Wiltshire Council

Overview Scrutiny Management Committee

20 March 2018

| Subject: | **Corporate Peer Challenge** |

Purpose of Report

1. To provide the feedback report received from the Local Government Association following the Corporate Peer Challenge that took place in November 2017; and the draft action plan which has been developed to reflect the feedback and recommendations made.

Background

2. Corporate Peer Challenges (CPC's) are a form of sector-led improvement arranged by the Local Government Association. They are improvement focused and tailored to meet individual councils' needs, designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. They are not inspections and do not provide a detailed diagnosis or scored assessment.

3. All CPC's cover five core components: Understanding of the local place and priority setting; Leadership of Place; Organisations leadership and governance; Financial Planning and viability and Organisational Capacity to deliver.

4. In addition, Wiltshire Council asked the Peer team to consider/review/provide feedback and reassurance to the council in respect of the plans it has in place to:
    • Enable greater digital access to all services
    • Focus more on commercialisation of its services (maximising every opportunity to generate income and operate in a more business like way).
    • Continue to involve communities and encourage them to do even more for themselves
    • Transform adult social care
    • Increase the supply of and access to affordable housing

5. The Peer team prepared for the corporate peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent 4 days onsite at Wiltshire Council between the 6 – 9 November 2017, during which they:

    • Spoke to more than 130 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders.

- Gathered information and views from more than 40 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading.

- Collectively spent more than 260 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 7 weeks in Wiltshire.

Main Considerations for the Council

6. The Peer team publish their report as a letter to the Leader of the council, Cllr Jane Scott (appendix 1).

7. The Peer Team noted that:
   - The council has strong and accessible political leadership which sets a clear direction for the council and the place.

   - Stakeholders are clear what the council stands for, how it goes about its business and what its plans are.

   - The council has launched its new Business Plan which sets out an ambitious agenda for the next ten years and there remains a resolute focus on 'strong communities' complimentary priorities which reinforce this and a refreshed approach highlighting the key enablers to deliver them.

   - The council benefits from a committed workforce. All staff that the Peer team met told them that Wiltshire Council is a great place to work; that they feel valued, are developed to undertake their roles and feel supported to progress their careers.

   - There is evidence of a very impressive approach to staff engagement, clearly owned throughout the organisation from front line staff to senior leaders.

   - The Council has a strong record in terms of financial management.

   - There has been a very good recovery in Children's services since a disappointing Ofsted inspection in 2012

8. There are a range of suggestions and observations within the main section of the report that will inform some 'quick wins' and practical actions. The following are the Peer team's key recommendations to the Council:

   - To enable the most effective delivery of the Council's Business Plan it should seek to clarify and quantify its key priorities. In such a way a sharper focus can be brought to organisational delivery and resource allocation which underpin this.

   - In respect of the key areas of commercialism and 'digital' the council should build a shared understanding of the opportunities, investment required and skill needed in these areas so that it is more able to achieve successful outcomes.

- Revisit the current intent and application of the Area Boards - so that into the future the council's ambitions in terms of leadership of place can be further realised

- More closely align financial and budget planning to organisational priorities and underpin this with a more robust planning and performance management regime. This will enable better linking of business and financial planning and further supporting a culture of openness and accountability

- Apply the same approach and commitment to the Adults Services Transformation plans as was afforded to the council's previous children services recovery plan – so that it is organisationally owned and more likely to be delivered as a consequence

- In order to increase the delivery of housing numbers across Wiltshire, the council may wish to consider developing its plans in respect of a smaller number of strategic sites. This may strengthen its ability to secure the appropriate infrastructure and enable it to more effectively deliver its housing plan aspirations

- Ensure that both the council and CLT themselves invest sufficient time in focussing on their development as a team. They have a pivotal leadership role and such investment will help them realise their ambition to provide strong, collegiate corporate leadership on behalf of Wiltshire Council into the future.

9. The council's proposed method of addressing the recommendations is outlined in the draft peer challenge action plan (appendix 2)

Safeguarding Implications

10. None in the context of this report, any specific issues will be considered in the context of individual actions

Public Health Implications

11. None in the context of this report, any specific issues will be considered in the context of individual actions.

Procurement Implications

12. None in the context of this report, any specific issues will be considered in the context of individual actions

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

13. None in the context of this report, any specific issues will be considered in the context of individual actions

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

14. None in the context of this report, any specific issues will be considered in the context of individual actions

Risk Assessment

15. None in the context of this report, any specific issues will be considered in the context of individual actions

Financial Implications

16. None in the context of this report, any specific issues will be considered in the context of individual actions

Legal Implications

17. None in the context of this report, any specific issues will be considered in the context of individual actions

Conclusions

18. The feedback report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit 6th-9th November 2017. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time.

19. Reflecting on the findings and suggestions, a draft action plan has been developed as a suggested approach to take things forward

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Appendices
Appendix 1: Corporate Peer Challenge feedback letter
Appendix 2: Draft Peer Challenge action plan

Background Papers: None