

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION COMMUNICATIONS PEER REVIEW

Head of Service:	Shona Mason, Head of HR & Organisational Development
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?(yes/no)	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 - LGA Communications Peer Review Feedback Slides Appendix 2 - LGA Communications Peer Review Report

Summary

This report provides details of the LGA Communications Peer Review process and details of their findings.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note the content and recommendations of the LGA Communications Peer Review.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The Committee are asked to note the content of the report as a first stage. Due to COVID19 and the Council's focus on the emergency response over the past few months, Officers have not been in a position to develop an action plan to date. It is planned that the action plan will be developed over the summer and will be presented to Strategy & Resources Committee in September 2020. Therefore the recommendation is to note the content of the LGA Communications Peer Review report at this stage.

2 Background

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- 2.1 In line with ambitions for continual improvement, the Council commissioned the LGA to undertake a peer review of communications across the organisation. This took place in January 2020.
- 2.2 The peer review team comprised of a group of six individuals who were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and comprised of both Officers and Councillors.
- 2.3 The team visited the Council offices on 15, 16 and 17 January and met with over 40 people including council staff, councillors and external stakeholders. The peer review team gathered information via interviews, focus groups and meetings. The team undertook more than 125 hours of investigation to determine their findings and provide a rounded view of communications across the organisation.
- 2.4 A number of external stakeholders were invited to participate in the review which included the following:
 - Royal Automobile Club
 - Jockey Club
 - Surrey Police
 - Rosebery Housing
 - Epsom BID
 - University of Creative Arts
 - Citizens Advice Bureau
 - Food Bank
 - Whiteway Transport
 - Local media
 - Citizen Panel
- 2.5 A number of internal stakeholders were invited to participate in the review which included the following:
 - Communications Team
 - Consultation Team
 - Leadership Team
 - Staff Consultative Group
 - ICT Team
 - Committee Chair/Chairmen
 - Cross party Members group
- 2.6 On day three of the review (17 January 2020) and upon completion of all the meetings and interviews, the LGA provided initial feedback to the Leadership Team and the Chair of Strategy and Resources. This feedback was provided verbally with accompanying slides as set out in Appendix 1.

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- 2.7 The LGA Peer Review report was completed on 9 March, with the next step to report the findings of the review, to Strategy & Resources Committee.
- 2.8 In late February/early March the Council had moved in to the early stages of managing the emerging pandemic. The Council formally started to respond to the pandemic on 9 March when the Council's Pandemic Co-ordination Group was established, ten days before an Emergency was declared. A number of the Leadership Team including the Head of HR & OD were engaged in dealing with the emerging situation before 9 March. As a result, the peer review was deprioritised, allowing Officers to focus on saving lives and reducing harm caused by the pandemic to the borough.
- 2.9 The full peer review report is set out in Appendix 2.
- 2.10 In consultation with the Chair of Strategy and Resources, two of the Peer Review's recommendations have been tested during the past few months with the appointment of an interim Communications and Engagement Manager who has contributed to the Council's COVID19 communications response. The Council appointed to this role in 1 April for a five month placement. This role has had significant impact in supporting Members and the communications team to ensure that our response has been effective.
- 2.11 The Council also undertook a digital "Who Reads What" survey, digitally on 22 May. This survey promoted through the Borough Insight as well as social media, intended to gather insight on respondents' communications preferences. It was timed to coincide with a special Covid-19 edition of Borough Insight, the next edition of which is not due until Nov 2020 and aimed to maximise the opportunity while people were at home in lockdown to complete the survey. The closing date was 3 July. Over 300 responses were received and results are being analysed at the time of writing
- 2.12 It is recognised that the survey was not accessible to all residents in digital format and will provide feedback from only those who could access it on digital platforms. It is intended to be an indication and a guide to help the Council refine communications delivery and direct attention to any areas of reported need, rather than a one off consultation. Further engagement work will need to be undertaken to ensure that all residents have an opportunity to contribute in a fully inclusive and representative way. This will be a feature of the action plan that will be developed over the summer.
- 2.13 The action plan will, subject to a further outbreak of Covid19, be developed over the coming months and will be reported to Strategy & Resources Committee in September 2020 for member consideration

3 Risk Assessment

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Legal or other duties

3.1 Impact Assessment

3.1.1 There are no impact assessment implications for this report.

3.1.2 Upon development of the action plan and development of any resulting action from the action plan, impact assessments may be required. These will be outlined in future reports

3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 There are no crime and disorder implications for this report.

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 There are no safeguarding implications for this report.

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 There are no dependencies for this report.

3.4.2 Upon development of the action plan and development of any resulting action from the action plan, a number of dependencies may be identified. As detailed within this report developing a whole Council effective communications approach will require input from many different groups.

3.5 Other

3.5.1 N/A

4 Financial Implications

4.1 The Council is facing significant financial impacts from the result of COVID19, as reported to S&R Committee on 2 July. In developing the action plan it will be vital to ensure that priorities are established and can be funded, particularly in relation to any investment in technology and tools.

4.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None for the purposes of this report.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

5.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** none arising from the contents of this report.

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** All of the Council Key Priorities are engaged.

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6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None

6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None

6.5 **Partnerships:** None

7 **Background papers**

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- None

Other papers:

- None