

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Local Government Association Planning Peer Challenge – Update

4 September 2024

Report of Chief Officer – Planning and Climate Change

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the latest Update Report regarding the November 2022 Planning Peer Challenge (published January 2023).

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) **That Members note the Update Report and determine how the few remaining workstreams should be signed off (when completed).**

1.0 Background

- 1.1 This is the fourth Update Report following Lancaster City Council's Peer Challenge (November 2022). The Peer Challenge was requested by the City Council, and it was co-ordinated by 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 Details of the Peer Challenge process, including the LGA/PAS report (January 2023) and the City Council's subsequent response (the Implementation Plan 2023/24) were set out at the 12 July 2023 Overview and Scrutiny Meeting. Both documents were appended to the July 2023 meeting report.
- 1.3 The LGA/PAS Peer Challenge was a positive experience for internal and external participants, with some pleasing outcomes. The recommendations of this independent review were fair.

2.0 Update Report

- 2.1 The Update Report Table is appended to this covering report. It provides details of progress in addressing the recommended actions. Each workstream activity is given a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating.

2.2 Immediately prior to the previous Update Report, the PAS Team revisited Lancaster (25 January 2024) to assess progress. The formal feedback, which was published on the City Council's Planning Peer Challenge webpage, was generally positive. The conclusions include the following:

"It is clear to the peer team that the recommendations of the original Planning Peer Challenge in Lancaster City Council have been taken seriously over the last 13 months. A Comprehensive action plan has been developed by Lancaster and significant progress has been made across all of the recommendations, as highlighted in Annex 1 and the Council's own progress reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee."

2.3 During 2024 progress in most of the outstanding workstreams has continued and has been concluded. Some workstreams have been superseded by the recommendations of the (separate) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC), and officers across the Council, including the Planning & Climate Change Service, will help support the delivery of the CPC Action Plan.

2.4 There are some areas that remain outstanding due to some isolated resource (staffing) issues. Paragraph 3.1 below provides options for Members in determining how to receive the updates regarding these workstreams.

3.0 Conclusion

3.1 Given that most workstreams are now complete, there are two options for Members of the Committee. They can either choose to receive a further report at the end of the year for sign-off of the remaining items, or they can delegate this to the Chief Officer for Planning and Climate Change, who would then produce written confirmation of sign-off to the Chair of the Committee (including an updated full Implementation Plan table). Either option is considered acceptable.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):
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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 and improved guidance on the Council's website.
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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications stemming from this report.
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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces
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None, all recommendations can be addressed within current resources.
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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

- Update Report Table, September 2024.

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