

CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE PROGRESS 4TH QUARTER 2020/21

1. BACKGROUND AND FOREWORD

- 1.1** The Local Government Association (LGA) offers all local authorities the opportunity to participate in a Corporate Peer Challenge every 4 years or so as part of its sector-led improvement programme.
- 1.2** The Council's Corporate Peer Challenge took place between 26 and 29 March 2019. It was conducted by a team of elected members and senior officers from other local authorities together with LGA advisors.
- 1.3** The Peer Challenge team reviewed the Council's self-assessment, key documents. They conducted site visits, interviews and workshops with a wide selection of staff, members, stakeholders and partners, meeting with 107 people and holding 47 meetings during their stay.
- 1.4** The Council received the Peer Challenge team's feedback report in May 2019 and reported it to Council on 16 May 2019. The report set out eight recommendations in respect of areas for development and improvement.
- 1.5** An Action Plan was developed in respect of the 8 recommendations, including timescales and organisational leads. These are recorded on our performance management system – Excelsis.
- 1.6** Three of the recommendations were completed during 2019/20, namely the restructure of the senior leadership team (CRD1); adoption of the Corporate Delivery Plan to May 2020 (CRD2) and regular meetings are now held between Senior Officers and Members both on a formal and informal basis. Officers and members are also involved in strategic conversations with partners from other authorities (CRD5). The remaining actions were rolled forward to 2020/21.

2. PROGRESS ON THE ACTION PLAN

- 2.1** A summary of progress made during the 4th quarter is set out below. Progress on Rec 8 (CRD8) remains as stated in the 3rd quarter report to S&R Committee in February.

REC 3 (CRD3) Ensure the integrity of the current IT system. Review the progress and suitability of current plans, capability and capacity in respect of this, and beyond that to confirm the emerging plans in respect of ICT development and digital delivery fit with longer term transformational plans.

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**STRATEGY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE
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- The infrastructure refresh programme remains on schedule. Resource supply required to support the Fit for The Future programme will be assessed as demand plans are established. The IT and Security Strategy are both currently being reviewed.

REC 4 (CRD4) Work with all key stakeholders over the next year to develop a clear vision and priorities for the council aligned to our Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), to be agreed in the next iteration of the Corporate Delivery Plan (CDP) and once approved ensure this is communicated effectively to residents, businesses and other partners.

- After the election of May 2021 a process for agreeing a new Corporate Plan is well underway. Discussion to be held with the Alliance Leadership about agreeing how the plan will be produced in 2021. It is clear that the work of the recovery board will form the basis for many of the organisation's key ongoing activities.

REC 6 (CRD6) Establish effective workforce planning and performance management arrangements so that the Council has a committed and engaged staff group with clarity in terms of the expectations of them and sufficient capacity to deliver its plans. The Council should:

- Review is future staffing arrangements, ensuring strategic fit and the development of a 'one council' ethos
- Develop core transformation plans and ensure sufficient capacity to enable effective delivery and monitoring. This includes consideration of ICT provision.
- Establish appropriate pay and reward arrangements for staff
- Ensure consistent compliance with, and outcomes arising from, core HR policies are delivered eg appraisals
- Ensure consistent oversight, management and compliance with key performance management practices.

- Working with the Council's Organisational Development Consultants significant progress has been made in the following areas:
 - Organisational Values and Behaviours
 - People Strategy
 - Wellbeing Framework
 - Performance Management
 - Non Pay Benefits
 - Learning and Development Offer
 - Target Operating Model

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A toolkit is being rolled out to managers to promote values and behaviours. As part of the Fit for the Future programme, staff and Members are being regularly updated on progress via blogs and videos on The Hub

REC 7 (CRD7) Building on its relatively strong financial position, review how its investment and commercial plans could be enhanced. A key focus of this will be to help deliver the Council's priorities as well as sustain its financial viability into the medium term.

- The Council's financial performance has been strong throughout the pandemic and the short term financial position is sound. There remains a need to close the medium term financial gap although the position there remains uncertain until the Local Government Financial Environment is clarified.

2.2 In summary, the impact of the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in having to postpone the local council election until May 2021, has delayed the implementation of some of the recommendations. Alliance Member workshops to help set strategic priorities and inform budget setting have been held. The Council's organisational development programme is now under way with much of the ongoing activity captured in our Fit for the Future Programme.

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