

STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

11 JULY 2019

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Report Title	LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE ACTION PLAN
Purpose of Report	To consider the Action Plan resulting from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report received in May, and reported to Council on 16 May 2019.
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to: (1) Agree the Action Plan; and (2) Note that progress reports will be brought to future Strategy & Resources Committee meetings.
Consultation and Feedback	The Peer Challenge process involved meetings with the Leader, Group Leaders, Committee chairs, a number of other members, the CE, senior management and a cross-section of staff as well as external partners and agencies. The Action Plan has been developed in consultation with managers and members of this Committee.
Financial Implications and Risk Assessment	There are no financial implications arising directly from the report. Actions taken will be subject to proper financial evaluation and reported to Committee as appropriate. Andrew Cummings, Interim Director of Resources and Section 151 Officer, Tel: 01453 754115 Email: andrew.cummings@stroud.gov.uk
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications arising from the content of this report. Patrick Arran, Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer, Tel: 01453 754369 Email: patrick.arran@stroud.gov.uk
Report Author	Kathy O'Leary, Chief Executive, Tel: 01453 754292 Email: kathy.oleary@stroud.gov.uk
Options	The Local Government Association encourages all local authorities to undergo a Corporate Peer Challenge every 4-5 years. These are designed to complement and add value to the Council's own performance and improvement focus. The preparation of an Action Plan to address the recommendations set out in the feedback report is optional. The Action Plan will help guide the Council's improvement over the next 18 months to 2 years.

Performance Management Follow Up	Progress against the Action Plan will be regularly monitored and reported to this Committee. The LGA will follow up with a visit in the next 18 months to 2 years to assess progress against their recommendations.
Background Papers/ Appendices	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge feedback report, May 2019. Report to Council on LGA Corporate Peer Challenge feedback report 16 May 2019. Appendix 1 – Emerging Action Plan

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) offers all local authorities the opportunity to participate in a Corporate Peer Challenge every 4 years or so as part of its sector-led improvement programme.
- 1.2 The Council's Corporate Peer Challenge took place between 26 and 29 March 2019. It was conducted by a team of elected members and senior officers from other local authorities together with LGA advisors.
- 1.3 The Peer Challenge considered 5 core components:
- a) How well we understand our local place and priority: do we understand the local context and use this to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
 - b) Leadership of place: do we provide effective leadership through members and officers and form constructive partnerships with stakeholders?
 - c) Organisational leadership and governance: how effective is this politically and managerially and is this supported by good governance and decision making in response to key challenges and allows the Council to change and transform in response to these?
 - d) Financial planning and viability: do we have a plan in place which ensures our long term viability?
 - e) Capacity to deliver: is our resource aligned with our priorities?
- 1.4 The Peer Challenge team were also asked to give views on:
- a) How well are we currently meeting customer needs?
 - b) How might we make the best use of technology in the delivery of efficient and excellent customer services?
 - c) How well our structure supports our vision and delivery of corporate objectives and how might we improve this?
 - d) How we can best achieve financial self-sufficiency – including making the most of commercial investment and treasury management (with an eye on the benefit to residents and businesses)?
- 1.5 The Peer Challenge team reviewed the Council's self-assessment, key documents and visited Ebley Mill for 4 days between 26 and 29 March 2019. They conducted site visits, interviews and workshops with a wide selection of staff, members, stakeholders and partners, meeting with 107 people and holding 47 meetings during their stay.
- 1.6 The Council received the Peer Challenge team's feedback report in May 2019 and reported it to Council on 16 May 2019. The report to Council identified the headlines in the feedback report, which included that Stroud District Council is a good Council

providing good services, does much that is of the highest order and has the potential to be an exemplar leader of place.

- 1.7 The Peer Challenge team set out eight recommendations in respect of areas for development and improvement on pages 3 and 4 of the feedback report. The first four recommendations were identified as needing more immediate action and the latter four as needing action in the medium term. To some extent progress on the medium term recommendations and actions relies on addressing initial recommendations and actions, particularly carrying out a senior officer restructure to ensure sufficient strategic capacity is in place at the top of the organisation. A separate report on this agenda addresses that issue.

2. ACTION PLAN

- 2.1 The Action Plan at Appendix 1 sets out the 8 recommendations in full and the actions identified to address them, with reference to the page numbers and sections in the LGA Peer Challenge team's feedback report to ensure all suggested actions are captured. The anticipated timescale and current progress against each action is recorded and lead officers / members identified.
- 2.2 As further work is carried out in respect of each recommendation and action, which will include lead members and officers engaging with the LGA and others for advice and support, the Action Plan will be underpinned by further detail.
- 2.3 The Action Plan will be kept under continual review and progress regularly reported to this Committee. The intention is to make substantial progress on the Action Plan by the time the LGA are invited back within the next two years.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 Members are asked to endorse the emerging Action Plan at Appendix 1 which is being developed to respond to the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge team's feedback report.