

LGA Peer Review – Key Recommendations and Response

Recommendation	Response
Prioritise your focus on income generation and IT projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Property Investment Strategy will be considered by Council on 18 December 2017. 2. Resources to deliver key projects kept under review and strengthened where needed. 3. Further review currently being carried out to assess any additional areas requiring further support, including current and forthcoming IT projects.
Be clear about what you want to achieve from other strands of Rother 2020	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All staff briefings have been carried out and numerous references in internal communications. 2. Will be picked up as part of the Members' learning day in January 2018. 3. Will be developed as part of the internal communications review.
Use financial strength to invest in resources to deliver	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Property Investment Strategy will be considered by Council on 18 December 2017. 2. Additional staff have been appointed to deliver key projects.
Support all members to become more strategic	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work with the Member Development Task Group. 2. Promote the opportunities available through the LGA to all Members. 3. Build on existing informal Member/Officer sessions
Develop the effectiveness of Scrutiny	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work with the Scrutiny Committee. 2. Continue to work with the Member Development Task Group. 3. Promote the opportunities available through the LGA to all Members. 4. Overview & Scrutiny Committee be requested to review the revised arrangements at the end of the first year.
Take opportunities to look beyond East Sussex for inspiration and innovation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual Members and officers have existing links with authorities across the country through various political and professional organisations along with other informal networks. 2. Review procedures to ensure that 'external learning' by individual Members and officers is spread throughout the organisation.
Account for risk rather than avoiding it	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Treasury Management Strategy reviewed on an annual basis. 2. Property Investment Strategy will be considered by Council on 18 December 2017. 3. Audit & Standards Committee to review the Council's overall risk appetite.

Recommendation	Response
Improve staff communications	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review of staff communication methods to be carried out, including those used by other organisations. 2. Information has been requested from staff on what information they would like communicated, how frequently, by what means etc.

Other issues raised

Issue	Response
Consider an organisational development approach with a specific focus on culture change.	This will be taken into account in work currently being undertaken in relation to the next stages of the Workforce Development Plan.
Incentivise developers to build sites that have already received planning approval.	Although we recognise that this is something to be looked at it is a national issue and not one confined to Rother. Officers will look at good practice from elsewhere to see if there are ideas that could be used locally. Furthermore, Overview & Scrutiny Committee has recently considered this area and the outcome of that will be verbally reported at this meeting.
Staff who suggested areas for improvement were not always supported to take these forward.	SMT will reiterate the message that we are keen to receive ideas from staff. This will also be reviewed as part of the internal communications process to ensure that communication is a clear two way process.
Compliance of the Forward Plan.	In terms of the definition of the Forward Plan in Rother's Constitution it is compliant. However, in terms of openness and transparency many other authorities seem to use the Forward Plan to cover Cabinet issues as well as Full Council and Officers will develop such an approach to be considered by Members.
Possible lack of consistency around risk management.	Risk management is considered through various processes within the Council such as Audit & Standards Committee, SMT, individual service reviews and the internal audit process. SMT will, however, review the various strands to ensure a consistent approach is being adopted.
Caution about charging and finances.	The Council's fees and charges are reviewed each year and considers such items as cost of providing services, statutory limitation on charges, charges made by neighbouring authorities (where relevant) etc. In terms of the specific area mentioned in the report, i.e. car parking charges and garden waste, these were the subject of extensive discussions with members before the latest charges were set. At the present time it is felt that the Council is maximising its charges where it can but this will continue to be kept under review.

For 2017/18 there is very little capital spend planned and this would not seem to reflect the Council's plans for housing and growth.	As soon as the leisure centre project gets the go ahead there is likely to be a large capital expenditure on that project. Furthermore, Members will be aware that the Council recently unsuccessfully bid for a property in Western Road, Bexhill, which would have entailed around £1 million being spent on purchase and other costs.
Apparent lack of a performance management culture.	The Council has very clear performance management procedures and SMT will review these to ensure they remain relevant and also ensure that managers are aware of the procedures to be followed. Also the Council has performance management and monitoring software and the use of this will be further promoted.
Rother 2020:	
Rother is sedate and there was corporate dithering on Rother 2020 projects.	Cabinet and SMT have approved and adopted the Efficiency & Sustainability Plan that sets out the timetable for delivery. We are on target to deliver the savings for the current financial year and plans are in place for the years up to 2020. This approach is transitional and evolutionary rather than revolutionary and therefore carefully managed, which may come across as sedate.