



meeting      **CABINET**

date            **13 September 2006**

agenda item number

## **REPORT OF THE LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCE**

### **DIRECTION OF TRAVEL STATEMENT**

#### **Purpose of report**

- 1 To gain Cabinet approval for the submission of the Direction of Travel Self Assessment to the Audit Commission

#### **Background**

- 2 The Direction of Travel Assessment, which will be made by the Audit Commission, forms part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). At the end of each year the Council is evaluated and given a star rating ranging from the top rating of four stars down to no stars and is also classified according to how strongly it is improving. This second judgement is the Direction of Travel Assessment and the Council will be placed in one of four categories, Improving Strongly, Improving Well, Improving Adequately or Not Improving.
- 3 The Direction of Travel judgement was given for the first time last year and the Council was classified as Improving Well. This stood beside the overall CPA assessment of the County Council as a four star authority.
- 4 In order for this year's assessment to be made, the Council is asked to undertake a self assessment to be submitted by the end of September. This follows the questions that the Audit Commission will use in their assessment.

#### **The Council's Direction of Travel Self Assessment**

5. A copy of the draft Self Assessment for submission is attached to this report. Its format and length are prescribed by the Commission. The objective in completing the assessment has been to describe the improvements that are being made in service delivery and organisational capacity across the Council within a strong corporate framework. Our responses have, therefore, been built around the new Community Strategy and Strategic Plan. The assessment also draws strongly on the work undertaken as part of the Council Annual Improvement Plan published in the Annual Performance Plan.

- 6 Following the submission of the Self Assessment, a representative of the Audit Commission will visit the authority and discuss with members and officers any aspects of the Assessment they chose to investigate further. Members will be aware that the Council also submits a self assessment on Value for Money to the Audit Commission as part of the CPA. This will also be subject to an on site assessment. These two assessments were conducted separately last year but the intention of the Audit Commission is to integrate the two assessments more strongly this year. It is expected that the Council will be informed of the judgment to be made in late autumn. The full CPA announcement will, however, be later this year. The tri-annual Best Value User Satisfaction Survey is being conducted this autumn. In order to incorporate the results of these surveys the final assessments for 2006 will not be made until February 2007.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

7. The Direction of Travel Assessment forms part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment which is the Government's system for evaluation of the effectiveness of local authorities. The judgment made on Direction of Travel will be part of the assessment of the Council which will be published next February.

### **Legal Services Comments**

8. Cabinet has the authority to receive the report and to approve the recommendation. [HD - 18/8/06]

### **Director of Resources Financial Comments**

9. The Direction of Travel Self Assessment makes reference to the Value for Money (VFM) reviews through the 'Resourcing Priorities' work, the production of the Annual Efficiency Statement and the approval of the new Medium Term Financial Strategy in April 2006. (NS 18/8/06)

### **Recommendation**

10. It is recommended that:

Cabinet approves the Direction of Travel Self Assessment attached to this report for submission to the Audit Commission and authorises the Leader and Chief Executive to make any final modifications required before submission.

**Cllr David Kirkham**  
**Leader of the Council**

**Cllr John Stocks**  
**Cabinet Member for People and Performance**

### **Background Papers:**

Audit Commission guidance on the Direction of Travel Assessment