

**Report to Finance and Performance
Management Standing Scrutiny
Panel**



Date of meeting: 2 August 2005

Portfolio: Finance and Performance Management

Subject: User Focus

Officer contact for further information: S Tautz

Committee Secretary: Simon Hill (Ext 4249)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Scrutiny Panel note the contents of the council's self-assessment submission in respect of the Audit Commission's 'User Focus' assessment.

1. (Head of Human Resources and Performance Management) The Audit Commission is currently undertaking a short piece of work across all Essex local authorities, looking at User Focus and how effectively individual councils engage with their communities. The assessment is based on a self-assessment exercise and through on-site validation by the Commission.
2. User Focus is an important element in the revised approach to Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for upper-tier authorities and, although the revised CPA methodology for second-tier authorities has not yet been published, it is an issue that is expected to also feature significantly in the next round of assessments and will also inform Direction of Travel statements for 2005/06.
3. The timescale for the submission of the self-assessment element of this work is extremely tight, and the draft completed assessment will be circulated at the meeting.
4. The validation of the self-assessments of all Essex councils will take place during October 2005. Once this validation exercise has been completed, the Audit Commission intends to hold a 'Share and Learn' event to identify best practice and produce practical solutions for areas for development.
5. The Scrutiny Panel is requested to note the contents of the council's self-assessment submission in respect of the User Focus assessment. The results of the assessment will be reported to a future meeting.