

## **CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN UPDATE**

<b>Head of Service:</b>	Jackie King, Chief Executive
<b>Report Author</b>	Emma Hill, Principal Programme Manager
<b>Wards affected:</b>	(All Wards);
<b>Urgent Decision?(yes/no)</b>	No
<b>If yes, reason urgent decision required:</b>	
<b>Appendices (attached):</b>	Appendix 1: Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan – Updated Appendix 2: Terms of Reference – Task & Finish Group - Member Induction Programme Appendix 3: Terms of Reference – Task & Finish Group – Corporate Priorities

### **Summary**

This report provides an update on progress against the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, approved at Strategy & Resources Committee in July 2024 following the Peer Challenge in March 2024.

### **Recommendation (s)**

#### **The Committee is asked to:**

- (1) Note the progress against the actions set out within the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.**
- (2) Note the amendment to the completion dates of the actions highlighted within the Action Plan as attached as Appendix 1 to this report.**
- (3) Approve the Terms of Reference as attached as Appendix 2 to this report and confirm the Member Induction and Development Programme task & finish group.**
- (4) Approve the Terms of Reference as attached as Appendix 3 to this report and confirm the task & finish group of members and officers to develop the corporate priorities into a five-year plan.**

# Strategy and Resources Committee

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### 1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 To ensure that Strategy & Resources Committee maintains an overview of the Council's response to the matters identified within the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) report, ensuring that the benefits of the CPC process are realised.
- 1.2 Amendments to Action Plan delivery dates have been highlighted to reflect where some areas of work have required more time and resource to deliver than was originally anticipated.

### 2 Background

- 2.1 In March 2024, a team of senior local government Councillors and officers (the peer team) undertook a comprehensive review of key finance, performance, and governance information and reviewed a 'Position Statement', provided by the council.
- 2.2 Following a three-day site visit during which the peer team met more than 100 people including Councillors, staff, partners and residents, the peer team prepared a report of their findings which made 11 recommendations.
- 2.3 The peer team's recommendations were carried through to an Action Plan approved at Strategy & Resources Committee on July the 23rd, 2024.
- 2.4 Following the initial CPC, a follow-up progress review, including a further one-day site visit will take place in January 2025 to assess the council's progress in addressing the identified improvement areas set out within the Action Plan.
- 2.5 This report provides an interim update on progress against the Action Plan to date. Details of the current position, by individual action are set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.6 Members will note that progress has been made against many of the actions.

Amended delivery dates:

- 2.7 It has been necessary to amend the delivery date of some actions set out within the Action Plan. The reasons for this vary from the action requiring more resource (time and staffing) to progress than was anticipated at the time that the end date was originally set, to needing to realign delivery dates based on the connectedness and inter-dependencies between individual actions within the overall Action Plan.
- 2.8 A summary of each of the actions affected, and the reason for each amended end date is summarised below with a more detailed progress update set out within Appendix 1:

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- 2.9 Action 3.1 'Political leadership to explore its current governance model and consider if it wishes to adopt a different model'. It has been necessary to amend the end date of this action to allow for a decision by March 2025, following discussions which will take place in December 2024.
- 2.10 Action 3.3 'Refresh of the member development programme, identify those members who wish to take on more strategic roles and put in place development opportunities to support that'. It has been necessary to amend the end date of this action to March 2025, from December 2024 to allow adequate time for all members to input into the member development programme.
- 2.11 Actions 4.1 and 4.2 regarding 'Establish a members group to develop a member development programme' and 'Establish a task and finish group from those members elected for the first time in May 2023 to review Member Induction and feedback on how to shape the programme for May 2027 and work with officers on the review.' These were due to be completed by September 2024, but an amended end date of November 2024 has been necessary to allow time for members of the group to be identified.
- 2.12 Action 5.1 'Create a process which lays out the steps for committee reports to come to committee or full council'. This was due to be completed by September 2024, however a new completion date of November 2024 has been necessary to allow statutory officers to review the process note already drafted by the democratic services team.
- 2.13 Action 8.2 'Provide communication on what all the elements of our Corporate Transformation Programme are and quarterly updates on how they are being progressed and delivered.' The CTP has been drafted within existing staff resources and is being internally reviewed to ensure it is properly resourced as advised by the peer team. An end date for this action of January 2025 has been necessary.
- 2.14 Action 8.3 'Incorporate the Corporate Transformation Programme into the five-year plan'. An amended end date for this action of March 2025, is logical as it allows alignment with the development of the refreshed corporate priorities. The CTP has been drafted in alignment with the current corporate priorities, but if this changes significantly, it will be necessary to change the CTP as drafted and the projects and programmes prioritised within the portfolios to reflect and amended corporate priorities and ensure resources are aligned to their delivery.
- 2.15 Action 11.4 - The recommendation to amend the date of Action Plan item 11.4 will address a scheduling and delivery issue. The component parts of the action lead up both logically and chronologically to the presentation of a report to Full Council, as it currently stands, an error in the drafting of the target completion dates means that the component parts will be delivered after the report to Full Council.

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- 2.16 To address this drafting error, it is proposed that the date for presentation of a report to Full Council should be amended from February 2025 to February 2026, in line with delivery with some of the other more complex Action Plan items.

### **Member Working Groups**

- 2.17 In line with a 'One Council' ethos, two Member and officer task & finish groups are proposed to take forward the peer team's recommendations around the development of corporate priorities, a place narrative and renewed focus on Future40, and a further task & finish group to develop a revised member induction programme. Terms of Reference and membership of the two groups have been set out in Appendix 2 and 3.

## **3 Risk Assessment**

### Legal or other duties

#### 3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1.1 The CPC process focuses on the council's ability to serve and work with its residents. The recommendations will be utilised to support the council to deliver more efficient, resilient, and resident focused services.

- 3.1.2 In developing a 'Shared Vision', a recommendation of peer team, and reflected in the attached Action Plan, it will be important to listen to all sections of our community and to carry out a full Equality Impact Assessment of any proposed corporate priorities that arise.

#### 3.2 Crime & Disorder

- 3.2.1 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

#### 3.3 Safeguarding

- 3.3.1 There are no safeguarding issues arising directly due to this report.

#### 3.4 Dependencies

- 3.4.1 Implementation of an Action Plan is an expected part of engaging positively in the Corporate Peer Challenge process.

#### 3.5 Other

- 3.5.1 As the Corporate Peer Challenge process aligned with the need to refresh the current corporate priorities, the opportunity has been taken to draw on the insights and recommendations of the peer team in developing a new Corporate Plan.

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### 4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Corporate Peer Challenge process is a valuable assurance tool, provided free of charge to the council.
- 4.2 Whilst there are no financial implications arising directly from this report, it is recognised that in implementing the appended Action Plan, some investment may be required, for example in providing the Member and staff training referenced by the peer team, and in developing organisational capacity to deliver an all-encompassing Corporate Transformation Programme.
- 4.3 To date, no additional expenditure has been incurred in delivering the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan. All costs identified are expected to be met in the first instance through existing, approved budgets, or referred to the appropriate Committee should any anticipated expenditure extend beyond the already approved financial envelope.
- 4.4 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

### 5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 **Legal Officer's comments:** None arising from the content of this report.

### 6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

- 6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:
  - Effective Council. The peer team's recommendations, and the council's response to them are important in supporting the council's commitment to continuous improvement and transparency.
- 6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter is included within the current Service Delivery Plan.
- 6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:**
- 6.4 There are no direct climate and environmental issues arising because of this report, however, in developing a shared vision for Epsom & Ewell, as recommended by the peer team, it will be important to incorporate the council's climate change commitments into any strategic priorities that are developed as a result.
- 6.5 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:**
- 6.6 There are no sustainability policy and community safety implications arising from the contents of this report.
- 6.7 **Partnerships:**

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6.8 CPC Action Plan item 9 directly with the council's approach to partnership working and recommends a refreshed approach to collaboration.

### 7 Background papers

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

#### **Previous reports:**

- [Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, Strategy & Resources Committee, July 2024](#)

#### **Other papers:**

- [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report](#)
- [Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Corporate Peer Challenge Position Statement](#)