

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET ADVISORY COMMITTEES

- c) LGA Peer Challenge - Feedback letter (Minute 33, Strategy & Performance Advisory Committee – 28 January 2014)

In accordance with Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chairman had agreed to accept the papers for this item as an urgent matter. The papers had not been available five clear working days before the meeting for the following reason:

The letter summarising feedback from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge was only received on Friday 24 January. The findings of the Peer Challenge needed to be reported to the Committee and the next meeting was not until 11 March 2014 yet it needed to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting 6 February 2014 as much of the content of the feedback related to the strategic direction of the Council, including elements of the already adopted Corporate Plan.

The Chief Officer Corporate Support presented the report which summarised the feedback and suggestions of the Corporate Peer Challenge carried out in December 2013.

The Chairman commented that it had felt like an inspection and had been highly challenging. The Council had been fortunate in the high calibre of reviewer such as Simon Ridley, Director of Local Government Finance, DCLG.

A Member queried, when there was a stress on community involvement, why Parish and Town Councils had not been involved and in reality not many Councillors. The Chairman responded that the peer team had attended two council meetings, interviewed all party leaders and the Chairman of Scrutiny and Governance Committees. The Chief Executive further advised that a selection of officers had been interviewed.

In response to a question as to whether the peer group were suggesting releasing greenbelt, the Chairman explained that Harry Platt, Associate Growth Advisor, had visited sites with the Property and Facilities Services Manager. There were some areas on the greenbelt boundary that could possibly be looked at.

A Member queried, whilst appreciating the value, the officer time involved and cost, and whether the suggestions given were any different to those already in mind. The Chairman responded that it was a free national programme in its third year and offered to all councils. With regards to officer time it was not like an old Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) inspection which required a lot of paperwork. Documentation forwarded was all information already publicly available or website links. It was hard to quantify the added value, but what other opportunity would the council get to have input from experts such as Harry Platt and Simon Ridley. Overall it had taken place over a period of four days. It was invaluable to have such collective expertise as a critical friend, and the validation of being on the right path.

Resolved: That

- a) the findings of the Corporate Peer Challenge be noted and recommended to Cabinet for consideration; and
- b) the Corporate Peer Challenge Team be thanked for the time taken in completing the review and providing their feedback.