

Cherwell District Council

Council

26 February 2018

<p>Local Government Association - Peer Challenge Final Report and Recommendations</p>

Report of the Chief Executive

This report is public

Purpose of report

This report presents the final report from the joint Peer Challenge of Cherwell District and South Northamptonshire Councils, undertaken by the Local Government Association in November 2017.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended to:

- 1.1 Endorse the report and request that officers ensure its recommendations are reflected in relevant plans and strategies.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Peer challenges support local government improvement and are tailored to meet individual council priorities and needs, while taking account of local circumstances. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement priorities. The peers use their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented from the people they meet, from what they have heard and material read. Peers are drawn from across the sector and this Council supports the process by enabling senior staff to act as peers for other councils' reviews.
- 2.2 All peer challenges consider five key corporate themes (as set out in the final report). Working in partnership with South Northamptonshire Council, this authority also requested that the peers considered how best the councils could maximise their strategic advantage, and explore how the next phase of organisational transformation could develop.
- 2.3 The Challenge took place between 14 and 17 November, initial feedback was given in a presentation on the 17, and the final report issued by the Local

Government Association (LGA) has now been completed and is attached as an appendix to this report.

- 2.4 The Peer Challenge considered both Cherwell and South Northants councils and how they work together. During the challenge week the peers spoke to more than 200 people (stakeholders, councillors and staff), gathered feedback from around 65 meetings and interviews, visited key sites and undertook research and review of the council's documentation. In all they collectively spent more than 260 hours (or one person spending 7 weeks) undertaking the review in the districts.

3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 The draft report has been reviewed and both the strengths and opportunities for development have been considered and accepted.
- 3.2 The Council is proud that its achievements and areas of good practice have been recognised, indeed at the end of the challenge week the Peers' presentation of findings was entitled 'From Strong to Stronger'. It is with this in mind that the opportunities identified for further for development should be considered and built into future plans.
- 3.3 The next steps arising from the Peer Challenge process are for the recommendations to be built into new plans and relevant strategies. These include strategies for place and growth, financial sustainability and organisational development.

4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Both councils embraced the peer challenge process and would like to put on record their thanks for both the peer team who undertook the challenge and all of those who contributed to the process; councillors and colleagues from local public sector organisations, town and parish councils, staff and many representatives of the local business and voluntary sector communities.
- 4.2 Following review of the draft document it is recommended that Council endorses the report and acts upon its recommendations. The recommendations will be addressed through relevant plans and strategies, including the Council's business plans and organisational development programmes.

5.0 Consultation

- 5.1 Representatives from the local business sector, community and voluntary sector representatives, sector partners from local public sector organisations, staff, councillors and members of town and parish councils were involved in the peer challenge.

6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

6.1 There are no proposed alternative recommendations.

7.0 Implications

Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Comments checked by:

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HR and Legal Implications

7.2 There are no HR and legal implications arising from this report.

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8.0 Decision Information

Wards Affected

All

Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

All

Lead Councillor

Councillor Barry Wood, Leader of the Council

Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Final Report of the Peer Challenge
Background Papers	
None	
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