

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

18 January 2022

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 PEER CHALLENGE REVIEW

To update Members on the Local Government Association review due to take place from 25 January 2022.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 A Peer Challenge Review involves a team of experienced officers and members spending time with another council as “peers” to provide challenge and share learning. Participating councils receive a comprehensive report and recommendations from the peer team in the capacity as a “critical friend”, and then identify their own action plan to respond.

1.1.2 A Peer Challenge Review was last undertaken at the Borough Council in 2014. The review offered an assessment of strengths and weaknesses and provided recommendations on future changes to address the challenges ahead.

1.1.3 In consultation with the new leadership, it is now felt to be the right time to undertake another Peer Challenge, bringing in some external challenge to help influence and inform new priorities and plans. The focus of this challenge will be on five core elements:

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

1.1.4 As part of the Review, the Council is required to submit a Position Statement, which is attached at Annex 1 for information.

1.1.5 The Peer Team will conduct the initial interviews and focus groups remotely over a five-day period. Interviews will take place with Cabinet, political group leaders, the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, Management Team, heads of service, partner organisations as well as focus groups with a range of Council employees. At the

end of the five days, there will be a presentation and Q&A session. The Peer Team then send a report to the Council within three weeks. The Council is required to comment on this and publish an action plan. There will be a further session with the Peer Team six months after the action plan is published to assess progress and check recommendations have been considered.

1.2 Legal Implications

1.2.1 N/A (a Peer Challenge is a voluntary review).

1.3 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.3.1 To be assessed as part of the review. The Peer Challenge is provided by the LGA at no charge. As it is being held remotely, there are no associated expenses.

1.4 Risk Assessment

1.4.1 Reputational risk if the outcome of the review is not favourable or the Council fails to undertake recommendations suggested by the Peer Team.

1.5 Policy Considerations

1.5.1 Business Continuity/Resilience

1.5.2 Communications

1.5.3 Community

Background papers:

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Nil

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