

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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| Report to: | Overview and Scrutiny Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | 7 June 2022 |
| Subject: | Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan |
| Report of: | Head of Corporate Services |
| Corporate Lead: | Chief Executive |
| Lead Members: | Leader of the Council |
| Number of Appendices: | One |

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 was 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.

This is the third progress report to date, previous reports were presented on 8 June 2021 and 23 November 2021. Given the nature of the actions, in that the majority were related to known, ongoing issues such as the financial sustainability of the Council, it is anticipated to close off the action plan when it is next reported.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER the progress made against implementation of the corporate peer challenge action plan.

Reasons for Recommendation:

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

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| <p>Resource Implications:</p> <p>None directly arising from this report</p> |
| <p>Legal Implications:</p> <p>None directly associated with this report.</p> |
| <p>Risk Management Implications:</p> <p>If the Council does not implement the recommendations made by the peer challenge team then this will be a lost opportunity for improvement and a potential reputational risk of not accepting critical feedback.</p> |
| <p>Performance Management Follow-up:</p> <p>The action plan is monitored on a six monthly basis by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> |
| <p>Environmental Implications:</p> <p>None directly associated with this report.</p> |

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 if we are set up organisationally to successfully deliver our growth plans and ambitions, if we are 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.
- 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 was 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. The action plan at Appendix 1 is the third update the Committee has received. Given the nature of the actions, in that the majority were related to known, ongoing issues such as the financial sustainability of the Council, it is anticipated to close off the action plan when it is next reported.

2.0 ACTION PLAN

2.1 The action plan 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; and
- prioritisation and allocation of resources.

2.2 In terms of the actions, the majority are progressing well; as reported above, they are almost 'business as usual'. 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, delivery of the new HR microsite and online recruitment, senior leadership roles and responsibilities. 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. Other actions are in progress, such as the consideration of webcasting for Council meetings. Overall, the delivery of the action plan is positive and it is envisaged it can be closed off when next reported upon.

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 were consulted with regard to the development of the action plan.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1 Council Plan 2020-24.

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.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 8 June 2021 – first six monthly update of the action plan

Overview and Scrutiny Committee 23 November 2021 – second six monthly update of the action plan

Background Papers: None

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Appendices: Appendix 1 – LGA Peer Challenge Action Plan