

REPORT TO: CABINET

DATE: 29 JANUARY 2015

TITLE: LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE –
OUTCOME AND NEXT STEPS

PORTFOLIO HOLDER: COUNCILLOR JON CLEMPNER

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**This is not a Key Decision
Call-in procedures may apply
This decision will affect no ward specifically.**

RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

- A** Notes the findings of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge as detailed in the feedback letter attached as Appendix A.
- B** Asks the Scrutiny Committee to conduct a review into two of the key themes highlighted by the Challenge, with terms of reference as detailed in Appendix B.

REASON FOR DECISION

- A** To determine a response to the recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and how the Council can add value to the Challenge's findings.

BACKGROUND

1. The Local Government Association's (LGA's) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a sector-led review and improvement process. The challenge involves a hand-picked team of senior managers and Councillors who visit an individual Council, look at how it is doing things and provide targeted feedback and ideas for improvement. The challenge is led by a Peer Team, which normally includes senior Councillors and Officers from other Councils.
2. The Council determined to undertake a Peer Challenge during 2014/15. The Leader of the Council and senior Officers met with LGA representatives to discuss the challenge process and prepared a challenge scoping document.

The Council asked that, in addition to the three core elements of leadership, organisational capacity and financial viability (examined in all CPCs), the challenge focus on its community engagement role.

3. The Peer Team was appointed by the LGA in consultation with the Council and included:
 - Lee Harris, Chief Executive, Crawley Borough Council
 - Cllr David Simmonds, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services, LB Hillingdon
 - Rachel North, Deputy Chief Executive, Tewkesbury Borough Council
 - Chris Traill, Strategic Director, Charnwood Borough Council
 - Joseph Cormack, Public Affairs Assistant, LGA
 - Sue Avery, LGA.
4. The Peer Team visited the Council between 18 and 20 November 2014, during which time it spoke to more than 160 people including a range of Officers, Councillors and external partners and stakeholders. The Team gathered information and views from more than 34 meetings and a range of documents including Council plans and strategies. An initial feedback presentation was made by the Peer Team at the Civic Centre on 20 November 2014.

ISSUES/PROPOSALS

5. The LGA Challenge Peer Team has now summarised its findings in a feedback letter which is attached as Appendix A.
6. The feedback letter demonstrates that the Peer Team identified many areas of good practice in the Council. In particular the Team has commended the attitudes of staff and the positive workforce culture; partnership working; the Councillor induction process; creative use of social media; and the Council's achievement in delivering saving requirements so far.
7. The feedback letter also raises a number of issues that the Council is recommended to consider to secure its continuous improvement and these are summarised in the 'key suggestions and ideas for consideration' section towards the end of the feedback letter.

ACTIONS TAKEN SO FAR

8. The Council has already started work to implement some of the improvements suggested by the Peer Team. In response to the Peer Team's suggestion regarding management of member enquiries, A new process for dealing with Councillors' enquiries has been introduced. The process will enable Councillors to report enquiries on behalf of the residents and ensure

that they are dealt with effectively and efficiently. The process will be implemented by the end of January 2015.

9. To explore how the Council may take forward the Peer Team's suggestions regarding community engagement, it is proposed that the Scrutiny Committee be requested to undertake reviews that will explore this matter in detail by focussing on both community engagement and service user engagement. Draft terms of reference for the Scrutiny Committee's reviews are attached as Appendix B.

IMPLICATIONS

Regeneration (includes Sustainability)

None specific.

Author: **Graeme Bloomer, Head of Regeneration**

Finance (Includes ICT)

None specific.

Author: **Simon Freeman, Head of Finance**

Housing

If agreed, the Scrutiny Committee reviews will align with the scheduled independent review of the current Tenant and Leaseholder Participation Agreement. This will consider representation, structures, processes, and governance, appraising and strengthening future activity. The review will also consider any barriers to engagement and involvement.

Author: **Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

Community Wellbeing (includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)

None specific.

Author: **Graham Branchett, Chief Operating Officer**

Governance (includes HR)

None specific.

Author: **Brian Keane, Interim Head of Governance**

Appendices

Appendix A – CPC feedback letter.

Appendix B – Proposed terms of reference for Scrutiny Committee reviews.

Background Papers

[These are papers referred to in the preparation of the report that are not attached as appendices but that are available for public or Councillor study.]

Harlow Council – Peer Challenge Scoping Document.

Glossary of terms/abbreviations used

LGA - The Local Government Association's

CPC - Corporate Peer Challenge