

REPORT FOR DECISION



DECISION OF:	CABINET
DATE:	5 FEBRUARY 2014
SUBJECT:	LGA PEER CHALLENGE – OUTCOME
REPORT FROM:	LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
CONTACT OFFICER:	H Downie, Asst Director, Business redesign and Development
TYPE OF DECISION:	CABINET (NON-KEY DECISION)
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	This paper is within the public domain.
SUMMARY:	<p>The Local Government Association (LGA) facilitated a peer review of the Council’s corporate arrangements in November 2013. A letter has now been received setting out the findings from this review.</p> <p>Overall the LGA team found Bury to be a good Council which is held in high regard, has strong working relationships with partners, sound financial planning and also benefits from strong and effective leadership. Whilst identifying many positives, the team made some suggestions designed to assist the Council prepare for the financial and organisational challenges ahead.</p> <p>The full letter is attached together with a draft action plan to address the areas for improvement identified by the LGA team.</p>
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	<p>Option 1 – approve the letter and action plan. This acknowledges the findings of the external review and puts in place actions to help the Council with the challenges that are likely to be faced post 2015. Further tasks could be included on the action plan should Cabinet so wish</p> <p>Option 2 – not approve the letter and action plan. This rejects the findings of the review team</p> <p>Option 1 is recommended.</p>
IMPLICATIONS:	
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes

Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	The review recognises a number of strengths and makes helpful recommendations. These are supported, and will be addressed as per the action plan attached, within existing resources.	SK
Statement by Executive Director of Resources:	The action plan will be delivered from within existing resources or by continuing current work streams and so there are no specific resource implications arising from the report.	MO
Equality/Diversity implications:	Full consideration of equality/diversity issues will take place as each aspect of the action plan is developed.	
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	Yes	JH
Wards Affected:	All	
Scrutiny Interest:	Overview and Scrutiny	

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR: Executive Director of Adult Care Services

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Executive Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
23/1/14	23/1/14		
Scrutiny Committee	Committee	Council	

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Corporate Peer Challenge is a national process designed to help councils improve. It is not an inspection nor is it an audit; it is an opportunity to receive feedback from qualified and experienced individuals from within local government on how well the Council is doing and where areas for improvement may exist.
- 1.2 The areas considered by the peer team followed a set format:
 - Understanding of the local context and priority setting
 - Financial planning and viability
 - Political and managerial leadership
 - Governance and decision making
 - Organisational capacity to deliver priorities
- 1.3 The Council were particularly keen for the team to look at financial planning in the context of a sustainable plan; prioritisation from a political perspective and available capacity (and resources) to deliver our future ambitions.

2. FINDINGS

- 2.1 Full details of the letter are attached but in summary the team were impressed by the Council. Leadership, employee commitment (which the team said is "amazing"), strong partnership working and sound financial planning were singled out as being strengths.
- 2.2 Capacity is, and will continue to be, an issue going forward. The team have made a number of suggestions as to how this could be addressed and these are picked up in a proposed action plan (attached).

3. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 The Corporate Peer Challenge process has been a useful exercise in both obtaining an external perspective on the Council and identifying areas for improvement.
- 3.2 Whilst the team believe that the Council has many strengths, it has also put forward a number of suggestions to assist Bury meet the challenges ahead. These have been grouped under five main headings in the action plan:
 - Building on the strengths of the council and its political and professional leadership
 - Strategic capacity to take the Council forward
 - Stakeholder engagement
 - Prioritisation of transformation projects that will deliver best return
 - Other
- 3.3 The views of Cabinet are welcomed on the LGA letter and the Council's draft action plan. Subject to Cabinet approval, each of the tasks will be taken forward and progress reports brought back to Cabinet at regular intervals

List of Background Papers:-

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge letter

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