

# **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**EXECUTIVE - 1 NOVEMBER 2016**

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**Title:**

**STRATEGIC REVIEW 2016/17**

**[Portfolio Holder: Cllr Julia Potts]**

**[Wards Affected: All]**

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**Summary and purpose:**

This report seeks authority to commission and fund a Strategic Review of Waverley Borough Council to support the Council's delivery of high quality services.

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

A Strategic Review will actively support the Council to deliver all corporate priorities going forward.

**Financial Implications:**

A Strategic Review, estimated to cost up to £12,000, will require a supplementary estimate to be approved by the Executive to be met from the Revenue Reserve.

**Legal Implications:**

Employing a consultant to complete a Strategic Review will fall within the Council's Level 2 Procurement process which involves inviting 2 consultants to tender.

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**Introduction**

1. The way that local government is funded is changing and the Council recognises that it cannot continue to operate in the same way if services and jobs are to be protected.
2. The implications of reduced funding, coupled with the need to deliver high quality services, requires the Council to think differently about how service delivery is sustained and supported so that it meets the needs of our communities. It is also essential that the Council continues to remain positive and ambitious so it is able to plan for the future.
3. In recognition of the challenges ahead, a Strategic Review of Waverley would help clarify the current status of the organisation and identify opportunities for development and improvement. This would inform the Council's future strategy for service delivery and ensure the organisation is robust and resilient.
4. Consideration has been given to the options available to the Council in carrying out this review. The three main options that have been considered are: a review carried out using internal resources; a review led by the Local Government Association (LGA) using its 'peer review' process; and a review led by external consultants.

5. The first option, an internal review, is attractive in cost terms. An internal review would not incur any additional up front costs, however it would impact upon the ability of staff to achieve their immediate objectives. This approach also offers less scope for a fully independent perspective.
6. The second option, an LGA Peer Review, is also attractive in cost terms as it is available to Waverley as part of its pre-paid membership package. The review would be undertaken by other local government councillors and staff. However, the timescale for delivery would imply a start date of February 2017, at the earliest, followed by the actual peer review, so this would delay the commencement of this important piece of work.
7. The third option is the use of external consultants to undertake the review. Using the Council's procurement process, two consultancy firms experienced in all aspects of local authority functions would be invited to submit tenders to complete a Strategic Review, with the aim of starting in November 2016 and completing the task by the end of December 2016. The estimated cost of this is expected to be a maximum of £12,000, to be funded by a supplementary estimate agreed by the Executive. This option, although more costly, offers the prospect of a swifter start date as well as a fully independent strategic perspective on the Council.
8. On balance, this third option is considered to be preferable. The recommendation to the Executive within this report is put forward on the basis of this option being pursued.

## **Objective**

9. The purpose of the review is to provide both the Executive and the Head of Paid Service with an expert opinion and detailed recommendations, to be used as a detailed framework for improving council functions and maximising the effectiveness of member/officer working, particularly lines of communication so that these are optimal and fit for the future.
10. Any changes put in place will need to maintain and promote excellent customer service and the best value for money for Waverley. However, the review is principally intended to be a catalyst for ensuring the Council's existing use of resources and staffing structures become smarter, more positive and more proactive rather than seeking to make cost savings through significant staffing changes or redundancies.
11. Specifically, the aim is for the review to:
  - i. Identify and articulate the strategic opportunities, which the Council may wish to pursue;
  - ii. To analyse the challenges and issues for Waverley Borough Council in achieving these opportunities including organisational, partnership, resources, skills and culture; and to
  - iii. Produce a statement setting out the Council's strategic ambition and key priorities for discussion by the Executive and Council.

## **Conclusion**

12. Members have indicated that, whilst the Strategic Review is not budget driven, it will be useful to have the outcome of the review available for the final budget setting for 2017/18 in February 2017. In the light of this, an external consultancy be appointed to conduct the Strategic Review with an LGA peer review being considered at a later date.

## **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Executive agrees to a supplementary estimate of £12,000 to fund the appointment of an external consultancy to complete a Strategic Review by the end of December 2016, to be funded from the Revenue Reserve.

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## **Background Papers**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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