

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01 HOURS, 20/12/05

North West Leicestershire District Council ‘takes first steps on road to recovery’

North West Leicestershire District Council is getting better according to a report published today from the Audit Commission. The council is now clearer about what it is trying to achieve. Internal leadership of the council is improving and there are early signs of improving performance.

North West Leicestershire District Council was among a number of authorities inspected in Leicestershire during 2004/05 as part of the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) of district councils which rates each as either excellent, good, fair, weak or poor. In September 2004 North West Leicestershire District Council was rated ‘weak’.

All ‘weak’ councils were required to produce an improvement plan. The Audit Commission is charged with monitoring and publicly reporting on improvement in these councils.

The Audit Commission looked at how North West Leicestershire District Council has moved on since last year’s CPA. It found that the council has made good progress in:

- Implementing a far reaching management restructure
- concluding key projects such as job evaluation and housing stock options appraisal
- embedding performance management arrangements that improve the accountability of officers and councillors

However it recognises that significant challenges remain. These include:

- concluding the organisation-wide restructuring
- further integrating service and financial planning to ensure key improvement priorities are adequately resourced
- Developing medium and longer term delivery plans

Phil Jones, Audit Commission senior manager, said:

‘The Council is clear about what it wants to achieve for the people of North West Leicestershire and it knows how to get there. It has made significant progress over the last year and is concentrating on the delivery of priorities that matter most. The council has worked hard to build an organisation that is capable of improving services, and there are recent signs of improvement in some services. For example, the performance of waste recycling, street cleansing, planning and the management of sickness absence have all improved significantly during 2004/05. The Council however recognises that improvement needs to be consistent across all services.

The Council continues to be open and realistic about its rate of improvement and where plans need to be developed and implemented. Overall, therefore, I am satisfied that the Council is taking the first steps on its road to recovery.”

Following today’s report North West Leicestershire District Council will continue to plan what it needs to do to improve, with support from the Audit Commission and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

The progress report for North West Leicestershire District Council is available from the Council, and through the Commission’s main site at www.audit-commission.gov.uk

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high quality local services for the public. Our remit covers around 11,000 bodies in England, which between them spend more than £180 billion of public money each year. Our work covers local government, health, housing, community safety and fire and rescue services.

As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we ensure that public services are good value for money and that public money is properly spent.

For further information about the Audit Commission, visit our website at www.audit-commission.gov.uk.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT ERIC LUDLOW, REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER ON 0116 250 4183