

Central Bedfordshire Council

EXECUTIVE

Tuesday, 19 September 2017

Corporate Peer Challenge – Feedback Report

Report of: Cllr James Jamieson, Chairman of the Executive and Leader of the Council, (james.jamieson@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

Responsible Director: Richard Carr, Chief Executive, (richard.carr@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

This report relates to a decision that is Non-Key

Purpose of this report

1. To commission the development of an action plan in response to the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to

1. **welcome the findings of the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, including the recognition of the significant progress made by Central Bedfordshire Council since its creation in challenging circumstances, which is a tribute to the hard work of Members and staff across the Council underpinned by effective leadership; and**
2. **commission the development of an action plan by the Autumn in response to the recommendations of the Peer Challenge Team.**

Overview and Scrutiny Comments/Recommendations

2. This report has not yet been considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee, although the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be invited to consider whether they would like it to be.

Background

3. In May 2017 a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) delivered by the Local Government Association took place.
4. The Corporate Peer Team included local government and partner representatives with relevant expertise from organisations facing similar issues to Central Bedfordshire.

Scope of the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC)

5. The scope of the CPC involves five core components, listed below, to provide an indication of the Council's ability and capacity to deliver on its plans, proposals and ambitions and, where appropriate, to comment on performance and achievements: -
 - 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?
6. In addition to the above, the Council requested an additional focus on how we work with partner organisations, looking at a whole systems approach across Central Bedfordshire as a place.
7. The Peer Team interviewed a range of stakeholders, including Councillors, officers and partners and analysed our policies and strategies before issuing their final report in August 2017.

Feedback from the Peer Team

8. The primary message from the Peer Team was to acknowledge the Council is an 'impressive' organisation which has established a sound foundation and is delivering some 'exemplary' work.

Some of the key observations were:

- A recognition of the excellent analysis of our plans across the four local quadrants of Central Bedfordshire; this was seen as creating the basis for clear local priorities which could and should be shared and developed with our partners.

- Positive progress in terms of customer satisfaction and staff engagement.
- A need for a stronger delivery model for our organisational change programmes and better connectivity between transformation initiatives in Children's, Social Care, Health and Housing and others across the Council.
- Sound financial management which is well understood across the Council and has allowed us to avoid some of the more draconian service reductions that others have implemented.
- A need for us to be more consistent in how we articulate our ambitions for the area, particularly with our partners.
- The potential for us to be more ambitious in terms of commercialisation, income generation and asset management.
- Strong partnership working in some contexts with a desire for even stronger collaboration specifically on Central Bedfordshire specific issues.

Reason/s for decision

9. The Executive is asked to approve the development of an action plan in response to the recommendations of the Peer Challenge Team to enable the Council to deliver the next phase of its improvement journey.

Council Priorities

10. The proposal to develop an action plan to progress the recommendations in the CPC report supports each of the Council's priorities.

Corporate Implications

Legal Implications

11. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. Any legal implications arising from proposals for change or the clarification or extension of governance arrangements, in response to the CPC report will be detailed in future reports.

Financial and Risk Implications

12. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Any financial implications arising from proposals for change in response to the CPC report will be detailed in future reports.

Equalities Implications

13. Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics; age disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. This report does not propose that the Council make any specific changes to its ways of working. Any proposals for change will be set out in detail providing Members with the opportunity to ensure that decisions are made in a way which meets statutory requirements.

Conclusion and next Steps

14. The findings of the CPC provide some helpful and practical suggestions for development. The emerging action plan will help form a strategic response to the recommendations.
15. A follow up visit to help the Council assess the impact of the CPC and monitor progress against the areas identified for improvement will take place within the next two years.

Appendices

Appendix A: LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Feedback Report

Background Papers

None

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