

Name of meeting: Cabinet
Date: 12 November 2019

Name of meeting: Council
Date: 13 November 2019

Title of report: Peer challenge feedback report and action plan

Purpose of report:

Cabinet: To seek input and endorsement from Cabinet on the draft action plan that responds to the recommendations from the LGA Corporate Peer challenge, and recommendation to Council for approval.

Council: To receive the report and recommendations from Cabinet and consider the draft action plan for approval.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	No
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)</u>?	Key Decision – No Private Report/Private Appendix – No
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Richard Parry: 31 October 2019
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance	Eamonn Croston: 30 October 2019
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	Julie Muscroft: 31 October 2019
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Pandor

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: Elected members were involved in the peer challenge visit in July. Scrutiny members and Group Leaders have had input into the draft action plan. Democracy Commission working group members have shaped the proposals for the recommended actions that overlap with that area of work.

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? This report and the action plan contain only aggregated and/or anonymised data and no personal data that identifies a living individual, no sensitive personal data such as health, religion, sexuality and ethnicity and no information about members of staff, users of services, or details of Kirklees citizens.

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises recommendations of the corporate peer challenge that was undertaken in Summer 2019, and sets out a draft action plan to address the subsequent recommendations shared by the peer challenge team.
- 1.2 The action plan will subsequently be recommended to Council for approval on 13 November.

2. Information required to take a decision

- 2.1 Peer challenges are improvement focused and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals.
- 2.2 The Kirklees corporate peer challenge took place from 9 - 12 July 2019. It involved substantial input from a wide range of staff, elected members and stakeholders.
- 2.3 The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components covered by all Corporate Peer Challenges. These are the areas the LGA believe are critical to councils' performance and improvement:

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?

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?

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?

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 successfully?

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?

- 2.4 In addition, the Council asked the peer team to take a sense check of whether the Council has the right focus, how the Council's 'journey' might be speeded up and what more the Council could do.
- 2.5 The peer team have shared their feedback report. The report identified key strengths including:
 - Strong communities with strong identities.
 - Incredibly dedicated and committed staff.
 - An ambitious investment budget.
- 2.6 The report also set out a series of key recommendations to the Council:
 1. *Craft and tell your story, externally and internally; and put strategic communications at the heart of the organisation.*
 2. *Develop and promote a high profile, permanent listening and dialogue action plan with residents and ensure system-wide coordination of engagement activity to harness the voice of residents.*

3. Implement the 'Collaborate' recommendations around place-based working and harmonise place-based initiatives, using the lessons learned from Community Plus.

4. Strengthen the corporate centre to develop its capacity; and invest in the Council's ICT systems.

5. Prioritise a decision on the long-term future of the ALMO.

6. Streamline decision-making and bring greater clarity to the roles and responsibilities of Members and officers, including greater congruence between officer and Member structures.

7. Consider reviewing the electoral cycle to bring it in line with councils that have adopted a longer, more stable electoral pattern with the strong leadership model.

8. Push for the establishment of a single CCG.

2.7 The recommendations have been discussed at a meeting of cross party Leaders in October, and the recommendations and draft action plan at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 4 November. Feedback from OSMC will be reported verbally to Cabinet to inform their decision-making. The recommendations from the peer challenge team and draft action plan that addresses these recommendations will subsequently be considered by Council on 13 November.

2.8 Reflecting the peer team's positive perspective of our direction of travel, some of their recommendations reflect work that is already in train. Actions to address the recommendations are set out in the action plan attached. The action plan will form an addendum to the [Corporate Plan](#). Progress against it will be reported on a quarterly basis, aligned with Corporate Plan progress reports.

3. Implications for the Council

- **Working with People and Partners and Place-based working**

The peer challenge team saw much evidence of the "We're Kirklees" journey and its focus on people, partners and place during their time in Kirklees. The direction of travel it represents is supported in the recommendations in the feedback report, particularly around place-based working.

- **Improving outcomes for children**

There are no recommendations specifically focused on outcomes for children, though the action plan will ensure that children and young people are considered in follow up actions including communication and engagement.

- **Other (e.g. Legal, Financial or Human Resources)**

The peer challenge is not a statutory requirement and the recommendations made by the peer team are recommendations rather than requirements. The action plan being developed will form an addendum to the Corporate Plan which is part of the Council's Article 4 Policy Framework.

Workstreams within the action plan which require more detailed consideration will be subject to further decisions.

The peer team found staff on the ground to be a great asset to the Council, and recognised their energy, their will to support residents and their desire to respond to a vision. Ongoing delivery of the action plan will continue to emphasise the positive messages heard, ensure that staff are supported to shape delivery and are given the development, tools and training to fulfil their roles.

4. Consultees and their opinions

4.1 During the peer challenge period the peer team:

- Spoke to more than 300 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders.
- Gathered information and views from more than 50 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading.
- Collectively spent more than 280 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 7 weeks in Kirklees Council.

5. Next steps and timelines

5.1 Monitoring of delivery will be aligned to the existing schedule of reporting progress against the Corporate Plan. There will be a strong Cabinet member input into progress monitoring and also identifying where there is a need for further decisions on the detail of action development and delivery.

5.2 A more detailed delivery plan will be developed in line with reporting progress at the end of the financial year 2019/20 for Quarter 4 delivery.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

Cabinet: To ask Cabinet to consider and agree the draft action plan, as an addendum to the Corporate Plan, in forming the basis for a response to the peer challenge recommendations that will assist the Council to progress with its improvement journey. And to recommend it to Council for approval.

Council: To receive the report and approve the draft action plan as an addendum to the Corporate Plan.

7. Cabinet Portfolio Holder's recommendations

To welcome the findings of the peer challenge team for its independent view of our services, our support for local communities and our focus for the future.

To agree the draft action plan and recommend it to Council for their approval.

8. Contact officer

Kate McNicholas, Head of Policy, Partnerships and Corporate Planning.
Kate.mcnicholas@kirklees.gov.uk / 01484 221000 ext 72957

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Appendix 1: Peer challenge feedback report
Appendix 2: Draft action plan

OSMC: 4 November 2019

<https://democracy.kirklees.gov.uk/documents/s32177/Peer%20Challenge.pdf>

10. Service Director responsible

Andy Simcox, Service Director for Strategy and Innovation

Corporate Peer Challenge: Draft Action Plan

November 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Peer challenges are improvement focused and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals.
- 1.2 The Kirklees corporate peer challenge took place from 9 - 12 July 2019. It involved substantial input from a wide range of staff, elected members and stakeholders.
- 1.3 The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components covered by all Corporate Peer Challenges. These are the areas the LGA believe are critical to councils' performance and improvement:
 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?
 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?
 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?
 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 successfully?
 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?

2. Feedback

- 2.1 The peer team have shared their feedback report. The report identified key strengths including:
 - Strong communities with strong identities.
 - Incredibly dedicated and committed staff.
 - An ambitious investment budget.
- 2.2 It also set out a series of key recommendations to the Council:
 1. Craft and tell your story, externally and internally; and put strategic communications at the heart of the organisation.
 2. Develop and promote a high profile, permanent listening and dialogue action plan with residents and ensure system-wide coordination of engagement activity to harness the voice of residents.

3. Implement the 'Collaborate' recommendations around place-based working and harmonise place-based initiatives, using the lessons learned from Community Plus.
 4. Strengthen the corporate centre to develop its capacity; and invest in the Council's ICT systems.
 5. Prioritise a decision on the long-term future of the ALMO.
 6. Streamline decision-making and bring greater clarity to the roles and responsibilities of Members and officers, including greater congruence between officer and Member structures.
 7. Consider reviewing the electoral cycle to bring it in line with councils that have adopted a longer, more stable electoral pattern with the strong leadership model.
 8. Push for the establishment of a single CCG.
- 2.3 The peer challenge is not a statutory requirement and the recommendations made by the peer team are recommendations rather than requirements.

3. Developing the action plan

- 3.1 This draft action plan sets out how the Council proposes to respond to the recommendations above.
- 3.2 The action plan follows a framework based on the eight recommendations from the peer team. Responses and proposed actions are set out against these recommendations. In addition the action plan includes details from the full feedback report that are not covered by the eight key recommendations above – particularly around risk appetite and delivery planning.
- 3.3 It will receive input from Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and will be considered for agreement by Cabinet on 12 November, before a final version is recommended for approval to Council on 13 November.

4. Draft action plan

- 4.1 The information below forms the draft action plan. Reflecting the peer team's positive perspective of our direction of travel, some of this plan draws on work that is already in train. Some of the recommendations identify new improvement proposals, and in those areas the approach to be adopted is outlined.
- 4.2 We will use the recommendations and proposed actions to more effectively measure the outcomes in the Corporate Plan. In so doing this action plan will effectively form an addendum to the Corporate Plan which is part of the Council's Article 4 Policy Framework.
- 4.3 Monitoring of delivery will be aligned to the existing schedule of reporting progress against the Corporate Plan. There will be a strong Cabinet member input into progress monitoring and also identifying where there is a need for further decisions on the detail of action development and delivery.
- 4.5 A more detailed delivery plan will be developed in line with reporting progress at the end of the financial year 2019/20 for Quarter 4 delivery.

From the peer team....

1. *Craft and tell your story, externally and internally; and put strategic communications at the heart of the organisation.*

“The Council has a very good story to tell but it is not yet well crafted and this should be done. It also needs the corporate capacity to tell the story successfully so that people can align themselves to it.”

Response....

We welcome the recognition of the peer team that we have a good story to tell, and recognise that there is more to do to develop our capacity and tell our story well, to the multiple audiences that are stakeholders of the Council, including residents, businesses, investors and other public and voluntary sector organisations in the borough and beyond.

We also agree that we should engage with partners in developing and telling our story, to help create a coherent voice for Kirklees, which achieves buy in to an ambitious direction of travel as well as the messages to describe it.

Proposed actions....

Ensure ***strategic communication capacity*** is embedded at the heart of the Council by building capacity and reshaping resources to align them to a clear focus on supporting the delivery of the corporate plan and related strategic communications, by developing a strategic communication strategy.

Since the peer team’s visit in the Summer, we’ve restructured the communications team and created more capacity. This includes roles focused on:

- Risk and reputation, which will help shape our strategic narrative as we go forward – addressing risks, horizon scanning and enhancing our reputation through strong messaging and work across our departments and partners.
- Design and brand, to manage our corporate brands and ensure that they assist in supporting a clear narrative for the Council.
- Digital, to support our move to developing our digital channels, to complement our use of traditional media, and work more closely with partners to the same end.

These resources are feeding into the development of a ***communication strategy*** which will set out *how* we deliver communication strategically. Developing our approach will involve working closely with elected members and staff, including Leading Members and scrutiny.

Officer lead: Service Director for Strategy and Innovation

By when: communication strategy to be developed by early December 2019.

Use the work developed with a set of partners including the University of Huddersfield, SWYFT and the Chamber of Commerce around a place narrative for Kirklees as a borough as an input to work with heads of communication across key organisations in Kirklees to firm up a ***clear narrative*** that can form the basis of communication across a range of partners. We will ensure that the place standard and other citizen engagement work (below) is utilised to ensure that the narrative is rooted in local perceptions and priorities.

Officer lead: Strategic Director for Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health– and via cross organisation heads of communications group

By when: final narrative agreed March 2020

Internal staff communication around “**We’re Kirklees**” to describe the journey the Council is on in terms of how it works with people, partners and places has resonated across the organisation and we’re proud the peer team recognised its success. We will continue to deliver internal communication to our staff around “We’re Kirklees” and ensure the next version of the corporate plan reflects this journey. We will develop different materials and campaigns that deliver for frontline and office-based staff teams. And as the programme becomes fully embedded in the Council we will investigate the scope to roll it out to partner organisations, dependent on partner appetite to use and shape it.

Officer lead: Strategic Director for Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health

By when: ongoing

From the peer team....

2. Develop and promote a high profile, permanent listening and dialogue action plan with residents and ensure system-wide coordination of engagement activity to harness the voice of residents.

“This will ensure an ongoing dialogue with residents on all matters, particularly those of strategic importance. It will also enable the Council to use data, intelligence and insights to inform future service design and policy development.”

Response....

We are committed to moving away from traditional consultation to genuine engagement and ongoing dialogue with our citizens, based on local identity. Our developing approach to place-based engagement using the place standard tool evidences our ambition, as does our commitment to co-ordinate such engagement across the wider partnership landscape in order to ensure we maximise the totality of resource and insight.

Integrating such insight with the intelligence we hold will enrich our dialogue with citizens as we work together to translate engagement into action in developing our operating model for place-based working (see recommendation 3 below).

Proposed actions....

We will continue to progress the use and awareness of the **place standard** tool both within the Council and across our partners. Our approach, overseen and co-ordinated by our cross-partnership **Citizen Engagement Reference Group**, will continue to be organic based on either opportunistic, councillor-initiated or citizen-initiated approaches to place-based engagement. This will create an ongoing dialogue with citizens which will draw on day to day contact with officers and will help to ensure that decisions are co-produced.

Officer lead: Head of Democracy

By when: The organic programme of place-based engagement activity is now in place. It is operationally overseen by the Reference Group described above. This will be used as a basis for ongoing monitoring and reporting to both Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee who have established specific mechanisms for scrutinising the work.

To support an ongoing dialogue with citizens, good quality surveys provide valuable intelligence about people’s needs, what they think, feel and experience, what differences and inequalities exist between communities and places and what is changing. This intelligence underpins decisions about what we commission, deliver and prioritise with people and communities. We will continue to undertake our **Current Living in Kirklees (CLiK) Survey** on a regular basis, the next one being planned for early Autumn 2020 on a partnership footprint. To that end we will take initial proposals to the Health and Wellbeing Board in late November 2019.

The CLiK survey will provide us with Kirklees-wide intelligence to support our understanding of what is helping or hindering progress to achieving our shared outcomes and to inform council and partnership priorities. Key indicators collected via the CLiK survey will help all of our key partners to monitor and understand collective progress and identify opportunities for collaboration and partnership working. Information will also be accessible to communities so

they can hold public services to account and use it to make decisions and develop solutions together.

Triangulating findings from CLiK, Place Standard and other engagement activities will provide greater insights into strengths and needs within and across communities and places across Kirklees.

Lead officer: Head of Intelligence and Performance

By when: CLiK survey delivered early Autumn 2020

From the peer team....

3. Implement the 'Collaborate' recommendations around place-based working and harmonise place-based initiatives, using the lessons learned from Community Plus.

"There is a lot of passion among people working in place-based initiatives but they are not yet fully coordinated and brought together. The Council should use this model as the foundation to build on."

Response....

Place-based working is a priority for the Council and our partners. Since the peer team were in Kirklees, a number of strands of work have been coming together which demonstrate clearly that we are making progress in aligning the programme of work in a coherent way. We have begun to pilot and progress the Place Partnerships approach and are now beginning to link the outcomes of place-based engagement with the development of Ward and Sub-Ward Partnerships. We also recognise there is still much work to do in developing a shared understanding of where we have got to and where we are heading. This will only be addressed by working collaboratively and developing a cohesive and prioritised programme of work.

We have a clear commitment to progressing our approach to place-based working, drawing on the recommendations from Collaborate and our work with the New Citizenship Project (NCP). We will use the findings and recommendations from our work with NCP to begin to change our relationship with local citizens and progress the cultural change with our staff that will help us create the conditions for place-based working.

We also recognise that there is still much work to do in developing a shared understanding of where we have got to and where we are heading. This will only be addressed by working collaboratively.

In this context, each Strategic Director has taken responsibility for one of four operational footprint areas. Four Heads of Service have also taken the lead for an area, supported by the Head of Democracy. This work will form the basis of developing an operating model, and the required cultural change, to facilitate place-based working.

Proposed actions....

We have begun to prioritise and finalise the programme of work that will assist us in creating the conditions for place-based working. In the interim we have prioritised three key areas which we are currently working on. We see these as core foundations from which to build:

1. We are developing the ***governance arrangements*** for place-based working and will have these finalised and signed off by the beginning of December 2019.
2. We will identify a ***core suite of policies*** (e.g. assets, funding) that we would wish to review in order to ensure that they are enablers to place-based working. We want to ensure that place-based working runs through all our strategies and work moving forward. These will be finalised by the beginning of December and detailed review work will take place thereafter.

3. We have agreed with Council colleagues and partners to begin to work to develop, in partnership, the ***operating model for place-based working***. In practice this means:
- Looking at all the great work that our staff already do in towns, villages and communities. We need to understand fully the good stuff we are doing and build from it.
 - Understanding the positive impact that work has for our citizens.
 - Developing an awareness of what and how we could improve even further what we do.
 - Using the insight we gather to help us create the conditions for our staff to work systemically in a place based way.

Four staff engagement events have been organised (in November and December) to get people who work in these areas together. These events will help to widen the understanding of place-based working and understand the great work that is already taking place. They will also help us to appreciate the challenges we face and where best to focus our thinking and efforts. We are committed to doing this work in a restorative and co-produced way.

Area	Strategic Director	Head of Service
Kirklees Rural	Richard Parry	Michelle Wheatcroft
Huddersfield	Rachel Spencer Henshall	Jenny Frear
Dewsbury and Mirfield	Karl Battersby	Jill Greenfield
Batley and Spen	Mel Meggs	Carol Gilchrist

Alongside the above mentioned work we have made a commitment to prototype and iterate our work in a way that allows us to test our thinking and approach. Similarly we remain committed to putting councillors at the heart of our approach to place-based working, having acknowledged that while there are many geographical and administrative boundaries, the Ward is a core building block.

In addition Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee have agreed specific arrangements for the place-based working programme. This will involve the creation of a sub-group of the Corporate and the Economy and Neighbourhood Panels who will monitor progress between now and the end of the current municipal year.

Lead officer: Strategic Director for Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health

By when: It is intended that the programme of work that will assist us in creating the conditions for place-based working will be finalised by the end of November 2019.

From the peer team....

4. Strengthen the corporate centre to develop its capacity; and invest in the Council's ICT systems.

“This will help to drive change across the Council and Kirklees for the benefit of residents so that the ambition that the Council has can permeate right through the organisation and into local communities. Investment in the Council's ICT systems will improve morale, productivity, performance standards and should make the organisation more efficient and effective.”

Response....

We welcome the fact that the feedback on our staff is so positive, and are proud of the people who work for the Council and the difference they make to local people every single day.

We also welcome the recognition that we need to consider our capacity to achieve our shared outcomes and the need for investment in the corporate centre to support the impact of our work on residents, businesses and Kirklees borough.

Proposed actions....

We are producing an ***IT strategy*** to shape where we prioritise technology investment and systems development to achieve outcomes designed around the needs of people more effectively and efficiently. This will clearly focus on people, getting the basics right, capability and skills, as well as systems, data, intelligence and technology to ensure what we use is fit for purpose and embedded effectively in the organisation.

Quick wins include: Improvements in the first line support service, replacement of two HR systems, completing the rollout of new laptops and Office 365 and delivery of cyber security training videos.

Lead officer: Strategic Director for Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health

By when: strategy finalised by March 2020.

We recognise the importance of working with our staff teams to develop the workforce of the future that supports our transformation journey. Our ***People Strategy*** sets out a programme of culture change and organisational development focused around:

- Supporting cultural transformation
- Attracting and retaining high quality employees and growing our own
- Developing our workforce
- Building leadership and management capacity and capability
- Promote quality assurance and a high performance culture

Transforming our approach to wellbeing has already delivered significant improvements in workforce healthcare and associated reductions in sickness absence levels and this work continues.

Working with our partners and in our communities, we have created the connections and foundations upon which to further develop our approach to workforce planning, which is

intelligence-led and includes a focus on better talent attraction and talent development. Coupled with improved resourcing systems and new and innovative technology, which will be implemented in early 2020, we are confident that our modernised approach will improve our workforce capacity and capability as well as improve staff morale.

Our planned senior leadership development programme which will commence in Spring 2020 will focus on key areas such as system leadership and place-based working which will complement our ongoing programme of workforce development focused on embedding a restorative approach to the way we work together in Kirklees.

Having reviewed our approach to performance appraisal, a planned roll-out of a new approach will take place during 2020, the aim of this is to promote a high performance culture which focuses on engaging and empowering staff, enabling them to build confidence in risk-taking.

This programme of work will underpin our cultural transformation journey.

Lead officer: Strategic Director for Corporate Strategy, Commissioning and Public Health

By when: dates as above.

Boosting ***inclusion and diversity*** of the staff workforce and embedding inclusion and diversity across the organisation is a clear priority, recognised by the peer team. We will continue to deliver against the current Inclusion and Diversity action plan, which includes actions to address the core principles of our Inclusion and Diversity policy statement:

- A committed and diverse workforce
- Taking a positive and inclusive approach to everything we do
- Zero tolerance on abuse, harassment, bullying and violence
- Demonstrating our commitment through the way we do things in Kirklees
- Inclusive policies
- Spreading the word about inclusion and diversity
- Listening and acting for ongoing improvement

We will develop a revised year three action plan for consideration by Council that builds on feedback from the inclusion standard report we received from Inclusive Employers as part of our improvement journey.

Lead officer: Service Director, Growth and Housing (inclusion and diversity lead)

By when: update on year 2 delivery to inform the development of a year 3 action plan - to be shared with scrutiny in January 2020.

From the peer team....

5. Prioritise a decision on the long-term future of the ALMO.

“If the ALMO is brought back in-house it will allow the Council to maximise the opportunity to embed place-based working into priority neighbourhoods. It would also provide much needed additional corporate capacity to deliver key Council objectives.”

Response....

Since it was established in 2002, KNH has been successful in delivering the Decent Homes Programme. In 2016 the Council’s building services function was also transferred to the ALMO. As a result of a governance review the Board commissioned, and the Grenfell tragedy, the Council initiated its own review into a number of options for the future management of the housing stock which included consideration to bring the ALMO back in-house.

The recommendations of these independent reviews were considered by Cabinet in December 2018, and given the uncertainty in the national policy environment, it was resolved to retain the ALMO with a smaller, strengthened Board that is more closely aligned to the Council’s priorities.

These changes have resulted in closer working in delivering front-line services and better alignment with Council priorities, and the Council values the work of KNH. However, continuing to deliver housing services in two separate and distinct entities has, at times, created unnecessary complexity.

Cabinet in December 2018 resolved to revisit the decision in 12-18 months. Hence this recommendation is timely and consistent with the Council’s intentions.

Proposed actions....

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee are considering setting up an ad hoc scrutiny group to consider the various options available to the Council and the main issues and associated risks. If they agree to this approach (on 4 November) they will undertake work over the remainder of 2019 and early 2020, with the aim being to produce a report by March 2020 at the latest.

Officer lead: Strategic Director for Adults and Health

By when: starting November 2019 and concluding by March 2020.

From the peer team....

6. Streamline decision-making and bring greater clarity to the roles and responsibilities of Members and officers, including greater congruence between officer and Member structures.

“This will enable Members to focus on developing policy and officers to implement and deliver it. It will also strengthen Members’ community leadership and Council ambassador roles.”

Response....

The Kirklees Democracy Commission dedicated much of its work to the governance and decision making arrangements in Kirklees and the officer / councillor relationships that underpin them. These areas formed some of the priority recommendations that the Cross Party Working Group identified as part of their work programme, some of which have been progressed.

In considering ***governance, accountability and decision-making*** the Democracy Commission identified some design principles for governance and decision-making:

- Be open and engaging
- Actively involve all our councillors
- Based on dialogue, not consultation
- Built around the needs of the citizen
- Create opportunities for young citizens
- Has effective checks and balances
- Lightens the load
- Makes the most of regional devolution

We know that there is further work to do to agree and deliver an approach that puts these core design principles into action. In the interim, the Chief Executive commissioned an internal project intended to understand and improve our internal governance processes and practices. Some of the recommendations from that work have been implemented while there is an acknowledgement that there is more work to do in terms of reviewing our wider governance landscape in line with the design principles identified by the Democracy Commission.

We have made a conscious effort to focus our efforts on progressing our strategic priority to put councillors at the heart of what we do. This is the principal means by which we will continue to revisit and recalibrate the relationship between councillors and officers. We are also well progressed in co-producing the redesign of the councillor role which aligns with this work.

Proposed actions....

We are currently exploring what gaps remain having delivered the actions outlined above. We will come forward with any new proposals around our governance and decision-making arrangements by the beginning of the calendar year at the latest.

We will complete the redesign of the councillor role profile by December with a view to it being considered by our Members Allowances Independent Review Panel in January 2020. This will form the basis of how we redesign support for councillors and will similarly

influence how officers work more effectively and collaboratively with councillors moving forward.

We will continue to progress the culture change that will put councillors at the heart of what we do. Our quarterly campaign bursts will continue to showcase and story-tell what our councillors do, how officers can work effectively with them and specifically support our officers in working in a political environment and with councillors.

The Democracy Commission working group reviewed proposals for a next phase in October 2019, which included suggestions around:

- Linking our staff volunteering scheme with ward councillors whereby staff volunteer a day working in the ward with a voluntary organisation or community group.
- Developing a ‘freshers’ fair where councillors can drop in and meet different officers and services.
- Proactively encouraging and facilitate officers to attend Council, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny meetings as part of their development
- Refreshing and reinforcing the officer / councillor protocol as part of induction and on an ongoing basis.

Over the coming months we will specifically focus on putting councillors at the heart of place-based working.

Officer lead: Head of Democracy

By when: details as above.

From the peer team....

7. Consider reviewing the electoral cycle to bring it in line with councils that have adopted a longer, more stable electoral pattern with the strong leadership model.

“This can provide stability, better continuity, and a platform for more longer-term decision making.”

Response....

In Kirklees, we currently have local elections in three years out of every four. The Democracy Commission considered a range of evidence in order to fully explore and understand the issues, benefits and risks associated with changing our current pattern of elections in 2016. This included talking to other councils who have moved to a cycle of all-out elections, where there is a local election once every four years, and all seats are therefore up for election at the same time.

The Democracy Commission had a very interesting debate with citizens about the pros and cons of changing our current system. It heard mixed views about whether it would be a good idea to change to a four-year cycle or to maintain our current arrangements. It found that any changes are unlikely to have a significant influence on levels of engagement in elections across the population of Kirklees and citizens were more interested in what councillors do between elections than in the actual electoral cycle itself.

Having weighed up factors and evidence, the Democracy Commission did not find it possible to reach a consensus, and nor did they find a fully compelling case for us to change our cycle of elections at the current time. Given the fluid electoral landscape it was recommended to continue with a current electoral cycle of local elections three years out of every four, and revisit this issue when there is greater clarity, especially in terms of regional governance.

Proposed actions....

It is likely that we will have a Boundary review in the next few years which will provide a point at which it may be considered appropriate to consider further this recommendation further.

Officer lead: Service Director for Legal, Governance and Commissioning

From the peer team....

8. Push for the establishment of a single CCG.

“This will help enable the health and care system to move away from planning based around acute trust footprints and improve strategic planning and commissioning across Kirklees to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all residents. This, alongside strong, outward looking Primary Care Networks will also support a shared clinical and political dialogue for the benefit of residents and patients in Kirklees.”

Response....

The configuration of CCGs can only be changed with the consent of the members of each of the two CCGs. The membership is made up of all GP practices in the CCG area.

The senior leadership of the CCGs recognise that this is the journey they should be taking and are working hard to achieve a single CCG. They have already established joint senior management arrangements and aligned wherever possible CCG governance arrangements.

And the Council is committed along with other local partners to creating a more joined up health and social care system. The Council believes a single CCG would enable this to happen effectively and quickly.

Proposed actions....

The West Yorkshire and Harrogate ***Health and Care Partnership-led peer review*** to take place at the end of November 2019 will provide additional external challenge on the effectiveness of the current CCGs' configuration. This will assist the Council and partners across the system developing an approach to local governance that promotes integration.

Officer lead: Strategic Director for Adults and Health

By when: December 2019

From the peer team....

Alongside the eight recommendations above, the peer team made some more detailed observations in their feedback report, which merit further consideration and proposed actions.

Risk appetite

“The peer team identified a lack of risk appetite in the Council, which could constrain the Council’s pace and ambition. A bolder approach to risk and opportunity is required throughout the organisation and existing governance processes should be strengthened to support this.”

Response....

Like most organisations we have a range of risk appetites, depending on the nature of the risk and the degree of ambition. Strategically, our risk appetite and the boldness of our decision-making has increased significantly over the last couple of years.

We have more than doubled our long term capital plan, and recent announcements like the Huddersfield Blueprint, and its emphasis on increasing our ambition for the borough, the scale of inward investment intent (including significant external funding bids), and strategic asset acquisitions such as the Piazza, all reflect our boldness, as does the Council’s appetite to provide loan finance to support key town centre regeneration projects, because these support our long term strategic ambitions.

We’ve committed to increasing our levels of prudential borrowing over the much longer term, which in turn feeds into our investment and treasury management strategies.

And in line with this we’ve also strengthened our internal governance arrangements to ensure we have robust mechanisms to effectively manage the increased risk appetite prevalent across the Council with regard to capital and major projects, in particular to ensure our decision-making processes are sound, transparent, and that key decisions are well informed by an appropriate level of due diligence and risk acknowledgement.

However, there is a recognition that across the organisation we find it culturally difficult to accept failure. Given our responsibility for the effective and efficient deployment of public funds, there needs to be a careful balance. Learning from both successes and mistakes is something we need to prioritise as we continue to re-calibrate our risk appetite.

Proposed actions....

Reviewing the current arrangements for ***strategic decision-making*** setting out the level of ambition and willingness to seek reward and the chance of failure. We will review the current arrangements for more detailed decision-making on projects, including scheme of delegations to ensure this remains fit for purpose, and improving the understanding of officer-level delegated decision-making. This should help to promote a greater degree of ability to utilise our current processes in ways which support a growing boldness and risk appetite across the Council. We will also consider the need for stronger arrangements for ensuring appropriate risk based monitoring and feedback.

Officer lead: Service Director for Legal, Governance and Commissioning

By when: Summer 2020

Delivery planning

“Whatever savings strategies the Council pursues, the savings programme should be backed up with visible delivery plans and regularly reported to the appropriate performance board and Members; and the senior leadership team should ensure that this is the focus of their deliberations. There is an opportunity to ensure that all departments and services are full engaged in the development and ownership of the savings plan.”

Response....

We recognise the importance of ensuring an appropriate level of corporate support and challenge, service accountability and transparency around our savings programmes and associated delivery plans.

We have a corporate reporting framework in place which provides this function via service directorate Senior Leadership Teams, Executive Team (which receives quarterly reports from the Transformation Portfolio Board), and into an elected member domain via scrutiny, Cabinet and Council. Progress against all Council planned savings is also captured through monthly financial monitoring reported to Executive Team and the corporate portfolio holder and quarterly financial monitoring reported to Cabinet.

Our transformation capacity is now focused on cross-council and cross-partnership change in subject matter areas which are often challenging and require more innovative or radical solutions. Providing support with defining, planning and managing change projects and ensuring that impacts are tracked and success is measured creates a focus on improving outcomes and creating efficiencies.

Proposed actions....

Aligning our current transformation activity with effective development, ownership and corporate transparency of budget savings will help us provide greater corporate visibility and manage budget risks, as well as ensuring a focus on achieving increased outcomes as well as any required savings, and maximise the return on our investments.

Through the Transformation Portfolio Board, **regular highlight reports** will be brought back to Executive Team in-year, setting out progress on key actions and deliverables against the key transformation activity (with specific reference to high needs, waste management and placement activity initially).

Officer lead: Service Director for Strategy and Innovation and Service Director for Finance

By when: immediate

Corporate Peer Challenge

Kirklees Council

9th – 12th July 2019

Feedback Report

1. Executive Summary

This is an exciting time for Kirklees Council in its improvement journey. There is a desire and civic pride among people to make Kirklees into an extraordinary place in the future. A fresh direction for the Council has been taken over the past two years and this is fuelling ambition and energy in the organisation. There is an opportunity now to set a path to ongoing success. The peer team found residents, staff, partners and Members they met to be passionate about the Council's ambition for the future and ready to contribute to making it a reality. People are aware of the Council's vision for 'People', 'Partners', and 'Place', and its delivery in part through the Place Standard. The Council now needs to be bolder, clearer and outward-facing in its approach if it is to transform its communities and the place.

In the drive to move from "average" (as previously self-defined) to ambitious the Council has several priorities, all of these are important and interlinked but they now need to be crystallised into the desired outcomes the Council is trying to achieve. The vision should be long-term and bold with a constancy of purpose. The Huddersfield Blueprint (the ten-year £250million vision to create a thriving, modern-day town centre) is a good example of a long-term and bold vision with a constancy of purpose. It shows ambition and will generate pace and results for Kirklees. It will also ensure that all the good work that is going on will automatically gravitate towards that direction and the Council will start 'punching at its weight'.

The Council should be confident that it is and can be the catalyst for regeneration, development and investment for Huddersfield, Dewsbury and other towns across the district. Kirklees has a rich industrial heritage, breath-taking countryside, beautiful buildings, and a young, energetic and diverse community. These are assets that can and must be maximised.

The Leader and the Chief Executive are highly-regarded and are ready to lead change. The ambition in Kirklees is exciting and palpable. Cabinet Members have the opportunity to own and drive forward the Council's ambition and priorities with clarity and more strategic focus. The Council has highly skilled officers who can do the detail, freeing up Cabinet Members to lead Kirklees in a coordinated way. Council staff are dedicated and committed and are at the heart of everything the Council does and achieves. They need consistent, energetic, high-level leadership and robust Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and organisational development to support them.

The Council needs to invest in its corporate centre if it is to deliver on its ambition and priorities. The corporate centre of the organisation should be bolder to enable the Council to rediscover its "stand-out flair". The peer team sensed a desire and a need for the Council to re-invest in the corporate centre; to drive change across the Council and Kirklees for the benefit of residents so that the ambitions that the Council has can permeate right through the organisation and into local communities.

The Council has and continues to respond positively to the recommendations of the Children's Services inspection. The process of recovery created an environment of cross-departmental working which has reaped benefits for the organisation. Going forward it will be important to capture and build on the lessons identified to maximise opportunities.

Organisational culture across the Council has improved considerably and this is bearing fruit. Member and officer relationships have dramatically improved but there is more to do to streamline decision making and having clear lines of roles and responsibilities between Members and officers. Members should develop policy and officers should deliver and implement it. Furthermore, given the electoral cycle it is important that cross-party working continues and that there is cross-party buy-in to the Council's new strategic direction. This is vital to ensure consistency in the messages that are sent to the public and provide stability for the organisation. Going forward the Council may wish to review its electoral cycle to bring it in line with councils that have adopted a longer, more stable electoral pattern with the strong leadership model.

Kirklees Council has a very good story to tell and this needs to be developed, articulated and proudly shared by Cabinet Members and senior officers. Clear messages about the future, shared ownership of the vision, values and behaviours and modern communication technologies can be used to tell and share these stories among all its communities and potential investors.

2. Key recommendations

There are a range of suggestions and observations within the main section of the report that will inform some 'quick wins' and practical actions, in addition to the conversations onsite, many of which provided ideas and examples of practice from other organisations. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council:

1. ***Craft and tell your story, externally and internally; and put strategic communications at the heart of the organisation.*** The Council has a very good story to tell but it is not yet well crafted and this should be done. It also needs the corporate capacity to tell the story successfully so that people can align themselves to it.
2. ***Develop and promote a high profile, permanent listening and dialogue action plan with residents and ensure system-wide coordination of engagement activity to harness the voice of residents.*** This will ensure an ongoing dialogue with residents on all matters, particularly those of strategic importance. It will also enable the Council to use data, intelligence and insights to inform future service design and policy development.
3. ***Implement the 'Collaborate' recommendations around place-based working and harmonise place-based initiatives, using the lessons learned from Community Plus.*** There is a lot of passion among people working in place-based initiatives but they are not yet fully coordinated and brought together. The Council should use this model as the foundation to build on.
4. ***Strengthen the corporate centre to develop its capacity; and invest in the Council's ICT systems.*** This will help to drive change across the Council and Kirklees for the benefit of residents so that the ambition that the Council has can permeate right through the organisation and into local communities. Investment in the Council's ICT

systems will improve morale, productivity, performance standards and should make the organisation more efficient and effective.

5. ***Prioritise a decision on the long-term future of the ALMO.*** If the ALMO is brought back in-house it will allow the Council to maximise the opportunity to embed place-based working into priority neighbourhoods. It would also provide much needed additional corporate capacity to deliver key Council objectives.
6. ***Streamline decision-making and bring greater clarity to the roles and responsibilities of Members and officers, including greater congruence between officer and Member structures.*** This will enable Members to focus on developing policy and officers to implement and deliver it. It will also strengthen Members' community leadership and Council ambassador roles.
7. ***Consider reviewing the electoral cycle to bring it in line with councils that have adopted a longer, more stable electoral pattern with the strong leadership model.*** This can provide stability, better continuity, and a platform for more longer term decision making.
8. ***Push for the establishment of a single CCG.*** This will help enable the health and care system to move away from planning based around acute trust footprints and improve strategic planning and commissioning across Kirklees to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for all residents. This, alongside strong, outward looking Primary Care Networks will also support a shared clinical and political dialogue for the benefit of residents and patients in Kirklees.

3. Summary of the Peer Challenge approach

The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the Council's requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with the Council. The peers who delivered the peer challenge at Kirklees Council were:

- **Professor Donna Hall, CBE** (Former Chief Executive - Wigan Council and Accountable Officer of NHS Wigan Borough Clinical Commissioning Group)
- **Councillor Clare Coghill** (Leader - LB Waltham Forest)
- **Councillor Colin Noble** (Suffolk County Council)
- **Helen Isaacs** (Director for Communities - North East Lincolnshire Council)
- **Jim Ripley** (Chief Executive - Phoenix Community Housing)
- **Lynne Dowdican** (Local Authority Chief Executives Relationships lead - MHCLG)
- **Satvinder Rana** (Programme Manager - Local Government Association)

Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components covered by all Corporate Peer Challenges. These are the areas the LGA believe are critical to councils' performance and improvement:

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?
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?
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?
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 successfully?
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?

In addition, the Council asked the peer team to take a sense check of whether the Council has the right focus, how the Council's 'journey' might be speeded up and what more the Council could do. All these are covered in the main body of the report.

The peer challenge process

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team 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 peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent 4 days onsite at Kirklees Council, during which they:

- Spoke to more than 300 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders.

- Gathered information and views from more than 50 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading.
- Collectively spent more than 280 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 7 weeks in Kirklees Council.

This report provides a summary of the peer team’s findings, based on a triangulation of the information gathered above. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit (9th – 12th July 2019). In presenting feedback to the Council, they have done so as fellow local government officers and Members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. The peer team appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things the Council is already addressing and progressing.

4. Feedback

4.1 Understanding of the local place and priority setting

Kirklees Council is ambitious for the local area and its residents. There is understanding and recognition among Members and officers of the many strengths and the potential Kirklees has as a place. The Council recognises and values its assets of strong communities with strong identities, impressive industrial heritage, the outstanding Yorkshire countryside and excellent connections to major northern cities. There is also recognition of the nature and scale of the challenges that Kirklees faces. For example, identity and belonging in towns and villages, community cohesion, local economy, isolation in rural areas, inequality and quality of life were some of the issues people spoke about.

There is a refreshed Council plan that focuses on place-based working with an emphasis on ‘People’, ‘Partners’, and ‘Place’; an economic strategy focusing on business development, skills development, partnerships, connectivity and revitalised town centres; and a ten-year £250million vision to create a thriving, modern-day town centre. All these are providing a renewed focus and direction for the Council. However, given the electoral cycle in Kirklees, cross-party buy-in to the Council’s new strategic direction is vital so that there is consistency in the messages that are sent to the public and stability for the organisation.

Members have a detailed understanding of their locality and the communities they represent. The Council is focused on place-based citizen engagement and uses the ‘Place Standard’ to engage with its residents. Members and staff talk to groups, individuals, businesses and young people to better understand the things that matter to them. Result summaries and score sheets are produced for target wards and areas to provide data and insights which are then fed into the Council’s decision-making processes. This approach is supplemented with a range of other research and engagement activities such as an e-panel, online budget simulation, CLiK surveys, etc.

Nevertheless, there is now potential for broader and more strategic conversations with the public and these should be grasped in order to; better engage with residents across

the whole place; to help develop a strong narrative for Kirklees; and to promote civic-pride in the whole area. The primary aim of a strong and compelling narrative for Kirklees should be to talk up the sense of place and belonging across the area and to continue attracting inward investment to help deliver the ambition around regeneration of town centres, jobs and housing. It should also be about helping to set the destination, while engaging, involving and inspiring staff, partners and communities to be part of that journey. Communication and marketing should be focused on ensuring that the right messages are sent out to all the stakeholders locally and to the outside world about where Kirklees is heading. This will inevitably require the Council to work with its strategic and business partners to get them to own and help deliver, not just the messages but also, the ambition.

4.2 Leadership of Place

Kirklees is a unique place, made up of towns, villages and communities with a rich and diverse history. The Council is focused on serving all towns, villages and communities and is passionate about its integrated place-based working. Staff and most partners are keen to progress together with the Council. Place-based working provides focus to 'Working with people not doing to them' and this is "sinking in". Whilst there is a genuine desire to work 'with, not to', there is a proliferation of similar but slightly different overlapping initiatives across different boundaries which feel dis-jointed. For example, Community Plus, Community Hubs, 'with, not to', restorative solutions, school community hubs, Neighbourhood Policing Areas, Primary Care Networks and a large number of Housing patches etc. There is the potential to simplify and unify this work to have greater impact by implementing the recommendations of the 'Collaborate Report' into place-based working in Kirklees.

In addition, greater clarity is needed on the actual modus operandi in place-based working. To make a genuine difference to families and communities the practical arrangements for place-based working need to be quickly put in place. For example, while in its infancy, the work of Community Plus is clearly valued by residents and partners and is having a significant positive impact, but there is a lack of awareness and clarity about its purpose and capacity – "tell us what the end product is going to be".

There are trusting relationships and good partnership arrangements in place, for example the Kirklees Partnership Executive – which is the Local Strategic Partnership for Kirklees. Kirklees has a very strong, active and willing partner in its Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and the peer team saw a number of community initiatives being delivered in partnership with the VCS. Partners generally are very keen to be drawn into delivering the Council's ambition for Kirklees, so they actively need to be brought into the process to enable them to do so. This means fully defining the working relationships between the Police, the Council, housing providers, NHS Services, GPs, schools and the University. While acknowledging some joint working with the University, for example teaching partnership, community safety, etc., the peer team would urge the Council to strengthen this key strategic partnership as it will help deliver against the ambition for Kirklees.

The focus of the Economic Development Strategy is strong and ambitious but can be delivered more effectively and with greater pace if it is driven from the corporate centre.

Senior Members and officers should understand and own this drive and how their role relates to it. The Council is ambitious to create “jobs, more jobs and better paid jobs” and there is a strong business base which can be used by the Council to generate these better paid jobs. The business community is keen to work with the Council and its voice needs to be strengthened as they currently feel a little “outside the tent”.

The Council is now a key player within the sub-regional partnerships and has a presence on strategic forums such as the Health and Care Partnership, the Key Cities Network, and representation at a national level on several Local Government Association (LGA) Boards. It has also developed its voice and can now move confidently to define its bespoke offer to the city region and benefit from its place in the region – “Kirklees voice is now very strong via Leader and Chief Executive”. As the sub-regional partnerships develop the Council may need to develop strategic capacity to manage the demands so that it is able to lead and help influence the sub-regional agenda and work effectively across boundaries, thereby capitalising on future emerging growth and funding opportunities.

Given the levels of health inequalities in Kirklees and challenges facing many local health and care organisations in relation to quality and/or finance, the local health and care system needs to play more of a leadership role in place based working. Working relationships across the local health and care system have developed in the last two years, but can still be stronger. At present there is a concern that Kirklees’ residents are being left behind by a health and care system that is more fragmented than in other places in West Yorkshire. Kirklees is the only place in West Yorkshire that will not have a coterminous footprint between the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) from 1 April 2020 and that is not beneficial to patients and residents in enabling a coherent strategic commissioning approach to improving outcomes and services. Instead there is too much of a disjointed, transactional approach to commissioning. A single CCG and effective Primary Care Networks playing a system leadership role in local communities could result in a shared clinical and political voice acting on behalf of residents and patients across Kirklees.

The Council’s ‘with, not to’ mind-set is powerful and the way to go, but it does not align with the outmoded paternalistic approach which the peer team heard still exists in some parts of the organisation. If Kirklees is to truly work ‘with, not to’ there needs to be a highly visible, consistent set of messages from Members and officers as a two-way dialogue with residents, including the VCS. Also, with the developing confidence of the organisation, the Council can be bolder and develop more trusting relationships with residents and staff. Strategic communications is starting to evolve and has been used, for example the way the new Kirklees Masterplan has been communicated and shared. However, given the Council’s passion for place-based working an on-going conversation with the public on strategic issues is not consistently in place across the Council and its partners, and this should be developed.

Community safety and community cohesion remain challenges for Kirklees - as they are across the country. Whilst an in-depth analysis of community safety and community cohesion was outside the scope of this peer challenge, the peer team would urge the Council to continue delivering and reviewing its ‘Prevent Programme’ and ensure that

safeguarding is relentlessly prioritised and that existing resources are used more strategically to reduce serious risk of harm.

4.3 Organisational leadership and governance

There has been a dramatic improvement in Member and officer relations in Kirklees Council and it is evident there is now respect both ways. The work of the Democracy Commission and the Member development programme has helped in this. Good relations have enabled improved decision making, for example there is now better decision-making in the Planning Committee. Going forward the peer team would encourage the Council to speed up decision making across the Council by developing a more agile and efficient decisions making system. This may include reviewing the level of decision making and the number of meetings held to reach a decision.

The Cabinet and the senior leadership team work well together, however sharper delineation of roles between Cabinet Members and seniors officers needs to be articulated as there is some confusion between the roles of Members and officers. Members should develop policy and officers should implement and deliver it. Members should feel confident and empowered to be community leaders and Council ambassadors. Furthermore, there should be a focus on the congruence between officer and Member structures: either a matrix or an organisational delivery approach, but which ever it is they should reflect one another

In 2017 the Council established the Democracy Commission to embrace a strategic approach to reforming how decisions are made. However, the peer team heard that there has been mission creep on the Democracy Commission's work. Therefore its recommendations should be re-visited by leading Members, re-prioritised and implemented.

The Council currently operates a one third electoral cycle where one third of the Council is elected each election year, with no elections every fourth year. This can be destabilising for the Council and impacts on continuity and shared political ownership of long-term ambition, which is desirable. The peer team would therefore urge the Council to consider reviewing its electoral cycle in line with councils that have adopted a longer, more stable electoral pattern with the strong leadership model. This will provide a platform for more longer term decision making. Nevertheless, it is positive to see strong cross-party working in Kirklees Council, which is crucial in a one third electoral pattern. These relationships should be particularly fostered and emphasised as it motivates frontline Members and Members of opposition groups.

The peer team heard how the organisation previously compared itself against national and regional averages. It is now keen to move from "average to ambitious" and plans to do so by moving away from the previous budget top-slicing approach to a more strategically planned and a strategically resourced approach. The building blocks to enable this are in place and there is a will to manage demand, invest and deliver genuine strategic financial future planning. However, at present there are a blend of several key messages, priorities, actions and objectives which overlap and can make it difficult to grasp what the Council is focused on achieving. For example, there is 'We're Kirklees' approach to 'People', 'Partners' and 'Place'; then there is place-based working

and the 'with, not to' strapline; the eight shared outcomes; and a number of community based initiatives and approaches – there is a “tendency to tell the journey, not the outcome”. All these are important and interlinked but greater clarity of purpose and simplification of strategy and approach will enable all Council staff and partners to fully embrace the new approach and ensure its delivery and sustainability.

In addition, the Council would benefit by having identified owners of priorities at the political and managerial levels, who can drive change throughout the organisation and be accountable for the delivery of those priorities over an extended period of time. This may mean reviewing the management team structure so that it better reflect the ambition for the place, ensures better use of resources and releases capacity to deliver.

Kirklees Council has highly regarded Leader and Chief Executive, dedicated Members and highly skilled and committed staff who are at the heart of everything the Council does and achieves. Nevertheless, there is still some work to be done to win hearts and minds among the workforce. The peer team would suggest some quick wins which may help with morale and internal efficiency. For example, sort out Systems, Applications and Products (SAP) and telephony (booking of leave, claiming mileage and procurement and customer waiting times all cited as frustrations); strengthen internal communications; improve awareness of the 'High Five Awards' recognition scheme and how it works; carry out a regular staff survey among all employees; provide consistent, energetic, high-level leadership; provide access to robust ICT; and put in place an organisational development programme to put all this in place. This can be complemented with a strategic workforce plan across the partnership to ensure that Kirklees has the skills and capacity for the future. This will enable shared values across the organisation and the right skills in the right place, and might involve bringing new skills where they are needed. It is likely that more human resource and organisational development capacity will be needed to enable this.

There are generally constructive relationships between the Council and the trades unions. However, relationships between the unions are an issue in Kirklees and one trades union in particular has a bullish relationship with the others; this is not working in the best interests of hard-working Council staff and urgent steps should be taken to improve this relationship.

Whilst there are positive efforts to improve the organisational culture through a stronger and shared set of priorities and place-based approaches, these initiatives need to be driven at pace through every part and at every level of the organisation through well-defined and agreed set of values and behaviours.

4.4 Financial planning and viability

The Council has a medium-term financial strategy covering the period to 2022/23 that provides for service pressures and addresses the need to find savings in the budget.

The Council has good financial management arrangements in place and consideration is given to risks through a Risk Panel of senior officers and the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee. The peer team identified a lack of risk appetite in the Council, which could constrain the Council's pace and ambition. A bolder approach to risk and

opportunity is required throughout the organisation and existing governance processes should be strengthened to support this. Taking calculated risks will help the Council to move forward with the delivery of its long term ambitions for the place and people – “haven’t dipped our toes yet where other councils just get on with it”.

The Council faces savings of £20m over two years and it plans to deliver these savings by focusing on better outcomes for people and improved collaboration with communities and partners to deliver a balanced budget. In order to achieve the £20m budget savings target, greater alignment between the ‘with, not to’ mind-set and budget reductions is key. For example, residents want to recycle more - by helping them to do this will save unnecessary costs. In addition, the Council acknowledges that there is work to do with partners to get the most out of assets across Kirklees. One Public Estate Programme could generate opportunities and benefits by maximising assets across Kirklees and release efficiencies through co-location and more integrated ways of working on the ground. Closer working with strategic partners can also help the Council to increase capacity to achieve its ambition and deliver better outcomes for residents.

Whatever savings strategies the Council pursues, the savings programme should be backed up with visible delivery plans and regularly reported to the appropriate performance board and Members; and the senior leadership team should ensure that this is the focus of their deliberations. There is an opportunity to ensure that all departments and services are full engaged in the development and ownership of the savings plan.

The Council has set a revenue budget and a capital programme. The revenue budget includes proposed savings. However, the required savings for 2020/21 and subsequent years have yet to be identified. The Council is planning to increase its revenue balances. The capital programme is mainly dependent on external grants and borrowing and the current capital financing charges as a percentage of net revenue expenditure are at below 8%.

Departments across the board have made good progress on delivering very challenging savings without a reduction in service. Despite financial challenges, the Council has been able to produce an ambitious Investment Budget which will improve Huddersfield and Dewsbury town centres as well as other parts of the Kirklees area, which will help to tackle inequality and create jobs and opportunities for local people.

Robust financial management should continue to address areas of severe (and growing) demand and a more informed sense of spend amongst officers and Members will be very beneficial. Learning can be drawn from Children’s Services where services should be re-imagined with outcomes as the focus.

The Capital Investment Plan and corporate strategy should be synergised and the Medium Term Financial Plan needs to be refreshed to better reflect the Council’s new ambition and priorities so that the Council can have meaningful discussions internally and externally with its partners and citizens on how the money will be spent and what impacts they can expect. Although existing governance structures are in place and

effective, they can be used to a greater extent to do more to ensure that money continues to be spent on the right things at the right time and in the right place.

4.5 Capacity to deliver

The Council has adopted a voluntary approach to redundancy and early retirement as its response to austerity. However, a more strategic approach to workforce re-design would ensure that gaps in capacity are filled. The peer team found staff on the ground to be a great asset to the Council. Their energy, their will to support residents and their desire to respond to a vision from the corporate centre is palpable. However, the peer team also noted that Kirklees has yet to fully realise the potential of a diverse workforce that reflects its communities at all levels of the organisation. It should therefore aim to make rapid progress with staff towards boosting inclusion and diversity of the Council's workforce in order to better reflect the demographic of and the considerable talent in Kirklees - "don't just follow the numbers, create the right environment".

In the past, the organisation has to some extent relied on consultants and now has an opportunity to put in place long-term capacity to build its own sustainable home-grown talent. Staff development will be key because the right training and tools will enable staff to innovate, show initiative within a defined framework that is focused relentlessly on the over-arching vision as defined by the Leader, Cabinet and the senior leadership team. Reward and recognition is now being systematically applied to residents and staff and there are a number of good staff events that are used to communicate key messages and promote the 'one organisation' ethos. There is a good opportunity to celebrate Council staff and residents, and the 'Staff Thank-Yous', 'High Five Awards' and other such initiatives are excellent and will bear fruit for Kirklees Council.

In comparison to other similar sized organisations the corporate centre at Kirklees Council is light and this has an effect on the Council's capacity to deliver its strategic objectives. It is imperative that the resources to transform are fully in place otherwise this will hold the organisation back. Investment in the Council's ICT systems to improve morale, productivity and performance standards should be a priority for the corporate centre. It is not necessarily the basic kit but the SAP system and other software that needs more development time and buy in as some staff seem to be pushing against it.

Given the importance of housing among the Council's priorities, the peer team did not get a sense of how the Council's Arm's-Length Management Organisation (ALMO) is contributing to delivering on this. There was also some uncertainty about its future and the peer team would suggest that the consideration of the future of the ALMO should be brought forward. This could release talent out of the silo of the ALMO into the wider organisation to have a much greater impact and support the delivery of the Council's vision, especially around place-based working.

There is a very strong and inspirational Voluntary and Community Sector in Kirklees and therefore its ability to contribute to the Council's ambition should not be underestimated. A bolder approach to risk appetite and risk management would power up the pace with which the Council can deliver its objectives.

5. Next steps

Immediate next steps

The peer team appreciate the senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support this. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this. Mark Edgell, Principal Adviser is the main contact between Kirklees Council and the Local Government Association (LGA). His contact details are: Tel: 07747 636 910 and email: mark.edgell@local.gov.uk.


In the meantime the peer team is keen to continue the relationship it has formed with the Council throughout the peer challenge. It will endeavour to provide signposting to examples of practice and further information and guidance about the issues they have raised in this report to help inform ongoing consideration.

Follow up visit

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge process includes a follow up visit. The purpose of the visit is to help the Council assess the impact of the peer challenge and demonstrate the progress it has made against the areas of improvement and development identified by the peer team. It is a lighter-touch version of the original visit and does not necessarily involve all members of the original peer team. The timing of the visit is determined by the Council. The LGA's expectation is that it will occur within the next 2 years.

Next Corporate Peer Challenge

The current LGA sector-led improvement support offer includes an expectation that all councils will have a Corporate Peer Challenge or Finance Peer Review every 4 to 5 years. It is therefore anticipated that the Council will commission their next Peer Challenge before 2024.



Satvinder Rana
Programme Manager

(On behalf of the peer challenge team)

Examples of good practice

The following is an example of good practice that the peer team identified during the peer challenge at Kirklees Council which might be suitable for an LGA case study and sharing across the sector.

Kirklees High Five Awards

As part of the Council's culture of working 'with and not to', and its high support and high challenge approach, it wanted to adopt a more inclusive, user-friendly, peer approach to formally recognising the good work its employees do and to acknowledge the commitment they have to delivering services to the residents of Kirklees.

The Council wanted to recognise that team members can see the day-to-day effort and hard work that individuals put in and it wanted an opportunity for them to acknowledge their colleagues and decide who deserved this special recognition.

The goals were to ensure that all staff felt recognised, valued and appreciated, it was critical to ensure that the dispersed workforce felt included and engaged; that it helped improve staff morale and motivation and enhanced loyalty to the council.

Celebrating success helps build a culture of innovation across the organisation. The Council's rewards and recognition programme 'High Five' allows team members to show their appreciation to others. The programme provides well-deserved recognition for the employee receiving the High Five and, also helps share positive and innovative ways of working and behaviours. The nominations also demonstrate how employees are helping the Council achieve their strategic priorities.

The Council launched its rewards and recognition programme 'High Five' during November 2018, and engagement with the programme is good; in the first two months alone, had a total of 228 High Five award nominations.

Going forward, the priority is to encourage more engagement from the dispersed workforce. This year's staff awards in October will celebrate people's contribution to role-modelling the Council's stated behaviours and values and to contributing to working with people, partners, and places.

Further information on the awards can be gained from Deborah Lucas, Head of People Services (deborah.lucas@kirklees.gov.uk) or Adele Humble, HR Manager (adele.humble@kirklees.gov.uk)