

Outcomes of the Local Government Association Peer Review

Cabinet

Date: 7th December 2016

Author:	Leader of the Council and Head of Performance, People and Engagement
Wards:	All
Locality Affected:	All
Parishes Affected:	All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report outlines the scope and main findings of the peer review, and gives details of the Council's response to the review findings.
- 1.2 The review provided valuable external insight and challenge and identified a number of key recommendations to enable the corporate functions of the Council to continue to develop and improve.
- 1.3 High quality corporate functions are an essential component of successful delivery of the Council's Vision, Priorities and Pledges.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Note the contents of the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report and
- 2.2 Authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to deliver the actions outlined in the plan.

3. Detail

Scope and Purpose of the Review

- 3.1 The review provided a peer challenge by senior officers and elected members from other local authorities. It was not an inspection, but provided a constructive external view about how well the Council has put structures and processes in place to deliver its Vision, Priorities and Pledges. The review took place from 13th -16th September 2016
- 3.2 The review team focussed on questions covering five key themes:
 - 3.2.1 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?
 - 3.2.2 Leadership of place- Does the Council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Sam Mowbray 07823 525337, smowbray@swindon.gov.uk.

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- 3.2.3 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?
- 3.2.4 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?
- 3.2.5 Capacity to deliver- Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the Council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

Findings of the Review

3.3 The review team noted the Council had strengths in a number of areas. There included:

- Clear ambitions from the Council Leader and energy and drive for the Council action
- Leadership which provides a focus for Council action through a vision for Swindon and a good understanding of key challenges and opportunities
- Ambitions with purpose including the economy, housing plans, master plans for the town centre, educational attainment
- Savings of £120m over the past eight years and a medium term financial plan with a clear direction
- Work which is moving from transactional to transformational
- A Vision which is underpinned by a strategic framework and commitment including a Council Plan
- Strong and sustaining partnerships and good partnership working through changes. Examples quoted included work with the Clinical Commissioning Group, Schools Forum and the Local Enterprise Partnership
- Staff who are proud to work for the Council and some shining lights.

3.4 The review team also made a number of key recommendations. These were:

- 3.4.1 Underpin your compelling vision with a coherent narrative and plan which will take you from 2016 to the outcomes you seek for 2030,
- 3.4.2 Develop critical success factors for making choices about what initiatives to prioritise, to sit along your very clear principles,

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- 3.4.3 Have a clear understanding of the Council's purpose and then design its structure to ensure it can deliver the vision,
- 3.4.4 Place a greater emphasis on the execution of your plans and review whether you have the existing capacity and right vehicles to help you deliver them,
- 3.4.5 Review the breadth of responsibility at CMT level by reducing direct reports to the chief executive to create strategic space,
- 3.4.6 Ensure all corporate/enabling services are restructured to support front – line service delivery and review merging finance, HR, legal, IT, PPE and customer services into one strong enabling function to help deliver the change most effectively,
- 3.4.7 In respect of your Parish plans consider how you will most effectively ensure a smooth transition to devolving responsibilities in this new model,
- 3.4.8 Harness afresh your business and community partners to revive your One Swindon ambitions,
- 3.4.9 Look to engage more purposefully with your communities and seek their views and opinions in a structured manner,
- 3.4.10 Step up your ambition about digitalisation,
- 3.4.11 Utilise your great people to be even more effective and fill your skill gaps,
- 3.4.12 Call to arms, celebrate wins, create momentum, engage people to play their part and inform the public possibly via a community magazine, and
- 3.4.13 Keep learning and be networked - look outwards and steal with pride-- encourage others to steal from you-there is much to steal.

Response to the Review

- 3.5 Officers from across the Council have contributed to drawing up an action plan to address the recommendations of the peer review team.
- 3.6 This plan is set in the context of the existing Council Plan and will complement and enhance that work and the delivery of the Vision, Priorities and Pledges.
- 3.7 There is an offer of further support from the Local Government Association. This includes additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas for development and improvement and the potential for a light touch follow up review in 12- 24 months' time.

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4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 The Council could decline to implement the recommendations of the independent peer review team, but this would be inconsistent with securing value for money for residents as well as delivering continuous improvement. Therefore the report sets out how Cabinet is committed to taking action to address the review's recommendations.

5. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 The actions outlined in the plan will be delivered within the existing budget. There are no additional financial implications. The Head of Finance has been involved in the production of the action plan.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 There were not considered to be any legal or human rights implications arising from this report. The Board Director for Legal and Democratic Services has been involved in the production of the action plan.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.3 None.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 5.4 As the review looked at corporate function, the majority of the recommendations and actions relate to these areas of work and do not require diversity impact assessments. Prior to implementation of any actions where assessments are deemed to be necessary, these will be carried out.

Risk Management

- 5.5 The actions of the plan will make a significant contribution to areas of corporate risk including organisational sustainability, achievement of the vision and capacity and capability.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Interim Corporate Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

7. Background Papers

- 7.1 None.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix One – The Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report.

8.2 Appendix Two – The Peer Review Action Plan.

9. Key Decision/Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

9.1 This is not a Key Decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for September 2016.