

REPORT OF: STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

TO: COUNCIL

DATES: 15TH DECEMBER 2016

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**CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE:
FOLLOW-UP VISIT**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the Council with the feedback letter from the Local Government Association (LGA) following the recent Corporate Peer Challenge Review.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Council accept the letter.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Corporate Peer Challenge forms part of the Council's continuous improvement work.

ISSUE

Background

1. As part of their 'sector led improvement' support to local government, the Local Government Association (LGA) offers the delivery of a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC). The Peer Challenge is designed to help Councils improve their performance.
2. The Council was subject to a CPC during the 3rd-5th November 2015. The Peer Team provided their initial findings in the form of a presentation on the 5th November 2015 which concluded the review on site. Following this the Peer Team provided a more detailed report setting out their findings and recommendations.
3. This detailed report was presented to Council at the 17th December 2015 meeting. It was agreed that a cross-party task and finish group of 6 Councillors (2 from each Group) be established to develop an Action Plan to address the issues highlighted.

4. The proposed Action Plan was endorsed by the Council at the meeting on 23rd March. It was also agreed that the Executive would take it forward with 6 monthly progress reports to Council.
5. A progress report was presented to Council at the meeting on the 20th October 2016.
6. As part of the original CPC, the Peer Team were asked to make a follow up visit approximately 12 months later to help the Council objectively review and assess the progress made in responding to the findings and recommendations made.

Current Position

7. The follow up visit took place on Friday 25th November 2016 with the following members of the original Peer Team taking part, and with:
 - John Sellgren – Chief Executive, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
 - Councillor Bryony Rudkin – Deputy Leader, Ipswich Borough Council (Labour)
 - Councillor Keith House – Leader, Eastleigh Borough Council (Liberal Democrat)
 - Councillor Tom FitzPatrick – Leader, North Norfolk District Council (Conservative)
8. Kate Herbert (LGA Programme Manager) was the Peer Challenge Manager for the review.
9. Prior to their return visit the Peer Team were provided with a copy of the CPC Action Plan which included progress made against each of the actions, a summary of what we had done so far to address the key recommendations made originally, and a wide range of documents and information to enable the team to review our progress effectively in advance of the visit.
10. During their time onsite on the 25th November 2016 the Peer Team spoke to more than 40 people including a range of council officers, councillors and partners.
11. The team concluded their visit by providing their initial feedback in a short presentation. A more detailed feedback letter has now been provided and this is available at Appendix 1.
12. The Peer Team summarised their findings as follows:

Pendle Borough Council has an ambitious agenda and clearly has an appetite for more. The council has made a great deal of progress; however with the scale of the challenges the council face, the pace of change is still not fast enough. The pace needs to be quickened, and this will require Members to make some difficult decisions promptly.

There is a need to ensure there is cross-party member engagement in setting the direction for the council to help respond to these challenges.

The council has committed its support for the Combined Authority. Now is the time to stake Pendle's claim and 'bang the table' to get the best deal for the borough.

Progress to date on commercialism has been positive, but there is a need to fully embed commercialism with staff and members and ensure wider buy-in.

Discussions are ongoing with local town and parish councils on devolving more services from the borough council. The council should seek to expand and tailor the offer to town/parish councils to ensure a good fit for each locality.

The council's financial strategy of 'Grow, charge, save' has been effective so far.

However, it is time to include 'stop' as part of your analysis. Members need to confirm to officers which services need to be prioritised as resources contract further.

The peer team's final recommendation to Pendle Borough Council is to be bold and move with greater pace. The Council has achieved a great deal over the past year and needs to use the evident energy which has been unlocked in that time, particularly that of management and staff, to help take it on the next stage of the journey. Members need to support the Head of Paid Service and the management team to ensure the long-term sustainability of a strongly performing council which is serving its community well.

Next Steps

13. The Action Plan will be embedded into the next refresh of the Council's Strategic Plan.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy

There are no policy implications arising from the contents of this report.

Financial

The Council is currently a subscriber to the LGA. The Corporate Peer Challenge is provided by the LGA at no additional cost to the Council.

Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Risk Management

There are no risk management implications arising directly from the contents of this report.

Health and Safety:

There are no Health and Safety implications arising from this report.

Climate Change:

As with health and safety implications, there are no climate change implications arising directly from this report.

Community Safety:

There are no community safety issues arising directly from the contents of this report.

Equality and Diversity:

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from the contents of this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge follow up visit 25 November 2016 feedback letter

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None