



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

DIRECTION OF TRAVEL – SELF ASSESSMENT

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Agenda Item No:

Date: 5 September 2008

Purpose of Report:

To outline to Members the position regarding the assessment by the Audit Commission in September 2008 and to seek approval of the self assessment document.

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) for Fire and Rescue Services was introduced in 2005 as part of the Government's modernisation of the Service. CPA replaced the previous regime of inspection which was conducted by Her Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate. From 2006 CPA for Fire and Rescue Services was based on assessment through a performance framework with three key elements:

- A use of resources assessment;
- A direction of travel assessment
- Operational assurance.

The first two assessments have been completed on an annual basis over the last two years. Operational assurance was conducted in 2006 only, and the resulting score has been carried forward year on year.

1.2 A scored direction of travel assessment continues to be an important element of the performance assessment 2008. The purpose of this assessment will be to provide a concise statement on a Fire and Rescue Authority's strength of improvement or deterioration. The assessment will state how well the Authority has performed since its last assessment and whether it is considered that it will continue to improve.

1.3 The assessment is outcome focused. Emphasis will be given to how the Service has demonstrably improved outcomes for the public since the last assessment. It will assess how the Authority has addressed modernisation and the requirements of the National Framework. The Commission will rely on a desk-top assessment and/or fieldwork as appropriate to update the previous assessment.

1.4 The direction of travel (DoT) assessment is a concise statement on an Authority's improvement, or deterioration, since its last fire and rescue DoT assessment. The DoT assessment provides yearly public assurance about whether an Authority is:

- Complying with its best value duty of making arrangements to secure continuous improvement; and
- Modernising its Fire Service according to the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework (see below).

The direction of travel assessment will be scored in this way:

- 4 - Improving Strongly
- 3 - Improving Well
- 2 - Improving Adequately
- 1 - Not improving adequately/Not improving

- 1.5 It is not mandatory for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service to produce a self assessment document, based on performance from April 2007 to March 2008, but is considered good practice. A self assessment provides the Auditors with background information on achievements as well as overall aims and future plans. To assist their audit due to be undertaken in September, a document has been produced in support of this and has to be submitted to the Audit Commission by 8 September 2008, ahead of their on-site inspection occurring later that month.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 The production of the self assessment has been co-ordinated by the Corporate Services department with input from other directorates of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. It is made up of the following elements / questions, 'What is the Service setting out to achieve?'; 'How is the Service being delivered along with value for money?'; 'What has been achieved to date?' and 'What plans does the Authority have for the future?' The document provides more detail around these key questions.
- 2.2 An element of value for money (VFM) assessment is contained within the document to support the fact that the on-site assessment will not only look at DoT but also the approach to VFM, and this will contribute to the score on use of resources.
- 2.3 The National Framework sets out the context in which the Audit Commission assesses improvements in the Service for 2007-08 and is the basis on which the Commission makes judgements. It is also fundamental to the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Community Safety Plan 2007-10 and central to what the Service is currently setting out to achieve. A new National Framework has recently been released and will be one of the key drivers when producing the new Community Safety Plan.
- 2.4.1 The Framework covering the period of this assessment is the 2006-08 Fire and Rescue National Framework and it contains the following major areas of service improvement:
- Fire prevention and risk management – including fire prevention measures and developing Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs);
 - Working together: the regional approach – including the functions on which Authorities should work together through Regional Management Boards (RMBs);
 - Effective response – focusing on providing an effective response to incidents;
 - Resilience and New Dimension – including strategies for responding to terrorist threats and other major natural or man-made disasters;
 - Fire and rescue staff – covering how Authorities deal with fair and effective management of staff, including equality and diversity issues; and
 - Workforce development – covers the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) and training provision.

2.5 Guidance indicates that changes made from the last assessment in autumn 2007, for the year 2006/07, are limited and include additional clarity around:

- Consideration of progress with the operational assessment of service delivery (OASD) carried out in November 2006;
- A focus on partnerships and engagement with Local Area Agreements (LAAs).

2.6 Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) consultation is currently taking place and this is helping shape the wider agenda.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, however indirectly producing a self assessment including a value for money element may highlight where cost savings and 'value for money' impacts on the Service.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising directly from this report.

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

After consideration regarding any equality impacts the report may generate, it was deemed unnecessary for an equality impact assessment to be carried out.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising directly from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Failure to produce a submission to the Audit Commission may have an impact on the overall assessment result and lead to a poor score, with consequent reputation damage.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 That Members approve the proposed approach laid out in this report.
- 9.2 That approval of the final submission to the Audit Commission be delegated to the Chair and Vice Chair following consultation with the opposition spokespersons.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Frank Swann
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER