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| REPORT OF: | DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE |
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| TO: | EXECUTIVE |
| DATE: | 7 JANUARY 2016 |
| EXECUTIVE MEMBER | Councillor V.W. Broad |

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| KEY DECISION REQUIRED: | No |
| WARD (S) AFFECTED: | ALL |

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| SUBJECT: | LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: | |
| <p>(i) That the comments of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee regarding the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge be noted (Annex 1);</p> <p>(ii) that the improvement action plan, developed in response to the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge be approved (Annex 2); and</p> <p>(iii) Progress against the improvement action plan be reported as part of the Council's quarterly performance management reports to both the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p> | |
| REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS: | |
| To progress the work arising from the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and to develop an improvement action plan to drive further improvements forward. | |
| SUMMARY: | |
| <p>The Council recently undertook a Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge. The report and recommendations from this challenge were reported to the Executive on 12 November and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 10 December for comment. Comments from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee are attached at Annex 1.</p> <p>Whilst the report is extremely positive about Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, it is part of an LGA improvement programme and therefore included some recommendations for the Council to consider.</p> <p>An improvement action plan has been developed in response to these recommendations and is attached at Annex 2.</p> <p>It is recommended that the improvement action plan be approved and progress be reported regularly to the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p> | |

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| Executive has authority to approve the above recommendations. |
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STATUTORY POWERS

1. The Council has a range of statutory duties which it is required to deliver.
2. The Local Government Association Peer Challenge programme is voluntary, but in undertaking this process the feedback will enable the Council to provide better services and support to residents.

BACKGROUND

3. The Local Government Association (LGA) developed the Corporate Peer Challenge programme to support sector led improvement following the abolition of Audit Commission and local government inspection regime.
4. Reigate & Banstead commissioned a Corporate Peer Challenge in order to provide external feedback on our performance and inform further improvement and learning.
5. The peer challenge process is designed to be forward looking, facilitative and problem solving. Whilst it can be used to provide an external 'health-check', the peer challenge is not a form of inspection, and does not deliver a detailed diagnosis or scored assessment.

LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

6. The Peer Challenge involved an on site visit by a team of experienced elected members and officer peers in both the public and private sector. At the end of the on-site visit, the peer team provided immediate feedback to the Executive and Management Team through a summary presentation. This was followed by a written report, which was reported to the Executive on 12 November and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 10 December 2015.
7. The peer team recognised the excellent services and support that we are delivering and described Reigate & Banstead as a leading Council, exceptional community leader and one of the top Councils in the country.
8. Other great feedback includes the following highlights – the Peer Challenge team believes:
 - We are an ambitious, confident and achieving Council, with strong political and managerial leadership
 - Our focus on supporting people is to be applauded
 - We are a strong community leader, with an excellent reputation amongst our partners
 - We have a range of great activities and projects such as our health action plan, living and ageing well work and our Joint Enforcement Team
 - We have an impressive focus on talent management and staff development, including the Emerging Stars and Next Generation Leader programme
 - Our unique focus, dedication and programmes to help challenged young people into work are very impressive.
9. The peer team were particularly positive about the Council's staff, describing them as 'motivated and empowered, proud to work for the council and keen to shape its future direction'. They also noted that our staff were of high quality, engaged and enthusiastic and committed to improving our borough.

10. The key recommendations from the peer challenge were:

- Articulate your innovative approach to financial sustainability at a corporate level
- Allocate funding to political priorities
- Deliver the Development Management Plan and a parallel marketing strategy
- Create a sustainable approach to a recurring pressure on homelessness
- Continue the strong future workforce planning
- Internal and external challenge will ensure you remain a leading council
- Tell people your story

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

11. An improvement action plan has been developed in response to the Peer Challenge recommendations and is attached at **Annex 2**.
12. Under each recommendation, the action plan captures the detailed comments made within the Peer Challenge report, the Council's response, and any actions and timescales that are recommended in response.
13. It is recommended that the improvement action plan be approved and progress regularly reviewed by the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This will be completed through the normal quarterly performance reporting process.
14. It is anticipated that the LGA Peer Review team will undertake a follow up site visit in September 2016 to review the Council's progress against their recommendations.

OPTIONS

15. The Executive can:
 - a. Agree the Improvement Action Plan (**recommended option**). This will ensure that the Council responds to the recommendations made by the LGA Peer Review team and continues to improve the services and support that we provide to the borough;
 - b. Request further work be undertaken on the Improvement Action Plan. The Executive may request further work be undertaken to develop the action plan if there are any areas of concern.
 - c. Reject the Improvement Action Plan. This is not recommended. The LGA Peer Challenge Team, whilst very positive about the Council's performance, have recommended areas of improvement.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

16. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

17. There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.
18. However, the action plan does recognise that some areas will need to be considered through the Council's service and financial planning process to ensure that appropriate budget provision is made. It is anticipated that this will be undertaken over the summer 2016, in order to inform the provisional service and financial

planning proposals for 2017/18 when some of the fixed term funding arrangements come to a close.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

19. There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

20. The Corporate Peer Challenge recognised that the Council is managing risks well. The recommendations within the report will help us deliver services even better, thereby managing our risks even better.

CONSULTATION

21. The report and recommendations from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge were reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 10 December. The comments from this meeting are attached as Annex 1 and have been considered in the development of the action plan.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

22. There are no policy framework considerations arising from this report.

Background Papers: None

Extract of Minutes of a meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 10 December 2015

32. LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

The Committee had before it a report received by the Executive on 12 November 2015 regarding the feedback from the recent Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge. Appended to this report was the Peer Challenge Team's Feedback Report, setting out their findings and recommendations.

The Committee were pleased to note highly positive nature of the Challenge Team's findings.

It was noted that the Executive had authorised the Deputy Chief Executive to prepare an action plan setting out how the Council will respond to the recommendations for further improvement made within the report. The Committee noted that the action plan would be fully owned by the Council.

The Committee made the following observations:

- That the Council should continue to explore all potential funding streams, particularly with regard to the delivery of health and wellbeing work, including mental health care;
- That it would be beneficial to produce a 'compelling narrative of the Council's sustainable future', as recommended in the report, prior to the commencement of the Service and Financial Planning process for 2017/18;
- That the Council should continue to work to maximise the performance of all staff, partly through appropriate performance management systems;
- That the Council should ensure that future investment in ICT enables flexible working arrangements for staff, as recommended in the report;
- That the Council should continue to work to optimise its relationship with Raven Housing Trust, in order to protect and support the interests of borough residents;

RESOLVED:

- (i) that the report of the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, received by the Executive on 12 November, be noted; and
- (ii) that the observations made by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee be considered in the development of the action plan.

| Suggested actions / considerations | RBBC Response | Activities Resulting | Owner | Timescale | Progress |
|--|--|--|----------------|--|----------|
| Recommendation 1: Articulate your innovative approach to financial sustainability at a corporate level | | | | | |
| Produce a corporate document providing a narrative description of the Council's future operating model to achieve a sustainable future (what, how, why), providing a link between the MTFP and 5-Year Plan. This should articulate: - how we will grow the business - how we will get capital returns - what a commercial approach to services means and what will change - what the principles for investment and disinvestment are | We recognise the need to provide a clear and strong narrative to deliver our priorities and financial sustainability. | Identify best practice examples from other Councils (e.g. Wychavon DC) and clarify audience and purpose. | Gavin Handford | Complete best practice review by January. Produce RBBC version by March if required | |
| Create a well-defined and resourced Asset Management Plan | Work is already underway to produce a new Asset Management Plan | Seek out Asset Management Plan best practice examples | John Reed | Mar-16 | |
| Recommendation 2: Allocate funding to priorities | | | | | |
| Health & wellbeing | | | | | |
| Consider how the Council will continue to fund health, wellbeing and ageing well - either through dedicated reserves, or by creating headroom in the revenue budget | Health, wellbeing and ageing well are priorities within the Council's 5 Year Plan. Activities will be funded through base revenue and Corporate Plan Delivery Funds. This will be reviewed regularly as part of service & financial planning | Review funding for 5 Year Plan priorities around health, wellbeing and ageing well through annual service & financial planning Explore partner funding streams to support 5 Year Plan wherever possible | Tom Kealey | Initial scope by Feb 2016 | |
| Prioritise Health & Wellbeing activities where we can make the most impact, working more with partners to demonstrate measurable outcomes and impact of activities | We recognise the need to demonstrate outcomes, including impact on residents, and prioritise resources where they are most effective. | Work with partners to review and strengthen offer and how these are contributing to the 5 Year Plan (e.g., Furnistore, Staywell, GLL, Taxi vouchers) and the level of Return on Investment. | Tom Kealey | Jun-16 | |
| Continue to undertake a leadership and coordination role and provide a universal offer, particularly around lifestyle choices. Strengthen our role as enabler, broker and marketer of independent networks as opposed to delivering ourselves | We will continue our work in this area. | Continue our work in this area, including the Health Partnership forum Use our influence to better identify the requirements of the 3rd sector, in order to understand how we can assist in enabling them to achieve their desired results. | Tom Kealey | Ongoing - provide quarterly updates | |
| Continue to raise awareness of the impact of many council services on health & wellbeing e.g. planning and housing – healthy environment and homes | Agreed | Review and deliver communications and engagement plan in support of 5 year plan health priority | Tom Kealey | Develop campaign by April 2016, and then provide quarterly updates | |
| Consider how to market the health & wellbeing offer and highlight community assets given change to website | We work well with our partners to promote our health and wellbeing offer (e.g. Ageing Well week publicity, which included very successful customer insight marketing) | Continue existing activities | Tom Kealey | N/A | |
| Financial planning | | | | | |

| Suggested actions / considerations | RBBC Response | Activities Resulting | Owner | Timescale | Progress |
|---|--|---|-------------------------------|---|----------|
| Consider longer term planning of the recyclates market | Our financial plans recognise that the Council relies on significant income from the recyclates market, which due to global factors can fluctuate. We review this regularly as part of service and financial planning. | Minimise the financial risk from recycle market through strong financial planning, joint work within Surrey Waste Partnership (such as joint tendering for recyclates) and creating a stabilisation reserve. Continue to review through service and financial planning and adjust funding as necessary | Frank Etheridge | Contract tender complete by April 2016. Service & financial planning review by July 2016 | |
| Continue to be aware of existing and emerging risks e.g. The Harlequin, and consider reducing the revenue subsidy | Agreed. Maintenance of assets, links to the asset management plan e.g. leisure centres, day centres etc. We review this regularly as part of service and financial planning. | Continue to manage reduction of revenue subsidy and other budget mechanisms e.g. sink funds, capital budget. Continue to review through service and financial planning and adjust funding as necessary | Tom Kealey / Bill Pallett | Service & financial planning review by July 2016 | |
| Economic Development | | | | | |
| Consider managed workspace for micro businesses | Ongoing. Council already working on Economic Development Framework. | Proposal/update to be provided to Management Team. | Luci Mould / Simon Bland | 01-Jun-16 | |
| Provide / encourage work placements in a wider range of service areas (e.g. clerical work/admin roles), other sectors (e.g. encourage private sector) and for a wider range of people (e.g. older people) | Agreed. We would like to provide wider placements as recommended, however, demand is now lower than previously experienced. | Continue to review scheme and the needs of groups. Consider opportunities for wider groups (e.g. disabilities engagement through Surrey Choices) | Chris Smith / Steve Bevan | Review complete by June 2016 | |
| Engage with contractors to offer work placements and apprenticeships (utilising Social Value Act) | Supported in principle, however, there is concern that this may lead to higher procurement costs | Consideration to be given through Contract Procedure Rules and options identified | Bill Pallett / Michael Graham | 01-Apr-16 | |
| Recommendation 3: Deliver the DMP and a parallel marketing strategy | | | | | |
| Continue focus on delivering the Development Management Plan (DMP): - deliver affordable housing - deliver employment sites | Agreed | Continue to develop our DMP in accordance with our adopted Local Development Scheme | Luci Mould | Consultation summer 2016 and spring 2017 Adoption Feb 2018 | |
| Support the development and delivery of a DMP with a strong marketing plan, underlining the importance of effective planning for growth and the difficult decisions that come with this need. | ROSIE communication plan already exists. Market research being commissioned. | Potentially better articulate the message from business | Luci Mould | Summer 2016 | |
| Keep Gatwick at the top of our Agenda - the Council's position on Gatwick expansion is critical | We agree that the future of Gatwick airport is a key issue for our local economy and local planning. However, we do not believe our position is critical to the Government's decision regarding airport expansion. | Continue to monitor and engage in discussions regarding future airport provision | Luci Mould | Ongoing - provide quarterly updates | |
| Finalise Community Infrastructure Levy | Agreed. Work is already underway and the Planning Inspector has completed an Examination in Public. | Finalise CIL for implementation on 1 April 2016 | Luci Mould | 01-Apr-16 | |
| Recommendation 4: Create a sustainable approach to recurring pressure on homelessness | | | | | |

| Suggested actions / considerations | RBBC Response | Activities Resulting | Owner | Timescale | Progress |
|---|--|---|-------------------------------|--|----------|
| Continue to improve the relationship with Raven Housing Trust (RHT) as a strategic partner, developing stronger trust and appreciation of each other's independence, in order to address current and future pressures: - impact of welfare reforms - improving health and employment - reducing homelessness | We recognise the challenges facing the Council in relation to welfare reform and homelessness, and the need to work with partners to create a sustainable approach. We are making significant service and financial changes to respond to this. | Establish an internal cross-organisational think tank to understand process and interventions necessary to help prevent homelessness. Continue to liaise with Raven HT as appropriate. Look at buying Raven. Work with other partners - other neighbours with housing stock and other RPs. Continue to review through service and financial planning and adjust funding as necessary. | Kathy O'Leary / Bill Pallett | 01-Apr-16 | |
| Recommendation 5: Continue the strong future workforce planning | | | | | |
| Promote value of flexible working, including among Members and championed by the Executive | We recognise that in order to continue being a high performing Council we will need to enable more flexible working utilising best practice from the public and private sector. | Develop and deliver business change activities, including greater flexible and agile working. Provide regular updates on the benefits of this approach. | Gavin Handford / Fiona Cullen | 01-Jul-16 | |
| Appraise staff performance through a streamlined process based on behaviours and what they deliver as opposed to visibility in office (whilst using mobile technology to maintain virtual presence) which requires a shift in culture and expectations | Agreed. Work is already underway to amend the staff appraisal approach | Amend staff appraisal process to focus on performance and behaviours Review working hours and clocking arrangements to encourage flexibility among staff | Chris Smith | 01-Apr-16 | |
| Extend high quality accommodation across all Council sites | Agreed. Executive approved funding to support accommodation changes at Earlswood Depot | Complete Earlswood Depot accommodation review | Frank Etheridge | Work commences August 16, for completion December 16 | |
| Keep abreast of succession planning in key business areas (including Development Management & Property) | Agreed. Succession planning is formally and consciously considered for both Management Team and key risk roles. | Review succession planning approach as part of wider talent management review (incorporating 9 box grid assessments) | Christine Smith / Steve Bevan | 01-Apr-16 | |
| Invest in talent management, organisational culture and purpose | Talent Management is a key priority for the Council | Continue/review formal programmes and how to support everyone's Personal Development plans. Continue to promote our development plans in recruitment. | Christine Smith / Steve Bevan | 1 April 16 1 June 16 | |
| Work with private sector partners or neighbouring colleagues to address skills gap, giving particular consideration to key skills sets around commercialisation | Agreed. We need to determine what we mean by commercialisation. | Scope what we mean by commercialisation, Share learning of our commercial activities, learning and partners knowledge. Consider formal training. | Kathy O'Leary | 01-Jun-16 | |
| Recommendation 6: Internal and external challenge will ensure you remain a leading council | | | | | |

| Suggested actions / considerations | RBBC Response | Activities Resulting | Owner | Timescale | Progress |
|---|--|--|----------------|---|----------|
| Continue to identify opportunities for internal and external challenge | Agreed. We will continue to seek out and share best practice using internal and external challenge to support this | Arrange further external challenge opportunities (e.g. organisational raids) Arrange follow up visit by LGA Peer Review team Develop political challenge through Member development Continue to undertake staff surveys, internal audit and scrutiny activities to provide internal challenge | Gavin Handford | Ongoing, with quarterly updates Follow up visit Sept 2016 | |
| Balance the need for a professional approach with genuine debate in Committee meetings (particularly where webcast) | Our approach is to ensure efficient and effective decision making, providing a range of opportunities to input to decisions making (Member workshops, Executive meetings, Overview & Scrutiny) | Maintain existing arrangements | N/A | N/A | |
| Play a key role in the Surrey debate on devolution, using your position at heart of Gatwick Diamond (a key sub-regional economic growth point) to play a lead role in shaping a possible devolution bid | We are actively engaged with the devolution discussions across 3SC | Continue to engage in devolution discussions, with regular reports to Executive | Kathy O'Leary | 01-Apr-16 | |
| Recommendation 7: Tell people your story | | | | | |
| Communicate the purpose and usability of the new Website more widely and signpost to other sites such as twitter, Facebook and streetlife for communities discussing local issues | Work is already underway to develop a channel shift strategy and promoting the new website capabilities. The Council actively engages with community discussions on a range of social media sites. | Continue to communicate and engage with residents through social media, as well as other channels. Finalise and deliver channel shift strategy | Fiona Cullen | Strategy developed by April 16, followed by quarterly updates | |
| Tell people your story | We welcome the positive feedback from the LGA Peer Challenge and the encouragement to do more to promote the excellent work of the Council. | Develop submissions for sector awards in order to raise the Councils profile and reputation Continue to provide regular updates to all Councillors to enable them to promote the Councils achievements in their local communities Work with the LGA to support local government conferences and events, promoting the achievements at Reigate & Banstead | Gavin Handford | Ongoing, with quarterly updates | |