

**Report to the Finance and Performance
Management Cabinet Committee**



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report Reference: FCC-020-2008/09.

Date of meeting: 17 November 2008.

Portfolio: Finance and Performance Management.

Subject: Direction Of Travel Self Assessment 2008.

Responsible Officer: Steve Tautz (01992 564180).

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Committee consider the Council's draft self-assessment submission in respect of the Direction of Travel assessment for 2008.

Report:

1. The Council's annual Direction Of Travel assessment for 2008 is to be undertaken jointly by the Audit Commission and PKF (UK) Ltd, during December 2008.

2. Direction of Travel (DoT) is an annual assessment of the progress a council is making towards achieving improvement in the services it delivers to the public, and is intended to identify and reflect efforts to put in place plans to secure improvement. As in previous years, the assessment for 2008 will be based on a voluntary self-assessment exercise and through an on-site validation exercise involving interviews with a range of members and officers. Unlike other similar assessments, DoT will not result in a scored judgement, and the findings and results will be reported by the Council's external auditors as part of the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter for 2007/08.

3. The assessment will review the following themes and Key Lines of Enquiry (KLoE):

Review Theme	Key Line of Enquiry
1. What evidence is there of the Council improving outcomes?	<p>1.1 Are services improving in areas the council has identified as priorities and areas the public say are important to their communities;</p> <p>1.2 What contribution is the council making towards wider community outcomes?</p> <p>1.3 To what degree is the Council improving both access and the quality of service for all its citizens? Is it focusing on those who are made vulnerable by their circumstances?</p> <p>1.4 Is value for money improving as well as quality of services?</p>
2. How much progress has been made in implementing improvement plans to sustain future	<p>2.1 Does the Council have robust plans for improving (aligned with other plans, SMART, detailed, resourced, agreed and widely communicated?)</p> <p>2.2 How well is the improvement planning being implemented: are key objectives and milestones being achieved?</p>

improvement?	<p>2.3 Does the council have the capacity to deliver its plans?</p> <p>2.4 Are there any significant weaknesses in arrangements for securing continuous improvement or failures in corporate governance that would prevent improvement levels being sustained?</p>
--------------	--

Self-Assessment

4. For each theme, the KLoE act as a basis for the Council to undertake a voluntary self-assessment of its progress over the last year. Although the completion of a self-assessment is not a mandatory requirement for the purposes of the assessment, the Audit Commission and the Corporate Executive Forum consider that this exercise is helpful for both the assessment and for the Council to understand its current position. As with all similar assessment frameworks, it is considered important for the Council to participate in the voluntary self-assessment process, in order that the authority's progress over the last year can be articulated and demonstrated.

5. The self-assessment is required to be submitted to the Audit Commission during mid-November 2008. Whilst there is no set format for the self-assessment, it is required to cover the individual KLoE and should be an update on what has happened in the last twelve months only. The Commission have emphasised that there is no need to go any further back than this in the self-assessment, as the information from the last self-assessment has been retained. The self-assessment should focus on achievements, particularly in terms of improved performance, but also any areas where there have been problems, in order to explain why and what the Council has done to resolve and improve specific issues. It is important that the self-assessment reflects the Council's response to the recommendations of the Environment Inspection carried out earlier in the year.

6. The draft self-assessment had not been completed at the time of the preparation of this report, and will be circulated separately to the Committee in advance of the meeting.

7. The on-site element of the DoT assessment is to be undertaken on 8 December 2008 and will involve interview sessions with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive, Service Directors, a group of middle managers, and a group of front line staff.

8. The Committee is requested to consider and agree the Council's self-assessment submission for the Direction Of Travel assessment for 2008.

Resource Implications:

None.

Legal and Governance Implications:

There are no legal implications or Human Rights Act issues arising from the recommendations in this report. As in previous years, it has been considered important for the Council to complete the voluntary self-assessment in relation to the overall DoT process.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

There are no implications arising from the recommendations in this report for the Council's commitment to the Nottingham Declaration for climate change, the corporate Safer, Cleaner and Greener initiative, or any Crime and Disorder issues within the district.

Consultation Undertaken:

The content of the draft DoT self-assessment has been considered and agreed by the

Corporate Executive Forum.

Background Papers:

None

Impact Assessments:

Although the Council is required to participate in the annual assessment process, the failure to compile a self-assessment submission could potentially have implications not only for the judgements made about the authority in the forthcoming assessment, but might also mean that opportunities for improvement were lost. There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report. In terms of risk management, a poor Use of Resources assessment score could trigger intervention or further inspection, as well as having a negative effect on the Council's reputation.