

REPORT TO CABINET

JOINT**REPORT OF: Leader and Chief Executive****REPORT NO. CEX248****DATE: 6th September 2004**

TITLE:	CPA Re-Assessment
KEY DECISION OR POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL:	No

COUNCIL AIMS/PORTFOLIO HOLDER NAME AND DESIGNATION:	Leader
CORPORATE PRIORITY:	N/A
BACKGROUND PAPERS:	None

RECOMMENDATION

It is therefore recommended that the Council commissions the IDeA to carry-out the proposed CPA re-assessment at a cost of £5,000 plus expenses

October will see the anniversary of our CPA inspection. During the intervening twelve months a number of measures have been implemented to improve the efficiency and effectiveness. The impetus for these improvements has come from the Council's Change Management Action Plan, which was drawn directly from the inspection report.

It would be reasonable to expect that this activity would result in an improved score, however all Councils are engaged in seeking to improve their performance

and only an external perspective can make an informed judgement on a comparative basis.

The Audit Commission has published proposals for the next round of District CPAs and has made some adjustments to the model as a result of the lessons learnt during the first round. The Audit Commission is proposing a new round of CPA inspections commencing in 2007 and integrating District inspections with inspections of County Councils in the same area. As part of this they are seeking to complete a service profile for each Council, which, whilst not altering the scored judgement, will comment on the direction of travel. The consultation document indicates that District Authorities such as South Kesteven will receive one more CPA inspection under the "old" methodology before the new framework is applied from 2007. It is likely that our next assessment would be in late 2005 or early 2006. These details are given in the ODPM consultation paper "CPA 2005 – The Way Ahead" and the follow-up "CPA 2005 – The new approach. Both of these documents are available on:

<http://www.auditcommission.gov.uk/cpa/furtherconsultcpa2005.asp>.

The Audit Commission and IDEA have jointly produced guidance on "Getting the best out of District CPA", this is available on

<http://www.auditcommission.gov.uk/cpa/downloads/learningfromDCPA.pdf>.

The guidance recognises that the best authorities see improvement as a journey with the CPA adding clarity, and where necessary challenge, to the process.

Measuring the speed of travel from within is not easy, nor is assessment against other Councils because they are improving at different speeds and from different starting points. It is however, vitally important that the Council does have a robust methodology for assessing on a regular basis its speed of travel and judging what this is likely to mean for an assessment. It's the old adage that if you know yourself, (and in this case know not your enemy but the CPA methodology), you never need to fear a CPA inspection: and, it is fear that drives authorities to commit unreasonable amounts of resources and organisational effort to the CPA process.

To reach this level of self-awareness requires a triangulation of three perspectives:

1. The Council's own perspective focused through a robust self-assessment.
2. The views of partners and customers within the local community.
3. An external judgement delivered by experienced assessors who have the knowledge base to make informed comparisons with other authorities.

In order to deliver the last of these, and rather than wait for the next CPA round, it is proposed to commission a CPA revisit in the autumn of this year. Unfortunately the Audit Commission themselves are not able to provide this service to the

Council, but following discussion with both our relationship manager and Brian Rowland, (the lead inspectors from the team that came to South Kesteven) the IDeA were approached and prepared the proposal detailed in Appendix A. This appendix also includes some revisions to the brief which the Chief Executive proposed, and the IDeA accepted. By undertaking such a process now, before changes have been fully embedded we would be in a position to adjust any of the key components before they become “cemented” into the new culture of the organisation. It should be noted that it is a CPA re-assessment, in the form of an abbreviated peer review, and not a full peer review that is being requested.

Although this service carries a cost of £5,000, this needs to be put against the considerably greater cost that could arise if the Council, lacking the insight that this process will deliver, embarks upon ineffective or ill-considered programmes.

Councillor Linda Neal
Leader.

Duncan Kerr
Chief Executive

Duncan Kerr
Chief Executive
South Kesteven District Council

Dear Duncan,

Abbreviated Peer Review – Autumn 2004

Following our discussions, I am pleased to set out my thoughts on how the IDeA can best meet your needs.

Our understanding of your needs

South Kesteven District Council is keen to have an external assessment of where it is one year on from your CPA.

You are keen on getting an independent overview of progress of the Council against your Improvement Plan and an opinion of current likely “scores” against the existing model of CPA and issues for consideration against the proposed model for CPA.

You are not looking for in-depth diagnosis but rather evidence-based challenge to officer and member perceptions. Similarly you are looking for the wider learning on what is working and what challenges remain and some constructive advice on how to take these forward.

You are looking for this review around September/October/November and for it to be honest and challenging.

Our approach – what we will do

We will base our review on the Key Lines of Enquiry for the existing CPA, and consider:

- where the Council has moved over the last year
- how embedded any changes appear to be
- our best estimate of how any progress in South Kesteven compares with progress elsewhere in the country
- what issues are still to be resolved and offering advice on how these may be tackled.

We will focus our work on the current key lines of enquiry (KLOE) in the CPA, but will also have clear sight of the proposed new approach for CPA.

In order to help us meet your needs we may well ask you to complete a draft self-assessment which responds to the key lines of enquiry (KLOE).

Timing

The exact timetable needs agreeing but we can fit this into your late Summer/Autumn window.

Any key meetings (such as the Executive) which do not coincide with the visit, we will seek to send either myself or the Review Manager along to observe.

The review itself would take place over 2 or 3 days (we would want to discuss this with you) with a presentation of initial findings on the final day.

Review Team

We propose a team of 3 people comprising:

- A Principal or Managing Consultant to act as Review Manager (we would look to use someone with direct experience of the Audit Commission)
- A Senior Conservative member (someone like Cllr George Buckley – although so far I have not been able to confirm his availability)
- Myself to oversee quality and to have direct input to the on site work and feedback to the Council

Fees

Team Member	Role	Days	Day Rate	Fee
IDeA Review Manager	Tailoring of review methodology, liaison, review management, challenge & share learning, report production, final workshop	5	£500	£2,500
Senior Conservative Councillor	Review, challenge & share learning and final workshop	3	£300	£900
Regional Associate	Review, challenge & share learning, final workshop, overall quality and impact of work	2	£800	£1,600
Project co-ordinator	Liaison, tailoring of review timetable and some quality assurance work	3	IDeA central recharge	Na
Total Investment		13 days		£, 5,000¹

**Plus reasonable expenses including limited overnight accommodation*

I trust that this proposal reflects the work you are looking for. If you would like to discuss any part of this proposal then please feel free to contact me on the numbers below.

¹ This figure does not include VAT.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly. But please note that I am on holiday from 2 August until 20 August inclusive.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Edgell

-----Original Message-----

From: DUNCAN KERR [mailto:D.KERR@southkesteven.gov.uk]
Sent: 29 July 2004 13:25
To: 'Mark Edgell'
Subject: RE: Abbreviated Peer Review

Thanks for the prompt response - a couple of issues:

1. On the third para I would replace "Evidence based challenge to member and officer perceptions" with "evidence-based scored assessment that measures progress made by the Council since the CPA inspection and compares it with the authorities own perceptions".
2. On "what we will do" add "Using the best knowledge and advice available to the team produce a scoring of the authority against the CPA framework used to assess the authority in 2003.

Apart from these areas you have summarised our requirements very well and I am broadly happy with the team you propose. The key to this will however be the identify and experience of the Review Manager - and we obviously could not commit until we had been satisfied on this point. We would be prepared to compromise on the involvement on the other team members if it is necessary to secure the appropriate rate for a review manager who has received the AC training and acted as a moderator.

Perhaps you can progress and provide us with some proposed names.

Many thanks.

Duncan.

