

Report to the Audit and Governance Committee



**Report Reference: AGC-016-2010/11.
Date of Meeting: 15 November 2010**

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Finance and Economic Development.

Subject: Audit Commission National Local Government Studies.

Responsible Officer: Steve Tautz (01992 564180).

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (019920564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To note the recent publication by the Audit Commission of national reports relevant to the Council's areas of service provision, and any actions or implications for the Council arising from the reports.

Executive Summary:

This report provides details of national local government studies recently published by the Audit Commission that are relevant to the Council's areas of service provision. Arrangements for the reporting of local government studies issued by the Commission were agreed by the Committee at its meeting on 24 September 2009.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

At the meeting of the Committee held on 22 June 2009, members requested that details of all Audit Commission national reports and publications received by the Council be reported to the Committee for information. To meet the request of members, the publication of national local government studies by the Audit Commission that relate to the Council's areas of service provision, is reported to the Committee on an ongoing basis, with each report having first been considered by the Corporate Governance Group. The Commission's Executive Summary (where produced) of each study is provided to members for information, together with a weblink for the download of the full document.

Other Options for Action:

None. This report is presented at the request of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Report:

1. The Audit Commission's national studies programme aims to improve local public services through an independent authoritative analysis of national evidence and local practice. The Commission has a duty to undertake studies designed to make recommendations for improving the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of certain bodies, and to improve the financial and other management of local public bodies. The Commission's national reports address strategic issues affecting specific sectors as well as the public sector as a whole, identifying practice that works, highlighting emerging findings and examining national trends to influence local practice and national policy. Each of national local government studies published by the Audit Commission since 2000 can be downloaded directly from the Commission's website at:

<http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/pages/list.aspx?ctype=ACNationalStudy>

2. The following national local government study relating directly to the Council's areas of service provision, has been published by the Audit Commission since the last meeting of the Committee:

(a) *"Strategic Financial Management In Councils: Delivering Services With A Reduced Income"* (September 2010).

3. A summary of this report has not been published by the Audit Commission. A copy of the full report is therefore attached as Appendix 1 to this report, and can also be downloaded from the Commission's website using the weblink above.

4. The 'Strategic Financial Management In Councils' report published by the Audit Commission has been considered by the Corporate Governance Group (CGG). The CGG is satisfied that the recommendations in the report are already being followed by the Council, and considers that the challenge questions set out as part of the self-assessment questionnaire produced to support the report, would be useful in future budget rounds when reductions in expenditure may be necessary. This matter will therefore be taken forward by the Director of Finance and ICT as part of the budget setting process for 2012/13 and future years as required.

5. The Committee is requested to note the recent publication by the Audit Commission of national reports relevant to the Council's areas of service provision, and the action being taken by the Council to meet relevant recommendations.

Resource Implications:

None.

Legal and Governance Implications:

There are no legal implications or Human Rights Act issues arising from the recommendations in this report.

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:

This report has been agreed by the Corporate Governance Group, and any possible actions or implications arising from the Audit Commission's national reports will be reported to the Committee. Relevant reports of the Audit Commission are also considered by the Corporate Executive Forum and Management Board as necessary.

Background Papers:

Audit Commission report - 'Strategic Financial Management In Councils: Delivering Services With A Reduced Income' (September 2010)

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

There are no risk management implications arising from the recommendations contained in this report.

Equality and Diversity

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications?

No. The content of this report has no specific equality implications. However, the equality implications arising from any proposals for action in respect of areas for local authority improvement recommended by the Audit Commission would need to be considered if these were to be pursued by the Council.

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken?

N/A.

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?

N/A.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?

N/A.