

**Finance & Contracts Committee**

4 April 2019

**LGA Corporate Peer Review**

Chief Executive

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor Green

**Purpose**

To consider the final report and recommendations from the LGA Corporate Peer Review of RBK conducted in January this year and the initial response from the council's Senior Leadership Team ahead of discussion at Full Council on 24 April.

**Recommendation that -**

Authority be delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to develop a Council action plan which responds to the recommendations of the Peer Review.

**Benefits to the Community:**

The LGA Peer Review provides recommendations to the council for improvement relating to a set of core themes including place leadership and priority setting, financial planning and capacity to deliver. Implementing the improvements will help the council to achieve its high aspirations for the borough and its communities.

**Key Points**

- A. An LGA Corporate Peer Review took place in January 2019. The Peer Review was requested by the council as part of its plans for improvement.
- B. The review, led by senior officers and members from other councils, looked at the council's current performance against a set of core themes including our understanding of the local place and priority setting; leadership of place; financial planning and viability; organisational leadership and governance; and capacity to deliver.
- C. A final report was produced by the review team and published on the council's website on 14 March which included a number of observations and recommendations to help the council improve.
- D. The council's Senior Leadership Team - comprising the Chief Executive and Directors - have provided an initial management response to the recommendations which is appended to this report.
- E. The committee is asked to consider the review findings and recommendations and authorise the development of an action plan to fully implement the required improvements and changes, for approval at Full Council on 24 April.

## Context

1. To support the council's transformation and improvement - and to learn from best practice - the council asked the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a Corporate Peer Review of the organisation.
2. LGA Corporate Peer Reviews are based around a standard framework comprised of the following themes: our understanding of the local place and priority setting; leadership of place; financial planning and viability; organisational leadership and governance; and capacity to deliver.
3. In addition to the standard themes, the council asked for the review to look deeper at the financial planning and viability element and to consider the council's ambitions in relation to improving community engagement.
4. Peer Reviews comprise senior officers and councillors from other local authorities. The Team tasked with conducting the RBK Review was led by Andy Donald, Chief Executive, London Borough of Redbridge and also included; Cllr Adam Payntor, Leader, Cornwall Council, Cllr Melvyn Caplan, Westminster City Council, Tom Hook, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Peter Robinson, Sophie Poole and Chris Bowron, LGA.
5. The Review team were on site at the council offices between 10th and 14th January 2019 to carry out the assessment. During this time the review team conducted a number of interviews and focus groups with council staff, councillors, local strategic partners and residents.
6. It is important to highlight that LGA Peer Reviews are not a formal inspection. Such reviews are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. The Peer Review team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by the people they met, things they saw and material that they read. They provided feedback as critical friends not as inspectors or assessors.

## Review findings and recommendations

7. The Peer Review team produced a final report and recommendations which was published on the council's website on 14 March. The final report is appended to this document.
8. Overwhelmingly, the Review Team were struck by the potential and opportunity that exists for the council, both as an organisation and as a leader of place; *'The council has much to call upon to drive things forward, including a committed and talented workforce, a passionate elected membership and the goodwill of partners. The prospect of harnessing all of this and uniting it behind fulfilling the potential and the opportunity means that these are very exciting times for Kingston'*.
9. A summary of the key recommendations for improvement is that the Royal Borough of Kingston should:
10.
  - Capitalise upon the opportunity as an organisation and a leader of place, involving establishing a clear vision and sense of purpose.
  - Seize the place leadership through building relationships with partners.

- Establish a single, shared understanding about the scale of the financial challenges being faced and mechanisms that provide real grip and rigour around the delivery of savings and budget spend.
  - Bring about greatly improved communication across the council.
  - Establish greater collective leadership of corporate and strategic issues.
  - Determine what community engagement means in Kingston and the approaches to be adopted.
  - Continue the review of the council's Constitution and governance arrangements.
  - Conclude the organisational restructure in as timely a fashion as possible.
  - Prioritise/sequence the corporate system and process changes that the council recognises are needed and then inject pace and rigour at each stage.
11. The full LGA report is attached at **Annex 1**
  12. The council's Senior Leadership Team, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, have provided an initial response to the recommendations and these are detailed in the table at **Annex 2**.

### **Consultations**

13. Staff, councillors, local strategic partners and a number of residents were invited to take part in focus groups with the Peer Review Team to discuss the council's performance, challenges and opportunities.
14. The comments and feedback received was used by the peer review team to inform the findings and recommendations made.

### **Timescale**

15. A more detailed action plan to progress all the recommendations will be developed and presented to Full Council on 24 April 2019.
16. The actions developed in response to the Peer Review recommendations will be implemented over the next 12-18 months and will be added to Directorate Service Delivery Plans to ensure accountability is clear.
17. In 18 -24 months time the LGA Peer Review Team will be invited back to look at how the council has made progress with the areas of improvement identified.

### **Resource Implications**

18. The actions required to progress the improvements will be delivered using existing staff resources

### **Legal Implications**

19. No legal implications

## **Risk Assessment**

20. If the recommendations are not implemented the council may not make the necessary improvements and change sufficiently to meet its aspirations for the borough.
21. Developing a plan with clear actions, action owners and target dates will ensure the recommendations are progressed.

## **Equalities Analysis**

22. No equality analysis is required as this is not a change to policy or service delivery

## **Health Implications**

23. None

## **Road Network Implications**

24. None

## **Environmental & Air Quality Implications**

25. None

## **Background papers -**

- None other than those referred to in this report

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