

LGA Peer Challenge Original Recommendations from 2020

The following sets out the recommendations in full made by the peer team following the full review undertaken in 2020. This is provided as a contextual aid to understand progress made since 2020.

1. Implement the new structure – this should be completed as soon as possible and include the senior management structure as well as the structure of council departments including the resolution of temporary arrangements. As far as possible this new structure should seek to ensure the right number of employees with the right skills and experience are in place in substantive posts in order to provide clarity and a firmer footing to enable delivery of the council's priorities.

2. Reduce the Customer First Programme to its core and 'rebrand' it – its objectives are sound but the vision is currently too big and undeliverable, with some confusion about its overall purpose or vision. It has had its successes, eg in service redesign, so has potential for more. Engage your staff, who want to serve customers to full effect, to consider what customers really need and therefore what you need to do to meet those needs. Develop a new programme that offers a clean break from the current one.

3. Use the 'purposeful pause' regarding commercialisation and financial planning to understand and identify where future income and savings should come from – there is understandable uncertainty about local government funding, Brexit and economic conditions generally but use your financial strength, commercial success, momentum and strategic economic thinking to shape your next steps. Much of your potential could be lost if you do not make the most of this pause.

4. Clarify what 'social regeneration' means to the council, what it will deliver and how to resource it – the peer team heard about this new concept throughout its visit as a possible development or even replacement as a new approach to growth. There were however different interpretations within WLDC of what it could mean. The council therefore needs to clarify and agree exactly what it is and is not. This clarity will enable WLDC to decide if social regeneration should be part of its longer-term plans. If so, the council can then confirm its purpose, and plan the required activities and resources.

5. Improve communications with all stakeholders - to keep staff and councillors abreast of developments and decisions so they are clear about what they need to do. To improve relationships and trust, inform all district stakeholders regularly about what the council is doing, why and explain how they can be kept updated and get involved.

6. Use the Local Plan Review process to ensure the viability and deliverability of allocated housing sites across the District – the current Local Plan sets challenging housing targets, a review of the objectively assessed housing need, alongside the proposed allocations required to ensure targets remain deliverable. It will be essential to use your political leadership to inform and influence the next Local Plan.

7. Review the overview and scrutiny function – there are mixed views and questions about the function generally, including its effectiveness and purpose. This was reviewed about 18 months ago but there are already differing opinions about the value it adds. A further review is therefore needed to identify the function's value and how it can be most effective, in particular how it can engage all members constructively.

8. Ensure a structured approach to workforce and succession planning – WLDC has an ageing workforce, there are pressures on staffing capacity and potential 'single points of

failure' – where there will be no or insufficient cover if certain staff are absent or if/when they leave the council. You also have a large number of staff on secondment and acting up, and this has added to an air of uncertainty for your teams which has also informed recommendation 1. All of this needs addressing before these issues reach crisis point.

9. Ensure performance management processes are consistent at service level – you have a corporate performance management team that want to support team managers to improve performance rather than report it. Further engage with team managers as necessary to enable this.

10. Consider a cultural strategy - there is potential to align and increase the use of, and maximise income from, your portfolio of existing and planned cultural assets.