

<b>Item No</b>	<b>Referred from:</b>	<b>OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY</b>
<b>6a</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>20 JUNE 2023</b>
	<b>Title of item:</b>	<b>CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE REPORT &amp; ACTION PLAN</b>

The report considered by Overview & Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on 20 June 2023 can be viewed here: [Agenda for Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Tuesday, 20th June, 2023, 7.30 pm | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](#)

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:**

- (1) That the draft Action Plan at Appendix A be considered, and proposed action be recommended to Cabinet for approval (as per Appendix A\*).
- (2) That, in the absence of timescales, that it be recommended to Cabinet, that these be set by the Leader, Deputy Leader and Managing Director (in consultation with relevant Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs).

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION:** To ensure that the Council responds to the matters identified within the CPC report, ensuring that the benefits of the CPC process are realised.

\*NB Appendix A should read Appendix B

*Audio recording – 46 minutes and 1 second*

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis presented the report entitled ‘Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan’ and highlighted:

- The LGA 2020 Peer Review looked at North Herts Council and provided an action plan that was agreed by Cabinet in March 2020. A follow up review took place in 2022, with a focus on Overview and Scrutiny and Finance, Audit and Risk Committees and how these could be improved.
- A number of recommendations were produced from this review, which are detailed in the Action Plan, and Members were asked to consider these actions and whether they were appropriate.
- Any timescales that are not set would be agreed by the Managing Director, Leader and Deputy Leader consulting the relevant Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Matt Barnes

In response to a question from Councillor Ralph Muncer, the Service Director - Legal and Community advised that the Scrutiny Officer role was discussed with Group Leaders, and although a full time role would be ideal, the 17 hour role reflected the funding available. This could be reviewed following the recruitment process and when an Officer was in place.

In response to a question from Councillor Matt Barnes, Councillor David Levett, as former Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, confirmed that the Action Plan was a fair

reflection of what was required, especially a dedicated Scrutiny Officer, however he noted that this had been difficult due to resources, recruitment and staff turnover.

The Chair made the following comments:

- Overview and Scrutiny Members had not previously been reviewing the Forward Plan and therefore it was often left for Officers to decide what items to include on agendas.
- Debate at meetings had previously been limited.
- A pre-agenda meeting had been set up with Officers and the Chair and Vice Chair to discuss topics before publication of agenda.
- The Scrutiny Officer role would assist with ensuring agendas were shorter and more focussed.

Councillor David Levett noted that the discussion on this item had been one of the most in-depth at the Committee and this was thanks to the new Members on the Committee who had contributed.

The following Members took part in debate:

- Councillor Ralph Muncer
- Councillor Matt Barnes
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Clare Billing

Points raised during the debate included:

- The Action Plan proposed was fair and followed the best practices of the LGA peer report.
- Without the Scrutiny Officer role in place, it was difficult to set timescales for the actions.
- Taking relevant actions from the plan should be a priority, and operational before May 2024.
- Requested that a progress report be provided at the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Adam Compton, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Val Bryant seconded, and following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the content of the CPC report was noted.

**RECOMMENDED TO CABINET:**

- (1) That the draft Action Plan at Appendix A be considered, and proposed action be recommended to Cabinet for approval (as per Appendix A\*)
- (2) That, in the absence of timescales, that it be recommended to Cabinet, that these be set by the Leader, Deputy Leader and Managing Director (in consultation with relevant Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs).

**REASONS FOR DECISIONS:** To ensure that the Council responds to the matters identified within the CPC report, ensuring that the benefits of the CPC process are realised.