

Report to:	EXECUTIVE
Relevant Officer:	Antony Lockley, Director of Strategy and Assistant Chief Executive
Relevant Cabinet Member	Councillor Lynn Williams, Leader of the Council
Date of Meeting	8 November 2021

LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE RESPONSE

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide an update on actions progressing the recommendations of the Local Government Association’s Corporate Peer Challenge (visit March 2020, final report received Nov 2020), and to approve the Council’s formal response to the Peer Challenge report.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To approve the Council’s response to the Corporate Peer Challenge attached at Appendix 2b, and note the actions taken already to address the recommendations made by the Peer Challenge team.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 Substantial work has been undertaken to address the issues and recommendations highlighted in the Peer Challenge report, and the further actions planned will ensure sustainable improvements to the Council’s corporate capacity and approach.

3.2 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.3 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council’s approved budget? Yes

4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

5.0 Council priority:

- 5.1 The recommendations of the report cut across both Council priorities:
- “The economy: Maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool”
 - “Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience

6.0 Background information

- 6.1 Corporate Peer Challenges are part of the Local Government Association’s sector-led improvement support offer, and generally take place at 4-5 year intervals. The Local Government Association stresses that they are not inspections. Rather, they provide a “critical friend” analysis of the Council’s response to its context and challenges. The Peer Challenge Team gather information via 1-1 interviews and by reviewing a range of reports and strategies. The Peer Challenge team then turn their findings into a report, and make recommendations that are for the Council to consider. Most Councils go on to publish both the Peer Challenge report and their response.
- 6.2 The Local Government Association’s Peer Challenge team visited the Council in March 2020, very shortly before the global pandemic had dramatic consequences for the organisation, town, and wider UK. The pandemic inevitably caused a significant delay in the production of the report. The Council received the final version of the report in November 2020, and this is included as Appendix A. As a result of prioritising the emergency demands of the pandemic – and the reality that we had already started to deliver against most of the recommendations – the Council did not begin to draft a formal response to the Peer Challenge until the summer of 2021.
- 6.3 The Council’s response to the recommendations is included at Appendix 2b. As can be seen, the Council accepts the majority of recommendations; where the Council has a different view, this is explained. The Council’s response explains how the Council has already made substantial progress in addressing the majority of recommendations and issues identified, in some cases going beyond their original scope. This is despite the significant and ongoing impacts of the pandemic, which was starting to take hold around the time of the onsite element of the peer review.
- 6.4 The Council will continue to consider how targeted support from the Local Government Association should form part of its overall approach to corporate improvement, inviting them to undertake further reviews where they will add value.
- 6.5 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

7.0 List of Appendices:

- 7.1 Appendix 2a: Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, Blackpool Council, 3-6 March 2020 – Feedback Report
- Appendix 2b: Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge –Council Response

8.0 Financial considerations:

- 8.1 No immediate considerations.

9.0 Legal considerations:

9.1 None.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 The report considers risk in the context of the Council's financial position.

11.0 Equalities considerations:

11.1 No specific implications arising from this report.

12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:

12.1 The report specifically includes parts of the Council's response to the Climate Emergency declaration.

13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:

13.1 None.

14.0 Background papers:

14.1 None.

15.0 Key decision information:

15.1 Is this a key decision? No

15.2 If so, Forward Plan reference number:

15.3 If a key decision, is the decision required in less than five days? No

15.4 If **yes**, please describe the reason for urgency:

16.0 Call-in information:

16.1 Are there any grounds for urgency, which would cause this decision to be exempt from the call-in process? No

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

17.0 Scrutiny Committee Chairman (where appropriate):

Date informed: N/A

Date approved: N/A

18.0 Declarations of interest (if applicable):

18.1

19.0 Summary of Discussion:

19.1

20.0 Executive decision:

20.1

21.0 Date of Decision:

21.1

22.0 Reason(s) for decision:

22.1

23.0 Date Decision published:

23.1

24.0 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

24.1

25.0 Executive Members in attendance:

25.1

26.0 Call-in:

26.1

27.0 Notes:

27.1