

Report to: Audit & Governance Committee: 7 May 2025

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Report Summary	
Report Title	Local Government Peer Review – Corporate Peer Challenge
Purpose of Report	To inform Committee of the recommendations from the Local Government Association Peer Challenge that have been delegated to Audit & Governance Committee.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note progress on the recommendations from the Local Government Association Peer Challenge that have been delegated to Audit & Governance Committee. 2. To update the Committee’s Work Plan accordingly.
Reason for Recommendation	To contribute towards the Community Plan objective of being a top performing Council.

1.0 Background

1.1 At its meeting of 18 February 2025, Cabinet considered the findings of the Local Government Association Peer Challenge and agreed the formation of a working group tasked with an action plan to address those findings. The Chair and Vice Chair of Audit & Governance Committee were appointed to the group. At its first meeting on 25 February, the group agreed for Audit & Governance Committee to action the following recommendations: -

- 1.1.1 Review the audit, governance, and overview and scrutiny functions of the Council to maximise councillor engagement and council productivity
- 1.1.2 Strengthen and enhance the Annual Governance Statement
- 1.1.3 Strengthen the application of the national Code of Conduct
- 1.1.4 Establish a Councillor development group
- 1.1.5 Ensure councillors understand the longer-term budget pressures
- 1.1.6 Establish an ongoing councillor development programme

1.2 A progress report is due to be submitted to the working group in May, with a view to progress on the entire action plan being reviewed with the Local Government Association around September 2025.

2.0 Proposal/Options Considered

- 2.1 The Audit & Governance working party that has been meeting to review the Council's Constitution has considered recommendation 1.1.1. A separate report on the agenda for this meeting addresses that recommendation, and it is therefore considered complete.
- 2.2 The Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/5 is on the Committee's work plan for July 2025; this will include a reviewed and updated Annual Governance Statement to ensure it accurately represents governance arrangements, that future risks are identified and that governance arrangements support the achievement of the Council's objectives. Officers will review the associated Constitutional document, the Local Code of Corporate Governance at the same time, and bring a reviewed and updated version to the same meeting. Recommendation 1.1.2 is therefore ongoing with an expected completion date of July 2025.
- 2.3 The Audit & Governance Committee working party of 27 March began work on recommendation 1.1.3, in considering actions arising from the Good Conduct and Public Service motion that was passed by Full Council and referred to this Committee. There is a separate update report on this agenda. This action is therefore ongoing with an expected completion to be confirmed (September 2025 at the latest).
- 2.4 Officers have started work on a draft Councillor Development Strategy, and a report will be brought to this Committee for consideration, taking into account recommendations 1.1.4 to 1.1.6 above. This document will formalise the Council's arrangements for member development and will signpost key internal training and external opportunities through bodies such as the LGA and East Midlands Councils for example. Members would approve and review this strategy to ensure it continues to meet the ongoing training and development needs of all councillors. This action is therefore ongoing with an expected completion to be confirmed (September 2025 at the latest).

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

3.1 Financial Implications - FIN25-26/517

There are no financial implications from this report.

3.2 Legal Implications (LEG2425/9610)

Audit & Governance Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Cabinet report February 2025 – item 245 - <https://democracy.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=288&MId=1017>