

Scrutiny approach to LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Date: 20 February

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

In December 2022 the Executive Board, as part of its consideration of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge findings, recommended that the Peer Challenge report and its recommendations should be referred to scrutiny for further consideration, this report is designed to initiate that process.

Whilst the findings from the Peer Challenge are relevant to all scrutiny boards it is the remit of Strategy and Resources Board that covers the Council's corporate planning and policy development services and is therefore considered to be the most appropriate for this work item. However, to ensure that all boards are represented the Chairs from the four other scrutiny boards have been invited to attend.

To enable pre-decision scrutiny of the Peer Challenge response and to facilitate 'live input' into the Action Plan that is being developed in response to its findings, this report is presented today. Members are encouraged to provide feedback on the Peer Challenge findings as well as consider how progress against the action plan can be monitored by Scrutiny and how the key recommendations from the report can input into the future work programmes of the successor Boards in municipal year 2023/24.

Following consideration of this item at the Strategy and Resources Board any comments or recommendations will be fed back to inform the development of the Council's Peer Challenge response.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- a) Note the contents of the report and provide comments on the LGA Peer Challenge and how scrutiny can have input into the action plan that is being developed in response.
- b) Note that any comments or recommendation arising from this item will be used to shape the peer challenge response as appropriate.
- c) Consider how the Peer Challenge recommendations could feature in work programming discussions for municipal year 2023/24.

What is this report about?

- 1 In December 2022 Executive Board approved a report outlining the findings and recommendations of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in November 2022. The findings and 15 recommendations have been fully accepted and initial action planning has been carried out in response to them. At this meeting, Executive Board referred the LGA Peer Challenge report to scrutiny for consideration.
- 2 In February 2023 Executive Board received a further update on the LGA Peer Challenge which focused on responding to the findings of the report and set out an action plan to detail the Council's response. The Peer Challenge report and action plan can be found at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3 For the purposes of action planning, the 15 recommendations are grouped around five themes:
 - Values, culture and workforce.
 - Locality and community working.
 - Transformation approach across the organisation.
 - Financial planning.
 - Work beyond the city.
- 4 As an organisation, the Council is already committed to transforming work in relation to people, finances and assets, exploiting digital opportunities, improving customer service, and engaging with citizens and communities. This Action Plan aims not to duplicate existing activity or create additional workload pressures on staff, but to complement those plans and highlight areas where further action is needed to respond to the Peer Challenge recommendations.
- 5 In order to ensure scrutiny is able to influence the development of the action plan it is presented at the earliest opportunity to ensure that comments and recommendations from scrutiny can shape the response to the Peer Challenge findings. The recommendations of the Peer Challenge impact on all five scrutiny boards and as a result representation from all of them has been sought by inviting the Chairs of the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles, Children and Families, Environment Housing and Communities, Infrastructure and Investment and Inclusive Growth scrutiny boards to attend this meeting and contribute to discussion.
- 6 As noted above the 15 recommendations made by the Peer Challenge Team impact across the remits of the council's five scrutiny boards. The recommendations and how they could fit with the respective remits are broken down as follows:

Table 1

Board Remit	Peer Challenge Recommendation
Strategy & Resources	<p>Keep being Leeds, keep being ambitious and living the values of collaboration, compassion and convening</p> <p>Be mindful of the risk of staff burnout and provide clarity about priorities especially as budgets further reduce. Capacity at some levels is stretched and some employees are worried about the health and wellbeing of their colleagues.</p> <p>Build on the success of the EDI champions network and strengthen corporate champions at the senior level to support the further development and embedding of EDI in the council.</p>

Invest in member development on strengths-based community development. Councillors' ambitions for their communities are clear but as the council's resources reduce members have an important role to play in supporting communities to be able to do more for themselves. **(Shared remit with Environment Housing and Communities Board)**

Consider a more outcomes focused and evidence-based approach to medium-term financial planning. As budgets reduce the development of a more consistent and clearer set of guiding principles and criteria to drive the budget process is needed to help bring consistency across the council.

Prepare for the financial challenges ahead. Although there is some awareness of future budget pressures, it is not yet widely understood in terms of the scale and impact on council and its ability to deliver. The council needs to develop a clear and robust plan and process to address the council's budget gap, which further mitigates risk.

Develop capacity for transformation and change. Incorporate a stronger user design focus, bringing existing teams together horizontally across the council and bringing in new capacity and skills.

As the Mayoral Combined Authority develops use the Leader's and Chief Executive's leadership roles to help further strengthen relationships.

Continue to influence and improve policy and practice in partnership with national and local government. Leeds could work with anchors and city partners to strengthen further their campaigning and lobbying on the financial challenge and the need for investment in the Leeds transport infrastructure to maintain their major contribution to the city and the economy. **(Shared remit with Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth)**

Use the opportunity of the digital transformation to co-produce with middle managers a system that is more agile and responsive to their needs on the ground **(Shared remit with Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth)**

Environment, Housing and Communities

Review locality working to improve clarity and coherence for the council, partners and communities:

- Ensure shared understanding of priority areas, underpinned by work on indices of deprivation.
- Map out services and existing assets, and through a collaborative process, review locality arrangements to potentially cluster and consolidate where this would add value and efficiency.
- Review and align service provision geographies with health, education/clusters, and the voluntary sector.
- Consider how to further strengthen place-based networks.
- In this context, review and develop the community committees and draw on the work of the Social Progress Index to measure progress.

Invest in member development on strengths-based community development. Councillors' ambitions for their communities are clear but as the council's resources reduce members have an important role to play in supporting communities to be able to do more for themselves. **(Shared remit with Strategy and Resources Board)**

	<p>There is an opportunity to be a new national exemplar for community led integrated public service delivery. For example, starting with a new model of home care and a wide range of community services and activities, and net zero projects (Shared remit with Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Board)</p>
Children and Families	<p>Take best practice on specialist commissioning and robust financial management from the Adults and Health directorate into the Children and Families directorate (Shared remit with Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Board)</p> <p>Use the opportunity of the new leadership team to review and develop strong practice in Children's and Families in light of the MacAlister review and strengthen collaboration between Children's and Families, and Adults and Health services in communities (Shared remit with Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Board)</p>
Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles	<p>Take best practice on specialist commissioning and robust financial management from the Adults and Health directorate into the Children and Families directorate (Shared remit with Children and Families Board)</p> <p>Use the opportunity of the new leadership team to review and develop strong practice in Children's and Families in light of the MacAlister review and strengthen collaboration between Children's and Families, and Adults and Health services in communities (Shared remit with Children and Families Board)</p> <p>There is an opportunity to be a new national exemplar for community led integrated public service delivery. For example, starting with a new model of home care and a wide range of community services and activities, and net zero projects (Shared remit with Environment Housing and Communities Board)</p>
Infrastructure, Investment and Inclusive Growth	<p>Use the opportunity of the digital transformation to co-produce with middle managers a system that is more agile and responsive to their needs on the ground. (Shared remit with Strategy and Resources Board)</p> <p>Continue to influence and improve policy and practice in partnership with national and local government. Leeds could work with anchors and city partners to strengthen further their campaigning and lobbying on the financial challenge and the need for investment in the Leeds transport infrastructure to maintain their major contribution to the city and the economy. (Shared remit with Strategy and Resources Board)</p>

- 7 Appendix 1 provides an initial update on how progress against these recommendations will be made and which officers are responsible each recommendation along with planned timescales.
- 8 It will be for each Board to determine individual work programme items. With the planned return visit by the Peer Challenge Team in Summer 2023, perhaps the best time to consider how monitoring of progress can take place or any further work on any specific recommendation will be in June 2023 when the successor boards will first meet and begin the process of identifying and agreeing work programme items for the coming 2023/24 municipal year.
- 9 As suggested in Appendix 1, performance reporting against these recommendations will be a feature of existing annual performance monitoring processes. Scrutiny Boards consider performance in respect of their remits in June and January of the municipal year so it is possible that performance tracking against the peer challenge recommendation could form a part of that existing process commencing in January 2024.

10 To support this item and to enable scrutiny to receive direct feedback from the LGA Peer Challenge Team Judith Hurcombe (LGA Peer Challenge Team Manager) has been invited to attend.

What impact will this proposal have?

11 Consideration of this report fulfils the Executive Board request for scrutiny to consider the LGA Peer Challenge report. On a wider note, this will enable scrutiny chairs and board members to have input into how the council responds to the findings of the Peer Challenge and has an opportunity to add value to that response.

12 Should any of the scrutiny boards wish to consider aspects of the recommendations in detail this report provides an initial opportunity to flag up that interest. In addition, any performance monitoring that scrutiny may wish to undertake is facilitated by this item.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

13 The terms of reference of the scrutiny boards continue to promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the Best City Ambition.

14 Given the role of scrutiny as a critical friend focussed on adding value, consideration of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge will widen feedback on the Council's initial response and provide challenge where appropriate to ensure that the recommendations are delivered and key issues are picked up.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

15 The initial action plan detailed in Appendix 1 has been informed by ongoing engagement with officers and drawing in views from members and partners.

What are the resource implications?

16 There are no specific resource implication associated with this report.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

17 There are no specific risk associated with scrutiny consideration of the LGA Peer Challenge report and subsequent action plan.

18 As the Action Plan is progressed, risks will be a consideration in line with the Risk Management Policy and reported through the regular risk management reports.

What are the legal implications?

19 There are no legal resource implication associated with this report.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

20 Consideration of this issue was requested by Executive Board, as such no other options were considered.

How will success be measured?

21 It is planned that scrutiny will feedback to the Executive following consideration of this item and any further actions that are driven by the work programmes of the five scrutiny boards will be picked up through the usual reporting processes. By providing critical friend challenge it is hoped that scrutiny can add value to the response to the Peer Challenge report.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

22 Scrutiny Boards will have the option of considering any of the peer challenge recommendations in isolation as a focussed work item throughout municipal year 2023/24. In addition, progress and performance against the recommendations could be considered as part of the regular performance updates taken by the five scrutiny boards in June or, in this case more likely, January.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Initial Action Plan considered by Executive Board on 8 February 2023.
- Appendix 2 – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Findings and Initial Response considered by Executive Board on 14 December 2022
- Appendix 3 – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report – considered by Executive Board on 14 December 2022

Background papers

- None