



Report to Cabinet

Subject: IDeA Corporate Peer Review 2008

Date: 1 November 2007

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1. Purpose of the Report

- To inform members of proposals for the Council to undertake a corporate peer review in early 2008.

2. Background

Peer review is an increasingly accepted means of reviewing a council's progress and overall performance.

It involves a team of people who understand the pressures and challenges of running a local authority visiting a council to review its practices in a challenging and supportive way. This in turn allows constructive discussion of strengths and weaknesses which will lead to recommendations on how improvements can be made.

Peer review has already been used to good effect by the Council on a corporate basis and most recently for the Planning Service. The Gedling Partnership is currently the subject of a peer review, as part of a wider review of all partnerships in Nottinghamshire.

Earlier this year, the Chief Executive began informal discussions with representatives of the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) on the issue of a possible corporate peer review for the Borough Council. This was in the context of a potential future Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) corporate reassessment of the Council, though it was also recognised that the

review itself could be of value irrespective of whether the Council is included in the CPA reassessment programme.

Further to these discussions, it is now proposed that the Council should progress the proposal and commission an IDeA peer review early in 2008.

3. Proposal

It is proposed that the Council undertakes a peer review in March 2008. Provisional dates have been suggested for the review to take place from 11-14 March 2008, subject to final confirmation from IDeA.

The exact focus of the review will depend on whether the Council is accepted onto the CPA corporate reassessment programme. If it is, then the peer review can be carried out against CPA Key Lines of Enquiry and in effect operate as a “dry run” for CPA corporate assessment later in the year. If it is not, the peer review can focus more on the IDeA model of an “ideal” local authority, drawing on those Key Lines of Enquiry (there is some overlap between the two). In both instances, the review will help target future corporate improvement activity.

The review will be carried out by a team of four people – three peers supported by a review manager. The peers will include a serving Chief Executive, a serving Director or Head of Service and an experienced councillor. The IDeA has been asked to ensure that peers selected have understanding and experience of two-tier working and of what an “excellent” council is like.

The team will be on site for four days, during which time they will interview various members, officers and partner representatives; carry out focus group exercises with employees, stakeholders and local residents, and observe the council “in action” at various meetings and events happening during the course of the week.

They will be guided by a self-assessment based around the relevant Key Lines of Enquiry, which the Council will need to complete in advance of their visit, and by further documentary evidence which the Council will also need to provide.

There will be an initial feedback session at the end of the week, with a full report and further feedback provided later in the Spring/Summer.

4. Resource Implications

The normal cost of an IDeA Peer Review for a district council would be £8,700 plus VAT plus expenses. However, the East Midlands Improvement Partnership has recently agreed to subsidise the full cost of a peer review for the Council, so

the cost to the Council will be limited to the expenses of the review team. These costs can be met from within existing budgets.

5. Recommendation

Cabinet is recommended to endorse proposals for the Council to undertake an IDeA corporate peer review in early 2008 as outlined above.