

To: Cabinet
Date: 16 October 2024
Report of: Head of Corporate Strategy
Title of Report: The Local Government Association: Corporate Peer Review Action Plan update and Progress Review feedback.

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To update the Cabinet on the Council's Action Plan based on feedback and recommendations from the Corporate Peer Review in July 2023; and the Progress Review feedback.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council
Corporate Priority:	Well-run council
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2024 to 2028

Recommendation(s): That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	Note the progress and updates in the Council's Action Plan update;
2.	Note the Local Government Peer Challenge feedback report, April 2024; and to;
3.	Agree that the remaining tasks in the Council's Action Plan be incorporated into the Council's ongoing work, which will be monitored to completion by the Council's Corporate Management Team.

Appendices	
Appendix 1	The Council's Action Plan.
Appendix 2	Oxford City Council Local Government Peer Challenge Progress Review feedback report, April 2024.

Introduction and background

1. The Council invited in a Local Government Association (LGA) team to conduct a review in July 2023, and this was followed by a feedback report detailing the strengths of the Council, the issues considered, and areas for further improvement and key recommendations.
2. The review recognised the Council's commitment and success in a number of areas and was a highly positive report overall. There were ten recommendations for improvement, most around structures, focus and process, but one around IT infrastructure that had potential budgetary implications.
3. In response to the findings the Council started work early to start developing the Council's Action Plan (Action Plan).
4. This Action Plan was agreed by Cabinet in December 2023 and published in line with the LGA reporting timelines "within eight weeks of the CPC report's publication".

Update on the Council's Action Plan

5. The Council's Corporate Management Team and Heads of Service proactively considered the recommendations of the Peer Review Team and started work early to start developing and delivering the Action Plan.
6. The Action Plan update is attached to this report as Appendix One. The Cabinet is asked to note the progress and updates in the Action Plan as of September 2024.
7. Officers recommend that any remaining tasks in the Action Plan (those not complete) be embedded in the Council's regular work and monitored to completion by the Council's Corporate Management Team. This will help the Council keep up the progress made and make these tasks a natural part of the Council's operations.

April 2024 Progress Review feedback

8. On 9 April 2024, some of the LGA Peer Team returned to assess the progress made against their recommendations and the Action Plan.
9. The review was delivered in person and onsite and was held over a day, and facilitated by the LGA Peer Challenge Manager and Peer Team members:
 - Chief Executive, Lancaster City Council
 - Former Leader, Norwich City Council
 - Chief Operating Officer and s.151 Officer, Cornwall Council.
10. To help the Peer Team gain an understanding of the local issues before the review, the Council provided a short update position statement along with other relevant documents that the Council believed would be helpful for the Peer Team. This was provided three weeks before the scheduled review.
11. The position statement provided the Peer Team with a detailed progress update against all the recommendations and subsequent actions. It was an opportunity for the Council to set out the key issues, challenges and current thinking in relation to the Action Plan.
12. The Peer Team's findings included:

- Welcoming the “positive steps” taken to work with other key institutions to develop a shared vision for the future of Oxford, including creating the Oxford West End website, launching the Anchor Institutions Network in 2024 and piloting the co-location of health services in the Leys Pools and Leisure Centre
 - Praising the “innovative approach” of using developer contributions from the West End redevelopment to fund skills training at the local further education college
 - Commending the Council for showing “proactive leadership” by working closely with the new Regulator for Social Housing to improve Oxford’s council homes
 - Welcoming the better prioritisation and sequencing of building and ICT projects, and the Council’s new key performance indicators to monitor workstreams
 - Commending the Council’s financial management, noting the successful setting of a balanced four-year Medium-Term Financial Strategy
 - Welcoming the introduction of a new aspiring managers leadership programme to develop and retain talent within the council.
13. Following the Progress Review, the LGA provided a short feedback report that reflected the Council’s progress, provided examples of good practice and highlights the initial impact and outcomes. The feedback report is appended to this report at Appendix Two.
14. The LGA report said: “It was clear to the peer team that the council have positively engaged in the Corporate Peer Challenge process; taken onboard the peer review findings and have been thoughtful about the impact of the recommendations.”
15. Alongside the progress over recent months, many of the LGA’s recommendations have also been included in the Council Strategy 2024 to 2028, which was agreed at a meeting of Full Council (15 July 2024).
16. As part of ensuring an open and transparent process, the LGA [Progress Review feedback report](#) was published on the Council’s Website in line with the LGA reporting timelines.

Financial implications

17. There are no financial implications for the Council arising from this report.

Legal issues

18. There are no legal implications for the Council arising from this report.

Level of risk

19. There are no risk implications for the Council arising from this report.

Equalities impact

20. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not necessary for this report. Equalities Impact is intrinsically built into the Council’s policies and alongside the key strategies. The Council will continue to monitor equalities impact as programmes grow and develop.

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Background Papers: None	
1	Oxford City Council Local Government Peer Challenge Feedback report, July 2023