

**Full Council**  
**29 October 2024**  
**Part i**

## **Peer Review Action Plan**

### **Purpose of Report**

To review and sign off the Action Plan created following the Peer Review undertaken by the Local Government Association in January 2024

### **Recommendation(s)**

The Committee RESOLVES to:

- (1) Approve the Peer Challenge Action Plan

### **Financial Implications**

Financial Implications are set out in paragraphs 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 of this report.

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### **Legal Implications**

Legal Implications are set out in paragraph 3.2.1 of this report.

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### **Risk Assessment**

Risks are set out in paragraphs 3.3.1 and 3.3.2 of this report.

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### **Environmental/ Climate Change Implications**

There are no environmental or climate change implications from this report.

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## **Executive Member**

Cllr Richard Keeling  
Leader of the Council

## **Appendices/Background Papers**

### **Appendix 1 – Draft Action Plan**

**Background paper 1 – LGA Corporate Peer Review Feedback Report: 9-11 January 2024** [LGA Corporate Peer Review: Teignbridge District Council | Local Government Association](#)

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Corporate peer challenges are delivered by the Local Government Association (LGA). The intention is to support Councils in identifying opportunities for continuous improvement by providing insight, guidance and challenge.
- 1.2 It is expected that all Councils receive a Corporate Peer Challenge every 5 years.
- 1.3 Any actions identified in the Feedback Report are expected to be set out in an Action Plan within 6 months of the Feedback Report being completed. Due to the impact of the unexpected decision to call a General Election it was agreed with the LGA that the timescale to produce the Action Plan could be extended.

### **2. Overview of the Action Plan**

- 2.1 The Feedback Report, included as Background Paper 1 to this report, sets out the findings of the Corporate Peer Challenge team.
- 2.2 The Corporate Peer Challenge team, appointed by the LGA, spent three days on site in January 2024, speaking with elected members, officers, key partners, and external organisations. Their work was also informed by a Council produced Position Statement, included as Background Paper 2 to this report, which included key facts and figures about the district.
- 2.3 The Position Statement was also produced with input from members from all political groups within the Council, officers within the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT), and external organisations and partners.

- 2.4 Section 2 of the Report made 11 key recommendations to the Council.
- 2.5 Following the review there were discussions with all officers and political groups that engaged with the process, to identify potential actions to address the recommendations. Appendix 1 to this report sets out a draft Action Plan for Members to consider.
- 2.6 The actions are split across four key themes of Relationships, Constitution, Council Strategy and Partnership, and Functioning Authority.
- 2.7 The following actions were suggested but have not been included as it is considered that they have already been implemented:

<b>Suggested action</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Relationships</b>	
Ongoing meetings between the Leader, Deputy Leader, and statutory officers to provide timely advice and guidance, review agendas	Already occurs monthly
Group Leader meetings with statutory officers	Already in the diary to occur monthly
Facilitated discussions between Executive Members and Senior Leadership Team	Arranged for October 2024
Provide teas and coffees at meetings	In place for Full Council only
Member access to all parts of Forde House	In place
<b>Constitution</b>	
Adopt the Officer/Member Protocol	Approved 30 July 2024 Council
<b>Council Strategy and Partnerships</b>	
Co-production sessions on developing policies	Council Strategy work including the Officer/Member Working Group provides this forum

On-going communication programme of key issues with local communities	Facilitated workshops through Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC) have taken place and more work planned.
Centralised Partnership Record	Already exists
Responsibilities on external bodies	Already exists
Create an 'invest to save' reserve	A reserve of £0.4m has been created when closing the 2023/24 accounts

### **Functioning Authority**

An operating model that aligns with the Council Strategy	New structure and roles approved by Council
Enhance scrutiny procedures for raising issues in advance of the meetings	New Informal Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) meetings agreed 16 September 2024
Improve feedback mechanisms for scrutiny groups	Working groups reporting back to O&S, who report back to Executive or Full Council
Review decisions made contrary to statutory officer advice	The mechanisms to do this already exist through scrutiny functions
Introduce a new Finance Management System, training and testing	Work in progress

- 2.8 Section 4 of this report sets out actions not considered for inclusion within the action plan but are available for consideration as alternative options.

## **3. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact**

### **3.1 Financial**

- 3.1.1 The Action Plan contains several additional financial costs to the Council, which while of low value are not within existing budgets. This includes the introduction of teas and coffees at Full Council, an extension to the Member and Officer training programme, and bringing in the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny to review the Constitution.

3.1.2 The Feedback Report also included support for the introduction of an Invest to Save strategy and scrutiny of the Medium-Term Financial Plan, which will have an impact on future budget setting processes.

### **3.2 Legal**

3.2.1 There are no Legal implications related to approving the Action Plan. However, it should be noted that the actions within the plan contain several activities relating to changes to the Council's Constitution and an action related to the regard to be given to statutory officer advice.

### **3.3 Risks**

3.3.1 Failure to agree the action plan could mean that the Council does not implement improvements that have been identified as necessary by an external review. This will have reputational impacts and may lead to future scrutiny on the effectiveness of governance and performance at the Council.

3.3.2 Not taking collective ownership of the actions could undermine the ability to make improvements and avoid the opportunity to address issues identified by the Corporate Peer Challenge team and key partners. Again, this could have reputational harm and impact on relationships.

### **3.4 Environmental/Climate Change Impact**

3.4.1 There are no direct impacts or references to the environment or Climate Change within the Action Plan.

## **4. Alternative Options**

4.1 The production and implementation of an Action Plan are core requirements of the Corporate Peer Challenge process. The Feedback Report was accepted by the Council and the 'alternative options' to consider can only be based on how else to take the recommendations forward.

4.2 The actions were based on extensive feedback from those involved in the process and included all relevant actions.

4.3 The following actions were raised during the post report engagement work for inclusion but are not recommended to be taken forward in the Action Plan:

**Suggested action****Response**

Maintain an ongoing programme of compulsory Councillor training

The only compulsory training relates to membership of the Planning and Licensing Committees due to their regulatory nature. It is impractical to make other training compulsory.

Creation of community centred case studies from recent engagement to build evidence

No resource to implement this

Staff information and briefings

These already exist and are part of 'Business As Usual' operations.

**5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 The Peer Challenge Action Plan sets out practical steps on how the Council can make continuous improvements recommended by the Corporate Peer Challenge team.
- 5.2 Approving the Action Plan and monitoring the effectiveness of its implementation will be part of a 6-month review that the LGA will carry out following Member approval.
- 5.3 The Action Plan also recommends that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Audit Scrutiny Committee review the actions on a quarterly basis, and Full Council receives an annual report.