

Committee(s): Ordinary Council	Date: 16 March 2022
Subject: Corporate Peer Challenge	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Jonathan Stephenson, Chief Executive	Public
Report Author: Name: Steve Summers, Strategic Director (Deputy Chief Executive) Telephone: 01277 312500 E-mail: steve.summers@brentwood.gov.uk	To note/For Decision

Summary

Brentwood Borough Council invited the Local Government Association to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2021.

The Peer Team issued their Feedback Report on the 23rd February 2022 and is attached as Appendix A. In accordance with the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge process the report and draft action plan will be formally published on the Council's website within 6 weeks of the council receiving the report.

The LGA will undertake a follow up visit in late summer and update monitoring reports on the action plan will be made to the Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee.

Recommendation(s)

- R1. That Members note the Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report attached at Appendix A.**
- R2. Members agree that regular update reports on the action plan are made to the Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee.**

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. Brentwood Borough Council invited the Local Government Association to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2022. The review took place on the 9th to 12th November 2021.
2. Corporate Peer Challenges are conducted by experienced Member and Office peers from across local government who are chosen to reflect the requirements and focus of the review.

3. They are improvement focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement plans.
4. The Peer Team spoke to councillors, officers, partners and stakeholders. At the end of the site visit the Peer Team provided a presentation of their findings.

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

5. The Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report highlighted a number of positive areas:
 - Strong political and officer leadership
 - Councils' ambition along with its bold persona
 - The organisational culture is admirable
 - Pace of delivery, especially during the pandemic was impressive and a testament to the dedication and commitment of staff and councillors
 - Number of projects delivered in first year of Corporate Strategy in addition to the core business
 - Other organisations see BBC as a partner of choice
 - The financial arrangements of the Council are fundamentally sound
6. However, there were a number of observations that the Council needs to address in order to meet the challenge of meeting our objectives set out within the Corporate Strategy 2020-25.
 - There is insufficient resilience in the system to deliver all the councils' aspirations and needs to focus on a smaller set of priorities
 - Need to develop workforce plan to consolidate strands of work which will support the councils' ambitious delivery programme
 - Poor councillor behaviour at public meetings
 - A more diverse budget strategy is developed
7. Since the publication of the report Officers are currently developing an action plan to set out a pathway to deliver the Peer Team's key recommendations which are set out on pages 5 and 6 of the appendix. It is intended that this action plan will be presented to and monitored on a regular basis by the Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee.
8. In accordance with the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge process the report and draft action plan will be formally published on the Council's website within 6 weeks of the council receiving the report.

9. The Corporate Peer Challenge process includes a six-month check-in meeting. This will be a short, facilitated session which creates space for the council's senior leadership to update peers on its progress against the action plan and discuss next steps.

Reasons for Recommendation

10. To ensure that the Peer Review recommendations are implemented and regularly reviewed.

Consultation

11. None.

References to Corporate Plan

12. An Action Plan will assess the impact and effectiveness of the Council to deliver against the key priorities set out within the 2020-25 Corporate Plan.

Implications

Financial Implications

Name/Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Corporate Director (Finance & Resources) and Section 151 Officer

Tel/Email: 01277 312500/jacqueline.vanmellaerts@brentwood.gov.uk

13. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The peer review was conducted using existing resources and no additional costs were required. Any actions or outcomes that which have resulted from the peer review feedback will be evaluated against available budgets within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Amanda Julian, Corporate Director (Law & Governance) and Monitoring Officer

Tel & Email: 01277 312500/amanda.julian@brentwood.gov.uk

14. There are no direct legal implications arising from the report. The implementation of the recommendations may require further legal and governance advice which will be provided as we implement these.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Corporate Director (Planning & Economy)

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15. There are no direct economic implications. Specific feedback regarding the pace of delivery achieved and future resilience informing the prioritisation of objectives will need to be considered as part of economic growth aims.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

16. None

Background Papers

17. None

Appendices to this report

Appendix A: Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report