

Corporate Policy and Resources Committee



26 June 2023

Title	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Outline Action Plan
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
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: Agree the proposed Outline Action Plan as outlined in Appendix A , to address the 12 recommendations from the Local Government Association following the completion of their Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC), and to agree to the subsequent development of a Detailed Action Plan as outlined in this report.
Reason for Recommendation	To ensure that the Council fully addresses the issues raised within the CPC report, which is designed to assist this authority to further improve the way it administers and delivers its services to our residents and businesses.

1. Summary of the report

- 1.1 In November 2022 Spelthorne took part in a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC).
- 1.2 Following a meeting of the Council’s political Group Leaders and senior managers in March 2023, an Outline Action Plan has been developed to address the 12 recommendations contained within the CPC Team’s feedback.
- 1.3 This report requests that the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee adopts the proposed Outline Action Plan with a view to developing a more outcome-focused and comprehensive Detailed Action Plan by September 2023.

2. Key issues

- 2.1 LGA 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 visited Spelthorne from 15-17 November 2022 and consisted of peers from across the sector (including senior officers and two Council Leaders).
- 2.2 The CPC Team provided a verbal summary of their findings at a feedback session held in the Council Chamber on 17 November to which all staff, Borough Councillors and all other stakeholders taking part in the process were invited.
- 2.3 The CPC Team's detailed feedback report ('the CPC report') (see **Appendix B**) was received on 1 February 2023 and this was considered by Full Council on 23 February 2023. This included a recommendation that Council agree to the development of an Action Plan to address the recommendations in the CPC report. Council agreed to accept these recommendations, subject to amending Recommendation 2 of the covering report to state, *"to agree to the development of an Action Plan to address those recommendations and for this to be directed through the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee"*.
- 2.4 Following the completion of a CPC, the LGA would normally expect a Council to start developing an Action Plan to address any recommendations within 8 weeks of their report being published. The CPC Team would then normally revisit the Council around 6 months after their report is published to assess progress and to offer any further assistance.
- 2.5 A number of measures are already in train to address some of the issues outlined in the CPC Team's comments/recommendations, such as a review of the current committee system, the development of the Member training programme for successful candidates in this year's May election, and an ongoing Establishment Review, which will cover issues such as staff recruitment and retention.
- 2.6 In order to progress the development of an Action Plan in a timely manner, a meeting of all Group Leaders was held on 9 March 2023, which was also attended by senior managers of the Council. At that meeting the 12 recommendations contained within the CPC report were considered in order to try to find some 'common ground' as recommended by the CPC Team, and to start developing some outline actions which all political groups could support and work together to progress. The meeting was generally very positive and good progress was made in agreeing some overarching outline actions, being mindful of the fact that the political landscape of the Council could change as a result of the impending May 2023 local government elections. One significant area of common-ground shown by the Group Leaders at that meeting was the desire to continue to pursue the existing CARES priorities and PROVIDES values which form the basis of the Council's current Corporate Plan, with the Recovery priority possibly adapted to have a revised focus on supporting our communities (both residents and businesses) in recovery from the cost-of living crisis. A further meeting of Group Leaders was held on 16 May 2023 where it was agreed that the Outline Action Plan should be presented to the next meeting of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee ('the Committee')

2.7 **Appendix A** contains a summary of the outline actions agreed at that Group Leader/senior officer meeting, with the CPC recommendations grouped by relevant subject area. If agreed by the Committee, this will form the basis of a more detailed outcome-focussed Action Plan, with clear targets and action-owners (the 'Detailed Action Plan'), to be developed over the next few months.

2.8 In the meantime, the LGA have been kept apprised of progress and if the Outline Action Plan outlined in **Appendix A** is agreed by the Committee this will be forwarded to the LGA as evidence of progress with the CPC's recommendations, prior to their planned revisit to assess our progress. Although this revisit was originally planned to take place around July 2023, it is proposed that this will now be arranged for September 2023 at the earliest, in order to give the new Council an opportunity to 'settle into business', develop the detailed actions it wishes to take to address the CPC report recommendations and to arrange a suitable time for the CPC Team to visit.

3. Options analysis and proposal

3.1 Option 1 (**preferred option**) - The Committee is asked to agree the Outline Action Plan as shown in **Appendix A**, and to agree to the subsequent development of a Detailed Action Plan as outlined in section 2.7 of this report.

3.2 Option 2 - The Committee may wish to make changes to the proposed Outline Action Plan or propose an alternative approach.

4. Financial implications

4.1 There are no additional costs for the LGA to undertake a CPC (and their subsequently follow-up visit) as the Council pays an annual £10,000 LGA subscription.

4.2 There will be some financial implications of pursuing a number of the actions proposed to address the CPC report recommendations. The Committee will be advised of these as the Detailed Action Plan is developed.

5. Risk considerations

5.1 The CPC report makes a wide range of comments and recommendations which are designed to assist the Council in understanding its strengths and where improvements could be made. Failure to recognise those strengths and address some of the key issues raised, could potentially have significant financial, reputational and organisational implications for the Council (including risks to future recruitment and retention of staff). It is proposed that a risk analysis forms part of the proposed Detailed Action Plan to assist in understanding and addressing those issues.

6. Legal considerations

6.1 There are no direct legal considerations relating the consideration of the CPC Report. Any legal considerations relating to the Council following up on the CPC recommendations made will be outlined in the proposed Detailed Action Plan.

7. Other considerations

7.1 There are none.

8. Equality and Diversity

8.1 There are no direct equality and diversity considerations at this stage relating to the proposed CPC Outline Action Plan. Any equality and diversity considerations relating to the Council following up on the CPC recommendations made will be included in the proposed Detailed Action Plan.

9. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

9.1 There are no direct sustainability/climate change implications at this stage relating to the proposed CPC Outline Action Plan. Any sustainability/climate change considerations relating to the Council following up on the CPC recommendations made will be included in the proposed Detailed Action Plan.

10. Timetable for implementation

10.1 If agreed by CPRC, the Outline Action Plan will take immediate effect. Further discussions will then be arranged with the Group Leaders to establish how they wish to move forward with the actions outlined in the plan, including developing the Detailed Action Plan to fully address the CPC recommendations. All progress will be directed through the Committee as requested by Full Council.

10.2 The CPC Team would normally revisit the Council 6-months after the publication of their report which would have been around July 2023. However, as suggested in paragraph 2.8 above, this visit is now unlikely to be undertaken until September 2023 at the earliest.

11. Contact

Daniel Mouawad, Chief Executive: dcm.cex@spelthorne.gov.uk

Lee O'Neil, Deputy Chief Executive: l.o'neil@spelthorne.gov.uk

Terry Collier, Deputy Chief Executive: t.collier@spelthorne.gov.uk

Background papers: There are none.

Appendices:

Appendix A – CPC Outline Action Plan

Appendix B – Spelthorne CPC Report