

REPORT TO CABINET: 5TH AUGUST

COUNCILLOR IAIN BRODIE-BROWN **Cabinet Member for Performance and Governance**

CAA abolition and alternative arrangements

The abolition of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), the lighter touch approach to Inspection and greater public accountability, transparency and new measures to hold the council more locally to account, will need to be factored into the new approach to localised performance management. This will be reported into Cabinet in due course, but will be developed through this portfolio.

Work is underway to implement the new approved Performance Management Framework, and a new more localised approach will be developed over the coming months. This matter was raised with Cabinet members and officers in the last round of performance reviews.

As part of the budget setting process last year, the Council agreed to include a savings target within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) of £1M to be achieved from the integration of support services/functions across the Council in the 2011/12 financial year. In addition to this, a savings target of £250,000 in the current financial year was set to be achieved from communications activity. Work to realise these savings is underway.

Two Projects are underway which impact on the Performance and Governance Portfolio: the Communications Project and the Performance Improvement (Intelligence) Project. The outcomes from these Projects are due to be reported through the Performance and Governance Portfolio and work is in train to identify how a proportion of the £1M savings target can be achieved from the integration of these functions.

It is important to note that the current national and as a result, local, context has changed since the budget was set for the current financial year, and a change of government and in-year and future grant reductions and other financial measures introduced to cut the national debt will have an impact on the Council, and its partners. In addition, the new context brought about as a result of new policy directions around health, localism, the big society to name but a few will require a flexible and fluid approach to these integrated functions/activities. With this in mind, work is underway to implement changes arising from these Transformation/Strategic Budget Review Projects in the current financial year, to enable the in-year and next years savings to be achieved. It is also important that these integrated functions are in place to support changes in central and local policy direction for the Council. This will enable the Council to be better placed to respond and meet these new policy directives over the coming months and years. These changes will require us to expand the review of the governance arrangements, to take account of the policy shift towards more open and transparent local government. This will form a major component of the portfolios work in the coming months

Corporate Communications

The Communications Project has involved a review of the following activities across the Council:

- Public Relations / Media Handling and Reputation Management
- Internal Communications
- Brand Identity / Design and Print
- Advertising, Marketing and Sponsorship
- Web Communications

- Social Marketing and Access Channels
- Public Information (agendas, leaflets, plans and strategies)
- Consultation and Engagement
- Event Management

A mapping exercise of the communications spend across the council has also been carried out and as Members begin the exercise of prioritisation of services, the Project Team leading this integration work is well placed to use this to prioritise the resources available within the current communications budgets held across the Council. This mapping exercise helped identify how the £250,000 saving could be achieved.

The main outcome from the Communications Project is that a more corporate approach to communications is essential for the authority. This activity will lead to a new Communications Strategy which will need to be approved by members.

Outside of this work, there have been a number of high priority media enquiries in the last month mainly centring around safeguarding issues and government spending. A number of media FOI's have also been handled by the Corporate Team.

The Corporate Communications Team partnered Merseyside Police Press Office to lead the media liaison with regard to the recent flooding in Seaforth which included regular out-of-hours contact with the press, emergency services and the Emergency Planning Team. The Team continues to offer support in getting key messages and offering support to residents affected by the flooding.

Much of the day to day work continues and there have been good successes in briefing the media, with the Chief Executive, around the financial issues currently facing the authority. A lot of work is also being carried out to ensure staff and members have as much information available to them with regard to the Transformation/Strategic Budget Review process through the 'Informing Sefton' news sheets on the intranet. These are also printed out by managers and colleagues for those who do not have access to the intranet.

Intelligence, Improvement and Performance Management

The Performance Improvement (Intelligence) Project has continued and work to integrate intelligence, improvement and performance management as part of the Transformation Programme is now underway. A Performance Board has been established and the task and finish groups have completed their initial work for the areas of performance; intelligence, data quality and data rationalisation; freedom of information/data protection; engagement and consultation; equality and diversity; research; policy; and partnerships and governance.

The outcomes of the project will be implemented in the current financial year, in order to realise the contribution to the savings target built into the MTFP. It will also enable the Council to be better placed to plan to meet the emerging and known public sector spending cuts and new policy directives described above introduced by the coalition government.