

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	8 June 2021
Subject:	Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress of Action Plan
Report of:	Head of Corporate Services
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 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 was very positive about how the Council performs across the subject areas.

As with all challenges, areas for improvement were identified in the form of five key recommendations. An internal action plan comprising these recommendations with associated action points and other less implicit recommendations were approved by Council on 8 December 2020. Council delegated the monitoring of progress in delivering those actions to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a six-monthly basis.

Recommendation:

To NOTE the progress made in delivering the corporate peer challenge action plan.

Reasons for Recommendation:

There is an expectation from the Local Government Association that following the issuing of their report, appropriate action is taken to implement their recommendations.

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 welcomed an LGA led team on site during week commencing 2 March 2020.
- 1.2** 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?
- 1.3** 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 was very positive about how the Council performs across the subject areas. For reference, the report is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.4** As with all challenges, areas for improvement were identified in the form of five key recommendations. An internal action plan comprising these recommendations with associated action points and other less implicit recommendations were approved by Council on 8 December 2020. Council delegated the monitoring of progress in delivering those actions to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a six-monthly basis.

2.0 THE ACTION PLAN

2.1 The action plan can be found in Appendix 2. The template is the same as approved by Council but with an additional column so commentary can be added on how the actions are progressing. Though the LGA team made a number of recommendations these were small in number and the majority of the key recommendations simply asserted what we already had corporate awareness of. For example:

- financial scenario planning.
- branding, governance and engagement of the Tewkesbury Garden Town project.
- prioritisation and allocation of resources.

2.2 In terms of the actions, they are at various stages of delivery. For example, elements of the financial related action are complete whereas other elements of the action are of an ongoing nature as part of the cycle of the Council's strategic financial planning. Other actions are wholly complete, such as the governance structure of the garden town project, a small number of actions have been impacted by the Council's response to COVID-19, such as how the Growth Hub model is delivered and others have revised dates as the focus of the action has moved on, for example the consideration of webcasting for Council meetings.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 None.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 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.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 Council Plan 2020-2024.

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

6.1 None.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

7.1 None directly arising from this report.

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

8.1 None directly arising from this report.

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

9.1 None directly arising from this report.

10.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

- 10.1** Council 8 December 2020 – LGA final report and TBC action plan to implement the recommendations made.

Background Papers: None

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Appendices: 1 – LGA Peer Challenge Final Report.

2 – Action plan to deliver recommendations.