending external learning opportunities, with a structured, systematic feedback and shared learning framework being developed.
37. On an individual level, members of the Management Team and a cross section of middle managers have piloted a 360° Management Appraisal, to enable them to be more self aware of development needs.
38. We have started to strengthen our learning capacity in relation to procurement and risk management. We are actively seeking ways to learn from external partners (Centre of Excellence) and agencies. We have commissioned specialist consultants to help us evaluate our financial expenditure profile, we subsequently received a detailed spend and trend analysis which will form the basis of a planned project management approach to securing sustained efficiency savings.
39. We are key players in the Leicestershire and Rutland Improvement Partnership. This has three strands and we have taken the lead on performance management, sharing our knowledge in relation to the TEN computerised management system, its functionality and capability.
40. With regards to communicating and consulting with the community, we recognise that we do not as yet have a firm corporate approach. We have therefore appointed a specialist consultant from the Audit Commission to help us develop an appropriate action plan, which will support our journey in becoming a customer focussed organisation.
41. Importantly we have learnt that when engaging external consultants we need to be mindful of their approach and professional style. Consideration needs to be afforded to the potential impact upon the organisation as a whole and the organisations maturity in relation to change.
42. We need to strengthen and establish our reputation of delivery, internally and externally. Through embedding core initiatives such as project management, performance appraisal and developing a customer focussed organisation we will grow to become an organisation that is valued and has integrity in terms of delivery. Critically, this in turn, will raise the organisations expectations of it’s self and will influence raising our customer’s expectations of the Council.
43. Our new Performance Directorate will enable us to provide support to our services and improve performance management across the council. We will use the TEN computerised management system to link financial resources to performance management.

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44. We have learnt that we need to embed Value for Money within our service delivery and provision across the Council, and evidence this as being a driver for improvement.
45. Our planned learning has progressed; however, we recognise that we have not fully developed our processes in relation to capacity building and learning and engagement both internally and externally. We continue to embed and develop our mechanisms to sustain a measurable performance culture within the organisation, critically, we need to establish clear links with the high level strategic aims and priorities that are directly related to an individuals performance targets, and are visible in divisional and service plans.

Appendix

Key documents

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