

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL  
 CABINET 23/09/2021  
 COUNCIL 18/11/2021  
 LGA CORPORATE PEER REVIEW  
 REPORT OF DAVID SIDAWAY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
 LEAD CABINET MEMBER SHAUN DAVIES, COUNCIL LEADER**

**PART A) – SUMMARY REPORT**

**1. SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS**

1.1 The Council has a commitment to drive continuous improvement to ensure that services, and the organisation as a whole, is as efficient and effective as it can be to take forward delivery of its strategic priorities. As part of this commitment, in June, the LGA undertook a Corporate Peer Review of the organisation to explore how effectively resources are prioritised and used to deliver the organisation’s vision “to protect care and invest to create a better borough”. This report sets out the findings of the Review.

**2. Recommendations**

**It is recommended that Cabinet endorses:**

**2.1 the LGA Corporate Peer Review report that highlights that:**

- **the Council is a high performing organisation**
- **has strong and effective leadership together with a committed workforce**
- **is valued by partners as an organisation that gets things done**

**2.2 the proposed approach to addressing the Peer Review report recommendations and the timescale for reporting progress to Cabinet.**

**3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

<b>COMMUNITY IMPACT</b>	Do these proposals contribute to specific Co-Operative Council priority objective(s)?	
	Yes	<i>Impacts on all Priorities</i>
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	No	<i>Borough-wide impact</i>
<b>TARGET COMPLETION/DELIVERY DATE</b>	<i>Complete</i>	

<b>FINANCIAL/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT</b>	No	The Council has a track record of strong financial management which is integral to delivering its ambitions and is highlighted in the Peer Review report: “ <i>There is a clear focus on managing the council’s budget and maintaining and enhancing the overall financial position.</i> ” The Service & Financial Planning Strategy for 2022/23 will include medium term financial projections, albeit in the context of limited information available from central Government on future funding levels for local government.  PH 24.8.21
<b>LEGAL ISSUES</b>	No	There are no direct legal implications associated with this report. In implementing any recommendations, legal advice and support will be provided as needed. AL 20/08/2021
<b>OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS &amp; OPPORTUNITIES</b>	No	
<b>IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS</b>	No	<i>Borough-wide impact</i>

## **PART B) – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **4. INFORMATION**

4.1 The Leader and Chief Executive invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a Corporate Peer Review of the organisation as part of its sector improvement role. This Review was the latest of a number of peer reviews that have been completed in the past 12 months which have included the Council’s response to the Covid pandemic, customer services and digital, and Adult Social Care. These reviews have been commissioned to inform and drive forward the organisation’s continuous improvement agenda.

4.2 The purpose of the Corporate Peer Review was to understand how the Council uses its resources to deliver its priorities through five lines of enquiry:

- Understanding place and priority setting
- Leadership of place
- Financial planning and viability
- Organisational leadership and governance
- Capacity to deliver

4.3 The Review was undertaken remotely from 7th to 10th June, and involved thematic interviews and focus groups with over 130 people including Cabinet members, ward members, Scrutiny Chairs, SMT, employee focus groups and a broad range of partners including representatives from the Police, Fire Service, Health, community and voluntary sector partners, local businesses and Government departments. Overall, the Review was a robust and challenging process.

4.4 The Review team was:

- Nick Carter, Chief Executive, West Berkshire Council
- Councillor Michael Payne, Deputy Leader, Gedling Borough Council and Deputy Chair of the Local Government Association
- Laura Church, Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director for Population Well-Being at Luton Council
- Richard McGuckin, Director of Towns Investment, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
- Andy Ralphs, Strategic Director of Customer and Corporate Services, Plymouth City Council
- David McIntosh, Corporate Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Dorset Council
- Will Bramble, incoming Chief Executive of Pembrokeshire County Council (shadow)
- Chris Bowron, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

4.5 Following the Review, the LGA have produced a short report (see Appendix One) of their findings. Although there is no overall grade or assessment given for the Review, the Review has identified the Council to be a high performing organisation and one that is working effectively to deliver its vision to “protect, care and invest to create a better borough”:



**“The council can be very proud of what it is achieving, with it clearly being very ambitious, top-performing in key areas and striving constantly to deliver for local people. The authority, partners and communities can be extremely proud of the borough’s Covid-19 response.”**

4.6 As a Co-operative Council, partnership working is core to the organisation’s ethos. It is rewarding that the Review identified partnership working as a major strength of the Council:



“The authority is held in extremely high regard as a partner, founded upon credibility and a **convincing track record of delivery**, and it is very highly trusted.”

4.7 In addition, partners have recognised the Council’s ongoing energy and commitment to making the borough a better place to live:



“**Telford and Wrekin fights for Telford and Wrekin’ is a strong theme** that came across during the course of our work, particularly from partner organisations.”

4.8 The effectiveness of the leadership of the organisation was praised as was the hard work and commitment of the whole organisation:



“**There is strong and effective political and managerial leadership of the council.** The Leader and Chief Executive are held in very high regard both within and beyond the organisation, but it clearly isn’t just them. Phenomenally hard work has been delivered over many years to get the organisation to where it is.”

4.9 As well as how we do things, the Review recognised the difference the Council is making across the Borough:



“The council has a relentless focus on neighbourhoods and very high standards that it works constantly to attain and exceed. **It is an organisation that is striving constantly to deliver for local people.**”

4.10 Fundamentally the Review has robustly endorsed the Council’s approach as to how priorities are set, how resources are used, particularly the way in which the budget has been managed to protect frontline services, how decisions are made and how the workforce has delivered the corporate priorities, and critically, the difference that is being made to the communities which the Council serves.

4.11 That the Peer Review found the Council to be high performing is reinforced by their suggestion that the organisation should proactively share learning and best practice within the local government sector both regionally and nationally:



**“We see a real role for the authority to play in sharing its good practice, keys to success and learning with others across local government more. It is time for the council to move away from what feels like ‘hiding its light under a bushel’ and establish the higher profile and enhanced reputation that its track record and successes deserve, whilst benefitting the sector in doing so.”**

4.12 As is the practice with all robust external reviews, the Peer Review identified five recommendations to be considered in taking the organisation forward. It is positive that these recommendations build on commitments that the Council has already made:

Recommendation	Response/Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continues to strengthen the importance of the use of data, intelligence and insight to inform policy and service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant progress has been made on this over the past year including the development of a series of performance dashboards, locality profiles and a Covid-dashboard. To build and drive this, additional investment was made into the refocussed Insight team as part of a restructure that was implemented in April 2021</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Publishes the Medium-Term Financial Strategy early 2022 and aligns it with the Council Plan and priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The work-programme to achieve this is in place as part of the Council’s Service &amp; Financial Strategy for 2022/23. The Council Plan will be refreshed as part of this.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works with partners to develop a place-based vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This work commenced in March 2021 and will be published in early 2022.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops a clear set of ‘Asks and Offers’ around Telford and Wrekin – enabling partners at the regional and national level to see the way in which mutual benefit can be derived through tapping into what the borough has to offer. Determines the extent to which the council seeks to extend its engagement at the regional and national level – crucially involving first a determination of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work to develop our “ask and offers” has commenced. We are actively seeking opportunities to engage at a regional and national level to develop a calendar of activity that seeks to promote, share and build on the Council’s reputation for best practice.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Response/Action
the benefits of this for Telford and Wrekin as a council and as a borough	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weaves in mechanisms to ensure the council 'takes a breath' intermittently – creating the space for reflection and evaluation before moving on</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council has a clear business planning framework which is refreshed each year. This provides an opportunity for the organisation and services to reflect, review and revise their priorities for the coming year. A core part of this includes reviewing the capacity and resources available to each service to ensure there is an effective fit with priorities.</li> </ul>

### **Next Steps**

4.13 Delivery of the Review recommendations will be taken forward through this financial year with progress being reported to Cabinet at year end. In line with this timeframe, the LGA will conduct a follow-up visit to understand the extent to which we have adopted and delivered their recommendations.

4.14 The Council will continue to seek appropriate opportunities for further external reviews of services to drive forward continuous improvement to ensure that the organisation is as efficient and effective as it possibly can be to drive the vision to “protect, care and invest to create a better borough”.

### **5. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

- LGA Customer Services & Digital Peer Challenge, Cabinet 8<sup>th</sup> July 2021
- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services - Peer Challenge of Telford and Wrekin Adult Social Care, Cabinet, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2021.
- LGA Response & Recovery Peer review, Cabinet 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

### **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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