

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Audit & Corporate Governance Committee **DATE:** 3 August 2020

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WARD(S): All

PART I FOR CONSIDERATION AND COMMENT

LGA PEER REVIEW ON GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS – FINAL REPORT

1 **Purpose of Report**

To report to the Committee on the final report issued by the Local Government Association (“LGA”), via their peer review team, following their peer review of the Council’s governance arrangements, which they conducted between 3-5 February 2020.

2 **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Panel is requested to consider and comment upon the contents of this report.

3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan**

3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Good governance arrangements will have positive implications for the SJWS and the JSNA.

3b **Five Year Plan Outcomes**

Good governance arrangements will enhance all the outcomes of the Five Year Plan.

4 **Other Implications**

(a) **Financial**

There are no financial implications at this stage

(b) **Risk Management**

Recommendation from section 2	Risks/Threats/ Opportunities	Current Controls	Using the Risk Management Matrix Score the risk	Future Controls
To consider and comment upon the LGA Peer Review on the Council’s	Political, Legal & Regulatory risks associated with decisions	Existing operating arrangements	Likelihood – Very Low – 2 Impact –	Enhanced and fortified governance arrangements

Governance arrangements.	taken on existing arrangements		Negligible – 2 Risk Score: 4	for the future.
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(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

Constitutional and Governance arrangements rely for their effectiveness on the exercise of disciplinary powers which has the potential to engage the rights to a fair hearing, the rights to freedom of thought and conscience and the rights to freedom of expression contained Articles 6, 9 and 10 respectively of the European Convention on Human Rights, which are given effect to in domestic law by the Human Rights Act 1998.

Local Authorities also have a statutory duty under Section 9P of the Local Government Act 2000 to prepare, keep up to date and publicise a constitution whose contents are partly prescribed by statute, partly by ministerial directions and are partly matters of local content, within a statutory framework.

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

There is no identified need for an EIA at this stage.

5 **Supporting Information**

- 5.1 Between 5 and 8 February 2020 the Council underwent a formal Peer Review of its governance arrangements by a corporate peer review team from the LGA.
- 5.2 The LGA peer review team presented its initial preliminary findings of their review by way of a written interim feedback report to the Council in February 2020.
- 5.3 A summary of this interim feedback report was reported to the Committee at their meeting on 5 March 2020 for comment and consideration.
- 5.4 The Council received the LGA's final report of their peer review in June, a copy of which is appended to this Report.
- 5.5 The main findings of the peer review team are as follows:
- The Council is ambitious to improve and senior officers and members understand why governance is a key part of that
 - The council has made significant and tangible progress on governance issues over the last two years
 - Many of the building blocks of an effective governance framework are now in place but there are still some gaps in the framework that need to be addressed
 - There is more to do to embed a strong foundation of good governance and apply and own it consistently.
- 5.6 The peer review team made the following recommendations:
1. the ambition for transformation now needs to move quickly into the delivery phase.
 2. good governance must be embedded regardless of the delivery of the transformation programme.

3. the council should ensure councillors are appropriately engaged and supported through active involvement in agenda planning, training and briefings.
4. The council should ensure that the quality and timeliness of reports is improved. It should consider making better use of Democratic Services, forward agenda planning and Mod.gov to manage agendas.
5. The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee Terms of Reference should be reviewed to take account of its wider remit.
6. The council should consider a “lessons learned” review of the reasons for the delay in the conclusion of the audit of accounts.
7. The council should proceed quickly to appoint its own suitably qualified and experienced permanent Monitoring Officer.
8. The council should establish a comprehensive member training and development programme
9. The scheme of delegations should be reviewed to ensure the new scheme is understood by everyone involved.
10. The council should ensure scrutiny is given greater status and support to enable it to focus on the key strategic issues facing the authority.
11. The council should maximise the opportunity to be transparent to enhance its reputation.
12. The council should complete the roll out of the localities model and ensure that appropriate governance exists around it.
13. The council should take steps to ensure all councillors are appropriately informed about issues happening in their ward.

5.7 The Committee will appreciate that since they considered the LGA’s interim report at their meeting on 5 March 2020 the council’s focus has been on dealing with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, as considerations are now shifting to recovery from the pandemic, focus is now returning to the LGA’s report and the following developments have taken place:

- The report was used as the basis for training for scrutiny members on 1 July
- The report was presented to the council’s Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at their meeting on 7 July to commence discussion about the action plan which will follow to implement the report’s recommendations.
- The committee began consideration of the recommendation relating to the review of the committee’s Terms of Reference at their workshop on 22 July
- A survey has been issued to Members eliciting their views on their training needs and requirements to inform future planning of a training programme.

5.8 Also, since the Committee’s last meeting, there have been developments affecting some of the recommendations of the LGA Peer review team, particularly relating to the move of the transformation programme into the delivery phase. For example:

- The Council launched the formal consultation in relation to the restructure of 2nd and 3rd tier posts on 3 June 2020. The consultation closed on 15 July 2020 and the time limit for expressions of interest for appointment to the new structure closed on 22 July 2020. Interviews and appointments to the new Structure are scheduled to take place in August with a view to the new structure taking effect from the beginning of September 2020.
- In accordance with the localities strategy, Landmark Place has now closed. The first of the Council’s local access points has now opened at the Britwell Community Hub.

5.9 The next steps now will be for the Council to develop the action plan to implement the recommendations of the LGA Peer Review team and to report to the Committee upon this plan. This will be done at the first appropriate opportunity following the completion of the implementation of the 2nd and 3 tier restructure and the appointments to the new structure.

6 **Comments of Other Committees**

The Monitoring Officer will also receive the final report on the LGA Peer Review on Governance and it will be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

7 **Conclusion**

The formal findings and evaluation of evidence of the LGA Governance Peer Review Team have now been presented to the Council with a list of 13 recommendations which provide a “roadmap” to the Council for improvements it can make in order to progress further on its journey to complete its good governance framework and enhance its transformation. The action plan that will now follow will set the timetable to complete this process.

8 **Appendices**

LGA Peer Review Feedback Report – “Governance Peer Challenge – Slough Borough Council – 3rd to 5th February 2020”

9 **Background Papers**

None