

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL	COUNCIL	17 JULY 2017	13

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION PEER CHALLENGE REVIEW

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

SUMMARY

The report provides details of the work carried out by the Local Government Association as part of the Peer Challenge Review process in 2016 and includes the final report that includes feedback on strengths as well as areas for improvement and further development. In response to member enquiries when the draft report was published in September 2016, a follow up session was held for elected members only on November 2nd 2016 that highlighted issues for further investigation and action which are included in the report. Members are asked to note the work carried out by the LGA on behalf of the council and support the use of the relevant feedback to inform improvement actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the council note the report produced by the LGA Peer Challenge Review Team included at Appendix 1 and the constructive feedback provided to assist the council.
2. That the further actions agreed at the follow up session for elected members only on November 2nd 2016 and included in Appendix 2 are progressed and developed as part of the councils improvement agenda.
3. That the Leader writes to the LGA Peer Review Team to thank them for their work at Fylde and the advice and support they have provided over the last 12 months.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS

None

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

Spending your money in the most efficient way to achieve excellent services (Value for Money)	√
Delivering the services that customers expect of an excellent council (Clean and Green)	√
Working with all partners (Vibrant Economy)	√
To make sure Fylde continues to be one of the most desirable places to live (A Great Place to Live)	√
Promoting Fylde as a great destination to visit (A Great Place to Visit)	√

REPORT

1. An LGA Peer Challenge Review is improvement-focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs, it is not an inspection, it is best practice rather than compulsory and the advice is provided to assist and support. The review is designed to support, complement and add value to the council's own performance and improvement plans. The peer review team use their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them through interviews and group work, evidence they found on site and documents they examine throughout the process. The team prepared for the Peer Challenge Review by examining a range of documents and information to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent three days on-site during which they:
 - Spoke to more than 80 people including a wide range of council staff together with a significant number of councillors and external partners/agencies and stakeholders.
 - Gathered information and views from meetings, a short tour of the borough, observing a Development Management Committee meeting and additional research and reading.
 - Collectively spent more than 120 hours to assess and determine the findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 3 weeks at the authority.
2. The report included in Appendix 1 provides a summary of the findings from the Peer Challenge Review which is presented by fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors, as advice and support on what is going well, what could be done better and what should be considered in forward planning given the challenges facing local authorities. The reviews are used by local authorities as one of the evidenced based information sources that inform forward planning and proposed improvement initiatives.
3. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time and it is recognised that some of the feedback will be about things the council is already addressing and progressing. It is recognised that some of the issues have progressed since the review and the publication of the report for example the Combined Authority and potential boundary review and therefore the feedback and proposed options in respect of these issues have been addressed. The report highlights the strengths and successes of the council as well as providing advice on areas for improvement or measures that can be taken to prepare for the next significant change in local government, which at the present time is the requirement to be self-sufficient by 2020.
4. The peer review team explored three issues:
 - The ability of the council to deliver its priorities within the resources available
 - The capacity, abilities and potential of the administrative and political leadership
 - An assessment of overall strengths and weaknesses of the council
5. There are a number of established standard questions that corporate peer challenge teams apply to explore the councils ability to prioritise, plan and deliver within its resources, which are:
 - Does the council understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?
 - Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
 - Does the council have effective political and managerial leadership and is there a constructive partnership between officers and members?
 - Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change and transformation?
 - Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?
6. The LGA Peer Challenge Review report has already been used to inform operational improvement initiatives since it was published in September 2016, in particular the creation of the Self-Sufficient Working Group

which examines ideas for income generation and service efficiency, and an increased focus on developing a more commercial approach.

7. When the report was first published a number of elected members sought further clarification about the findings and representations were made to the Peer Review Team lead. In response the Lead Officer from the LGA, Neil Shaw and the Lead Chief Executive on the review team, Shelia Oxtoby returned on site to hold a follow up session that all members were invited to on November 2nd 2016. This provided the opportunity for the team to clarify the findings in the report addressing the issues that some members had raised but also the opportunity for further discussion with elected members about the key strategic issues the council needs to address.
8. The note included in Appendix 2 to the report provides details of the issues that were discussed by the members in attendance on November 2nd that should be explored further as part of the improvement agenda at Fylde. Only 14 members were able to attend the additional follow up session so it is important that the follow up actions agreed are presented to the council and proposed as part of the improvement agenda. The relevant feedback from the LGA Peer Challenge Review as well as the issues discussed at the follow up session will be used to inform targeted improvement initiatives and forward planning.
9. The LGA Peer Challenge Review and follow up support was provided as part of the membership of the LGA and designed to provide independent and impartial advice on improvement that is most suitable for Fylde given the capacity, resources, culture and appetite of the council set against the challenges common to local government. The council should seek to make the most of the opportunity provided by using the feedback and advice as one of the evidenced based sources that can inform future improvement.

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	There are no direct financial implications as a result of the report.
Legal	There are no direct legal implications as a result of the report.
Community Safety	There are no direct community safety implications as a result of the report.
Human Rights and Equalities	There are no direct human rights or equalities implications as a result of the report.
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	There are no direct sustainability or environmental implications as a result of the report.
Health & Safety and Risk Management	There are no direct health, safety or risk management implications as a result of the report.

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
Leader	listening@fylde.gov.uk 01253 658658	April 19 th 2017

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection

Attached documents

Appendix 1 – The LGA Peer Challenge Review Report for Fylde Council

Appendix 2 – The LGA Peer Challenge Review Follow Up Session Note