

RESPONSE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PEER REVIEW

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In December 2017 Cabinet received the feedback and recommendations from the corporate peer challenge undertaken in October. This paper presents a response to those key recommendations in support of future improvements and sets out a Corporate Framework for delivery of the council's priorities.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The peer team spent four days onsite at the council, during which time they spoke to more than 60 people, including a range of council staff together with councillors, external partners and stakeholders, gathered information and views from more than 30 meetings and visited key sites in the area.
- 2.2 The feedback was generally very positive with the observation that the council is well placed to address the future challenges on behalf of the district. It identified some opportunities for improvement, which were welcomed, whilst also acknowledging that the feedback supported issues that were already being progressed in some cases.

3. RESPONSE TO LGA PEER TEAM REPORT

- 3.1 The feedback report set out the Peer team's observations against each area of focus. The report included 8 specific recommendations that the Council should consider:

- a) *Develop the strategic framework with underpinning action plans to deliver the Council's vision for the broader district area; and***
- b) *Align the Medium Term Financial Plan and investment strategies within that strategic framework***

The Council's vision and priorities have been clearly established and are embedded in the Council's on going work programmes and financial plans. Appendix 1 sets out an overview of the corporate framework that will help support the delivery of recommendations a) and b).

- c) *Consider alternative models for delivery through options appraisals and the use of external expertise to most effectively achieve the Council's objectives***

This will be included as an element of the Council's approach to Service Reviews and will be set out in guidance contained within the Organisational Strategy.

- d) *Invest in your ICT infrastructure to leverage change***

The council will be investing £1 million in new ICT infrastructure details are set out in the 2018/19 annual budget and medium term financial plans. A revised Information Technology Strategy is being developed to support this investment. "The Smarter Working Project" requires improvements in technology and will enable the Council to develop new ways of working.

e) *Engage with staff and managers in developing the future direction of travel for the Council*

The development of the Corporate Framework will assist in the communication and engagement of staff, managers and members in how the council will progress going forward in the delivery of its priorities.

f) *Review levels of decision making to empower managers and staff to deliver*

A review of Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations is being undertaken and is due to be reported in March 2018.

g) *Review the requirements for more formal engagement arrangements with the National Park Authority including, to be fully effective, a review of current appointments to the National Park*

Work has commenced with the National Park Authority on where enhancements could be made to both organisations arrangements that lead to improved outcomes for the wider district. The outcome of this work will be reported to Cabinet during 2018.

h) *Prepare a robust and sound Local Plan, in a realistic but timely way.*

Good progress has been achieved in recent months with submission to the Secretary of State likely to be in the summer of 2018.

4. CORPORATE FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The corporate framework (Appendix 1) articulates how the council's priorities are to be delivered and identifies the strategies that will help support that delivery. The framework is a clear articulation of how the council intends to deliver positive outcomes to the community together with a direction of travel for the organisation through a process which both engages and monitors progress.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None arising directly from this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL, EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None arising directly from this report.

7. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 7.1 I am pleased that the Council already has in hand key actions that were suggested by the Peer Review Group.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Cabinet are asked to note the responses to the peer challenge recommendations and approve the proposed Corporate Framework.

For further information contact:

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Background Papers:

Corporate Peer Challenge – NFDC
Position Statement
Cabinet 6 December 2017 – Corporate
Peer Challenge