

SUBJECT: CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE UPDATE

DIRECTORATE: CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Audit Committee on the activities that are underway within the six recommendations made by the Corporate Peer Challenge team.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 A final report from the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge team was received on 11th April 2017, this was subsequently approved by Executive and published in full on the City of Lincoln Council website and on the appropriate section in the LGA website.
- 2.2 The report was considered to be extremely positive, with many positive compliments paid to the council on its staff, relationships and processes.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Local Government Association offers all councils a free Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC), which is a core element of sector-led improvement for local authorities. It is not an inspection, nor is it mandatory – it is a way of helping councils help themselves to improve in a non-judgmental way. Conversations with the LGA commenced in spring 2016 following which a scope was developed. Dates for the review were agreed for mid-February 2017
- 3.3 As per normal process, the team reviewed the core components of: understanding of local place and priority setting, leadership of place, organisational leadership and governance, financial planning and viability, and capacity to deliver.

Corporate Management Team also defined three areas of special interest:

- How well is the council achieving and planning to achieve its ambitions for the city?
- How is the council progressing on income generation and commercialisation?
- How is the council developing into a more flexible, adaptable and innovative organisation?

The challenge team was made of up four experienced peers – one member and three officers, who were able to make a judgment on our council's operation, utilising information and evidence provided in advance and as part of the on-site review – as well as through meetings and focus groups with Members, officers and external

partners/stakeholders

4. The Peer Challenge Report

- 4.1 The final report from the Peer Challenge team was received on 11th April 2017, this was subsequently approved by Executive and published in full on CoLC website and on the appropriate section in the LGA website. [LGA peer report](#) (No. 18)
- 4.2 The report was considered to be extremely positive, with many positive compliments paid to the council on its staff, relationships and processes.
- 4.3 The main section of the report contained a range of suggestions and observations that inform some quick wins and practical actions. The following six items are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council, along with evidence of the work that was and will continue to be undertaken as part of business as usual activity.

1. **Celebrate success** and what you have achieved – it is a lot.

As part of the Vision 2020 communications plan, we now have an on-line 'virtual' communications tool, accessible by all staff and members: [Vision 2020 Engine Room](#)

Staff are encouraged to update not just on progress with projects, but also with successes in every-day service activities. In addition, CR4 has also been developed as a visual Engine room in which progress on each strategic priority can be captured

2. **Coordinate the initiatives that are addressing capacity fears**, including People strategy and prioritisation of projects in Vision 2020 and ensure staff concerns on this are being monitored and addressed.

The new People Strategy was approved by Executive in March 2017. It helps to address capacity fears through several initiatives, including; engagement with staff, a fit for purpose organisation design and structure, revised staff appraisals process, ensuring staff have the tools and skills they need to do their jobs, and introduces HR reps for wellbeing and performance. A training needs analysis will be developed to ascertain corporate leadership development needs with the intention of procuring relevant training accordingly to support the delivery of Vision 2020.

In March 2017, work was undertaken through CMT, AD Group and the Service Managers Forum to consider Vision 2020 and Service Plan 2017/18 priorities, and several projects have now been moved into 2018/19. This work recognised the need for staff at different levels to be involved in the setting of work and delivery against key milestones – which are now agreed through individual project managers. The normal service plan process will continue to ensure that remaining Vision 2020 projects are prioritised alongside any other service needs.

3. **Eliminate any superfluous processes procedures** and reporting lines to make sure no opportunity is missed, that **staff feel empowered to deliver** and that process does not hamper progress.

The Vision 2020 performance management infrastructure has now been implemented. The Service Managers Forum has been tasked with reviewing

processes, to make suggestions as to how these may be changed where appropriate. The first two are:

- 1) A 'Roles and Responsibilities' working group was formed by Service Manager Forum – report of findings presented to AD Group in July will go to CMT for adoption.
- 2) The 'Strategic Plan Implementation Team (SPIT) review working group' also formed from the Service Managers forum completed its review and will report to CMT 19th Sept.

Other activities underway include;

- CMT/SM's have attended leadership development sessions. A coaching programme is now in place to support development with 24 places available.
 - Capability training rolled out to support managers dealing with performance issues.
 - A staff survey is to be conducted from 1st October 2017 to seek employee feedback, with the intention of creating directorate owned action plans where improvements are highlighted.
4. **Continue to foster and develop effective partnership working** with neighbouring councils, business community, VCS and residents to maximise opportunities, resilience and efficiencies.

We are outward-focused, and work with neighbouring councils, the business community, VCS and residents on a variety of issues. Examples of such engagement is; neighbouring councils – a number of finance-related initiatives (such as response to localised Council Tax reduction schemes, and a NNDR pool), VCS – hosting 'The Network', residents – through the Citizens and Tenants Panels.

CMT has a programme of external visitors to ensure relationships are built and maintained with key partners. One of the strands in the new TFS savings programme specifically includes the consideration of new shared services with other LA partners.

5. Work on **clarifying priorities so that the right things are measured** to establish what success looks like.

All year 1 Vision 2020 projects are currently having key milestones set. Each project will have SMART outcome measures, and these will be managed through each of the 4 Vision Groups (each chaired by a member of CMT) and reported accordingly.

The High Performing Services Board was established, commencing August 2017. The group will be looking at bringing together all performance related activity into one session. They will also consider a range of performance and success measures including the possibility of benchmarking, redesign etc.

As part of the SPIT review (mentioned above) one recommendation is to complete a full review of the Lincoln Project Management Model (LPMM). This would include ensuring that our project management clearly covers good success measurement.

6. Take confidence from the difficult decisions and issues already made
and addressed as there will be more!

We have a track record of making difficult decisions, and have a clear approach to determining the most appropriate option – e.g. cutting of service, lean review of service, shared services, income-generation, commercialisation etc.

CMT have adopted the 'risk appetite' method of considering risk and has identified CoLC as "Creative and Aware" In practice this means that the Council wishes to be creative and open to considering all potential delivery options, with well measured risk taking whilst being aware of the impact of its key decisions. The Council is prepared to invest funds in projects and initiatives that deliver an acceptable return with this being measured in the context of the corporate vision and purpose of the Council and not in narrow financial terms. In so doing it will be mindful of its fiduciary duty to taxpayers to use limited resources responsibly whilst maximising value for money.

5. Strategic Priorities

- 5.1 Let's drive economic growth – Some of the recommendations and subsequent activities undertaken are aimed at improving achievement of all strategic priorities
- 5.2 Let's reduce inequality - Some of the recommendations and subsequent activities undertaken are aimed at improving achievement of all strategic priorities
- 5.3 Let's deliver quality housing - Some of the recommendations and subsequent activities undertaken are aimed at improving achievement of all strategic priorities
- 5.4 Let's enhance our remarkable place - Some of the recommendations and subsequent activities undertaken are aimed at improving achievement of all strategic priorities

6. Organisational Impacts

- 6.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable) – There are no financial implications from this report
- 6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules – There are no legal implications from this report
- 6.3 Equality, Diversity & Human Rights (including the outcome of the EA attached, if required) – There are no E&D implications from this report

7. Risk Implications – N/A

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 Members are asked to note the six LGA recommendations and the activity that was already underway and will continue as part of our business as usual activity

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? None

List of Background Papers: None

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