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| Committee:         | <b>Cabinet</b>   |
| Date:              | <b>14 December 2005</b>  |
| Title of Report:   | <b>Children's Services Annual Performance Assessment (APA) 2005</b>  |
| By:                | <b>Director of Children's Services</b>   |
| Purpose of Report: | <b>To inform the Cabinet of the Children's Services Annual Performance Assessment 2005 judgment which contributes to the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).</b> |

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**Recommendation:**

**The Cabinet is recommended to:**

- 1. note the judgments awarded in the Children's Services Annual Performance Assessment (APA) letter, and the contribution of the APA to the Council's overall CPA score; and**
  - 2. note the areas highlighted in the APA letter that require attention and approve the action plan set out at Annex 2**
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**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 Whilst there are costs associated with the preparation and the coordination of the APA, there are no direct costs arising from the report itself. Costs associated with preparation and coordination are absorbed within the Children's Services Policy Performance and Review Team. Costs associated with implementing the actions and strategies detailed in Annex 2 will, and are being, considered by the Children's Services Senior Management Team.

**2. Supporting Information**

2.1 2005 saw the introduction of a new joint inspection framework for all Children's Services Authorities in England and Wales. Between April and May 2005, East Sussex County Council coordinated and prepared its first Annual Self-Assessment under the new framework. The Annual Self-Assessment formed the basis of the Annual Performance Assessment of the Council's services by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and Ofsted which culminated in a meeting between CSCI, Ofsted, the Children's Services Senior Management Team and Members on 27 June 2005. The outcome of this meeting and judgments awarded were formally published on 1 December 2005; the APA letter is attached at Annex 1.

2.2 The APA provides the grading for the Children and Young People's block of the Council's CPA. The Council's overall CPA score will be published on 15 December 2005.

**3. The Annual Performance Assessment**

3.1 There are three parts to the APA letter. The first part summarises the services delivered under each of the Every Child Matters priority outcome areas along with one for Service Management. A summary table highlights 'Strengths' and 'Areas for Improvement'. The second part lists areas for exploration in the joint area review (JAR), which is scheduled to take place in 2007/08. The final part provides a table listing the final judgments (grades) for each of the four areas judged.

The final judgments for the County Council are listed below; the judgment grades range from grade 1 to 4, with 4 being the best, and 1 the worst.

| <b>Areas for Judgments</b>   | <b>Final Judgments</b> |
|--|------------------------|
| The contribution of the local authority's social care services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people | 3                      |
| The contribution of the local authority's education services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people   | 3                      |
| The contribution of the local authority's children's services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people  | 3                      |
| The Council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people   | 4                      |

3.2 The judgments together form an overall grade. In East Sussex the Council has achieved a grade 3 overall, which is the second highest judgment and means that the County Council's Children's Service is deemed 'a service that consistently delivers above the minimum requirement for users'. The Council's judgment for 'capacity to improve' is a grade 4, which is the highest judgment awarded. Further details on the grading descriptors are provided on the last page of the APA letter.

#### **4. How the Council compares nationally and with its statistical neighbours**

4.1 The initial, provisional, analysis of the national APA gradings shows that of the 141 authorities to receive full APAs this year, just 13 authorities have scored higher than East Sussex.

4.2 Within its Statistical Neighbours (SN) comparator group of ten authorities only two authorities, Leicestershire and Worcestershire, have scored higher than the County Council.

4.3 Within the Institute of Public Finance (IPF) comparator group, which consists of 16 authorities, East Sussex ranks joint second with only one authority, Worcestershire, scoring higher than the County Council.

4.4 East Sussex Children's Services ranks joint top, along with Kent and West Berkshire, out of the 18 South East Children's Services Authorities.

#### **5. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations**

5.1 East Sussex County Council's Children's Services in 2005 has been recognised as a service that consistently delivers and one which has an excellent capacity to improve. This is testament to the professionalism and commitment of staff particularly in an environment of increasing pressure on budgets and resources. The letter also identifies Elected Members as making a positive commitment to developing children's services. The Cabinet is asked to note this achievement and in particular the highest possible judgment awarded for the authority's capacity to improve.

5.2 Areas identified as areas to work on are consistent with the priorities identified in the Annual Self-Assessment and the Council is already working to address these issues. The Cabinet is asked to note the action plan attached at Annex 2.

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Local Members: All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS - None

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