

REPORT TO	ON
Council	22 nd November 2017



September 2017

TITLE	REPORT OF
Corporate Improvement Plan	Chief Executive

Is this report exempt from publication?	No
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To provide an update for members of the Council on the progress in addressing the recommendations from the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The report relates to the following corporate priorities

Clean, green and safe		Strong and healthy communities	
Strong South Ribble in the heart of prosperous Lancashire		Efficient, effective and exceptional council	✓

4. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

4.1 In February 2017, Cabinet approved an Improvement Plan to address the recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Licensing ('the Scrutiny Review Action Plan').

4.2 A key component of that plan was the commissioning of a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) by the Local Government Association, and this took place during the last week of March 2017.

4.3 The final report from the CPC was received by the Council in April and this was shared with all members, staff and the partners who took part in the CPC. The key recommendations are set out below:

- I. The political Administration needs to lead the council coherently, effectively, visibly and take ownership of the improvement to take the council forward positively.
- II. Agree a clear vision for the borough which tackles its major strategic challenges and sets out a positive future picture for the place and clear priorities for the council.
- III. Develop robust plans to bridge the financial gap in the council's medium term financial plan, focused around firm project plans.
- IV. All political parties to seek to gain consensus on the council's strategic issues to improve the political stability of the council.
- V. Senior members to ensure strong standards of personal behaviour in order to provide stronger leadership of the council.
- VI. Progress the permanent appointment of the council's chief executive and permanent appointment of the statutory officers, and design the organisation around the key priorities.
- VII. Senior members to lead the improvement journey the council has begun and demonstrate greater ownership of the Improvement Plan.
- VIII. Establish an Improvement Reference Group to ensure appropriate pace and external challenge of the improvement agenda.

A further recommendation in the main body of the report (at paragraph 24) suggested that the Council considered the role of the Governance Committee in its review of the Constitution.

A revised Corporate Improvement Plan (the Peer Review Improvement Plan) designed to address the recommendations in the CPC report was approved by Cabinet in June.

Cabinet agreed in June that future focus for the Council would be on the Peer Review Improvement Plan although the Scrutiny Review Action Plan would continue to be monitored.

An update on progress in relation to the Scrutiny Review Action Plan was provided to the Scrutiny Committee in August 2017. At that meeting, the Committee said it was pleasing to see that the vast majority of its recommendations had been completed.

For the sake of completeness, an overview in relation to the Scrutiny Review action plan is also provided in this report for members to note.

5. PROGRESS TO DATE

5.1 Scrutiny Review Action Plan

5.1.1 The Scrutiny Review of Licensing Action Plan was approved by the Cabinet in February 2017.

5.1.2 An overview of the key achievements that were reported to Scrutiny Committee is set out below:

- a) Diagnostic reviews of the Council have been undertaken by both the Centre for Public Scrutiny and the Local Government Association and a new Corporate Improvement Plan was developed and approved by Cabinet as a result of the recommendations arising from this work. This plan is being overseen by a cross party Improvement Reference Group which includes members and officers from the Local Government Association.
- b) A new Communications' Strategy was approved in March and has been largely implemented, resulting in significant improvements in internal communications for both officers and members.
- c) A new Transformation Strategy (incorporating organisational development activity for both officers and members) was approved in July and is being implemented.
- d) The Council's Corporate Plan was reviewed and revised for 2017-18 and the process for developing a new Council vision and priorities for 2018 and beyond is well underway. A workshop for all members to engage with this work was held in July and a further workshop for all members was held on 16th November.
- e) Reviews of financial regulations, the Council Constitution, procurement practice, fraud and anti-corruption policies and compliance with the Transparency Code have all been undertaken, although changes to the Council Constitution is yet to be fully completed. This is because links need to be made to Directors and services in schemes of delegation and the work will not therefore be finalised until the Council's revised organisational structure has been determined.
- f) The Council's Safeguarding Policy and practices have been independently endorsed by the Lancashire Safeguarding Children's Board, and the Council's Licensing Service has also been independently reviewed and given a clean bill of health. Training has been provided for the Council's Licensing Committee members.
- g) A residents' survey was undertaken in February with very positive results.
- h) A new Customer Feedback policy has been developed and approved.

- i) New performance and risk management arrangements are in place and a new risk management system (GRACE) has been implemented. Officers are currently in the process of procuring an integrated projects and performance management system which will support robust performance monitoring and management.
- j) Support for Governance, Standards and Scrutiny Committees has been reviewed and all now have work programmes in place. An additional independent person has been appointed to advise on standards complaints.
- k) A social media protocol for members has been developed and approved and training in the use of social media for members has been provided.
- l) A new permanent Chief Executive has been appointed and a new organisational structure has been developed for consideration by Council.

5.2 Peer Review Improvement Plan

5.2.1 The new improvement plan was structured around the following three key themes.

- (i) Strong and effective political and managerial leadership;
- (ii) The development of a clear and concise vision for the future of the Borough and the Council;
- (iii) Delivery of the MTFs, including business transformation, shared services and the review of leisure.

5.2.2 The CPC Team will re-visit the Council on 31st January and 1st February 2018 to review progress. In the meantime, an Improvement Reference Group to ensure appropriate pace and external challenge of the improvement agenda was established. The Group consists of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Executive, the Council's Section 151 Officer and the Council's Interim Corporate Improvement Manager.

The LGA is represented on the Group by both a Conservative and a Labour member peer and the LGA's Principal Advisor for the North West region.

The Group had its first meeting in May and has met monthly since then to oversee delivery of the Improvement Plan.

The key messages from each meeting have been published on the Council's staff and member Intranet (Staff Connect and Councillor Connect).

5.2.3 The other recommendations were structured around the three themes referred to in paragraph 5.2.1 above.

5.2.4 A summary of the actions that have been taken in relation to each of these themes and recommendations in the report are set out below.

5.2.5 Improvement theme 1: Strong and effective political and managerial leadership

Recommendation:

The political Administration needs to lead the council coherently, effectively, visibly and take ownership of the improvement to take the council forward positively.

Actions taken:

- ❖ The leading group and its Cabinet have attended externally facilitated sessions to consider leadership styles and priorities
- ❖ Cabinet and the Senior Management Team have attended a joint externally facilitated workshop to consider a new Corporate Vision and priorities
- ❖ Opposition members have been supported via a workshop facilitated by the LGA Labour member peer.

Recommendation:

All political parties to seek to gain consensus on the council's strategic issues to improve the political stability of the council.

Actions taken:

- ❖ All members were invited to an externally facilitated workshop to shape the new Corporate Vision and priorities and to a follow up session to provide feedback on the Cabinet's new corporate vision and emerging corporate priorities for the new 5-year Corporate Plan.
- ❖ A cross party member working group has been established and is meeting regularly to consider the key issues and a future model for leisure and wellbeing campuses.
- ❖ Cross party working groups on asset management and investment and communicating with residents have been established
- ❖ A cross party budget working group has been established to raise awareness of the budget process and budget challenges facing the Council.

- ❖ The Scrutiny Committee has had an away day and an externally facilitated workshop to consider its work programme for the year, aligned to the strategic priorities of the Council.

Recommendation:

Senior members to ensure strong standards of personal behaviour in order to provide stronger leadership of the council.

Actions taken:

- ❖ A comprehensive member survey was undertaken in September. The results of this have been shared with the leaders of all political groups and will be shared with all members on 12th December.
- ❖ Members and officers have attended workshops to identify the issues to be addressed in a new member / officer protocol. A draft protocol has been considered jointly by the Cabinet, Shadow Cabinet and the Senior Management Team and will be discussed with all members and key staff who have regular contact with members at joint member / officer workshops to be held in early December.
- ❖ The new Social Media Protocol for members was approved at Full Council in July and training on the use of social media has been provided for members. Further follow up sessions will be arranged to ensure that all members attend this mandatory training.

Recommendation:

Senior members to lead the improvement journey the council has begun and demonstrate greater ownership of the Improvement Plan.

Actions taken:

- ❖ The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition are reviewing progress and considering ongoing challenges at monthly meetings of the Improvement Reference Group referred to in paragraph 5.2.2 above.

Recommendation: consider the role of the Governance Committee in the review of the Constitution.

Actions taken:

- ❖ Officers have undertaken a desktop review of best practice and alternative models for governance used in other councils and organisations and a paper is currently being developed for consideration by the Council's Governance Committee.

Recommendation:

Progress the permanent appointment of the Council's Chief Executive and permanent appointment of the statutory officers, and design the organisation around the key priorities.

Actions taken:

- ❖ The Council appointed a new Chief Executive with effect from 3rd July and a proposed new organisational structure (which addresses statutory officer posts) has been developed for consideration by members. This puts growth at the centre of the organisation and proposes the expansion of shared services to create efficiencies and meet approved targets in the Council's medium-term financial strategy.

5.2.6 Improvement theme 2: The development of a clear and concise vision for the future of the Borough and the Council**Recommendation:**

Agree a clear vision for the borough which tackles its major strategic challenges and sets out a positive future picture for the place and clear priorities for the council.

Actions taken:

- ❖ All members were invited to an externally facilitated workshop in July, to shape the new Corporate Vision and priorities. 32 members attended this session.
- ❖ A follow up session to provide feedback on the Cabinet's proposed corporate vision and emerging corporate priorities for the new 5-year Corporate Plan took place on 16th November.

5.2.7 Improvement theme 3: Delivery of the MTFS, including business transformation, shared services and the review of leisure**Recommendation:**

Develop robust plans to bridge the financial gap in the council's medium term financial plan, focused around firm project plans.

Actions taken:

- ❖ Project Plans and communication plans for each of the MTFS projects have been developed
- ❖ These plans are monitored monthly by the Council's Programme Board and progress is reported to and considered at each monthly meeting of the Council's Improvement Reference Group.

- ❖ Cabinet approved a new Transformation Strategy in July.
- ❖ A Transformation Consultant was appointed to lead the first transformation projects and to identify a programme for future transformation work. Initial focus has been on streamlining and modernising customer service at Gateway and on commercialisation of the Depot for future income generation.

The Transformation Programme has been developed and a decision is awaited from Council in relation to the use of some of the Council's General financial reserve as a transformation fund to pump prime transformation activity.

- ❖ A proposal for the expansion of shared services has been built into the proposed new organisational structure which is awaiting a decision from members.
- ❖ A cross party member working group has been established and is meeting regularly to consider the key issues and a future model for leisure and wellbeing campuses.

6 CONSULTATION

None, although the key messages from the meetings of the Council's Improvement Reference Group have been made available to all staff and all members on Staff and Councillor Connect.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications to this report, which is provided for information only.

8. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND ASSOCIATED RISKS

No alternatives were considered. This report is for information only.

The Corporate Improvement Plan has a risk register in place which is monitored monthly by the Council's Programme Board. There has recently been an increase in risk due to the delay in members making a number of key decisions, namely the decision to defer the decision in relation to the Council organisational structure and the decision to approve use of Council General financial reserves to establish a fund to pump prime transformation activities.

These risks will be reviewed further when decisions on both matters are made by members.

9. STATUTORY 151 OFFICER COMMENTS

This report is to inform and update members of the Council and therefore there are no financial implications arising.

10. MONITORING OFFICER COMMENTS

Clearly it is imperative that the council should continue to make substantial progress with implementing the new Improvement Plan. The relevance of this to good governance – and to the Annual Governance Statement – need hardly be spelt out.

From a Monitoring Officer perspective it is particularly important that all members should demonstrate strong standards of personal behaviour.

11. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge March 2017

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