
ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL: CORPORATE PEER REVIEW

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks the Executive Board's formal response to the recommendations outlined in the IDEA's Peer Review report to the Council.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Peer Review report was first considered at the Executive Board on 26th September but any response was deferred pending the presentation given by members of the Peer Review Team the following week (min 322/2007). Now that the feedback session has taken place with Cllrs. Mrs Claire Denman from Crawley Borough Council, it is opportune to consider the key recommendations arising from the report and agree a course of action. A copy of the summary to the report is appended.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Set out below are the main recommendations from the report for Members to consider, discuss and agree appropriate action points. Officer comments are given as possible actions to aid consideration and development of an appropriate action plan.

Ambition

Articulate more clearly and confidently a clearer vision for the area, with easily understood objectives and outcomes that can be translated into future actions.

Member Training undertaken in respect of visioning and possible actions and outcomes. Further work currently underway with the Executive Board around the clearer articulation of the Council's vision. Aim to input this work into the budget process and the member awayday in November. Once budget and priorities agreed in January, aim to produce a Council document 'From Vision to Delivery' which will be circulated to key partners and stakeholders and promoted internally to staff. The key aspects of this document will shape the Corporate plan for 2008/2009 and the main messages will be publicised via Rochford District Matters, the Council's website and other key medium.

Prioritisation

Review and revise the alignment between the community strategy, the vision, corporate plan and other plans to identify the 'golden thread' in order to ensure a sharper focus on resource allocation to the priority areas.

Sharper alignment around the golden thread will be achieved through the work outlined above, the production of a new corporate plan, and the work

underway on a new sustainable community strategy. By next April, the key linkages between the main documents should be more transparent.

Build on existing work and make excellence in customer service a cross cutting priority. This will ensure that all staff can contribute to the success of the organisation.

This will be achieved through the budget prioritisation process and the current ongoing work around Access to Services. An Access to Services Strategy will be presented to the Board at its December meeting for consideration.

Provide greater clarity on what you have de prioritised, and evidence the moving of resources from these areas.

This will be achieved through greater clarity and transparency through the budget process around priorities/non priorities and the allocation of resources as a result.

Decision-making and Scrutiny

Develop and support all Members so they can contribute fully to the capacity of the council, in their Executive, Scrutiny or policy development roles, and in their external roles, as community leaders

The Standards Committee is currently considering the training and development needs of members in producing a new training and development plan for members for 2008/2009. These issues can be taken on board in that consideration.

Members need to lead policy development and have greater input in the development of key corporate documents

The work around visioning and the budget process should assist in the delivery of this.

Scrutiny review committee needs to work more closely with the Forward Plan to ensure that plans and budgets are examined at the appropriate stage of the planning cycle, for maximum corporate benefit

The linkages between the Executive Board's Forward Plan and the Review Committee's work programme will be further developed for 2008/2009 to ensure this is very apparent. Meanwhile, the Review Committee might wish to formally review the Executive Board's Forward Plan to determine whether it can add value to the decision making process, for maximum corporate benefit.

Customer focus

Area profiles and a thorough analysis of non-users need to inform service design and delivery. This is important for value for money decisions as some members of the community may not need, or require as much support, or even the provision of certain services, however, the converse may also be the case. It is important that the council can clearly demonstrate their approach to customer focus in this way

The ongoing work around Access to Services and the preparatory work around the new Sustainable Community Strategy should help deliver this, through providing better, more up to date information on the communities that make up Rochford District, potential users and non-users.

Communication and community engagement

Communicate and promote more effectively with the public and other stakeholders, so there is a broader understanding of what the council wants to achieve. It is critical to balance local interests against wider community needs, particularly in relation to the LDF

See the work under 'Visioning' above. The re-consultation around the LDF 'core' strategy will also be important in this respect.

Delivering through partnerships

Continue to improve and strengthen partnership working in order to deliver the council's plans and strategies. More work needs to be done with the business community on strategic economic issues and grassroots partnerships need to be developed to support the Area Committees

The Council will continue to work with the local chambers and meet with them on a regular basis. Also, through the Economic Regeneration Sub Group of the Rochford Local Strategic Partnership, the Council will attempt to develop a dialogue with businesses around the key strategic economic issues.

Performance management

Ensure a clearer alignment between targets, the community strategy and the corporate plan in order to embed a performance culture across the council, and to ensure that measurement of performance drives improvement

The current performance management framework as it has been developed seeks to do this and will continue to drive the improvement agenda.

Resource Management

Sharpen and refresh medium term corporate financial planning and focus on longer-term financial planning in order to set out more clearly, the future scenario for the council. This should include key priorities, what will be done, and how it will be funded over the next 5 years

This relates to vision and the budget process. This will be achieved through the budget process when the priorities and non-priorities are defined, along with an agreed 5 year budget strategy to secure effective implementation.

Change and project management

Accelerate the pace of change throughout the organisation in order to achieve step change in the improvement agenda. RDC should ensure that the need for change is owned by all Members and staff, and is understood by partners and stakeholders

The Council has already achieved many things through the outsourcing of several of its key frontline services and innovative approaches to partnering with the private sector, as demonstrated through the leisure contract. The recent transfer of the Council's housing stock represents another significant milestone, as do the recent changes to the political decision making process. The next key driver for 'step change' will revolve around the Access to Services work currently underway and the impact that has both in terms of the shape of the organisation and the delivery of services.

Organisational design and development

Develop an effective mechanism to share good practice and learning between department and service areas, in order to maximise the use of resources

Internally, this is being driven by the Service Improvement and Development Management Team, who will provide the framework to ensure learning and development is shared.

In relation to member development, the member training and development programme continues to look at best practice elsewhere and ensure good examples/experiences are incorporated in the agreed programme. Also, in terms of members policy and scrutiny development, the Review Committee looks at best practice examples to learn from experiences elsewhere.

Managing people

SMT needs to set aside time for development as a new team to ensure it has the capacity to transform the council. SMT should present itself as a team of managers dedicated to leading the organisation on the improvement agenda and each member of the team should act as an ambassador for the many good changes being introduced. To achieve this, there needs to be a clearer understanding at this level of the vision, purpose and direction of the council

SMT has agreed to set aside 4 sessions per year to work on this, plus working on specific management development and project issues. In addition, the Executive Board and SMT will also schedule 4 joint meetings per year to focus on the bigger issues confronting the Council.

Managers need to take responsibility for the consistent implementation of corporate policies and procedures, and to ensure that all staff are kept informed of progress and new emerging issues within the council

There is commitment from SMT to achieve this and procedures will continue to be developed in line with the Workforce Development Plan and Investors in People to ensure that communications are continually worked on across the Authority.

4. RISK IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The Peer Review acknowledges the solid progress the Council has made over a period. However, it is important that we continue to develop and improve; otherwise there is a reputational risk to the Authority and the ultimate risk of more direct involvement by either the Government Office and/or The Audit Commission.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The recommendations as outlined and the suggested actions do not in themselves require additional resources at this stage. However, it is likely that through the budget process there will be priorities for action identified which will need adequate resourcing if they are to be properly implemented.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is proposed that the Executive Board considers the recommendations outlined in the Peer Review report and determines its priorities for action, along with a detailed action plan.

Paul Warren

Chief Executive

Background Papers:-

None

For further information please contact Paul Warren on:-

Tel:- 01702 318 199

E-Mail:- paul.warren@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.