

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

8 AUGUST 2012

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CHANGE AND SCRUTINY

Report prepared by Ellie Kershaw

1. Planning Peer Challenge- next steps

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To agree that recommendations made by the Planning Peer Challenge Team in March 2012 will be converted to actions and progressed.

1.2 Recommendation of the Head of Change and Scrutiny

1.2.1 That the contents of the report of the Peer Challenge Team are noted (Appendix A) and the recommendations agreed.

1.2.2 That the lead officers at Appendix B are agreed and actions to implement the recommendations form part of the Lead Officers' service plans as appropriate.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 Following the abolition of the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Performance Assessment the Council agreed that alternative methods of ensuring continuous improvement would be sought. One of these methods is peer assessment, where trained peers undertake the role of "critical friend" and make recommendations for ways in which services could be enhanced or improved.

1.3.2 In March 2012 the Council invited a team of LGA trained peers to undertake a review, the purpose of which was to determine how planning can contribute to the Council's overarching priority of increasing economic prosperity. The team, comprising two officers, one Councillor and one LGA employee spent three days on site interviewing a wide range of people including officers, elected Members and developers. Using the information gathered the review team wrote a report (Appendix A) making a number of recommendations for improvement.

1.3.3 Following the production of the report an internal officer group was set up to look at the recommendations to see what work is already being undertaken and agree who would be best placed to carry each one forward. (Appendix B). Cabinet is asked to agree that these recommendations should now be progressed, as proposed in Appendix B.

1.3.4 One of the recommendations relates to the refresh of the Economic Development Strategy. This refresh will take into account discussions that were held with the Peer Challenge Team, remembering that the Council's overarching priority is economic prosperity. Individual actions from the Economic Development Strategy once agreed will be added to service plans.

1.3.5 Two members of the Peer Challenge Team, along with Adam Dodghson from the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) returned to the Council in June 2012 to carry out an action planning day, discussing the recommendations from the challenge and informing the Council of a range of support services that PAS can offer the Council in moving forward.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The Council could choose not to implement the recommendations in the report. However, this would lead to a number of improvements not being made.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 This relates to all three corporate priorities, but in particular 'For Maidstone to have a growing economy'.

1.6 Other Implications

1.6.1

1.	Financial	X
2.	Staffing	X
3.	Legal	
4.	Equality Impact Needs Assessment	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	

- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management

1.6.2 The implications arising from the recommendation will be identified and assessed as part of the implementation of those recommendations.

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

This is a Key Decision because:

Wards/Parishes affected:

1.7 Relevant Documents

1.7.1 Appendices

- Appendix A- Final report
- Appendix B- Proposed lead officers