

**Report for:** The Cabinet, 9 July, 2019

**Title:** LGA Corporate Peer Challenge response to recommendations

**Report authorised by :** Zina Etheridge, Chief Executive

**Lead Officer:** Joanna Sumner, Interim AD, Strategy & Communications

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** Non Key Decision

**1. Describe the issue under consideration**

This report sets out the Council's response to the recommendations from Corporate Peer Challenge carried out in February 2019 by a team of local government peers, and facilitated by the Local Government Association.

**2. Cabinet Member Introduction**

2.1 Earlier this year we decided that it would be a good time to invite the Local Government Association (LGA) to carry out a corporate peer review of the Council. The peer review process is part of an important approach to local government-led improvement and mutual support.

2.2 This was an opportunity to tell the story of where Haringey has got to: to show how far we've come since the last peer review in 2014, to have an accurate representation of the challenges we face, and to be clear about what we need to do to ensure we're in the best shape to be able to deliver our ambitious plans in this context.

2.3 It is important that we celebrate the positive role that councillors, staff, partners and residents play in making Haringey such a great place to live and work. We are mindful of the key challenges set out in the report and are taking active steps to address our financial position and the delivery of our borough plan objectives.

2.4 I welcome the findings set out in the report and I would like to thank the peer review team for their hard work and honest feedback.

**3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to note that the highest priority recommendation put forward by the peers related to the budget. The report recommends that the Council agrees “a sustainable Medium-Term Financial Strategy by October 2019 with a clear decision-making pathway.” Progress on this is the subject of a report elsewhere on this Cabinet agenda, titled “Budget report and MTFS update”.
- 3.2 Cabinet is asked to note that the second highest priority recommendation related to prioritisation within the Borough Plan, with a suggestion that the Council sets out an annual delivery plan for each year of the life of the Borough Plan 2019-23, and that these delivery plans are aligned to the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The year one delivery plans for each Borough Plan priority are set out in a report elsewhere on this Cabinet agenda, titled “Borough Plan 2019-2023 year 1 delivery plan”.
- 3.3 Cabinet is asked to endorse the action plan in response to the remaining findings of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge as set out in appendix B.

#### **4. Reasons for decision**

- 4.1 There is no requirement to formally respond to Peer Challenge reports, but it is considered good practice to publish the findings in the form of the LGA’s formal report, and to set out the Council’s plans to respond to any recommendations for improvement.
- 4.2 In addition, the risks of not responding effectively to the LGA’s highest priority recommendations in relation to the budget are very significant. The report states that the Council’s financial position is “very challenging”, and that the “policy ambition of the Council makes this position even more challenging.” There is an urgent need to address the requirement for significant savings in 2020-21. The report states that to facilitate decision-making by councillors “a clear decision-making pathway through to autumn 2019 is required,” and that, “Failure to take this action would result in the further depletion of reserves and a precarious future for the Council and its services.”

#### **5. Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 The option not to respond to the Peer Challenge with a formal report was considered. The decision has been made that it would be better to publish the report, and the Council’s response to it, so that the Council can be held to account on its improvement plans.

#### **6. Background information**

- 6.1 In February 2019, the Council took part in a Corporate Peer Challenge, organised by the Local Government Association (LGA), at the Council’s request, which involved senior officers from several different councils, led by Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive at Brent, and one lead Member peer, Cllr Rishi Shori, Leader of Bury Council in Greater Manchester. All councils are given the opportunity to have one of these reviews every 4-5 years as part of a local government-led approach to improvement and mutual support. The peers spent four days talking to a wide range of people connected to the Council, providing challenge, and sharing their knowledge and experience.

- 6.2 A position statement was submitted in advance, which addressed the general themes that are included in all peer reviews across the country:
- Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
  - Leadership of Place: Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
  - Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
  - Organisational leadership and governance: Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
  - Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?
- 6.3 The peer team were also asked to focus on the following question:  
*“The Council is agreeing its Borough Plan in February 2019 so is keen to focus on how well set up it is to deliver against the plan, especially in relation to the way it prioritises within the Borough Plan, and invites the peer team to reflect particularly on how set we are to deliver the level of partnership working required to make the ambition of a Borough, rather than Corporate, plan a reality by the end of the plan period.”*
- 6.4 The peers’ final report highlighted the “tremendous ambition” and “changed strategic direction” demonstrated by the administration, and reflected in the Borough Plan. They said that all the Council staff that they met were highly committed and enthusiastic, with a real passion for Haringey.
- 6.5 Haringey’s progress in health and social care integration was held up as a good example. The team also commented on the strong progress in improving Children’s Services, and noted that the voluntary sector considers the Council to be a strong and receptive partner. The work on developing a Youth at Risk strategy is described as good practice, and Community First is considered “a great initiative”. The report also states that “the development community...saw Haringey’s Spatial Planning team as one of the most impressive and efficient across the country”.

## 7 **Contribution to strategic outcomes**

- 7.1 The response to the recommendations contributes to the “Your Council: the way the council works” priority in the Borough Plan, 2019-23.

## 8 **Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equality)**

### **Finance**

- 8.1 It is expected that the costs of implementing the action plan will be contained within the existing MTFS budgets. In the event that the need for additional resources is identified these will be included in subsequent reports to Cabinet as required.
- 8.2 The highest priority recommendation put forward by peers related to the deliverability of a sustainable MTFS. Members' attention is drawn to the report elsewhere on this Cabinet agenda titled "Budget report and MTFS update".

### **Legal**

- 8.3 The Assistant Director of Corporate Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report. There are no legal implications arising out of this report.

### **Equality**

- 8.4 The Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to:
- Tackle discrimination and victimisation of persons that share the characteristics protected under S4 of the Act. These include the characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (formerly gender) and sexual orientation;
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not; and
  - Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.
- 8.5 The peer challenge report makes two specific proposals on how the Council can improve the way approach to tackling inequalities is organised and supported. One is to raise awareness of staff equality networks to ensure that staff have a voice both to celebrate their differences, as well as a point of contact to be consulted on council-wide policies. The second is to ensure that statutory equality objectives are aligned to corporate performance reporting.

## **8 Use of Appendices**

Appendix A – Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report  
Appendix B - Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge 2019  
Action Plan

## **9 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

