



PR.25 11/12
Challenge and Improvement Committee
29 November 2011

Subject: External Assessments: Peer Review and Investors In People (IIP)

Report by:

Chief Executive

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To advise Members of the findings of the recent Peer Review and the outcome of the Investors in People (IIP) re-inspection and the Positive About Young people Award

RECOMMENDATION(S):
That Members note the feedback from the Peer Review Team and the successful re-assessment of the Investors in People (IIP) award 2011 and the Council's success in obtaining the Positive About Young People Award.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:
None arising from this report.

Financial :
None arising from this report.

Staffing :
None arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :
*NB: A full impact assessment **HAS TO BE** attached if the report relates to any new or revised policy or revision to service delivery/introduction of new services.*

Risk Assessment :
None arising from this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :
None arising from this report.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:
Peer Challenge Feedback
IIP Inspection Report held by HR Department

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

Yes

No

Key Decision:

Yes

No

1. Introduction – Peer Review

- 1.1. During September 2011 the Council was subject to a Peer Challenge by the Local Government Group.
- 1.2. The purpose of the review was to ‘seek a steer and support from the peer team in the approach to the future direction, identifying positives as well as possible risks, seeking a view on challenging areas and signposting to examples of best practice’.

2. Key Findings

- 2.1. The Peer Challenge Feedback report is attached in full as appendix 1.
- 2.2. The key findings of the report were:
 - A clear vision and future direction exists for the organisation captured in the recently agreed Corporate Plan
 - Overall, the council has a strong focus on local communities and is open to learning
 - Positive working relationships exist between politicians and officers
 - Members have been engaged in shaping local area priorities
 - Robust data sets and information are being used to develop area profiles to ensure future work is evidence based
 - Positive relationships between County and district officers and members
 - There is a convergence in the philosophies and the overall priorities between the County and the West Lindsey,
 - The council has a sound medium term financial strategy to meet the current financial challenges but it will be important to review this as the future national and local financial picture develops in coming years

3. Key points for development

- 3.1. The following key points for development were identified
 - Ensure the vision and content of the Corporate Plan is thoroughly embedded throughout the organisation and gains the understanding of partner agencies
 - The council needs to satisfy itself that it has the capacity and capability to deliver its change programme

- Ensure they are equipping members and officers with the skills to deliver the council's ambitious change programme
- Explore opportunities for more innovative use of assets, shared services and ensuring value for money e.g. through the co-location of services and more effective procurement. This should enable a clearer view of what benefits can be derived from working with other organisations
- Ensure it fully understands the implications which its approach to localism could bring e.g. more requirement to work at a strategic level, letting go etc
- Ensure there is a sufficient level of political commitment for stronger County and District working
- The County and district to determine the right level of ambition for future plans

4. Investors in People Re-assessment 2011

4.1. Launched in 1991, Investors in People is the UK's leading people management standard. It is a business improvement tool designed to help organisations develop performance through their people. The tool is administered by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills.

4.2. The Investors in People framework has three fundamental principals:

- Plan – developing strategies to improve the performance of the organisation
- Do – implementing these strategies
- Review – evaluating and adjusting these strategies

4.3. These three principles breakdown into 10 indicators; each indicator is subdivided into a number of evidence requirements. These detail the criteria organisations are required to meet in order to achieve the standard. There are 39 evidence requirements in total. The headings for the 10 indicators are:

1. Business Strategy
2. Learning & Development Strategy
3. People Management Strategy
4. Leadership & Management Strategy
5. Management Effectiveness
6. Recognition & Reward
7. Involvement & Empowerment
8. Learning & Development
9. Performance Measurement
10. Continuous Improvement

5. Process

- 5.1. West Lindsey District Council was first assessed against the Investors in People standard in October 2008 and was successful in gaining the award. The work did not stop there as every organisation has to be reassessed after a 3 year period to ensure that the standard is still being met.
- 5.2. West Lindsey District Council was reassessed in October 2011. The Investors in People assessors visited the Council for 3 days and spoke to the core management team, members, wider management and a number of randomly selected staff. In total 46 interviews were carried out by the assessor. The assessor has written a report which details how we have met each area of the award and this will be reviewed by the Human Resources team to see if there have been any areas identified for improvement.

6. Outcome

- 6.1. We have been successful in gaining the Investors in People award for another 3 years. We have received the report and certificate and will be putting together some communication to let people know that we have received the award.
- 6.2. We have also set up a staff champion group to review our current health and wellbeing initiatives and we will be striving to achieve the Investors in People Health and Wellbeing Award in 2012.

7. Positive About Young People Assessment – 2011

- 7.1. Positive About Young People is a quality standard which recognises employers' commitment to young people at work. To make sure that young people are being given the opportunity to get the best start in their working life.
- 7.2. One of the biggest challenges facing the council is how to successfully maintain our workforce in order to meet the demands of the community. Doing this also gives us an opportunity to provide jobs for young people from the local area who have finished school, college or are returning from university elsewhere.
- 7.3. Positive About Young People has been developed in partnership with Lincolnshire County Council's Children's Service Directorate and it examines policy and practice in employment, experience of work and awareness of opportunity.
- 7.4. The assessment gave the Council the opportunity to reflect on its current position and to make decisions on how to move forward as one of the largest employers in the area.

8. The Process

- 8.1. The council was assessed against an action plan to make sure they are achieving the relevant standards to gain the award. The action plan was split into 6 standard headings with sub headings underneath.
- 8.2. Stacey Wrath HR & OD Officer compiled a folder of evidence to show how the organisation was meeting the set standards required. The folder was then submitted to the panel from Lincolnshire County Council who either suggested improvements or areas of weaknesses that needed to be completed before an assessment could happen or was happy to come and complete an assessment. The panel was happy with the evidence supplied and an assessment date was scheduled in for 22 September 2011.
- 8.3. The format of the assessment day was a panel of 3 staff from Lincolnshire County Council came over and met with different employees of the organisation. They started with a meeting with the Human Resources Team to go through all the evidence supplied and ask any questions. They then meet with Adrian McCormick to discuss the future of young people in the organisation and finally met with a group of young employees to gain their views and experiences in the organisation.
- 8.4. After they had met with everyone they made the decision to see if they felt the council had met all the standards to obtain the award and any further recommendations moving forward.

9. Outcome

- 9.1. West Lindsey District Council was successful in obtaining the Positive About Young People Award and will be re assessed in 3 years time. We are currently just awaiting details of receiving the award and will be working on the publicity for this.
- 9.2. The council also has a rewards and recognition working group who will be applying to get West Lindsey District Council into the best companies list next year and we hope that this award will help towards us being part of this list.

WEST LINDSEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

PEER CHALLENGE FEEDBACK

20-22 SEPTEMBER 2011

1. Purpose

This paper has been produced to capture the outcomes from the Local Government Group's peer challenge at West Lindsey District Council in September 2011. This paper presents the key findings from the peer team.

2. Context

West Lindsey District Council is an organisation undergoing significant change. The appointment of a new leadership team (Chief Executive and Leader) in 2010 signalled the start of a process of a change in direction. Considerable effort has been dedicated in the last eighteen months to addressing significant governance issues and to providing the council with a new vision and direction.

The peer challenge has coincided with a time where the council has published its new Corporate Plan in September 2011.

3. Focus of the peer challenge

The council identified the following themes which formed the focus of the peer challenge:

- Vision and corporate strategy (future direction)
- Leadership and governance
- Financial viability
- Localism
- Further strengthening County and District working

Within the context the council were seeking a steer and support from the peer team in the approach to the future direction, identifying positives as well as possible risks, seeking a view on challenging areas and signposting to examples of best practice.

4. Key findings from the challenge

Future direction

- A clear vision and future direction exists for the organisation captured in the recently agreed Corporate Plan
- The Corporate Plan is ambitious and comprehensive
- In recent months a more positive culture has developed which supports the direction of the organisation e.g. enthusiasm, passion and a 'can do' attitude from staff and members
- All these recent developments have established a clear set of building blocks for future improvement e.g. a clear vision and direction, sound medium term financial plan and the entrepreneurial council model
- The performance of key service areas such as waste, street cleansing and revenues and benefits are good
- Overall, the council has a strong focus on local communities and is open to learning

To support further improvement, the council now needs to:

- Ensure the vision and content of the Corporate Plan is thoroughly understood throughout the organisation and gains the understanding of partner agencies
- The council needs to satisfy itself that it has the capacity and capability to deliver its change programme
- Ensure the whole organisation understands the full implications of the entrepreneurial and localism approaches
- Recognise that change of such a complex nature is likely to benefit from further reflection and iterative discussion and development as the council moves into the 'action' phase of its change
- Housing and Planning services face specific challenges in meeting their key targets' (these issues have been recognised, actions are being undertaken, but are yet to result in conclusive outcomes)

Leadership and governance

- The type and style of political and managerial leadership has positively changed over recent months
- Positive working relationships exist between politicians and officers
- New governance arrangements are becoming embedded. These include the introduction of a Leaders Panel and more informal member forums and are allowing better relationships to be built between officers and members
- Members and officers are generally enthusiastically embracing the new ways of working

To support further improvement, the council now needs to:

- Ensure they are equipping members and officers with the skills to deliver the council's ambitious change programme
- Gain a better understanding of partnership governance arrangements
- Actively engage champions throughout the organisation to take a stronger leadership role and ownership of the Corporate Plan to ensure leadership is extended through the organisation
- At a time of major time senior officers make sure they spend time to be engaged with officers in addressing issues of concern in delivering the corporate plan

Financial viability

- The council has a sound medium term financial strategy to meet the current financial challenges but it will be important to review this as the future national and local financial picture develops in coming years
- The actions in the Corporate Plan can be delivered within the council's current financial plans
- The council is taking opportunities for efficiency savings
- Financial management is supporting the vision/objectives

To support further improvement, the council now needs to:

- Manage the future risks around the role income generation will play in managing the council's overall financial position
- Explore opportunities for more innovative use of assets, shared services and ensuring value for money e.g. through the co-location of services and more effective procurement. This should enable a clearer view of what benefits can be derived from working with other organisations
- Maximise the use of external funding

Localism

- The council's approach to localism is being developed
- There is an openness to change and redesign services based on community feedback
- Considerable good work is already taken place under the localism 'umbrella'. One of the challenges for the council will be to build on this further
- Allocating lead area responsibility to key service managers is beginning to strengthen ownership of the 'localism' agenda
- Members have been engaged in shaping local area priorities
- Robust data sets and information are being used to develop area profiles to ensure future work is evidence based

To support further improvement, the council now needs to:

- Ensure it fully understands the implications which its approach to localism could bring e.g. more requirement to work at a strategic level, letting go etc
- Ensure local action plans are manageable and deliverable
- Ensure key roles like the Area Managers and Community Action Officers are clearly defined and is understood
- Join up internal working (between services) and external working (between the council and other agencies)
- Ensure key local partners ensure the local ways of working
- Existing service provision by community and voluntary groups is mapped to ensure better knowledge of local provision and to avoid duplication of effort
- Understand how it will equip local organisations and communities to embrace the localism agenda
- Review the approach to communicating with local communities to ensure the existing approaches are having the appropriate impact

Further strengthening County and District working

- Positive relationships between County and district officers and members
- An existing track record of joint working upon which to build
- There is a convergence in the philosophies and the overall priorities

To support further improvement, the council now needs to:

- Ensure there is a sufficient level of political commitment
- Explore where collaborative working might eventually lead to
- Think through how this approach is presented to the councils themselves and the outside world, including; other district councils, partner agencies and communities
- The County and district to determine the right level of ambition for future plans

5. Notable practice

The peer team believe it is important to share learning from other organisations. The team provided some specific examples and 'lessons learned' during the localism workshop during the peer challenge. In addition to this, the team identified a number of initial examples of notable practice (or practice to consider) from which the council are likely to benefit from. This is attached in the appendix. The team would like to reflect on further examples and provide these following the feedback discussion.

Chris Bocoock (lead peer)
Chief Executive, Malvern Hills District Council
22 September 2011

Examples of notable practice

The team identified a number of initial examples of notable practice (or practice to consider) from which the council are likely to benefit from. We will provide an overview of the localism work in Worcestershire and Cambridgeshire following this paper.

In this appendix we provide a brief overview of some practice it might be useful to reflect on. These are not intended to be prescriptive, but merely provide learning in terms of some of the key issues explored for the future improvement of the council.

Localism work – Surrey

The Surrey First programme focuses on five workstreams to reap efficiencies by making collaborative strategic decisions across Surrey. It is lead through a joint committee of all Leaders from the Districts and the County along with the Chairman of Surrey Police Authority. Work is managed through the Chief Executive Group and commissioned through existing professional networks in Surrey (paper available).

The Mole Valley Localism work focuses on five areas of service delivery that are delivered by the County and District Council. The aim of the project is to stop services 'falling through the gap', avoid duplication and increase community engagement. An early success of the project is the alignment of s106 monies to localities by both authorities and passporting of money to community groups or a parish council for spend locally (paper available). The project is managed through the Mole Valley Local Committee which is a form of area committee under the County Council's constitution.

Neighbourhood action teams – NW Leicestershire

The establishment of multi-agency teams in 2006 in the district's seven neighbourhoods has helped provide a local focus for service delivery. The teams meet several times a year to task actions to meet local needs and issues which are raised by neighbourhoods. A neighbourhood co-ordinator looks after more than one neighbourhood and is tasked with working with a range of public and voluntary sector organisations to ensure the NAT works. One of the NATs is co-ordinated by the voluntary sector to explore alternative approaches to working at the local level.

Using Twitter to better understand local activity

A number of authorities are considering (but are yet to implement) an approach using Twitter or other social media to track the activities of a range of services in a locality. A Twitter group is created online which includes all the locality based officers in the local authority. Officers update their Twitter feed every time they undertake an action in that community e.g. responding to a noise nuisance issue, a graffiti incident, faulty street lighting. The area manager can then visit their Twitter group page regularly, understand the variety of activity being undertaken and also link different service issues together with minimal effort.