

IMPROVEMENT & INNOVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2022 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllr. Bayley (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Abraham, Bayley, Bonin, Eyre, McGregor, Nelson, Pett and Waterton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Andrews and Hogarth

Cllr. Osborne-Jackson was also present.

32. Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting on 25 November 2021 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

33. Declarations of interest

There were none.

34. Actions form previous meeting

The Assistant Chief Executive gave an update to the committee on the Mental Health Strategy which was now available on the [Council's website](#).

35. Update from Portfolio Holder

Funding had been approved for various projects at Council (Budget) on 22 February 2022.

The Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Results had been made available and were to be presented to the Committee as Item 6 in the agenda.

The Council's Place Strategy was coming forward once more and would likely be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

36. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There are none

37. LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report

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The Assistant Chief Executive presented the report which outlined a summary of the LGA Peer Challenge findings.

The Peer Challenge took place between 29 November and 1 December 2021 and was conducted by a team of seven elected member and officer peers, drawn from across the Local Government sector. The report concluded with nine recommendations as set out below:

Recommendation 1: Build on recent place leadership work - consider developing a renewed, partnership-led, long-term vision for the district, residents and businesses

Recommendation 2: Complement the council's existing project-based community engagement work with more open, bottom-up, conversational approaches

Recommendation 3: Use service data and community networks to enhance the council's understanding of its diverse and emerging communities

Recommendation 4: Consider the optimum balance between the council's scale of ambition and availability of resources

Recommendation 5: Explore the scope for a managed increase in Quercus Housing's affordable housing delivery outputs

Recommendation 6: Consider the full range of options for additional modest-scale market value and affordable housing activity - 'massive small'

Recommendation 7: Review the external specialist skills to challenge viability appraisals and negotiate S106 agreements with developers

Recommendation 8: Use the council's influence to optimise the outcomes from the district's strategic development sites

Recommendation 9: Consider developing a proposition for inward investment and development as part of the emerging economic development strategy.

Once the final report had been received the Council would have six weeks to publish it. It was hoped that this would be taken to the Cabinet meeting in March 2022. After publication of the report the Council had a further eight weeks to publish their action plan. After a further six-month period, the LGA Team would return to review progress with the action plan and discuss any further support that the Council may welcome.

The Committee discussed the report.

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In response to questions the Chairman established that the Council were looking into smaller parcels of land that the Council owned across the District which could be used for development. The Council were also working with West Kent Housing to improve the housing type imbalance in the district. The Chairman also confirmed that the Town Centre Strategy Meetings Consultation which formed part of the emerging local plan had been broadened to look at the future of the Districts High-Streets and New Ash Green.

Resolved: that Members

- (a) Give their thanks to the LGA Peer Challenge Team for giving their time and expertise in undertaking the peer review of the Council, and
- (b) the findings of the Peer Challenge and the nine recommendations as set out in this report be noted

38. Data analysis on Customer Interactions

The Head of Information and Customer Solutions and the Chief Officer Customer and Resources gave a presentation (see published tabled document) which updated the Committee on the results of data analysis of the Council's customer interactions.

Over the previous two years, the Council had seen a sustained increase in customer contact across a range of customer facing services. Whilst the pandemic had had a direct impact on the amount of customers contacting the Council, it was evident that growth in customer demand for Council services began before the pandemic took effect.

Through better use of data, IT and other technology capabilities the Council could continue to seek to meet residents' needs and expectations. Being more effective and more efficient, would allow the Council to create more capacity to meet current and future challenges.

The report presented a service restructure, which would bring together a number of key skills, such as data analytics, customer service expertise and web development in to a new team.

Members discussed the report.

In response to questions, it was noted that frontline staff required the right skills and tools to manage complex customer issues and enquiries. Data analytics would contribute towards this, to ensure the right skills and resources were allocated in the right places. Officers confirmed that there was a requirement to delve into the data and work with services to provide more innovative solutions. The Head of Information and Customer Solutions would bring a progress update to a future meeting of the committee.

Resolved: that the report be noted

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39. Work plan

The Work plan was noted with the following additions:

June 2022

- Capital Programme Update
- Cyber Security Update
- Asset Review
- Data Analytics on Customer Interactions Progress update

October 2022

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.42 PM

CHAIRMAN