

### PEER CHALLENGE – TURNING RECOMMENDATIONS IN TO ACTIONS

The Final report from the Peer Challenge Team contained a number of recommendations for Darlington Borough Council, both explicit and embedded within the narrative. The table below details those recommendations and the actions we propose to take or have already commenced to address them.

Recommendation	Action
Look beyond 2016, and begin to speak optimistically and positively about the future of Darlington to staff and the community	There have already been opportunities to give greater publicity to some of the really significant developments in the local economy, and the Council will continue to promote these.
Seek to reach agreement with Partners on the question of what the Council will look like in five years time, including what the Council's leadership role will be.	The development of the next Medium Term Financial Plan is providing opportunities to reflect on how the clear ambitions can be realised within a context of declining resources. This will be subject to public and partner consultation and engagement in the Autumn.
DBC already has clear ambitions and priorities for Darlington. It is recommended that they seek to deliver on them in the medium to long term.	
Continue to plan for the future in the medium to long term and take action and get pace and accountability into delivery	
Seek to understand why initial vision for collaboration with other Tees Valley colleagues has not reached it's forecast potential	We will review work with our Tees Valley colleagues to determine the key factors that have delivered success and what lessons we can take from partnerships/collaborations for future programmes.
Conclude the tri borough arrangements in one way or another so that you can move on. (A decision not to progress a tri borough vision shouldn't preclude collaboration on individual projects).	It was always the intention to re-visit the tri-borough collaboration business case in the third quarter of 2013/14, following identification of local savings plans, to determine whether there was still a business case for collaboration. At this point we will conclude our discussions one way or another. In the meantime, where opportunities for collaboration at a more local service level have presented themselves we have continued to pursue these. The work carried out previously has also facilitated a greater degree of 'learning from each other' and sharing best practice than was previously the case.
Grasp the leadership opportunity using a	These recommendations are informing how

different style that is 'big picture' and engages others in a different way than previously, then focus on action.	we think about the Medium Term Financial Plan and programmes that will flow from it. We are investigating best practice from elsewhere on how community budgeting can help achieve our ambitions.
Explore the community budgeting approach with public sector partners that examines the total public sector spend, and how it can best be achieved to deliver the necessary services (It is strongly recommended that this is not a 'pilot' approach but that DBC 'grasps the nettle')	
Ensure that sufficient time is dedicated to discussion between senior Members and officers, re-visiting the previously developed joint vision and taking the time to think and re-focus on the difficult times ahead, discussing how the aims can now be achieved.	As above, this is being factored into our thinking about the future.
Empower COB to deliver even more as a virtual team outside of their professional boundaries	
Consider creating some additional, bespoke senior management capacity (not consultants) to help over the next two years particularly around the management of change, public sector reform and new delivery models	
Consider developing a corporate commissioning team	It is likely that as we investigate and explore with partners approaches to commissioning the right services, then the way in which we organise commissioning is likely to change.
Consider re-focussing the budget consultation so that it focuses less on what must be cut but genuinely informs the public about a possible future direction and provides budget options, setting a platform for nothing less than public sector reform in Darlington.	This was implemented and the budget consultation to date focussed discussion on what future services might look like and what the public value rather than what might be cut. This encouraged some excellent debate. We are now in the process of preparing draft 'scenario' budgets and these will be debated via a further round of public consultation in the autumn
Seek to achieve a joint waste collection contract as soon as possible and continue with the positive leadership of this collaboration.	The Tees Valley Waste Management Group is leading this work and it is likely that recommendations on the shape of future contracts will come to the five councils in the

	Autumn.
Set ambitious targets to reduce demand for the provision of social care in Darlington	A key focus of the change programme going forward will be work to review processes and cost of service provision across all service areas. This will be particularly important in areas such as Adult Social Care where demand on services is forecast to increase due to changes in the demographic of the borough going forward. Specific projects will focus on what we deliver, how we deliver it and who is best placed to deliver it. This is likely to include work with our partners and the VCS who may be able to support us in meeting the needs of our service users in a different way that supports them to maintain independence and reduces pressure on the Council's social care budget. A good example of this is the Good Neighbours scheme.
Consider working with the VCS differently in a way that we commission rather than contract the VCS	
Work with partners to take a radical look at how services will be provided and by whom.	
In relation to the Xentrall partnership, consider where other developments could be realised (and further savings made), as was envisaged in the original business case	We will re-visit previous work which examined whether the existing partnership could be expanded to deliver additional services. This can now be reviewed in light of our learning from subsequent collaboration work.
Encourage staff to visit other authorities to look and learn and use their creativity to bring solutions to the problems they are facing back to Darlington	A review of our benchmarking data, much of which was collated ahead of the peer review will be used to determine an approach to learning from authorities who deliver good quality, value for money services to seek opportunities to learn from their approach or replicate their mode of delivery. The Assistant Chief Executive network for the North East are currently leading a piece of work around Sector Led Improvement which we are engaged in with a view to wider our learning and collaboration opportunities.
Seek to take advantage of the available LGA support for political and managerial leadership, in the form of development sessions, peer mentoring and leadership academy events.	A Development plan for senior managers and Members will be developed as part of our overall change programme, and we will actively engage with the support available from LGA

