

11 April 2023

Corporate Peer Challenge Report

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: All

Purpose: For Information

1. Aim

- 1.1 To provide oversight of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken in January 2023 the findings and recommendations from which may contribute to the Councils' overall internal control environment and the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/22, for which the Audit Committee has a role in providing independent assurance.

2. Summary

- 2.1 Audit Committee's terms of reference and work programme provides for receipt of information in relation to reviews and Inspections undertaken on council services and Audit Committee may seek assurance that actions arising from recommendations in relation to findings which may impact on the councils internal control environment are being addressed.
- 2.2 This report provides Audit Committee with information on the LGA CPC in January 2023. There are no significant areas of improvement to bring to the attention of the Committee. Indeed, the report provided favourable feedback in relation to governance and internal controls and the Audit Committee itself, as follows:

"Through the Peer Review process, the team were presented with evidence of strong governance arrangements and effective financial planning. This corporate core provides a strong foundation for services, engagement, ongoing transformation, and is underpinned by clear financial reporting, effective engagement with audit, and appropriate internal scrutiny."

"During our time on site, the Team heard particular praise for the Council's Audit Committee, and recognition for the contribution of the Chair in taking this forward over a number of years. This includes the effective use of a risk strategy, clear reporting of corporate risks, and constructive engagement with external audit. This continuity of Chair has been important to the Committee as there has been a level of churn in other Committee Members."

- 2.3 Audit Committee was singled out as *"one of the strongest they have seen."*

3. Recommendations

3.1 Audit Committee are requested to note the report.

4. Report Detail - Know

4.1 The CPC took place in January 2023. The assessment consists of 5 core elements:

- **Local priorities and outcomes:**
 - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context?
 - Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities and achieving improved outcomes for all its communities?
- **Organisational and place leadership:**
 - Does the council provide effective local leadership?
 - Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
- **Governance and culture:**
 - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements?
 - Is there a culture of respect, challenge, and scrutiny?
- **Financial planning and management:**
 - Does the council have a clear understanding of its current financial position?
 - Does the council have a strategy and a clear plan to address its financial challenges?
- **Capacity for improvement:**
 - Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities?
 - Does the council have the capacity to improve?

4.2 In addition to the 5 core elements, the Council asked for the assessment to focus on the delivery of our Proud Promises:

- Improve outcomes and customer experience.
- Improve employee satisfaction and engagement.
- Improve service efficiency and performance.

4.3 Cabinet received the report and the council's action plan on 22 March 2023, both of which are attached to this report.

5. Financial information

5.1 There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

6. Reducing Inequalities

6.1 There are no direct equality implications directly related to this report.

7. Decide

- 7.1 Audit Committee may wish to comment on the feedback and actions as set out within the attached report.

8. Respond

- 8.1 Audit Committee may wish to receive further updates in relation to specific actions within the plan.

9. Review

- 9.1 The CPC process provides for a six month review from the initial visit. Actions arising from the action plan will be monitored throughout 2023/24.

Background paper

Cabinet report 22 March 2023 - LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Findings and Action Plan

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