



Meeting **Community Services Select Committee**

date **8 November 2004**

agenda item number

Trading Standards Best Value and Peer Review

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To advise the Community Services Select Committee of a service Peer Review to be undertaken within Trading Standards. The review is part of a national programme managed by LACORS (Local Authority Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services).
- 1.2 To agree to a working party of members from the Committee to be involved in the exercise as part of their Scrutiny role.

2. Background

- 2.1 LACORS has been working with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the Trading Standards Institute (TSI) to deliver a peer review process for trading standards. A fundamental objective of the peer review process is that it must add value to all the authorities taking part. That is the authority that is subject to the peer review and the officers from authorities who will be carrying it out.
- 2.2 Peer review differs from audit and inspection in that it does not check compliance against standards. The use of peers from within local government provides a challenging but supportive environment. Peer review is undertaken by critical friends. It has a clear intention of helping a Service identify its current strengths and recognise key areas that require development in order to drive improvement.
- 2.3 The pilot process for peer review was held in the spring of 2004 in 11 authorities and proved to be a success. An Officer from Nottinghamshire along with an Officer from Nottingham City and an IDEA representative acted as critical friends and undertook a peer assessment on Derbyshire County Council. A number of improvements were identified from these pilots and new guidance incorporates those improvements.
- 2.4 Nottinghamshire is scheduled to be the second authority within the East Midlands region to have a peer assessment.
- 2.5 The DTI has agreed to fund the programme nation-wide and LACORS will be overseeing the management of the review programme.

3. Peer Review: The Way Ahead?

- 3.1 Peer Review is based on the approach that lasting change and improvement can only happen from within, and cannot be imposed from outside. Local Government overall is very supportive of this type of process as a potential replacement for traditional government "inspection" and Trading Standards is the first service specific peer review programme to be implemented.
- 3.2 As indicated in the report, the Trading Standards Peer Review process is a partnership with a number of central and local government organisations. Lead responsibilities are outlined in Appendix 1 to this report.

4. The Peer Review Process

- 4.1 The Peer Review Process is designed around the European Foundation Quality Model (EFQM) whereby authorities do a self-assessment via a specially adapted website provided by the Society of Chief Trading Standards Officers. They then design a service improvement plan and on a three year rolling cycle, the service and plans are examined by a team of reviewers comprising of trading standards professionals from other authorities together with an independent reviewer provided by the Improvement and Development Agency (IdeA) Peer Clearing House.

5 Future Work

- 5.1 A team of officers has been established during October to undertake a self assessment. Two officers have undertaken training on the process and web tool and they are responsible for training other members of the team.
- 5.2 The peer review process will take place during January 2005. This therefore means that our self assessment needs to be completed by December 2004. A project timetable which provides more information can be found in Appendix 2.

6 Statutory and Policy Implications

- 6.1 This report has been compiled after consideration of the implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material they have been described in the text of the report.

7 Recommendation

- 7.1 That the report be noted and the Peer Review be welcomed and
- 7.2 A working Party be established to fulfil a scrutiny role in this process.

**RICHARD HODGE
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (COMMUNITY PROTECTION)**