

Parish Conference

**Local Government Association
Corporate Peer Challenge
18-21 September 2017**



Purpose and team

Peer challenges are invited, 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 peer team use their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them, things they see and hear and material that they read.

The team provide feedback as critical friends, not as assessors, consultants or inspectors.

- Gillian Beasley Joint Chief Executive, Peterborough Borough Council and Cambridgeshire County Council
- Cllr David Renard Leader, Swindon Council
- Anna Rose Head of Planning Advisory Service, LGA
- John Skidmore Director of Corporate Strategy and Commissioning, East Riding of Yorkshire Council
- Clare Hudson Peer Challenge Manager, LGA



Process for the Royal Borough and caveats

The team reviewed a range of information to ensure they were familiar with the council, the challenges it is facing and its plans for the future.

The team spent 4 days onsite during which they:

- Spoke to more than **90** people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external stakeholders
- Gathered information and views from more than **35** meetings, visits to key sites and additional research and reading
- Collectively spent more than 140 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending almost **4 weeks** in the Royal Borough

The team were directly approached by residents, residents groupings and parish councils following our press release. Their views were not fully captured by the review team.



Scope for the peer challenge

The team were asked to consider:

How can the council ensure that its governance and operating model are fit to deliver on the council's ambitions?

This was considered alongside the five core components looked at by all corporate peer challenges, namely:

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



Recommendations

The team presented feedback and detailed three main recommendations:

Pause: now is the moment to pause on the change you have focused on designing and delivering. This does not mean stop improving services, but will allow you time to;

Embed: establish and share with all partners clear lines of accountability for council service areas. Consolidate the good services that you have without seeking further immediate change. Where services fall short of expectation identify clear pathways for improvement and ownership for who is accountable for that improvement. Refresh your governance to help you underpin this;

Explain: the organisation, its partners and the residents of the Royal Borough need to better understand the changes that are taking place – and why. This will also be an opportunity for you to build and further deepen trust between yourselves and all of your partners



Recommendations

As well as the three main recommendations, further recommendations were made in answering the question the Royal Borough posed and for the five component areas. These additional 26 covered:

- Structural and constitutional governance
 - Accountability
 - Scrutiny
 - Understanding of local place and priority setting
 - Leadership of place
 - Financial planning viability
 - Organisational leadership and governance
 - Capacity to deliver
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