

REPORT FROM: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

TO: EXECUTIVE

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Corporate Peer Challenge – Final Action Plan Report

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the Executive on the outcome of the Corporate Peer Challenge and to provide options on the Live Streaming of some Council meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To note the findings of the CPC Action Update Report as set out in Appendix 1 and to consider the options around live streaming of meetings.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To inform Executive and to allow the live Streaming of some Council meetings to be taken forward.

ISSUE

- 1.0 As part of its '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.
- 2.0 In late 2021, and in view of the changes in the political and senior officer leadership of the Council at that time, it was felt that a CPC was an ideal opportunity for the Council to have an external assessment of its present position. This would present the opportunity to identify improvements given the challenges currently faced by the Council.
- 3.0 The Peer Review Team were on site 9-11 February 2022. The Team provided their initial findings in the form of a presentation to Members, staff and representatives of other organisations who had taken part in the review. The Team provided a detailed report setting out their findings and key recommendations which is available via the LGA website via the link at the end of this report.
- 4.0 The Council was required to draw up an Action Plan by way of response to the Team's key recommendations. The draft Action Plan was approved at the June 2022 meeting of the

5.0 A six-month review was then held with the Peer Review Team on 7th December 2022. The progress review provided the opportunity to discuss progress made to date against the recommendations including early impact/learning and included feedback from both the Lead Chief Executive Peer and LGA Member Peers on this progress.

6.0 It also provided space to discuss current opportunities and challenges including any significant changes in context (since the peer team were on-site) check on progress with the delivery of the Action Plan.

7.0 The Key Recommendation from the Action Plan are shown in detail in Appendix A and summarised below highlighting any unresolved areas;

a. **Corporate Plan, Vision and Priorities**

An updated Corporate Plan was produced and taken to Council for sign off in February 2023. The plan was not approved and will be reviewed and updated following the elections in May 2023 with a view to final sign off as soon as the Members are able to agree a new plan.

b. **Performance Management Framework**

This Action was accepted and implemented in full.

c. **Performance Appraisals**

This Action was accepted and implemented in full.

d. **Organisational Structure and Governance**

This Action was accepted and implemented in full. Both Directors are now in place with further restructures in both Directorates providing clear responsibilities for both areas.

e. **Governance and Decision Making**

This was the most complex area covering four main areas;

i. *Planning and use of P&R Committee*

Members will be aware of the proposed changes agreed at May 2022 Council which were subsequently amended. In the end Council agreed to retain control of planning via Area Committee with any items being escalated to a separate Development Control Committee.

ii. *Call In*

New arrangements were taken to August 2022 Council but were not agreed. The move to the Executive system will set Call in arrangements in line with those agreed under the new Constitution.

iii. *Election Cycle*

A move to a 4 yearly election cycle has not been taken forward.

iv. *Live Streaming of meetings*

This has not yet been taken forward. The council intended to undertake further work to understand good practice across the sector to inform the way forward. It will be important for the council to develop and agree a timeframe to look at this. Please see paragraph 8.0 onwards for further details.

f. **Medium Term Financial Strategy**

This Action was accepted in full. Council approved an updated MTFS in February 2023 as part of the Council Tax setting process. This remains an ongoing challenge for Pendle. The new Strategy does align with the new corporate priorities whilst also reflecting the need for budget savings and the outcomes of the work on the Liberata contract and the Leisure Review. The forecast will require updating to reflect the revised Corporate Plan once adopted.

g. **Capital Budget**

This Action was accepted in full. Council approved an updated Capital Programme in February 2023 as part of the Council Tax setting process.

h. **Transformation**

This Action was accepted and implemented in full but the on going financial challenge remains. A report on the outcomes of the Transaction Programme will be covered in a separate report.

i. **Strategic Housing**

Good progress is being made on the Local Plan, with Executive agreeing in May 2023 that the Plan can progress to public consultation. A Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment has been completed to inform the Plan. The clear steer from Executive, however, is that the Plan should progress on the basis of lower, 'Standard Methodology' housing numbers.

Live Streaming of Meetings

8.0 Pendle Borough Council does not have an agreed Policy for Live Streaming Meetings in place. During Covid, the Council used an external company to assist with the recording of meetings with these being uploaded to YouTube after the event. This was carried out independently of Democratic Services staff and at a cost of £350 per meeting. The Annual Council meeting in May 2020 was Live streamed at a cost of £852.

9.0 Subsequently this arrangement was phased out as face to face meetings once again become mandatory and Live Streaming was not taken forward by the Council. However, Councillors David Whipp and Tom Whipp chose to use their own time, money and equipment to continue to live stream both the Policy & Resources and full Council meetings.

10.0 The new Leadership Group has expressed a strong desire to Live Stream each meeting of Council, the Executive and Development Committee; up to 30 meetings per annum.

11.0 There are a range of options for delivering live streaming from basic arrangement to full meeting management systems.

	Options	One Off Cost	On Going Costs
1	To keep the existing arrangement to not live stream meetings unless individual members wish to do so.	£nil	£nil
2	To go out to tender for a third party to live stream meetings.	£nil	Between £12,000 to £24,000 per annum
3	To go out to tender an in house fixed camera solution in the Council chamber.	£15,000	Staffing costs and Equipment maintenance
4	To go out to tender for an inhouse meeting management solution for the Council chamber.	£100,000	staffing costs, equipment maintenance and annual software licence

12.0 Option 2 would require a. There would be no equipment or staffing issues as the provider would be expected to cover these costs under the tender.

13.0 Options 3 & 4 have been discussed with the same provider that installed equipment for both Chorley and West Lancashire District Councils, both require a tender exercise to be completed to confirm costs. Option 3 is a fixed camera solution and would potentially require more resources to staff. Under both options, the existing staffing resources are unlikely to be sufficient to deal with the additional cost, time and training needs of delivering an in house solution.

14.0 Option 4 is a full meeting management solution with complete video and voice solution including member voting and speech management tools. Whilst this is an expensive solution it does provide a more complete solution and can be managed as part of the on-going meeting.

15.0 Note that under Options 3 and 4 this solution would only be deliverable from the Council chamber and could not be moved between rooms or other locations though this option could be investigated. The lead in times for each option are likely to increase with complexity i.e. Option 2 could be delivered soonest with additional time needed for Option 3 and then Option 4.

IMPLICATIONS

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

Financial: The implications are as set out in the report.

Legal: There are no legal implications arising from the contents of 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 issues arising directly from the contents of this report.

Sustainability: There are no sustainability issues arising directly from the contents of this report.

Community Safety: There are no community safety issues arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity: There are no equality and diversity issues arising from this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – CPC Action Plan Update June 2023

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

<https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/council-assurance-and-peer-support/peer-challenges-we-offer/corporate-peer-challenge-23>