

Thursday, 27 June 2024

Report of the Leader of the Council

Corporate Peer Review

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

To advise members of the Corporate Peer Challenge being undertaken on 29 to 31 October 2024 by the Local Government Association (LGA) and seek approval for the programme of work in the run up and following the review.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet note the Corporate Peer Challenge will be undertaken 29 to 31 October 2024 and the scope will include core elements and the use of technology and innovation.
2. That Cabinet approve the programme of work in preparing for the review and commit to the publication deadlines as set out in **Appendix 1**.

Executive Summary

A Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a voluntary process which forms a key part of the LGA's new [improvement and assurance framework](#) for local government. It underpins the principals of Sector-led improvement (SLI) to support continuous improvement and assurance across the sector and is recognised as assisting councils to meet their [Best Value duty](#) to gain assurance both of the performance of its services and corporate governance (see extract at **Appendix 2**)

The LGA encourages all councils to have a Corporate Peer Challenge every five years and to publish their reports online.

This report outlines the process and timeline for the review.

Options Considered

This is a voluntary process to provide assurance, members can opt to not host a CPC, however this will be subject to challenge and may be a reputational risk if not undertaken.

Resource Implications

The CPC is fully funded by Government however a limited budget is required for the production of key documents and hosting of the event and associated workshops, which will be covered by existing budgets.

Once undertaken, a council must commit to publicise the report and develop an action plan in response to the recommendations.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

None specifically for this report. Authorities who fail to engage with the CPC process are being challenged.

Equalities Implications

CIA has been completed – No issues relevant to decisions in this report

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

Not relevant to this report

Background Information

Tamworth Borough Council had its previous CPC in 2013. There has been considerable change and challenge across the sector since this period, and the organisation itself has had some significant changes including a new Leader and Cabinet following the borough election in 2024, and a new Chief Executive who started in April 2024. This CPC has been commissioned to support the council in the next stage of its journey.

A CPC provides robust, strategic and credible challenge and support to avoid insularity within councils and covers five core elements:

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

In addition, the team will be asked to review how the council can make best use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) including emerging technologies to support innovation and the delivery of corporate objectives.

The CPC process involves providing key information to the team and culminates in engagement with a wide range of people connected with the council over the 3-day challenge including residents, staff, members, external partners and stakeholders. They will attend council meetings, gather information and views prior to their visit. The Peers will also access reports based on Tamworth performance data held in [LG Inform](#).

Following the CPC visit, a report outlining the key findings and recommendations from the peer team will be shared with the council. In the spirit of openness and transparency, councils are required to publish this report, alongside an action plan, within three months of the corporate peer challenge. If the council is unable to publish the action plan at the same time as the report, it is required to publish the action plan no later than five months after the 3-day challenge.

All CPCs now include a progress review which takes place approximately ten months after the original 3-day challenge. The progress review provides space for a council's senior leadership to report to the peer team on the progress made against the CPC recommendations, discuss early impact or learning and receive feedback on the implementation of the action plan.

Following the progress review, a report outlining the peer team's findings is shared with the council. In the spirit of openness and transparency, the council are required to publish this report no later than 12 months after the original CPC.

Report Author

Christie Tims – Corporate Project Co-ordinator

List of Background Papers

Cabinet Report [LGA Peer Assessment 2013](#)

LGA [Feedback 2013](#) and [Letter 2013](#)

LGA [improvement and assurance framework](#)

Statutory [Best Value duty](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Timeline for CPC Review

Appendix 2: Best value standards and intervention: a statutory guide, published 8 May 2024

Appendix 1

Timeline for CPC Review

| Date | Action | Owner |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| 27 June 2024 | Cabinet approval of timeline | Leader of the Council |
| TBA July/August | Scoping Meeting with the LGA | Chief Executive/ Leader of the Council |
| 31 August 2024 | Data and Information Pack prepared including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position statement from the Council • Supporting documents • LG Inform Performance data • LGA Financial briefing | Project Manager On behalf of ELT S151 Officer |
| September/ October 2024 | Pre-engagement with the council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of Council meetings • Engagement with Chief Executive and Leader of the Council • | Chief Executive/ Leader of the Council |
| Week commencing 14 October 2024 | Peer Team Briefing | Chief Executive/ Leader of the Council Project Manager |
| 29 to 31 October 2024 | Corporate Peer Challenge visit | All |
| 30 November 2024 | Draft Report | LGA Peers |
| 31 January 2025 | Deadline for TBC to publish CPC Report and Action Plan if available (Cabinet 23 January 2025) | ELT/Cabinet |
| 31 March 2025 | Final Deadline for TBC to publish Action Plan (Cabinet 27 March 2025) | ELT/Cabinet |
| 31 August 2025 | Progress review session with Chief Executive and Leader of the Council | Chief Executive/ Leader of the Council |
| 31 October 2025 | Final Report and Findings published by TBC and LGA | ELT/Cabinet |

Appendix 2 : Best value standards and intervention: a statutory guide

Characteristics of a well-functioning authority

- Members provide quality leadership by setting a clearly articulated, achievable and prioritised vision for officers to follow that puts place and local people at its heart. Senior officers have the capacity and capability to provide the authority with effective strategic direction.
- The authority's corporate plan is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation's performance to be measured and held to account. The authority's financial strategy and delivery arrangements are aligned with priorities in the corporate plan, and respond appropriately to local need, including the plans of partners and stakeholders.
- Members and officers, particularly those with statutory responsibility, including the Head of Paid Service, Section 151 and Monitoring Officer, uphold their duties and speak truth to power.
- The Monitoring Officer is sufficiently supported and protected to allow them to enforce regulations and codes of conduct without fear.
- Strong financial management and reporting, in accordance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code, runs throughout the whole organisation.
- Robust systems are in place and owned by members for identifying, reporting, mitigating and regularly reviewing risk.
- Effective succession planning, with the recruitment and development of officers with the necessary skills, ensures organisational resilience.
- Members and senior officers maintain constructive relationships and engage effectively with external stakeholders and the wider local community.
- A demonstrable commitment to leadership and member development, including specialist training for key roles
- Effective and timely responses to issues with acceptance of the need to make changes and without a culture of blame.

Indicators of potential failure

- A lack of corporate capacity or capability, resulting in a lack of strategic direction, oversight and sense of accountability.
- Leadership losing sight of the authority's role and function as a leader of place and provider or enabler of services to local residents and businesses.
- A lack of understanding of public sector standards, the Nolan Principles and appropriate behaviour.
- Corporate plan is out of date, unrealistic and unaffordable and/or has too many priorities.
- Poor quality financial management.
- Section 151, Section 73 and Monitoring Officers do not have direct lines of communication to the Head of Paid Service, do not demonstrate ownership and accountability, or are not involved in important decisions.
- Risk management is not effective, owned corporately and/or embedded throughout the organisation.
- A lack of political and/or organisational stability, with high leadership turnover, key posts remaining vacant or an overreliance on interim officers, creating a lack of continuity and/or decisions in the long-term interests of the authority.
- Leadership at both political and managerial levels is distracted and involved to an unhealthy extent in internal battles.
- The absence of fit for purpose and regularly reviewed approaches to workforce planning, procurement, risk and IT.
- A loss of stakeholder and public confidence.

- A sense of insularity, a failure to tolerate internal or external challenge, and to recognise the need for improvement.
- Decisions that are perceived as being difficult are avoided or deferred.

This page is intentionally left blank