

Agenda Item No.

Comprehensive Area Assessment Results

To: South Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership

Date: 17 February 2010

From: Stephen Moir, Corporate Director: People, Policy and Law, CCC

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Comprehensive Area Assessment, or CAA, became the formal inspection methodology for local authorities and other public bodies within defined geographic areas with effect from 1 April 2009, replacing the prior regime of Comprehensive Performance Assessment, or CPA. Consequently, the seven Joint Inspectorates, led by the Audit Commission, formally published the results of the first year of Comprehensive Area Assessment inspection in late 2009.
- 1.2 Comprehensive Area Assessment consists of two separate elements of inspection activity. The first element of the inspection is an Organisational Assessment of the Council's as individual authorities. The second element of the CAA methodology relates to an assessment of Cambridgeshire at a County, or area level, and assesses the collective activity across the key public authorities including local authorities, police, fire and health undertaken on behalf of the communities of Cambridgeshire.
- 1.3 The results for both the organisational and area assessment were published on 9th December 2009. As a part of the publication of CAA results, the Audit Commission established the Oneplace website at <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>. This website enables the public and other interested parties to review the details of the overall Area Assessment and the Organisational Assessment of their principal council(s), fire authority, police authority, and primary care trust. The website also includes links to the specific assessments undertaken in respect of children and young people's services and adult social services.

2. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AREA ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 The Area Assessment for Cambridgeshire reviewed how Cambridgeshire Together partners were working together to meet shared priorities for Cambridgeshire, as identified in the Countywide Sustainable Community Strategy. Cambridgeshire received one 'green flag', recognising "exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from". The green flag was awarded for efforts to manage waste and recycling issues and noted that the ReCAP partnership was "key in reducing waste". The county, as an area, did not

receive any red flags and was therefore not considered to have any significant areas of concern to be addressed.

- 2.2 Drawing upon the detailed Area Assessment Report, which provides a greater narrative to underpin these judgements, some summarised commentary is set out as follows:

Managing Growth

- 2.3 The report recognised that organisations are working together well to manage the significant housing and population growth. The report concludes that funding has been secured to help ensure house building continues during the recession, but it is not growth at any cost. It says partners have learned from past experiences and are making sure new housing has the necessary facilities, such as schools, when they are needed. It recognises that congestion is a problem and will get worse and the longer term solutions rely on Government funding. But it says that partners have successfully encouraged local people and visitors to use public transport.

Economic Prosperity

- 2.4 Cambridgeshire's economy is one of the strongest in the country and until the recession many local people benefited from a long period of growth. But people in some areas do not have the same chances as in more wealthy areas as jobs are less well paid or transport links are not as good.
- 2.5 Many young people are well prepared to benefit from prosperity in the area. Education results are generally good and more young people are staying in education to improve their prospects. Action is being taken to improve results for children in poorer families who do less well at school and has been identified as a high priority by partners.

Environmental Sustainability

- 2.6 Successful partnership working means that well over half the waste collected is for recycling and the amount of waste created is also reduced. Good work is being carried out to educate people and encourage businesses to recycle more. The report praises partners for working together to keep the local environment attractive and healthy. It highlights the fact that air quality has improved by using cleaner buses and pollution has reduced because more people are using public transport.

Equality and Inclusion

- 2.7 In terms of equality and inclusion the overall picture of life in Cambridgeshire is positive. Many people are healthy, well educated and have good incomes but there are some big differences within the area. Partners are aware of these differences and services are being put in place to help people to live healthier lives. Local politicians are committed to ensure that available money is directed to help those who need it and have moved funds from more wealthy areas to less well off places.

Safer and Stronger Communities

- 2.8 Although crime in Cambridgeshire is higher than in similar places it did reduce last year. Crimes where people have been injured have increased recently and many were a result of domestic abuse or by people with alcohol problems. Action is being taken collectively and the report praises the creation of the violent crimes task group to tackle excessive drinking in Cambridge. Police and partners are working well to tackle domestic abuse.

Areas for Improvement

- 2.9 Cambridgeshire received no red flags in the Area Assessment, in recognition of the work being done by partners to address priority areas in the County. However, in the following areas, the Partnership will need to show how it has continued to address inequalities and improve outcomes:
- Reducing inequalities across the County, particularly around rural isolation, education and health. Partners are all taking action to address this, and there are a number of projects emerging from Making Cambridgeshire Count that should continue to improve outcomes.
 - Reducing crime in Cambridgeshire to a level at least equivalent to similar areas. Alcohol abuse and domestic abuse are particularly noted. The report recognises that work is being carried out on excessive drinking in Cambridge; and a Making Cambridgeshire Count project is aiming to significantly improve co-ordination of services for victims of domestic abuse.
- 2.10 The Area Self-assessment will note these areas for improvement and identify action that is being taken to address them. They will also need to be recognised as priorities during the development of the Cambridgeshire Plan.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The South Cambridgeshire Local Strategic Partnership Board is asked to note the results of the Comprehensive Area Assessment.