

**STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**AGENDA  
ITEM NO**

**30 JANUARY 2020**

**10**

<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 3 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 3 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. Lucy Clothier, Interim Accountancy Manager 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. Patrick Arran, Interim Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer Tel: 01453 754369 Email: <a href="mailto:patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk">patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report Author</b>	Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive Tel: 01453 754292 Email: <a href="mailto:kathy.oleary@stroud.gov.uk">kathy.oleary@stroud.gov.uk</a>
<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>	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan progress reports 3 October and 17 December 2019.

**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 2 was reported to this Committee on 17 December 2019 and detailed the improvements made in respect of the eight areas.
- 2.2 All of the key items of progress are contained within this report and therefore there is no separate appendix.
- 2.3 Summary of progress made in Quarter 3:

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

- Three of the four Strategic Directors are now in post:
  - Andrew Cummings – Strategic Director of Resources
  - Caron Starkey – Strategic Director of Change and Transformation
  - Brendan Cleere – Strategic Director of Place.
  - Keith Gerrard has been appointed as Strategic Director of Communities and will be in post in March.

### **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 is now in post.

Officers have been working with Foresight consulting to implement a detailed action plan for urgently needed infrastructure improvements. This has included a detailed project plan to make use of the £1.8m IT investment budget.

**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.**

- Production of the next Corporate Delivery Plan (CDP) remains in the data and information gathering phases.
- Results of the satisfaction survey on residents and businesses have now been received and processed.
- A revised timeline for production of the CDP is in production.
- Workshops for Town and Parish Councils as well as elected members are planned.

**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.**

- Initial discussions have been held around the possibility of away days for senior members and officers to give the space for strategic conversations.
- An initial workshop is to be planned in March to begin discussing priorities for the new Corporate Delivery Plan.

**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.
  - Consultation with the Policy Team begins on January 20th.
  - The new director of Change and Transformation is now in post and will be working on the modernisation agenda.

**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 has made its first investments into property and multi asset funds.
- A fees and charges review has brought additional income into the MTFP. The funding gap within the MTFP remains and work will need to continue on income generation.

**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 are building on good progress made to date, but this work needs to be coordinated by the proposed Corporate Policy team and discussions around this have been delayed due to the General Election.
  - The Elections and Democratic Services team are making strides in developing a Forward Plan.
  - Two training sessions on the Code of Conduct were delivered to members as well as members from Town and Parish Councils.
  - A further training session on good governance has been delivered to Town and Parish Councillors.
  - On the 17th December, Strategy and Resources Committee gave authority to the Monitoring Officer to commence a review of the Constitution in consultation with the Constitution Working Group
  - Discussions are being held with Group Leaders in terms of mandatory training for members which will need to be in place in readiness for the induction of new members after the elections in May 2020.

**2.4** 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 3 in the implementation of the Action Plan.