

Audit Commission Consultation Exercise Transition to Comprehensive Area Assessment

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

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1 Purpose of Report

In 2009 the current Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) arrangements for auditing of local public sectors services will superseded by Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA). CAA will develop a shared view about the challenges facing an area, such as crime, community cohesion, a sustainable environment or public health issues and will also create a more joined-up and proportionate approach to public service regulation. This report advises of the Audit Commission's consultation proposals regarding the transition from CPA to CAA.

2 Recommendations

Members are requested to authorise officers, in dialogue with the Chair and Vice-Chair, to prepare a draft response on behalf of the Fire Authority to the Audit Commission's consultation proposals.

3 Background

The Local Government White Paper and the subsequent Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill (the Bill) set out a new performance framework for local services. The White Paper signalled a new stage in reforming local services with a new performance framework including Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) at its heart. CAA will focus on place rather than the individual bodies responsible for local services. It will look across local government, housing, health, education and community safety.

The Audit Commission has recently (4 April 2007) published consultation proposals for how it intends to manage the transition from Comprehensive



Performance Assessment (CPA) of local government to the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) framework. The CAA framework is proposed to be in place from April 2009, and will cover all local public services including fire and rescue authorities (FRA).

The proposals can be viewed in full at:

www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa/cpatransition.asp

It should be noted that the introduction of CAA is, of course, dependent on the Bill being approved by Parliament and the Audit Commission's proposals assume, out of necessity, that it will receive Royal Assent and the main provisions will be enacted.

It is essential that the transition is carefully managed over the next few years to maintain and accelerate improvement in public services. The Audit Commission's proposals do not seek to address all of the issues that this raises but to signal some of the key factors to be considered and some of the main steps necessary to achieve this aim.

There are three key stages to the transition:

- 1 Short-term updating of the CPA framework to apply to single tier and county councils for reporting in February 2008. This will not affect the Fire Authority.
- 2 The transitional year of 2008/09, the final year of CPA, while the new arrangements are being put in place
- 3 Implementing the new performance framework, including CAA

There are a number of other changes to the landscape of local government that will need to be considered in the transition from CPA to CAA. In particular, the impact of any changes to local government structures in two tier areas will need to be carefully considered both as part of the transition and the development of a new framework. Furthermore, CAA represents a fundamentally different approach to assessment that is area based, risk focused and more forward looking than current assessment activity. The new framework will need to take account of how services are delivered across areas and focus clearly on outcomes.

The Commission's consultation proposals provide a starting point for widespread discussion over the coming months. Further consultation on the detail of the assessment framework will be carried out jointly with other public sector regulators later in the year.

4 Consultation Exercise

The Commission is seeking views on a range of questions set out within their consultation document. **The closing date for responses is 14 June 2007.**



Subject to Member approval, officers in dialogue with the Chair and Vice-Chair will prepare a draft response on behalf of the Fire Authority, bringing proposals to the Authority meeting on 13 June 2007 for final approval, prior to submission on, or before, the deadline.

5 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Any consequential financial implications arising from the Audit Commission's proposals will be the subject of a separate report.

6 Legal Comment

The Audit Commission Act 1998 places statutory responsibilities upon the Audit Commission to undertake assessments of local government bodies, which includes Fire Authorities.

Local government bodies are required by the Local Government Act 1999 to participate in the assessments undertaken by the Audit Commission.

7 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Personnel 5 Part 2) and have determined that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising from this report, as it is purely advising Members of the consultation document published by the Audit Commission. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

8 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

9 Background Papers

Audit Commission April 2007 *The transition from CPA to CAA, including consultation on CPA – the harder test framework proposals for 2007*



Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	*
Business Continuity Planning	*	Legal	*
Capacity	*	Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act	*	National Framework	*
Comprehensive Performance Assessment	*	Operational Assurance	*
Efficiency Savings	*	Retained	*
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	*
Fire Control/Fire Link		Strategic Planning	
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	*
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*

