

Peer Team Observations	Peer Team Recommendations	Proposed Action/ Action Underway
GOVERNANCE		
Committee Structure		
<p>The Council's current committee structure leads to duplication and an over focus on operational rather than strategic issues. The current committee system can be time consuming with a lot of reports sent for information and low levels of delegation.</p>	<p>That the committee system be streamlined before the next election to achieve effective best practice in governance</p>	<p>The Council agreed that a Member led review to consider the recommendations set out in the BDO report and the Peer Review should take place and report back to the Council in six months' time (October 2017) (<i>Minute No. 1161 refers</i>)</p>
<p>Current arrangements where all members sit on an area planning committee add to the imbalance between the ward and strategic role of councillors. The current number of planning appeals lost by the Council is high and expensive for the Council. The Council is running too many risks in this area.</p>		<p>This review was led by the Deputy Leader who held a series of meetings with Group Members during June and July 2017. Output from those meetings was used to compile a series of recommendations aimed at streamlining governance arrangements.</p> <p>All of those recommendations have now been agreed by the Council and some implemented with immediate effect. The remainder will be actioned over the next 15 months leading up to May 2019.</p>
Member Training and Engagement		
<p>The Peer Team felt that whilst all members were committed and enthusiastic about their ward duties that a stronger emphasis and understanding was needed around the strategic and corporate role of Councillors.</p> <p>A refresh on the statutory duties and the creation of a narrative for the Council would help both officers and members understand the strategic objectives of the Council and the role that they both had to play in achieving them.</p>	<p>Member development needs to be revitalised so that members are clear on both their strategic statutory and ward roles.</p> <p>Work out where the Council will be in 2 years, 5 years and articulate it</p>	<p>An updated approach to engaging with Members in advance of key policy decisions going before Council is now in place.</p> <p>A Strategic and Financial Planning Timetable setting out the proposed programme of work to engage with Members to compile a 4 year Corporate Plan for 19-23 will be recommended to F&CS in April 18.</p> <p>A Member Development Plan will be formulated for agreement by the Council in preparation for new member intake May 2019.</p>

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	The Council must ensure that all members that sit on the planning committees receive mandatory training.	<p>The Council meeting on 2 November agreed that mandatory training be provided to all Area Planning Committee members no later than the Statutory Annual meeting of the Council in May 2018. This training will cover core planning regulations and guidance to support and inform Members when making decisions on planning applications.</p> <p>Arrangements are being made for training to be provided by a specialist planning practitioner in the Spring of 2018.</p>
Member Officer Relationships		
<p>Whilst member officer relationships are good in general there is a concern about the lack of trust between some members and officers and the impact that this has on senior capacity within the organization. A feeling of mutual respect between officers and members is essential if the Council is to deliver on its objectives and services to residents.</p> <p>The Peer Team noted that there were a number of complaints in the system re members' behavior - both from officers and other members.</p> <p>Officers need to better understand the role of the councillor at both a ward and strategic level, and how they can support these roles and that Members need to understand their behaviors will be telegraphed throughout the organisation.</p> <p>Some staff believed that there was a lack of respect between officers and members and that there were concerns that this would get worse if not addressed.</p>	<p>Members need to understand their behaviours will be telegraphed throughout the organisation.</p> <p>It is essential that the council addresses this and heads towards the council working as one team.</p>	<p>Both Directors and the Chief Executive regularly meet with their Committee Chairman or the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council to discuss current issues and update on progress of key activities.</p> <p>Arrangements are in place for periodic meetings between the Leader, Deputy Leader, Committee Chairmen (or Vice-Chairmen in their absence) and the Corporate Leadership Team to facilitate communication on cross-cutting issues and forward planning. Meetings take place every six weeks.</p> <p>The staff induction process has been updated to explain the principles of the Member Officer relationships policy and reinforce understanding of the role of elected members; the updated corporate approach to policy development and the need to keep members informed of important and potentially sensitive ward matters.</p> <p>Further training will be organised for members in</p>

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<p>It was reported that at times there were volatile relationships at a senior level which affect the council and could have short and long term implications.</p> <p>The Peer Team felt that a feeling of mutual respect between officers and members is essential if the council is to deliver on its objectives and services to residents.</p>		<p>respect of member behaviour and the code of conduct.</p>
<p>The process to address Member complaints takes too long and causes a great deal of uncertainty.</p>	<p>Processes needs to be reviewed to ensure that clear and timely policies are in place.</p> <p>External capacity is commissioned by the Monitoring Officer to deal with the back log when and if required.</p>	<p>Updated procedures on the management of Member complaints have now been approved by the Council. This will ensure that all parties are aware of the process for management of a complaint and how it affects them. It will also ensure that complaints are dealt with promptly to reduce the period of uncertainty for all parties.</p>
<p><u>Economic Development</u></p> <p>Whilst there are a number of good projects underway, there is a lack of a clearly articulated overall vision or narrative for Maldon District as a place. By narrowing its focus and articulating its 'asks' for the area Maldon District Council (MDC) will be able to better position itself and its ambition. The work would also be better supported through the use of programme management to coordinate and tie all the projects together.</p> <p>MDC has not taken the opportunity to address economic development through joint working.</p> <p>The Council is working with partners to deliver on its</p>	<p>The Council needs to clearly express its geographic priorities and make better use of partnerships such as the Haven Gateway to deliver through shared ambitions.</p>	<p>The Council is now taking a much more outward focussed approach to economic development. This includes:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in partnership with the Haven Gateway to compile an economic strategy for the sub region, taking a sector led approach. • A programmed approach to delivery of projects set out within Central Area Master Plan, many of which will support economic growth. • A geographic plan on a page showing the key employment areas is in the processing of being drawn up

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ambitions on key subjects such as the Central Area Master Plan and Bradwell B but needs to think about whether it has the capacity to deliver everything it wants to do and what role partners can play in doing this.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbying for infrastructure investment – accessible links onto the A12. • Better engagement with businesses through Burnham Chamber of Commerce, the emerging Causeway Business Forum to help shape our agenda. • An updated website to make clear the offer to businesses seeking to either grow or relocate to our District. • Open for Business as a key workstream in the Council's Transformation Agenda.
<p><u>Transformation</u></p> <p>It was felt that there is a reluctance to change at Maldon and a leaning towards being more risk averse and sticking to traditional methods of service delivery. The Council may be missing opportunities through new initiatives such as income generation and commercialization etc.</p> <p>Whilst the financial pressures continue in local government, MDC has some space to think about what type of Council it wants to be and what type of transformation it needs to go through</p>	<p>There needs to be a high level discussion with members about what type of Council MDC wants to be to help provide clarity, vision and a strategy for the future direction of the Council.</p>	<p>The Conservative Group has recently agreed budget setting strategy:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced budget for next three years without drawing on reserves. • Phased reduction of dependence on NHB. • Low or zero council tax increases. <p>Officers are now tasked with delivering the savings and budgets in accordance with this policy and are working with Members to confirm targets and agree timescales to achieve this goal.</p> <p>It is intended that targets will be achieved in a number of ways including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Generation and Commercial Projects • Back office review • MMR and SMR • Workforce Development Projects • Information Systems and Systems Review • Review of service offer • Skills audit

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<p>It is essential that the Council reviews the structure of its transformation work to ensure that it gets the best results for the Council. This should include consideration of the role of the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and the resources that it has to ensure a successful delivery.</p> <p>The Council needs to look at the benefits of cross-organisational working and how it could utilise the skill base that it already has. To do this it needs to trust and empower staff to work differently, share ideas and encourage collaboration and innovation. With a clear framework there is a desire by senior and middle managers to take this forward and staff generally see the need for change.</p>	<p>Transformation programme management to operate differently with creation of a separate overview board to provide strategic overview and direction for members to sit on and an operation group for delivery which would be managed by officers.</p>	<p>A Transformation Board is in place and has oversight of the key work streams each of which are managed under the Council's Project Management Methodology.</p> <p>All managers and team leaders have received project management training and projects are required to follow standard project management methodology.</p> <p>CLT act as project sponsors and provide operational programme management.</p> <p>Effective employee and member engagement will be critical to enable the whole organization to embrace change.</p> <p>A skills audit is scheduled to be undertaken to help identify the skills within our workforce which may or may not be identified or fully utilized. The information will be utilized to enable staff to bring their skills and knowledge to work across departmental boundaries and provide opportunities to contribute to delivery of corporate projects.</p> <p>A Communication and Engagement plan will be implemented to engage staff and members in programme delivery.</p>
<p>Capacity The Chief Executive is very accessible to staff but not as</p>	<p>The Chief Executive to be</p>	<p>CLT has recently signed off a Staff Engagement</p>

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<p>visible as the Peer Team felt she could be. Staff would really welcome the opportunity to hear from the chief executive about future plans and directions of the Council, even if this is currently still in development. If this was to happen then there would be a greater chance that staff would feel more engaged and empowered.</p>	<p>more visible through regular briefings to update staff on the future plans and direction of the Council</p>	<p>Strategy which recognises the value of engaged employees and plans a range of activities to be delivered by all tiers of management, from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) downwards to help ensure that employees are engaged.</p> <p>The Chief Executive and CLT delivered staff briefings in October 2017, the next one is scheduled for March 18.</p> <p>F&CS has recently agreed late office opening once a month to enable regular uninterrupted time for staff briefings and team meetings.</p>
<p>There was also a feeling that some staff and members lacked a real understanding of the Corporate Plan and its objectives. It was noticeable to the Peer Team that there was little reference to this around the Council building and one quick win would be to create some reminders on objectives and values. This would make it clearer for staff, members and residents.</p>	<p>Create some visual reminders on objectives and values to be situated around the building and on corporate literature.</p>	<p>The draft 2018/19 update to the Corporate Plan has been developed in consultation with Managers and has been cascaded to staff through staff briefings. A reduced number of KCAs will help to ensure that all staff recognise the Council's direction and provide a greater focus on priorities.</p> <p>The action plan linked to the Employee Engagement Strategy will include a number of approaches to help improve understanding of corporate goals.</p>

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<p>MDC has difficulty recruiting to some professional positions and has a high turnover of staff within those areas of the Council which touch most closely on its key priorities - e.g. planners, economic development officers etc. The Council needs to think about its external reputation as an employer and the impact of staff churn on its ability to deliver.</p> <p>It is essential that the senior management team is fully recruited to, stable and focused on the direction of the Council whilst keeping sight of the operational delivery of the Council.</p>	<p>The Council needs to think about its external reputation as an employer and the impact of staff churn on its ability to deliver.</p>	<p>The majority of vacant posts have now been recruited to.</p> <p>A monthly recruitment report allows closer oversight of the recruitment and vacancy position.</p> <p>The Council's Recruitment Pack has been updated to promote:- the Council's plans and successes, excellent career opportunities, pay and benefits package and quality of life offered within the Maldon District.</p> <p>Maldon officers and Members have active roles on external liaison bodies and key local partnerships raising the profile of the Council</p>
<p>Members need more support in terms of their development and training. Whilst member briefings take place regularly they are conducted in an open and public environment. The Council would benefit from a refresh of its member induction process and could consider the development opportunities that are available to its members through the LGA and also by working with other neighbouring authorities.</p>		<p>A Member Development Plan will be formulated for agreement by the Council in preparation for new member intake May 2019.</p>