

Overview and Scrutiny

01 April 2019

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

No

Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Follow-Up

Final Decision-Maker	Cabinet
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor David Reilly – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance
Lead Director	Lee Colyer – Director of Finance, Policy and Development
Head of Service	Finbar Gibbons – Head of Policy and Governance
Lead Officer/Author	Finbar Gibbons – Head of Policy and Governance
Classification	Non-exempt
Wards affected	All

This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. That the contents of the Follow-Up letter from the Local Government Association be noted and;
2. That the 'Initial Responses' outlined in Appendix B be agreed.

Explain how this report relates to the Corporate Priorities in the Five Year Plan

- The LGA Peer Challenge is a sector-led improvement tool that seeks to provide Councils with a greater understanding of how well their operations are performing in a number of key strategic areas. Improvement of approach and services is something the Council strives for on a daily basis, as it supports the better delivery of local services and projects to local people, and therefore meets all of the objectives within the Five Year Plan.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Management Team	28 February 2019
Leadership Board	11 March 2019
Cabinet Advisory Board	19 March 2019
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	01 April 2019
Cabinet	11 April 2019

Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Follow-Up

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report outlines the feedback provided by the LGA Peer Review team as part of their Corporate Peer Challenge follow-up visit, which took place over two days, 28 and 29 January 2019.
 - 1.2 The follow-up letter (Appendix A) is a very positive assessment of the progress that the Council has made since the initial LGA Peer Review report in 2016.
 - 1.3 Appendix B sets out the 'areas for further action' in table format and the Council's initial response to each of these.
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2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The LGA Peer Challenge is a sector-led improvement tool that seeks to provide Councils with a greater understanding of how well their operations are performing in a number of key strategic areas.
- 2.2 In late 2016, members of the LGA's Peer Review team came to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to conduct a three day review of how the council was performing in these key strategic areas, and subsequently provided us with 7 recommendations.
- 2.3 Cabinet agreed to the 7 recommendations and to actions which set out how to meet the recommendations.
- 2.4 As part of the Peer Challenge process, the Review Team revisits Councils within two years of their initial visit. The follow-up visit to Tunbridge Wells Borough Council took place on 28 and 29 January 2019.
- 2.5 The purpose of the follow-up is to help councils assess and demonstrate the impact of the peer challenge and the progress made against the recommendations.
- 2.6 The follow-up focused on two key areas:
 - the transition from a broad to a more focused set of priorities and the move towards actually delivering them; and
 - the Council's approach to communicating its plans and projects.
- 2.7 The follow-up letter makes clear that the council has performed well against the recommendations set in 2016 and made a number of positive comments, including:

- Tangible progress is being made in translating the council's vision into reality.
- The council has acted impressively in seizing the place leadership mantle, with the drive for economic growth central to this. It is creating a sense of optimism and excitement about the future for Tunbridge Wells. Tunbridge Wells represents place leadership at its best.
- Challenging projects are being taken forward by the council, demonstrating that it has the courage of its convictions. The vision and ideas are turning into tangible realities and have been underpinned by a thoroughness of planning and preparation that has seen the more controversial elements of the plans successfully pass the scrutiny they have faced. That scrutiny has been significant, involving Judicial Review, the Local Government Ombudsman, CIPFA analysis and detailed external audit. The fact all such scrutiny has been passed with flying colours says much about the council and the people leading it and working for it.
- There have been clear improvements over the last two years in the council's approach to communications.
- There is a positive atmosphere and culture within the Council and its staff are committed, energetic and enthusiastic.
- Councillors are well informed and there is a good flow of information about them to the public, demonstrating openness and transparency. There is also good engagement with partners.
- The Council has good governance at the heart of which are good officer/member relationships and good support for councillors.

2.8 The follow-up letter also outlines some 'areas for further attention', largely around building a complete picture of how the council's growth projects help tackle social challenges and then communicating that to a wide range of audiences. The letter also recommends that the Council continues its good work on its strategic approach to 'transformation', and that it should continue to make this an environment where both councillors and members feel that they can make a really positive contribution.

2.9 The areas for further attention and the Council's initial responses are set out in Annex B.

3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

3.1 That the contents of the follow-up letter are noted and that the council's initial responses are agreed.

3.2 That the contents of the follow-up letter are noted and that the council's initial responses should be revised.

4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the contents of the follow-up letter are noted and that the initial responses are agreed.
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8. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 8.1 The information presented in this report is due to go to the Overview and Scrutiny on 1 April 2019.

RECOMMENDATIO FROM CABINET ADVISORY BOARD

- 8.2 The Finance and Governance Cabinet Advisory Board will be consulted on this decision on 19 March 2019.
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9. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 9.1 There are no decisions arising from this report, but the information will be published on the Council's website as part of the relevant agenda pack information.
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10. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	There are no significant implications arising from the recommendations in this report.	Christine Nuttall, Senior Lawyer Corporate Governance 11 March 2019
Finance and other resources	There are no significant finance implications arising from the recommendations in this report.	Finbar Gibbons, Head of Policy and Governance 11 March 2019
Staffing establishment	There are no significant staffing implications arising from the recommendations in this report.	
Risk management	All risks associated with this report are within the Council's current risk appetite and managed in accordance with its risk management strategy.	
Data Protection	There are no data protection issues which need to be considered as a part of this report.	
Environment and sustainability	There are no significant environment implications arising from the recommendations in this report.	

Community safety	There are no consequences arising from the recommendation that adversely affect community safety.	
Health and Safety	There are no health and safety issues to consider as a part of this report and recommendations.	
Health and wellbeing	There are no significant health and wellbeing implications arising from the recommendations in this report.	
Equalities	The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no apparent equality impact on end users.	

11. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: LGA Corporate Peer Challenge follow-up letter
- Appendix B: Areas for further attention and the council's initial responses

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- The Five Year Plan:
http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/53291/Five-Year-Plan-2017-2022.pdf
- The original 2016 Peer Review documents and Finance & Governance CAB papers:
<https://democracy.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/meetings/mgAi.aspx?ID=17915>