

**GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
29 APRIL 2009**

**ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER
(Borough Treasurer)**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter (AAIL) which has been received from the Audit Commission. The External Auditor will attend the meeting to present the Letter and answer any questions.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the Governance and Audit Committee note the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter at Appendix 1.**
- 2.2 **That Directors have regard to the areas for improvement set out in the annual Audit and Inspection letter when finalising their service plans for 2009/10.**

3 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 3.1 Nothing to add to the report.

Borough Treasurer

- 3.2 Nothing to add to the report.

Strategic Risk Management

- 3.3 All risks identified in the AAIL will be addressed in departmental service plans for 2009/10.

4 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 The Audit Commission is required to provide the Council with an AAIL. The AAIL provides a summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of the Council. It draws on the most recent Comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) finding and conclusions from the audit of the Council for 2007/08 and from inspections undertaken since the last AAIL. It also includes the results of the most recent Corporate Assessment. The letter includes an assessment under the final year of the CPA framework, including the Direction of Travel.
- 4.2 Bracknell forest is now rated as a "three star" authority, "improving well". The AAIL is clear from the outset that services continue to be good, with "42% ranking among the best 25% nationally." This exceeds the average for top performing councils and

makes Bracknell Forest more comparable with four star councils in terms of performance. This star level of performance has inevitably made it more difficult for the council to maintain the strong rate of improvement demonstrated last year. Nevertheless, performance in a wide range of services has improved across the Council, and value for money remains good.

- 4.3 The AAIL explains that the overall star rating changed from a four star to three stars due to four performance indicators in the culture block which kept the overall culture score at (the indicators related to libraries and museums). The removal of protection from the original Corporate Assessment score in this final year of the CPA Framework then impacted on the overall star rating. In essence, then, the reduction in star rating stems from the vagaries of the CPA scoring system. The AAIL report itself acknowledges that service performance is generally stronger than it was last year and that the council is “improving well”. The contradiction between this and the “loss” of a star is itself evident.
- 4.4 The AAIL summarises the key messages for the Council at page 3 of the document. Whilst the letter is overwhelmingly positive about the Council’s performance, some areas for improvement are highlighted on page 4. These will be addressed through departmental service plans for the coming year.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Not applicable.

Contact for further information

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Governance and Audit Committee\AAIL report