

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**FRIDAY 22 MARCH 2002 AT 2.00 P.M.**

Agenda Item No.

**19**

**COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CPA) –  
PATHFINDER FOR THE PROCESS**

Report of the Chief Executive

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Executive Member:- Robert Ellis

**1. Purpose of report**

To provide an opportunity for members to discuss the comprehensive performance assessment for which we are a pilot authority.

**2. Background**

All top-tier authorities will be subject to the comprehensive performance assessment during 2002. This assessment has been introduced by the audit commission, working with other inspectorates, in response to widespread criticism from the local government community that there were too many inspections and that they overlap and sometimes contradict each other. The CPA will involve all of the inspectorates (Ofsted, SSI, HMI Fire Services etc) and deliver a single annual report card. Authorities will be placed in one of four streams, Top Performing, Striving, Coasting or Failing and future inspection, freedoms and possibly financial rewards will be based on the outcome.

Hertfordshire has volunteered to be a pathfinder authority for the CPA and is working to the following timetable:

**27 March**

**Self-Assessment** we are currently working on producing a 20 page document which gives our own assessment of our current performance and prospects in the area of local governance. The questions that we are required to address are:

- what is the council trying to achieve?
- how has the council set about delivering its priorities?
- what has the council achieved/nor achieved to date?
- in the light of what the council has learnt to date what does it plan to do next?

Appendix 1 sets out the more detailed set of questions from the Audit Commission

A first draft of our self-assessment document will be circulated to Members by the close of play on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March to give an opportunity for comment and discussion at the Cabinet Meeting.

- 21/22 March**      **Scrutiny Bid** meetings for Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen to review and comment on the draft self-assessment.
- 26 March**      **County Council** – the CPA will be an item on the County Council agenda and there will be a seminar for all Members on the rising of County Council to review the final draft self-assessment and discuss the next steps of the process.
- 27 March**      **Self-Assessment Deadline** – self-assessment e:mailed to Audit Commission Inspection Team
- 9 April**      **Round Table Discussion** – a meeting with our inspection team and representatives from the SSI, Ofsted, District Audit and possible others to provide constructive challenge to our self-assessment and performance indicator information in order to prepare for the assessment risk (we have yet to hear who will attend or how it will be organised)
- 18 April –  
1 May**      **Corporate Assessment** – on-site inspection visits by our inspection team which will take a maximum of ten days. The assessment team will have reviewed our self-assessment, performance indicators and other documents and consulted people who have inspected the authority previously before the on-site visit. The visit will be used to investigate and challenge any issues arising from the self-assessment and will probably include:
- observation of officer and member meetings
  - interviews with members and senior officers
  - focus group of staff
  - meetings and discussions with external partners
  - input from local communities and service users
- mid to late  
May**      **Provisional Assessment** – we will receive the provisional assessment made by the inspection team at this stage but we will not be allowed to publish this, results for all authorities will be published by the Audit Commission at the same time in the late Autumn.

**May onwards Improvement Plan** – following the assessment the authority will be required to produce an improvement plan which demonstrates how we intend to meet the requirement to provide continuous improvement and addresses any issues raised through the inspections.

The members of our inspection team are:

Ian Hickman - Team Leader. Currently a lead auditor with the Audit Commission. At one time Assistant Director of Leisure Services with Broxbourne Borough Council.  
Helen McMahn - An inspector with the Best Value Inspectorate, formerly part the team supporting Bedfordshire's scrutiny function and the lead inspector for our ICT inspection.

Kevin Huggins-Cooper - Auditor

Jill Barrow - Peer reviewer formerly Chief Executive of Lincolnshire County Council

Paul Bettison – Peer reviewer, leader of Bracknell Forest Unitary Council.

As part of the CPA the Best Value Inspectorate will be carrying out inspections of our Highways Maintenance and Libraries services later on this year. In recognition of the aspiration to decrease the inspection burden planned best value inspections this year have been cancelled

### **3. Cabinet Decision**

Cabinet is asked to view and comment on the:

- draft self-assessment
- agree that the self-assessment will be signed off by the Leader and Chief Executive following the County Council meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> March