

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28 MAY 2013

EXECUTIVE – 4 JUNE 2013

REPORT BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND THE CHIEF
EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITY
SERVICES

7. EAST HERTS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report:

- The purpose of this report is to set out the improvement plan for the council following on its Peer Challenge and the Executive's recent away day session to consider the recommendations and service priorities for 2014/15 onwards.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY:

That:

(A)	The Improvement Plan be recommended to Executive for approval; and
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(B)	The Improvement Plan be monitored on a six monthly basis by Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee for one year.
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RECOMMENDATION FOR THE EXECUTIVE: That:

(A)	The Improvement Plan be approved and monitored on a six monthly basis by Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee for one year.
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1.0 Background

1.1 Following changes to the national inspection and assessment regime, a new approach to improvement was developed by local government for local government through the Local Government Association (LGA).

1.2 'Taking the Lead' identified a small core set of activities that are commonly undertaken by councils who proactively take responsibility for their own performance and improvement. This common set of activities provides the framework for sector-led improvement across councils' services and activities. Two key components of this framework are:

1. Transparent and comparable performance information supported by LG Inform. This is a data service for local government which at no cost, provides:

- a single point of access to a wide range of key contextual, financial and performance data
- the ability to share and compare performance information between councils

2. Challenge from one's peers. The LGA and local government recognised that challenge from one's peers is a proven tool for improvement. Facilitated by the LGA the 'Peer Challenge' is primarily an improvement tool capable of being tailored to allow individual councils to use it to focus on their local priorities. However, all corporate peer challenges include a core component that looks at issues of leadership, corporate capacity and financial resilience.

1.3 The council already makes regular use of LG Inform as part of its performance management framework and will make more use as the service is developed further.

1.4 Having been through an extended period of significant change during 2011/12 the council In December 2012 took up the opportunity of having a Peer Challenge, to take stock, reflect and consider the next round of challenges for the council going forward.

2.0 Report

2.1 East Herts Peer Challenge took place in December 2012 and considered how the council might explore future improvement in a number of areas that were important to the council, such as:

1. Members' role as Community Leaders
2. Developing the organisation, culture and supporting staff
3. Customer Service - an organisation that is 'Here to Help'

- 2.2 The findings from the Peer Challenge were received in January 2013 and a copy of the report is attached in **Essential Reference Paper 'B'**. Following the publication of the report the Executive team and the Corporate Management Team met in February 2013 to discuss the recommendations from the challenge and consider what the service priorities should be for 2014/15 onwards.
- 2.3 **Essential Reference Paper 'C'** contains the improvement plan that sets out how the council will take forward the recommendations from the Peer Challenge whilst still being faced with tough challenges of maintaining quality with reducing budgets. The plan is a working document that will evolve and progress commentary against the proposed actions have been included.
- 2.4 It is recommended that once this plan has been approved it is monitored six monthly in line with the service plan monitoring timetable by Corporate Business Scrutiny. It is envisaged that the plan be monitored for one year, after which any outstanding activity can be incorporated into relevant service plans.
- 3.0 Implications/Consultations
- 3.1 Information on any corporate issues and consultation associated with this report can be found within **Essential Reference Paper 'A'**.

Background Papers

None.

Contact Member: Councillor A P Jackson – Leader of the Council.

Contact Officer: Ceri Pettit, Corporate Planning and Performance Manager, Extn: 2240.
ceri.pettit@eastherts.gov.uk

Report Author: Ceri Pettit, Corporate Planning and Performance Manager, Extn: 2240.
ceri.pettit@eastherts.gov.uk