

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 18

meeting date: 18th JUNE 2019
title: CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE – ACTION PLAN SIX-MONTHLY UPDATE
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: MICHELLE HAWORTH – PRINCIPAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To report to committee on progress made with implementing the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, which was devised to deal with the issues raised by the Peer Challenge Team.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives –
 - Corporate Priorities –
 - Other Considerations -
- The scope of the Peer Challenge covered: understanding of local place and priority setting, leadership, governance, financial planning, and capacity to deliver.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 As part of their 'sector led improvement' support to local government, the Local Government Association (LGA) offered the delivery of a Corporate Peer Challenge. Peer Challenges are designed to help Councils improve their performance.

2.2 The Peer Challenge team were onsite 20th – 22nd November 2017.

2.3 The core components that the team looked at were the issues of leadership, governance, corporate capacity and financial resilience. In addition the agreed scope of the Peer Challenge included:

1. Promoting local growth – this explored how the council might better promote Ribble Valley as a place for businesses to start up and grow. This recognised the local challenges in many people commuting out of borough to work and sought to examine how the council might better develop the borough as a place to work, not just reside.
2. Balancing growth and housing – this explored how the council can progress sustainable local development, including increasing the number of new homes (including affordable homes) being built in the context of the desire of many local people to limit the number of housing development in the borough.

2.4 The full LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report was reported to this committee in January 2018. In summary the peer team felt that "Ribble Valley Borough Council has much to be proud about. The council delivers good core services through a committed workforce achieving high levels of customer satisfaction and value for money. The council has a history of prudent financial management and remains in a comfortable position relative to the rest of the sector".

2.5 However, there were a number of suggestions and observations made within the report that led to some key recommendations for the Council.

2.6 An action plan was formulated and agreed by this committee in March 2018. It was agreed that this committee should be presented with 6 monthly progress reports.

- 2.7 The action plan and updates is provided at Appendix A for Members consideration.
- 2.8 The Peer Challenge Team will be onsite in September 2019 to carry out their follow-up review. The revisit will be carried out over two days and will be scoped later this month, but it is likely that the team will be looking at the implementation of their recommendations.
- 3 RISK ASSESSMENT
- 3.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications
- Resources – None identified.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – None identified.
 - Political – None identified.
 - Reputation – None identified.
 - Equality & Diversity - None identified.
- 4 CONCLUSION
- 4.1 Consider the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan updates as provided at Appendix A.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

REF:

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CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE - ACTION PLAN

Key Recommendations:

- Strengthen engagement with staff and partners to ensure clarity of vision and desired outcomes in relation to the Corporate Strategy, priorities and initiatives.
- Review the Performance Management Framework linked to the Corporate Strategy.
- Review the resourcing of Corporate Strategy priorities.
- Develop an Economic Development Strategy.
- Explore opportunities to strengthen early engagement with developers in order to maximise community benefits, as well as opportunities to strengthen community engagement/communication in relation to development.
- Strengthen engagement between the Leadership and Corporate Management Team – this includes the chairs of committees.

Issue (from the report)	Required Action	Milestones	Due Date	Lead	Update
Strengthen engagement with staff and partners to ensure clarity of vision and desired outcomes in relation to the Corporate Strategy, priorities and initiatives					
More needs to be done to ensure clarity of vision and priorities. Key to this will be recognising and valuing the good work that the council has already undertaken which provide the building blocks for the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini review of the existing Corporate Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised Corporate Strategy – CMT & Leader • Revised Corporate Strategy – Policy and Finance Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO/ Principal Policy and Performance Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed – reported to Policy and Finance Committee June 2018
A new Corporate Strategy will be developed next year. This provides an opportunity for the Leadership to develop a clear timetable of engagement with both staff and partners. This will help ensure wider ownership of the vision, ambitions and priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform staff, public and other key stakeholders of the revised Corporate Strategy and progress updates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circulation of revised Corporate Strategy to staff • Publish revised Corporate Strategy on the Council’s website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal Policy and Performance Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed – information in Backchat and published on the Council’s website

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<p>The council need to ensure continued, timely engagement of staff at all levels to ensure wider understanding and buy in.</p> <p>It is important that the council continues to engage staff at all levels of the organisation to ensure ownership of future ambitions and priorities. Feeding back to staff following the staff survey is key.</p> <p>Regular Corporate Strategy progress updates to staff and celebration of successes will help to keep the whole organisation engaged around delivery of the plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Internal Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Internal Communications – Personnel Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of HR/ Principal Communication s Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the Staff Survey an action plan was developed and approved by personnel Committee in June 2018. Several actions around Internal Communications were included and are now being implemented.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a shared vision for the Borough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Policy and Finance setting out plans for developing new Corporate Strategy 2019-2023 Develop new Corporate Strategy 2019-2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2018 September 2019 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEO/ Principal Policy and Performance Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reported to Policy and Finance Committee September 2018 A new Corporate Strategy for 2019-2023 will be developed over the coming months following an away day to develop the Corporate Priorities of the new Council.
Review the Performance Management Framework linked to the Corporate Strategy					
<p>As part of the development of the new Corporate Strategy, the framework should be reviewed to ensure it is rooted in the priorities and ambitions of the council moving forward.</p> <p>There are opportunities to review the monitoring information shared with committees to maintain clear governance, ownership and constructive challenge.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Performance Management Framework in light of revised Corporate Strategy Review performance monitoring information provided to committees to enable progress with key priorities to be better monitored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Performance Management Framework and Indicators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMT, Heads of Service and Principal Policy and Performance Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Performance Management Framework reported to Policy and Finance Committee September 2018. Review of Performance Indicators is ongoing.
Review the resourcing of Corporate Strategy priorities					
<p>Ensuring capacity to deliver corporate priorities. The challenge now will be to ensure good ‘succession planning’ for the years to come.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider resource implications of new Corporate Strategy and Council priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Periodic review of priorities and resources 2019/2020 Budget – review of priorities and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 monthly February 2019 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing

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<p>Anecdotal evidence suggesting delivery of appraisals and one to ones may be patchy in some areas. The council should consider reviewing its current approach to ensure consistency across all teams. There is also an opportunity to review the current appraisal system, including competency based approaches. This should be aligned to the development of a new Corporate Strategy next year so that the appraisal system is rooted firmly within the council's future priorities and ambitions and the type of council it wants to be.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Performance Appraisal system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Performance Appraisal System – Personnel Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CMT/ Head of HR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Performance Appraisal System was reviewed in April 2018. 95% of the 2018/2019 appraisals were conducted (an improvement on previous years).
<p>The council may benefit from further work to review its use of ICT linked to its ambitions for the future. The peer team had a sense that some service areas may still rely quite heavily on paper copies of documents and files. If this is the case, could more be done to reduce the need for this which may have the potential to reduce the costs of printing as well as supporting the council's sustainability agenda?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce a comprehensive IT Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption of IT Strategy – Policy and Finance Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Financial Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopted by Policy and Finance Committee - June 2018

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Develop an Economic Development Strategy					
<p>Develop an Economic Strategy that better reflects the borough's standing as a key player in the region.</p> <p>Economic Development to play a key part in overseeing the Economic Development Strategy.</p> <p>An Economic Development Strategy developed with partners should help prioritise resources and future investment in the key areas that will make a difference.</p> <p>The new strategy might include how to attract new and diverse industries, inward investment, marketing of key employment sites, higher value jobs for local people (harnessing good local educational outcomes) and branding.</p> <p>The Economic Development Strategy should reflect the council's appetite for risk in terms of economic development investment going forward.</p> <p>The Economic Development Strategy could be used to help raise the economic profile of the borough both regionally and nationally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a comprehensive Economic Development Strategy that is realistic and achievable and follows the Council's vision and priorities for the economic development of the Borough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Report to Economic Development Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2018 December 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Director of Economic Development and Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This action was delayed due to the appointment of a new Director (in post August 2018). The due date was amended accordingly with the intention of reporting the Strategy to Economic Development committee in January 2019. At the start of the year the Council set up an Economic Partnership with businesses in the Borough. Information gathered at the initial two events has been used to formulate a draft Economic Plan which will be reported to Economic Development Committee in June and subject to public consultation. The final plan is expected to be finalised in autumn 2019.

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<p>Work with partners to better articulate growth ambitions.</p> <p>Become a stronger voice regionally and nationally, particularly through the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The council have a real opportunity to raise their profile through the LEP; stepping up to the plate to harness their relatively strong economic position to better influence and shape future work. In particular, discussions relating to the Strategic Economic Plan and Growth Deal for Lancashire.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempt to gain Council representation on the LEP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seat on the LEP Board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Leader of the Council has recently been appointed to the LEP Board.
<p>The council should continue to work in partnership with the other councils in the region outside of any Combined Authority if it is to realise its ambitions for the borough, particularly the LEP.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political Leadership and Member involvement through Lancashire Leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed system of collaborative working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> December 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Leader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Leader regularly attends meetings of both District Leaders and the Lancashire-wide Leaders group.
<p>Explore opportunities to strengthen early engagement with developers in order to maximise community benefits, as well as opportunities to strengthen community engagement/communication in relation to development</p>					
<p>Through infrastructure planning and costing, the council should maximise contributions to meet infrastructure needs arising from development.</p> <p>There may be opportunities to review the pre-application offer to developers, agents and architects to strengthen current approaches, including early engagement with councillors. Holding the line on viability, particularly in the face of demands around affordable housing, is key. Recognising there is often the opportunity to adjust the housing mix</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absorb changes to National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Articulate the vision for the area in terms of house building and economic development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline Plan to Planning Committee Discussion and debate on the extent of new development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> April/ May 2018 September 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Regeneration and Housing Head of Regeneration and Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes to NPPF were published later than anticipated (24 July). We are now operating to the changes which are reflected in current planning policy decisions and integrated into the Development Plan review process. Ongoing – this was delayed due to the appointment of a new Director. Housing matters will be the subject of further consideration as part of housing strategy and local plan review. Economic Plan draft is going to Economic Development Committee in June 2019.

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<p>and/or tenure, which can deal with some of the gap on the viability to maintain affordable housing numbers, is also important.</p> <p>Explore opportunities to develop an 'implementation group' to take a programme based approach to oversee delivery of major sites with planning permission and associated infrastructure.</p> <p>The council should continue to share learning and offer support to parishes who wish to pursue neighbourhood plans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Core Strategy Determine infrastructure requirements Consider adopting the Community Infrastructure Levy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim reports to Planning Committee Updated Core Strategy/Local Plan Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Throughout 2018 - 2020 March 2020 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Regeneration and Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Plan review is still ongoing
<p>Strengthen engagement between the Leadership and Corporate Management Team – this includes the chairs of committees</p>					
<p>Strengthen engagement between the Leadership and Corporate Management Team in order to take the council forward positively; the council should consider a 'top team development' session to begin to shape this work going forward.</p> <p>To ensure continued cohesive leadership of the council in meeting the challenges ahead, the development of a standard approach to senior member and Corporate Leadership Team engagement should be considered. Investing this time together will support collaborative working. This might involve regular meetings e.g. quarterly, between the Leader, committee chairs and CLT. It could also involve a future programme of 'top team days' – particularly leading up to the development of the new</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Council's Governance arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct review of the Council's Governance arrangements Report to Policy and Finance Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEO/ Head of Legal Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review of the Council's Governance arrangements takes place annually as part of the Annual Accounts and any issues raised are considered by the Accounts and Audit Committee The Annual Governance Statement 2018/2019 has made recommendations with regards to governance issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise training sessions for senior members and officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify training requirements Develop training programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Legal Services/ Head of HR 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Training Plan is being compiled and will include Member training. Member training is regularly reported to Personnel Committee. The focus has recently shifted to inductions for new members following the local elections.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit the Officer/ Member Protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Accounts and Audit Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> July 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEO/ Monitoring Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Head of Legal report the Member Officer Protocol, as a part 1 Information item, to each committee in the 2nd cycle 2018/19

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<p>Corporate Strategy next year.</p> <p>The relationships between members and officers, including communication and understanding of respective roles, will be key in helping the council move forward positively. To this end, the council may benefit from re-visiting its current Member Officer protocol to ensure continued understanding and buy in across the council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a forum for two-way communications between senior members and corporate management team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings with CMT/Committee Chairmen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commencing April 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CMT and Senior members held an Away Day was in May 2018. The intention is to hold similar meetings at regular intervals. The next one to be organised will look at setting the new Council's priorities for the 2019-2023 Corporate Strategy. • The Chief Executive has meetings with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Conservative group and the Leader of the Liberal Democrats on a regular basis