
REPORT TO:	Housing and Community Services	AGENDA ITEM: 11
DATE OF MEETING:	17 November 2005	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	Director of Community Services	OPEN PARAGRAPH NO:
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Stuart Batchelor Ext 5820	DOC:
SUBJECT:	'Towards An Excellent Service' Performance Assessment	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE: HCS07

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Members approve the implementation of the 'Towards An Excellent Service' Improvement Plan.
- 1.2 The 'Towards An Excellent Service' Self Assessment is repeated in July 2006 and progress reported to Committee.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The report outlines to Members the new industry based performance measurement scheme for leisure, 'Towards An Excellent Service' Framework (TAES), it provides feedback on the self assessment that was undertaken by the service and asks for Members approval for the implementation of the improvement plan.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The desire to improve performance is now having a major impact on all public services. Local Government is being challenged to raise its game through Best Value, performance indicators, inspection and, most recently, the Comprehensive Performance Assessments (CPA).
- 3.2 Some public services such as Housing and Environmental Health have long been influenced by the performance management approach. Inspection processes underpinned by clear national priorities, national performance indicators and inter-authority comparisons have been used to drive through improvement in these and other service areas. The importance applied to these key services is significantly higher than that applied to Sport and Recreation. For example, in the first round of CPA assessment for Unitary and County Councils, Education, Social Services, Housing, and Environment are all weighted more heavily than Leisure. Where these other services are labelled poor or failing, there is already evidence that resources are being redirected to them, away from Sport and Recreation.

- 3.2 In other services such as Education and Social Services, as well as defining and delivering local priorities, performance frameworks have also been used to ensure local government deliver national priorities. In these services, a lack of commitment to national priorities can result in poor inspection reports, reduced resources and the threat of intervention. The Towards An Excellence Service Framework for Sport and Recreation Services will allow a similar approach to be adopted in these services. Through its policy and strategy theme it can evaluate the degree to which any national strategies, national priorities and/or national performance indicators are being effectively delivered.
- 3.3 The TAES model is almost certainly to be included within the 'Culture Block' in the next CPA Assessment. With this in mind your Officers decided to embark upon the TAES process so that a year on year improvement in the leisure service could be identified and initiated.
- 3.4 The TAES for Sport and Recreation Services has been developed to achieve three objectives:
- To provide a basis for self-assessment that will enable Sport and Recreation providers to achieve continuous improvement for the users of services.
 - To provide a vehicle through which the national priorities for sport and physical activity outlined above could be achieved by all the organisations involved alongside local priorities in each community.
 - To provide a basis for future inspection processes should these be developed in the future.
- 3.5 The format of the Framework is such that it can be adapted to other Leisure and Cultural functions that have not yet developed their own frameworks or more generically to an integrated Leisure or Cultural Services department.
- 3.6 There are eight key factors that influence the quality of Sport and Recreation services delivered to users. Through effective management in all these areas it is possible to improve the services delivered on a continuous basis. These factors have been developed around eight "themes" which will form the basis of the assessment.
- Leadership
 - Policy and Strategy
 - Community Engagement
 - Partnership Working
 - Use of Resource
 - People Management
 - Standards of Service
 - Performance Measurement and Learning
- 3.7 A self-assessment workshop was held on 21 July that involved over twenty Leisure and Community Development Staff and representatives from partner organisations. The assessment was split into four areas which best covered the varied nature of the Division. These areas being: -
- Leisure facilities
 - Open space and grounds
 - Sport, recreation and physical activity development
 - Partnership and voluntary and community sector support

3.8 The four groups each self assessed the status of the following key factors based on a score of poor, fair, good and excellent.

3.9 The assessed scores were as follows: -

Overall rating

	Leadership	Policy & strategy	Community engagement	Partnership working	Use of resources	People management	Standards of service	Performance Management & learning
Excellent								
Good		★		★	★			
Fair	★		★			★		★
Poor							★	

3.10 This gave an overall score of fair. The areas of weakness that were identified were: -

- Reliance on project / short term funding
- Lack of performance management
- Lack of service standards
- System for people management and development are inconsistent

3.11 The strengths were: -

- Commitment to achieving excellence and improving services
- Attracting external resources
- Working in partnership to achieve shared objectives

3.11 The next stage of the process was to produce an improvement plan, which would over the next year take the service on to a 'good' score. This main improvement plan is provided as Annexe N^o 1 and includes Key Tasks such as: -

- Identify Champions to promote service areas
- Develop a set of performance indicators
- Develop a set of service standards
- Produce a Consultation Strategy
- Benchmarking
- Increased focus on equal opportunities

3.12 Improvement Plans have also been produced for each of the service areas that were looked at on the workshop day.

3.13 If Members approve the Improvement Plan then Officers will begin the implementation process with the aim of achieving the following scores and an overall rating of 'good' when the self-assessment is repeated in July 2006.

Overall rating 2006?

	Leadership	Policy & strategy	Community engagement	Partnership working	Use of resources	People management	Standards of service	Performance Management & learning
Excellent		★		★	★			
	★		★			★	★	★
Fair								
Poor								

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, although a number of the actions in the improvement plan may require some investment, which will be considered in the forthcoming budget process.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 The Towards An Excellent Service process is not only a prerequisite for the CPA assessment but will also achieve service improvements and increased value for money as a Council service.

6.0 Community Implications

6.1 Improvements in the Leisure and Community Development Service will have benefits to the local community as there will be more opportunities for participation in activities, improved standards of service and increased involvement in service development.

7.0 Conclusions

71 The TAES framework is still being developed by the industry, but its early utilisation by the Council means that weaknesses have been identified and service improvements made as early as possible before the CPA inspection.