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### **Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) - November 2007 consultation**

As an authority Shropshire County Council is very positive about external assessment and inspection and recognises it as an essential part of the improvement process. However, we have some significant concerns about the proposals for CAA.

General overarching points on CAA:

1. As the accountable body for the CAA and therefore with lead responsibility for the Area Risk Assessment, when considered with the DoT and the UoR we in Shropshire County Council would see little if any reduction in assessment and inspection activity. This is in conflict with the White Paper's aim that proposals will reduce the burden.
2. There is potential for confusion on how elements of the CAA will fit together, in particular how the 'area based' risk assessment (focused on the CAA) and not scored, will sit alongside the 'council focused' elements of the Use of Resources and Direction of Travel statement, both of which are scored.
3. There are concerns about the capacity of auditors to make assessments on such complex, wide ranging issues as LAAs/LSPs. This is a developing area that local councils and their partners are still in many areas working their way through – it is unclear how auditors will be able to add value.
4. The Area Risk Assessment (ARA) is based on the LAA and current CLG and Government Office advice is that targets need to be challenging and focussed on local areas of improvement. Our concern is that this improvement focus would not provide a balanced assessment of an area and would not necessarily pick up areas of success and good performance. It is not clear how an ARA based on such a premise would properly describe the entirety of the existing successes of a local area.
5. The Terms of Reference for the Use of Resources framework has expanded to almost represent the previous Corporate Assessment. We question the appropriateness of the use of auditors to assess the management of staff and workforce and organisational development.

Regards,

Carolyn Downs  
Chief Executive