

CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE – FEEDBACK REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As part of their approach to sector led improvement the Local Government Association offer all councils the opportunity to undergo a Corporate Peer Challenge, focused and tailored to meet individual council's needs and designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus. This Council welcomed the opportunity for external challenge to assess the nature and appropriateness of its plans and took up the offer with a review undertaken in October 2017.
- 1.2 This report presents the peer team's feedback and recommendations (Appendix 1).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In preparation for the review the Council developed a position statement, setting out some key background information in support of each of the following areas of focus:
1. **Understanding of local context and priority setting:** Does the Council understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?
 2. **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?
 3. **Political and managerial leadership:** Does the Council have effective political and managerial leadership and is it a constructive partnership?
 4. **Governance and decision-making:** Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change, transformation and disinvestment?
 5. **Organisational capacity:** Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?
- 2.2 Further detail on the purpose and approach to the peer challenge is contained within the report.

3. PEER RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 The appended feedback report sets out the peer team's observations against each area of focus and makes the following key recommendations in support of future improvements for the Council to consider:
- a) Develop the strategic framework with underpinning action plans to deliver the Council's vision for the broader district area
 - b) Align the Medium Term Financial Plan and investment strategies within that strategic framework
 - c) Consider alternative models for delivery through options appraisals and the use of external expertise to most effectively achieve the Council's objectives
 - d) Invest in the ICT infrastructure to leverage change

- e) Engage with staff and managers in developing the future direction of travel for the Council
 - f) Review levels of decision making to empower managers and staff to deliver
 - g) Review the requirements for more formal engagement arrangements with the National Park Authority including, to be fully effective, a review of current appointments to the National Park
 - h) Prepare a robust and sound Local Plan, in a realistic but timely way.
- 3.2 In considering these recommendations the Council will develop an action plan, to be presented to Cabinet in early 2018. It is intended that both the report and the action plan, along with the Council's position statement, will be published on the Council's website.
- 3.3 Councils receiving a Corporate Peer Challenge are strongly encouraged to consider a follow-up visit by the peer team, to enable the Council to demonstrate progress achieved. This is likely to take place typically between 12 and 24 months after the initial challenge.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None arising directly from this report.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None arising directly from this report.

6. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

- 6.1 The Leader is grateful to the peer review team and all members and staff who took part in the process.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Cabinet are asked to note the content of the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report and the intention to develop an action plan in response to the recommendations made.

For further information contact:

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Background Papers:

Corporate Peer Challenge – NFDC
Position Statement