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**LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council 2023 – Progress Review**

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matthew Dormer, Leader of the Council
Portfolio Holder Consulted	
Relevant Head of Service	Sue Hanley, Chief Executive
Report Author	Job Title: Chief Executive Contact email: <a href="mailto:s.hanley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk">s.hanley@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk</a>
Wards Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) consulted	N/A
Relevant Strategic Purpose(s)	All
Non-Key Decision	
If you have any questions about this report, please contact the report author in advance of the meeting.	

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Council is asked to RESOLVE that:-**

**The report in respect of the outcomes of the Corporate Peer Challenge progress review from the Local Government Association peers be noted, and thereafter published on the Council’s website.**

**2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The report details the outcomes of the progress review from Local Government Association (LGA) peers, following completion of a full Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) review of Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council in spring 2023.
- 2.2 Members are invited to consider the report provided and to identify further actions, if any, that need to be taken.

**3. OPERATIONAL ISSUES**

- 3.1 Since 2012, the LGA has provided, as part of its support to the local government sector, the facilitation of CPC reviews whereby senior members and officers from other local authorities, supported by LGA staff, visit the Councils with the objective to inform their improvement plans and how to develop corporate learning. It is designed to be forward looking, and to facilitate reflection on issues and how they may be resolved. While it can be used as an external ‘health check’ on an

authority's corporate governance, the peer challenge is not a form of inspection.

- 3.2 By means of background, at a Council meeting held in Bromsgrove on the 7th December 2022, Members discussed reports which detailed the Section 24 Statutory Recommendation given by the External Auditors, Grant Thornton, to the Council. An action plan to address the issues was agreed and Council also agreed to commission a CPC from the LGA with a specific focus on corporate governance and financial planning and management. Redditch Borough Council (RBC) received similar reports in November 2022 and accepted their Section 24 Recommendation along with the action plan to address the issues identified. Due to the shared nature of the Councils and the issues identified, BDC and RBC agreed to jointly commission this CPC.
- 3.3 The peer team visited Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council over a four-day period in March 2023. Following consideration by the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Leaders of both Councils, a Council response to the CPC Feedback Report and a more detailed action plan were developed. A report updating Members on the outcomes of the process was considered at an Executive Committee meeting held on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023, following pre-scrutiny at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2023.
- 3.4 Ten months after a CPC review has been conducted, the LGA organises a CPC Progress Review. This is a short, facilitated session which creates space for the Council's senior leadership to update peers on its progress against the action plan and to discuss next steps. This progress review was held at Redditch Borough Council and Bromsgrove District Council on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023.
- 3.5 In line with the standard process for CPCs, the LGA produced a brief report following the review meeting which was received in January 2024. This reflects on the Council's progress since the original CPC was undertaken. Members should note there are no new recommendations contained in the review report, a copy of this update can be viewed at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.6 Having considered the findings and suggestions in the progress review report, other than formally reporting this to Council with the requirement thereafter to publish on the Council's website, there are no additional recommendations being proposed.

- 3.7 In providing assurance to Members that the Council continues its delivery to the agreed actions, and equally ensuring that impacts are measured, the following arrangements and actions are advised.
- The development and drafting of a Council Plan for 2024 to 2027 continues and the Plan will be brought to Council during 2024 for consideration and endorsement.
  - Review of the Council's constitution will be brought to full Council at the Annual General Meeting 2024.
  - Officers continue to overview arrangements and processes to ensure Members receive comprehensive, accurate and timely reports, with ownership for oversight resting with the responsible officer within the Corporate Management Team.
  - The Workforce Strategy Board chaired by the Chief Executive Officer will ensure that there is delivery to the agreed workforce action plans alongside governance and overview of the implementation of the Authority's Agile Working Policy.
  - Officers are currently preparing best practice guidance for handling and supporting Member enquiries. Once endorsed, this guidance could be constituted as part of the proposed constitutional review proposals.
  - Officers will continue to provide support, advice and delivery information to all Members of the Council both formally and informally. This includes financial and performance monitoring reports to the Executive Committee on a quarterly basis, topic specific briefings, training and externally facilitated support and opportunities for Members.
  - Positive Member/Member relationships and positive Member / Officer relationships should continue to be viewed as fundamental to the successful operation of the Council. Joint developmental work as part of the constitutional review programme can assist in supporting arrangements to a common purpose.
  - Overview and reporting of the Council's Accounting policies is taken to each Audit, Governance and Standards Committee meeting with regular reporting to the Executive Committee and thereafter Council on the Finance Recovery Plan, including the status of the accounts submission for audit.
- 3.8 Whilst no further follow up CPC meetings are anticipated at this stage, Members are invited to consider the content of this follow up report and, in doing so, to identify any additional actions that Members may feel need to be taken.

**4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The cost of the CPC is included within the authority's annual subscription to the LGA. Other costs are internal ones related to officer time. The cost of implementing the CPC action plan is being met from current budgets (unless separate specific reports were required).

4.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

**6. OTHER - IMPLICATIONS**

**Relevant Strategic Purpose**

6.1 The update in respect of the follow up to the CPC is relevant to all of the Council's strategic purposes, which were considered during both the original challenge and in the follow up. Further information can be viewed in the original CPC document and at Appendix 1 to this report.

6.2 By taking action as detailed in the CPC report and listening to the advice from peers, Redditch Borough Council is demonstrating its commitment to be an effective and sustainable Council.

**Climate Change Implications**

6.3 There are no specific climate change implications arising from this report.

**Equalities and Diversity Implications**

6.4 There are no specific equalities and diversity implications arising from this report.

**7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

7.1 There are no specific risks arising from this report as it is considered that the appropriate governance arrangements are in place.

**8. APPENDICES and BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Corporate Peer Challenge Follow Up Report 2023

Background Papers:

‘Corporate Peer Challenge – Bromsgrove DC and Redditch BC 2023’ – report considered at the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023 [Executive Committee agenda - 13th June 2023](#) (Item 5, Pages 19 – 91)

Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023: [Executive Committee minutes - 13th June 2023](#)

**9. REPORT SIGN OFF**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Name and Job Title</b>	<b>Date</b>
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Matthew Dormer	16/01/24
Lead Director / Head of Service	Sue Hanley, Chief Executive	16/01/24
Financial Services	Pete Carpenter, Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer	16/01/24
Legal Services	Nicola Cummings, Principal solicitor (Governance)	16/01/24