

Report of:	Mayor of Middlesbrough, Andy Preston Chief Executive, Tony Parkinson
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Submitted to:	Executive, 19 November 2019
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Subject:	Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge
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Summary

Proposed decision(s)
That Executive endorses the proposed corporate peer challenge with a focus on the Council's approach to consultation and community engagement.

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent?¹
Information	No	Not applicable	No

Contribution to delivery of the 2018-22 Strategic Plan		
Business Imperatives	Physical Regeneration	Social Regeneration
Provides the Council with an opportunity to commission an independent review of its arrangements for consultation and community engagement.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.

Ward(s) affected
Not applicable

¹ Remove for non-Executive reports

What is the purpose of this report?

1. The purpose of this report is to advise Executive that the Chief Executive and the Mayor have commissioned a further corporate peer challenge from the Local Government Association (LGA) as part of the Council's commitment to seeking regular independent assessment of its corporate governance frameworks.

Why does this report require a Member decision?

2. Given that LGA peer reviews involves external consideration of the Council's strategy and governance processes, it is appropriate that Executive views are sought on this proposal.

Report Background

3. Local government has in place an established network of peer review processes that has been developed by the Local Government Association (LGA). The Council is keen to regularly access this support to independently assess its position in relation to corporate governance processes. Since 2016 it has accessed LGA support to undertake a number of assessments including:
 - a corporate peer challenge
 - Highways Management review
 - Children's Services financial management review
 - Marketing and Communications review.
4. It has also had a follow up visit in relation to the 2016 corporate peer challenge.
5. As part of regular engagement with the LGA, and in line with the Council's commitment to ensuring the sector led improvement resource provided by the LGA is used to its full potential, the Mayor and the Chief Executive have requested LGA support to undertake a further corporate peer challenge as it has been four years since the last one. This will have a particular focus on the Council's arrangements for consultation and community engagement.
6. The timing of the review and the content of the peer review team are currently being finalised with the LGA, with the aim that the review will take place early in the New Year, subject to the availability of the peer review team.
7. The Mayor and the Chief Executive have agreed with the LGA that the review will assess the Council against five core themes:
 - Understanding of the local place and priority setting
 - Leadership of place
 - Financial planning and viability
 - Organisational leadership and governance
 - Capacity to deliver.
8. It will also have a particular focus on consultation and community engagement.
9. In line with the Council's commitment to transparent and honest engagement, the findings of the review will be published and brought back to Executive for consideration, along with an action plan to address any recommendations made by the review, taking into account what can be delivered within the resource constraints the Council is operating within.

What decision(s) are being asked for?

10. That Executive endorses the proposed corporate peer challenge with a focus on the Council's approach to consultation and community engagement.

Why is this being recommended?

11. Utilising the LGA resource provides an opportunity to gather views from a range of experts from across the local government sector.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

12. The Council could choose not to access this support and undertake an in house review or commission external specialists to deliver the review at a cost. These options are not recommended because it is healthy to seek external views of key governance issues on a periodic basis. Sourcing alternative specialists would be at a cost, while the cost for the LGA peer challenge is included within the cost of annual membership to the LGA.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

Legal

13. There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Financial

14. There is no charge levied by the LGA for a peer challenge. The cost of reviews is included within the LGA annual membership fee.

Policy Framework

15. No impact on the Policy Framework, however the review has the potential to recommend changes to documents that comprise the policy framework.

Equality and Diversity

16. Not applicable.

Risk

17. Commissioning a peer challenge is not directly relevant to risk management, however findings may identify new risks or suggest some current risks should be reassessed if the review finds that there is a disconnect between the Council's understanding of a risk and wider perceptions.

Actions to be taken to implement the decision(s)

18. If approved, work will be undertaken to prepare for the review, further communications will be issued in due course.

Appendices

19. None.

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Executive	Corporate Peer Challenge – Final report and draft action plan	12 April 2016
Executive	Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge – Follow-up visit	21 Nov 2017