

Information/Discussion Paper

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 11 February 2019

Peer Challenge Feedback

Development of the Corporate Strategy 2019 - 2023

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 In November 2018, the council participated in a peer challenge organised by the Local Government Association. The Council has now received the final report from the peer challenge team and the report and draft action plan are attached to this report.
- 1.2 In recognition that the council would reflect on the peer challenge feedback in the consideration of its priorities for the forthcoming period, the draft corporate plan for 2019-23 is attached to this report.
- 1.3 Members of the committee are invited to comment on the peer challenge report and accompanying action plan and to also comment on the draft corporate plan.

2. LGA Peer Challenge

- 2.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) undertook a peer challenge review of the council in November 2018. The review took place between 13 and 16 November. The peer review explored five core components that all LGA corporate peer challenges cover:
 - Understanding of the local place and priority setting: does the council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
 - Leadership of Place: does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
 - Financial planning and viability: does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
 - Organisational leadership and governance: is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
 - Capacity to deliver: is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?
- 2.2 In addition, there was an extended focus on three specific areas:
 - Review how the authority is positioned to deliver the aspirations and ambitions contained within the Cheltenham vision in the context of the emerging thinking on Gloucestershire 2050, and whether the authority and its partners have sufficient capacity to achieve delivery of the ambitions.
 - Review the council's broad range of external delivery mechanisms, including the council's commissioning, contracting and other partnering approaches and various company arrangements, to see how effectively they are delivering the outcomes the council requires from them.
 - Consider the council's modernisation programme and to reflect on how well it is being articulated, organised and driven across the organisation.

- 2.3** The Peer Challenge Team spent 4 days on-site and spoke to more than 100 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external stakeholders. The team gathered information and views from more than 50 meetings, focus groups and phone calls, plus additional research and reading. They collectively spent more than 260 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending nearly 7 weeks in CBC. Their recommendations are below:
- Be clear what you want and prioritise.
 - Strengthen contract management arrangements.
 - Devise a coherent programme around regeneration and deprivation with nominated leads.
 - Strengthen governance and project management arrangements for the Cyber Park.
 - Continue to invest in and further improve the relationship with Gloucestershire County Council.
 - Sustain the momentum that has been generated by the modernisation programme.
 - Housing delivery will need focus and capacity.
 - Review inherent financial risks and build levels of reserves to withstand future uncertainty.
 - Develop an economic growth / skills strategy; engaging in this with local businesses and linking with business marketing.
 - Strengthen the role of members.
 - Strengthen Place Governance.
- 2.4** The peer challenge report has now been circulated to participants and is also now available on the council's website.

3. Draft Corporate Plan 2019-2022

- 3.1** Following on from the Peer Challenge feedback, this year we are proposing a new look for our plan that reflects the intentions to be clearer about what we are going to focus on and the reasons why.
- 3.2** The starting point for the new plan is Cheltenham's place vision; this is the collective commitment to ensure that Cheltenham is a place where everyone thrives supporting by a thriving economy, a thriving cultural offer and thriving communities. We have made sure that the commitments in this plan support this vision.
- 3.3** We have taken stock of our organisation and involved a wide range of staff, elected members and external partners in discussions about the purpose of our organisation and how we want the organisation to look and feel.
- 3.4** As part of this, we have taken time to consider our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats whilst also reflecting on our external environment.
- 3.5** With our better understanding of the council, we have been able to develop a new corporate plan that will guide us over the next three years through defining what we are trying to achieve - our purpose, how we will go about our work – our principles, and what we are going to focus on over the next three years – our priorities.
- 3.6 Proposed purpose**
- 3.7** We want to make Cheltenham an even greater place for all; a place that is celebrated for its strong economy, its vibrant cultural offer and a place where our communities benefit from inclusive growth.
- 3.8 Proposed Principles**
- We will achieve inclusive growth so all our communities can benefit and prosper from investments made in the borough
 - We will be commercially focused where needed and become financially self-sufficient to ensure we can continue to achieve value for money for the taxpayer
 - We will use data and technology, including insight from our customers, residents, businesses

- and visitors to help us make the right business decisions
- We will provide strategic co-ordination across Cheltenham’s agencies, partnerships and networks to drive the delivery of the Place Vision
- We will work in ways that encourage equal collaboration at all levels and we will take time to listen, understand and respect each other to ensure what we do is appropriate and empowering
- We will invest in and develop our people so they can continue to provide excellent services to residents and are prepared to meet the opportunities and challenges ahead

3.9 Proposed priorities

- Making Cheltenham the Cyber-Capital of the UK.
- Continuing the revitalisation and improvement of our vibrant town centre and public spaces.
- Achieving a cleaner and greener sustainable environment for residents and visitors.
- Increasing the supply of housing and investing to build resilient communities.
- Delivering services to meet the needs of our residents and communities.

3.10 We will also supplement the 3 year longer-term plan with a specific 1 year plan that will set out the details of the projects that will contribute to the delivery of the priorities and their supporting performance indicators. This will be shared at the committee meeting.

4. Next Steps

The plan is to take the new corporate plan to council on 25 March for approval. In the meantime, we plan to have a number of staff sessions in the week commencing 28 February plus taking the draft plan to cabinet on 5 March.

Contact Officer	Richard Gibson, Strategy and Engagement Manager, 01242 235 354, richard.gibson@cheltenham.gov.uk
Accountability	Leader of the Council
Scrutiny Function	All
Attachments	LGA Peer Challenge Final Report Draft Peer Challenge Action Plan Draft Corporate Plan 2019-2023