

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Overview and Scrutiny

DATE: 13th April 2017

CONTACT OFFICER: Tracy Luck, Assistant Director, Strategy and Engagement
(For all Enquiries) (01753) 875518

WARD(S): All

PART I **FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION COMMUNICATIONS PEER CHALLENGE

1. **Purpose of Report**

To consider the recommendations of the Local Government Association's (LGA's) Communications Peer Challenge and the council's response to those recommendations.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Committee is requested to note the report and comment on the response to the LGA's recommendations.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

The council's communications function should help to explain and promote of all of the SJWS's priorities:

Priorities:

1. Protecting vulnerable children
2. Increasing life expectancy by focusing on inequalities
3. Improving mental health and wellbeing
4. Housing

3b. **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

The council's communications function should help to explain and promote of all of the Five Year Plan's outcomes, particularly via development of a strategic narrative, which describes slough's ambitions and plans:

- Our children and young people will have the best start in life and opportunities to give them positive lives.
- Our people will become healthier and will manage their own health, care and support needs.
- Slough will be an attractive place where people choose to live, work and visit.
- Our residents will have access to good quality homes.

- Slough will attract, retain and grow businesses and investment to provide jobs and opportunities for our residents.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

There are no financial implications of proposed action; all proposed changes can be met within existing budgets.

(b) Risk Management

There are no identified risks.

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal

There are no Human Rights Act Implications.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

An EIA is not required.

5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 As part of the LGA's support to local authorities they carry out a number of peer challenges. These include corporate challenges about the way the council operates as a whole, financial (Slough Borough Council had one of these in 2015) and communications. It was agreed to participate in a communications peer challenge and this was undertaken in November 2016. The review team included an elected Member from a London Borough and experienced communications officers from two large local authorities and LGA communications staff.

5.2 The challenge consisted of:

- An in-depth review of the communications function (including communications links to corporate priorities, corporate narrative, media relations, proactive campaigns, communications with key partners, internal communications and digital communications)
- An in-depth review of our communications strategy and advice on developing an authentic corporate narrative
- A detailed onsite assessment (over three days) of current communications activity, capability and capacity
- A feedback session, a set of recommendations/quick wins to help tackle key issues and a formal report.

5.3 The LGA's report is attached as Appendix 'A'. It is recommended by the LGA that the report is made public by reporting to a Council committee. The report includes a number of recommendations and suggestions as to short, medium and longer term actions. An action plan has been developed in response and is attached as Appendix 'B'. Members will note that the report acknowledges much good work, particularly around our day to day operation and in responding to emergency/crisis situations. However, the report notes that the Council has

lacked a strategic approach to communications, to explain the Council's ambition and direction and the need to plan campaigns around this direction.

5.4 As part of the Council's response to the recommendations, the Council has employed John Seekings, an experienced senior communications manager, to provide consultancy support on strategic communications and public relations, on a temporary basis.

5.5 The Committee is asked to consider the report and make any suggestions as to additional action.

6. **Comments of Other Committees**

No other committees have been consulted.

7. **Conclusion**

The report provides an opportunity for the Committee to comment on the LGA's review of Council communications.

8. **Appendices Attached**

'A' LGA's Communications Peer Challenge Report

'B' Action Plan in response to the report's recommendations

9. **Background Papers**

None other than previously published reports.