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Final Draft

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## NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

“It was very scary,  
we nearly  
actually achieved something”

# NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

We have been commissioned by the Leader and Acting Chief Executive of the City Council to provide them with a confidential report on the existing culture of the organisation with a particular view toward the Corporate CPA re-assessment scheduled for next March and the ability, or otherwise, of the Members and senior management to turn policy into practice and make a real difference in delivering top quality services for Nottingham residents and visitors.

To do this we have researched key corporate policies, strategies and initiatives and conducted some 80 hours of one to one interviews under 'Chatham House' rules, with forty senior managers, elected Members, partners and trade unions and have checked the accuracy of our initial assessments by two group sessions involving over thirty people from junior management positions within the organisation.

Our findings, drawn from that process, reflect what the vast majority of interviewees have said. We were surprised that there was almost unanimity across the sectors in identifying the problems but, if there was any serious challenge to the point of view we express, it is specifically mentioned in the text. We thank all of those have taken part in this process for their time and commitment and the exceedingly frank way they were willing to give their opinions.

## **2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Put simply, the Council is dysfunctional. Elected Members and officers genuinely have the same goal, to serve Nottingham to the best of their ability, to provide the best for the City, its residents and visitors, but, it is clear that several factors mitigate against this and there is a failure to meet this common objective so that opportunities and resources are wasted.

Key factors are:

- : -lack of leadership and management of the organisation;*
- : -Member/officer relationships;*
- : -the lack of, or use of, effective systems, processes and procedures;*
- : -the existing culture;*
- : -communications;*

and

each of these is examined in turn.

Our recommendations to start to turn the organisation around are at section 10.

*"There's too many cooks in the kitchen but they all want to make a nice meal"*

*"I care about my neighbourhood and City"*

*"I want to work in a high performing authority and I shouldn't have to move"*

*"People are banging down the doors to do something different, a real appetite for continuing development of the service"*

### 3. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

#### 3.1 THE LEADER

There is considerable respect for the Leader as an individual and also a clear expectation of strong political leadership of the organisation. He is seen as a tenacious driver of change. To many he is seen as a solution to the Council's problems, but perversely also the creator of many of those problems.

"The Leader has formidable energy and doesn't give up but everything is done as one offs and systems remain unchanged"

This stems partly from his interventionist role driven by sheer frustration at the inability of the organisation – the officers in his mind – to deliver, and the deliberate covering up of that lack of progress to the extent of hiding information or lying. In practice this means that he intervenes when he believes things go wrong and there is service failure, "and there's lots of service failure", so he along with [Deputy Leader] [ ] are seen as meddling, wanting to micro manage the organisation and act as officers.

"We end up with a camel being driven by [Leader] he's OK"

It also stems from the lack of a credible Corporate Plan as he is seen as putting forward knee jerk reactions or initiatives, reacting to situations or to the media, which are not thought through but simply because they come from the Leader are seen as priorities and displace and disrupt work programmes. He is known to get upset and shout if things are not done, or not done to a timescale, even though they are unrealistic or outside of the Council's legal powers. Whilst understandable, this type of behaviour is unreasonable, not effective and actually counter productive as it undermines the "Respect those we work with and for" corporate way of working, so it is not seen as being modelled from the top of the organisation. It is however the Leader's way of holding people to account and is rightly or wrongly accepted as such and does not amount to bullying.

"We get shouted at and a bit of public humiliation but nothing happens, there's no problem with that"

Having to concentrate on organisational issues means again to his own considerable frustration that the Leader is unable to fulfil the crucial leadership roles of setting, articulating and maintaining the vision for the City and the Council and many within and outside the Council are critical of this. They want to see the Council, through the Leader, setting that vision for what the City should aspire to over the next ten years, the leadership of place agenda.

"Nottingham does not know what kind of city it wants to be"

Although strictly outside our brief, issues have been raised with us as to the relationship between the Leader and Deputy Leader and the Leader and his Group. We have not sought to follow these up but, if there are issues they do need resolving to ensure the status of the Leader is not undermined.

The Leader's role in pursuing the Respect agenda is quite rightly widely praised but in reality the organisation has let him down, as he has had to manage the process to ensure success as opposed to simply leading it.

### 3.2 ELECTED MEMBERS

The overwhelming criticism of elected Members, which they even voice themselves, is that they interfere and attempt to micro manage the organisation at all levels. They are seen as making unreasonable and unrealistic demands to unreasonable timescales and this consumes too many resources and deflects officers from dealing with what they thought were the priorities.

The real difficulty with this is that the ‘meddling’ as it is termed is usually on pet schemes or ward issues and may even run counter, sometimes deliberately, to the agenda the Council is pursuing. Members with few exceptions are not seen as having a citywide view or profile and are not seen as signed up to any corporate agenda, strategies or policies. There is said to be too much Member infighting and they do not, “Act as one Council for our whole community”, if the Members are not seen as corporate why should the officers be?

Portfolio Holders and executive Members are in the main seen as helpful and committed but concentrate on ‘their departments’ which again undermines any corporate agenda.

Members’ role as ‘advisors’ to recruitment panels should be reconsidered as this is widely seen as a step too far into the officer domain, a political interference and an attempt to circumnavigate the legislation on Member involvement in recruitment which was introduced for good reasons. Given the heat this issue generates and the apparent lack of success of it as a practice, after-all Members are highly critical of officers they have taken part in recruiting, we would question whether it is even a valuable use of Members’ time.

The Opposition, epitomised by Councillor Cowans, is not seen as constructive or effective. Councillor Cowans in particular is seen as very awkward, demanding and over personalises issues to the extent of being insulting. However, two things emerge, firstly, the issues he raises, as opposed to how he raises them are seen as legitimate and ones which should be pursued by the Controlling Group and secondly, the Controlling Group is seen as failing to effectively deal with him on a personal basis which gives him credibility and undermines the commitment to ‘respect those we work with and for’.

### 3.3 THE STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Corporate Strategic Management Team to give it its full title, has been frequently described to us as, “not corporate, not strategic, it doesn’t manage and it’s not a team” whilst we expect a certain antipathy towards any top management team, the fact that four members of the team also made this quite devastating criticism gives it total credibility.

*“Politicians are too involved in detail, it's insidious interference”*

*“Members act as dissatisfied managing directors”*

*“Most members don't want to change they want to re-invent the past”*

*“The deep-seated mistrust of officers is warranted, members have information concealed from them”*

*“Members are silent about their values”*

*“They don't act as a corporate team”*

SMT is seen as totally ineffective, it does not or has not driven change or equipped the Council to drive change. It has not provided clear leadership, it is not joined up, it is unfocused and lacks any dynamism. It, as opposed to some individuals in it, is poor at communication and sends out mixed messages.

*"SMT observes slow motion crashes"*

Corporate Directors attend as departmental representatives and advocates not as members of a separate team charged with running one Council. There appears to be some tacit agreement that Directors do not question each other's departments even if they have the information or skills to do so. If strategic issues are discussed either no decision is reached at all or they are fudged, eg centralising HR and ICT. Certain individuals in the team clearly have little, if any, respect for each other..

*"Corporate Directors are a fiction, it is not working, they act as departmental champions"*

To a certain degree the departmental attitude is understandable at this moment in time as departments have undergone very significant change and, as Corporate Directors are actually judged by Members on departmental not corporate performance, that is what they have concentrated on. The amount of effort needed to form new departments or reform existing ones should not be underestimated but given that these Directors are setting the **strategy** and have well paid service Directors to implement and monitor the change and run the departments on a day to day basis, 18 months to two years should be the maximum for Corporate Directors detailed involvement in their departments. It is counterproductive and merely maintains the micro management culture and does not give any time for the corporate initiatives and issues which are essential for the Council and departments to perform effectively.

*"Corporate Directors don't own the corporate agenda or the corporate messages in their own department"*

An examination of the agendas confirms that although a considerable amount of time is taken up by meetings, which gives an impression that SMT is 'busy', little, if anything that is discussed is strategic, at best it is an information exchange and talking shop with few decisions being made. We saw few meetings that all Corporate Directors actually attended with a range of substitutes being the norm. The substitutes were unimpressed with what they witnessed and they no doubt talk to their colleagues further undermining SMT's credibility. SMT agendas and minutes should be available on the intranet and not just an anodyne heavily censored note of discussions which is of no use for tier down briefing.

*"SMT operate in a parallel universe, not connecting with Service Directors or Team Leaders"*

Returning to the time available for SMT members to be effective we should now mention the effect of the micro management culture on the organisation. If the Leader engages even unwillingly in micro management the Chief Executive requires high amounts of departmental information to ensure he is not 'caught out' by the Leader having or wanting knowledge/information that the Chief Executive does not have. This has to be supplied to the Chief Executive by Corporate Directors who in turn require it of Service Directors and so it tiers down the organisation. Information, not intelligence, is passed up and with it responsibility, a fairly unique upward delegation. This information

*"Nothing sensible or coherent has come out of SMT that has impacted on anything that I've done"*

gathering exercise takes up inordinate amounts of time, blurs accountability, and the information is rarely used. This cycle must be stopped to free up time and refocus responsibility.

We also share the view that some Corporate Directors 'talk the talk' but actually do not know how to achieve things. It may not therefore be an unwillingness to act corporately but a real lack of knowledge regarding what corporate as opposed to centralised actually means and how it could be achieved.

The new Chief Executive needs to work very hard on forming these departmental Corporate Directors into a corporate team and focus them on the pressing issues facing the authority. SMT needs to establish credibility with Members and employees before it is able to provide the leadership to the organisation that is lacking at present. A rapid step change is needed and we put forward some recommendations at section 10.

### 3.4 SLMG

No one we spoke to questioned the need for a management competency exercise to be carried out with senior management. Some would have preferred it to be more of a leadership rather than a management competency exercise but looking at the competencies tested they would not have changed very much. Justification for the exercise did differ, one school of thought being to ensure that the Council had the right managers to take it forward into some brave new world, the other that the capability procedures had not been followed through for some 10 to 15 years and that a significant proportion of senior managers were simply incapable of carrying out their responsibilities.

Whatever the reason there is no doubt that the way the exercise was carried out, the system and process followed, has been absolutely disastrous for the Council. The idea was good but its execution flawed. Every attribute of poor project management is evident.

Objectives were never initially set out, hearts and minds were not won, the process was uncertain and changed, timescales were changed, sufficient resources were not provided, no thought was given to the consequences of individuals failing and no finance was allocated for redundancy and pension uplift costs.

*"People who didn't get through should have been paid off, the old regime are somewhere to run and hide"*

The result of the process is a considerable de-motivation of even the staff who were successful, "a deeply de-motivating experience", "the worst process I've ever experienced". Also everyone we spoke to thought that some people had got through the process who shouldn't have and one or two hadn't who should have. This means that the managers that got through still have no credibility as was evident from the comments of Members, Corporate Directors, other Service Directors as well as Team Leaders.

*"I know the deficiencies of people who have just sailed through"*

Perhaps the worst aspect is that those who failed the process are, in the main, still employed by the Council, on protected salaries in less responsible roles but in a position to undermine the new management and block progress and change, which they are good at as evidenced by their not getting through the original process. This also reinforces the belief that nothing happens as a result of failure anywhere in the organisation.

*"The disgruntled are still here"*

*"People who didn't get through appeared one year later on structure charts"*

You are however, where you are and despite the considerable financial and other organisational costs need to be sanguine and look forward. There is some evidence that SLMG is beginning to find its feet, is beginning to gel, is starting to network and become an emerging force for change. We were impressed with some of the individuals, their knowledge, drive and commitment and SMT must now ensure this is properly harnessed and exploited.

“Team Nottingham” is perhaps an unfortunate title as it is divisive for all those working hard for the City who are not seen as in it, but there is no doubt that even with quarterly meetings it has been useful for networking for those of who have bothered to attend.

This should be built on with SLMG being the engine room of the Authority. Elsewhere, it is the ‘Head of Service’ level officers who meet weekly and are charged with the operational running of the Authority freeing up SMT members time to concentrate on corporate and strategic issues, looking to the future, driving change and tackling areas of poor performance. Monthly meetings should be held between SMT and SLMG to provide leadership, reinforce direction and exchange information. This would send a real message to the organisation, would push the decision making process down by formal delegation and empower those at the front line, as all managers, Corporate Directors, Service Directors and Middle Managers would have to delegate to free up their time for their new responsibilities.

It is also essential that after one full year there is a re-evaluation of individuals, including this time SMT members, against the management competencies to ensure that the people who did get though are actually effective in managing and changing the organisation. This will be painful and some will fail but it will give credibility to senior management which is lacking at present.

### 3.5 DRIVING CHANGE

Having considered the leadership and senior management of the organisation we looked at who or what was seen as actually driving change.

The lack of a proactive role by SMT was clear, they were not seen as ‘key players’ with ‘little evidence of leadership ’being “ineffective and

*"There's a willingness to change, people are up for it"*

*"We need a genuine understanding of the big picture and a willingness to make changes to what we do"*

negative" sending out "confused messages" so managers were not sure what to do even if they had an aptitude to do so.

Compare this with changes within departments where Corporate and Services Directors were seen as successfully driving departmental changes even if this was sometimes seen as on pet issues or 'their hobby'. This reinforces the Departmental culture.

The prime driver for change was seen as Members, particularly the Leader and some Portfolio Holders. This was often seen as negative as it was 'unfocused and un-prioritised, wanting unrealistic instant response', 'ad hoc' and 'knee-jerk', 'interference not help', 'not strategic and too detail orientated', but it was also accepted that their involvement was born out of frustration of the inability of the organisation to deliver.

Scrutiny was seen as improving but still ineffective as it frequently scrutinised the wrong things and scrutinised the officers not the Portfolio Holders who should have been accountable.

Outside agencies such as the Government Departments, the Regional Office, the Audit Commission, the IdeA, the private sector and the Nottingham Evening Post were also quoted but it was quite clear that driving change remains unstructured and ad hoc, and proper process eg performance and programme management, are not working.

A similar story was told when we asked who provided challenge and rigour, 'only the politicians', 'some officers up to a point', with again only unstructured and ad hoc arrangements being partly effective.

*"Things get done by the heroic action of a few"*

*"People pursue their hobbies, organisational priorities may not coincide"*

*"Members try to drive change but they just shout the problems more loudly"*

*"Things kick around for 5 months that could be redesigned in 2 weeks"*

*"There's a lack of proper firm definition and process, we fly by the seat of our pants"*

*"People who challenge things are viewed as a pain in the neck"*

#### 4. MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONSHIPS

To say that there is a total breakdown of trust and respect between Members and officers may be going too far as there are examples of good working relationships between officers and Members but those are in the main based on the personalities involved. As a body both parties exhibit, for a variety of often legitimate reasons, a complete lack of trust and respect for each other. Each is seen as "the enemy" by the other. Members through frustration or inclination try to micro-manage, officers resent the interference which is seen as time wasting and ineffective and detracting from the real job in hand.

We were surprised that there appears to be no real widespread acceptance or understanding within the officer corps that they work in a political environment and that the democratic nature of local government means that there are different additional factors to take into account when managing than there are in the private sector. This does not mean officers have to be political, it does mean that they have to have political sensitivity and understanding particularly when political imperatives may change for national or local reasons. Members have a responsibility to communicate such changes but officers also need to continually check on their understanding of what Members want.

It is too glib to say that Members should set policy and officers deliver it as local government has moved on with officers having critical roles in policy formulation and Members, critical roles in the delivery agenda. Each authority needs to consider and set out the respective roles of Members and officers taking into account respective strengths and weaknesses and particular skills. For example, in one authority the Leader will chair the LSP, in another it will be the Chief Executive. What is certain is that clarity of role, completely lacking at present in the City Council where roles are undefined and blurred, is essential as the starting point for sound officer Member relationships. This is a task for the Leader and new Chief Executive to lead the Group Executive and Portfolio Holders together with SMT on, a mature, perhaps in the circumstances facilitated, discussion of existing relationships and what they are to be in the future, which can then be set out in a protocol and communicated to all Members and employees.

As in other authorities the change to a Cabinet system has meant that Members do not either meet officers with the frequency that they used to or the range of officers they used to see. We believe this to be detrimental and whilst we cannot advocate a return to the old committee system, ways of officers and Members meeting to build up an understanding of respective positions that are not challenging to management, or indeed political leadership, should be found. We make a suggestion in our recommendations.

"We need to feel we're on the same side"

"There's a deep legacy of contempt"

"Micro management is the comfort zone"

"A difficult place to work politically"

"Councillors are in touch with the community, officers aren't"

"There's a victim mentality, members are unclear and change their minds, there's no good dialogue"

"There's no united voice from members and officers"

"We do our best, not necessarily what Members want, we need clarity"

"We should sit down and thrash it out like a family and review monthly"

It is hoped that a building of trust will enable Members to concentrate on issues and not, as often at present, personalities. Councillor Cowan is not said to be the only existing example of this. Some officers are known to be less than positive but we have been given several examples of officers being castigated for giving genuine but cautious advice or constructive criticism. This does not mean that they are not being 'ambitious for Nottingham' and the rejection or suppression of advice seen as being unwelcome is a factor why some initiatives have been delayed or failed.

A proper accountability framework is also required as the existing methods of holding officers and Portfolio Holders to account, simply doesn't work. See section 7.2.

## 5. SYSTEMS, PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

### 5.1 THE CORPORATE PLANNING PROCESS

The ideal, or perhaps idealistic, is often promulgated as a City or Corporate Plan linked to the budget and through Service Plans to Team Plans and then through Performance and Development Reviews, a 'golden thread' setting individuals accountabilities which can be performance managed and monitored at the various levels.

*"We start with panic, mayhem and a lack of clarity"*

Such systems are all very well in theory and for inspection purposes but are often actually made too complicated to maintain and plans remain on the shelf unread and irrelevant. Any system needs to contain the vision for the organisation over the next three years, have a restricted number of prioritised objectives properly balanced with SMART targets that are easily understood, monitored, and communicated.

This year's Corporate Plan is said to be better than last year's but in fact very few people have actually read it, or the final version in any event. "There were so many drafts we lost the will to live". It is actually irrelevant to the running of the Council despite being agonised over for many hours by many people. The simple test must be, 'if I didn't have it would anything be different?' Given the following factors the answer must be **no**.

*"I ignored last years Corporate Plan and nothing happened, so why should I take any notice of this one"*

The Corporate Plan is still not signed off so has no legitimacy. Those who have worked from a draft version will have problems because of the significant changes that have been made throughout its lengthy gestation period.

*"The Corporate Plan is unhelpful so we fly by wire"*

The vision for the City is still not clear in simple terms that can be communicated to employees and the public. It is also seen as the Plan writers vision, not owned by the employees or Members. The number of objectives are reduced but are not prioritised, or rather everything is a priority so nothing is. There are no 'bite sized chunks' that can easily be taken into Service Plans.

*"The Corporate Plan has too many diverse deliverables, not prioritised against each other as it's politically difficult or a fudge"*

The timing is all wrong. Service Plans have to be completed before the Corporate Plan is available, even if it were produced on time. The Corporate Plan does not therefore drive the Service Planning process.

The Corporate Plan is not linked to the budget. Resource allocation does not therefore follow the corporate objectives. In reality the Budget becomes the Corporate Plan because it allocates resources to priorities and is available for implementation at the start of the municipal year.

*"They didn't understand or accept what we're not good at and haven't focussed resources on the big issues"*

The lack of a proper Corporate Plan on a rolling three year programme linked to the budget, produced on time with the budget, and driving the Service Planning system means there is a lack of vision, focus, clarity of purpose and direction.

We have not reviewed Service Plans but are told that they are variable, tend to be much too complicated and are not generally used as a tool to drive change or improve performance.

## 5.2 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Council has purchased the Performance Plus system which is expensive but widely regarded as the best system available. It is not used anywhere near its potential and there was widespread ignorance of its existence. For the system to work properly it relies on sections and departments capturing and entering the base information which it, the system, automatically aggregates up. For example a Team Leader would enter sickness statistics for his team on a weekly basis and the system would show him trends etc, highlight individuals who were over target or particular days when sickness fell, eg before or after the weekend. Management would have access to that information but also an aggregation of all sections in a division or the department as a whole. The information would automatically, through the system, be available to Human Resources and the Corporate Centre where departmental performance could be compared and council performance monitored. However, the system is not uniformly applied, if at all, and not utilised to provide the meaningful intelligence it is designed for.

There has been no mature discussion between the departments and the Corporate Centre as to what management information should be collected that would be useful to all parties to actually manage performance. Departments are universally highly critical of the existing system which is almost exclusively based on BVPI's and requires "half a tree" of figures to be submitted to the centre where "it disappears into a black hole" with no analysis or trends going back to the departments. A system that is information rich but intelligence poor. This is confirmed by the people who work at the centre, who are swamped with information and have little time to deal with it before the next month's information comes along. There is no risk reporting or progress reporting against objectives.

BVPI's are not useful performance indicators for most services in any event, some services don't have them so they are irrelevant, so it is no wonder that several services quite separately keep their own independent performance data.

The existing system simply does not attempt to manage the right things, it is not performance or improvement driven, targets are not based on outcomes and are rarely profiled so as it was put to us, "we're a highly successful team until month 12 when we always miss our target by a mile". We have seen no evidence that the system has driven performance improvement.

There are other methods of measuring performance, the Team Service Plan, quarterly PI monitoring, the quarterly challenge to Portfolio

*"We focus on meaningless high level benchmarking"*

*"We're busy, expensive and inefficient"*

*"Information rich, management poor"*

*"No risk reporting, no progress reporting against objectives, we're not governance driven"*

*"They just monitor, we get information but that's it"*

*"We have lots of information to satisfy the auditors or for the CPA but not what we need to run the organisation"*

Holders, the Performance and Resources Scrutiny Panel etc, but it is difficult to see with the information available to them how they can be effective, although it is clear that despite the system some of them have come up with some good results.

*"If things work well it's because of individuals not the system"*

The real performance monitoring is happening in the best departments, behind the scenes as it were. They have decided what is useful performance information, collect, collate, analyse and use it but this needs bringing into the mainstream.

*"There's a need for considerable re-routing of business processes to get us up to the baseline"*

The final part of performance management is the individual employees Performance Development Review. The first problem is that implementation is variable, some departments carrying out over 90% of PDR's, others under 50% with the average being 60% according to HR. There is no reason why 95%+ should not be reached and it is essential it is. This is not just about the credibility of the system and demonstrating commitment to performance and training and development. The PDR is essential in driving change and the understanding of the need for it with individual employees. If there are breaks in the PDR chain which there must be with only 60% taking place, then there can be no allocation of responsibilities and tasks into 'bite size chunks' down the organisation.

This brings us to the second major problem with PDR's. They are bottom up with individual employees supposedly having theirs first, then Team Leaders, and so on up the organisation. This must be completely the wrong way round and simply maintains the status quo. The Chief Executive should have his PDR first so that his targets are clearly set out for the year, in the light of this he then sets, Corporate Directors' targets through their PDR's, they set the Service Directors' and so on down the organisation. This process needs to be properly scheduled into all diaries so it finishes by the end of March prior to the beginning of the new municipal year. A period of six weeks is easily achievable in similar sized authorities.

The final problem with performance management is that there are little or no sanctions if you fail to perform, "it doesn't matter unless the Leader asks questions when we run round like headless chickens", which we deal with in section 7.2.

### 5.3 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Again the Council has the leading project management system, Prince 2, some staff are trained to use it, and there is evidence of its use on major capital schemes. Capital schemes are also now subject to the Gateway Review process where they are properly scrutinised to see if they are realistic and achievable.

In the main however, lip service is paid to project management and it is rarely, if ever, considered for initiatives to eg change the culture of the organisation. We are not suggesting that a full Prince 2 process should

*"We don't know how to implement and as we don't know we don't ask"*

be gone through for every initiative but the principles of Prince 2 should be followed. Every initiative should have a project initiation document (PID) setting out in detail the desired outcomes, it should assess risk, resource requirements and their availability, and set a realistic timescale with SMART targets or benchmarks that can be performance monitored. Other than for the large capital schemes previously mentioned this does not happen, and even with those often not in sufficient detail, leading to a situation where initiatives are not capable of being assessed against corporate priorities, have conflicting views as to what they will achieve, eg did the Market Square scheme including the cleaning of the front of the Council House or not?, have insufficient resources allocated to them and unrealistic timescales so there is a failure to deliver on time or at all to the frustration of all concerned.

Changes are often made to initiatives which are not communicated so the officer machinery is seeking to deliver the wrong thing. In the absence of a PID that can be monitored with Members there is no way of checking things are on course to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Proper project management is the delivery mechanism which the Council lacks and one of the main reasons for under achievement. Until a proper system covering all initiatives is implemented any change agenda will not be realised. We were frequently told, "there are no completer finishers round here!" proper project management is the solution to that weakness. The eventual use of project management for BSF is a shining example.

Consideration should be given to the creation of a pool of properly trained project managers that can be drawn on by departments, there are insufficient resources at present with success of a project often reliant on getting the right lawyer or finance officer.

#### 5.4 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

With proper project management individual initiatives can be brought to fruition but in the absence of proper programme management there is no co-ordination of those initiatives, or indeed knowledge of all of them, which may be conflicting or a poor use of limited resources.

An example is the failure to programme manage the neighbourhood, leisure and customer care policies. Considerable sums have been spent on new and refurbished leisure centres which is a successful project in its own right. These centres we are told, were put at the heart of communities where they would be easily accessible to residents. Their location does not match the nine neighbourhood areas and so the opportunity to use them or design into them community centres or facilities was not even considered. Similarly, given their location they would appear to be ideal for one stop shops/customer contact points with dual use of reception staff but again this was not considered. We

*"The neighbourhood agenda is just not thought through, there's no rationale for 9 areas"*

*"It's a reactive approach rather than planned so the deliverables are never set out"*

*"Project management support is bloody awful"*

*"Not enough recognition of the practical doers"*

*"Too few central people are competent, there's not enough to go round!"*

understand there has also been no such consideration under the BSF proposals where other council facilities could be built into schools.

We could find no evidence of programme management and in its absence the Council is not getting "a bigger bang for the buck".

## 5.5 INITIATIVES

Interviewees had some difficulty identifying successful initiatives and it was interesting that some that were judged as successful, were used as examples of being unsuccessful by others. The Respect initiative, or usually "the Leaders Respective initiative", the tram, the Lift initiative, housing benefits improvements, were all universally seen as successful. The Market Square refurbishment and The Ice Arena were seen as successful, changing the face of the City, but also as unsuccessful, "it will be completed much later than is being admitted" in respect of the former, and "totally over optimistic over usage and revenue generation, a white elephant", in respect of the latter.

There was no difficulty in identifying unsuccessful initiatives from the Customer Transformation policy, the toilets policy (or lack of it), the Accommodation review, the ALMO, "set up to fail, poor management and no political backing", Gearing Up, "very costly, fudged, ineffective and stopped", through to Neighbourhood Services, "a good idea but no-one really knows what it means, there's no direction or focus" and Parking Enforcement in residential areas, "Members meddled, it's a mess".

A common view was that there were far too many initiatives but no one could identify any that should be stopped. In the absence of a corporate planning framework they are all, of course, worthy. The only initiative that was identified as ever having stopped was Gearing Up which was seen as perverse as although time expired it had clearly not achieved its objective.

Other initiatives simply die of their own accord, are forgotten about, "fall into a black hole", or are superseded by the next similar initiative. Comparatively few are successful for the reasons set out under 5.3 Project Management, but some are if they have a particularly resourceful champion who may be pursing a hobby or pet project, eg the City Centre disabled toilets that had been pursued by an individual for nearly 15 years and were never in any plan or budget.

Due to the lack of proper project management there is a Nottingham syndrome of moving straight from problem or good idea to solution, "sometimes we even have a solution without realising we had a problem!". This inevitably means that proper outcomes are not set but unrealistic timescales are, with totally inadequate resources which may, in any event, have been pulled off another project causing it to be delayed or die.

*"We need reality not just good ideas"*

*"The department is littered with part finished initiatives"*

*"We take our eye off the ball looking at the next initiative, we need to bed the first one down before moving on"*

*"The next big thing pushes out what you understood to be valuable"*

These unrealistic initial assumptions lead to delays which lead to stacking. Unfinished initiatives from year one trip over into year two and so on. By year three Members are of the view that officers “only produce 50% of what we want” so increase the number of initiatives in the hope of getting half of them completed. There is, of course, no hope with far too many initiatives chasing far too few resources in unrealistic timescales.

The City Council is also in the habit of “chasing the funding”, usually government but also lottery etc and is successful. This means initiatives, usually with tight timescales for bidding, are inserted into the ‘programme’ disrupting existing initiatives and taking resources that were allocated elsewhere. No consideration is given to whether the funding actually meets any of the core objectives (difficult we know without a corporate plan) and there are examples of bids being submitted without matched funding or revenue being in place, or even the Council’s funding requirements not being known. Whilst with Nottingham’s deprivation factors, chasing all available funding is understandable, the effects of doing so including stopping other projects, must be ascertained and agreed in advance.

There needs to be a proper structured process allied to the project management system for properly worked up initiatives to be considered at an early stage and then included in a programme or not. This will protect against the “pet project” or “knee jerk reaction” we have been frequently told about which deflects the organisation from achieving its core objectives.

## 5.6 PRIORITIES

Allied to the difficulties of project management and initiative overload is the Council’s failure to prioritise policies, strategies, and projects. The easy bit of the planning process is to produce the plan, it is prioritising the desired outcomes that is difficult. Lack of priorities also leads to a lack of accountability of elected Members and officers and the lack of a targeted use of resources.

The tendency is to make everything a priority and actually therefore nothing is. This is evident from the Corporate Plan and elsewhere and officers frequently complain of ‘not knowing what to do’, “I just do my best”, “my team ask me what to do next and I honestly don’t know”, “what’s more important the Children’s Plan or the Corporate Plan, which takes precedence?”. It is essential that this is dealt with as part of the review of the Corporate Plan.

## 5.7 STRUCTURES

There were divided views as to whether the existing departmental structures assist with corporate working. There were strong views about Neighbourhood Services, “not fit for purpose”, “not set up right”, “lacks

*“Lots of initiatives chasing too few people”*

*“We need to be more strategic, not changing everything every 30 seconds”*

*“We have no mechanisms for setting a priority”*

*“Poor priority setting and what we want to do”*

*“Fire fighting isn’t strategy”*

*“The LSP stuff just comes in from the side”*

*“It’s not structures it’s attitude and behaviour”*

focus and no clear agenda", "a rag bag of what others don't want" and about Corporate Services, "a festering mess, a bloody nightmare", but others said that problems don't relate to the structures but to the range of other factors discussed elsewhere.

We are inclined to agree that although there may be the need to swap functions between some departments and provide clarity of role similar departmental structures elsewhere function reasonably well. A further re-arranging of the deck chairs would provide an excuse not to get on with the real priority of changing the organisation.

*"Why have departments?"*

*"In my last two authorities we didn't have departments"*

## 6 THE CORPORATE APPROACH

### 6.1 BEING CORPORATE

We have received several history lessons going back to [Previous Chief Executive] days and it is quite clear that the City Council has never been corporate and, with notable exceptions doesn't really want to be. On a scale of one to ten going from departmental to corporate the majority marked the Council at five or below with the direction of travel being on balance towards corporate but 'slow' or 'very slow' or, at best 'static'.

The lack of an accepted and articulated vision for the City "a lack of clarity of purpose, focus and direction", the lack of an effective corporate plan, the absence of corporate management systems and procedures all lead to the maintenance of a silo mentality where departments are over protectionist over resources which can't then be reallocated.

This has not been helped by inept centralisations, eg communications and marketing where departments have been left without resources, or inadequate consultation with departments, eg the existing HR proposals. There is a confusion between centralisation and corporate.

Even at corporate director level there is a lack of understanding of what being corporate means, "if I saw it in a bottle on a shelf I wouldn't recognise it!", and officers whilst playing lip service to "one Council" frequently say, "I simply don't understand what it means". In departments we were often told that being corporate was to assist them to achieve what the department wanted.

Hearts and minds have not been won on the corporate agenda, there is still entrenched departmentalism, but the resistance to change is not marked with many seeing the need for and wanting to change if proper leadership is provided.

A braver, pro-active approach needs adopting with tight timescales and support for those officers who will have the unenviable task of leading the process. SMT must not fudge, scale down or prevaricate, the levers of change must be brought into the centre to dissipate departmentalism. The new head of HR should be given his head with his new plan and the HR function re-energised and stop being risk averse, ICT budget and staffing should be centralised, the training budget should be centralised, as must the property portfolio and its management, but all this must be done as proper projects, project managed and with full consultation with departments, not on what the objective is but how it is best achieved.

"We try to be corporate but are forced back to departmental by corporate incompetence"

"Good people but badly suppressed, creativity is stifled, you get into trouble for coming up with ideas, a real silo mentality"

"The HR review is doomed, they haven't talked to departments"

"Corporate is them out there and we don't understand what they do"

"Corporate services are order takers, they don't provide a service, but departments won't let go"

## 6.2 CUSTOMER FOCUS

We have read the latest 23 page report on the "Next Steps in Putting Customers first" and, as elsewhere, the objectives are exemplary but we have such concerns over whether the policies and strategies have been thought through that we believe implementation should be delayed whilst there is a detailed review involving outside expertise. We do not criticise those who have tried their best but who we believe are acting outside the scope of their own expertise and experience when dealing with this matter.

There does not appear to be a complete understanding in the organisation of what customer orientation, focus, or customer first actually means. It is essentially the re-engineering of all of the Council's business and cannot be dealt with in isolation as proposed.

*"A total lack of understanding of who the customer is"*

The customer contact centre is a good example of what we mean. Almost everyone agrees it is in the wrong place, out of centre, not near the station or a bus route or on a well-used thoroughfare. People will have to go out of their way to use it and in any event why should they have to come into the city centre, why aren't one stop access points available to them convenient to where they live? When they come to the contact centre only some services are available, more next year, more the year after, so they will have to visit other council facilities in any event for the foreseeable future. There are considerable doubts as to whether existing IT systems can cope and in any event there are no 'shareware' systems so that various departmental systems can be interrogated to provide a comprehensive answer to a customer's problem. As it was put to us, "it's doomed to failure, why would customers use it?"

*"We get answers not solutions"*

Even if a review means delays it is better than having an expensive failure which will set back customer orientation for years. The review must include a review of the neighbourhood strategy, ICT capabilities, and asset management so real consideration can be given to providing facilities in Leisure Centres or libraries or schools out in the community with a city centre facility being a back stop or venue of choice when visiting the city centre for other purposes. With clarity of purpose, a dedicated team and proper resources it will be challenging but be possible to start opening a network of customer centres within two years. Working on a major project such as this which will include Members and all departments would be a catalyst for the creation of a corporate council.

A further aspect of customer orientation is finding out what the customer wants. We are told that there are over 270 ways the City Council does this from annual MORI polls to facility user surveys. We had not however, found a single service that had been changed due to the analysis of all of this information being collected until our meeting with Team Leaders who challenged what we said but could only come up

with two minor, but important, examples between them. This is a further example of being information rich but intelligence poor which is incredibly wasteful of resources.

Consideration should also be given to how complaints are dealt with as the evidence is that the immediate complaint is often successfully dealt with but the systemic problem that caused it is not tackled at all so the type of complaint simply recurs. There is no learning process.

*"We're a fix it organisation  
rather than getting it right  
first time"*

## 7. THE EXISTING CULTURE

### 7.1 THE HISTORY

Whilst undertaking the review Managers often referred back to the days of [Previous Chief Executive] referring to him as a strong Chief Executive who protected his officers from undue pressure of the Elected Members. This was seen by them to be a good thing and an important part of the Chief Executive's job. The management style was totally autocratic and delivery was through departments.

On the other hand we have been told that criticism of Nottingham City services could not be discussed in an open and constructive manner. If this indeed was the case the implications for the Council to improve and change would be serious as in the opinion of many Managers this attitude was carried over when Nottingham became a Unitary Council in 1998.

In 1998 on the achievement of unitary status the major services of Education and Social Services were simply 'bolted on' to the existing Nottingham structures and the culture of the City Council was the dominant one – therefore the attitude of not being open to criticism prevailed, with the obvious implications for change and service improvement. This had led to officers describing the present situation as a 'time warp', that the Council is old fashioned and some feel that they have stepped back in time. There is no example of a district bolting on county services, as opposed to totally re-structuring as a new council, being a successful unitary and this is exacerbated when the district services were under performing.

### 7.2 RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In any successful organisation a process will be embedded to ensure that at all levels, managers and employees take responsibility and are held accountable for their actions or inactions.

In Nottingham City Council this appears to be the exception rather than the rule and throughout our review a common theme was expressed that too many managers do not want to manage, eg excessive copying of e-mails to cover their backs and constantly referring upwards for decisions. This slows down the organisation generally, employees become frustrated at the lack of action, leading to them not bothering to get things done, and throughout the Council, employees spend too much time explaining why things can't be done. All too frequently non-performance is not tackled and not much happens to an employee who fails to deliver, although in some departments this is apparently not the case and employees have been dismissed. However, the most common action taken is that the manager gets a ticking off or the Leader or Portfolio Holder gets upset with the lack of progress and shouts! The

"We've recruited people in our own image, not those who want to uproot trees"

"I am no longer empowered to take decisions, I could have a couple of years ago"

"People think that they do not have to do things and there are no sanctions"

"e-mails aren't action"

"We're complacent, no-one gets sacked or taken to task, we're frightened of disciplining people"

"Your can't get rid of poor performers. HR are risk averse"

"Insurmountable barriers to getting rid of poor performers"

problem goes deeper, since the overall lack of focus, drive and accountability actively assists managers and others to evade responsibility and ensures that it is very difficult to hold them to account. The challenge and rigour necessary to drive up performance and service improvement is not corporately embedded in the Council, it is left to individuals in departments, Members, the Leader and government inspectors to provide it.

Without having effective systems to make employees take responsibility and hold them to account, coupled with a robust system of challenge and rigour, standards within, the Council will fall and keep falling, undermining the public service ethos of employees having pride in the City and a commitment to providing quality services.

We were surprised and dismayed that officers feel free to criticise strategies, processes and procedures but do not take responsibility for doing something about it. Corporate Directors complain about SMT but do not have mature discussions as to how to change it. Services Directors grumble about, eg communications or HR, but do not proactively raise the issue where solutions can be found. Whinging and expecting others to take action rarely works and is an abrogation of responsibility by well-paid managers.

### 7.3 THE DAY JOB

One expression that we heard repeatedly during our interviews with managers was ‘the day job’ which over the course of the review we took to mean as maintaining the status quo and doing that what I like to do. Our reasons for coming to that conclusion was based on managers’ comments eg “change gets in the way of the day job”, “too many initiatives distract us from the day job which is our core business”, “new initiatives are a problem to getting the day job done”, “I have to do the day job as well as deal with change initiatives”. Managers are in the business of change and it is therefore of particular concern that the phrase ‘day job’ which does not include changing and improving things has occurred so frequently in Nottingham. Not all managers take this view and one in particular made the point that in modern local government change is constant and that you only get improvement to services through change. This is absolutely true.

Therefore, Nottingham must embrace change wholeheartedly if it is to bring about greatly improved services for its residents. This re-inforces section 7.2 above where the day job mentality amongst managers is encouraged to flourish because non-performance is not tackled effectively. In the absence of clear direction, planning and process officers do not know what to do so they get on and do their best but this may not be what either the organisation or the customer actually needs.

*“If people provide the core of what they do we accept it and don't rock the boat”*

*“We protect the poor performers, not the stars”*

*“Where's the visibility of senior managers in the council and in the community?”*

*“It's always someone else's fault or they are waiting for mummy to do it”*

*“People go back to the day job and hope everyone has forgotten”*

*“The day job doesn't include innovation”*

#### 7.4 CULTURE OF CHANGE

The City Council is not short of ideas or change initiatives and we were given many examples of these during our interview sessions. They included the recent Council restructure, Children's Services restructure, the new Committee system, the leaving of the Chief Executive, SLMG initiative, the Respect agenda and 'Gearing Up' etc. Some said that the journey had started and the pace was accelerating – many said they felt comfortable with change, and were very positive about it. However, this is not the general rule and the lack of planned change, core values or strategic direction, coupled with a view that the Council is not cost effective, has had a marked effect on most managers. A view shared by some was that there was in reality no change or difference with lots of activity, but no feel of step change. It quickly became apparent to us that a culture of change is not embedded in the Council and therefore it was not surprising that there was a feeling from some that they were weary of initiatives with unclear, unfocussed outcomes that just take up time. The Council was described as 'at best passive and will only change when forced'.

This paints a depressing picture as change is constant, ongoing and accelerating and unless the Council thoroughly embraces it, then its aspiration to excellence will fail. There is however, some hope in that in one department they stated that they had a culture of change, it was liked and more was wanted. If this was built upon in a positive, constructive manner, but corporately driven, then the Council can begin the journey of real and sustainable improvement. Similarly, the SLMG were recruited to be the engine room for driving change and therefore most are positive about it and up for it. This positive attitude needs to be developed and encouraged by ensuring that clear lines of responsibility and accountability are drawn, that the Council puts in place proper systems for programme and project management with defined outcomes.

#### 7.5 A LISTENING AND LEARNING ORGANISATION?

The pressure is on all local authorities to change and improve services and it is accepted that one of the most effective tools is by being a learning organisation and listening to its customers and others.

Does this apply to Nottingham? We believe the answer to be an emphatic NO. Throughout our interviews with individuals and in the two open forums that we conducted the same theme emerged eg "we challenge but they don't listen or change anything". Many individuals also made the telling point that if they make constructive criticism it is unwelcome and discouraged. Employees were not trying to slow things down or criticise for the sake of it, but were genuinely concerned that the matter had not been properly considered and as a result the outcomes would either be wrong or simply not as effective as they could have been. Managers that we talked to at all levels were committed to providing the best services they could and it troubled them that if they

"Change is illusion to create the sense of progress"

"We write strategies but don't make things change"

"We don't actually change, just talk about it"

"We don't have a change process, it's the heart of the trouble, we're organised to maintain the status quo"

"The culture's not fit for a modern authority"

"It thinks it's changed but not compared with the outside world, it's a time warp"

"There's arrogance, complacency and cynicism about change"

"Complaints are not taken seriously, they're not logged or recorded, we're not a listening organisation"

"Changes are done to staff and in turn to the public, we tell them"

voiced their concerns, they were seen as part of the problem not as part of the solution. It may be that this attitude harks back or is a hangover from the past when we are told any criticism was stifled and critical reports not aired see section 7.1, if so, after this length of time it is both damaging and disappointing.

There are numerous ways that Nottingham can learn from others and/or discover what the best is, these include benchmarking against other Councils, the core cities group, award of IIP, Charter Marks, IdeA and peer group reviews, visits to other local authorities on a specific issue and, if appropriate benchmarking against the private sector. However, where these methods were used there was no direct evidence presented to us that it made any difference to the way Nottingham operated and as one manager put it "there are not the fundamental processes to get the best out of an idea". In a perverse way visits to other local authorities to see how they have tackled a particular issue have often had a negative effect. The instant reaction to transplant the solution instead of undertaking a detailed analysis of what is required and can it be made to work for the City Council, often results in ineffective and confused implementation or the initiative is gradually dropped.

A separate part of the process provided for what was described to us as the 'De Montfort' training under which managers were given training in four relevant competencies:

1. Bold, determined leadership
2. Change Management
3. Vision/Setting direction
4. Driving Service Improvement

Of those managers that we interviewed many did not attend a single module or attended one or two. The number of managers who had attended, or been allowed to attend, only one module indicates a tokenistic approach. The common criticism was that they were not relevant, too broad, did not meet their personal needs or as one manager put it "not for me, learnt nothing, insulting". Only one manager has been sufficiently interested in the training to attend all three modules that have been held and will be trained on the last one in September.

It may be that many managers are complacent, or that training interferes with the 'day job', there certainly appears to be no commitment to learning new things or new ways of doing things. What is certain is that for a new group of managers expected to be the driving force for improvement the fact that so many have opted out of the training and have been allowed or encouraged to do so by their Directors bodes ill for the future and will send a powerful message throughout the Council that the current ways of working persist. One of the more disappointing

aspects is that the Corporate Centre did not take control to ensure for themselves that the training was relevant and necessary (we have no direct evidence that it was not) and then make it mandatory for all managers to attend. As it is, an expensive and time consuming initiative appears to have been wasted and further underlines the lack of a learning culture across the Council.

Lastly, the MORI poll of residents which is done every year, provides a good indication of how Nottingham listens to its residents. We were told that the last poll carried out some nine months ago is still being considered although it has been available in draft form. The next poll is due in November and will overtake the current one. The clear message from this is of a slow-moving Council that pays lip service to the views of its residents.

## 8. COMMUNICATIONS

The need to communicate effectively and regularly is a critical element for success in any organisation and Nottingham is no exception and part of our interviews with managers was designed to find out how employees were communicated with, what formal or informal mechanisms existed.

We were told of various methods such as team meetings which took place on either a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis, the Intranet, notes of SMT meetings, the staff newsletter 'Impact' which was described as good, the Gearing Up initiative, Team Nottingham and the recent Leader/Chief Executive Roadshows.

There are no doubt others, but however many there may be the critical element is that they must be effective, but judging from the response of most this is not the case. Comments such as 'internal communications dire and incoherent', 'its who you know' and 'no formal process' were all too common.

Communication to be effective does not just need to deal with the 'what' and 'how' things are to be done but crucially the 'why'. It is the 'why' that wins hearts and minds and leads to a change in behaviour so that things are not just done once because employees have been told to but will continue to be done as they understand the reason for it. In all of the material that we saw the 'why' is widely neglected and this is a general criticism by all managers we spoke to.

Even when change is widely communicated it is badly done and the example given to us was the new branding colour for the Council. This was communicated by the Intranet without proper guidance and managers were expected to pick this out from a myriad of other e-mails and know what to do. In a similar vein notes of SMT meetings, which are circulated to staff, are described as bland and of no use to brief staff. Where communication was said to be good, it was on a purely departmental basis through their DMT, information was passed on by whoever had attended a meeting who was charged with this reporting back role. In one instance a manager only found out he had been made responsible for delivery of a new initiative because he happened to read the minutes of a meeting he had not attended.

The communication of change or of a new initiative appears to us to be ad hoc and disjointed, front line staff do not know what is happening which leads us to question the effectiveness of the team meetings and it was described to us that communications start at the wrong end, ie bottom up, and that there is not enough from the Strategic Centre giving clear messages. If this is the case then hearts and minds will not be won because staff at all levels will not generally know why the initiative is needed – if that is they are aware of it at all.

*"Coms and marketing is a complete and utter pickle, centralising has been done badly and everyone is a loser"*

*"Communication is based solely of who you know"*

*"Team Leaders are out of the loop, they haven't been touched yet"*

We were told a new communications process has been proposed to SMT and on its merits we make no comments as we have not seen a copy of it. Rather worryingly we were told that it was not understood, the subject of fierce debate and was having to be reconsidered at a later date. That a new communications strategy is needed is not in doubt and it may be that this strategy is not the answer but to be effective any new strategy must have the support and positive commitment of SMT and be communicated throughout the Council so that it is both well understood and well used.

## **9. CONCLUSIONS**

We hope that from the preceding text and the illustrative quotations you will have gained an accurate impression of how the City Council is operating, or not, at this time and, indeed, how it has done so for a number of years. Interviewees have been open and forthright with us and it is only right that we reflect that back with the same honesty however unpalatable or disappointing that message may be.

Put simply the City Council is dysfunctional. Members and officers have the same objectives and motivation, there is considerable impetus for change at senior management levels, there are some of the right strategies and systems if only they were implemented and used. As it was put to us it is like the inside of a clock where all of the cogs are turning but are not engaging, the hands are not going round and time stands still. We genuinely believe that with the energy and commitment of the Leader and the new Chief Executive concentrating on the strategic issues and ensuring proper process and systems are introduced and followed a rapid turnaround is possible

It must also be remembered that we are only looking at part of the Council, albeit an important part, the corporate centre, strategies and processes. Quite separately there are shining examples of excellent service provision and excellent officers at the Council changing things and providing top rate services sometimes against the odds.

Our recommendations follow. We do not believe their implementation will have an immediate effect on any CPA service score but we do believe there should be a significant improvement in the 'direction of travel' scoring. Irrespective of the CPA the changes we suggest are necessary for the City Council to provide the services its residents deserve and its Members and officers aspire to.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The new Chief Executive needs to engage the Corporate Directors in development and team building. He will not change the organisation on his own and needs committed SMT members to enforce and re-inforce a new culture. Corporate Directors must be just that, however good they are as departmental experts or at departmental management if they do not show commitment to a one council culture they must be replaced. Consideration should be given to the Corporate Directors sitting centrally with the Chief Executive and not with their departments so they sit corporately and have to think departmentally as opposed to sitting departmentally and having to think corporately.
2. We raise the issue as to whether the Leader needs to engage his Group Executive or Portfolio Holders in a similar exercise so that a consistent political vision is displayed.
3. After team building the Chief Executive, SMT and the Leader and Portfolio Holders need to meet and have a mature discussion on how they are going to work together and what their common vision for the City is. A line in the sand needs to be drawn and a new Member officer protocol produced so that respective roles are clearly defined and communicated to all.
4. There needs to be an immediate review of project management and a well resourced team created. Without the proper use of project management the Council has no machinery with which to implement the changes, particularly the cultural changes, that are necessary and any necessary initiatives will fail.
5. Review and renew the policy objectives and coordination of the following:-

Neighbourhood Focus

Customer Orientation

Office Accommodation

BSF

ICT strategy

6. Review and renew commitment to the following systems:-

The Corporate Planning Process, (the Vision, the Corporate Plan through to PDRs)  
Performance Management  
Programme Management  
The Communications Strategy  
The Asset Management Strategy

7. In respect of 5 and 6 above **implement** any changes, or re-launches, though the project management process with defined responsibility in a detailed PID to individual members of SMT and individual Portfolio Holders with properly resourced teams of officers and quarterly review mechanisms. Use this to engage officers and Members in corporate joint working.
8. Create a formal Services Management Team out of SLMG 2 that will meet weekly and be responsible for the operational running of the authority with formal delegations from SMT with whom they should have a joint meeting every month. SMT will continue to meet to deal with the strategic issues and deal with major issues raised politically or via the Services Management Team.
9. To utilise the latent resource in teams and foster a greater Member officer understanding embark on a 'top 10%' exercise that has been successful elsewhere. Any local authority has between 300-400 individual teams providing services but these can easily be aggregated up to 60-70 large teams providing similar services. Each Team Leader should be challenged to engage his team on researching who is the best in the country (top 10%) at what they do, either in the private or public sector, and visits and information exchange should be encouraged. The Team Leader produces a 3 year Action Plan showing where his team is now and what they need to do to get into the top 10%. The Action Plan needs to be checked by central policy staff – not departmental management – to ensure it is both challenging and realistic and a commitment given to provide the resources to make the necessary change happen. Two Councillors are allocated to each of the 60-70 teams and they meet with them on a quarterly basis to discuss objectives and progress. Each Councillor is allocated two teams and they are changed annually, this ensures a broad level of contact between Members and junior officers but too close relationships are avoided. For the first time front line staff will see they have a role in changing the organisation together with elected Members and step change improvements in CPA scores of over 20% per annum are not unusual when this is monitored by central policy staff. The organisation is empowered from the bottom up at the same time as the one Council culture is being driven from the top down.
10. After 12 months review the management competencies and include members of SMT so that the credibility of senior management is re-established.
11. Build morale in the organisation by supporting teams in Charter Marks and competitions and go for whole Council IIP (this a useful check on some systems in any event). Celebrate success.

If we can be of any further assistance, our contact details are below. In any event we hope the contents of our report will be instrumental in bringing about the necessary change so that the Council can realise its ambitions for its residents.

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