

Cabinet Meeting

26 April 2017

Report title	Outcome of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Roger Lawrence Leader of the Council	
Key decision	No	
In forward plan	No	
Wards affected	N/A	
Accountable director	Keith Ireland, Managing Director	
Originating service	Managing Director's Office	
Accountable employee(s)	Matt Vins Tel Email	Project Manager 01902 556916 Matthew.vins@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	People Leadership Team Place Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board Executive Team Scrutiny Board	20 March 2017 20 March 2017 28 March 2017 3 April 2017 25 April 2017

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the draft action plan arising from the recommendations within the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Review final report.
2. Approve that the LGA conduct a follow up visit in February 2018 to assess the progress that the City of Wolverhampton Council has made with regards to the recommendations set out in the final report.

Recommendations for noting:

Cabinet is asked to note:

1. The outcome and issues raised in the LGA Corporate Peer Review final report.
2. This report will also be considered by Scrutiny Board on 25 April 2017.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcome of the recent LGA Corporate Peer Review and to consider the recommendations and action plan arising from it.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Councils are increasingly looking for good practice, support and challenge to help them improve services for users while maintaining a balanced budget. As part of the process of ensuring the City of Wolverhampton Council is providing the best service, the LGA was invited to carry out a Corporate Peer Review which took place 30 January – 2 February 2017.
- 2.2 A Corporate Peer Review allows external colleagues from across Local Government to assess the Council on a number of key points. These are as follows:
- Understanding of the local place and priorities – does the Council use this to set a clear vision
 - Leadership of Place – does the Council, through members and officers and relationships with external stakeholders have an effective leadership of place
 - Finance – does the Council have a financial plan to ensure long term viability that is being implemented
 - Leadership and governance – is there effective political and managerial leadership, supported by good governance and decision making arrangements, that can respond to key challenges and enable transformation
 - Capacity – is organisational capacity aligned to priorities and how does the Council influence and leverage external capacity
- 2.3 As part of the process the Peer Team spoke to more than 130 people, including a range of Council employees together with Councillors and external stakeholders and business partners. They gathered information and views from more than 40 meetings and additional research, reading and site visits, collectively spending more than 260 hours to determine their findings.
- 2.4 The final report is now complete and is attached as Appendix A.

3.0 Outcome of the Corporate Peer Review

- 3.1 The overall conclusion of the Peer Team was that:

‘The City of Wolverhampton Council has been on an impressive journey of improvement. Since the last LGA Corporate Peer Challenge in 2014 it has recovered from a precarious financial position, made a rapid transformation into a ‘Confident, Capable Council’, and set out a clear vision and agenda for the future. The progress is recognised and respected by a range of stakeholders, including staff and partners, and has helped significantly enhance the Council’s reputation. The extent and pace of transformation is notable and has rightly been recognised by external reviews and awards – including the

MJ Council of the Year Runner Up in 2016. The Council is now in a strong position to respond with confidence to both current and future challenges facing the City.'

- 3.2 **Understanding of the local place and priority setting:** The report praises the achievements made by the Council since the 2014 Corporate Peer Challenge and highlights how the Corporate Plan supports the long term Vision for the City by focusing the Council's priorities and using technology to support evidence-based decision making. There is particular praise for the achievements in transforming LAC, partnership working with schools which has seen 95% rated Good or Outstanding and for enabling investment and regeneration in the City. It summarises that the Council has focused on improving its own reputation and ability to deliver in order to bring about wider change across the City.
- 3.3 **Leadership of Place:** The report highlights the Council's role as a respected 'leader of place' both within the City, and on a regional level, and makes particular reference to the role of the Leader and Managing Director in the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). It also praises the Council's partnerships across the City of Wolverhampton, notably in achieving improved educational performance and for 'place-shaping' by driving investment and growth in the City Centre.
- 3.4 **Organisational leadership and governance:** The report highlights the strong corporate core of the Council with particular reference to the strength of management at SEB and the depth of understanding of the Council's priorities across the organisation. It praises the improved Councillor/employee relationships since the 2014 review and evidences that these messages have been clearly communicated across the organisation. The additional reporting tools for management such as Qlikview were also seen as vital in monitoring performance across the organisation and the consistent Project Management approach and Business Reviews had created strong internal challenge which enhanced performance.
- 3.5 **Financial planning and viability:** The report widely praises the turnaround of the financial situation of the Council and references the Finance Peer Review (June 2016) which stated, 'it is clear there has been a period of significant and rapid improvement that has helped to put the Council on a better financial footing'. It highlights that the Council has a good grip on the future financial situation and is exploring income generation and commercialisation whilst consulting and engaging with residents. It mentions that Yoo Recruit and WV Active has seen a more commercial approach taken to service delivery and that further opportunities to commercialise services should be regularly reviewed.
- 3.6 **Capacity to deliver:** The report identified a 'One Council' ethos where cross departmental working and professional support from the corporate core was seen as the norm. It highlights the positivity and optimism amongst employees, particularly in the face of substantial challenges to budgets and staffing levels. It emphasises the commitment to creating a flexible, diverse workforce, and references the apprentice and graduate schemes as examples of planning for the future but suggests this work is accelerated to ensure that workforce planning meets the future requirements of the organisation.

4.0 Recommendations of the Corporate Peer Review

4.1 The overarching comment from the Peer Team was that the Council, after achieving a strong platform following significant transformation of the organisation, now needed to shift its narrative to how it is going to deliver the long-term ambitions set out in Vision 2030. The subsequent recommendations tie into this theme, and focus on how the Council can leverage additional capacity through further engagement with partners and citizens across the City. The recommendations are noted below with further detail contained in the report (Appendix A):

1. Use the strong platform of a being a 'Confident, Capable Council' to unlock the next phase of your journey
2. Consider how you further utilise the 'Wolves Workforce'
3. Strengthen the connection between city leadership and community leadership at a neighbourhood level
4. Develop a stronger and more consistent communication on the social value outcomes and impact for Wulfrunians
5. Continue the focus on strengthening corporate governance further – including the investment in performance management and scrutiny
6. Accelerate the pace and ambition on digital transformation to support the delivery of the City Vision aspirations of digital inclusion and 'smart city'
7. Further develop the interrelationship between the financial strategy, future operating model and vision
8. Continue to ensure that opportunities for commercialism and shared services are constantly considered

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 The LGA Corporate Peer Review identified that the Council has made major progress in achieving financial stability. Recommendations arising from the review will enable the Council to further improve upon its financial strategy and its communication of the strategy to residents and stakeholders. [MH/24032017/S]

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from report. [TS/16032017/Y]

7.0 Equalities implications

7.1 There are no direct equalities implications arising from report.

8.0 Environmental implications

8.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from report.

9.0 Human resources implications

9.1 There are no direct human resources implications arising from report.

10.0 Corporate landlord implications

10.1 There are no direct corporate landlord implications arising from report.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

- 11.1 22 November 2016 – Overview of the LGA Corporate Peer Review (SEB)
- 29 November 2016 – LGA Corporate Peer Review (SEB)
- 10 January 2017 – LGA Corporate Peer Review (SEB)
- 17 January 2017 – LGA Corporate Peer Review (SEB)
- 23 January 2017 – Arrangements for LGA Corporate Peer Review (Leaders meeting)
- 2 February 2017 – Feedback presentation from the Peer Team
- 7 February 2017 – LGA Corporate Peer Review (SEB)
- 28 February 2017 – Final Feedback Report LGA Corporate Peer Review (SEB)