

 EXECUTIVE 12th February 2014		Agenda Item No. 11
Title	Peer Challenge Improvement Plan Update	
For further information about this report please contact	Andrew Jones Andrew.jones@warwickdc.gov.uk	
Wards of the District directly affected	All	
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No	
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	Executive Meeting 10 th October 2012	
Background Papers	See above	

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	Yes Ref. ?
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No
Not applicable.	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
	Date	Name
Chief Executive	21 st January 2014	Chris Elliott
CMT	21 st January 2014	Chris Elliott, Bill Hunt, Andrew Jones
Section 151 Officer	21 st January 2014	Mike Snow
Deputy Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer	2 nd January 2014	Author
Portfolio Holder(s)	21 st January 2014	Councillors Mobbs & Caborn
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Not applicable		
Final Decision?	Yes	

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report updates Members on progress against the Peer Challenge Improvement Plan, recommends that the Council participates in further Peer Challenges and highlights opportunities available to the political leadership to help them fulfil their respective roles effectively.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Executive notes progress against Warwick District Council's (WDC) Peer Challenge *Areas for Consideration* as detailed in the Improvement Plan at Appendix A.
- 2.2 That Executive agrees to the Council's corporate and service performance and measures being published on-line on a monthly basis.
- 2.3 That Executive agrees to WDC participating in a more limited follow-up Peer Challenge in July 2014 (1-day), with a further full Peer Challenge to assist the new Council in July 2015 and asks officers to make arrangements for a Growth Workshop to be provided for all Members.
- 2.4 That Executive agrees to make available £8,000 from the Contingency Budget to enable the political leadership of the Council to benefit from mentoring support provided by Local Government Association (LGA) sanctioned peers.

3 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members will recall that in July 2012, WDC participated in a LGA Peer Challenge and that the findings were reported along with an Improvement Plan to Executive in October 2012. At Appendix A are details of the Council's progress against the *Areas for Consideration* as identified in the Improvement Plan. Officers consider that by-and-large progress over the last eighteen months has been good although there are two areas where work is still required.
- 3.2 When adopting the FFF programme, Members agreed that the Council should focus on three strands of work: Saving money/increasing income; maintaining/improving services; and bringing about cultural change. Whilst progress on the first two strands has been very positive, changing the Council's culture has been more difficult. Whilst officers have been able to identify what the organisation should be doing "more of", "less of" and "continuing with", it has been more of a challenge to articulate this in a narrative that is easily digestible and understandable to the organisation. This difficulty has predominantly been around the way senior managers have been trying to communicate the message.
- 3.3 Consequently, throughout the autumn of 2013, officers have undertaken a number of initiatives to sharpen the cultural change message. These initiatives include:
- Moving away from the Cultural Change strapline to focussing on People;
 - Commissioning expert advice to help develop the approach to effective message delivery;
 - Putting in place a communication action plan;

- CMT/SMT focussing on the People and communication issues at their respective team meetings.
- 3.4 It is very difficult to measure the success or otherwise of such initiatives on cultural/people change but officers will continue to deploy the Cultural Change Barometer it has developed and other tools such as Hot Frog surveys, Appraisal feedback and senior officer meetings to gauge the progress the organisation is making.
- 3.5 The second area for further work is reporting of corporate and service performance. Currently Members receive service performance on a half yearly basis although Portfolio Holders and their Shadows regularly meet with Service Heads to discuss issues. However, it is recognised that Members should receive more timely information and not just about service performance but also corporate health measures. It is therefore recommended that this information is published on-line on a monthly basis.
- 3.6 Since the 2012 Peer Challenge, CMT has maintained its dialogue with LGA and has taken advantage of other services such as the 2013 Growth Workshop attended by officers and Members. The LGA is now offering a light-touch Peer Challenge in July 2014 and a full Peer Challenge in July 2015 and a further Growth Workshop for all Council Members. Officers consider that the Peer Challenge process has been a valuable tool in helping to keep the Council focused on continuous improvement and so it is recommended that the LGA is asked to make the necessary arrangements for these Peer Challenges and Workshop.
- 3.7 A further service provided by the LGA is support for the political leadership. Members will be aware that local government has been in uncharted territory for a number of years with political leaders having to develop and communicate increasingly complex and often contentious initiatives. To assist Members and particularly Council Leaders, the LGA has developed a number of services including the Leadership Academy and one-to-one mentoring.
- 3.8 The Leadership Academy has seen over 2000 elected members of all political persuasions, from almost every Council in the country graduate from the main Leadership Academy programme since it was launched 13 years ago. The programme is now recognised by ILM (Institute of Leadership & Management), the UK's leading awarding body for leadership and management, and Leadership Academy graduates receive an accredited ILM certificate. The Leadership Academy is a leadership development programme for leading councillors based on three two-day residential modules over a three-month period:
- **Module 1** focuses on **leading through relationships**. This module explores how councillors can develop, maintain and use relationships (both internal and external) to provide effective leadership at the political, organisational and wider community levels.
 - **Module 2** looks at **leading innovation and change**. This module will develop councillors' ability to lead and manage complex change to improve effectiveness and efficiency and to achieve better outcomes for the community
 - **Module 3** explores **leading communities and place**. The focus is on helping councillors to communicate with and provide leadership to their communities and within partnerships to achieve growth and prosperity.

- 3.9 The mentoring support is provided by an experienced Councillor of a political persuasion to suit the mentoree. Should the Leader wish to take up both or one of these offers, the LGA has agreed to provide this free of charge. LGA is also able to make available mentoring support for the other Group Leaders and respective Groups as the Council leads up to its elections in May 2015. Appropriate mentoring could be arranged for the Leaders of the Labour, Lib Dem and Independent groups and work could also take place with their Groups. The charge for this is £450/day (including expenses). So, if it is assumed 5 days per group, this would be c£6,750.

4 POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 The Peer Challenge was very useful in helping senior officers and Executive understand whether they were doing the right things to help the Council achieve its vision of making Warwick District a great place to live, work and visit.

5 BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

- 5.1 Subject to the agreement of the recommendations within the Budget report, there is £200,000 Contingency Budget for 2014/15 which can accommodate the £8,000 funding.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 No alternative options were considered as it is essential that the Council responds to the changing economic and policy context and ensures that it improves continuously.