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Dear Colleague

Corporate Assessments and Joint Area Reviews

The purpose of this joint letter is to share with you our current thinking and intentions about the timing for corporate assessments and joint area reviews from 2005.

Ofsted, in its lead role for the joint area review programme, and the Audit Commission with its responsibility for corporate assessments are committed to ensure that we undertake our regulatory activities in a co-ordinated and proportionate fashion.

We have consulted on various timetable options and concluded that the best arrangement will be to seek to align the two processes as closely as possible, in most cases conducting these assessments simultaneously. We believe that an approach which has a shared self assessment process, a common spine of inspection and review activity and common timelines for reporting has most potential to work in the best interests of local government. We believe it will minimise duplication and reduce unnecessary burdens, as well as being more cost effective. It is likely that the first corporate assessment/joint area reviews will be in September 2005.

We are therefore jointly revisiting aspects of our draft assessment methodologies, working with our respective reference groups and partners in central and local government. We anticipate that we will be able to consult on the detail of our aligned approaches to assessment by the end of November. At the same time we hope to publish our assessment timetable for 2005/06 and the indicative programme for the following two years.

Inevitably, as the programme will need to be jointly agreed between the Audit Commission, Ofsted and CSCI, the proposed programme will differ from that previously proposed in our consultation paper "CPA 2005 – the way ahead" published in January 2004. I appreciate that this may cause concern to some authorities, but it is unavoidable if we are to deliver inspection proportionately and in co-ordination with other inspectorates. We hope through effective joint working to minimise the burden on local government of our inspection regimes.

Kind regards.



Frances Done – Managing Director, Local Government