

**ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER**

**Agenda Item 9(a)**

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**Background Papers:-** Annual Audit and Inspection Letter  
**Financial Implications:-** None  
**Equalities Implications:-** None  
**Legal Implications:-** None  
**Options:** None  
**Risks:** None

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The key messages from our Annual Audit and Inspection Letter are:

1. Braintree District Council has taken positive steps to improve in priority areas, although the overall picture in relation to performance indicators is mixed, with just 19% in the top quartile, well below the average for District Councils. Performance in development control, housing benefits, waste collection and recycling – all priority areas – has improved.
2. Partnership working is developing well and outcomes are making a difference. A number of initiatives have been undertaken in response to public concerns about anti-social behaviour and have been well received by local people. Joint working is being actively pursued with neighbouring Districts, as well as with Essex County Council.
3. The Council has good arrangements for managing resources and is performing well across most areas. Financial management is sound and, having successfully transferred its housing stock, the Council is now pursuing an agenda of ‘Shaping up for Excellence’, intended to drive through further sustained improvements. A new organisation structure is being established to meet the new agenda. The Council will need to keep corporate capacity under review in order to ensure that capacity matches its ambitions.

**DECISION**

The Cabinet note the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter and seek the views of the Audit Committee as to appropriate actions.

## **SUMMARY ON PRESENT POSITION OF PROPOSED ACTIONS**

### **1.0 Performance Management**

It is anticipated that approximately 30% of our BVPI basket of indicators will be in the top quartile. A significant improvement over the 19% for 2006/07.

It is further anticipated that 50% of the Planning BVPIs will be in the top quartile and 45% of the Housing Benefit BVPIs will also be in the top quartile.

This is a significant improvement, however, we are not complacent regarding the need for continuous improvement and this will be an important part of planning our targets for 2008/09.

### **2.0 Service Provision and Hard-to-Reach Groups**

This is a challenging issue to identify these groups and establish any specific service needs. We are part of a capacity-building project regarding migrant workers, which is developing a self-help support toolkit.

Some further work will be undertaken this year regarding hard-to-reach groups, which will be assisted through the LAA partnership working.

### **3.0 Organisational Development**

Following the successful transfer of housing, the organisation has been reviewed and some minor changes to responsibilities have been implemented; however, there are some key issues which may need additional capacity to drive through improvement. These are:

Performance Management  
Efficiency  
Customer Service/Business Process  
Customer Satisfaction and Information

These issues are addressed later in this agenda.

### **4.0 Overview and Scrutiny Arrangements**

The revised arrangements have been in operation for about 12 months and appear to be working more effectively. A formal review is scheduled for the latter part of this year.

### **5.0 Use of Resources**

We have retained an overall score of 3, which is assessed as performing well and this is against a harder test than the previous year.

To put a level 3 score in context, only a handful of District Councils achieved a level 4.

It is proposed that we should continue to target to achieve a level 3 across all elements. This will require greater effort to go into an improved process of budget consultation, information to the public and monitoring the financial performance of our partnerships.