

Charnwood Borough Council is a 'fair' council

Charnwood Borough Council overall is 'fair', according to a major report out today from the Audit Commission. Based on its current plans, it is likely to continue to improve services.

Charnwood was among a number of authorities inspected in Leicestershire as part of the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) of district councils which rates each as either excellent, good, fair, weak or poor.

CPA is the first time that people have had a single overall assessment on their council. Reporting for the 238 district councils in England follows the annual CPA carried out for the 150 larger all purpose and county councils.

The assessment of Charnwood found that the council is doing well in some areas:

- The council has moved on in the last three years with a new chief executive, new political arrangements and renewed vigour and purpose. The council has clear ambitions for the borough and a keen understanding of local issues.
- The council is successful in some of its priority services and has made improvements to the local environment, leisure, street cleaning, and on economic development.
- The council is in a debt free financial position and has the financial capacity it needs to achieve change and continue its improvement.

But the assessment also found room for improvement:

- The council performs poorly in the ensuring that all its homes meet the governments 'decent homes' standard and has failed to improve in some priority areas such as recycling, and housing re-let times.
- It is not always clear to residents what standard of service they should expect.
- Some of the important systems that should support the council's services, such as performance management and risk management, are not yet fully embedded.

Following today's report Charnwood Borough Council will plan what it needs to do to improve, with support from the Audit Commission.

Audit Commission senior manager Nigel Toms said: "Charnwood Borough Council is working hard to provide the services that local people need and is making investments that will contribute to improvement. It has plans to improve key service areas such as customer services and recycling. However, there is still work to do on improving housing, and on internal support services such as performance management. Residents of Charnwood will want to know what happens next. Where the council has weaknesses it should use this assessment to help it deliver improvement. We would expect the council to make its improvement plans public. We will want to track progress. The end result should be better services for the people of Charnwood."

Audit Commission Chairman James Strachan said: "Comprehensive Performance Assessment is Strategic Regulation. It reduces red tape and is aimed at helping improve public services. Not only is this the first comprehensive report to the public on how well councils are run - it also provides a powerful tool to make services better. The findings we have published today will form the basis for future improvement plans. The Commission will help by focusing its attention where it is necessary and most productive. The council will get maximum support without unnecessary bureaucracy."

A summary and full report for Charnwood Borough Council is available from the council, and through the Commission's main site at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/cpa

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Comprehensive Performance Assessment for district councils was developed by the Audit Commission with help from local government. Between July 2003 and September 2004 all 238 district councils in England will get a CPA report.

The comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) released today, is part of a rolling programme to give local people a report on how their district councils are performing corporately, and how they are serving their communities.

District CPA starts with a self-assessment carried out by the council. This will normally be challenged by councillors and officers from other councils. An on-site visit from a team of inspectors completes the process. The team assesses the council's performance in core services, and its ability to improve. The final overall assessment includes an auditor's judgement, a report from the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate and diagnostic assessment of how the council manages delivery of public space, and housing (either its progress in meeting the decent homes standard, or its contribution to balancing the housing markets in the area).

The Audit Commission co-ordinated CPA at 150 single tier and county councils in England in 2002 and 2003, categorising each as either excellent, good, fair, weak or poor. Those councils are now planning, how to improve or continue improving their services.

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) was also involved in CPA. In assessing the Benefits service provided by district councils, the BFI uses the same methodology. This is based mainly on a self assessment by authorities against Performance Standards, followed by

a short on-site visit. A summary of the report together with BFI's assessment is available on their website - <http://www.bfi.gov.uk>

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We are active in local government, health, housing, criminal justice and fire and rescue services and consequently have unrivalled insights into the overall impact of public services on users.

In addition to making sure that taxpayers receive value for money, our aim is to provide impartial information on the quality of public services. We also act as a force for improvement by providing practical recommendations and spreading best practice.

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