

<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>	No
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>	Yes/No
<b>Equality &amp; Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>	No

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive	16/11	Chris Elliott
Head of Service	16/11	Susie Drummond
CMT	21/11	Chris Elliott, Bill Hunt, Andrew Jones
Section 151 Officer		Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	16/11	Andrew Jones
Finance	n/a	
Portfolio Holder(s)	21/11	Michael Doody, Les Caborn

## 1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 The Local Government Group is offering all Councils a free Peer Challenge exercise over the next three years. This report sets out the proposed scope and timing of this exercise.

## 2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 That the Council invites the Local Government Group to undertake a Peer Challenge in July 2012 focusing on our Fit for the Future programme in light of progress to date and the implications of the emerging local plan and strategy review.

## 3. **REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 The Local Government Group are offering a Peer Challenge to every local authority as part of their "Taking the Lead" offering which seeks to replace the former Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) regime with a sector lead approach to self-regulation and improvement. The offering is significantly different from the assessment based approaches of CAA and Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) in that it is:

- Optional
- Non prescriptive in scope, timing and approach
- Tailored to meet the needs of the Council
- Future focused rather than backwards looking

- 3.2 The costs of offering have been covered by the top sliced funding for the Local Government Group and as a result it is free of charge

- 3.3 Corporate Management Team have been in discussion with the Local Government Group about how and when Warwick District Council could take advantage of the offering. As a result of these discussions, the following is proposed:

### 3.3.1 Scope

- review the progress made on "Fit for the Future" in order to test if this is on-track to deliver the outcomes you set yourselves; if it is sufficiently ambitious with the capacity and leadership required to drive it home; and whether the plan continues to meet the council's requirements for the future;
- challenge and inform the emerging delivery strategies for the new Local Plan and the credibility of the growth strategy the council has set itself;
- offer insight into how the council harnesses its leadership and capacity to successfully implement the Local Plan and, as appropriate, adapts the Fit for the Future strategy to support this outcome.

The peer challenge will also consider the 5 core elements which form part of all corporate peer challenges, including financial planning; political and managerial leadership and organisational capacity.

3.3.2 Timing: to take place over a 3-day period in July 2012. The timing is such that the outcomes of the peer challenge will help to inform the council's thinking on the delivery plan for the Local Plan and to re-inform its change programme.

3.3.3 The Peer Team: The Local Government Group will suggest the make up of the Peers who will undertake the challenge for our approval or veto. However it is proposed that the team include a current or former District Council chief executive and a current or former District Council leader. Warwick DC will be able to veto any names put forward and will ensure that none of the Peer Team are local or are linked to the Council's partners.

#### 4. **POLICY FRAMEWORK**

- 4.1 **Policy Framework** – This report has no direct impact on the Council's policy framework. However, the feedback from the Peer Challenge is likely to provide us with learning and data which will potentially have a significant impact on the policy framework.
- 4.2 **Fit for the Future** – The Peer Challenge will contribute directly to our understanding of the progress we are making on Fit for the Future and will provide with learning and data which should enable us to consider changes to FFF and the approach that underpins it.

#### 5. **BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK**

- 5.1 The Peer Challenge is a free offering. There are therefore no direct budgetary implications of this report. However, the Peer Challenge will include a review of our progress to meeting the challenge of achieving a balanced budget as set out in Fit for the Future.

#### 6. **ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S) CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 As the Peer Challenge is optional, we could choose not to undertake a Peer Challenge. However as the offering is free and the potential for learning from external challenge is significant, this option has been rejected.
- 6.2 We could choose to focus the challenge on a different scope, for instance looking at a specific theme/service or looking at partnership working etc. Whilst value could no doubt be derived from this, it is likely that greater value can be derived from looking at our corporate approach, particularly given the scale of change and opportunity in this area. In addition, this proposed scope is similar to some of the Peer Challenge exercises that have already been successfully undertaken elsewhere in the Country.
- 6.3 We could choose to undertake the challenge at any time within the next three years. However other options have been rejected on the basis that our local plan and strategy development will be emerging in draft form in the months preceding July, but will not be finalised. It is therefore the ideal timing to take stock of our approach whilst there is still significant flexibility in the way forward.