

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	28 July 2022
Subject:	Local Government Association Peer Review Revisit		
Report of:	Chief Executive	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services		
Is this a Key Decision:	N	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

This report updates members on the outcome of the Local Government Association Peer Review Revisit and advises of the intentions to action the areas identified

The report also informs Council of the intention to review and refresh the Vision 2030.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) Consider the feedback form the Local Government Association Peer Review Revisit at Appendix A and Council response to actioning the recommendations.
- (2) Note the timeline review and refresh the Vision 2030 and note the strengthened Core purpose at Appendix B.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

Peer Reviews are a proven tool for sector-led improvement and the Council has always been open to learning from others and sharing good practice.

The peer challenge that took place in 2018 provided external recognition of the things it believes the Council was doing well, highlighted where the Council can learn from other councils considering best practice elsewhere and recommended several key actions.

The follow up revisit took place in April 2022 and the peers have made a number of recommendations.

Sefton Council is a listening Council and intends to review and refresh Vison 2030 as per the timeline presented in the report.

In the interim Council are asked to consider and note the strengthened Core Purpose at Annex A.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

NA

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The report does not have direct implications for finances or resources, actions within the proposed action plan may have implications. In such cases and where they cannot be contained within existing budgets there will be a separate report to Cabinet or Cabinet Member seeking approval in accordance with the Council's constitution.

(B) Capital Costs

The report does not have direct implications for finances or resources, actions within the proposed action plan may have implications. In such cases and where they cannot be contained within existing budgets there will be a separate report to Cabinet or Cabinet Member seeking approval.

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): The report does not have direct implications for finances or resources.	
Legal Implications: There are no legal implications.	
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.	
Climate Emergency Implications: The recommendations within this report will	
Have a positive impact	N
Have a neutral impact	Y
Have a negative impact	/N
The Author has undertaken the Climate Emergency training for report authors	Y

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: The Core Purpose strengthens the Council's commitment to protecting the most vulnerable.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The Core Purpose reaffirms the Council's commitment to facilitating confident and resilient communities.
Commission, broker and provide core services: The Core Purpose reaffirms the

<p>Council's commitment to this.</p> <p>Place – leadership and influencer: The Council is a self-aware learning organisation and commissioned a peer review from the LGA in 2018 to assure it plans and learn from best practice.</p> <p>This report ensures transparency of the feedback report from the LGA peers.</p> <p>The Core Purpose strengthens the Council's commitment to this.</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform: The Core Purpose reaffirms the Council's commitment to this.</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: The Core Purpose strengthens the Council's commitment to facilitating sustainable economic prosperity.</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment: The Core Purpose reaffirms the Council's commitment to this.</p>
<p>Cleaner Greener: The Core Purpose reaffirms the Council's commitment to this.</p>

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD.6875/22) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD5075/22) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

As part of the Peer Review Revisit the peers met with partners.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

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Appendices:

Appendix A - LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Re-visit Report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The Council commissioned the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a peer review as an independent check on how the Council is performing in terms of planning for and delivering against our ambitious plans for the future.
- 1.2 The peer review took place in September 2018 and the peer review team was made up of experienced elected member and officer peers. The peer team considered the following five core themes:
- Understanding local context and priority setting
 - Leadership of place
 - Financial planning and viability
 - Organisational leadership and governance and
 - Capacity to deliver.
- 1.3 In addition to the five core themes, the peer review focused on the progress that the Council has made in implementing its 'vision for change' and the Council's approach to commercialisation.
- 1.4 The overarching message in the initial feedback from the LGA peer team immediately following the review was –

Sefton has listened to and served its communities well through a challenging period of austerity. To meet your Sefton 2030 ambitions, the Council will need to further recognise and move towards a model of co-production especially with your communities.

The peer review team summarised the Council's strengths as

- Knowledge of Sefton 'the place' is strong.
- Strong political and managerial leadership.
- Vision is in place, priorities have been set and transformation plan in place, which is significant.
- Local Plan is in place which has required difficult decisions
- Medium Term Financial Plan is linked to strategy and priorities.
- The Council has a committed and passionate workforce.
- Strong partner relationships exist across the Borough.
- The Council exhibits self-awareness and willingness to reflect.
- The Council has successfully managed a 51% reduction in grant funding and put in place a 3-year budget: and

- The Localities model has proven to be effective and the service is moving in the right direction

1.5 Cabinet considered the feedback report in December 2018, the recommendations were accepted, and Cabinet requested officers to develop an action plan for their consideration. Action Plan was approved in January 2019. Progress on the Action Plan was considered by Cabinet in March 2020.

1.6 The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge process includes a follow up visit. The purpose of the visit is to help the Council assess the impact of the peer challenge and demonstrate the progress it has made against the areas of improvement and development identified by the peer review team. It is a lighter-touch version of the original visit and was delayed due to the COVID 19 pandemic and took place 21st and 22nd April 2022.

2. The Revisit

2.1 The Peer Review revisit team included

- Cllr Steve Houghton, Leader of Barnsley Council (member of original Peer Review Team)
- Ali Griffin, Chief Executive at London Councils (member of original Peer Review Team)
- Jayne Traverse Executive Director Place Cheshire East Council and
- Dan Archer Programme Manager, Local Government Association (member of original Peer Review Team).

2.2 The peer team explored progress against each of the recommendations from the original peer challenge. The peer team prepared for the revisit by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing.

2.3 The peer team gathered information and views from more than 25 meetings, in addition to further research and reading. The peer team spoke with more than 65 people including a range of Council staff, with elected members and partners.

2.4 The peer team have now produced a report, at Appendix A, which found that the Council had worked purposefully and had seen an improved approach across all the areas.

It could evidence that the Council made progress against the key recommendations. Good relationships with partners across the system was evidenced. Peers believed the Council had a clear sense of direction around commercialisation and the parameters were well understood. The peers believed that the Council had managed its budget effectively and evidenced improvements in the financial position and stability of the Council. Member development was judged positively and many examples of good practice were evidenced by the peer team.

The peers made a number of recommendations.

A Ensure the planned refresh of the vision for Sefton is used as an opportunity to then ensure the underpinning strategies and plans reflect the key priorities of the Council over the next period such as improving Children's Services. This should lead to clear and specific, corporate milestones and metrics that can be performance managed. This refresh can be used to further inform activity to address key capacity and skills gaps also.

Council response – In Section 3 of this report the Council stated it will commence its review of its Vision in 2023 and the Core Purpose is reaffirmed at Appendix B.

B Inform the above work by taking stock, internally and with partners of the new opportunities, strengths and challenges that the Council will wish to build on, capitalise from and address in the next three year period.

Council response – Member development – the peer team reported positively on support to Members. Following the initial feedback, the Leader, Cabinet Member Children Social Care and Chief Executive agreed to improve Opposition party involvement in Children's Social Care and the two Leaders of the main Opposition parties were invited onto the Corporate Parenting Board and Overview and Scrutiny of Children's Services and Safeguarding has now been changed from quarterly meetings to 6 weekly meetings.

Council response – Capacity – A new Executive Director Children's Social Care and Education and Assistant Director Safeguarding Review & Quality Assurance are now in post and six new permanent Service Managers have been recruited in Children's Social Care. In addition to this Cabinet and Council have agreed significant additional investment in Children's Services and plans are in development for the introduction of a Social Work Academy and discussions have commenced on the possibility of international recruitment of social workers.

Workforce Strategies and supporting action plans are in development for Children's, Adults and across the wider Council which recognise the capacity challenges that the Council faces. It is important to note that some of the recruitment challenges faced by the Council are regional challenges and, in some instances, national issues. The Children services department has now a well developed workforce strategy.

Council response – Partnerships – the Council values its partnerships and will continue to work closely with partners to the benefit of local people.

C Embed the service level improvements in performance management made recently and establish regular, collective and cross-cutting performance discussions at Cabinet. This should be supported with a performance scorecard which tracks progress against the Council's key corporate priorities. Also then ensure that similarly routine performance information is provided to Scrutiny and all wider members.

Council response – in 2018 the LGA recommended that the Council reported quarterly to Cabinet on progress against our key Corporate priorities, because of capacity it was agreed we would present a comprehensive annual report to Cabinet. In November 2021, a more consistent approach to performance management was introduced with each Cabinet Member receiving detailed performance information against key priorities, this

has also been evidenced in some areas of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, although more work needs to be undertaken to develop this, which has been highlighted by the peers. Although capacity still remains a challenge, the Council will introduce quarterly reports to Cabinet with a focus on our key priorities.

D Given how much change the world has seen in the last two years and how the localities model has been required to react, work with partners to review the localities model. This may include how it should and could be adapted looking ahead and in light of the strength of partnership will, the amount of community interest reported and the next set of challenges for the Council. This should also look again at ways in which all members can be engaged with the model looking ahead.

Council response – There are many positive examples of how effective the localities model has been operating, the peer team have proposed that the Council takes stock and review the model taking into account the impact of Covid and the changing world this has created, as well as the relationship with localities and Ward members. This review will be undertaken over the next 6 months.

E Continue to build on the significant progress seen in regard to economic growth. Further grow the improved relationship with the Combined Authority and look at how business leaders can be routinely engaged strategically, routinely as a collective, with a role across the wider priorities for Sefton, as well as how the learning from strong engagement with young people can be a feature of other, future funding bids. There is now also an opportunity available to more closely connect the health challenges and opportunities available locally to Sefton's economic direction.

Council response – the peers recognised the challenges in the Borough and in particular areas of disadvantage they felt that a local business Leaders Forum could be established to secure more influence, advocacy, challenge and bring fresh ideas and further connections. This will be explored more comprehensively in the coming months.

3. Refreshing the Vision and Core Purpose 2035

- 3.1 The Council introduced the Core Purpose as part of its budget planning processes. The Council developed Vision 2030 and strengthened the Core Purpose following major community consultation in 2016. The Core Purpose has served the Council well and this was demonstrated throughout the COVID 19 pandemic.
- 3.2 It is recognised that there is now a need to refresh the Vision and alongside the Core Purpose. Council is asked to consider and approve the strengthened Core Purpose at Appendix B which reinforces the issues raised by the peer review and Inspections.
- 3.3 The Cabinet Sponsors for the development of Vision 2030 were Councillor Hardy, Cabinet Member Communities and Housing and Councillor Lappin, Cabinet Member, Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services. As Cabinet Sponsors they have overseen the introduction of the Annual Performance report.
- 3.4 The approach to building upon, assessing the impact of Vision 2030 and developing Vision 2035 is described in the diagram below.



- 3.5 A review of the Council's Core Purpose will take place in 2025 in line with this timeline and will take account community feedback.
- 3.6 Cabinet is asked to note timeline for the development of Vision 2035. The Cabinet Sponsors for the development of Vision 2035 will continue to be Councillor Hardy, Cabinet Member Communities and Housing and Councillor Lappin, Cabinet Member, Regulatory, Compliance and Corporate Services.

Appendix B

Protect the most vulnerable: change to i.e., those children and adults who have complex care needs with no capacity to care for themselves and no other networks to support them. For those who are the most vulnerable we will have a helping role to play, we will challenge others to ensure we all protect the most vulnerable children and adults and where we need to we will intervene to help improve lives.

Facilitate confident and resilient communities: the Council will be less about doing things to and for residents and communities and more about creating the capacity and motivation for people to get involved, do it for themselves and help one another. We will create an environment in which residents are less reliant on public sector support and which have well developed and effective social support.

Commission, broker and provide core services: the Council will directly deliver fewer services but will act as a broker and commissioner of services which meet the defined needs of communities, are person-centred and localised where possible. We will deliver services which cannot be duplicated elsewhere or where we add value.

Place-leadership and influencer: making sure what we and what others do are in the best interests of Sefton and its residents and has a contributing role to the 2030 vision of the borough. The Council will use data and feedback from our communities, children and young people in shaping plans. The Council will demonstrate strong leadership and influence partner organisations to

- work towards common goals
- deliver the best opportunities and outcomes for the children in young people in and leaving our care by being good Corporate Parents
- deliver the best opportunities and outcomes for residents and every child in Sefton
- ensure Sefton is a child, older person and disability friendly place
- and build pride in the borough.

Drivers of change and reform: the Council will play a key role in leading change and reform to improve outcomes for Sefton residents, every child's future and continuously improve the borough.

Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: that is, people having the level of money they need to take care of themselves and their family; creating the conditions where relatively low unemployment and high income prevail, leading to high purchasing power; opportunities for future generations and having enough money to invest in infrastructure.

Generate income for social reinvestment: the Council will develop a commercial nature and look to what it can do either by itself or with others to generate income and profit that can be reinvested into delivering social purpose and preparing for the future.

Cleaner and Greener: the Council will work with others to act as guardians and protect and maintain Sefton's natural beauty and ensure that its many assets can be enjoyed by

everyone and future generations and provide a contribution to Sefton's economy, peoples wellbeing and the achievement of the 2030 Vision.