

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee



12 September 2022

Title	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge update
Purpose of the report	To note
Report Author	Daniel Mouawad – Chief Executive Lee O’Neil – Deputy Chief Executive Terry Collier – Deputy Chief Executive
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	N/A
Corporate Priority	Community Affordable housing Recovery Environment Service delivery
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: Note the contents of the report and progress with preparing for the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge.
Reason for Recommendation	Not applicable

1. Summary of the report

- 1.1 The Corporate Policy and Resources Committee (CPRC) has agreed that the Council will participate in a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) later this year.
- 1.2 This report seeks to provide the Committee with an update on progress with preparations for the CPC.

2. Key issues

- 2.1 Spelthorne’s last full Corporate Peer Challenge was undertaken in 2014 with a more focused Finance Peer Review undertaken remotely in 2020. Full CPCs are recommended to be undertaken every five years. The Council is therefore planning to undertake such an exercise later this year.
- 2.2 Peer challenges are designed to support councils to drive improvements and efficiency and to assist local authorities to respond to local priorities and issues in their own way to the greatest effect. The CPC team will involve

peers from across the sector and beyond (including senior officers and councillors (usually including at least one Leader) from other local authorities).

- 2.3 Spelthorne's CPC, as with all such challenges, will cover five core elements:
 - (a) Local priorities and outcomes
 - (b) Organisational and place leadership
 - (c) Governance and culture
 - (d) Financial planning and management
 - (e) Capacity for improvement
- 2.4 In addition, it has been agreed that the CPC team will also focus on one cross-cutting area of specific relevance/importance to Spelthorne:

'How can Spelthorne ensure that it can continue to deliver sustainable, affordable housing developments for the borough?'
- 2.5 The LGA are currently in the process of putting together a number of options for the proposed make-up of the CPC team which will visit Spelthorne. In view of the range of political parties represented by Spelthorne Councillors it has been agreed with the LGA that if possible they will seek to include two political Leaders in the team undertaking our CPC, one from a Conservative led authority and one Leader from a Liberal Democrat led authority, preferably both from Councils operating under a committee system of governance.
- 2.6 Council officers are currently putting together a range of background information for the CPC team so that they can understand more about our borough and the Council, including areas such as our political make-up, governance structures and our priorities/values etc..
- 2.7 Following the last CPC meeting there was a request to establish whether the process could be brought forward from the date that had been proposed towards the end of November this year. This date was chosen for a range of reasons including the availability of the LGA CPC team; the workloads and preparation time for Spelthorne officers to pull all the necessary information together for the CPC team; the need to give a number of new senior managers and recently elected Councillors time to bed into their roles and understand the Council's processes and procedures etc.; and also to ensure that the CPC and any follow up sessions do not clash with the May 2023 Borough Council elections. Following discussions with representatives from the LGA we have, however, now managed to move the CPC visit forward a couple of weeks to take place on 15-17 November 2022, rather than the end of that month.
- 2.8 During their visit the CPC team will meet with staff at the Council, Councillors, residents, business representatives, partners and other interested parties, using a combination of meetings (in the office and virtual) and workshops. As this is a corporate review, all Councillors will be invited to participate, including all members of the CPRC.
- 2.9 Around six months after the CPC, the LGA will organise a check-in meeting to explore progress and challenges with peers and discuss any next steps.

3. Options analysis and proposal

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to note the contents of the report and progress with preparations for the LGA CPC.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1 There are no additional costs for the LGA to undertake a CPC as the Council pays an annual £10,000 LGA subscription.

5. Risk considerations

- 5.1 The LGA plan and build their CPC team around a range of factors, including the specific area(s) of focus the team are asked to look at in addition to the five core areas. Once the make-up of the Peer Team is finalised and the scope of the CPC set, any subsequent changes requested would be likely to result in the CPC team's visit being significantly delayed (most likely into 2023).

6. Legal considerations

- 6.1 There are no direct legal considerations relating the proposed CPC.

7. Other considerations

- 7.1 There are none.

8. Equality and Diversity

- 8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity considerations relating to the proposed CPC.

9. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 9.1 The proposed main area of focus for the CPC Peer Team would include an opportunity to consider environmental sustainability issues relating to the Council's affordable housing developments.

10. Timetable for implementation

- 10.1 Spelthorne's CPC is currently scheduled for the week commencing 14 November 2022, with the Peer Team visiting the Council from 15-17 November.

11. Contact

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Background papers: There are none.

Appendices: There are none.