

## Comprehensive Area Assessment

### 1. Summary

#### This report

- Invites members to agree the key issues on which LGA should continue to press for changes in the CAA methodology;
- seeks members' agreement to promote take up of the self evaluation tool;
- reports the initiation of discussions about the shape of inspection and assessment beyond CAA.

### 2. Recommendations

- note the LGA response to the CAA consultation paper and agree the key issues on which the LGA should continue to press for changes in the CAA methodology, set out at Appendix 2;
- agree to promote take up of the self evaluation tool;
- agree proposals for lead member engagement with the Inspectorates;
- note the proposed publication about lessons for improvement and offer any comments.

### 3. Action

- continue discussions with the Inspectorates to shape the way CAA is finalised;
- promote the self evaluation tool with the sector;
- prepare Foreword to improvement publication for Cllr David Parsons.

## Comprehensive Area Assessment

### CAA: influencing the final methodology

1. At the last meeting members discussed the Inspectorates' proposals for CAA and authorised the lead members to approve the final response. The LGA response was developed in the light of members' views, responses from councils and discussion with the sector, and in the light of feedback from the CAA trial site councils. In summary the response reaffirms support for an outcomes and area based assessment that puts citizen views at the centre and which reduces the burden on councils and partners - but highlights a number of concerns about the methodology that need to be addressed and also about how other performance frameworks need to be integrated with CAA. The full response is available on the LGA website –

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelid=1138663>.

2. Over the last few months the CAA methodology has been developed and tested in 10 areas across the country. We have met with representatives of the trial councils throughout the process in order to provide a mechanism for sharing experiences and drawing out the lessons learnt on behalf of the sector. A copy of the sector's evaluation of the trials, prepared with the councils involved, is attached at Appendix 1. The trial councils also have a number of messages to share with others about preparation for CAA, which we will be promoting to the sector. Jane Scullion, Assistant Chief Executive, Stockport MBC will report to the Board on the experience of the CAA trial in Stockport.

3. The Inspectorates will be finalising the CAA methodology over the next couple of months, for sign off and publication in the New Year. It is important our continuing efforts to influence the way CAA is finalised are informed by the lessons learnt from the trials and councils' feedback on the consultation proposals.

4. Members are asked to agree the proposed issues on which LGA should continue to lobby for changes in the CAA methodology set out at Appendix 2 attached, and note the LGA's formal response to the CAA consultation paper.

### Self evaluation and support to the sector

5. Following LGA and IDeA lobbying the joint Inspectorate proposals place considerable emphasis on local performance management data – including self evaluation – as a starting point for CAA. In two phases of trialling, IDeA has now worked closely with 13 councils to develop and test an approach to self evaluation that can be used by councils and partners to evaluate performance against outcomes and the prospects for improvement. Further details about the progress of this work, peer challenge and other support to the sector alongside the self evaluation framework are attached at Appendices 3 and 4 respectively.

6. Feedback from the councils that have tested the self evaluation approach has been very positive. Their experience of undertaking the self evaluation was that it was beneficial for their partnership working and as a way of ensuring that they were

ready for CAA. Subject to refinement in the light of any further feedback from the councils involved and the Inspectorates

Members are asked to agree that the LGA and IDeA should promote take up of the self evaluation framework with the sector as an improvement tool in its own right as well as ensuring readiness for CAA.

**Developing sector led improvement and the longer term implications for inspection and assessment**

7. The sector's track record of improvement, the development of stronger sector led support for improvement and financial and political pressures all serve to challenge the contribution inspection can make in the future. There is now a much greater ownership of poor performance and the development of strong sector support mechanisms at national, regional and local level with sophisticated mechanisms for spotting performance issues and providing effective sector owned support at a much earlier stage than has been traditionally possible. At a national level LGA politicians and national group officers are able to bring pressure to deal with political blockages to improvement which has already proved effective in a number of circumstances.

8. Lucy de Groot and Andrew Cozens will update the Board orally on officer discussions which took place with the inspectorates at a dinner on 11 November, hosted by Lucy and Paul Coen. The purpose of the dinner was to reflect on what a proportionate inspection regime, within a framework of self improvement, would look like for local government in the longer term. Attendees included representatives of eight inspectorates (including the Audit Commission), improvement bodies and chief executives from five local authorities. The dinner laid the ground for subsequent member-level engagement by Board members with the Inspectorates. Proposals for taking this forward will be brought to the meeting.

**Comprehensive Performance Assessment and improvement**

9. To coincide with the announcement of the final round of CPA results, IDeA, on behalf of the LGA Group, is interviewing Leaders and others about their authorities' improvement journeys so far. The interviews will be distilled into a publication for January 2009, consisting of 10 stories and a 'think piece' about the forces for improvement at a local level over the last 6 – 10 years, with a Foreword by Cllr David Parsons, Chair of the Improvement Board. In particular, the publication will consider how far perceptions about drivers of improvement have changed and will continue to drive improvement as local authorities become more effective and confident.

10. We understand the Audit Commission is also to publish a report on CPA which will be a retrospective of seven years of the performance regime, drawing on quantitative analysis of how it worked. This will be published on 26 February to coincide with publication of the final reports.

The LGA Group publication will complement the report from the Audit Commission, by providing a broader qualitative reflection on the drivers of improvement based on direct experience from council leaders.

## **Financial Implications**

11. There are no additional resource implications for the LGA arising from this report

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## Implications for Wales

12. There is a different approach to performance management in Wales.

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