

Report to:	Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	5 March 2020
Subject:	Local Government Association Peer Review – Action Plan Update		
Report of:	Chief Executive	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Leader of the Council		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

Following the 2018 LGA Peer Assessment, this report sets out progress against the Cabinet Approved action plan responding to the peer team's recommendations. It is presented for Cabinet comments and endorsement.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to:

- (1) consider an annual reporting mechanism in line with the reporting of the financial outturn in June, commencing in June 2020; and
- (2) agree that future monitoring of activity falls within the scope of the Council's Framework for Change programme

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 in 2018 provided external recognition of the things it believes the Council is doing well, highlighted where the Council can learn from other councils considering best practice elsewhere and recommended several key actions. In January 2019 Cabinet considered and agreed an action plan responding to the Peer Team's recommendations.

This report seeks to keep Members informed of the progress. The LGA will follow up the initial review with a visit within 18 months to 2 years to assess progress against their recommendations.

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

Not appropriate

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:

<p>Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): The report does not have direct implications for finances or resources.</p>
<p>Legal Implications: There are no implications arising directly out of this report.</p>
<p>Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.</p>

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable:
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:
Commission, broker and provide core services:
Place – leadership and influencer:
<p>Drivers of change and reform: The Council is a self-aware learning organisation and commissioned a peer review from the LGA to assure it plans and learn from best practice. The report findings and recommendations will potentially influence future plans.</p> <p>This report ensures transparency of progress against the recommendations of the LGA Peer Team.</p>
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:
Greater income for social investment:

Cleaner Greener

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

Each of the owners of the agreed actions has been consulted in the development of this report.

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD 5938/20) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4122/20) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

NA

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

Contact Officer:	Jan McMahon
Telephone Number:	Tel: 0151 934 4431
Email Address:	jan.mcmahon@sefton.gov.uk

Appendices:

Appendix A – LGA Action Plan

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. 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 Councils approach to commercialisation.

1.4 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;
- MTFP 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 The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council:

A. Prioritise the refresh of the core purpose. This will help ensure the Council's contribution to the delivery of Sefton 2030 by targeting capacity at a carefully sequenced set of key priorities.

B. Strengthen corporate performance management. The Cabinet should receive a comprehensive, corporate performance management report on a quarterly basis. This report should be accessible and allow the Cabinet to understand the progress being made by the Council against the key priorities. A suitable report should also be made available to scrutiny.

C. Refresh and make clear form, function, accountability and pace of delivery for the localities model. The team acknowledged the ambition being

shown by moving to this new delivery model and endorsed this as the right direction of travel for Sefton. At this stage it is important the council is clear internally – and with its partners on what this will mean locally.

D. Be clear on the Council's parameters around commercialisation. This requires both officers and members to have a consistent understanding of what commercialisation means for the Council as well as the options that can be considered and those which will not. This will allow the Council to focus its efforts on the right commercial opportunities for Sefton.

E. Accelerate work on a local economic growth strategy alongside efforts in the Liverpool City Region. This will help Sefton benefit more from the opportunities presented by the Liverpool City Region and ensure that more schemes are in place ready for future funding opportunities.

F. Develop the role of all members in a changing context for local government and a changing model of delivery locally. This should reflect the role of all members in their communities and the capacity they can attract to support the efforts of the Council. This would mean the council more consistently co-producing solutions with communities and partners.

- 1.6 Cabinet considered the feedback report in December 2018, the recommendations were accepted, and Cabinet requested officers to develop an action plan for their consideration. The Action Plan (Appendix A) was approved in January 2019 and Cabinet requested a progress report be shared with them.

2. Progress against Action Plan

2.1 Prioritise the refresh of the Core Purpose

- 2.1.1 The Core Purpose was created as part of the Imagine Sefton 2030 consultation process and summarises how the Council intends to achieve the aims and objectives of the Sefton 2030 Vision which is based on the feedback from everyone that took part in the consultation.
- 2.1.2 A thorough review has identified that the existing Core Purpose still holds true and continues to reflect the Council's role in delivering the partnership Vision 2030.
- 2.1.3 The Core Purpose underpinned by the Council's Framework for Change Programme targets capacity at a carefully sequenced set of key priorities. Over the last three years this programme has not only helped the Council support the delivery of the Borough's 2030 vision and its own objectives as set out in its Core Purpose, but it has also successfully enabled the Council to set and deliver balanced budgets in each of the three years. The impact of the changes made continues to be assessed and will inform the future programme.
- 2.1.4 The Framework for Change programme will evolve further and continues to articulate a clear planning approach that defines the how, the what, the when - delivered within a financially sustainable envelope agreed with Elected Members. The proposed activity will be considered by Budget Council each year.

2.1.5 The LGA Action Plan recognised the need to celebrate success both locally and amongst peers. The Chief Executive encourages the workforce to share good news and recognise achievements on an everyday basis as well as through events such as the annual STAR (Special Thanks and Recognition) staff celebration event and Apprenticeship Celebration Event. Notably over the last twelve months the Council has been shortlisted for and received a number of awards that recognise the Council's achievements and to share its success with peers.

2.2 Strengthen corporate performance management

2.2.1 The Council recognises the importance of performance management and reports regularly to Cabinet Members and Overview and Scrutiny on service-related performance and key corporate activity for example financial performance is reported to Cabinet on a regular basis. The absence of a Corporate Performance Management Framework has remained a challenge due to the pace of change within local government and the extensive changes that have needed to take place to deliver savings over the last 10 years, capacity and the absence of a whole Council data repository.

2.2.2 Following the LGA Peer Review a Corporate Performance Framework is in development. The intention is that the framework will align to the Council's Core Purpose.

2.2.3 Officers are also currently in the process of developing a data warehouse which will over time be populated with Council data and will streamline the data gathering activity required to produce such a report. This was identified in the target operating model for ICT that would be implemented over 2-3 years post the end of the previous ICT contract (that ended in October 2018).

2.2.4 Given the challenge that a significant amount of performance data is only verified on an annual basis and some key performance data is already report to other meetings Cabinet is asked to consider an annual reporting mechanism in line with the reporting of the financial outturn in June, commencing in June 2020. Overview and Scrutiny Committees will continue to receive requested performance related reports relevant to their Committees.

2.2.5 Alongside this the leadership team will continue to ensure that the organisation's culture places an emphasis on management of performance not just measurement.

2.3 Refresh and make clear form, function, accountability and pace of delivery for the localities model

2.3.1 Since joining the Council the Head of Communities has continued to drive forward the implementation of the Localities model and the understanding of the model continues to embed across the Council and partners. The Executive Director (People) has continued to champion the model with partners and the community providing whole system leadership and this was recently recognised by the Department of Works and Pensions winning the Aspiring Instructors programme.

2.3.2 The model continues to evolve, and the introduction of Early Intervention Huddles has started to provide a greater opportunity for joined up partnership working

across Sefton. Service Managers in the model now offer regular drop in surgeries to all elected members to improve understanding on how to access the model and share current and planned activity. The Council's website reflects the current offer and activity timetables for the Family Wellbeing Centres are also accessible on line.

2.3.3 The Head of Communities is working with others to develop a performance dashboard that will demonstrate the impact of the new model.

2.3.4 Underpinning all of this the Cabinet and partner agencies have now agreed a strategic approach for early help and following consultation this has recently been publicised.

2.4 **Be clear on the Council's parameters around commercialisation**

2.4.1 The Council's commitment to developing a commercial nature has continued, looking at what it can do either by itself or with others to generate income and profit that can be reinvested into delivering social purpose. The Council has focused its limited capacity in this area on a small number of priorities such as Sandway Homes and the Crosby Lakeside Redevelopment Project.

2.4.2 The Council continues to embed a commercial and risk awareness culture, where appropriate. The Head of Commercial Development and the Commercial Development Manager work with teams in need commercial support, this support aims to enable the team developing a commercial opportunity to become effective at balancing of risk and financial and social return.

2.5 **Accelerate work on a local economic growth strategy alongside efforts in the Liverpool City Region.**

2.5.1 The Executive Director (Place) has continued to champion the Council's Investment and Growth Programmes and developed a prioritised pipeline of projects, with clear processes that deliver against the Council's economic and social objectives. The Executive Leadership Team actively champion Sefton within the Liverpool City Region.

The Growth and Strategic Investment Programme develops and delivers projects that relate to town centre regeneration, transport initiatives, housing, large employment sites, visitor infrastructure and innovation assets. These projects will directly support the creation of new jobs and businesses, the growth of new and existing businesses, and enhance access and connectivity to places of employment, housing, leisure, recreation and cultural activity. In addition, brown field sites might be redeveloped bringing redundant and difficult to develop land back into economic use, local people being upskilled and visitors enjoying a great recreational and cultural offer. Some of these projects are commercial in their nature of operation, and therefore will also deliver new revenue streams to the Council as well as growth in Council tax and Business rates.

Cabinet approve schemes for consideration by Council within the scope of the Council's Capital Strategy.

2.5.2 Some projects have attracted significant investment from the Combined Authority. In January 2020 Cabinet approved the following supplementary capital estimates in relation to the Investment Programme:

- (a) Strategic Acquisitions – Land at Bootle, funded by an external contribution of £0.998m from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority;
- (b) Town Centre Commission work funded by an external contribution of £0.750m from the Combined Authority;

2.5.3 In January 2020, Cabinet also recommended Council approve the redevelopment of the Cambridge Road Centre which is to be funded by an external contribution of £1.145m from the Combined Authority and Crosby Lakeside Redevelopment Project which again is to be funded by an external contribution of £3.100m from the Combined Authority.

2.5.4 The Investment Programme is an important mechanism within the Council's major change programme – the Framework for Change – through which the aims and objectives contained within the Vision for 2030 and Core Purpose, will be delivered.

2.6 Develop the role of all members in a changing context for local government and a changing model of delivery locally.

2.6.1 Following the LGA Peer Review the Council commenced work to develop an elected member development plan under 3 key activities: -

- The Induction Programme for Newly Elected Members
- Ongoing Member Development (some of which is mandatory) provided by the Council; and
- Dedicated external training for all members on specific subjects e.g. provided by the Local Government Association on the changing role of councillors

2.6.2 In October 2019 the LGA delivered two sessions for members to look at the role of the 'modern councillor' and how this role is changing given the demands on councils and councillors. The sessions were put in place to look at what this means in Sefton and the role that members play in helping residents and community groups to find and develop their own solutions. More specifically, the sessions looked at how in their roles elected members can support effective prevention and early intervention with a view to reducing the need for Council services.

2.6.3 The session content included:-

- Time to share good practice locally and to discuss examples from elsewhere;
- Time to reflect on the challenges that members face in their community roles and how they could apply the principles of the 'modern councillor' way of working to help deal with some of these;

- An opportunity to share examples of when members have been able to support prevention and early intervention – as well as opportunities for doing more of this in the ward; and
- Space for members to share experiences when engaging with local communities and the approaches that have worked for them.

2.6.4 In November 2019 Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered a briefing note of the Democratic Services Manager on proposals for the induction of newly elected Members and continuous Member development. The briefing note set out proposals to develop an induction programme, conduct a review of the Councillor Induction and Member Development Programme and outlined the LGA Member development sessions, together with the next steps planned.

2.6.5 The Cabinet Member for Regulation, Compliance and Corporate Services has been and will continue to be consulted throughout the development stages of all the project. Members of the Management Board noted the work on the Member Development Programme. Officers will continue to develop the training and development offer which will include Members being able to access e-learning via the Council's Corporate Learning Centre.

3. **Conclusion**

3.1 Cabinet is asked to note the good progress made on the LGA Action Plan and given that much of the scope of the activity falls within the Council's Framework for Change agree that future monitoring falls within that programme of work.