

## Report of the Chief Executive

### Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough Wide Leadership Councillor S Robinson

#### 1. Summary

1.1 This report presents the final report from the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) which was conducted from 31 January – 2 February 2018. The CPC focused on the following core elements:

- Understanding of local context and priority setting
- Leadership of Place
- Organisational leadership and governance
- Financial planning and viability
- Capacity to deliver

1.2 The final report in **Appendix 1** contains the full final report which includes the Corporate Peer Challenge team's recommendations for consideration by the Council.

1.3 An action plan contained in **Appendix 2** identifies actions to address the recommendations made by the Corporate Peer Challenge team.

#### 2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet

- a) Accept the Corporate Peer Challenge report as detailed in **Appendix 1**
- b) Agree that the Corporate Peer Challenge report be utilised as a key document to drive forward the future priorities, resource utilisation and culture of Rushcliffe Borough Council and
- c) Agree the Action Plan set out in **Appendix 2**.

#### 3. Reasons for Recommendation

3.1. The implementation of the Corporate Peer Challenge action plan will ensure that the Council continues to act in the best interests of its residents, whilst utilising and building our capacity, to maximise the outcomes stated within the corporate plan, working towards becoming sustainable, whilst also delivering significant growth with a clear and exciting vision for the borough.

## **4. Supporting Information**

### **Overview of the Corporate Peer Challenge Process**

- 4.1 With the abolition of the inspection and regulatory regime and the national performance framework, there was a shift to local accountability for performance and self-regulation in local government, with sector led improvement through peer challenge at its heart. As part of this shift, the Local Government Association (LGA) began to provide a Corporate Peer Challenge to all member councils once every four / five years. The aim of the peer challenge is to provide external challenge to the council's own self-assessment.
- 4.2 Peer challenges are improvement-focussed and tailored to meet individual council's needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus. The peers use their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they meet, things they see and material that they read. The team provide feedback as critical friends, not as assessors, consultants or inspectors.
- 4.3 The peer team was composed of:
- Lead Peer – Nicola Bulbeck, Former Chief Executive of Teignbridge District Council and from January 2018, West Sussex County Council Executive Director
  - Elected Member Peer – Cllr Julian Daly, Former Leader of St Albans City and District Council and current Portfolio Holder for Commercial and Development
  - Officer Peer – Louise Branford-White, Chief Finance Officer at Hambleton District Council
  - Officer Peer – Doug Bamsey, Corporate Director at Sedgemoor District Council
  - External Peer – David Joel, Managing Director of Lanson Consultants specialising in business performance improvement
  - Challenge Managers – Becca Singh and Frances Marshall, Local Government Association
- 4.4 The peer team spent three days with us on site, at the Rushcliffe Arena and visiting other locations including the Abbey Road Depot, Rushcliffe Community Contact Centre, West Bridgford and the Cotgrave Town Centre development.
- 4.5 During their three days with us, the team:
- Spoke to 90 participants including a range of Rushcliffe councillors (both internal and external), staff and key external partners and stakeholders
  - Gathered information and views from more than 40 meetings, visits to key sites and additional research and reading
  - Collectively spent more than 340 hours to determine our findings

4.6 The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges. These are the areas which the LGA believes are critical to councils' performance and improvement:

- **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?
- **Leadership of Place:** Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected Members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
- **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?
- **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?
- **Capacity to deliver:** Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

4.7 In addition to these questions, we asked the peer team to provide feedback on Growth, our approach to Commercialisation, and Streetwise Environmental Ltd.

### **Summary of the Key Recommendations**

4.8 The CPC report was overwhelmingly positive regarding the current leadership, priorities, pace and record of delivery. These were reflected through the team's key observations, which included:

- Responsive to, and understanding of, RBC communities
- Some very engaged and enthusiastic Members who use their knowledge and skills to help make strategic decisions and set the direction of the Council
- Seen as a 'go to' partner that delivers for a variety of stakeholders spanning different sectors at lots of different levels
- An organisation that has commercialisation in its DNA leading to multiple and diverse positive outcomes
- Well-respected and admired corporate brand and reputation with potential to lead, inspire and motivate others
- Dedicated, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and adaptable staff who are proud to work for RBC

4.9 Whilst it is pleasing to receive positive feedback it is extremely important to listen and learn from the messages contained within the report and in particular the recommendations for improvement. These are stated as:

- Position Chief Executive and Leader roles to maximise dialogue and engagement at local, regional and national level.
- Explore scope for greater strategic collaboration with and on behalf of neighbouring district and borough councils.
- Improve engagement with Nottinghamshire County Council.
- Continue to implement and develop the Commercial Strategy.

- Clarify, with partners, the role of the Economic Prosperity Committee.
  - Cabinet and EMT should spend team development time identifying and understanding one another's skills, and preferences.
  - Review pay, reward and progression package.
- 4.10 Activity has already begun to remedy some of the issues outlined above and full details of all the recommendations of the peer team and the actions that the Council proposes to address these recommendations are contained in the attached appendices.
- 4.11 As can be seen from the key recommendations above in 6.3 there is a strong theme throughout the CPC report which centres around our engagement with partners, both locally and nationally. While considerable work has already been done in this direction, it is valuable to have this feedback from the peer team, to give the Council's work in maintaining and building relationships a clear focus.
- 4.12 Prior to the CPC, work had already been undertaken by the Chief Executive and Leader to raise Rushcliffe's profile and growth agenda, through partnerships and contacts both locally and nationally, including Ken Clarke MP and lead Civil Servants at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. This work continues to be vitally important in the light of the CPC recommendations and the Council will continue to strengthen relationships with relevant Government departments in respect of frequency, content and focus of our dialogue.
- 4.13 Equally, prior to the CPC, it was clear that monitoring and improving engagement with Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottingham City Council, whilst promoting collective responsibility for the successful delivery of the stated growth priorities, would be key to continued success for our authority, particular with regards to our significant growth agenda. It is now beyond question that we must continue strengthening joint leadership meetings, making sure they are regular, strategic focused and effective.

## **5 Risk and Uncertainties**

- 5.1 There are a number of identified risks and uncertainties which could ultimately impact upon the success of the Council in delivering the priorities and objectives of the Council. In particular the success of Rushcliffe Borough Council will be determined by the continuation of clarity of priorities, successful collaboration with the community and key partners, co-operation from upper tier authorities, regional bodies and national Government departments.
- 5.2 The capacity and resilience of the organisation will continue to be influenced by robustness, adaptability and good management of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, which is again influenced by the level of government funding, growth in the area and success in income generation.

## **6 Implications**

### **6.1 Finance**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Future resource decisions will be considered as part of future budget reporting and consideration of the Council's broader Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### **6.2 Legal**

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

## **7. Corporate Priorities**

- 7.1 The implementation of this action plan will ensure the Council is in the best position to deliver on all of its corporate priorities.

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<b>Background papers Available for Inspection:</b>	None.
<b>List of appendices (if any):</b>	<b>Appendix 1</b> – Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report <b>Appendix 2</b> – Action Plan