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| NAME OF COMMITTEE | COUNCIL |
| DATE | 11 DECEMBER 2012 |
| REPORT TITLE | PEER CHALLENGE |
| Report of | CORPORATE DIRECTOR (TW) |
| WARDS AFFECTED | ALL |

Summary of report:

The report summarises the findings of the Local government Association (LGA) Peer challenge team and advises Members on the actions the Senior Management Team (SMT) will now take to consider and implement some of the recommendations.

Financial implications:

There are no specific financial implications arising as a direct consequence of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Council:

1. Notes the content of this report and instructs Officers to issue a letter of thanks to the LGA for the opportunity it has provided to take an external look at the current progress and performance of the council.
2. Endorses the approach that SMT and the political leadership are taking, specifically to use this opportunity to review progress against the ambitions set out in the corporate blueprint, Shared Services and Beyond and to develop an action plan to encompass the suggestions highlighted through the Peer Challenge

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 During October 2012 both West Devon Borough Council (WDBC) and South Hams District Council (SHDC) welcomed the LGA to undertake an on-site Corporate Peer Challenge. Corporate Peer Challenges are free and have been designed to assist the continuous improvement approach adopted across local government. The peer challenge is delivered and managed by the sector for the sector.
- 1.2 It was agreed to request the team to focus on three particular themes. These were:
- a. To test the will and commitment of the two councils (Members and staff) to the shared services programme and how it may be developed and to consider the financial basis for shared service delivery and capacity (leadership and organisational) to progress this
 - b. Review the internal transformation process
 - c. Review and comment on the progress that the two councils have made on 'localism and working arrangements with the voluntary/community and business sectors and town and parish councils.
- 1.3 During the on site visit the team met with or held telephone interviews with around 100 people including a cross section of members, staff, Parish and Town council representatives, local newspaper editors and representatives from business, community and partner organisations.

2. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 2.1 The Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report is attached in full as Appendix A. It has been published on the council's website and shared both internally and externally with the organisations who contributed. Overall the findings were very positive and provide an independent endorsement of the Councils approach and work to date.
- 2.2 In particular the team were impressed by the external feedback they received and considered both councils to be extremely well thought of by the majority of partners.
- 2.3 They noted the high level of savings shared services had delivered and also commented upon the progress made in creating shared corporate and operational priorities along with a high level of 'shared ownership' from staff and Members across the two councils.
- 2.4 The team found that the two councils work well together, whilst maintaining their own identities, with a good understanding of their similarities and differences. They considered both councils to be well run both politically and managerially and to be generally delivering good quality services, dealing well with the financial challenges to date. Overall they felt both councils could face the future with some confidence.
- 2.5 However the team also highlighted a number of suggestions which they consider might help improve and develop the effectiveness and capacity required to

deliver future ambitions and plans and these can be seen on page 11 and 12 of their Report, repeated at Appendix A.

2.6 Senior Management Team's preliminary view is that the Review endorses our approach providing a strong platform for the two organisations to move forward positively to face the future major challenges, primarily the financial challenge.

2.7 In the short term, over the next four months:

- Members will be engaged fully to bridge the imminent budget gap for 2013/14 through the budget process and at the time of the Peer Review the budget material was being formulated.
- The scrutiny function will be reviewed to ensure it is productive and robust. Scrutiny Chairs from both councils have already met since the Peer Challenge to consider future actions.
- The leadership training we were already discussing with the Training Partnership will be pursued.
- Partners in the Connect Partnership will be engaged in reviewing its efficiency and effectiveness, with a focus on how they might further our approach to localism

2.8 Whilst these short term measures are being undertaken, we will also be thinking more deeply about how we can best use our capacity and resources; how we can sharpen up our performance culture and rationalise the 2015 Transformation Programme and Service Blueprints by simplifying processes and systems. This will take time and will need the full engagement of all elected Members after the Chair/Vice Chairs (West Devon) and Executive (South Hams) have given their consideration.

2.9 In addition as part of the peer challenge process there is an offer of continued activity to support our progress and the LGA have offered up to 12 free days of support to assist us. Their suggestion is that we use this offer, in particular to assist with our 2015 agile working project which is most welcome and will be pursued

3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no legal implications arising as a direct consequence of this report.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising as a direct consequence of this report.

5. RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 The Risk Management implications are shown at the end of this report in the Strategic Risks Template.

6. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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| Corporate priorities engaged: | All |
| Statutory powers: | As set out in the council's constitution and Financial Procedure Rules |
| Considerations of equality and human rights: | No specific issues |
| Biodiversity considerations: | No specific issues |
| Sustainability considerations: | No specific issues |
| Crime and disorder implications: | No specific issues |
| Background papers: | Shared Services and Beyond (WD- Strategies and Resources -25 January 2011) (SH Executive - 27 January 2011) |
| Appendices attached: | Peer Challenge Report attached as Appendix A |

STRATEGIC RISKS TEMPLATE

| No | Risk Title | Risk/Opportunity Description | Inherent risk status | | | Mitigating & Management actions | Ownership |
|----|---------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|-----------|
| | | | Impact of negative outcome | Chance of negative outcome | Risk score and direction of travel | | |
| 1 | Approach to report | That the report is not adequately considered to assist in our continuous improvement activities | 3 | 3 | 9 ⇄ | SMT and Leaders responsibility to ensure that appropriate time and opportunities are given to ensure this takes place | SMT |
| 2 | Reputational | Those who took part in the process feel it was not worthwhile | 3 | 2 | 6 ⇄ | Appropriate communication plan put in place and resulting action plan published. | SMT |
| 3 | Impact on Resources | Ambitious action plan and timetable developed that cannot be adequately resourced | 4 | 2 | 8 ⇄ | Careful prioritisation of actions and regular review of plans | SMT |

Direction of travel symbols ↓ ↑ ⇄