



South Staffordshire Council

South Staffordshire District Council

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

5th – 7th October 2022

Recommendations and Action Plan

LGA PEER RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE/ACTION
Future Planning	
Maintain the focus as set out in the Evolution programme	CLT has in place challenge boards which oversee delivery of the strategic work programmes that focus on the evolution framework.
Service Standards/Performance	
Develop a consistent approach to setting service standards, mapping customer journeys and measuring/evidencing satisfaction to support further improvement	<p>A priority in 2023 is to develop</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A new Customer Service Charter which will include a refresh of the service standards. 2. A review of our Customer Feedback Policy 3. Ongoing analysis of customer satisfaction data collected and using data and intelligence to feed into service/customer experience reviews.
Implement the operational service level dashboard that has recently been developed to help ensure consistency and quality of service (consider investment in a software-based system)	<p>The dashboard is discussed by CLT monthly and remains a flexible set of indicators, the customer experience programme outcomes will also be used to influence the indicators.</p> <p>Considering existing software-based system and no investment is needed to deliver this.</p>
Resources	
The Council may want to review capacity for project delivery and ensure it maintains this to delivery business as usual activity, including considering additional resource to support specific projects	CLT regularly reviews capacity across the teams and particularly in the delivery of projects. There are examples of where we bring in additional resource to deliver projects e.g., Commercial, project management, equality. The Culture of the organisation means that existing teams are best placed to deliver and lead projects as opposed to a separate project team.
Customer Experience Programme: 1) website project - consider the Council's capacity to deliver against the current timetable, and 2) ensure there is a collective vision and agreement of outcomes for the Programme and realistic timescales for delivery	There is a Project Board in place with a 2-year delivery programme. Investment made of £450,000 to support delivery and implementation. No additional action required.

Commercial/Financial Planning	
The Council needs to ensure a commercial approach is taken across the range of business-as-usual services, including contract management and income recovery	The Council is maximising its commercial approach through various channels – procurement and streamlining processes, new debt management policy, management of suppliers, capacity increased in finance and business enterprise to improve debtor and income recovery systems, ensure a holistic approach to our commercial offer. Fees and charges will be reviewed via RPP across all charging services e.g., cemeteries.
Capital schemes in the capital programme need to be profiled over the period of the MTFS to ensure accountability for delivery to allow regular monitoring of the capital programme	Capital projects to be profiled to MTFS from 23/24.
Learning/Continuation Development	
The Council should consider setting up a comprehensive peer programme, visiting other councils to learn from them but also with a view to offer feedback to reciprocally improve services.	Continuous learning approach with peers from other Councils across services is already occurring. There is also corporate input into LGA Peer reviews of other Councils. An approach to the LGA will be made to suggest that they lead a collaborative learning programme and SSDC would be keen to engage as a proactive leading Council. This approach could be focused for both Officer and Member learning of best practice.

LGA PEER ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSE/ACTION
Resources	
There is perhaps now an opportunity to develop staff networks and forums to provide further means to network across the organisation and for staff to support each other.	Strong communications opportunities and forums exist. As part of the Staff Today and Tomorrow Forums, we will encourage and accommodate the opportunity for staff to consider any further networks or forums that would add value.
The foundations it is laying to be an Employer of Choice are sound and will need to be consistently reviewed to ensure they are having the desired impact.	Metrics are being built as part of the refreshed Workforce Development Strategy and there will be a focus on understanding the impact of the changes as they are introduced.

Commercial/Financial Planning	
<p>Budget variations, the impact of rising inflation since the 2022/23 budget was agreed, together with continuing uncertainty about future funding for local government, makes it all the more important that the council finds ways of reducing dependence on planned use of reserves to balance its budget in future years.</p>	<p>The Council manages financial planning via its Resource Planning and Prioritisation programme (RPP)</p> <p>In year budget variations and the strategic use of reserves to balance the organisations financial position have been planned and agreed with members.</p> <p>The RPP process will continue to focus on service efficiencies where possible but also new opportunities to bridge the financial gap including increased income streams.</p>
<p>An effective Audit and Risk Committee which has oversight of financial governance is important. The council may wish to review how this may be strengthened further and how further support can be made available, for example through the LGA’s West Midlands Chairs of Audit Forum to ensure that the Committee has all that it needs to continue to be effective.</p>	<p>Proposals to amend committee membership will be brought forward for new administration in 2023.</p>
Data usage and Community Engagement	
<p>This includes looking to identify members of its community to help shape the approach to the Community Engagement Improvement Programme through the use of resident panels.</p>	<p>As part of the Evolution Framework a new ‘Community Lens’ programme will be introduced linking performance management to set out how staff, members and communities will be involved in developing a new level of ambition to further shape our services with our communities.</p>
<p>To enhance community engagement further SSDC may want to look at ways of increasing community involvement in the RPP process so there is wider public/partner understanding of the resource prioritisation choices the council has to make. This may link well with the</p>	<p>This will be dealt with through the Evolution Framework.</p> <p>An early Summer Overview and Scrutiny RPP session to create early engagement in the budget process and in the public domain. This also addresses the scrutiny and the participation point.</p>

<p>aims of the Evolution programme and provide further understanding of the choices which may need to be made in future.</p>	
<p>Locality Three – will be a big test of the outcomes which can be achieved when addressing some of the more difficult issues which the district’s residents are facing. SSDC has invested time in this approach and the peer team is interested in seeing the results.</p>	<p>This will be reviewed and the outcome can be taken to Overview and Scrutiny and form part of the 6 month peer review feedback.</p> <p>The programme will also be reviewed via the Challenge Boards.</p>