

## **REPORT TO EXECUTIVE**

**Date of Meeting: 13 March 2018**

**Report of: Chief Executive and Growth Director**

**Title: Corporate Peer Challenge**

**Is this a Key Decision?**

No

**Is this an executive or council function?**

Council.

### **1 What is the report about?**

- 1.1 To present to members the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) Feedback Report and recommendations, which follow the on-site visit by the peer team from 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 I. Note the content of the Feedback Report.
- II. Agree the peer team's key recommendations and areas identified for improvement and development, which following detailed consideration will be will be set out in a scheduled action plan and reported back to Executive.

### **3 Reasons for the recommendation**

- 3.1 To ensure continuous improvement, the application of best practice by other councils and to address resource issues identified by the peer team.

### **4 What are the resource implications including non-financial resources?**

- 4.1 There are no resource implications arising from this report but there are likely to be resource consequences arising from the action plan that will be presented to a future meeting. The resourcing implications will be set out in that report.

### **5 Section 151 Officer comments**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any future requests for funding will be considered at that time and the implications for the Council set out.

### **6 What are the legal aspects?**

- 6.2 There are no legal aspects, CPCs are undertaken by councils on a voluntary basis.

### **7 Monitoring Officers' comments**

7.1 This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

## **8 Report details**

8.1 A summary of the peer challenge approach, the membership of the peer team and the scope and focus of the CPC is set out on pages 3 to 5 of the Feedback Report (see Annex A). The peer team considered a combination of 'core components', which are looked at in all CPCs and, at the request of the council, reviewed specifically the council's role and success as a leader and shaper of place.

### **The City Council's leadership of place**

8.2 The emphasis on leading and shaping place is of particular importance in the light of the council's recent strategic direction and prioritisation of economic growth as a critical source of income as council funding, particularly Revenue Support Grant, has reduced so significantly. This was the primary reason for undertaking CPC and it is very pleasing to receive such a strong, positive endorsement of the council's ambitions and success in this area, including new and innovative ways of working with partners to achieve positive outcomes for the city and its communities.

8.3 The Peer Challenge found that:

- The Council has a strong understanding of the local economy and clear ambition which means that growth is shaped in line with a corporate vision;
- The Council has achieved a strong record of economic growth and has an impressive record of delivery in recent years;
- Exeter is now prominent on the national stage with a record of impressive growth delivery; the council's role in driving and shaping this has been essential;
- Growth has contributed to shaping a higher value economy, generating increased prosperity for the area and promoting inward investment;
- The Council is keen to shape growth rather than let it happen;
- It is actively working to shape a distinctive economic profile and location to attract future business investment;
- The Council has marshalled data to make a strong and successful bid to become a Sports England pilot to focus pioneering places for leading a healthy lifestyle in Exeter and Cranbrook;
- This typifies the council's openness to working with any partners from different sectors, recognising that capacity can be enhanced and the perspective of partners can add to an extra and complementary insight on resolving complex problems;
- The council has a good understanding of the importance of key 'anchor tenants' and shareholders in the city and actively nurtures strong working relationships to deliver on shared objectives.
- Partners commented on inspirational and charismatic political and managerial leadership

### **Sub-regional relationships**

8.4 The Peer Challenge Team found

- Local councils and partners are keen to collaborate to strengthen

- partnership working and enthusiastic of the council's partnership openness;
- A key requirement will be communication to stakeholders outside the sub-region to quantify the economic benefits that ripple out from Greater Exeter to benefit rural Devon and beyond to Somerset.
- The Council's reputation is held in high regard with the private sector and key stakeholders, with relationships described as excellent.

### **Organisational-focused findings**

- 8.5 Recognising the considerable financial challenges we face in the short to medium term, the challenge team concluded now is the time to move the Council's focus from outward-looking growth to major internal transformation programmes. Members will be aware that a new senior management team was recruited last year to support the organisation in delivering an outcomes based transformational programmes, such as the Sport England local delivery pilot, and to shift the focus to the internal operation of the organisation. It is therefore reassuring that many of the areas identified by the peer team for development and improvement are already being addressed, or had been flagged for action, in our corporate work programme.
- 8.6 In responding to these issues it will be important to ensure that the city's ambitions, and the council's ongoing role in leading and shaping the place, are not diminished, but that resources are allocated appropriately. A detailed action plan, comprising all areas of development and improvement identified by the peer team is being prepared and progress will be reported back to Executive.

### **The Post of Chief Executive & Growth Director**

- 8.7 The CPC has been valuable in identifying a series of ten key recommendations (see page 3 of the Feedback Report), which are already being addressed, or which will be prioritised for action. Key recommendation 4 - the separation of the roles of the Chief Executive - is the most significant. The peer team consider that the resource and capacity issues are addressed immediately by appointing a director with a portfolio covering the built environment. The peer team anticipate that this would provide additional capacity to enable the Chief Executive to drive internal change to deliver against the medium term financial plan and to support.
- 8.8 There are strategic considerations that flow from the Council's and Leader's priority to supporting growth that will still require the Chief Executive to support our national, regional and sub-regional agendas. However, the day to day support of transformation programmes and services is considerable and this has a consequence on the capacity to drive a significant internal change programme. It is therefore timely and appropriate that the Peer Challenge team has identified this issue as something to be addressed. The implications of implementing this recommendation, the options for achieving the additional capacity, and the impact on the wider organisation require more detailed consideration. Proposals will be reported back to another meeting of Executive.

## **9 How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?**

- 9.1 This decision helps to ensure the delivery of the council's purpose 'Well Run Council'.

**10 What risks are there and how can they be reduced?**

10.1 There are no notifiable risks at this stage, detailed risks will be identified in the action plan.

**11 What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?**

11.1 No adverse impact identified.

**12 Are there any other options?**

12.1 None identified.

**Karime Hassan**  
**Chief Executive & Growth Director**