

**Meeting: Council**

**Date: 3 February 2016**

**Wards Affected: All**

**Report Title: Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge of Torbay Council and resulting outline action plan**

**Is the decision a key decision? Yes**

**When does the decision need to be implemented?** Ongoing implementation of action plan

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## **1. Proposal and Introduction**

- 1.1 To make available the Local Government Association's (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge feedback report on Torbay Council.
- 1.2 The report sets out the resulting outline action plan, which will assist the Council to embrace the opportunities and improvements identified by the LGA.

## **2. Reason for Proposal**

- 2.1 To make available the LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report and to enable the Council to improve.

## **3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision**

- 3.1 That the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report (as set out at Appendix 1) and the resulting outline action plan (as set out at Appendix 2) be endorsed.
- 3.2 That the outline action plan be refined and reported as follows:
  - a) An all member/officer workshop be held, with assistance from the LGA if possible, to enable all members and relevant officers to contribute towards the development of the outline action plan;

- b) A joint member and officer working group (comprising 15 members politically balanced (11 Conservatives, 3 Liberal Democrats and 1 Independent Group) and lead officers for each of the action plan themes) be established to further refine the details of the action plan during February 2016; and
- c) The final detailed action plan be presented to Council meeting on 25 February 2016 for adoption.

3.3 That the implementation of the action plan be monitored by the Audit Committee.

#### **4. Background**

4.1 The LGA provide councils with support through corporate peer challenges. Peer challenge is a tool for assisting councils in identifying areas for improvement. The process involves a small team of local government peers spending time with the Council to provide challenge and share learning. Peer challenges are not a formal inspection and are designed to complement and add value to the Council's own performance and improvement.

4.2 The LGA undertook the peer challenge review of the Council during an on-site visit (30 November to 3 December 2015), with a focus on: financial viability; corporate capacity with an emphasis on workforce; and the effectiveness of leadership and governance arrangements.

4.3 During the visit, the Peer Challenge Team engaged with a wide range of people connected with the Council.

4.4 The Peer Challenge Team considered the following questions which form the core components looked at by all corporate peer challenges:

1. 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?
2. Leadership of Place: Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
3. 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?
4. 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?
5. Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

4.5 At the end of their review, the Peer Challenge Team made a number of recommendations and provided feedback. The full LGA Corporate Peer Challenge feedback report can be found at Appendix 1. A draft outline action plan to respond to the LGA's recommendations has been developed and is attached at Appendix 2.

## **5. Way Forward**

- 5.1 It is recommended that all members have an opportunity to contribute and be involved in the delivery of the action plan. Therefore, it is proposed to hold a workshop session for all members to enable them to participate in the way forward. This would be followed by a joint member and officer working group (politically balanced) to further refine the action plan during February 2016 and for approval at the Council meeting on 25 February 2016. It is also recommended that the Audit Committee provides ongoing monitoring and progress of the action plan, alongside performance and risk reporting.

## **6. Outline of significant key risks**

- 6.1 The main risk associated with the report is the failure to continue to respond to the recommendations of the LGA Peer Challenge Team. This may result in the Council not responding adequately to the issues and challenges it faces. The resulting action plan addresses the recommendations by the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge.

## **7. Other options**

- 7.1 Not to endorse the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report and resulting action plan – this is not recommended as the action plan will mitigate the risks outlined above.

## **8. Summary of resource implications**

- 8.1 The action plan will be delivered within identified resources and any additional resources will be incorporated in the budget setting process for 2016/2017

## **9. Consultation**

- 9.1 Key partners, stakeholders, elected members, senior officers and a staff group contributed towards the Corporate Peer Challenge and met with the Challenge Team. The resulting action plan assist the Council in making improvements which will ultimately lead to better outcomes for the community.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Torbay Council Feedback Report

Appendix 2: LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – December 2015 – Outline Action Plan

## **Background Documents**

None