

Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

Purpose

This report updates members on the development of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) and self assessment tool and seeks to develop communications with councils to support the board objective 3 - to influence the development of and help the sector prepare for a proportionate, risk-based, outcome focused approach to performance monitoring, assessment and inspection that helps councils improve and reduces the burden.

Decisions

- *Agree the proposed approach to responding to the joint Inspectorate consultation on CAA and authorise lead members to approve the response (see paragraphs 1-5);*
- *Agree the proposed communication plan and the draft member guide to CAA (paragraphs 6-8);*
- *Note the progress on the annual self evaluation tool and subject to a report on the further trialling agree to promote take up of the tool with the sector in the autumn (paragraphs 9-13).*

CAA – responding to the joint Inspectorate consultation

1. *The joint Inspectorate consultation paper on CAA was published on 29 July. A copy of the LGA’s “On the day” Briefing, prepared on the basis of the Board’s previously expressed views, is attached at Annex A. The deadline for responses to the consultation paper is 20 October.*

2. *In summary the revised proposals responded to many of the LGA’s concerns, including:*

- *A greater emphasis on data emanating from robust local performance management arrangements as the starting point for the assessment, with strong support for the LGA/IDeA self assessment tool;*
- *A streamlined assessment framework involving two assessments – the area and organisational assessment, with a score for the latter, supporting our desire for information to continue to tell a strong story about council improvement;*
- *Greater emphasis on the forward looking nature of the area assessment, with revised questions focusing more on future outcomes rather than process and removal of language around risk;*
- *A better explanation around how this will work in two-tier areas, with a particular focus in the draft reporting tool.*

3. *The proposals are ambitious and to a large extent reflect the White Paper commitment and what the sector has been calling for, but time will tell whether the principles that underpin CAA can be turned into practice.*

- *This will require councils to seize the opportunity and become a confident, self determining sector that drives its own improvement through increased self-awareness, self-assessment and robust performance management.*
- *It will also require inspectorates to genuinely take a proportionate approach where there is evidence of robust performance management and have the skills and capacity to conduct credible assessments. It will require GOs not to duplicate the role of CAA lead in assessing performance and it will require government departments to send consistent messages to partners around the centrality of the new performance framework.*

4. *Whether CAA will actually deliver a reduced burden in practice remains to be seen. We are concerned about the potential scope of the managing performance assessment and are not yet convinced that the scope of the Use of Resources assessment has been significantly reduced.*

- *We are therefore working closely with the CAA trial sites and those authorities trialling the self assessment tool to test whether CAA can work in practice;*
- *We are also helping the sector prepare for CAA, holding conferences, regional seminars with Chief Executives and developing communications specifically for members;*
- *We will continue to work with the other inspectorates as they develop proposals to ensure inspection regimes are aligned – a key component in reducing the burden;*
- *Finally, we are continuing discussions with the Audit Commission regarding the use of peers in CAA, which we believe is essential to establishing credibility in the sector.*

5. Members are asked to express any additional views on the CAA consultation and authorise lead members to approve the LGA response in the light of the Board’s previously expressed views and further comments from the sector.

CAA - communications

6. *At the last Board meeting members agreed that the LGA had a positive role to play in helping the sector to understand the ambitious nature of CAA, the opportunities it presents for*

the sector to take even greater responsibility for driving its own improvement and to avoid the sector talking itself back into a more prescriptive approach to assessment.

7. *As suggested a draft communications plan to support sector engagement during the current consultation period has been prepared and is **attached** at Annex B. A short member guide to CAA has also been prepared and is **attached** at Annex C. Subject to members' comments the draft will be revised and circulated to councillors via an insert in **first** later in September.*

8. Members are asked to agree the proposed communications plan and the draft member guide to CAA.

Supporting the sector – the approach to area self evaluation

9. *At the last meeting members agreed a programme of LGA/IDeA work to support the sector in implementing CAA. This report updates members on development of the self evaluation tool.*

10. *Following LGA/IDeA lobbying, the joint Inspectorate proposals for CAA place significant emphasis on self assessment.*

“Councils and their partners, and their representative bodies, are developing approaches to self-evaluation. While we are not making it a requirement of CAA, we do expect that each area will wish to complete an annual self-evaluation and we will take full account of it and any service level self-evaluation. We do not intend to repeat the work carried out already by the council or its partners. We will expect that any self-evaluation is based on verifiable evidence. The more robust the self-evaluation the more reliance we will be able to place on it.

11. *The IDeA and LGA approach to self evaluation has been tested in a number of localities. Feedback from councils is that the exercise was useful as an improvement tool in its own right. They found the experience to be useful in further developing their partnership working to achieve local outcomes. They also found that it was useful to help them think through the issues and areas that they need to address in readiness for CAA. A more detailed summary of the learning is **attached** at Annex D.*

12. *The approach to self evaluation has been revised in the light of this experience and feedback from the Inspectorates. It will be trialled in the following areas over the autumn: Hambleton with North Yorkshire; Buckinghamshire; Salford; Wirral; Richmond; Sunderland and Rotherham with a further report back to the Improvement Board on 25 November. It is intended that by end October/early November we will be able to demonstrate a fully tested and tried methodology and the next stage will then be to promote take up of the approach to self evaluation with the sector.*

13. Members are asked to note the progress on the annual self evaluation tool and subject to a report on the further trialling agree to promote take up of the tool with the sector in the autumn.

Implications for Wales

14. *There is a different approach to performance management in Wales*

Financial/Resource Implications

15. *There are no additional resource implications arising from this report*

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