



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 1 FEBRUARY 2023
Subject	PEER REVIEW – RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Stephen Andrews, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Email: Stephen.andrews@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Angela Claridge, Director of Governance & Development Email: angela.claridge@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	As above
Summary/Purpose	To consider the Local Government Association's Feedback Report, and, to review the Action Plan that details how the recommendations relating to the responsibilities of this Committee will be implemented.
Annexes	Annex A – Action Plan
Recommendation(s)	<i>That Overview and Scrutiny Committee:</i> <i>Review the findings of the Corporate Peer Review and associated action plan relating to this Committee;</i> <i>Identify any additional actions to implement the Peer Review's recommendation as it relates to this Committee.</i>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delivering our services to the highest standards</li></ul>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair and Vice-Chair. Local Management Team Assistant Director Property & Regeneration



## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to conduct a corporate peer challenge in October 2022. The review was undertaken by an experienced team including both councillor and officer representatives. The team acts as a “critical friend” providing feedback and commentary on areas of strength and areas for future consideration.
- 1.2 Full Council, at its meeting on 18 January 2023, considered the corporate peer challenge feedback report and approved the action plan included at annex A.

## 2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1 The Corporate Peer Challenge 2023 – Feedback Report, made a number of recommendations including one that relates to this committee, namely “*The council needs to determine what Overview and Scrutiny is there to do and provide appropriate support to do it*”. The agreed actions to implement this recommendation are:
  - a) Hold a workshop session with the Chair & Vice-Chair of Overview and Scrutiny to review findings on the Corporate Peer Review and to identify opportunities for enhancement
  - b) Ensure the Executive/Scrutiny Protocol agreed at Full Council on 16 November 2022, is embedded in terms of future ways of working;
  - c) Prepare and present to Overview and Scrutiny Committee the Peer Review outcomes and considerations report to consider options;
  - d) Provide Centre for Governance and Scrutiny “Scrutiny Essentials” training;
  - e) Maximise links with the SW Overview and Scrutiny Network to share good practice;
  - f) Utilise member briefings rather than Overview and Scrutiny Committee as a mechanism to update members.
  - g) Maximise input of the recently allocated Public Assistant Director in terms of assisting Overview & Scrutiny.
- 2.2 This report provides the opportunity for this Committee, action 2.1.c) above to discuss the peer review outcomes and consider additional proposals or actions to address the recommendation set out in paragraph 2.1.
- 2.3 One of the actions included in the action plan at paragraph 2.1.a) above is to “hold a workshop session with the Chair and Vice-Chair of this Committee to review findings of the Corporate Peer Review and to identify opportunities for enhancement”. This very constructive workshop took place on 17 January 2023 and identified a number of areas of focus that align with the peer review’s recommendations, these included:
  - the role of Overview and Scrutiny continues to evolve and improve including “pre-decision scrutiny” with recommendations to Cabinet;



- there has been turnover in staff supporting the Committee since 2021;
- the value of networking with other local authorities;
- recognition that the Committee has a very ambitious work programme – some areas of interest could be managed in different ways such as all member briefings or presentations;
- the work programme needs to include flexibility to include urgent or short-term issues that arise during the year;
- the Executive Forward Plan should be populated over a twelve month period to assist with effective planning and identification of key themes.

**2.4** In addition to the actions set out in paragraph 2.1 and annex A, the additional actions, arising from this workshop are proposed:

- To inform this Committee’s work programme, the Executive Forward Plan is populated, wherever possible, for a twelve month period;
- Extend “Scrutiny Essentials” training to all members;
- Maximise links with Scrutiny Chairs at West Oxon and Forest of Dean Councils to share learning and best practice;
- Twice yearly training and development/debrief sessions for scrutiny members;
- Periodically incorporate a summary of Overview and Scrutiny activity in the “Councillors Connected” e’newsletter;
- Extend members briefings to include presentations by external partners to all members;
- Reduce the ambition and size of Overview and Scrutiny’s work programme to allow for additional items during the year.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**3.1** There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations other than the cost of training provision which is already budgeted for.

### **4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**4.1** All members and officers should recognise and appreciate the importance and legitimacy the scrutiny function is afforded by the law. It was created to act as a check and balance on the executive and is a statutory requirement for all authorities operating executive arrangements and for combined authorities.

### **5. BACKGROUND PAPERS**



COTSWOLD  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

5.1 The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:

- Corporate Peer Challenge 2023 – Feedback Report & Action Plan (Full Council 18.01.2023).

These documents will be available for inspection online at [www.cotswold.gov.uk](http://www.cotswold.gov.uk) or by contacting democratic services [democratic@cotswold.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@cotswold.gov.uk) for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting.

(END)