

## LGA Peer Challenge – Follow-up Review

### - Revised Action Plan

<b>RECOMMENDATION 1</b>				
<b>Embed regular Cabinet and Management Team joint working</b> by creating time and space for discussion on strategy, expectations and key issues. For example, more joint meetings and away days				
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Update</b>
1.	<p>Implement a calendar of away days to focus on corporate projects as a Leadership Team (six-monthly).</p> <p><i>October 2019 Action Plan Item</i>  <i>This action has been brought forward from the previous action plan.</i></p>	Chief Executive	<b>COMPLETE</b>	<p>The first Cabinet Away-Day took place on 21 October 2021 and a further Away Day was held in February 2022.</p> <p>At the first Away Day it was agreed to have future follow-up away days geared around specific topic areas. The first in February 2022 focussed on Housing Services. Future topic-based sessions will follow throughout 2022-23.</p>

<b>RECOMMENDATION 2</b>				
<b>Introduce a clear improvement plan for Planning</b> , which is jointly developed and owned by Cabinet and Management Team, to establish clear targets and deadlines for improvement. This should include member training about their role in planning, inviting in the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and improving processes and procedures				
	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Update</b>

## RECOMMENDATION 2

**Introduce a clear improvement plan for Planning**, which is jointly developed and owned by Cabinet and Management Team, to establish clear targets and deadlines for improvement. This should include member training about their role in planning, inviting in the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and improving processes and procedures

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
2.	<p>Develop a service improvement plan as part of the internal business process review process and include provisions for subsequent monitoring and review.</p> <p><b>October 2019 Action Plan Item</b> <i>This action has been brought forward from the previous action plan. This was however further emphasised in the follow-up review with the need to ensure that this is seen as a strategic priority, ensuring both senior management and the Cabinet have responsibility for the overall improvement plan</i></p>	Director (Environment) and Deputy Chief Executive	March 2022	<p>A draft Service Plan Improvement Plan has been prepared and is being reviewed by the Director (Environment) and Deputy Chief Executive.</p> <p>Progress against the actions in the Plan will be monitored on a monthly basis through the through 1 to 1 meetings between the Director (Environment) and Deputy Chief Executive and the Assistant Director (Planning) and also through the monthly Planning Management Team Meetings involving the senior managers within Planning Services.</p>
3.	<p>Proceed with a <i>Gateway Review</i> of the Local Plan as a matter of urgency, and ensure completion of the Local Plan.</p> <p><b>September 2021 Action Plan Item</b> <i>This is a new action identified through the follow-up review process</i></p>	Director (Environment) and Deputy Chief Executive	<b>COMPLETE</b>	<p>The Gateway Review of the Local Plan by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has been completed. The Local Plan timetable has had to be rescheduled to take account of factors beyond the control of GBC and progress is being made in accordance with the revised timetable.</p>

### RECOMMENDATION 3

**Develop greater partnership working.** Gravesham has been very self-sufficient, but to tackle some of the bigger issues it needs to develop greater partnership working to deliver on key priorities such as housing.

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
4.	<p>Ensure a dedicated grants/bidding resource is in place to assist the progression of projects, both internally and with partners, in terms of sourcing grant-funding opportunities.</p> <p><i>October 2019 Action Plan Item</i> <i>This action has been brought forward from the previous action plan.</i></p>	Chief Executive	<b>COMPLETE</b>	The council recruited to the Funding Officer post in August 2021. Since this time, the officer has been supporting the council in delivering its initiatives in response to the Economic Stimulus package approved by council, in particular the Welcome Back fund.
5.	<p>Implement an approach to ensure partners are fully aware of the council's strategic priorities and long-term plans, and ensure they are fully engaged in the delivery of council priorities wherever possible.</p> <p><i>September 2021 Action Plan Item</i> <i>Whilst not a specific recommendation within the follow-up report, it was felt that this was an area for further development by the council and as such, a new action has been included within the action plan.</i></p>	Chief Executive	<b>COMPLETE</b>	The Chief Executive and Leader have put in place a number of periodic meetings/ discussions with strategic partners of the Council to ensure that those partners are aligned with the Council's own priorities, opportunities are maximised to promote the work being undertaken by the Council and support is sought where that is required to help move projects forward. Notable examples of such strategic partners are Homes England, Lower Thames Crossing, and key developers within the Borough.

#### RECOMMENDATION 4

**Seize on the cross-party consensus** on the need for the Council to be pro-active in relation to housing delivery in Gravesham, including putting its argument strongly to government

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
6.	<p>Improved liaison with the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP), and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to ensure a stronger focus on Gravesham and the growth areas within Kent.</p> <p><b>October 2019 Action Plan Item</b> <i>This action has been brought forward from the previous action plan. A piece of work is underway to set the economic context of Gravesham relative to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KEMP). It is considered that this piece of work will set the foundations for Gravesham and the ability to leverage greater funding and support for Gravesham from relevant associations.</i></p>	Chief Executive Director (Communities)	May 2022	<p>Economic Growth Strategy in place June 2020.</p> <p>This work is underway and the Council has commissioned a piece of work entitled "Making the Case for Gravesham" which sets out the economic and social demographic case for investment in Gravesham by such bodies.</p> <p>Information gleaned from that exercise has already helped to support a successful LEP bid for funding towards a new arts and cultural centre, and also an unsuccessful bid for Levelling Up funding towards a major Town Centre regeneration bid, however it is hoped the learning from that process will improve the Council's chances of success moving forwards.</p>
7.	<p>Liaison with the Kent Developers Group to forge stronger relationships with developers across the county by hosting a Group session and engaging with the private sector.</p> <p><b>October 2019 Action Plan Item</b> <i>This action has been brought forward from the previous action plan.</i></p>	Director (Environment) and Deputy Chief Executive	<b>COMPLETE</b>	<p>A meeting has been held with the Kent Housing &amp; Developers Group where GBC Officers had the main agenda item. GBC's Planning and Regeneration Plans were presented to KHDG and this has paved the way for increased engagement and development of stronger relationships with Developers and other influential Regeneration bodies within and beyond Kent.</p>

#### RECOMMENDATION 4

**Seize on the cross-party consensus** on the need for the Council to be pro-active in relation to housing delivery in Gravesham, including putting its argument strongly to government

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
8.	<p>Consideration to be given the implementation of a <i>Strategic Planning Forum</i> to involve the Leader, Cabinet Member, Opposition Leader and Chief Executive to enable wider discussions on specific issues as required.</p> <p><i>September 2021 Action Plan Item</i> <i>This is a new action identified through the follow-up review process</i></p>	Director (Environment) and Deputy Chief Executive	<b>COMPLETE</b>	As a precursor to the creation of a Strategic Planning Forum a series of meetings has been held with key Members in relation to the delivery of the Local Plan. These meetings have been well received by Members and lay the foundations for the proposed Forum. Details of how the Forum will operate to be agreed with the Leader.
9.	<p>Ensure all Members are briefed and understand the risks associated with the Local Plan, five-year land supply and Housing Delivery test. Updates should be provided on a regular basis.</p> <p><i>September 2021 Action Plan Item</i> <i>This is a new action identified through the follow-up review process</i></p>	Director (Environment) and Deputy Chief Executive	April 2022	A series of meetings have been held with key Members to keep them up to date with the risks associated with the Local Plan and to provide an update on progress. As well as the updates provided via Your Borough, more frequent updates on the Local Plan; five-year land, the Borough's identified need, via the Government's standard method, and associated risks will be provided to Members through the Members Bulletin and, as applicable, via committees such as the Strategic Environment Cabinet Committee.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

**Be a spokesperson for the area.** The Council should put itself at the forefront of telling the story of Gravesham's proud history, vibrant and varied heritage – creating a local 'brand' to unlock development opportunities and investments.

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
10.	<p>Develop closer link between the Economic Development Team and the council's Communications Team to ensure a 'brand' for Gravesham is developed.</p> <p><b>October 2019 Action Plan Item</b> <i>This action has been brought forward from the previous action plan. Work is underway in order to establish a 'brand' for Gravesham and the Communications Team have been working with the Economic Development Team to develop a detailed communications plan, including actions to promote the borough over the forthcoming 12 months.</i></p>	Director (Communities)	December 2022	<p>A small group has been formed around the 'brand' for Gravesham and a promotional film has been commissioned which can be used for a number of audiences.</p> <p>The Communications team will also be working on promotional literature to support the film going forward.</p>

## RECOMMENDATION 5

**Be a spokesperson for the area.** The Council should put itself at the forefront of telling the story of Gravesham's proud history, vibrant and varied heritage – creating a local 'brand' to unlock development opportunities and investments.

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
11.	<p>Build upon the work that is already being done in the areas of history, culture and tourism in the local area to boost the economy during the recovery period by ensuring this is communicated widely.</p> <p><i>September 2021 Action Plan Item</i>  <i>Whilst not a specific recommendation within the follow-up report, it was felt that this was an area for further development by the council and as such, a new action has been included within the action plan.</i></p> <p><i>The Communications team is working with communities' colleagues to publicise developments such as the St George's Arts Hub, Estuary 2021, Fringe, etc and publicising relevant strategies.</i></p>	Director (Communities)	<b>COMPLETE</b>	<p>The Tourism and Heritage strategy includes the following overall objectives:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To encourage more days visits and longer stays</li> <li>- Increase the stock, quality and breadth of visitor accommodation</li> <li>- Strengthen Gravesham's visitor offer through supporting the opening of existing and new visitor attractions and developing 'experiential' tourism</li> <li>- Enable the programme of festivals and cultural activity to appeal to visitors from beyond the borough</li> <li>- To extend the effectiveness of Gravesham's visitor information and promotion</li> <li>- Strengthen local partnerships working between tourism and hospitality businesses and organisations</li> <li>- Develop skills and work experience opportunities within the local tourism and hospitality sector</li> <li>- Value and co-ordinate the expertise, archiving and interpretation of Gravesham's heritage towards a telling of Gravesham's story</li> </ul> <p>It is intended that the Tourism and Heritage strategy will complement the council's Arts and Cultural Strategy and is consistent with the Council's Corporate plan ambitions</p>

## RECOMMENDATION 6

**Develop an induction programme for the new Chief Executive**, which includes joint sessions delivered by the Leader and Chief Executive to cascade key information and expectations from the Corporate Plan to staff

### Update from the Peer Challenge Team:

The team felt that the induction for the new Chief Executive went well and he has firmly and quickly established himself in this role. The Chief Executive is respected by partners, officers and Members of the Council and has as such, no further actions are required in his area.

## RECOMMENDATION 7

**Review council policy for flexible working arrangements** and ensure consistency of implementation. A synchronisation of the policies with the investment in the equipment to make this happen.

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
12.	<p>Develop a consistent, corporate approach to flexible working for the council as a whole in line with the action plan that has been developed in response to the council's liP assessment, ensuring this is communicated to all staff. A new agile working policy is required, with staff engaged in the development of the policy.</p> <p><b>October 2019 Action Plan Item</b> <i>This action has been brought forward from the previous action plan, although this was further emphasised in the follow-up review. A new Agile working policy has been developed and a pilot will commence with effect from 1st October 2021 to the end of March 2022.</i></p>	Director (Communities)	April 2022	<p>A Hybrid working policy pilot started on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021 to the end of March 2022, to enable the organisation to understand what works for the authority whilst working to a new policy.</p> <p>At the moment all line managers are going through compulsory training around managing staff in this way and some amendments to the pilot have been necessary following recent government guidance with regard to Home working. However, all the principles of the policy still apply.</p>

## RECOMMENDATION 7

**Review council policy for flexible working arrangements** and ensure consistency of implementation. A synchronisation of the policies with the investment in the equipment to make this happen.

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
13.	<p>Undertake a review of current office space requirements in order to determine if there is the potential for reducing the number of desks required and develop a more 'hot desking' approach for the workplace.</p> <p><b>October 2019 Action Plan Item</b> <i>This action has been brought forward from the previous action plan. Upon completion of the Agile Working pilot, these proposals will be progressed further and plans for the new Civic Building will embrace the new flexible working arrangements that the council will have as an employer going forward.</i></p>	Director (Communities)	<b>COMPLETE</b>	In preparation for the new Civic Centre, work has taken place to establish the councils requirements going forward with regard to office space in the new Civic Building and our requirements during the interim period.
14.	<p>Ensure that M365 is rolled out across the council (officers and Members) as a priority, and improve the council's telephony system to support agile working ensuring this is communicated to staff.</p> <p><b>September 2021 Action Plan Item</b> <i>This is a new action identified through the follow-up review process. Implementation of Microsoft 365 across the origination and the introduction of a new telephony system have commenced.</i></p>	Director (Corporate Services) Assistant Director (IT and Transformation)	<b>COMPLETE</b>  Telephony System – 23 March 2022	<p>The rollout of M365 has now been completed for both officers and Members. Moving forward, there is a need to review the policies and guidance associated with the use of M365 to ensure a consistent approach.</p> <p>Work has progressed significantly on the new telephony system. The project comprises of two elements – Corporate Telephony and Contact Centre. The setup, configuration, and user acceptance testing of Corporate Telephony has been completed. The setup and configuration of the Contact Centre is in progress. Go live cannot take place until both parts of the solution are in place and the revised go live date has been set for 23 March 2022.</p>

## RECOMMENDATION 8

**A more diverse workforce.** The Council has a strong programme of engagement initiatives with its diverse community but there is a need for the Council to reflect that diversity within its workforce

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
15.	<p>Explore the potential for introducing a jobs/career fair to the borough to not only open up the employment market across the borough but also the council's specific requirements to the community.</p> <p><b>October 2019 Action Plan Item</b> <i>This action has been brought forward from the previous action plan. Due to the pandemic, a jobs/career fair has not been progressed and instead the council is exploring other ways to give young people future job opportunities.</i></p>	Director (Communities)	<b>COMPLETE</b>	<p>The Economic Growth Strategy was agreed in June 2020 and actions being undertaken to link local people with job opportunities.</p> <p>At present a jobs/career fair to the borough is not being progressed, but the council is currently in discussions with the DWP about creating a Youth Hub within the Civic Centre which will act as a one stop shop for young people within the Borough who are seeking work, along with other information around housing, mental health support etc.</p>

## RECOMMENDATION 8

**A more diverse workforce.** The Council has a strong programme of engagement initiatives with its diverse community but there is a need for the Council to reflect that diversity within its workforce

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
16.	<p>Review of person specification, apprenticeships and work experience opportunities to ensure they are as inclusive as possible.</p> <p><i>October 2019 Action Plan Item</i> <i>This action has been brought forward from the previous action plan.</i></p>	Director (Communities)	<b>COMPLETE</b>	<p>A Kickstart co-ordinator was appointed in August and we currently have 19 Kickstart apprentices within the council and our target of 30 Kickstart apprentices will happen by the end of March 2022. The Kickstart scheme is working well for the apprentices and also for the council and one of the apprentices has already achieved a permanent position with the council. In addition, we also have 11 Apprentices working for the council.</p> <p>We are reviewed our work experience offer and we have opened up applications for 2022. The work experience on offer will be a mixture of office based experience, which will be spending time in a number of departments and will also involve the students completing a home based project to present at the end of the experience</p>

## RECOMMENDATION 8

**A more diverse workforce.** The Council has a strong programme of engagement initiatives with its diverse community but there is a need for the Council to reflect that diversity within its workforce

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
17.	<p>Ensure a corporate approach to ensuring a diverse workforce both through recruitment and retention processes but also ensuring accurate and up-to-date information on the workforce is held by HR.</p> <p><i>September 2021 Action Plan Item</i> <i>Whilst not a specific recommendation within the follow-up report, it was felt that this was an area for further development by the council and as such, a new action has been included within the action plan. The new GBC HR team will look to improve the information that we currently have in place and this work will be a high priority going forward.</i></p>	Director (Communities)	<b>COMPLETE</b>	<p>Monthly reports are now completed by HR based on characteristics supplied on application forms, but it should be noted that this is still not a mandatory requirement by law, so candidates and new employees are not required to give all information and some people choose not to do so.</p> <p>In addition, the council actively liaises with various community groups/channels to flag up recruitment opportunities to harder to reach communities.</p>

## RECOMMENDATION 9

**Communicate success more effectively.** Utilise expertise of new Communications Team to develop a corporate approach to communications that enables the Council to sell its success to the public, partners and staff more effectively

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
18.	<p>Explore the inclusion of measurable outcomes as part of the new Communications Strategy, including regular reporting on the KPIs.</p> <p><i>September 2021 Action Plan Item</i> <i>Whilst not a specific recommendation within the follow-up report, it was felt that this was an area for further development by the council and as such, a new action has been included within the action plan.</i></p> <p><i>There is a commitment to the evaluation of campaigns included in Communications Strategy and these being implemented</i></p>	Communications Manager	<b>COMPLETE</b>	<p>The council's adopted Communications Strategy includes a commitment to carry out evaluation of communications campaigns, with regular reporting of these to the portfolio holder.</p> <p>The Communications Manager has attended a number of online webinars and reviewed other online resources re best practice and methods for measuring outcomes of campaigns, etc.</p> <p>Future campaigns will be subject to regular or one off measurement depending on their duration.</p> <p>Other members of the comms team will also be asked to attend online courses/webinars etc. so the knowledge required to measure campaigns is shared across the team.</p>

## RECOMMENDATION 9

**Communicate success more effectively.** Utilise expertise of new Communications Team to develop a corporate approach to communications that enables the Council to sell its success to the public, partners and staff more effectively

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
19.	<p>Implement a process to enable a clear feedback loop so that information from the frontline reaches seniors management in a timely manner.</p> <p><i>September 2021 Action Plan Item</i> <i>Whilst not a specific recommendation within the follow-up report, it was felt that this was an area for further development by the council and as such, a new action has been included within the action plan. Working with colleagues in digital and HR, the Communications Manager is undertaking a review of the council's internal communications. This action point will be incorporated as part of that review</i></p>	Communications Manager	Spring 2022	<p>This is being considered as part of a review of the council's internal communications.</p> <p>The Communications Manager is working with colleagues in the Digital Team on a review of and updating of the council's intranet site to ensure it is fit for purpose and can be used for two-way communication. The intranet site is likely to be updated following the relaunch of the council's corporate website.</p> <p>Digital noticeboards have been installed in mess areas at Brookvale depot to share messages relevant to frontline staff and to highlight avenues for feeding information back up the chain to managers. Commissioning is taking place and the screens will be live by the end of March 2022.</p> <p>The staff suggestion scheme is being refreshed and relaunched, including measures to feedback to staff on whether or not suggestions have been accepted and progress on implementation if they have. This will include suggestion boxes for use by staff without access to the intranet/email.</p>

**RECOMMENDATION 10**

**Review risk management.** Risk management should be reviewed to include issues such as property investment strategy and non-delivery of key developments

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
20.	<p>Engage with Zurich Municipal to review the council's overall approach to risk management and implement any recommendations as required.</p> <p><b>October 2019 Action Plan Item</b> <i>This action has been brought forward from the previous action plan.</i></p>	<p>Corporate Performance Manager Wider Management Team</p>	<b>COMPLETE</b>	<p>As part of an overarching review of service governance, a new 'showcase' or peer challenge process has been implemented.</p> <p>Through this new process, managers will present an annual review of their services to the Corporate Management Team, compete with business plans and key project proposals for the financial year ahead.</p> <p>As an essential component of service planning, this new process will therefore enable key service risks to be further considered, reviewed and re-evaluated in line with the expectations of the Corporate Management Team, thereby delivering on the proposal by Zurich Municipal for an increased level of service risk scrutiny at a senior management level.</p> <p>This new approach to service planning, and specifically that for service risk management, was considered and endorsed through the recommendations of a recent internal audit.</p>

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
--	--------	---------------------	-----------	--------

	Action	Responsible Officer	Timeframe	Update
21.	<p>Consideration to be given to updating the Corporate Risk Register to include risks in relation to the Local Plan, five-year land supply, Housing Delivery Test and IT Services and infrastructure.</p> <p><i>September 2021 Action Plan Item</i>  <i>This is a new action identified through the follow-up review process</i></p>	Director (Corporate Services)	<b>COMPLETE</b>	The review of the Corporate Risk Register has been completed, with outcomes being reported to Cabinet and The Finance and Audit Committee in March 2022. The risks identified by the peer change team have been assessed but did not attract a high enough score to be included on the Corporate Risk Register as a main risk. These risks however have been included in wider corporate risks and where appropriate will be managed by the relevant service area.