

# TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

## CABINET

12 April 2022

### Report of the Chief Executive

#### Part 1- Public

#### Executive Non Key Decisions

#### 1 PEER REVIEW

**To provide an update on the recent Corporate Peer Challenge and seek endorsement for the associated Action Plan**

#### 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Members will be aware that the Council took part in a Corporate Peer Challenge on 25 and 26 January and 1, 2 and 3 of February 2022. The Peer Challenge Team attended all meetings virtually via MS Teams. The Team consisted of the Chief Executive from Melton Borough Council, the Leader of Brentwood Borough Council, along with two officer peers from different Councils (a Director of Customer Services and Operational Development, and a Director of Community Connections). In addition, the Peer Challenge Manager and a Shadow Peer from the LGA also took part.
- 1.1.2 During the five days, several 1-1 interviews and focus groups took place, with a mix of staff members, Councillors, and external partners. A resident survey was also undertaken. The peers were then able to use their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by the people they met, things they saw and material they read. The team provided feedback as critical friends, not as assessors, consultants, or inspectors.
- 1.1.3 The team focussed on the core components looked at by all corporate peer challenges, namely:
- Local priorities and outcomes
  - Organisational and place leadership
  - Governance and culture
  - Financial planning and management
  - Capacity for improvement
- 1.1.4 The Council has now received the formal feedback (attached at Annex 1), which highlights some overall messages and observations. On the whole the feedback

was positive and recognised the Council as “dependable, credible and trusted” with staff that are “committed and valued”.

1.1.5 However, as with all Peer Reviews, the team has suggested areas that the Council could strengthen, including:

- Establishing a regular ‘safe space’ for Management team and Cabinet to build strategic policy together.
- Refreshing the Corporate Strategy based on resident engagement.
- Adopting a Corporate Performance Framework to provide visibility and a formal mechanism to track progress.
- Recalibrating the Council’s approach to risk and explore opportunities to be more commercial.
- Developing a new Comprehensive Workforce Strategy in order to recognise and re-invigorate the workforce.
- Reviewing the Council’s governance arrangements

## **1.2 Next Steps:**

1.2.1 The Council is required to publish an Action Plan (attached at Annex 2) to illustrate how we will meet the recommendations from the Peer Team.

1.2.2 The Peer Team will then meet with the Council after 6 months to discuss progress in delivering on the Action Plan.

## **1.3 Legal Implications**

1.3.1 N/A (a Corporate Peer Challenge Review is voluntary)

## **1.4 Financial and Value for Money Considerations**

1.4.1 To be assessed as part of the Review and Action Plan Process. The initial Review was held remotely, with no associated expenses, provided free of charge by the LGA.

## **1.5 Risk Assessment**

1.5.1 Reputational risk if the Council fails to meet targets set out in the Action Plan and undertake the recommendations suggested by the Peer Team.

## **1.6 Policy Considerations**

1.6.1 Business Continuity/Resilience

1.6.2 Communications

1.6.3 Community

**1.7 Recommendations**

1.7.1 That Members **ENDORSE** the Peer Review Action Plan, as set out in Annex 2.

Background papers:

Nil

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