

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	7 February 2017
Subject:	Peer Challenge Action Plan
Report of:	Graeme Simpson, Head of Corporate Services
Corporate Lead:	Mike Dawson, Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Councillor R J E Vines, Leader of the Council
Number of Appendices:	Two

Executive Summary:

The peer challenge took place during 11-14 November 2014 and was facilitated by the Local Government Association (LGA). The process was an excellent learning opportunity for the Council, providing an external health check of where the Council is 'in life' and how we are set up to meet our future challenges, namely the delivery of our Transformation Programme.

Over four days, a challenge team interviewed nearly 80 staff and members and over 40 partners. The findings of the team were very positive and overall they concluded that we are a Council that 'is punching above its weight'. Following the challenge, a formal report was received which summarises the findings of the challenge team. This report included a number of recommendations where we can improve further.

The report and action plan were approved at Council on 19 February 2015. Council also approved that monitoring of the action plan should be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER the progress made in delivering the recommendations within the peer challenge action plan and to AGREE that no further monitoring is required by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the majority of actions have been implemented or are monitored elsewhere.

Reasons for Recommendation:

It was a resolution by Council that the Overview and Scrutiny be tasked with monitoring delivery of the peer challenge recommendations. Implementation of the recommendations will support the Council on its improvement journey.

Resource Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

Legal Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

Risk Management Implications:

If the Council does not implement the recommendations made by the peer challenge team then

this will be a lost opportunity for improvement.

If the Council does not implement the recommendations made by the peer challenge team then there will be a reputational risk in ignoring advice from a credible external assessment.

Performance Management Follow-up:

Progress in delivering the peer challenge recommendations will be reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a six monthly basis.

Environmental Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 As part of its approach to sector led improvement, the Local Government Association (LGA) offered, until Autumn 2014, every Council in the country a free peer challenge. Peer challenges are improvement focused, they are carried out to the specification of individual Councils and are aimed at improving, not judging, Councils.

1.2 This Council's peer challenge took place during 11-14 November 2014. The process was an excellent learning opportunity for the Council, providing an external health check of where the Council is 'in life' and how we are set up to meet our future challenges, namely the delivery of our Transformation Programme.

1.3 The challenge team was comprised of senior officers and a Member from other Councils. The team was led by a Chief Executive supported by an LGA challenge manager. Over four days, the team interviewed nearly 80 staff and members and over 40 partners. The findings of the team were very positive and overall they concluded that we are a Council that 'is punching above its weight'. Following the challenge, a formal report was received which summarises the findings of the challenge team. This report included a number of recommendations where we could improve further.

2.0 SCOPE AND FOCUS OF THE PEER CHALLENGE

2.1 The scope of all peer challenges undertaken by the LGA includes a review of five core components:

- **Understanding of local context and priority setting:** Does the Council understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?
- **Financial planning and viability:** Does the Council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
- **Political and managerial leadership:** Does the Council have effective political and managerial leadership and is it a constructive partnership?
- **Governance and decision making:** are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change, and transformation?
- **Organisational capacity:** Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?

2.2 In addition to the five core themes, the scope was tailored with a particular focus on the Council's approach to business transformation through addressing the following questions:

- Is there a clear and understandable message – is the narrative on the kind of Council we want to be clear to staff, stakeholders and the community?
- Do people own it and are signed up to the changes the Council is embarked upon?
- Will the programme to manage, engage and develop the Council deliver the transformation desired?
- Have we missed anything?

3.0 PEER CHALLENGE OUTCOME

3.1 As a reminder for Members, the final report is attached at Appendix 1. The report gives much that the Council can be proud of. A summary of the positive feedback includes:

- An energetic and active approach towards its service delivery.
- Developing itself as an effective organisation with a strong emphasis on value for money.
- Very good relationship with partner organisations.
- High levels of resident satisfaction.
- Strong sense of community leadership.
- Pioneering a multi service and partner approach to its activities.
- A good corporate understanding and ownership of transformation activities.
- Good financial management.

The review team concluded that the Council 'punches above its weight' at a local, county and regional level.

3.2 As with all organisations, there will always be room for improvement. The challenge team made eight formal recommendations (Page 16 of the final report) where it considered that the Council could develop the strengths needed to help progress the improvement journey. The report also contained other opportunities for improvement that could be translated into formal recommendations.

4.0 PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN

4.1 An action plan to progress these recommendations was approved at Council on 11 February 2015. Council also resolved that monitoring the delivery of the action plan would be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The first monitoring report was reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on July 2016 and this confirmed good progress in implementing the recommendations.

4.2 The action plan and a summary of progress in delivering the recommendations can be found in Appendix 2. The majority of actions are being, or have been, progressed through the ongoing work around development of the new Council Plan, individual service reviews, project management, financial management, Overview and Scrutiny and

Member development. Only two actions remain outstanding (13 and 15). Of the two, Action 15 - development of a Workforce Strategy - is virtually complete. This action together with Action 13 – review of the Constitution - is also identified as a significant governance issue within the Council’s 2015/16 Annual Governance Statement (AGS). Delivery of these issues is monitored by the Audit Committee on a quarterly basis. Given the majority of peer review actions have now been implemented, and with the two outstanding recommendations monitored by the Audit Committee, it is recommended future monitoring by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is no longer required.

5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The undertaking of a peer challenge was approved at Executive Committee on 4 June 2014. A significant number of Officers, Members and partners were consulted during the peer challenge. The peer challenge report and action plan were approved at Council on 11 February 2015.

7.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

7.1 Council Plan 2012-16
Business Transformation Strategy

8.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

8.1 None

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

9.1 None directly arising from this report.

10.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

10.1 None directly arising from this report.

11.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

11.1 Implementation of recommendations will improve the efficiency of the Council.

12.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

12.1 None.

Background Papers: Executive Committee 4 June 2014 – approval of peer challenge approach.

Council 11 February 2015 – approval of final peer challenge report and action plan.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 19 July 2016 – first monitoring report on progress of actions.

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Appendices:

- 1- Final peer challenge report
- 2- Progress of peer challenge recommendations