

CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee - 27 February 2020

Report of Chief Executive

Status For information

Key Decision No

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Peter Fleming

Contact Officer Lee Banks, Ext. 7161

Recommendation to Improvement & Innovation Advisory Committee:

That the proposal to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge in September this year is noted.

Reason for recommendation: To ensure that Members of the Advisory Committee are informed of the proposal to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Corporate Peer Challenges are provided by the Local Government Association (LGA). They are a core element of the sector-led improvement offer to local authorities.
- 2 Peer challenges are managed and delivered by the sector for the sector. They are improvement focused and the scope is agreed with the council and tailored to reflect local needs and specific requirements.
- 3 Peer challenge is not an inspection, it is a tool for improvement. The council's specific needs, the areas it wants to focus on, the makeup of the team and the results it wants to achieve are all discussed and agreed in advance.

Sevenoaks District Council Peer Challenge

- 4 The Council's last Corporate Peer Challenge took place in December 2013. There were a significant number of positive messages within the findings of the Peer Challenge Team, who summarised it at the time as the Council's success was built on a strong foundation from a planned, determined and sustained focus on doing the right things very well.
- 5 The Council has agreed with that its next Corporate Peer Challenge will take place from 21-23 September this year.

- 6 All Corporate Peer Challenges have core components, which focus on the following areas.
- **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?
 - **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?
 - **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?
 - **Capacity to deliver:** Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?
- 7 There is also significant flexibility to enable the peer challenge to focus on priorities, outcomes and ambitions which are important locally. In recent reviews of other organisations these have included area such as customer focus, use of technology in the delivery of efficient and excellent services and a view on the Council's activities to achieve its economic development ambitions for the district.
- 8 The additional areas the Council will chose to include in its Corporate Peer Challenge will be considered over the coming weeks and need to be concluded by the end of April. This will enable a Peer Team to be requested that have the necessary skills and experience to deliver the Council's Peer Challenge.
- 9 The Peer Challenge team will consist of four colleagues from local government, including a Member Peer and a Chief Executive Peer, and a Peer Challenge Manager from the team at the LGA.

Preparing for and undertaking a Peer Challenge

- 10 The Peer Challenge Team will be provided with information about the Council, its priorities and its progress in advance of arriving on site at the Council.
- 11 Whilst onsite the Peer Team will meet with a number of Members, Officers and potentially partners and other stakeholders. Those discussions will inform their view on the Council's progress and enable them to identify the

Council's strengths and any areas where they could recommend actions for improvement.

- 12 It is likely that before the Peer Team leave the Council they will be in a position to provide informal feedback on their findings. This will be followed by a short report on their work, findings and any recommendations for the Council.

Other Options Considered and/or Rejected

None.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal and risk implications arising from this report.

Equality Assessment

The information provided in this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Conclusions

This report informs Members of the Council's proposal for a Corporate Peer Challenge to be held between 21 and 23 September this year.

It summarises the core components of a Peer Challenge and explains that the Council has the flexibility to request additional focus areas for the review that are reflective of local priorities.

Appendices None

Background Papers LGA Peer Challenge Letter - December 2013

<https://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s15626/14%20-%20Appendix%20A%20-%20LGA%20Peer%20Challenge%20Letter.pdf?J=5>

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