



# **Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead**

## **Corporate Peer Challenge**

Report

18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> September 2017

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (the Royal Borough) is ambitious and high achieving in many areas, driven by sound finances and enthusiastic, capable members and officers. The Borough has made a conscious decision to 'deliver differently' and at the time of the review has transferred many of its core services to alternative delivery mechanisms.
- 1.2 Many of the council's staff group are loyal, dedicated and have demonstrated their willingness to embrace change. Many are proud to work for a borough that prides itself on securing sound finances for the future and delivering people-centred services that are developing pioneering approaches to service delivery.
- 1.3 The council invited in our team of peers at a crucial time in the development and implementation of their new delivery model and should be credited for inviting in an external viewpoint at a time of such fundamental change. The council was also in the midst of consulting on its draft Borough Local Plan.
- 1.4 The council experienced a change in leader in May 2016 with the former Deputy Leader Cllr Simon Dudley moving to the role of Leader. As part of his approach to leadership Cllr Dudley has continued with Deputy Executive Members and Principal Lead Members, which broadens the Executive and engages many more members in decision-making. There is however, an opportunity to clarify roles and responsibilities particularly regarding scrutiny which we will refer to later in the report.
- 1.5 Many external partners were positive about engaging with the new leadership and the council's ambitions around growth. This is most evident in the regeneration plans for Maidenhead town centre, but was also apparent to the team with delivery partners for people services. However this view is not universally shared, and this is having negative implications for the council's governance as well as its reputation locally. We will reflect on this later in the report, including providing short term recommendations for actions we believe the council should prioritise.
- 1.6 The ambition of the council is striking and in many ways we found a council that was ahead of its time in developing new ways of delivering services. The pace of this progress is one that many in the public sector would envy. This pace now needs to be matched with a focus on consolidating the new model by ensuring robust governance practice and a mature approach to internal and external engagement.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Royal Borough strives to deliver good quality services for its residents rooted in a focus on value for money. Council tax is the lowest outside of London Boroughs and there is a clear political commitment to keep it that way. The Royal Borough has a great story to tell and we would encourage you to undertake three overall recommendations, Pause, Embed and Explain, to ensure you are able to deliver on your ambitions and make the story you are developing a reality for all. Our three key recommendations are accompanied by 26 specific recommendations which are detailed throughout the report and summarised in Annex I:

### Three main recommendations

- **Pause:** now is the moment to pause on the change you have focused on designing and delivering. This does not mean stop improving services, but will allow you time to;
- **Embed:** establish and share with all partners clear lines of accountability for council service areas, whether commissioned or directly provided and clarity over the location of statutory roles (Director of Children's Services, Director of Adult Social Care and Director of Public Health). Ensure these are widely understood. Consolidate the good services that you have without seeking further immediate change. Where services fall short of expectation identify clear pathways for improvement and ownership for who is accountable for that improvement. Refresh your governance to help you underpin this;
- **Explain:** the organisation, its partners and the residents of the Royal Borough need to better understand the changes that are taking place – and why. The new operating model is not widely understood by staff and the residents that we spoke to. By investing more time in explaining what changes have taken place, and why, you will be able to reflect upon their success and consider how the borough can best deliver high performing services and value for money. This will also be an opportunity for you to build and further deepen trust between yourselves and all of your partners.

Having implemented the three key recommendations actively promote, to all parties a single vision for the borough – bringing together your ambitions for people and place.

2.3 The recommendations from each of the core components of peer challenge are set out in the body of the report and summarised in Annex I.

### 3. SUMMARY OF THE PEER CHALLENGE APPROACH

#### The peer team

- 3.1 Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and their selection was agreed by you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge at the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead were:

**Gillian Beasley:** Joint Chief Executive, Peterborough Borough Council and Cambridgeshire County Council

**Cllr David Renard:** Leader, Swindon Council

**Anna Rose:** Head of Planning Advisory Service

**John Skidmore:** Director of Corporate Strategy and Commissioning, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

**Clare Hudson:** LGA Programme Manager

#### Scope and focus

- 3.2 The peer team considered the five questions which form the core components covered in the LGA Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are the agreed focus of corporate peer challenge as they are believed to be critical to councils' performance and ability to improve:

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?

- 3.3 In addition to the five core components, the Royal Borough asked the peer team to consider a sixth area: **How can the council ensure that its governance and operating model is fit to deliver on the council's ambitions?**

### **The peer challenge process**

- 3.4 It is important to stress that a peer challenge is not an inspection. 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 focus. 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. Whilst this was not an inspection it became apparent during the peer team's time onsite that having not had a peer review for a decade the council responded to the review very much in the way they would towards an inspection.
- 3.5 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 spent four days onsite at the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead (the Royal Borough) during which the team:
- Spoke to more than 90 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external stakeholders.
  - Gathered information and views from more than 35 meetings, visits to key sites and additional research and reading.
  - Collectively spent more than 140 hours to determine our findings – the equivalent of one person spending almost four weeks in the Royal Borough.
- 3.6 Unusually for a peer challenge the peer team were directly approached by residents, residents' groupings and parish councils following the issuing of a press release by the council prior to the onsite visit. The team were made aware of some of the views held by these individuals and organisations. These views were not input to the formal peer challenge process and are not reflected in this report.
- 3.7 This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings along with suggestions for some next steps. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit. In presenting feedback to members and officers, we 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 issues raised may be about things you are already addressing and progressing, indeed several of which you have already started progressing with the Local Government Association.

## 4. FEEDBACK ON GOVERNANCE

- 4.1 The council is fortunate in that it has a breadth and depth of talent in the council – our experience found many instances of officers and members who were well skilled to acquit the council’s ambitions. Many of these officers valued the opportunities they had been provided in working for the council. We found a cohort of councillors who are dedicated, hard-working and adept at utilising their extensive professional experience in leading the administration and opposition. The council has a sound base for prospering as an organisation and partner and needs to ensure that its governance and communications helps to support that.

### **Structural and constitutional governance**

- 4.2 The council’s governance is out of date with the new operating model and the significant change that the council has implemented. There was a universal understanding amongst the people we spoke to that this was the case and that the organisation was open to making changes. We found the council has a sound basis for good governance, including instruments such as the Constitution and Member-Officer Protocol, but they are in need of refreshing and more consistent implementation.

*‘The constitution is out of date with where we are, and how we should work’*

- 4.3 The framework of good governance is in place but we consistently heard of an implementation gap in how matters are dealt with. The constitution and associated protocols are applied inconsistently and we were concerned to see evidence of what can appear to be disproportionate and uneven treatment by senior colleagues, of both members and officers, over conduct. The council now has the opportunity to use constitutional reform to underpin its culture, value and ambitions rather than be seen as a heavy handed instrument to keep ‘members and officers in check’.
- 4.4 The council has made regular updates to the Constitution and associated instruments, resulting in a piece-meal approach to constitutional reform. This has led to the Constitution itself not being widely understood and not being used as effectively as it could be to support the council’s ambitions.

### **Box 1: Recommendations structural and constitutional governance**

- Undertake a full Constitutional review – led at the most senior officer level, supported by members.
  - Through this review update the Constitution and associated protocols to reflect the new operating model. An updated constitution can be a powerful mechanism to drive forward the culture you need to embed your new operating model.
  - Recognise that members and officers have distinct roles, but can lead and deliver together adopting a ‘one-team’ approach. Ensure that protocols and codes reflect this and do not conflate how members and officers should act, e.g. members and officers should have distinct social media protocols
  - Use the constitutional modernisation to empower a refreshed leadership culture and style that uses the constitution in a positive way.

### **Governance: Accountability**

- 4.5 The council entered into ground-breaking partnerships with Optalis for the delivery of adults’ services and Achieving for Children for children’s services in 2017. Given the freshness of these arrangements the peer team will not provide detailed feedback on them. However as part of our review of governance we explored the lines of accountability for these arms-length arrangements. Whilst some senior officers were able to articulate the lines of reporting and accountability this was not uniformly understood and we would urge the council to invest more time in ensuring all members and officers have absolute clarity and can explain and evidence the model and lines of accountability to partners and clients.
- 4.6 The council has focused on delivering services differently, seeking to build resilience into key service areas and drive economies of scale that will allow investment in services that the council alone would not be able to provide. There is a risk, which some of interviewees we spoke to were aware of, that these services are perceived as ‘outsourced’ and no longer a core part of the council. We would urge you to ensure that the council makes it clear to residents in particular that these services are still a core part of the council.

### **Box 2: Recommendations for Accountability**

- Introduce a process map to clarify lines of accountability for all commissioned and contracted out services. This should be developed by members and officers and accompanied by a clear narrative set within the context of the council’s single vision for people and place. Identify and communicate internally and externally the process map, ensuring it is widely understood, setting out:
  - What your measures of success will be:
  - How you will measure progress:
  - How you will communicate these:

### **Governance: scrutiny**

- 4.7 The scrutiny function at the Royal Borough is extensive and models a traditional approach with six scrutiny panels and an overarching overview and scrutiny panel. Looking ahead, the impending boundary review will allow the opportunity to identify whether this number of scrutiny committees is proportionate and an effective way to hold the executive to account.
- 4.8 The Conservative group retain a large majority and have operated an extended Cabinet and Principal Lead member system since 2014. This has resulted in certain councillors who sit on the Executive also sitting on scrutiny committees. This causes the lines between the Executive and scrutiny to be blurred when scrutiny members are unsure as to whether a colleague on the panel is acting in their scrutineer or wider deputy/principal capacity.

*'The processes are in place for scrutiny but the organisational culture does not support or value it'*

- 4.9 Many members value scrutiny and the opportunity it may provide them in fulfilling their roles. Yet we had an overriding impression of scrutiny not realising its potential. Officer support capacity is largely limited to servicing the Committees with papers, which are frequently not as timely as they should be. The prescribed timescales are on occasion (approximately 10% of the time in 2017), not met, leaving the council exposed to risk, which officers are aware of, and needs correcting to meet statutory timescales.

#### **Box 3: Recommendations for Scrutiny**

- Introduce regular all member briefings on key issues
- Strengthen scrutiny through:
  - Ensuring clear and adequate timeframes to allow members, particularly scrutiny members to digest, understand and question papers to ensure decision-making is inclusive and robust.
  - Considering how scrutiny can play a role in member development allowing councillors to enhance their skillset.
  - Ensuring that Executive and wider Executive members (deputy lead and principal members) should not sit on scrutiny panels
  - Undertaking regular scrutiny training and other key skills for members.
  - Using the forthcoming boundary review as an opportunity to update scrutiny committees to reflect your new operating model and ambitions.
- Evaluate officer capacity and ensure it can adequately support a thriving scrutiny function.

#### **Signpost – LGA Leadership development**

The LGA provides a wide range of development and learning opportunities for councillors and officers, many of which are provided at no additional cost, including a two day course Leadership Essentials for Scrutiny

<https://www.local.gov.uk/highlighting-political-leadership-lga-development-offer>



**Signpost – scrutiny advice and support**

The Centre for Public Scrutiny provides extensive guidance on effective scrutiny  
<http://www.cfps.org.uk/how-we-help/good-governance-and-scrutiny/>

## **5. FEEDBACK ON FIVE CORE THEMES OF PEER CHALLENGE**

### **Understanding of local place and priority setting**

- 5.1 The council has a refreshed Corporate Plan which is now more informed by your new operating model and approach to commissioning services. This is better able to reflect your ambitions. The team found a committed and driven political leadership focused on driving forward a new vision for place including tackling challenges of affordable housing and homelessness.
- 5.2 The council's ambitions on regeneration in Maidenhead are allied to the development of the new Crossrail terminal in the town and are viewed as a positive step in providing the kind of retail and commercial offer that many feel the town 'deserves'. The council is building strong relationships with its joint venture partner, Countryside, to realise the vision that the leadership is clearly able to articulate. We suggest this needs to be matched by a stronger focus on understanding and driving the business environment in more of a 'place-shaping' role.

*'The council does not talk to businesses enough to understand the local business market and environment'*

- 5.3 The council's message about putting residents first seeks to reflect its focus on delivering value for money for local council tax payers. This message is consistently shared by the council's press office, who are viewed as responsive. The commitment to residents message was not widely understood by residents or staff we spoke to or, with businesses and partners. It feels out of step with the focus on delivering regeneration and 'place shaping' and has led to businesses not feeling valued as a partner. This is not to say that businesses are not engaged with at all. Businesses value the efforts of leading councillors to drive regeneration but this needs aligning with officer capacity.

#### **Box 4: Recommendations for understanding of local place and priority setting**

- Invest more time in understanding what your residents value.
- Engage positively with residents and community groups.
- Further develop your commitment to residents – consider using tools such as Residents Surveys to understand the issues that matter most to residents and how they want to be communicated with about them
- Ensure you have measures in place to marry member ambition and officer capacity and skills, which includes:
  - Resourcing your economic development function to focus on Council to business and business to business relationships.
  - The role of culture and heritage in terms of inward investment and quality of life. Is there sufficient resource to manage these important relationships and ensure adequate promotion of the borough?
  - Having a clear policy for inward investment and the resource to meet the borough's offer.
  - The role of the Borough Local Plan is to deliver the council's vision which includes driving economic growth and enhancing cultural and heritage assets. The Local Plan drives all development decisions and will be critical to achieving your ambition.
  - Businesses benefit from political engagement and the Council benefits from its association with key investors in the area. The Council needs to be clear about how this engagement is going to be managed and sustained going forwards.

#### **Signpost – Think Luton**

Luton BC developed a 'Think Luton' brand to encourage businesses to consider establishing or building their businesses in the town. Alongside the strapline the council developed a narrative with the key aspects of that story (proud, vibrant, ambitious and innovative) and some eye catching visuals that could be easily used by ourselves and partners in a number of different scenarios. The brand was launched at the same time as the **Luton Investment Framework** – the council's 20 year transformation strategy for the borough.

More info: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKgDrP0p\\_EY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKgDrP0p_EY)

#### **Leadership of place**

- 5.4 The council's approach to engagement with partners is often highly valued – there was an impressive and almost universal view amongst partners in health, police, housing and community safety partnerships that the council was good to work with. They particularly valued the drive that the Managing Director has given to these relationships. Equally partners in safeguarding boards for both children and adults valued the positive engagement the council provides, and would like it to be more systematic. The council's leadership places emphasis on their leadership role with these bodies and this effort is widely commended.
- 5.5 We would encourage the council to ensure that it invests corresponding focus and energy into clarifying its vision and role in the local health and wellbeing

system. This should include the role of public health, which did not appear to have a particularly high profile amongst partners. The council's new operating model is more complex than previously and time should be spent with partners clarifying roles and responsibilities at the sub-Sustainability and Transformation Plan level. Equally the council could drive stronger links between housing partners and the Health and Wellbeing Board to marry the 'offer' the borough has for all residents. You also need to ensure that any further transitions in service provision are carefully managed.

- 5.6 Throughout this report and our time onsite we have highlighted the need for the council to refresh its approach to resident engagement. At this key moment in the council regeneration plans we suggest it is critical that more is invested in engaging in a positive way with residents. This is reflected in our key recommendations in section 2.

#### **Box 5: Recommendations for Leadership of Place**

- Consider how to maximise existing partnerships
- Enhance and deepen relationships with businesses.
- Ensure interaction with safeguarding boards is regular and consistent.
- Articulate and share what an integrated health and social care system in the borough will look like, and what that will mean for residents and partners and ensure there are no gaps in services as you transition to a more integrated health and social care system.

#### **Signpost – Cornwall Council – engaging communities with their vision**

As part of its plans for devolution Cornwall Council wanted to ensure residents and partners were engaged and understood what the Council was seeking to achieve. In all of its communications materials, the authority broke down the powers it was asking the Government for into clear themes - including transport, housing, heritage, environment, employment skills and health - and asked people for their opinion on these. It also outlined the benefits for people of all ages - older, working age and young people - as well as businesses, to ensure everyone could understand how they could gain from devolution. The council also developed a social media campaign using #standupforCornwall to generate conversations about the devolution deal as well as a public pledge for residents and partners to sign up to and support devolution.

#### **Financial planning and viability**

- 5.7 The council is financially stable and in a strong position to face the future, provided that it is able to deliver on its capital programme and regeneration plans. Members have a strong understanding of finance and what they want to achieve to maintain low levels of council tax and high quality services. The finance function is well regarded internally and externally.
- 5.8 The council has identified its medium term financial plan and what expenditure and borrowing it anticipates. We suggest you consider how you can more strongly present the links between the council's regeneration plans and your place-shaping role, and we would be happy help you do this. In this financial climate it

can be difficult to ensure capital programmes in particular are delivered on time and we would encourage the council to consider carefully what measures it will put in place to mitigate against slippage. The council will also have to carefully plan for the provision of any future transformation costs that may be needed in services that are delivered through partnerships such as Optalis and Achieving for Children.

**Box 6: Recommendations for financial planning viability**

- Link the medium term financial strategy to the single overarching council vision and ensure that financial strategies and decisions are effectively communicated alongside corporate priorities.
- Ensure that colleagues have adequate ownership of planned savings and are able to report against them.
- Ensure that future transformation needs of services, including commissioned services, are adequately planned for and managed.

**Organisational leadership and governance**

- 5.9 The council has moved further and faster than many of its contemporaries – harnessing the energy and skills of councillors and officers to drive change. In many areas the experiences are positive. Independent safeguarding boards value existing engagement with the council, but would welcome this to be deepened. Equally the council’s commissioning partners recognise the areas for improvement and are positive about the council’s ability to deliver on these improvements. The multiplicity of partnering arrangements you have developed means you now need to invest time and expertise in maintaining and enhancing those relationships.

*‘The Senior Leadership team is widening out and more harmonious, but we need to move away from short termism.’*

- 5.10 The council’s Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has driven and continue to change at an incredible pace and it is clear that directors and colleagues have focused on delivering the specific targets within their service areas. Building on this change the council has the opportunity to consider what kind of leadership culture the SLT has a responsibility to lead and embed. The council is now a different type of organisation and will require different skills, approaches and styles to lead a much more diverse model of service provision. This will be crucial for ensuring that all staff are able to engage fully with the council’s transformational journey – whether they remain a part of the corporate core or a commissioned service delivered through partners.

### **Box 7: Recommendations for organisational leadership and governance**

- Consider what inclusive and inspirational leadership looks and feels like for the Royal Borough and how you can embed it throughout the organisation.
- Consider whether the language around 'commissioning council' which you have been promoting is helpful – consider if you are more of a 'partnering council'.
- Develop an engagement strategy – residents, businesses and partners, and adequately resource it.
- Focus energy on how you can ensure that all staff understand and feel part of the new operating model and understand their collective roles going forward.

### **Signpost – BeWigan**

Together with colleagues from internal communications, PR, IT and programme management Wigan Council decided to create the 'Be Wigan Experience'; an innovative, interactive walk through experience that celebrated the council's work while looking ahead to the future. The council used existing buildings and the talents and skills of our staff to create a number of interactive zones. Tours were led by colleagues from all areas of the organisation. Different zones explored the recent past using audio recordings and quizzes, moving on to look at the future vision for 2020. Staff were then asked to look at how they do things identifying behaviours, and which behaviours may need more support. Staff were then asked to make a 'BeWigan pledge' on interactive tablets, detailing what they would do differently. They then entered an achievement room, where they could leave a message on a graffiti board, see images of some of our best moments, and leave the experience feeling empowered and proud to be part of the Wigan family.

### **Capacity to deliver**

- 5.11 The pace of change you have delivered means you are clearly viewed as a catalyst for change by partners. To help you manage this you are progressing with refreshing your approach to performance management and you have set up a corporate programme management function to help deliver change. You are also seeking to understand what the training needs of the organisation are. The team were impressed with these emerging plans as well as your training needs analysis and how it is rooted in the principles of the 21<sup>st</sup> century public servant work.
- 5.12 As an organisation you are cognisant of the need to invest more time and capacity in equipping your organisation to deliver into the future and plans to do this are clearly in place. This should be grounded in embedding your commissioning and partnering approach and you are rightly using it as an opportunity to consider what skills you need to support your refreshed approach to governance.

*'We don't always have the right people in the right places'*

### **Box 8: Recommendations for capacity to deliver**

- Consider setting up a central commissioning unit to help develop and share the skills needed to deliver the new operating model, including investing more time in the skills and approaches you need to ensure you have a strong client management function.
- Be clear about lines of accountability within the organisation and with partners, such as public health. Ensure this is regularly updated, shared and widely understood.
- Ensure that SLT and CMT include the right people – statutory roles should be fully engaged in the appropriate fora.
- Continue to progress your People Strategy to ensure that it is developing the skills the organisation needs into the future.
- Develop a ‘one-team’ approach to leadership – bringing together the Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet on a regular basis to explore key strategic issues and your leadership culture. This one-team approach should set the tone for the organisation and work collaboratively to embed change.

### **Signpost – Swindon – embedding a vision**

Swindon Council created a **Vision for Swindon**, which focused on establishing a strong economy, a low-carbon environment, creating compelling cultural, retail and leisure opportunities and excellent infrastructure. They also developed 30 pledges of specific activity so that they have tangible ways of measuring delivery. While the new story was strong in itself, the communications team had the important job of embedding the vision into the organisation and launching it in a way that inspired, motivated and engaged employees and partners. A major event was planned building on the area’s railway heritage to emphasise that the council and its employees and partners are on a collective journey. The council created a tunnel of pledges so attendees could read about the 30 activities the council had committed to. Participants then moved through to the ‘buffet car’ area to meet senior leaders and talk about the issues in a more informal way before heading to a platform area with stalls from departments across the council explaining how they would be working to support our vision. At the end of the event participants were given the chance to write their own pledges and feedback on some cardboard bricks to build a ‘wall of thoughts’.

### **Conclusions**

- 5.13 The Royal Borough is an ambitious, exciting place that has harnessed the ability to change that many would envy. Leaders are focused on delivering value for money and are clear about their ambitions for people and place. The Borough faces an exciting future with regeneration, growth and major infrastructure projects all set to be realised soon.
- 5.14 Having undertaken many structural changes the council now needs to focus on ‘hearts and minds’ to build capacity, confidence and skills. These should be underpinned by a refreshed approach to governance. To deliver this we would encourage you to recognise the value of challenge and how it can be used in a

positive way. This will help you to have a big, honest conversation about the kind of organisation you are trying to be.

## Pause – Embed – Explain

**And in so doing develop and implement your single vision of the Borough bringing together your ambitions for people and place.**

## 6. NEXT STEPS

### **Immediate next steps**

- 6.1 We appreciate you will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions with your senior managerial and political leadership in order to determine how the Council wishes to take things forward.
- 6.2 As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support this as well as a follow up visit. 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. Mona Sehgal, Principal Adviser is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association (LGA). Her contact details are 07795 291006/ [Mona.Sehgal@local.gov.uk](mailto:Mona.Sehgal@local.gov.uk).
- 6.3 In the meantime we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with you and colleagues through the peer challenge. We will endeavour to provide additional information and signposting about the issues we have raised in this report to help inform your ongoing consideration.

### **Follow up visit**

- 6.4 The LGA 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 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. We have already discussed with you a potential re-visit in November 2018 and we look forward to hearing about your progress then.

On behalf of the peer team:

- |                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Gillian Beasley:</b>   | Joint Chief Executive, Peterborough Borough Council and Cambridgeshire County Council |
| <b>Cllr David Renard:</b> | Leader, Swindon Council   |
| <b>Anna Rose:</b>         | Head of Planning Advisory Service   |
| <b>John Skidmore:</b>     | Director of Corporate Strategy and Commissioning, East Riding of Yorkshire Council    |
| <b>Clare Hudson:</b>      | LGA Programme Manager   |

## Annex I – Summary of Recommendations

### **Box 1: Recommendations structural and constitutional governance**

- Undertake a full Constitutional review – led at the most senior officer level, supported by members.
  - Through this review update the Constitution and associated protocols to reflect the new operating model. An updated constitution can be a powerful mechanism to drive forward the culture you need to embed your new operating model.
  - Recognise that members and officers have distinct roles, but can lead and deliver together adopting a ‘one-team’ approach. Ensure that protocols and codes reflect this and do not conflate how members and officers should act, e.g. members and officers should have distinct social media protocols
  - Use the constitutional modernisation to empower a refreshed leadership culture and style that uses the constitution in a positive way.

### **Box 2: Recommendations for Accountability**

- Introduce a process map to clarify lines of accountability for all commissioned and contracted out services. This should be developed by members and officers and accompanied by a clear narrative set within the context of the council’s single vision for people and place. Identify and communicate internally and externally the process map, ensuring it is widely understood, setting out:
  - What your measures of success will be:
  - How you will measure progress:
  - How you will communicate these:

### **Box 3: Recommendations for Scrutiny**

- Introduce regular all member briefings on key issues
- Strengthen scrutiny through:
  - Ensuring clear and adequate timeframes to allow members, particularly scrutiny members to digest, understand and question papers to ensure decision-making is inclusive and robust.
  - Considering how scrutiny can play a role in member development allowing councillors to enhance their skillset.
  - Ensuring that Executive and wider Executive members (deputy lead and principal members) should not sit on scrutiny panels
  - Undertaking regular scrutiny training and other key skills for members.
  - Using the forthcoming boundary review as an opportunity to update scrutiny committees to reflect your new operating model and ambitions.
- Evaluate officer capacity and ensure it can adequately support a thriving scrutiny function.



#### **Box 4: Recommendations for understanding of local place and priority setting**

- Invest more time in understanding what your residents value.
- Engage positively with residents and community groups.
- Further develop your commitment to residents – consider using tools such as Residents Surveys to understand the issues that matter most to residents and how they want to be communicated with about them
- Ensure you have measures in place to marry member ambition and officer capacity and skills, which includes:
  - Resourcing your economic development function to focus on Council to business and business to business relationships.
  - The role of culture and heritage in terms of inward investment and quality of life. Is there sufficient resource to manage these important relationships and ensure adequate promotion of the borough?
  - Having a clear policy for inward investment and the resource to meet the borough's offer.
  - The role of the Borough Local Plan is to deliver the council's vision which includes driving economic growth and enhancing cultural and heritage assets. The Local Plan drives all development decisions and will be critical to achieving your ambition.
  - Businesses benefit from political engagement and the Council benefits from its association with key investors in the area. The Council needs to be clear about how this engagement is going to be managed and sustained going forwards.

#### **Box 5: Recommendations for Leadership of Place**

- Consider how to maximise existing partnerships
- Enhance and deepen relationships with businesses.
- Ensure interaction with safeguarding boards is regular and consistent.
- Articulate and share what an integrated health and social care system in the borough will look like, and what that will mean for residents and partners and ensure there are no gaps in services as you transition to a more integrated health and social care system.

#### **Box 6: Recommendations for financial planning viability**

- Link the medium term financial strategy to the single overarching council vision and ensure that financial strategies are decisions are effectively communicated alongside corporate priorities
- Ensure that colleagues have adequate ownership of planned savings and are able to report against them.
- Ensure that future transformation needs of services, including commissioned services, are adequately planned for and managed.

**Box 7: Recommendations for organisational leadership and governance**

- Consider what inclusive and inspirational leadership looks and feels like for the Royal Borough and how you can embed it throughout the organisation.
- Consider whether the language around 'commissioning council' which you have been promoting is helpful – consider if you are more of a 'partnering council'.
- Develop an engagement strategy – residents, businesses and partners, and adequately resource it.
- Focus energy on how you can ensure that all staff understand and feel part of the new operating model and understand their collective roles going forward.

**Box 8: Recommendations for capacity to deliver**

- Consider setting up a central commissioning unit to help develop and share the skills needed to deliver the new operating model, including investing more time in the skills and approaches you need to ensure you have a strong client management function.
- Be clear about lines of accountability within the organisation and with partners, such as public health. Ensure this is regularly updated, shared and widely understood.
- Ensure that SLT and CMT include the right people – statutory roles should be fully engaged in the appropriate fora.
- Continue to progress your People Strategy to ensure that it is developing the skills the organisation needs into the future.
- Develop a 'one-team' approach to leadership – bringing together the Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet on a regular basis to explore key strategic issues and your leadership culture. This one-team approach should set the tone for the organisation and work collaboratively to embed change.