

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

20 November 2018

Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan Update

Purpose

1. To provide the committee with an overview of the activity undertaken in respect of the agreed actions following the Corporate Peer Challenge in Wiltshire which took place at the end of the last calendar year.

Background

2. Following the formation of a new council in 2017 and the agreement of a new 10-year business plan the council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to arrange a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) for Wiltshire.
3. CPCs are improvement focused and are 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.
4. The LGA put together an expert team from other local authorities who reviewed a range of documents and information before spending four days in Wiltshire in November 2017. During their time at the council the group spoke to more than 130 individuals including councillors, staff and partners; attended more than 40 visits and meetings; collectively spent more than 260 hours investigating and deliberating to reach their conclusions.
5. The Peer Team reported that the council had strong and accessible political leadership; that stakeholders are clear about what the council stands for; that the council has an ambitious business plan; that the council benefits from a committed workforce who are well engaged; that there is a strong record of financial management in the council; that the council has overseen a very good recovery in Children's Services since 2012.
6. Additionally, the Peer Team made some observations, suggestions and recommendations about how the council might improve.
 - To enable the most effective delivery of its Business Plan the council should seek to clarify and quantify its key priorities. Sharper focus should 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 corporate leadership team (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.

7. Cabinet approved an action plan in March 2018 based on the CPC report. This report provides an update against that action plan. An updated version of the action plan is provided at appendix A.

Key developments since the peer review

8. The council has introduced a revised methodology for service planning. The focus of which has been to ensure that planned programmes, projects and actions are linked to the council's business plan. The process also helps to ensure all business plan commitments are being worked on and to avoid duplication of effort and resource. The new approach has entered its second year. The new planning approach has helped form a new corporate performance framework that allows the council's leadership to better judge the progress towards achieving the aims of the business plan.

9. The commercialism and digital agendas are now supported by new strategies and new staff. A new Director of Growth and Investment has been appointed and consideration is being given to other staffing changes that might be required to boost the council's ability to operate in a commercial way. This may include recruiting those with relevant skills but also involves building those skills in existing staff. The Council's new Leadership and Management Programme includes elements of commercialisation with an understanding that this filters through the organisation as current and future leaders are trained. The next edition of the leadership programme, starting in spring 2019, will include a module on commercialisation.
10. An important element of the implementation of the digital strategy has been the awarding of the contract to Microsoft (MS) to jointly deliver the outcomes of a five-month review. Working in partnership with MS will enable the council to resource and build long-term capacity to deliver a significant cultural and technical change to the way the organisation operates and serves its customers.
11. Going above and beyond the recommendations of the peer challenge a new post has been created to promote adoption and change management for the digital programme across council. The new role focuses on achieving efficiencies across services using new platforms as well as exploiting existing solutions; making the best of solutions already in place. In addition, work is ongoing to develop a programme of training and learning to ensure that staff are aware of, and able to utilise, the opportunities presented by digital transformation.
12. A significant Community Working Review has been completed. Although the review and subsequent action plan is still to be published there is likely to be a focus on providing a clear programme of devolution to communities, introducing multidisciplinary, multi-agency team approach to responding to community need. Transfers of assets will continue through Area Boards and transfers of packages of assets and services to town councils is now supported by a new policy.
13. The Adult Social Care Transformation Board has expanded its priorities to include a second phase which will focus on mental health and learning difficulties. The Board has expanded its membership and is working across a multi-agency agenda to improve outcomes for the residents of Wiltshire. The Board is also considering life course approaches with an emphasis on prevention, reducing inequalities and preventable illness and disease in later years. A key part of this is to look at transitions; not just children to adults, but also transitions through adulthood, such as following an illness or post retirement.
14. The Council's Adult Services are being supported by a joint commissioning team, led by a new Director of Commissioning who started in spring 2018, that also support Children's services. The new joint service has worked with local providers to create a new framework, helping to shape the market, for providing Help to Live at Home services which is due to go live in Autumn 2018. Commissioning is also a focus for the new Directors of Adult Services who are working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to devise and implement joint place based commissioning.

15. Specific needs across the county are being reviewed in a Bed Audit of specialist care. Once complete the audit will inform a new county-wide accommodation strategy expected in Spring 2019.
16. Changes in circumstances have meant that a joint strategic post with the clinical commissioning group was not possible. The council's senior leadership has been reorganised in order to make best use of existing resources.
17. A new local plan is being developed that will consider a number of strategic sites across the county for the development of homes. These sites will concentrate on areas of need. Consultation on the new plan starts in October 2018 and Area Boards will be briefed as part of that consultation. In addition, a specific bid has been developed and submitted to the Housing Revenue Account for borrowing approval to develop 49 units. The result of the bid should be known by the end of the year.
18. The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) are now scheduled to meet fortnightly as a Corporate Director team, and as a wider CLT (including statutory directors). This results in increased time spent developing as a team but also on discussing and agreeing actions relating to the strategic agenda. The Corporate Directors have agreed shared objectives for cascading to the extended leadership team, and whole council. These weekly meetings have however been impacted by events in Salisbury this year.
19. The Corporate Directors are now provided with professional advice and challenge from the Directors in the discharging of their statutory responsibilities and this is supporting and informing strategic decision making and delivery of the business plan priorities.
20. The Corporate Directors are now receiving leadership development and coaching as a team and individually. This is being provided as part of a schedule of development by an external expert.

Recommendations

21. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee note the progress against the Corporate Peer Review Action Plan described above and in Appendix A.

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Corporate Directors