

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Corporate Peer Challenge Follow up Visit

**Feedback from the peer challenge team
10-11 June 2019**

The peer challenge team

- **Gillian Beasley**, Joint Chief Executive, Peterborough Borough Council and Cambridgeshire County Council
- **Cllr David Renard**, Leader, Swindon Council
- **Anna Rose**, Head of Planning Advisory Service
- **John Skidmore**, Director of Corporate Strategy and Commissioning, East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- **Clare Hudson**, Peer Challenge Manager, LGA

The purpose of peer challenge

- Peer challenges are improvement-focussed and tailored to meet individual council's needs.
- They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus.
- The peers used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.
- The team provide feedback as critical friends, not as assessors, consultants or inspectors.

The process of peer challenge

- Original Corporate Peer Challenge September 2017
- Council Action Plan
- Updated position statement
- 24 hour onsite visit including meetings with around 45 people, both internal and partners
- Snapshot in time
 - Understanding of the local place and priority setting
 - Leadership of Place
 - Financial planning and viability
 - Organisational leadership and governance
 - The future

Quotes

“The council feels very different now”

“The council needs to get on with it”

“It can be difficult to understand who does what – we are too disconnected”

“We have to be clearer about what the future plan is – and tell people about it”

The Here and Now

- Embraced findings from original CPC
- Managerial leadership well received and set to reshape the organisation
- Culture feels more positive
- Some progress on governance
- But if you want to deliver on your ambitions for people and place you need to consider how you manage risk in order to get from good to great

Manage Your Risks

- Borough Local Plan at critical phase – vision for regeneration – for people and place needs stronger alignment
- Culture of financial management and budgetary control is not robust enough
- Commissioned services feel disconnected and oversight of them needs to be more strategic
- Member and officer relationships need further rebalancing
- Move towards a one team approach rooted in trust and respect

Financial planning and viability

- Budgetary control and monitoring needs strengthening
- Unplanned spend has grown
- Budgeting has been rooted in a culture of efficiencies rather than transformation
- Pipeline of future savings and options is not clearly evidenced – longer term approach?
- Financial management culture needs refresh – particularly capital spend
- Current service design and provision requires a longer term more strategic and more rigorous culture of financial management

Understanding of local place and priority setting

- The overall vision for people and place feels underdeveloped meaning that development risks being disconnected from it
- Local Plan is not necessarily driving development – it needs to be more of a blueprint for the future including regeneration
- Invest more time and resource in agreeing the vision – and communicate it
- Senior officers and leaders need to articulate and collaboratively deliver the vision for people and place

Organisational leadership and governance

- Build on the more positive culture by more consistent internal and external communications
- Silo working within the council needs consistent and sustained effort to be broken down
- Scrutiny has great potential to be a positive influence, but make sure the mechanics are appropriate and well supported
- Member officer protocols are clearer but make them a reality and model the appropriate behaviours
- Establish a oneteam approach with senior managers and portfolio holders having clear understanding of roles and responsibilities

People- Place - Change - Transform

- Policy announcements can appear fragmented
- Clearer vision bringing together elements of people and place – shared with partners
- More strategic oversight services – address the disconnections
- Collaboratively plan with partners, e.g. transitions, demand management
- Consistently communicate
- Move culture to change *for* transformation

Next steps

- Opportunity for questions and discussion now
- Short feedback report to follow
- LGA support offer

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