

CABINET MEETING – 16 APRIL 2014

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:

Corporate Peer Challenge – Final Report

Author(s):

Chief Executive

Purpose of Report:

To present the findings of the Corporate Peer Review and to seek approval of the action plan which has been prepared to implement the recommendations.

Description of Decision:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Note the findings of the Corporate Peer Challenge
- b) Agree the action plan to implement the recommendations from the report.

Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? *Yes

If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework

Suggested reason(s) for Decision:

- To strengthen Community Leadership across the city
- To better define the role and shape of the Council
- To improve the way we review and agree future service delivery models
- To ensure we have a first class interface with customers so that we fully understand this needs of the people in the city.

Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:

No alternative options as this is a direct response to a peer challenge.

Impacts analysed:

Equality ☒ Privacy ☐ Sustainability ☐ Crime and Disorder ☐

Is this a “Key Decision” as defined in the Constitution? No

Is it included in the 28 day Notice of Decisions? No

Scrutiny Committee:

CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE – FINAL REPORT

Report of the Assistant Chief Executive

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To present the findings of the Corporate Peer Challenge and to seek approval of the action plan which has been prepared to implement the recommendations.
- 1.2 This report sets out the scope of the peer challenge and the processes that were undertaken to inform the findings of the report. It seeks approval from Cabinet of the attached action plan which will support the implementation of the recommendations in a way that is appropriate to Sunderland.

2. Description of Decision (Recommendations)

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - a) Note the findings of the Corporate Peer Challenge
 - b) Agree the action plan to implement the recommendations from the report.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council hosted a Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2013 as part of its approach to self-regulation and sector led improvement. The team of peers came in to the council to provide support and challenge around the Council's transformation priorities of:
 - Community Leadership (defining the role and shape of the Council)
 - Alternative Delivery Models (defining the future of service delivery) and
 - Customer Relationship Management (defining the Council's relationship with its citizens).
- 3.2 The Council requested that the peer challenge was forward looking rather than assessing past success. The peer challenge therefore focussed on:
 - providing external “critical friend” challenge to our transformation journey ahead and an opportunity for reflection
 - the depth of understanding and how well embedded and integrated the current agenda around community leadership is
 - the capacity and capability challenges to date and moving forward around alternative service delivery modelling
 - assisting the council in assessing the journey towards understanding and using customer insight to manage demand and improve customer journeys and experience
 - the level of understanding and capacity and capability challenge to date and moving forward around customer relationship management.
- 3.3 The peer challenge took place on 5-8 November 2013 and the peer team members were:

- Simon Warren (Chief Executive, Wolverhampton City Council)
- Cllr Keith Wakefield (Leader, Leeds City Council)
- Cllr Peter John (Leader, London Borough of Southwark)
- Jane Burns (Monitoring Officer, Gloucestershire County Council)
- Stewart Martin (Head of Commissioning, Hertfordshire County Council).
- Marcus Coulson (LGA Review Manager)
- Amy Beeton (LGA – shadowing Marcus Coulson)

3.4 In order to get a good understanding of how we implement these priorities in Sunderland, the peer team conducted a series of meetings throughout the week with elected Members, frontline staff, middle and senior managers, as well as a number of partners who work with the council.

4. Findings of the Corporate Peer Challenge

4.1 The peer team very much appreciated the welcome they received in Sunderland and the openness and honesty with which people engaged in the peer challenge process. They felt that the Council has a clear brand as a “*Community Leadership Council*” and that our values of Proud, Decent, Together resonated with the people of the city, their past, present and future. The peer team recognised the work we do in relation to economic regeneration, skills for jobs and inclusiveness through a pride in the city for all the people. However, they also acknowledged a challenging future for the Council and the city as a whole, in a time of further efficiencies, changes to how services are delivered and greater pressure on resources.

4.2 In terms of their findings, the peer team identified strengths within the council and set out a number of areas we will want to consider for improvement. They reported back under the following headings:

- Leadership
- Community Leadership
- Context and priorities
- Financial planning/implementation
- Capacity and resources
- Customer insight.

4.3 An overview of their findings under each of these headings can be found at Appendix A.

4.4 The full report from the Peer Challenge can be found at Appendix B.

4.5 Since receiving the report, a high level action plan has been developed to implement the recommendations contained within the report. This can be found at Appendix C.

5. Reasons for the Decision

5.1 Cabinet is requested to note the findings of the peer challenge and approve the attached high level action plan so that, as a council, we can:

- Strengthen Community Leadership across the city
- Better define the role and shape of the Council
- Improve the way we review and agree future service delivery models

- Ensure we have a first class interface with customers so that we fully understand this needs of the people in the city.

6. Alternative Options

- 6.1 There are no alternative options, as this is a direct response to the peer challenge.

7. Impact Analysis

7(a) Equalities – An equality analysis has been undertaken and makes some recommendations for officers with lead responsibilities when implementing actions, particularly in terms of:

- understanding the diversity of communities in the city and communicating messages to communities appropriately
- monitoring outcomes for groups within the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 and other vulnerable groups, such as those living in poverty.

8. List of Appendices

Appendix A – Overview of the strengths and areas for improvement set out in the Peer Challenge final report

Appendix B – Final Peer Challenge Report

Appendix C – High level action plan

