

Committee(s): Policy, Resources & Economic Development Committee	Date: 8 February 2023
Subject: Corporate Peer Challenge Review Update	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Steve Summers, Strategic Director	Public
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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 23 February 2022. Alongside a number of positive reflections, the report included a series of recommendations for the council to implement. Subsequently, at Ordinary Council on 16 March 2022, (min 367 refers), an Action Plan to deliver the Peers recommendations was agreed.

The Peer Challenge Team returned on 14 December 2022 to review progress. This report updates members on the outcome of this review of our actions from the original Peer Review outcome.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. Brentwood Borough Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2022. The review took place between 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. On 23 February 2022, the council received the Peer team's feedback report, which contained recommendations for areas the council could improve.

5. At Ordinary Council on 16 March 2022, (min 367 refers), an Action Plan to deliver the Peers recommendations was agreed.
6. The Peer Review Challenge Team returned to review how the Council had progressed against the recommendations on the 14 December 2022. This report provides an update of that review along with actions were progress is still necessary. The outcome progress review letter from the Local Government Peer Review Team is at Appendix A which has been circulated to Members and in accordance with the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge process the review has been published on the Council's website.

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

7. The Peer Challenge Review recognised that significant progress against the recommendations had been made and acknowledged the continued strength within the organisation. Of the ten recommendations, seven are green, two are amber and one is red. These are listed below:
8. Recommendation 6 Amber - Rationalise the investment structure – Review the interrelation of Brentwood Development Partnership (BDP), Seven Arches and BBC.
9. Recommendation 8 Amber - Have a plan for partnerships – review existing arrangements to ensure they are still value for money and meeting the council's objectives
10. Recommendation 10 Amber - Demonstrate good standards in public office – Councillors can also demonstrate and adopt the "Brentwood way".
11. Having listened and spoken with officers and the Leader of Brentwood Borough Council, peers reflected on the areas that would most help the Council on its improvement journey and provided some considerations. These can be found in section 3.4 of their attached letter and consideration of these will be made as we work through initial action plan.
12. The Action Plan is attached at Appendix B, the two actions which the review identified as amber have actions already identified to be undertaken later this year. The action flagged red has been reinforced to provide a little more detail highlighting that the Model Code of Conduct has been adopted; and that the full member training and development programme will be in place post-election with mandatory training on some aspects of good standards in public life.
13. Members are asked to approve the proposed updated action plan and to report back at a future PRED Committee on progress.

Reasons for Recommendation

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

Consultation

15. None

References to Corporate Plan

16. The Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan helps assess the effectiveness of the Council to deliver against the key priorities set out within the 2020-25 Corporate Strategy.

Implications

Financial Implications

Name/Title: Tim Willis, Interim Director – Resources

Tel/Email: 01277 312500/tim.willis@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Andrew Hunkin, Interim Director – People & Governance (Monitoring Officer)

Tel & Email: 01277 312500/andrew.hunkin@brentwood.rochford.gov.uk

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Economic Implications

Name/Title: Phil Drane, Director – Place

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Growing the economy is a corporate objective measured by the council and relevant to the peer review process. A local authority that is reviewed by peers, and where performance on recommendations is monitored, is good for the positive running of the local area, and by extension local economy.

Background Papers

Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report

Appendices to this report

Appendix A: LGA Peer Review Outcome Letter

Appendix B: Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan – Update