

Corporate Peer Challenge – February 2022 - Action Plan

This Action Plan is in response to a Corporate Peer Challenge led by the Local Government Association in February 2022 which focussed on five core elements:

1. Local Priorities and Outcomes - are the Council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the Council delivering effectively on its priorities?
2. Organisational and Place Leadership - does the Council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
3. Governance and Culture - are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
4. Financial Planning and Management - does the Council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the Council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges?
5. Capacity for Improvement - is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the Council have the capacity to improve?

The Corporate Peer Challenge Team identified six actions arising from the review, as follows:

- Take time out to reflect and celebrate all that has been achieved.
- Quickly address senior corporate capacity gap.
- Use the hot-house process to focus on prioritisation, capacity, capability, governance and oversight.
- Bring forward a recruitment and retention plan to address key workforce shortfalls including pay and reward.
- Following a review of the housing management service, draw out the learning from systems and capacity and consider an LGA Housing Management peer review to support improvement.
- Move quickly and with greater certainty to a new model of post pandemic working.

	Action	Specific feedback	How this will be addressed
<p style="text-align: center;">LOCAL PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Use the hot-house process to focus on prioritisation, capacity, capability, governance and oversight + take time out to reflect and celebrate all that has been achieved</p>	<p>LGA Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite a track record of achievement across a range of exemplar projects and themes, the organisation is showing signs of fatigue. Staff are fully committed to the Strategic Plan and the work programme. Discretionary energy is in abundance although not sustainable given the demands of current and future work programmes. There is an urgent requirement to address the future capacity and capability needs against the work programme alongside reprioritisation. • The Strategic Plan is the Council's 'compass', guiding all its decision making against six themes. The Plan has previously been refreshed to reflect the impact of the covid pandemic. The timing is now right, three years since the Plan's initial development to build on the learning from the previous 'hot-house' approach to refresh the Strategic Plan and fully consider in the context of prioritisation, capacity, capability, governance and oversight. • ESC is now one of the largest district councils in the country. Peers were impressed with the Council's journey and transition to a new council. The organisation should be proud and celebrate what has been achieved. 	<p>Actions agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further hot-house session to refresh the Strategic Plan to be held with the new Administration following the district council election in May 2023 [SMT/new Leader - June 2023] • SMT to further consider capacity, capability and oversight at a dedicated 'away day' and as part of its regular SMT meetings [SMT – April 2022] • Governance and oversight to be considered by the Corporate Governance Group on a monthly basis [SB - ongoing] • Communications Manager instructed to write a reflective piece on the Council for publication in the MJ or LGC [PH – June 2022] • Will continue to enter the Council as a whole/individual service areas for national awards [All – ongoing] • Draw out the need to 'reflect' which is distinct from the need to celebrate at CMT 'away days' [CMT – ongoing]

ORGANISATIONAL AND PLACE LEADERSHIP

Quickly address senior corporate capacity gap

LGA Feedback

- Capacity at strategic corporate management level is urgently required to improve the support to your Heads of Service and wider workforce. This is not specifically about providing an additional level of oversight, however more focused on supporting strategic decision-making so Heads of Service feel supported.
- A corporate focused director will be able to provide oversight across the different functional areas and provide line of sight across the range of work programmes.
- A corporate focused director could be made accountable for providing leadership to the next stage of the organisation's development and ensure there is adequate alignment between for example the Council's processes, resources, culture, systems and the ongoing requirements of the Strategic Plan. The role would be pivotal in ensuring existing plans such as the 'people plan' (including recruitment and retention, pay and reward) and existing frameworks, for example performance management and programme management continue to evolve and adapt alongside the Council's ambitions and Strategic Plan.

Actions agreed

- Leader has verbally acknowledged the need for a new Corporate Director post (subject to approval) - Chief Executive to draft the necessary business case and explore appropriate funding with the Chief Finance Officer [SB – May 2022]
- A review of the Strategic Management Team will be linked to the above followed by a review of the Corporate Management Team [SMT – September 2022]

<p style="text-align: center;">GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE</p>	<p>Management peer review to support Following a review of the housing management service, draw out the learning from systems and capacity and consider an LGA Housing</p>	<p>LGA Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peers understand the Council will be commissioning a comprehensive, external, independent governance review, which will be carried out to understand how the issues experienced were not identified sooner. The output of the review will support further joined up conversations around governance and oversight. • The recently appointed Head of Housing should be further supported by the leadership team to drive the emerging improvement plan. 	<p>Actions agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing [February 2022] • Action plan in place • Expertise sourced in terms of policy and process review • Forensic audit of every tenancy from 2014 onwards taking place [ongoing] • New compliance dashboard developed • Strategic Project Board, Members' Project Board and Operational Project Board in place • HRA Asset Management and Compliance Strategy being drafted • Comprehensive communications plan in place • Independent governance review to be carried out
<p style="text-align: center;">FINANCIAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT</p>	<p>Bring forward a recruitment and retention plan to address key workforce shortfalls including pay and reward</p>	<p>LGA Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A holistic review of recruitment and retention is needed including pay and reward. Further dialogue with system partners such as health who suffer similar recruitment challenges could be pursued to better market the 'place offer' for East Suffolk as a great place to live and work. 	<p>Actions agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and retention plan drafted – to be considered at SMT away day [April 2022] • Action Plan to implement the above to be drafted [AS – May 2022]

<p>CAPACITY FOR IMPROVEMENT</p>	<p>Move quickly and with greater certainty to a new model of post pandemic working</p>	<p>LGA Feedback</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst discussing the future, there was an emerging need to clarify what the next six months of working arrangements will entail. There were some quite opposing views expressed from staff which underlined the need for a bespoke team-by-team approach to understanding future work practices. 	<p>Actions agreed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice posted on Sharepoint and disseminated to all Managers clarifying future working arrangements following the relaxation of the Government’s Plan B following consultation with the Council’s Health and Safety Officer [February 2022] • Staff updated on future working practices during a live staff briefing broadcast [March 2022] • Rolling summary of information for staff continuously updated on Sharepoint and disseminated to all Managers [ongoing] • Future Accommodation Group will continue to work up plans (including communications) as the national and local picture evolves further [ongoing]
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