



## Section 2 – Report

2.1 Harrow Council invited the LGA to conduct a peer review in June 2016. A Peer Review is improvement-focused and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. It is not an inspection. Peer reviews are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers and consider the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Reviews:

1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting
2. Leadership of Place
3. Organisational leadership and governance
4. Financial planning and viability
5. Capacity to deliver

In addition to these questions, Harrow asked the peer team to explore the following issues:

- Does the council have the appropriate resources to enable delivery of its £1.75bn regeneration programme?
- Is the council doing the right things, with the right skills and capacity, on commercialisation? Is risk appropriately understood and managed?
- Is the council using data effectively?

3.2 The Peer Review found that Harrow Council is 'a good council.' That we had made great strides in recent years resulting in having a clear vision for the borough, active and engaged councillors, passionate and committed staff, and well-respected member and officer leadership. It also praised the way we have embraced new ways of working and are enthusiastically pursuing a commercial agenda. It also offered a series of suggestions for how the council could continue to improve. In particular it highlighted 9 key recommendations to help the Council move from 'good' to 'great':

- a) It is imperative that all members work to improve political relationships and that this is supported by all senior officers
- b) Build on the passion and commitment of your excellent staff
- c) Create space for informal discussions between Cabinet Members, and also between Cabinet Members and the Corporate Strategy Board, for early discussion, shared thinking and joint policy development
- d) Improve governance arrangements to provide a space for effective cross-party policy development and critical friend challenge
- e) Ensure that there is detail within the Medium Term Financial Plan on how savings will be achieved over the period of the Plan, and clarity about the way in which the regeneration and commercialisation programmes contribute to council finances
- f) Ensure that the risk assessment process is robust, effective and gives confidence to the whole organisation
- g) Ensure that regeneration initiatives are planned within the context of the whole Borough, and be clear about how regeneration of key sites will benefit all residents

- h) Build capacity and capability across the council, ensuring an agile workforce to deliver against corporate priorities
- i) Don't take your eye off the ball – don't forget the day job!

- 3.3 The final report of the peer review team was taken to cabinet in December 2016 where it agreed to ask the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to work with Members and officers to help shape and deliver an action plan to address some of the key recommendations and monitor progress against delivery.
- 3.4 Since the peer review was undertaken in June a variety of work has taken place to follow up on some of the recommendations made by the peer review team. The table below captures the activity to date against the recommendations made in the peer review report.
- 3.5 Despite the challenging financial circumstances, progress has been made in all areas:
  - 3.5.1 Formal and informal mechanisms are in place to ensure the Leader of the Opposition, Shadow Portfolio Holders and Scrutiny Leads are all briefed on major issues such as regeneration, key commercialisation projects and the budget. An all-party Major Developments Panel and cross party working framework for regeneration along with the project with the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CFPS) in the spring to review the effectiveness of the scrutiny function will all contribute to enabling greater member engagement on key policy areas and contribute towards improving political relationships.
  - 3.5.2 We have continued to build on the successful roll out of the new Corporate Values by introducing new staff awards and included an assessment of values in all staff appraisals.
  - 3.5.3 Space has been created for more informal discussions between cabinet members and Cabinet and CSB.
  - 3.5.4 The CFPS review of scrutiny and the scrutiny review of regeneration financing will support improvements to governance arrangements to provide a space for more effective cross-party policy development and critical friend challenge.
  - 3.5.5 Clarity about the way in which the regeneration and commercialisation programmes contribute to council finances is reflected in the way in which both these programmes are subject to an annual refresh as part of the three year budget process. If plans are no longer achievable, the process must see alternatives agreed to ensure a balanced budget can be set. The council does not rely on using reserves to balance its budget.
  - 3.5.6 The Risk Appetite Statement and Risk Management Strategy are being reviewed in 2017 to ensure they are robust, effective and give confidence to the whole organisation.
  - 3.5.7 The Harrow Ambition Plan 2017 places an increased emphasis on the ensuring all our residents feel the benefits of this regeneration. Social and economic impact modelling of regeneration programme benefits has been completed and extensive community engagement is taking place.

- 3.5.8 In order to build capacity and capability across the council, we have revised our corporate training programme to now include commercial awareness training, facilitation skills and a new induction programme. We are also working with workforce development groups to identify skills gaps and address with appropriate training interventions.
- 3.5.9 In terms of keeping focussed on the day job the 2017 Harrow Ambition Plan sets out a renewed focus on the things that matter most to Harrow residents, such as street lights, bins, pot holes and clean streets. Enforcement is central to this. We are already fining people for dropping litter and prosecuting those that we catch fly tipping. But we will do more to make sure that those who make Harrow dirty are not only found but made to pay for the cost of cleaning up after them. We will also deal with landlords who are not fulfilling their duties and overcrowding houses.
- 3.6 More can and needs to be done if we are to achieve our potential, however we do not have the capacity nor the resource to do everything. We can also put mechanisms and processes in place, but the challenge will be how we get the best out of them. So given what has been done to date, we would welcome scrutiny's advice on what they think the focus and priority should be going forwards.

Table 1: Action taken to date against Peer Review Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION TAKEN TO DATE	LEAD
<b>PRIORITY SETTING</b>		
<b>1</b> Create space for informal discussions between Cabinet Members, and also between Cabinet Members and the Corporate Strategic Board, for early discussion, shared thinking and joint policy development	Dates have been set for 'informal cabinet discussions' on key issues rather than the more 'formal' report based Cabinet Briefing with the option of CSB joining them every 6 weeks if required. CSB has joined Cabinet once and the Cabinet has met on a fortnightly basis to discuss a range of issues, especially if they cut across multiple departments.	Leader & CX
<b>2</b> Create space for informal discussions between Group Leaders, Cabinet Members and Shadow Cabinet members on big issues	Leader of the Council has met with the Leader of the Opposition on a number of occasions, especially during the budget consultation. Further thought needs to be given to how the cabinet and shadow cabinet can come together on big issues.	Leader & CX
<b>3</b> Some politicians and senior officers need to work together to urgently overcome the trust issues between them	It has been made clear to all Corporate and Divisional Directors that they should be meeting opposition portfolio holders and scrutiny leads on regular basis	CX

<p><b>4 Don't lose track of the day to day delivery of local public services while delivering on the big ticket items</b></p>	<p>Investment into the Contact Centre was made in order to improve call wait times on public realm calls. Performance has returned to a good level.</p> <p>New clean and green campaign launched – 'Making Harrow Clean Again.' A weekly street cleaning regime is in place, we continue to roll out our successful Days of Action events and we have stepped up enforcement action on fly-tipping and landlord licensing.</p>	<p>CSB</p>
<p><b>5 Senior officers to consider how to communicate their attitude to the 'little big things' to members to inform how they engage and behave</b></p>	<p>New clean and green campaign launched – 'Making Harrow Clean Again.'</p> <p>Senior officers join the CX on his regular ward visits.</p> <p>CX and senior managers visit teams or 'go back to the floor' regularly to understand what is important to staff to do their job well.</p>	<p>CSB</p>
<p><b>LEADERSHIP OF PLACE</b></p>		
<p><b>6 Political and officer leadership to consider how to evolve one council principles into a 'one Harrow' approach involving partners to bring clarity to shared objectives and ambitions</b></p>	<p>CX to write to all partners canvassing opinion on holding a twice a year partners meeting to consider place based challenges facing the borough and how we can work together to join up our resources to tackle them.</p>	<p>Leader &amp; CX</p>
<p><b>7 Seek clarity about areas of agreement between the two main political groups about the strategic direction of the borough, together with consensus support for major commercial and long-term regeneration projects</b></p>	<p>Mechanisms are in place such as regular meetings between the Leader &amp; CX, opposition shadow PH briefings and scrutiny leads briefings. There is an all-party Major Development Panel and cross-party working framework on regeneration. Opposition briefings have taken place on project Infinity and a revised budget setting process for 18/19 has been implemented.</p>	<p>Leader, Leader of Opposition, CX</p>
<p><b>8 Improve communication between group leaders e.g by re-establishing regular leader's meetings to create space for discussion on key issues</b></p>	<p>Leader of the Council has met with the Leader of the Opposition on a number of occasions, especially during the budget consultation.</p>	<p>Leader, Leader of Opposition, Group Offices</p>
<p><b>9 Engage the voluntary sector to reach a shared understanding of the contribution the sector could make to the borough</b></p>	<p>VCS funding report and Information, Advice and Advocacy Strategy agreed at January cabinet which included a three-year commitment to fund third sector support services to be re-commissioned in the summer 2017.</p>	<p>Divisional Director Strategic Commissioning</p>

and work with the sector to increase its capacity	Joint VCS/Council steering group agreeing terms of reference for strategic review of the relationship between the council and the VCS to commence in spring 2017.	
10 Clarify what the Council wants to achieve for Harrow in the regional context, including part of the economic agenda	CLG discussion on London Devolution agenda June 2016. Leader and CX engaged in discussions in West London and London Councils. Harrow took lead role in STP process and CX is a member of the London devolution sub-group leading on criminal justice devolution with MOPAC and the Home Office.	Leader & CX
<b>FINANCIAL PLANNING &amp; VIABILITY</b>		
11 Review and refresh financial reporting arrangements and ensure effective engagement of the wider group of members	For 2017/18, the existing quarterly monitoring of the revenue and capital budget to Cabinet and Scrutiny will continue in its current format.  In addition, internally a brief monthly summary will be reported to all Members covering the revenue budget.	Director of Finance
12 Improve budget profiling skills (revenue & capital)	The 2017/18 budget has been set and loaded onto the financial ledger bearing in mind this recommendation.	Director of Finance
13 Review the budget setting challenge panel process to ensure rigour, transparency and wider engagement	A revised budget setting process for 2018/19 has been implemented which includes greater member engagement with the ruling group from the start and throughout the process. The process has been discussed with stakeholders to ensure the process is clear and the outcomes of the process are understood by all.	Director of Finance
14 Consider how to engage cllrs, partners and the community in evaluating options that may be considered unpalatable but may be needed to balance the budget	This is part of the new budget process for 2018/19 as detailed in 13 above.	Director of Finance
15 Clarify the contingency plan for what will happen if the commercialisation and regeneration plans do not deliver as hoped for	The Council has a three year budget planning process which is robust and refreshed each year to ensure planned use of the budget, savings and efficiencies are still achievable and in line with corporate priorities. Regeneration and commercialisation plans are part of the three year budget process and will be subject to refresh. If plans are no longer achievable, the process must see alternatives agreed to ensure a balanced budget can be set. The council does not rely on using reserves to balance its budget.	Director of Finance, Divisional Director of Planning

	<p>Review of financial model completed.</p> <p>Modelling to assess all current activities and the financial impact of those activities. Eliminate duplication of actions.</p> <p>Scrutiny review of regeneration financing taking place.</p>	
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## ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE

<p><b>16 Clarify governance roles and responsibilities to ensure clear understanding among senior officers and members of their respective roles, how they complement each other and where lines of responsibility fall</b></p>	<p>Not started – any new training will require additional resources</p>	<p>Director of Legal &amp; Governance</p>
<p><b>17 Ensure robust challenge takes place between political and officer leadership</b></p>	<p>Formal mechanisms are in place as outlined above with regular PH and shadow PH meetings and scrutiny leads briefings along with scrutiny committees and reviews and cabinet question time. There are also opportunities for challenge at improvement boards, cabinet briefing, regen board, 1-1s with the Leader and portfolio holders and 1-1s between the CX and Corporate Directors.</p> <p>The CFPS review of scrutiny should help identify ways in which this might be improved.</p>	<p>Leader &amp; CX</p>
<p><b>18 Ensure decision-making processes allow for greater member engagement and challenge and develop effective opportunities for cross party and wider engagement of non-executive Cllrs including O&amp;S</b></p>	<p>Support has been secured from CPFS to review the role and improve the effectiveness of scrutiny. They will be researching how scrutiny works in other contestable councils and will facilitate a series of workshops with officers and Cllrs in May/June.</p>	<p>Divisional Director Strategic Commissioning</p>
<p><b>19 Review member/officer protocols</b></p>	<p>Not started, a review would require additional resources</p>	<p>Director of Legal &amp; Governance</p>
<p><b>20 Ensure the Cabinet Forward Plan is kept up to date and given proper importance by senior officers</b></p>	<p>Cabinet Forward Plan is given specific time at every CSB to ensure it is up to date and accurate.</p>	<p>Director of Legal &amp; Governance</p>

<p><b>21 Consider how the political and officer leadership can best model the ‘one council’ way of working to ensure all parts of the organisation are modelling the same values and behaviours</b></p>	<p>Cross Council working on a number of major initiatives has taken place including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Green garden Waste Scheme 2017</li> <li>• Clean and Green Campaign – ‘Making Harrow Clean Again’</li> <li>• Voluntary Sector funding proposals</li> <li>• Building a Better Harrow</li> <li>• New Civic Centre workshop for members</li> </ul>	<p>CSB, Leader</p>
<p><b>22 Ensure clear ownership of member development support that is valued with a relevant programme in place</b></p>	<p>The Member Development Budget has been cut in the 2017/18 budget, with only a small budget remaining for induction after local elections</p>	<p>Director of Legal &amp; Governance, Divisional Director Strategic Commissioning</p>
<p><b>CAPACITY TO DELIVER</b></p>		
<p><b>23 Develop an updated robust workforce plan as part of the broader OD strategy to ensure the right people are in the right role at the right time</b></p>	<p>A workforce strategy is in development and is expected to be completed by late spring/early summer.</p>	<p>Divisional Director HR</p>
<p><b>24 Ensure the capacity of the organisation is used to best effect to deliver the council’s priorities</b></p>	<p>Appraisal and objective setting for 2017/18 using a new online system. We also use CLG and managers forums to focus on key council priorities. The Learning and development programme has also been refreshed to give an increased focus on the skills needed to deliver the councils priorities</p>	<p>CLG</p>
<p><b>25 Work with the VCS, businesses and communities to explore how partners can support each other and the wider community</b></p>	<p>See no. 9 Work with Business Improvement District, local chambers and traders association on place promotion. Promote knowledge transfer between business and VCS through social value in the procurement process and the Harrow Connect Event held in March 2017 Establishment of a Crowdfund Harrow Platform and support for the set-up of ‘Harrow Giving’</p>	<p>Divisional Director Strategic Commissioning, Head of Economic Development</p>
<p><b>26 Don’t let new projects detract from the ability to deliver the core service</b></p>	<p>See 4&amp;5 Investment put into Access Harrow to improve call wait times in Public Realm. Q3 Strategic Performance Report reports delivery of all three Ambitions as ‘green’</p>	<p>CSB</p>

<p><b>27</b> Consider how the skills and experience of all Cllrs can be better utilised to add capacity to the Council particularly in terms of communicating and engaging with residents and businesses on key projects</p>	<p>The Labour Group has taken this on board and members are assisting with making changes (such as IT changes) and linking the council with outside bodies.</p> <p>See 18: re review of scrutiny</p> <p>Consideration could be given to undertaking a skills audit of Cllrs?</p>	<p>Leader</p>
<p><b>28</b> Ensure the 'one Council' approach embraces all elements of the Council and work with partners to adopt a 'one Harrow' approach to partnership working to compliment this</p>	<p>See no. 6</p>	<p>CX</p>

## COMMERCIALISATION

<p><b>29</b> Continue to build commercialisation capacity and capability</p>	<p>Project Phoenix core team and Board in place. Restructure of the Procurement and Commercial team will include a dedicated post New Civil Service fast stream role</p>	<p>Corporate Director Resources &amp; Commercial, Divisional Director Procurement</p>
<p><b>30</b> Ensure customer service and work to deliver efficiency gains is not compromised</p>	<p>KPIs on customer service reviewed at Improvement Board, in Corporate Scorecard and reported to Cabinet in the quarterly strategic performance report</p>	<p>Corporate Director Resources &amp; Commercial, Director Customer Services &amp; Business Transformation</p>
<p><b>31</b> Review governance arrangements for commercial ventures</p>	<p>New Business Plan for Concillium Business Services is under development and will be presented to Cabinet 2017. Review of LLP structure underway.</p>	<p>Corporate Director Resources &amp; Commercial,</p>
<p><b>32</b> Adopt a nuanced approach to risk as one size will not fit all</p>	<p>Risk Appetite Statement and Risk Management Strategy being reviewed and will be brought to Cabinet, after consultation with GARMS.</p>	<p>Divisional Director Procurement</p>
<p><b>33</b> Ensure a wide range of partnership opportunities, both private and public sector are explored and robustly assessed to identify best fit</p>	<p>All partnerships are considered and the contracts registers give an overview of arrangements in place and when they come up for renewal.</p>	<p>Divisional Director Procurement</p>
<p><b>34</b> Ensure there is an understanding of the synergies between the</p>	<p>The formal mechanisms in place for meetings and briefings and including CSB, CLG and the regen board all provide opportunities to ensure</p>	<p>Divisional Director Procurement, Divisional Director</p>

commercialisation, regeneration and economic development programmes and an alignment of plans	alignment.	Planning, Head of Economic Development
35 Ensure IT infrastructure and performance management system enable the commercialisation programme to move forward at the pace required	New ICT Strategy under development. Review of Devolved Applications underway Website developed for sale of commercial services, eg MOTs, garden service Systems upgrade to handle green garden waste Fly-tipping app developed	Director Customer Services & Business Transformation Corporate Director Resources and Commercial
36 Be outward looking and clear about what you aim to achieve through sub-regional relationships, taking the long view and embracing projects that might further the interests of others rather than your own	A number of shared service arrangements are underway and more are under development.  Harrow leads on the WLA New Ways of Working programme. An outline programme of work has been presented to Leaders and CX's that will look at shared services, procurement and demand management.	Chief Executive, Corporate Director Resources & Commercial

## REGENERATION

37 Clarify what Harrow will look and feel like as part of the Masterplanning process and consider the wider 'place' impacts beyond the 'red line' boundaries of key development sites	Social and economic impact modelling of regeneration programme benefits  Economic Development Needs Assessment (EDNA) completed.  Masterplans progressing rapidly on main regeneration sites, with intensive community engagement.  Developing a Harrow investment strategy and action plan/programme that aims to attract businesses to Harrow and addresses the wider issues of the night time, weekend and leisure economies that are required and delivered to ensure that Harrow is a good place to live, visit, work and invest in.	Divisional Director Planning, Head of Economic Development
38 Clarify financing of the regeneration strategy to ensure financial returns are deliverable within the MTFS	The current financial model assumes affordability. The debt financing /structure is currently being worked on. If financing cannot be secured in line with the model, delivery will be amended to ensure affordability.  Scrutiny review of regeneration strategy financing started in January 2017	Divisional Director Planning

<p><b>39 Incorporate political engagement across all parties into the governance and decision-making processes (including scrutiny), consider taking the masterplan to full council to ensure long-term plans are continued beyond the lifetime of an individual administration</b></p>	<p>All regeneration programme schemes to be taken through the all party Major Developments Panel. Additional cross-party working framework being developed. Senior level briefing with opposition leads has commenced.</p> <p>Scrutiny review taking place in 2017</p>	<p>CX, Divisional Director Planning</p>
<p><b>40 Ensure effective local community engagement, with residents, businesses and the VCS to enable community views to be incorporated into the masterplanning process</b></p>	<p>Intensive community and stakeholder engagement is in progress including for example events at the Civic Centre and Waxwell Lane and tours of the Wealdstone site.</p>	<p>Divisional Director Planning, Head of Communications</p>
<p><b>41 Ensure that the future vision for Harrow has wider understanding inside and outside the Council</b></p>	<p>A range of internal forums are in place to support the communication of the vision for Harrow including managers' conference, staff forums, induction. Externally, we have a comprehensive programme of events to explain our vision for regeneration, but we recognise we could do more beyond this.</p>	<p>Leader, CX, Head of Communications</p>
<b>DATA</b>		
<p><b>42 Consider how to move the Council's approach from data to insight</b></p>	<p>As a council we make good use of management and performance data, Experian data, Values Modes analysis and CRM data to inform policy decisions and future strategy.</p>	<p>Divisional Director Strategic Commissioning</p>

## Financial Implications

Given the Council's financial position there is no specific budget available to fund additional activity to implement the peer review recommendations. Any follow up activity would have to be funded from within existing resources. All the actions undertaken to date have taken place within existing resources or according to investment as set out in the Mid-Term Financial Strategy.

## Performance Issues

Performance will be picked up as part of the improvement board cycle and quarterly performance report to Cabinet.

The LGA will also undertake a return visit 12-24 months after the initial peer review to follow up on progress

### **Environmental Impact**

There is no environmental impact associated with this report.

### **Risk Management Implications**

The Peer review is included in the corporate risk register

### **Equalities implications**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken for this report.

### **Corporate Priorities**

All

### **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

Not required for this report

### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

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**Background Papers:** LGA Peer Review Report 2016