

LGA FINANCE PEER REVIEW

Head of Service:	Kathryn Beldon, Chief Executive
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Urgent Decision?	No
If yes, reason urgent decision required:	N/A
Appendices (attached):	Appendix 1 – LGA Finance Peer Report Appendix 2 – Council Action Plan

Summary

This report presents the findings of the Local Government Association's (LGA) Finance Peer Review, and the Council's arising Action Plan.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Receive the LGA peers' feedback report (Appendix 1)
- (2) Approve the Council's Action Plan (Appendix 2).

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The recommendations will ensure that the Finance Peer Review findings are progressed to further enhance the Council's governance and financial procedures.

2 Background

- 2.1 In line with our drive for continual improvement, the Council commissioned the Local Government Association to undertake a peer review of finance across the organisation. The review took place in March 2021.
- 2.2 The LGA peers have provided their feedback report, which is attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.3 The report findings are considered by finance officers to be generally positive, with the executive summary stating:

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- 2.4 *“The Council has a long proven track record in financial management, demonstrating prudent oversight and management of its finances over a number of years”.*
- 2.5 To build on the report’s positive findings, the review contains eight key recommendations. These recommendations would assist the Council to further enhance its financial procedures and overall position, and are listed below:
- 2.5.1 Bring together into a clear strategic statement the change and recovery intentions of the Council;
 - 2.5.2 Review the approach to financial decision making and scrutiny;
 - 2.5.3 Consider how members and officers can adapt to support each other through the forthcoming period of change;
 - 2.5.4 Ensure budget monitoring is considered by the relevant committee(s);
 - 2.5.5 Refresh the approach to the Capital Programme;
 - 2.5.6 Agree a new Local Plan as soon as possible;
 - 2.5.7 Given the Council’s commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2035, assess the costs of delivering this plan both in terms of revenue and capital;
 - 2.5.8 Collectively reflect further on the types of considerations given below for progressing the work on shared services and look to progress this in a phased and managed way.
- 2.6 To address these recommendations and ensure we capitalise on the opportunity presented by the Peer Review, officers have produced the Action Plan at Appendix 2.
- 2.7 Leadership Team has been consulted on, and endorsed, the Action Plan.
- 2.8 Members are now asked to receive the Peer Review Report and agree the Action Plan, which would then be published on the Council’s website.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Impact Assessment

- 3.1.1 There are no direct impact assessments required for this report.
- 3.1.2 Any element of the Action Plan that requires an individual impact assessment will have one undertaken at the time.

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3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 There are no crime and disorder implications for this report.

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 There are no safeguarding implications for this report.

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 There are no dependencies for this report.

3.4.2 A number of dependencies resulting from the action plan may be identified.

3.5 Other

3.5.1 None.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

4.2 Should any financial implications arise subsequently from the Action Plan, these will be addressed at the time, as appropriate.

4.3 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** The Peer Review has provided the Council with an exclusive opportunity to reflect on its processes and to benefit from the experience of senior colleagues across local government.

4.4 While the review demonstrated that the Council's financial procedures are robust, a number of recommendations have been identified to enhance our position further.

4.5 Delivery of the Action Plan will ensure that the Council capitalises on the opportunities presented by the Peer Review.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from the contents of this report.

5.2 **Monitoring Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged: Effective Council.

6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.

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6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** Providing costings for the Climate Change Action Plan will enable the Council to assess, more clearly, the financial impact of its transition towards net-zero carbon emissions.

6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** None arising from the contents of this report.

6.5 **Partnerships:** None arising from the contents of this report.

7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- None.

Other papers:

- None.