

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report

Report of Managing Director

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Corporate Peer Challenge – Action Plan

Officer recommendation:

The Committee is invited to comment on:

- (a) the implementation of the action plan arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) of the Council undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA) in December 2017; and
- (b) the LGA's feedback report following its CPC 12 month follow-up visit on 30 November 2018.

Reason for Recommendation:

To enable the Committee to monitor the CPC action plan.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 We prepared an action plan to address the recommendations arising from the LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge of the Council in December 2017. It was agreed that this Committee should oversee and monitor its implementation. The first monitoring report was presented to the meeting of the Committee on 19 July 2018 and this second report sets out progress over the 12 months following the initial LGA visit.
- 1.2 As part of the CPC process, the LGA also undertakes follow-up visits to councils after one year. This took place in Guildford on 30 November 2018 and the LGA has provided its own report on progress against the recommendations made in the original CPC. The report notes that clear progress has been made and makes further suggestions for consideration.

2. Strategic Priorities

- 2.1 CPCs focus on issues such as prioritisation, leadership, finance, governance and capacity to deliver and make suggestions for improvements. As such, the recommendations arising from our CPC as set out in our action plan will help strengthen the Council to ensure that we are able to deliver our strategic priorities.

3. Background

- 3.1 The LGA offers Corporate Peer Challenges as a way for councils to improve. They are not compulsory, but they are encouraged and seen as best practice. The main areas of focus are our understanding of our borough and priority setting, leadership, financial planning and viability, organisational leadership and governance and capacity to deliver.
- 3.2 We invited the LGA to carry out a CPC of the Council and this was undertaken in December 2017. The LGA team reviewed key financial information and other relevant documentation and held meetings with political leaders, portfolio holders, councillors, senior managers, partners and other stakeholders.
- 3.3 The final report on the outcome of our CPC was received in February 2018. The report was very positive highlighting issues such as our track record of delivering high quality public services, our effective financial management, good standards of governance, strong leadership and the commitment of councillors and staff. It also included positive comments about perceptions of the Council in terms of trust, confidence and working relationships
- 3.4 However, the main purpose of a CPC is to identify areas for improvement and the report also made a number of useful suggestions for us to consider in the following areas:
- exploring new ways of partnership working
 - prioritisation in corporate and service planning
 - ensuring we have the capacity to deliver major projects
 - using our financial strength to support delivery of our priorities
 - making financial reporting to councillors clearer
- 3.5 The report also made a number recommendations on governance issues, including clarifying the responsibilities of lead councillors, reviewing the operation of the Executive Advisory Boards and seeking greater resident involvement in overview and scrutiny.
- 3.6 We presented the final report from our CPC to this Committee on 6 March 2018. Councillors were advised that we would draw up an action plan to address the key issues and it was agreed that its implementation would be overseen by the Committee. Progress against the action plan was first reported to the Committee on 19 July 2018. An up-to-date version is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration.

3.7 The LGA visited the Council again on 30 November 2018 to undertake its own 12 month follow-up as part of the CPC process. The feedback report from that second visit is attached as Appendix 2.

3.8 The report notes the clear progress made in addressing the recommendations from the initial CPC. In particular, positive comments are included about our new Corporate Plan, progress with the Local Plan and stronger partnership working. The report also includes some further recommendations to build on our implementation of the initial CPC findings.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. However, any resource implications associated with the implementation of the action plan will be subject to all necessary reporting and approval processes.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report. Corporate Peer Challenges are not a statutory requirement, but are seen as best practice. The recommendations in the LGA's report are not binding, but offer suggestions for improvement for us to consider.

6. Human Resource Implications

6.1 There are no human resources implications arising directly from this report.

7. Consultation

7.1 The Leader, Lead Councillors and Corporate Management Team agreed the content of the action plan.

8. Suggested issues for overview and scrutiny

8.1 The Committee is invited to comment on the implementation of the action plan arising from the CPC of the Council.

9. Conclusion

9.1 The final report on the outcome of our CPC was received in February 2018 and highlighted several areas of strength within the Council. The report also suggested a number of potential improvements for us to consider and these were incorporated into an action plan to take forward. This Committee is asked to review implementation of the plan, including the recommendations and comments made by the LGA following its revisit in November 2018.

10. Background Papers

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report (February 2018)

12. Appendices

Appendix 1: Guildford Borough Council Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

Appendix 2: LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Follow Up Visit: Feedback Report
(December 2018)