

Cambridge City Council Corporate Peer Challenge

Feedback from the peer challenge team
14 December 2017

The peer challenge team

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The purpose of peer challenge

Peer challenges are improvement-focussed and tailored to meet individual council's needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus. The peers used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read. The team provide feedback as critical friends, not as assessors, consultants or inspectors.

The process of peer challenge

- Peers reviewed a range of information to ensure we were familiar with the council, the challenges it is facing and its plans for the future
 - We have spent 3.5 days onsite at Cambridge City Council during which we:
 - Spoke to more than 95 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external stakeholders
 - Gathered information and views from more than 50 meetings, visits to key sites and additional research and reading
 - Feedback session at end of onsite visit, followed by a short report and follow up activity (to be confirmed)
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Scope and 'brief' for the peer challenge

We have considered the core components looked at by all corporate peer challenges, namely:

1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting
2. Leadership of Place
3. Financial planning and viability
4. Organisational leadership and governance
5. Capacity to deliver
- 6. Managing effective partnership delivery**
- 7. Shared Services**

What we have heard...

**Anti poverty
strategy
held in high
regard**

**Trusted
partner**

**Greater
good is in
your DNA**

**Proud of the
Cambridge
brand**

**Good at
consultation**

Overall messages and observations

- All the right ingredients are here to deliver your ambitious programme
 - Your vision is your values – so how do you articulate a longer term vision
 - You are operating in a complex political landscape
 - Good at delivering services which are well received by the public
 - Building relationships is a real strength – the leaders is key but these relationships need to be focused and prioritised for the future
 - Clear commitment to principles of social equality and social mobility – backed up by anti poverty strategy – It is in your DNA
 - You are on the cusp of step- change- fantastic opportunity
 - Celebrate your success!
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Understanding of place and priority setting

- Understand the opportunities and challenges facing the city
 - Good engagement with residents and stakeholders
 - Understand and value the use of partnerships at leader and chief executive level.
 - Well informed staff, residents, TU – underpinned by transparency
 - Good at equality and diversity, supporting the inclusive views of the city
 - Recognise the need for and have invested in infrastructure for new developments
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Understanding of place and priority setting

- Develop a longer term vision and focus
 - Understand your role and position within the changing landscape – identify your contributions and USP
 - Operating model is fit for current challenges but what do you need for the future?
 - Are you able to respond quickly to the changing demographics/ communities. How are you driving this?
 - The value of collaboration and partnerships to be embedded throughout the organisation.
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Leadership of place

- The council is seen as a well respected, liked and trusted player – Leader and CEX
 - Delivered for the city and on a sub regional context e.g. GCP
 - People look to the council for leadership
 - Mature relationship between the council, residents, businesses, universities etc
 - Members have a real commitment to their Wards and the services provided to their residents
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Leadership of place

- In the new complex landscape you now need to further drive the debate, and position yourself for the future.
 - Take time to reflect and carve out an influencing and commissioning role
 - Manage the public's high expectations for the future – reset the dialogue with residents
 - Decisions to backfill the County's services against the long term implications for the financial sustainability of the City Council
 - All members and staff need to have a wider strategic view, as well as a good understanding of their local patch and individual services
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Organisational leadership and governance

- Mutual respect between members and officers
 - Chief Executive seen as accessible by staff – would like to see more of her.
 - Good internal communications – staff feel well informed about changes
 - Good practice – Chair of the planning committee is not a member of the administration
 - Joint waste service is seen as a success (Internal Audit)
 - Level of transparency is seen as a strength
 - Recognise the need for modernisation across the council's systems e.g. finance, IT, people strategy
 - Tenants are elected onto the Housing Scrutiny Committee
 - Members are well served
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Organisational leadership and governance

- Decision making process is consuming excessive resources, impacting the pace of change and slowing down the delivery of the political priorities.
 - Where next for transformation?
 - Encourage cross organisational working to increase innovation and break down silo mentality
 - Heads of Service need to, and want, to step up
 - Changing the conversation with the workforce about future direction and delivery
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Financial planning and viability

- Good financial position but you need to future proof
 - Strong track record of leveraging external resources
 - Ensure that the MTFS is aligned to the political priorities over 5 years
 - Consider moving to a different approach with voluntary and third parties which unlocks other financial opportunities and deliver the councils outcomes.
 - Ensure that the FMS is delivered well
 - Need for a deeper dialogue with the County over its financial pressures which will have an impact on Cambridge City.
 - Have clarity over the financial position of the shared services agenda and where this is leading in the future
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Capacity to deliver

- You have a workforce that is willing to go above and beyond
 - You have recognised the need to refresh your People Strategy
 - You have protected services and limited compulsory redundancies have been managed well
 - Comfortable environment to work
 - You have an active voluntary sector and business community with proactive citizens
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Capacity to deliver

- You have the resources – you need to prioritise and target resources to deliver your political agenda and vision
 - Balance between debate and consultation, and action and delivery
 - Activate your workforce – horizon scanning
 - ‘People’ cultural shift is required to drive innovation and proactivity. Current culture is “waiting to be asked” and individually service driven
 - More opportunity to learn from the local government family
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Managing effective partnership delivery

- You value partnerships and utilise them – good collaboration
 - You have driven effective partnerships e.g. GCP
 - Understand your future value and position
 - Utilise your position to lever what you need for the City within GCP, 3CS, CaMKOx and the CA
 - Widen the engagement of your politicians and workforce in the discussion and delivery of partnership work
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Shared Services

- Celebrate your success!
 - Great that you are in this space
 - Need to reinvigorate the partnership
 - You need to understand the ‘why and the what’
 - What is the narrative for you, your partners and your staff? Clear timetable
 - Ensure that you have a single culture – “you and us”
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Recommendations

1. Prioritise what's important to you and focus on delivery
 2. Articulate your narrative and tailor to different audiences.
 3. Consider if your decision making process will enable you to adapt and respond quickly to the changing landscape around you
 4. Move forward with an enhanced energised culture for delivering the councils future agenda and transformation programme
 5. Work out what you want from shared services
 6. World famous cutting edge city – do you want to be a cutting edge council?
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Next steps

- Opportunity for questions and discussion now
 - Feedback report to follow
 - Follow up visit to be scheduled
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