

CAA Consultation

South Cambridgeshire District Council wishes to respond to the following consultation questions.

- Q3. *Should we adopt the term: 'the prospects for the area and the quality of life for local people' instead of 'the risk assessment' when reporting CAA results, or can you suggest a better description?*

The Council is of the view that the words 'the prospects for the area and the quality of life for local people' will be more descriptive to the public than the term "risk assessment".

- Q4. *How should we report on the national indicator set for local authorities and their partners?*

The public are likely to find that comparisons with comparable authorities in the same region or sub-region are most meaningful. Comparisons with all councils of the same type (all districts, counties etc) are also helpful. The Council does not support weighting or the selection of a basket of indicators for comparison purposes. Using the whole indicator set and unweighted data is most transparent and gives a clearer basis against which councils can manage their performance.

- Q7. *Do you agree with our proposals for direction of travel assessments?*

The Council generally supports the proposals. The proposal to extend scored assessment to district councils is supported, as this will give greater focus and incentive for improvement.

As councils improve, the scope for further improvement will diminish and high performing councils will find it increasingly difficult to achieve a high direction of travel of travel score based on improvement. They may have to devote higher levels of resources and effort into achieving increasingly smaller improvements. This needs to be reflected in the approach to inspection; the commentary on councils or even in the scoring categories. (see response to Q14)

- Q9. *Do you agree with the proposals for the use of resources assessments?*

The Council supports the broader restructuring of the UoR assessment. It also supports the intention for value for money to underpin all the categories

- Q11. *Should there be an overall CAA score?*

No. An overall score is too simplistic; it does not give an accurate picture of the area; and encourages partnerships to focus more on improving their score rather than the services they provide. The Council supports the proposal for a narrative, supported by traffic lights reflecting areas of success and concern.

- Q12. *Should the national indicator set be scored?*

Again, no. An overall score is meaningless and dependent too much on the methodology employed. Different ways of arriving at the score could produce very different results.

Q13. *Are the proposed labels / scoring arrangements for use of resources the right ones?*

The labels and scoring arrangements for UoR are now well established and accepted. There would be little benefit in changing them.

Q14. *What would be the best way of scoring the direction of travel assessments?*

In accordance with our response to Q7, we support the extension of scored assessments to district councils.

Of the two options for scoring given, the Council supports the current set (para 73), but refers to its response to Q7 and its concern that higher performing councils will find it increasingly difficult to achieve good improvement scores. Hence some element of current performance should arguably be included in the assessment.

Q15 *How should we ensure that the reporting and scoring of the area risk assessment is relevant, accessible and meaningful to the council and its partners, local people and central government?*

In considering the reporting and scoring of the risk assessment, the Commission needs to consider whether the arrangements will address the current mismatch between improving CPA scores and falling public satisfaction?

Q16 *What is the best way to report CAA in two-tier council areas?*

The Council supports an overall county judgement with a commentary picking out the performance of different partners (including districts) with traffic lights or other appropriate means.

Q18 *Do you agree with these proposals about the purposes, principles and benefits of inspection and the circumstances in which inspection might be suitable?*

The Council supports the switch from rolling programmes of inspection and the principle of gatekeepers as a means of ensuring that inspections are co-ordinated and at a realistic level.