

REPORT TO CABINET

Open/Exempt		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards	Mandatory/	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		YES/NO	
	Discretionary /	Need to be recommendations to Council		YES/NO	
	Operational	Is it a Key Decision		YES/NO	
Lead Member: Cllr Terry Parish – Leader of the Council E-mail: cllr.terry.parish@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted: Cabinet			
Lead Officer: Honor Howell – Corporate Governance Manager E-mail: honor.howell@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial:01553 616550		Other Members consulted: Corporate Performance Panel			
		Other Officers consulted: Management Team Assistant Directors Council staff via Briefing Sessions/Unison			
Financial Implications YES/NO	Policy/ Personnel Implications YES/NO	Statutory Implications YES/NO	Equal Impact Assessment YES/NO If YES: Pre- screening/ Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications YES/NO	Environmental Considerations YES/NO
If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s)					

Date of meeting: 5 March 2024

TITLE **CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN**

Summary

Following a motion to council, the council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) at the council as part of their sector level improvement programme.

The scope of the peer challenge was designed to incorporate both an external 'health check' of the organisation, including the core components examined by all corporate peer challenges listed below:

- Local priorities and outcomes
- Organisational and place leadership:
- Governance and culture:
- Financial planning and management:
- Capacity for improvement:

The review took place in October 2023 and the final report was received in December 2023. This report summarises the findings of the team's work and outlines the steps taken to develop the attached action plan (Appendix A) to respond to the recommendations set out in the report. It was encouraging to note that the council was already working on or planning actions to address some of the issues raised by the Peer Team.

The peers will be returning to the council on 27 June 2024 to assess and report on the council's progress against the published action plan. They will then publish their findings in respect of the action plan and progress made towards those plans.

Recommendation

Cabinet Resolves

Cabinet notes the final report of the LGA Peer Challenge Team and to endorse the Action Plan drawn up by Management Team and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) in consultation with council staff to respond to the report's conclusions.

That Cabinet note that implementation of the actions stated will require resource and capacity. It is envisaged that a financial allocation will be required in the future.

Reason for Decision

To enable the organisation to consider, plan, and respond to the findings of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and to put in place a programme of transformation across council services.

1 Background

- 1.1 A Motion was put forward to full Council in December 2022 that the council invite the Local Government Association (LGA) to visit the council to carry out a Corporate Peer Challenges (CPC). As part of its council assurance and peer support programmes, the LGA offer CPC's which are designed to harness opportunities and drive improvements in local government. It is recommended that councils undergo a CPC every five years. The last CPC at this council was in 2014, therefore was overdue for a CPC.
- 1.2 To prepare for the CPC, the council provided a number of documents and produced a Position Statement prior to the Peers visit. Meetings were arranged with a number of external stakeholders, Members, Management Team, the Senior Leadership Team, and staff representatives from across the authority. They also met with partners of the council. Members of the Town Deal Board as well as Chief Executives from neighbouring authorities.
- 1.3.1 On the last day of the visit, the Peers provided feedback to Cabinet and the Senior Leadership Team on their preliminary findings. The draft report was received in November 2023.
- 1.3.2 The timetable for the CPC is set out below:

Action	Date
Delivery of CPC	16 – 19 th October 2023
Drafting report	23 rd – 27 th October
QA report	27 th October
Peers to review report and feedback	30 th – 3 rd November
Receipt of draft report to BCKLWN	W/c 6 th November
Finalised Report	
Published CPC report	No later than 19 th January 2024

Published CPC action plan	No later than 19 th March 2024
Six-month progress review – scope meeting	TBA
Position Statement and action plan	No later than 14 June 2024
Progress Review	28 June 2024
Report published	No later than 18 th October 2024

1.3.3 Following receipt of the final report just before Christmas 2023, the report was sent to all staff and those stakeholders who had been interviewed as part of the process. It was also published on the council's website and a Press Release was issued to the local media.

1.4 The final report highlighted eight key recommendations for the council to consider:

- Recommendation 1 - Engage, consult and co-produce with residents and communities – Develop a customer engagement strategy/charter.
- Recommendation 2 - Talk and listen to staff, create new regular channels of ongoing staff engagement.
- Recommendation 3 - The political and managerial leadership needs to take stock and think about how to make the council fit for the future.
- Recommendation 4 - Re-focus SLT on strategic issues and empower managers to manage and deliver.
- Recommendation 5 - Use headroom to deliver ongoing annual revenue savings to address the underlying budget gap in 2026/27.
- Recommendation 6 - Put in place a transformation programme that designs everything around residents and communities.
- Recommendation 7 - Performance measures and data should focus on priorities and outcomes and provide the right information for members to make decisions.
- Recommendation 8 Undertake a governance review to focus meetings on adding value to decision-making and scrutiny.

1.3.4 Ongoing engagement with staff was a key recommendation from the peers. Acknowledging this, over recent weeks the Chief Executive has held a series of staff briefing sessions to obtain first-hand feedback from staff on their thoughts on the CPC and obtain their input and ideas for the action plan. This feedback has been incorporated into the attached action plan. Ongoing face to face engagement with staff will continue with more sessions on the Corporate Strategy and the budget and how staff roles contribute to the overall success of the council being planned for the spring.

1.6 Over the coming weeks, officer Working Groups will be set up progress the actions set out in the plan. The Working Groups will focus on recommendation four off the CPC Report along with other areas that the council had previously identified such as Digital Transformation, Culture and Values plus the Productivity Plans recently announced in line with the Local

Government Finance Settlement. Some initial suggestions for the groups include:

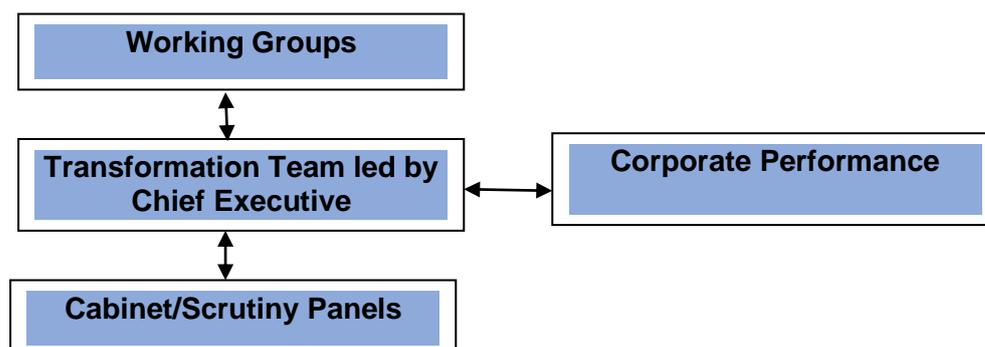
- a) Cost management and income generation/Productivity Plans
- b) Digital Strategy
- c) Office Accommodation
- d) Internal Communications/Staff Engagement/Corporate Intranet
- e) Community Engagement
- f) HR Processes
- g) Corporate Performance Management System
- h) Culture and Values

- 1.7 As we further develop and work through the action plan, these may change according to priority and available resource. A programme of transformation will consider any recommendations and outputs from these groups. This will ensure our staff have the opportunity to contribute on the way the council transforms its services.
- 1.8 These Working Groups will sit beside the work already completed on the Cost Management and Income Generation plan published with the annual budget. The groups will be managed and led by members of staff who have demonstrated an interest in being involved with the CPC action plan.

2 Options Considered

- 2.1 The primary purpose of inviting the Peer Challenge Team to carry out a review at the Borough Council was to identify opportunities for improvement against the core criteria set by the LGA. Approaches to the suggestions and recommendations made by the Peers and from the feedback from the staff engagement sessions will be explored by the officer task groups as they carry out their work programs.
- 2.2 The CPC action plan will be maintained and monitored by the council's Corporate Governance Team who are responsible for managing and monitoring the council's Corporate Strategy, Annual Plan, and the Key Performance Indicators. Progress reports will be presented to the Corporate Performance Panel and Cabinet on a quarterly basis with the other performance management reports. The plan will undergo a formal review bi-annually to ensure it remains relevant and to remove completed actions.
- 2.3.3 The last few months have seen the adoption of the Corporate Strategy, the Annual Plan for 2023/2024 and the Annual Plan for 2024/2025 will also soon be published. In considering the CPC Action Plan, Cabinet should recognise the action plans already in place and the resources, capacity, and finance available to deliver these ambitious plans. The CPC Action Plan needs to be delivered over a period of time. Change does not occur overnight, and this plan should be viewed as a long term, transformational and cultural shift of the organisation.

2.3.4 The model below demonstrates the performance framework for this ongoing transformation work:



2.3.5 An internal 'Transformation Team' will be set up, led by the Chief Executive, supported by the Corporate Performance Team. The officer working groups will feed into the transformation team. Regular update reports on progress will be presented to the Senior Leadership Team and the Corporate Performance Panel and Cabinet.

2.3.6 The Working Groups will all be given a brief for the area of work they are focused on. Relevant Portfolio Holders will be invited to join the initial meetings to discuss the purpose of the groups along with outputs and outcomes.

3. Policy Implications

3.1 There are no direct policy implications from this report or the CPC Action Plan. Any policy implications identified arising from the Working Groups will be subject to separate reporting.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 There is no budget or resource currently allocated to the implementation of the CPC Action Plan. The delivery of the plan will impact on resource and capacity across the organisation, but at this stage, a total cost is not quantifiable. As the staff working groups begin to make recommendations for the transformation of services, then the requirement for a budget to be allocated will be considered.

5 Personnel Implications

5.1 None

6 Environmental Considerations

6.1 There are no environmental considerations.

7 Statutory Considerations

7.1 None

8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) (Pre screening report template attached)

9 Risk Management Implications

- 9.1 Following a CPC, the council is obligated to publish an action plan and to be able to demonstrate progress against the plan when the LGA revisit the authority in June 2024. Failure to make visible progress against the recommendations in the CPC Report would be a considerable reputational risk for the council and would have a corresponding detrimental impact on staff morale as the perception would be that the council hasn't listened to what was conveyed to the Peers during their visit.

10 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

- 10.1 None

11 Background Papers

- 11.1 [Peer Challenge Position Statement](#)
[Peer Challenge Final Report](#)

Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

Borough Council of
King's Lynn & West Norfolk



Name of policy/service/function	Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function?	New / Existing (delete as appropriate)				
<p>Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened.</p> <p>Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations</p>	<p>Action plan to respond to the recommendations outlined in the Corporate Peer Challenge Report.</p> <p>No</p>				
Question	Answer				
<p>1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups according to their different protected characteristic, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service?</p> <p>Please tick the relevant box for each group.</p> <p>NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group.</p>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			x	
	Disability			x	
	Gender			x	
	Gender Re-assignment			x	
	Marriage/civil partnership			x	
	Pregnancy & maternity			x	
	Race			x	
	Religion or belief			x	
	Sexual orientation			x	
	Other (eg low income)			x	

