

Agenda Item No:

Report to: Audit Committee

Date of Meeting: 23rd March 2009

Report Title: Annual Audit Inspection Letter 2007/08

Report By: Jane Hartnell
Head of Policy & Performance

Purpose of Report

To present the Audit Commission's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter* to the Audit Committee.

Recommendation(s)

- 1. To thank the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Area Assessment Lead Officer for the positive and helpful report.**
- 2. To agree with the recommendations set out in paragraph 3**

Reasons for Recommendations

To further improve the Council's overall performance.

*** Please Note:**

Difficulties at the Audit Commission's publishing department has meant we were unable to receive the final version of the AAIL in time to publish this agenda to meet the 5 clear days rule. Although the attached Letter is labelled as Draft, the text will not change. The AC publishing department will also insert a new table at figure 1. This revised report will be circulated to Members ASAP.

Background

1. Attached is the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter for 2007/08. It provides an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council for that period. Whilst the letter is in respect of progress during 2007/08, it also comments on the latest performance in 2008/09, where necessary, to put 2007/08 performance into context.
2. Overall the report is extremely positive. The main messages highlighted in the report are that:
 - (i) The Council has improved performance in most of its priority areas.
 - (ii) The Council has a good track record of building its capacity and works well in partnership with others.
 - (iii) The Council performs well in its use of resources, maintaining the overall judgement secured in 2007. No areas covered by the appointed auditor's judgements deteriorated and arrangements for preparing and publishing the annual accounts improved.
3. The Letter recommends areas for the Council to take action, these being:
 - (i) Continue to report to the Audit Committee the progress made in implementing improvement plans to:
 - embed risk management arrangements across all aspects of the Council's operations
 - evidence standing guidance for the management of contracts is fully complied with.
 - (ii) Maintain focus on improving services in priority areas.
 - (iii) Build on the strengthened approach to equalities and diversity to harness good practice and further improve outcomes.
 - (iv) Undertake a systematic Council-wide workforce skills analysis to ensure that the Council has the skills to meet its long term priorities.
4. The Committee are asked to read the recommendations set out above alongside the report elsewhere on your agenda which details responses to the External Auditor's earlier comments on our Use of Resources.
5. The Committee is recommended to accept the recommendations set out in paragraph 3.

Wards Affected

Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Castle, Central St. Leonards, Conquest, Gensing, Hollington, Maze Hill, Old Hastings, Ore, Silverhill, St. Helens, Tressell, West St. Leonards, Wishing Tree

Area(s) Affected

None

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| Equalities and Community Cohesiveness | Yes |
| Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17) | Yes |
| Risk Management | Yes |
| Environmental Issues | Yes |
| Economic/Financial Implications | Yes |
| Human Rights Act | Yes |
| Organisational Consequences | Yes |

Supporting Documents

Insert a list of appendices and/or additional documents

Officer to Contact

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