

Corporate Peer Challenge Review

Summary

To note the Corporate Peer Challenge Review Report and agree to its publication on the website.

Portfolio - Leader

Date Portfolio Holder signed off report – 3 March 2016

Wards Affected – n/a

Recommendation

The Executive is advised to note the Corporate Peer Challenge Review and agree for the publication of the report on the Council's website.

1. Resource Implications

- 1.1 There are no resource implications attached to this report.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 In December 2015 the Council underwent a review of the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) that took place in October 2014.
- 2.2 Peer challenges are improvement-focused and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement plans.
- 2.3 There were 15 recommendations in the report that the Council received after the CPC in 2014 these formed the focus of the review visit in December 2015.
- 2.4 The outcome of this visit was very positive Annex A demonstrates the progress the Peer review team feels the Council has made against the 15 recommendations they made during their previous visit to the council in October 2014. An extract from the report reads '*It was clear to the peer team that the CPC has had a positive impact, with almost all recommendations being followed up.*'
- 2.5 Other comments from the report included:
- *The elections provided an opportune moment to review the Council's key priorities in October 2015. This has led to a renewed focus on Camberley town centre as the number one key priority, and a new emphasis on investment, prudential borrowing and income generation.*

- *There are good officer and Member relationships and the peer team were impressed with the commitment of staff to delivering improvement for Surrey Heath.*
- *The peer team was impressed by a strong group of members including new members with energy and ideas.*
- *Investment Strategy and Property Acquisition which sets out the “objective to acquire property for increased financial resilience also to contribute to the economic wellbeing of the borough”. This is governed by clearly set out investment criteria and is supervised by a Property Appraisal Group and the Council’s Risk Register. This shows a bold investment outlook married with a responsible approach to risk.*

3. Options

- 3.1 The Executive are asked to note the content of the report and to agree that the report is published.

4. Proposals

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Executive notes the report comment as appropriate and agree to the reports publication.

5. Supporting Information

- 5.1 Further information regards Corporate Peer Challenge can be found on the LGA website.

6. Corporate Objectives And Key Priorities

- 6.1 The feedback received from the Corporate Peer Review will be considered when drafting the Council’s new strategy document.

7. Consultation

- 7.1 All Councillors and staff have been briefed regards the corporate peer Challenge and through this report will be made aware of the outcome of the independent review.

8. PR And Marketing

- 8.1 The report will be published on the Councils website along with the report from October 2014.

Annexes	Annex A – Recommendations from the CPC October 2014 and progress from CPC Review December 2015.
- Background Papers	Corporate Peer Challenge Review – Report (exempt at the present time)
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Consultations, Implications and Issues Addressed

Resources	Required	Consulted
Revenue	✓	
Capital		
Human Resources		
Asset Management		
IT		
Other Issues	Required	Consulted
Corporate Objectives & Key Priorities	✓	
Policy Framework		
Legal		
Governance		
Sustainability		
Risk Management		
Equalities Impact Assessment		
Community Safety		
Human Rights		
Consultation		
P R & Marketing		

Version:

Annex A - Principal Recommendations from the CPC October 2014

	Recommendation	Progress as set out in CPC Report
1	The council will need to update its 2020 Vision and review its priorities to better match to available resources	The elections provided an opportune moment to review the Council's key priorities in October 2015. This has led to a renewed focus on Camberley town centre as the number one key priority, and a new emphasis on investment, prudential borrowing and income generation. Work on a new Corporate Strategy has begun and is to be complete for April 2016.
2	Initiate a community debate across the borough on what individuals and communities might take on themselves for future service delivery, where traditionally this might have been provided by the council. Consultation with communities will be essential to shape the new vision to understand future demand and manage expectations.	This recommendation was not specifically picked up in the review visit. But the events detailed below are examples of work undertaken by the Council in this area. Spotlight on Public Services events held in November 2014 and March 2015 to consult public on priorities. Ward Cllrs are on all local business associations. On-line Cllr Surgeries. Make It Real volunteering events
3	Invest in a dedicated and senior resource to deliver the Council's transformation programme	The Council had just appointed the new Executive Head of Transformation, being an internal appointment with the post being advertised externally. This will be an important appointment for the Council to assist it in developing new ways of working to gain efficiencies; developing new partnerships to gain capacity; and developing opportunities to develop income streams to support Council finances.
4	Invest in skills and expertise to strengthen project and programme management	The Wider Management Team (WMT) – being CMT plus middle managers – was recently reintroduced and was widely welcomed by staff. The peer team were impressed by the energy and commitment of the middle managers it met and believe that the WMT forum will be important

		platform to support matrix and project working to deliver transformation.
5	Complete the review of delegated authority with the principles of responsibility, accountability and enhanced decision making at the fore	Governance arrangements have been streamlined. The scheme of delegation has been reviewed, new time-frames for written reports, and report templates have been introduced with a clearer process for report approval.
6	Clarify the distinctive roles and responsibilities of CMT and the Management Board. If the latter is to serve a Programme Board function then ensure that working arrangements are supported by reconsidering membership composition and ensuring terms of reference are in place	The Management Board has been discontinued with CMT now the arbiter for strategic overview and reporting.
7	Provide clarity and certainty on the means of reporting to committees and the Executive to shorten the current decision making time frame	The scheme of delegation has been reviewed, new time-frames for written reports, and report templates have been introduced with a clearer process for report approval.

Annex B - Specific Recommendations

	Recommendation	Progress
1a	Review arrangements to support the member role in readiness for the new administration elected in May 2015. Commit to enhanced communication to all political groups and backbenchers on Council priorities and programme delivery to ensure awareness is widely and consistently understood and contributes towards a strengthened and shared commitment	The all-out elections in May 2015 was the opportunity for providing a positive new member induction programme, which included a LGA economic development seminar that set out the cross-overs from planning and economic growth and was well received.
1b	Enable Overview and Scrutiny to more effectively challenge the way services are delivered and to provide support on policy development	The peer team were told of the work undertaken to consolidate changes on the Council's Overview and Scrutiny framework. These functions have been reviewed and new chairmen appointed.
1c	Evaluate the backbencher role and how this might be enhanced by an increased community leadership function	The peer team was impressed by a strong group of members including new members with energy and ideas.
2	The understanding and deliverability of the Council as a business – in	The CPC described a bolder emerging outlook to investment

	particular, its readiness to borrow to invest and create income generating opportunities	St George's industrial estate was reported to be making a return of 6 per rental return per annum.
A	Procure an independent business case and options appraisal for the Camberley town centre regeneration to assist the Council to understand the range of investment options, the level of investment risk, the scale and assembly of the financial package and the implementation timescale	A revised town centre plan has been developed that still intends to attract a premium anchor retailer. This decision and new approach has given the Council new confidence and momentum towards implementation of town centre regeneration. For example, the use of Montagu Evans as Council advisers, the recent acquisition of Ashwood House for potential retail and residential development, and the assembly of premises demonstrates Council commitment and progress being made.
B	Develop an Investment strategy, incorporating the current Treasury Management, Property Acquisition and Asset Management strategies	The strategic approach to property acquisition is clearly set out in the Investment Strategy and Property Acquisition that has been adopted. There is an evident understanding and enthusiasm across Council for this approach
C	Ensure that the shift towards higher risk investment activity is counterbalanced by checks and balances to ensure that appropriate due diligence is carried out and that higher risk is actively managed via the Risk Register	Investment Strategy and Property Acquisition... This is governed by clearly set out investment criteria and is supervised by a Property Appraisal Group and the Council's Risk Register. This shows a bold investment outlook married with a responsible approach to risk.
D	Produce a Housing strategy setting out the parameters for future housing provision, affordable housing numbers, potential sites and which partners the Council might work with to deliver these	The housing development proposed for Deepcut, with planning permission for 1,235 homes, is important for delivering a large part of the overall housing numbers. This also highlights the potential use of redundant Ministry of Defence (MoD) land for housing development. The Council presented to ministerial advisers

		on the Government's One Public Estate initiative in December 2015 and, as a result, have been asked to be part of the phase 3 launch.
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