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| <b>Report for:</b>      | <b>Cabinet</b>         |
| <b>Date of meeting:</b> | <b>24 January 2017</b> |
| <b>Part:</b>            | <b>1</b>               |
| If Part II, reason:     |                        |

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| <b>Title of report:</b> | Corporate Peer Challenge – Feedback Report  |
| Contact:                | <p>CLlr Andrew Williams, Leader of the Council</p> <p>Author/Responsible Officers;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sally Marshall, Chief Executive</li> <li>• Robert Smyth, Assistant Director (Performance, People &amp; Innovation)</li> </ul>   |
| Purpose of report:      | For Cabinet to approve the publication of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge report for the Council.   |
| Recommendations         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cabinet note the contents of the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report</li> <li>2. Cabinet approve the publication of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge report for the Council.</li> </ol>   |
| Corporate Objectives:   | <p>The Corporate Peer Challenge is an opportunity for the Council to reflect on the services it delivers, how it works and the relationship it has with Members, residents and its wider stakeholder base.</p> <p>Therefore, the findings and recommendations from the report will support the Council to better deliver all of its corporate objectives.</p> |
| Implications:           | <p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>There are no direct financial implications. However, this report has identified a number of recommendations that can support</p>   |

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| Value For Money Implications'   | <p>the Council to deliver its financial objectives.</p> <p><u>Operational</u></p> <p>The recommendations would ensure that the Council is delivering high quality operational services.</p> <p><u>Value for Money</u></p> <p>This report would support the Council to deliver value for money across all its services.</p>  |
| Risk Implications   | There are no risks associated with this report.   |
| Community Impact  | The Community Impact of specific actions arising as a result of the Peer Challenge will be individually assessed as plans are developed.  |
| Health And Safety Implications  | None  |
| Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments                             | <p><b>Monitoring Officer:</b></p> <p><b>The Peer Challenge feedback did not identify any areas of concern from a Monitoring Officer perspective. It did, however, highlight areas for continued development which will need to be progressed as identified in the report.</b></p> <p><b>Deputy S.151 Officer</b></p> <p><b>There are no direct financial implications of this decision and the report highlights the good financial management arrangements and leadership in place.</b></p> <p><b>Any proposals put forward to address the recommendations will need to be either met from within existing approved budgets or will require growth bids for inclusion in the usual budget setting process.</b></p> |
| Consultees:   | Corporate Management Team<br>Sally Marshall   |
| Background papers:  | Corporate Peer Challenge – Feedback Report  |
| Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report: |   |

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a core element of the Local Government Associations sector-led improvement offer to local authorities.
- 1.2 This process involves a small team of local government peers spending time at a council to understand the issues, provide challenge and share learning and ideas.
- 1.3 In June 2016 the Council received its own CPC and the following report provides details of its findings along with suggested next steps and a recommendation to publish the report externally.

## 2. Methodology

### Peer Team

- 2.1 Peer challenges are delivered by an experienced mix of elected member and officer peers. The peers who delivered the review at Dacorum were:
  - 2.1.1 Alan Goodrum, Former Chief Executive of Chiltern and South Bucks Councils, LGA Associate
  - 2.1.2 Councillor Chris Millar, Leader of Daventry DC
  - 2.1.3 Dave Barnes, Strategic Director, Christchurch & East Dorset Councils
  - 2.1.4 Sophie Lloyd, Project Support Officer, Milton Keynes Council
  - 2.1.5 Ami Beeton, Programme Manager, LGA

### Scope and Focus

- 2.2 The Peer Team considered the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges cover.
  - 2.2.1 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?
  - 2.2.2 Leadership of Place: Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
  - 2.2.3 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?
  - 2.2.4 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?
  - 2.2.5 Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?
- 2.3 In addition to these questions, the Peer Team gave special consideration to the issue of *economic growth and regeneration*.

## Approach

- 2.4 In order to conduct the review, the Peer Team conducted a detailed desktop review of the Councils key documents. They also gathered information and views from more than 35 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading.
- 2.5 In terms of consultation the Peer Team spoke to more than 66 people including Members, a range of council staff, Parish councillors and key partners and stakeholders.

### **3. Feedback – Headline Summary & Recommendations**

#### Headline Summary

- 3.1 The Peer Challenge Team reported that Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) is a well-run council with stable leadership both politically and managerially. The peer challenge team were impressed with the good skills base that the council had within its staff and members. It was very clear from spending time with officers that the council is seen as a great place to work.
- 3.2 The council has benefited from good financial management and is currently in a more fortunate position than many other councils, and they acknowledged this was partly attributable to the strength of the council tax base.
- 3.3 This means that the general fund is in a robust position, however, they felt that a consequence of this is the lack of a burning platform which could result in less impetus for fast paced change.
- 3.4 DBC have a clear and robust project management methodology that has been a key element in their success in delivering key commitments.
- 3.5 This is not only seen in the success of the revamped town centre and re-opening of the Water Gardens but through the brave decisions that the Council made to invest financially in a period of austerity. This has paid off and brought key partners and stakeholders along with them.
- 3.6 The Peer Challenge Team also felt as the financial resources available for the Council for direct investment in regeneration diminish, there will be a need for it to further enhance and focus on its enabling and influencing role. The next step for the Council is therefore to build on its successful local partnerships and increase its influence at a sub-regional level.
- 3.7 It is important that there is a greater focus across all services on using evidence and data to set priorities, resource teams and deliver key services.
- 3.8 The move to a new building shared with partners is an exciting step for the council and staff are clearly on board with the changes that lie ahead. However, the pace of change could be increased, supported by clearer and visible messages which are being developed by senior members and officers.

## Recommendations

- 3.9 Provide pace and clarity to the change management approach with consistent and simple messaging.
- 3.10 Develop a constructive challenge culture at member and officer level
- 3.11 Enhance the council's leadership profile at a sub-regional level to meet the challenges ahead
- 3.12 Progress the sustainable growth agenda with an enabling focus (see the 10-point plan)
- 3.13 Sharpen the focus of priority setting
- 3.14 Continue to be BOLD

## **4. Next Steps**

- 4.1 The LGA peer challenge process includes a follow up visit. The purpose of the visit is to help the Council assess the impact of the peer challenge and the progress it has made against the areas of improvement and development identified by the peer team.
- 4.2 It is a lighter-touch version of the original visit and does not necessarily involve all members of the original peer team. The expectation is that it will occur within the next 12-24 months.

## **5. Recommendation for Cabinet**

- 5.1 Recommendation 1 - Cabinet note the contents of the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report
- 5.2 Recommendation 2 – Cabinet approve the publication of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge report for the Council.