

By: Alex King, Deputy Leader of the Council  
To: Communities Policy Overview Committee – 13<sup>th</sup> July 2007  
Subject: CPA Corporate Assessment  
Classification: Unrestricted

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## **SUMMARY**

KCC's corporate assessment inspection is due in early 2008. This report sets out details of the corporate assessment process, work undertaken so far and actions that need to be taken to prepare KCC for this major element of the CPA framework.

## **FOR INFORMATION**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

KCC's corporate assessment is scheduled to take place in 2007/08 and will be one of the most important inspections of the authority in the last few years. The score we receive will influence whether we retain our future Four Star status.

Our last corporate assessment and inspection was in 2002. Since then the assessment framework has been revised and become a far harder test and from 2005 all authorities are being inspected under this new methodology. The expectation is that therefore it will be harder to retain our current score of four out of four for this block which has been a major factor in obtaining and maintaining our Excellent/Four Star authority status since 2002.

The score we receive for the corporate assessment we will keep, as it will not be run again as part of the current CPA process. If we are less than a Four Star authority at the end of the CPA regime in 2008/09 this could well affect the amount of regulation and inspection we can expect to receive under the post CPA methodology. Our performance against the corporate assessment block is therefore important.

Running concurrently alongside the corporate assessment will be the Joint Area Review (JAR) covering children and young peoples' services. The score we receive for this will also be important as it will dictate the score for that CPA block, and again we will not have a further JAR as part of the current CPA process.

### **2. OBJECTIVES OF CORPORATE ASSESSMENT**

Corporate assessment is a major part of the Audit Commission's CPA framework. It focuses on the importance of a sound corporate 'engine' to drive good services. It measures how effectively the council is working corporately, and with its partners, to improve services and deliver improved outcomes for local people.

As part of the revisions to the corporate assessment framework that took place in 2005 there is now greater emphasis on:

improved outcomes for users  
meeting the needs of diverse communities and users  
community engagement  
increased emphasis on community leadership, partnership working and value for money.

In addition, we will particularly need to demonstrate how our understanding of Kent is translated into ambitions and priorities for the community). We will also need to demonstrate how the capacity and performance management of KCC is being applied to deliver improved outcomes for the people of Kent.

### **3. FRAMEWORK**

Corporate assessment uses key lines of enquiry (KLOE) to provide a framework through which to gather and assess evidence about how effectively the council is working. The corporate assessment KLOE measures:

- how well councils understand their local communities and neighbourhoods
- how this understanding of local people and places translates into councils' ambitions and priorities
- their capacity to deliver these
- what councils are achieving.

A key change underpinning this emphasis is the introduction of shared priorities in the 'Achievement' theme. The council's management of the cross-cutting issues inherent in the delivery of the shared priorities, and the link to local priorities will provide an important focus for the corporate assessment. It will examine how we balance national policy objectives against local priorities and will assess our achievements against these priorities and plans.

The framework of the corporate assessment KLOE is set out for your reference in Appendix 1.

### **4. TIMING**

Both the JAR and corporate assessment inspections will be held w/c 28 January and 8 February 2008.

### **5. SELF-ASSESSMENT**

Authorities complete a self-assessment at the start of the corporate assessment process about six weeks prior to the inspection. The self-assessment is the principal reference point for the corporate assessment. The information and evidence it provides will be used to help inform judgements made by the assessment team and decisions regarding the scope and focus of their on-site fieldwork.

The self-assessment will be used as evidence of the extent of KCC's self-awareness of its current position in terms of its local context and its capacity to deliver improved outcomes for local people. It should therefore demonstrate a clear understanding of the challenges and opportunities KCC faces and a realistic evaluation of its strengths and weakness. In illustrating the current position, we may wish to highlight how we have addressed

weaknesses or delivered improvement. In evaluating what we have done or what has improved we should demonstrate what has changed in terms of outcomes for the community and the difference our council is making to local places and local people.

## **6. INSPECTION AND REPORTING**

The team undertaking the corporate assessment/inspection will comprise of a:

- Team leader(s)
- Inspector
- Link inspector ( with JAR team)
- Peer officer
- Peer member
- Project support officer.

The team leader for the JAR will be from OfSTED or CSCI and will have their own team.

An inspector analysis week will take place in Kent from 7-11 January 2008 which will be mainly a document review and there will be feedback to us afterwards. The week can include a tour by the inspection team and the possibility of talking to selected individuals. The inspection team will then finalise the list of interviewees for the actual inspection.

The inspection itself lasts two weeks although the inspectors are not on site every day. Formal feedback will be given during that period.

During the inspection the team will talk to a wide variety of individuals and groups inside and outside of the authority and they will hold focus groups with members, executive, staff and partners etc. They will also conduct an online 'survey' of stakeholders to gain their views.

The report will be written following the inspection and will be submitted for a national consistency check to look at how well it fits with other reports. We will then be sent a draft and have a couple of weeks to comment before the final report is issued. A final feedback session will then follow.

## **7 RECOMMENDATION**

Members are asked to NOTE this report.

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## Corporate Assessment Key Lines of Enquiry

The corporate assessment Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) provides a framework to assess the council against five themes arranged under three headline questions set out below:

### 1. What is the council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

#### Theme 1 - Ambition for the community

##### 1.1 Are there clear and challenging ambitions for the area and its communities?

This assesses evidence that

- ambitions for the community address the underlying needs of the area and its communities
- ambitions are shared amongst partner organisations and understood by staff and the local community
- ambitions are challenging but realistic – underpinned by prioritisation, capacity and performance management

##### 1.2 Are ambitions based on a shared understanding amongst the council and partner organisations of local needs?

This assesses evidence that

- data collection and analysis needs are agreed between councils and partner organisations and information is shared openly between them
- councils and partner organisations work together to assess changes in statutory responsibilities, to analyse demographic characteristics and trends, to consider the findings of performance monitoring, to identify gaps and shortfalls in provision, and councils and partner organisations work together to assess the likely availability of resources
- service users, staff and other stakeholders, including voluntary and community and private sector organisations, are encouraged to give their views and supported where necessary in doing so; measures are taken within this to involve black and minority ethnic groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage
- consultation recognises the range and complexity of service user needs and makes provision for choice

##### 1.3 Does the council with its partners provide leadership across the community and ensure effective partnership working?

This assesses evidence that

- the council demonstrates community leadership through its ability to work in partnership with the statutory, community, voluntary, business and private sectors to add value and deliver against its ambitions and priorities
- councillors and officers are willing to make difficult decisions about what are and are not local ambitions
- the council is effective in ensuring that partnership working is productive and sustainable and that accountability in partnerships is clear and robust

## **Theme 2 - Prioritisation**

2.1 Are there clear and robust priorities within the ambitions for the area?

This assesses evidence that

- priorities reflect the findings of needs assessment
- priorities have regard to national and local policy frameworks
- the priorities address the needs of black and minority ethnic groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage, and promote good race relations
- service users, councillors, staff and other stakeholders understand key strategic objectives

2.2 Is there a robust strategy to deliver the priorities?

This assesses evidence that

- corporate, service and financial strategies are linked within a deliverable framework
- there are clear and agreed targets for improvement which are outcome-based and challenging but realistic
- there is shared understanding amongst partner organisations of the duties, frameworks, and priorities governing each other's work
- resources allocated within and between partner organisations are managed, reviewed and revised in line with priorities

2.3 Is robust action taken to deliver the strategy?

This assesses evidence that

- the links between action plans and the delivery of strategic priorities are clear and demonstrate the extent to which the council targets resources or shifts resources away from non-priority areas
- service users, staff and other stakeholders are encouraged to contribute to action planning
- action plans address the needs of black and minority ethnic groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage
- action plans include sufficient detail of the action proposed to enable stakeholders to assess its fitness for purpose
- difficult decisions are taken where necessary and focus is sustained

## **2. What is the capacity of the council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?**

### **Theme 3 - Capacity**

3.1 Is there clear accountability and decision making to support service delivery and continuous improvement?

This assesses evidence that

- the roles and responsibilities of officers and councillors for taking decisions are clear
- decision-making processes are transparent and result in relevant actions; and decisions are made in time for action to be taken to meet priorities
- reviewing risks and opportunities is a continuing strand of planning, delivering and reviewing services
- there are protocols and procedures for conflict resolution within and between partner organisations
- councillors and officers work effectively within the ethical framework

3.2 Is capacity used effectively and developed to deliver ambitions and priorities?

This assesses evidence that

- there is a clear and sustained focus on value for money
- staff recruitment, retention and development activities are designed to ensure current and future needs are met
- workforce planning is undertaken as a collaborative exercise by all partner organisations including voluntary and community organisations
- the council ensures projects are properly resourced and rigorously managed
- there is a strategic approach to partnering, procurement and commissioning services which takes account of the capacity of voluntary, community and private sector organisations
- users and other stakeholders are able to access services which meet their diverse needs
- staff are encouraged to be flexible and innovatory in meeting service needs

3.3 Does the council, with its partners, have the capacity it needs to achieve change and deliver its priorities?

This assesses evidence that

- the capacity of councillors, management, staff, and organisational development is sufficient to ensure clear leadership and support the achievement of priorities;
- existing financial capacity is sufficient to achieve the council's objectives, sustain performance, and promote improvement; and financial management arrangements are secure
- ICT resources and e-government are used to support delivery of priorities and greater choice for service users
- the council works with partnerships to enhance its financial and other capacity so as to achieve its ambitions and priorities
- full account is taken of diversity, user focus and human rights issues in decision making and achieving outcomes
- the council, with its partners, has the capacity to respond flexibly to changing circumstances and emerging challenges

## **Theme 4 - Performance management**

### **4.1 Is there a consistent, rigorous and open approach to performance management?**

This assesses evidence that

- councils and partner organisations individually and collectively review performance within a culture of open debate and constructive challenge
- the level of involvement of councillors and senior officers in performance review is consistent with their roles and responsibilities and reflects the importance for individuals and communities of meeting target standards and/or action milestones
- review cycles reflect risk and the time needed to take necessary remedial action
- resource management is integrated with performance management to support a sustained focus on priority issues
- there is a well publicised, user-friendly and supportive system for service users and staff to submit complaints or grievances, or representations about service performance
- the council and its partners invite external evaluation where this may add materially to their own internal processes
- managers and staff focus on performance and use performance management as an integral part of how they work

### **4.2 Do the council and partner organisations know how well they and each other are performing against planned outcomes?**

This assesses evidence that

- providers work together to develop and consider relevant performance information, including trends over time and comparisons with both similar areas and the national picture
- data collection and analysis includes reference to the needs of black and minority ethnic groups and other groups at risk of disadvantage, and geographic areas
- providers work together to compare and evaluate processes, costs and outcomes with those of similar providers
- service users, staff and other stakeholders, including voluntary and community organisations, contribute to performance review and are informed about its outcomes

### **4.3 Is knowledge about performance used to drive continuous improvement in outcomes?**

This assesses evidence that

- targets for improvement are set in line with priorities, performance and satisfaction levels are monitored and analysed, and under-performance is identified and addressed
- the council uses performance management to co-ordinate service delivery to communities and users
- actual or likely difficulties with carrying out action plans in line with priorities are raised by partners at an early stage
- user complaints and staff complaints and grievances are used to inform service development
- providers use performance review, inspection findings and independent reviews in developing priorities and improving value for money

### **3. What has been achieved?**

#### **Theme 5**

Achievement is assessed by examining how well councils are delivering local priorities and outcomes across five sub-themes. These are based on the 'shared priorities' agreed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's central and local government partnership. The five 'shared priority' sub-themes are given (in bold text) after the summary of achievement below:

#### Summary of achievement

5.1 What progress has the council made in delivering its priorities and improving quality of life for local people?

This assesses evidence that

- improvements are being developed, implemented and delivered in partnerships to sustain current and future improvement in national, shared priorities. The improvements are in line with local need and local priorities
- the council is working in partnership to improve areas local people say are important to their communities. Improvements are contributing to wider community outcomes and national, shared priorities to create a more sustainable, safe, cohesive and healthy community, and improved outcomes for children, young people and older people
- the council is improving access to services, and quality of life for all its citizens and local communities including those at risk of disadvantage

#### **Sustainable communities and transport**

5.2 What has the council, with its partners, achieved in its ambitions to develop sustainable communities, integrating economic, social and environmental issues?

This assesses evidence that the council, with its partners, co-ordinates its work on economic development, the housing market, the environment and transport to improve quality of life and deliver a more sustainable future all its communities by

- promoting and supporting a sustainable local economy, helping secure jobs and wealth
- addressing the area's housing requirements and housing needs
- delivering a quality environment now and promoting and supporting sustainable lifestyles to ensure environmental quality for future generations; and
- using the transport system, and where applicable the planning system, to increase the opportunities for all sectors of the local community have to access work and important services without need for a car

#### **Safer and stronger communities**

5.3 What has the council, with its partners, achieved in its ambitions for building safer and stronger communities?

This assesses evidence that the council contributes to successful outcomes through effective partnership working to

- reduce and prevent crime and fear of crime
- reduce anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- reduce the impact of drug and alcohol misuse on communities, individuals and their families
- reduce accidents and make people feel safer
- be well prepared for internal or external emergency situations
- build stronger communities

## **Healthier communities**

5.4 What has the council, with its partners, achieved in its ambitions for the promotion of healthier communities and the narrowing of health inequalities?

This assesses evidence that the council, with its partners, is achieving real and measurable improvements in the health and well-being of local people, notably, that

- the health of all the communities the council serves is improving as a direct result of the activities of the council
- the council is reducing health inequalities and the gap in life expectancy between its diverse communities

the council is improving access to services for those most at risk of disadvantage

## **Older people**

5.5 What has the council, with its partners, achieved in its ambitions to promote and support the independence and well-being of older people?

This assesses evidence that the council is working with its partners, and with older people, to

- develop a strategic approach to older people that goes beyond health and social care and covers the areas that older people say are most important
- undertake meaningful engagement with older people and their representative groups on all aspects of the strategic approach and service provision
- deliver a comprehensive, co-ordinated range of services to older people

## **Children and young people**

Normally, when the Joint Area Review (JAR) and corporate assessment are happening at the same time, the description and judgement of the council's and its partners' contribution to the quality of outcomes for children and young people will be summarised from the JAR report. In the exceptional circumstances where the two processes do not take place at the same time, the Ofsted/CSCI annual performance assessment for children and young peoples' services will form the basis of this section of the report.