



## Report to Cabinet

**Title:** Annual Audit Letter – Improvement Plan

**Date:** 22 June 2009

**Date Decision can be implemented:** 30 June 2009

**Author:** Leader of the Council

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**Electoral Divisions Affected:** All

**Portfolio Areas Affected:** All

**Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee:** Performance and Resources

### Summary

At its meeting on 20 April 2009, Cabinet received a presentation from Rob Hathaway, the Audit Commission's CAA Lead for the County Council, which covered the contents of the Council's latest Annual Audit and Inspection Letter published in March 2009. In the light of the presentation, Cabinet agreed to prepare an Improvement Plan to address the specific issues raised. The draft Improvement Plan has now been completed and is set out in Appendix A for approval.

### Recommendation

**The Cabinet is asked to approve the 2009 Annual Audit Letter Improvement Plan as set out in Appendix 1**

#### A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

1. Each year, the Council receives an Annual Audit and Inspection Letter (AAIL), prepared by the Authority's external Auditors, the Audit Commission. The latest letter sets out how the Council has performed during 2008 particularly in respect of its Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating. The letter also provides details of the audit of accounts and how the Council is achieving value for money.

2. At its meeting on 20 April 2009, Cabinet received a presentation from Rob Hathaway, which covered the contents of the latest AAIL. As a result of the County Council regaining the top-performing CPA rating of four stars, the only formal action outlined in the letter (paragraph 7) was:

- ***In tackling budget shortfalls and protecting core public services in the face of the recession, the County Council should continue to demonstrate clear community leadership and prioritisation of services for those residents made vulnerable by their circumstances.***

3. Planned action to address this issue is included in the draft Improvement Plan set out in Appendix A. In addition to the formal action outlined above, the AAIL also makes references to other aspects of Council performance raised in the Audit Letter. Where appropriate, further actions to address the relevant areas are also included in the draft Improvement Plan.

4. Last year, the Council produced an Improvement Plan to address the issues raised in the previous AAIL, covering performance in 2007. The plan included 34 actions and progress was monitored through the Council's performance management system – 'Performance Plus'.

5. Of the 34 actions, 29 have been completed within set timescales, 3 were reported as amber (however no further action is required) and 2 have been carried forward to the 2009/10 Improvement Plan. Appendix B gives a short narrative explaining the action taken and whether any actions have been rolled forward into this year's Improvement Plan.

6. Progress with this year's Improvement Plan will be monitored by the Cabinet on a quarterly basis via 'Performance Plus'.

#### **B. Other options available, and their pros and cons**

7. Demonstrating progress against our Improvement Plan actions will be an important factor in the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process.

#### **C. Resource implications**

8. All items in the Action Plan can be contained within existing budgets

#### **D. Communication Issues**

9. All Members have received a copy of the latest Annual Audit and Inspection Letter and it is available to view on the Council's public website

#### **E. Legal implications**

10. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report

#### **F. Progress Monitoring**

11. Progress on implementing the details of the Improvement Plan will be monitored by Cabinet through existing performance monitoring mechanisms

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### **Background Papers**

1. Annual Audit and Inspection Letter – Cabinet 20 April 2009
2. Appendix 1 – Improvement Plan
3. Appendix 2 – Performance Exception report for previous year

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### ***Your questions and views***

*If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.*

*If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Democratic Services Team by 5.00pm on 19 June 2009. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 383604 or 383610), Fax (to 01296 382538), or e-mail to [cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk)*

