

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review and Action Plan

Date: 28 March 2024

Author: Chief Executive

Wards Affected

Borough-wide.

Purpose

For Cabinet to consider the Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report and to approve a new Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation

THAT CABINET:

1. Considers the Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report.
2. Approves the new Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.

1 Background

- 1.1 All Councils who are members of the Local Government Association are expected to receive a Corporate Peer Challenge at least every five years. Gedling Borough Council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge from 21 to 23 June 2022. This was reported to Cabinet on 8 December 2022 alongside a detailed Action Plan.
- 1.2 A Peer challenge provides robust, strategic, and credible challenge and support to councils, by bringing together political and managerial leadership through the use of member and officer peers.
- 1.3 Peer challenge is a tried, tested and trusted tool. It is not an inspection. It is a tool for improvement, providing opportunities for councils to learn from colleagues in other local authorities. The 'peer team' act as 'critical friends', bringing knowledge and expertise from their respective organisations, gathering information from a range of sources, and then reflecting on and challenging performance in the areas the council has asked to be reviewed.

- 1.4 The peer team undertook a Progress Review on 22 November 2023 and focussed on each of the previous nine recommendations. Two of the original team members were involved in this Progress Review, being the lead member and the LGA associate, who were supported by the LGA's Progress Review Manager. The team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information provided to them in advance of the on-site visit.
- 1.5 The peer team met key GBC colleagues via a series of hybrid meetings throughout the day, ending with some informal feedback. This was followed up with a draft Progress Review report with key recommendations. The Council was afforded the opportunity to comment on the draft Progress Review report before it was finalised in the version appended to this report.

1.6 The Progress Review Report

The previous nine key recommendations are set out below:

1. Reset GBC's ways of working;
2. Establish a clear strategy for income generation and cost recovery alongside funding bids;
3. Consider comprehensive customer centred approach to transforming service delivery, and what resources and technology are needed;
4. Invest to save: good IT systems improve efficiency;
5. Consider imaginative ways to increase capacity;
6. Build up programme and project management capacity;
7. Widen member engagement, particularly through scrutiny;
8. Use strategic risks and the Corporate Risk register as part of the corporate planning process;
9. Widen partnership engagement to include businesses, LEP and Combined Authority discussions.

The peer review team recognised the significant progress the Council had already made against these nine recommendations, and their detailed overview of their observations and recommendations is set out in the Progress Review report attached at Appendix 1. In addition, the peer team had some key overall observations:

- ✓ The role of strong dual leadership – political and operational – throughout the council is key.
- ✓ GBC should develop and define its place-based vision for the borough.
- ✓ The Council should also be culturally more brave, open to and support innovation.

- 1.7 The new Peer Review Action Plan (Appendix 2) sets out the Council's further response to the key recommendations made.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to consider the Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report and to approve the new Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Members could choose not to consider the Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report and to not approve the new Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, however this process is seen as best practice conducted by respected peers and local authority colleagues.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any financial impacts arising from the plan will be considered separately as actions are developed.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. There is no statutory requirement to undertake a peer review, however it is considered best practice.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

7 Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 There are no carbon reduction/sustainability implications arising from this report.

8 Appendices

- 8.2 Appendix 1: LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report.
Appendix 2: Corporate Peer Challenge New Action Plan.

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 None.

10 Reasons for Recommendations

- 10.1 A peer challenge presents opportunities for councils to receive endorsements from other local authorities about how well services are being delivered but also to learn how things could be done differently to best meet the needs of the Council and the wider community.