

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT / REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

31st October 2018

Corporate Peer Challenge – Bromsgrove DC and Redditch BC 2018

OPEN

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Geoff Denaro (Leader of the Council)
Portfolio Holder Consulted	✓
Relevant Head of Service	Kevin Dicks, Chief Executive
Ward(s) Affected	N/A
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	Non key decision

1. SUMMARY OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform members about the outcome and next steps resulting from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge which took place 22-24th January and 23rd February 2018

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 Members are asked to discuss and note the attached letter and action plan following the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in January and February 2018.

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.1 The cost of the corporate peer challenge is included within the authorities' annual subscription to the LGA. Other costs are internal ones related to officer time. The cost of implementing the CPC action plan will be met from current budgets (unless separate specific reports are required).
- 3.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

- 3.3 None arising directly from this report.

Service / Operational Implications

Background

- 3.4 Since 2012 the Local Government Association (LGA) has provided, as part of its support to the sector, the facilitation of Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) reviews whereby senior members and officers from other local authorities, supported by LGA staff, visit the Councils with the objective to inform their improvement plans and how to develop corporate learning. It is designed to be forward looking, and to facilitate reflection on issues and how they may be resolved. While it can be used as an external 'health check' on the authorities corporate governance, the peer challenge is not a form of inspection.
- 3.5 The CPC was an opportunity to pause and reflect on what the Partnership (Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Council) has achieved so far and to reflect on its future direction of travel and the issues the Councils will face.
- 3.6 The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges. These are the areas we believe are critical to councils' performance and improvement:
- Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
 - Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
 - Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?
 - Political and managerial leadership: Does the council provide effective political and managerial leadership through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
 - Governance and decision-making: Is political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change to be implemented?
- 3.7 In addition to these questions the Councils asked the peer team to consider: "Whether the Councils' and partnership's direction of travel is the right one?"
- 3.8 The CPC team comprised of:
- Matt Prosser, Chief Executive, Dorset Councils Partnership Serving: North Dorset DC , West Dorset DC and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council
 - Cllr Paul James, Leader, Gloucester City Council
 - Cllr Tudor Evans, Leader, Labour Group, Plymouth City Council
 - Bindu Arjoon, Director, Exeter City Council

- Claire Taylor, Director Customers and Service Development, Cherwell and South Northants Councils
- Karen Iveson, Chief Finance Officer Selby DC and Assistant Director North Yorkshire CC
- Raj Khera, LGA programme support
- Clare Hudson, LGA Peer Challenge Manager

The Process

- 3.9 The peer team were based at both the Bromsgrove and Redditch offices during the four day review. There was an initial ‘scene setting’ and ‘checking the brief’ discussion with the Chief Executive and Leader. These were done separately for each Council.
- 3.10 Meetings and discussion sessions then took place with a range of officers, members and other stakeholders/partners enabling the peer team to explore the issues relevant to the purpose, scope and suggested terms of reference for the peer review.
- 3.11 At the end of the initial on-site activity (22nd – 24th January) there was a feedback session and members of the Executive (Redditch), Cabinet (Bromsgrove) and Corporate Management Team were invited to attend and presented with the findings of the initial 3 day review. A further day (23rd February) was then held for the team to review their initial findings based upon further discussions and investigations. Again the Executive (Redditch), Cabinet (Bromsgrove) and Corporate Management Team were invited to attend.
- 3.12 This has been followed by a written feedback report (Appendix 1), summarising the peer team’s feedback with their recommendations for improvement. This report was received just prior to the “purdah” period (for the Redditch Borough Council elections) and the Leaders of both Councils agreed that due to this that the publication of the report should be delayed.
- 3.13 Following consideration by the Senior Management Team and Leaders of both Councils, these have been pulled together into an Action Plan (appendix 2). Due to the change of political control in Redditch this report has been delayed in order to allow the new leader and Executive in Redditch to discuss this with their counterparts in Bromsgrove.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.14 None directly associated with this report.

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4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 No risks have been identified arising directly from this report.

5. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report
Appendix 2 – Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Peer Review for Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough Councils position Statement

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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