

---

**REPORT FOR: CABINET**

---

<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	8 December 2016
<b>Subject:</b>	Peer Review
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Michael Lockwood, Chief Executive
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Sachin Shah, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Partnerships and Devolution
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Decision subject to Call-in:</b>	No
<b>Wards affected:</b>	N/A
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Peer Review Report June 2016

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report sets out the Peer Review report and recommendations from the LGA.

**Recommendations:**

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Note the Peer Review report

2. Ask Overview and Scrutiny Committee to work with Members and officers to help shape and deliver an action plan to address some of the key recommendations and monitor progress against delivery

**Reason:** To support the council in continuous improvement

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introductory paragraph**

This report sets out the Peer Review Feedback report from the Local Government Association and the Peer Review Team. The report concludes that Harrow is a good council and makes a series of recommendations for how we can improve further. The Council needs to consider how we will take forward and respond to these recommendations in order to support the continuous improvement of the Council.

### **Options considered**

1. Do nothing. Harrow Council's last Peer Review was in 2007. The LGA guidelines advise it is good practice to have them every 4-5 years. This option was therefore not recommended.
2. To have the peer review at a different time – The Peer Review was timed to enable any feedback to be able to influence the development of key agendas like Regeneration and Commercialisation, therefore this option was not recommended.
3. Commission an LGA Peer Review to review into how we are performing as a Council and where we can focus in order to continue to improve as part of good governance and self-improvement. This was the recommended option.

### **Background**

Peer Challenge is a core element of the Local Government Association's sector-led improvement offer to local authorities and is offered for free. A Corporate Peer Challenge is not an inspection but an independent and objective team of councillors and senior managers from other Councils across the country that act as critical friends to identify the strengths of the council and help highlight how the council can improve further.

The Peer Review team were invited by the Leader and Chief Executive to conduct a peer review of Harrow Council which took place from Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> June to Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June. Their remit was to look at:

1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?

2. Leadership of Place: Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
3. Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
4. Organisational leadership and governance: Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
5. Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?
6. Regeneration: Does the council have the appropriate resources to enable delivery of its £1.75bn regeneration programme?
7. Commercialisation: Is the council doing the right things, with the right skills and capacity, in this arena? Is risk appropriately understood and managed?

The Peer Review concluded that Harrow Council is a good council. That we had made great strides in recent years resulting in having a clear vision for the borough, active and engaged councillors, passionate and committed staff, and well-respected member and officer leadership. It also praised the way we have embraced new ways of working and are enthusiastically pursuing a commercial agenda.

The report also concluded that the council has potential to be a great council and made a number of recommendations for us to consider that covered issues such as:

- improving political relationships;
- building on the passion and commitment of our excellent staff;
- creating space for informal discussions between Cabinet Members, and also between Cabinet Members and the Corporate Strategy Board, for early discussion, shared thinking and joint policy development;
- providing space for effective cross-party policy development and critical friend challenge;
- clarifying the way in which the regeneration and commercialisation programmes contribute to council finances
- Ensuring that risk assessment processes are robust,
- Ensuring that regeneration initiatives are planned within the context of the whole Borough,
- Building capacity and capability across the council,
- Not taking our eye off the ball

It is now up to the Council to consider the report and decide how it wishes to take forward any of the recommendations made. Officers have started work on developing a draft action plan and it is suggested that scrutiny be asked to work with Members and officers to help shape and deliver parts of that action plan that address some of the key recommendations and monitor progress against delivery. This would enable the follow up to be cross-party, which is one of the recommendations made in the report.

## **Implications of the Recommendation**

In considering how to respond to the recommendations the Council needs to be mindful of organisational capacity and resources. It should also be noted that in the Peer Review report the LGA does offer additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas and a follow up visit in 12-24 months time.

## **Risk Management Implications**

The Peer Review is not currently on the Corporate Risk Register, but consideration will be given as to whether or not it should be included now the report has been published.

## **Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications from this report or the Peer Review report

## **Financial Implications**

Given the Council's financial position there is no specific budget available for the implementation of the peer review recommendations. Any follow up activity would have to be funded from within existing resources.

## **Equalities implications / Public Sector Equality Duty**

There are no equalities implications arising from this report
---

## **Council Priorities**

The report helps to council to deliver against the Council's vision of <b>Working Together to Make a Difference for Harrow</b> and each of the priorities of the Harrow Ambition Plan: Build a Better Harrow, Be More Business-Like and Business Friendly and Protecting the Vulnerable and Supporting Families.
--

### **Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance**

Name: Sharon Daniels	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 8 November 2016		
Name: Jessica Farmer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 11 November 2016		

<b>Ward Councillors notified:</b>	<b>NO, as it impacts on all Wards</b>
<b>EqIA carried out:</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>EqIA cleared by:</b>	The report is for noting not for decision.

### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:**  
Rachel Gapp  
Head of Policy  
Tel: 0208 416 8774  
[Rachel.gapp@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:Rachel.gapp@harrow.gov.uk)

**Background Papers:**

- **LGA Peer Review Report (see enclosure)**

**Call-In Waived by the  
Chair of Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**

**NOT APPLICABLE**

*[Call-in does not apply as the  
recommendation is for noting  
only]*