

Name of meeting: Council
Date: 15 January 2020

Title of report: Peer challenge feedback report and action plan

Purpose of report:

To receive the report and consider the draft action plan for approval, as recommended by Cabinet on the 12 November 2019.

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 IT and Transactional Services?	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.

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, attached at Appendix 1. 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. The recommendations and draft action plan have been discussed at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 4 November, and at a meeting of the Cabinet on 12 November. The Scrutiny Committee noted the proposals and agreed that there needs to be clarity around monitoring arrangements and ownership of agreed actions. The committee recommended that a progress report should be considered at Cabinet and Council. Cabinet endorsed the report and action plan and agreed that it be referred to Council for approval.
- 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 draft action plan attached at Appendix 2. 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

To receive the report and approve the draft action plan as an addendum to the Corporate Plan, as recommended by Cabinet. The action plan will form the basis for a response to the peer challenge recommendations that will assist the Council to progress with its improvement journey.

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.

For Council to approve the draft action plan.

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>

Cabinet: 12 November 2019

<https://democracy.kirklees.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=139&MId=6243&Ver=4>

10. Service Director responsible

Andy Simcox, Service Director for Strategy and Innovation