

# OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## Local Government Association Planning Peer Challenge - Update

12 July 2023

### Report of Chief Officer – Planning and Climate Change

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the Update Report regarding the recent Planning Peer Challenge.

**This report is public.**

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) **That Members note the Update Report.**

#### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 Last year Lancaster City Council requested a Peer Challenge from the Local Government Association (LGA), working with the national Planning Advisory Service (PAS). The aim of the Peer Challenge was to independently review the local planning authority's operations and performance and consider how it can respond to the present and future challenges.
- 1.2 The Peer Challenge was held in Lancaster over 4 days (7-10 November 2022). The LGA/PAS Team invited different groups and individuals, both internal and external, to participate in interviews and discussion sessions. This included councillors, senior managers, staff within the City Council (not just Planning), parish and community representatives, external consultees, developers, agents and other partnering local authorities. The LGA/PAS Team also had prior access to a range of key documents and supporting material. In addition they attended two separate Planning Regulatory Committee meetings (10 October and 7 November) to view proceedings.
- 1.3 The final LGA/PAS Report is publicly available on the City Council's website, as is the City Council's response, which is titled the Implementation Plan 2023/24. For ease of reference, both documents are appended to this Update Report.

#### 2.0 The Peer Challenge Report and Outcomes

- 2.1 The scope of the Peer Challenge was wide-ranging, as had been requested by the City Council. It found that the local planning authority was performing "very well in

many areas” and was “recognised nationally as a good example of producing local plan policy” whilst “maintaining good planning decision-making”. The report highlights some of the strengths of the service, as well as making some suggestions for improvement in the form of recommendations.

- 2.2 In addressing the recommendations, the local planning authority has identified a work programme (‘workstreams’) within the Implementation Plan. A number of the workstreams have commenced. The Implementation Plan proposed that it would effectively monitor progress via reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at appropriate points. This is the first such Update Report, and it is envisaged that a further update will be provided in three months.
- 2.3 As well as our internal monitoring of progress, the LGA and PAS have indicated that they will be contacting the City Council within the next 12 months to assess progress. The City Council looks forward to continuing to work with the LGA/PAS.

### **3.0 Update Report**

- 3.1 The Update Report Table is appended to this report. It provides details of the workstreams and reviews the likely completion dates for the programme.

### **4.0 Overview and Scrutiny – Planning Informal Task Group**

- 4.1 The previous Overview and Scrutiny Committee (i.e. pre-local elections) had considered that their own work programme should include a review of Council services on an annual basis. This would comprise a review of a single Service Area each year. The first Service chosen was the Planning and Place Service (now known as the Planning and Climate Change Service) and the Committee formed an Informal Task Group to undertake their review.
- 4.2 The report of the previous Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny (March 2023) concluded the work of the Planning Informal Task Group. The Chair presented the Task Group’s report to Cabinet at its meeting of 11 April 2023. In his presentation, the Chair confirmed that many of the Informal Task Group recommendations were already identified by the LGA/PAS Peer Challenge. Following his presentation and questions, Cabinet voted to accept some of the Task Group’s recommendations but rejected others. Those recommendations that were accepted are matters that are identified in the Peer Challenge Implementation Plan workstreams. The work of the Planning Informal Task Group has now concluded.

### **5.0 Conclusion**

- 5.1 The LGA/PAS Peer Challenge has been a positive experience for internal and external participants, with some pleasing outcomes. The recommendations of this independent review are considered to be fair, and this Update Report provides Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members with the latest progress in addressing the recommended actions.
- 5.2 The next Update Report will be provided in October 2023.

**CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT  
(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety,  
Sustainability and Rural Proofing):**

Some of the measures described in the Implementation Plan 2023/24 will have a positive impact in terms of service delivery, particularly regarding accessing relevant planning application information.

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications stemming from this report.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

**OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services,  
Property, Open Spaces**

None, all recommendations can be addressed within current resources.

**SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

**MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS**

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Local Government Association Planning Advisory Service Final Report, January 2023
- Lancaster City Council Implementation Plan 2023/2024
- Update Report Table, July 2023

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