

## STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

17 DECEMBER 2019

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| <b>Report Title</b>                               | <b>LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN UPDATE</b>   |
| <b>Purpose of Report</b>                          | To note the progress made in Quarter 2 on delivering the Action Plan resulting from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge.  |
| <b>Decision(s)</b>                                | <b>The Committee RESOLVES to note the progress made in Quarter 2 on implementing the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.</b>   |
| <b>Consultation and Feedback</b>                  | The Peer Challenge Action Plan was developed following the Peer Challenge in March 2019, which involved Members, staff, stakeholders and partners and resulted in a feedback report.   |
| <b>Financial Implications and Risk Assessment</b> | There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.<br>Lucy Clothier, Interim Accountancy Manager<br>Tel: 01453 754343 Email: <a href="mailto:lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk">lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk</a>  |
| <b>Legal Implications</b>                         | There are no legal implications arising from this report.<br>Patrick Arran, Interim Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer<br>Tel: 01453 754369 Email: <a href="mailto:patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk">patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk</a>   |
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| <b>Options</b>                                    | Options in respect of actions are being set out in reports to Committee as appropriate.  |
| <b>Performance Management Follow Up</b>           | Progress against the Action Plan will continue to be regularly monitored and reported to this Committee. The LGA will follow up with a visit in the next 18 months to 2 years to assess progress against their recommendations.  |
| <b>Background Papers/ Appendices</b>              | <a href="#">LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan progress 3 October 2019</a><br>Appendix 1 – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Quarter 2 Update   |

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 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.

## **2. PROGRESS ON THE ACTION PLAN**

- 2.1 The Action Plan progress made in Quarter 1 was reported to this Committee on 3 October and detailed the improvements made in respect of the eight areas.
- 2.2 Appendix 1 sets out the progress made in Quarter 2. In summary:

### **REC 1 (CRD1) Commence senior officer restructure to ensure sufficient strategic capacity is in place at the top of the organisation**

- Interviews for the 4 Strategic Directors commenced on 8 October 2019. So far three appointments have been made, with the final interviews for the remaining role, Strategic Director of Communities, due to take place on 16 December 2019. The successful candidates so far are: Andrew Cummings – Strategic Director of Resources, who is already in post, Caron Starkey – Strategic Director of Change and Transformation, who starts on 9 December and Brendan Cleere – Strategic Director of Place who starts on 6 January 2020.

### **REC 2 (CRD2) Agree short-term priorities and actions for the period to May 2020.**

- This action was completed with the adoption of the Corporate Delivery Plan Key Actions for 2019/20 at Council on 16 May 2019. Updates are reported quarterly to this Committee and recorded and monitored on Excelsis.

### **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.**

- As detailed above Caron Starkey has been appointed the Strategic Director of Change and Transformation and will be joining the Council in December. Foresight Consulting (IT consultants) have reviewed all the available documentation and the IT architecture, and have produced a detailed and costed action plan to address current infrastructure issues. This will be discussed with the ITC Task & Finish Group when it next meets in December. In the meantime good progress is being made by the IT Team, with project management support from Foresight Consulting, on action plan implementation, starting with the urgent replacement of Citrix terminals which will be unsupported from January 2020.

### **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.**

- Progress has been relatively limited in the quarter due to the team being short staffed for most of the period. A timetable for development of the CDP has been produced and some elements are underway including the annual survey of residents and businesses.

**REC 5 (CRD5) Create time, once the senior officer team is appointed, for the political and managerial leadership teams, both informally and formally, to have 'strategic conversations'. This will help develop a strong leadership team and help them develop clear priorities and plans to be put in place focused on SDC's improvement, for the district and wider county and sub region.**

- Budget workshops were used to develop strategic conversations around financial plans and priorities for the upcoming year. Three out of the 4 new Strategic Directors are now appointed and once in place there are plans to hold regular conversations with political leaders, which will include workshops and awaydays to facilitate team building and agree priorities.

**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.
  - Plans for a new corporate policy team continue to develop which will give the framework for much of this work.
  - The new Strategic Director of Change and Transformation will be the lead in the majority of these projects working with colleagues including the new policy team and HR.

**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 member investment panel have agreed the funds in which they would be comfortable with the Council investing.
- Fees and Charges lists have been produced and will be distributed with committee budget papers.

**REC 8 (CRD8) Consider reviewing governance arrangements to ensure better decision making in order to deliver its revised priorities and plans. As part of this the Council should:**

- Look to develop better collaboration at an early stage in producing policy or service options, taking account of expertise available from members where

**appropriate, together with ensuring that operational, financial and legal implications of options are effectively understood**

- **Seek to build greater political consensus before decision making reports come to members, with greater opportunity for testing and rigour.**
  - We have made a lot of progress in terms of governance. Examples are:
    - Positive audit result on transparency;
    - Reports to Audit and Standards to include a new terms of reference and the proposal for an Independent Member of the Committee;
    - Training for members on good decision making;
    - Devising a new report template to be rolled out in the New Year;
    - Training for officers on governance and report writing;
    - Developing and implementing a Forward Plan;
    - Member session on roles and responsibilities and preparation of a new Member / Officer Relations Protocol to further define these.
  - A report to implement a review of the Constitution will be presented to this Committee.

**2.3** The Action Plan will be kept under review and progress will be regularly reported to this Committee. The intention is to make continual improvement and substantial progress on the Action Plan within the next 18 months.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

**3.1** Members are asked to note the good progress made in Quarter 2 in the implementation of the Action Plan as set out in Appendix 1.