

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	18 November 2020
Subject:	Corporate Peer Challenge – Final Report and Action Plan
Report of:	Chief Executive
Corporate Lead:	Chief Executive
Lead Members:	Leader of the Council
Number of Appendices:	Two

Executive Summary:

As part of its approach to sector led improvement, the Local Government Association (LGA) offers a fully funded corporate peer challenge to Councils every four to five years. Tewkesbury Borough Council accepted the LGA offer and, looking to build on the previous and very successful peer challenge in November 2014, welcomed an LGA led team on site during week commencing 2 March 2020.

As with all peer challenges, this included a review of five core components. This is essentially a high level, external 'health-check' centred upon understanding of local context and priority setting, financial planning and viability, political and managerial leadership, governance and decision making and organisational capacity. In addition, the scope of the challenge was localised, to ask the challenge team to also focus on: are we set up organisationally to successfully deliver our growth plans and ambitions?, are we confident in the delivery of the Garden Communities projects? and in more general terms, the ability and capacity to deliver the new council plan?

During the four-day challenge, the team spoke to more than 120 people including a range of Council staff, Councillors, external partners and stakeholders and gathered information and views from more than 40 meetings. The final report from the LGA is attached at Appendix 1. The overall opinion is very positive about how the Council performs across the subject areas.

As with all challenges, areas for improvement are identified. Five key recommendations were made by the team and these are summarised within page two of the final report. An internal action plan comprising these recommendations with associated action points and other less implicit recommendations can be found in Appendix 2. It is proposed the delivery of the action plan is monitored by the council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The production of the report was delayed as a result of the LGA's response to COVID-19.

Recommendation:

To RECOMMEND TO COUNCIL:

- 1) That the peer review action plan be APPROVED.**
- 2) That monitoring of the action plan be undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a six-monthly basis.**

Reasons for Recommendation:

The implementation of the recommendations will help the Council's overall performance. There is also an expectation that the final report from a peer challenge is communicated publicly.

Resource Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

Legal Implications:

None directly associated with 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 is a potential reputational risk of not accepting critical feedback.

Performance Management Follow-up:

The action plan will be monitored on a six-monthly basis by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Environmental Implications:

None directly associated with this report.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As part of its approach to sector led improvement, the Local Government Association (LGA) offers a fully funded corporate peer challenge to Councils every four to five years. Tewkesbury Borough Council accepted the LGA offer and, looking to build on the previous and very successful peer challenge in November 2014, welcomed an LGA led team on site during week commencing 2 March 2020.
- 1.2 The challenge week provided an excellent learning opportunity. The challenge was centred around the LGA's five core components as well as localised questions around the Council's growth and priorities. During the four day challenge, the team spoke to more than 120 people including a range of Council staff together with Councillors and external partners and stakeholders and gathered information and views from more than 40 meetings. The final report from the LGA is attached at Appendix 1.

2.0 SCOPE AND FOCUS OF THE PEER CHALLENGE

2.1 The scope of all peer challenges, irrespective of Council, is centred around the LGA's five core components:

1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting: does the Council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
2. Leadership of Place: does the Council provide effective leadership of place through its elected Members, Officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
3. Organisational leadership and governance: are there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
4. 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?
5. Capacity to deliver: is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

In addition to these questions, the Council asked the challenge team to consider the following questions:

- Are we set up organisationally to successfully deliver our growth plans and ambitions?
- In more general terms, do we have the ability and capacity to deliver the new Council Plan, particularly around our new priorities?

3.0 PEER CHALLENGE OUTCOME

3.1 The review team was very positive about the Council and this positive message flows through the report. The report gives much that the Council can be proud of. A summary of this feedback can be found in the executive summary of the report (paragraph 1). As with all challenges, areas for improvement are identified. Five key recommendations were made by the team and these are summarised within page two of the final report. An internal action plan comprising these recommendations with associated action points and other less implicit recommendations can be found in Appendix 2. It is proposed the delivery of the action plan is monitored by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

4.0 COMMUNICATION OF FINAL REPORT

4.1 The final report will be published on the Council's website and will be promoted by the Communication's Team. This will include a press release and all stakeholders who participated during the challenge will receive a link to the report. The report has already been circulated through the Member Update and through the staff newsletter 'News4U'. Further communications will follow as the action plan develops.

5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 None.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The undertaking of a peer review was approved by Executive Committee. A significant number of Officers, Members and partners were consulted during the peer review week. Heads of Service have been consulted with regard to the development of the action plan.

7.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

7.1 Council Plan 2020-2024.

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 None directly arising from this report.

12.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

12.1 Executive Committee – 27 November 2019 (endorsement of peer challenge).

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: 1 – LGA Peer Challenge Final Report.

2 – Action Plan – Implementation of Recommendations.