

**DR GIFTY EDILA'S REPORT AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION CORPORATE
PEER CHALLENGE - UPDATE TO COUNCIL ON RECOMMENDATIONS**

Executive Summary

The Council has undertaken an extensive programme of change to ensure continuing improvement in all areas of public life but particularly in those areas addressed within Dr Gifty Edila's Report and the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge. This report outlines the steps taken by the Council to date.

Recommendations

The Council is requested to:

RESOLVE That the report be received.

The Council has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above.

Background Papers:	<u>WBC21-028 Update on Council Decisions Following The Independent Investigation into the Woking Football Club and Associated Developments</u> <u>EXE20-047 Local Government Association Peer Challenge</u>
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**Dr Gifty Edila's Report and Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge -
Update To Council on Recommendations**

Dr Gifty Edila's Report and Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge - Update To Council on Recommendations

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 7 January 2021, Full Council considered Dr Gifty Edila's recommendations following her independent investigation into the Woking Football Club and associated developments. Full Council resolved that Dr Gifty Edila's recommendations should be accepted, and that Officers should report back to Council, on 29 July 2021, on progress made against the recommendations. Full Council received the progress report and resolved that a further report should be received by Council in February 2022.
- 1.2 Further to the above, the Executive received a report on 16 July 2020 outlining the recommendation of the Local Government Associations Corporate Peer Challenge. Given the synergy between the reviews, this report outlines the steps taken by the Council to date to comply with the recommendations flowing from both matters together with measures put in place to ensure continuing compliance with the recommendations.
- 1.3 The Council has committed to a continuing programme of change and self-improvement. It has taken steps to ensure compliance with the recommendations and in some circumstances taken steps which go beyond what was recommended. These recommendations have been regularly monitored by the Council's Corporate Leadership Team meeting and in respect of Dr Gifty's recommendations progress has been reported to Full Council.
- 1.4 This report provides an update on the continuing programme of change which encompasses compliance with the recommendations. As part of the pre-scrutiny process, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee received an update report at its meeting of 24 January 2022.

2.0 Dr Edila's Recommendations

- 2.1 The Council and its Committees have received various reports outlining the steps undertaken to comply with the recommendations contained within Dr Edila's report. The Council put measures in place to ensure compliance with these recommendations and has engaged in a programme of change and improvement. Most of the recommended actions have already been completed and processes embedded into the Council's governance procedures to ensure continuing compliance. This report does not revisit those matters already reported but will focus on those areas where there has been a notable development since the last report. Dr Gifty Edila's recommendations are listed in the July 2021 Council report together with the corresponding steps taken by the Council. This report has been provided to Members as background information.
- 2.2 Recommendation 2
- 2.3 Recommendation 2 (ii) was that:-

“(ii) If the WFC project proceeds to implementation, in the event of planning permission being obtained, an updated report should go to the Executive and Full Council and it should include confirmation of the legal powers on which the agreements were made.”
- 2.4 Recommendation 2(ii) is contingent on planning permission being obtained for the Woking Football Club development. The Secretary of State has now dismissed the Planning Appeal and as such refused to grant planning permission in respect of this matter. A copy of the decision has been circulated to all Councillors for their information. As such, this recommendation, and the Development Agreements, shall fall away.

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2.5 Recommendation 4

Recommendation 4 (ii) was that:-

"(ii) Legal Services should seek Lexcel accreditation from the Law Society of England and Wales."

2.6 At its meeting on 29 July, Full Council agreed to the creation and funding of a new post within Legal Services together with a budget to cover a consultant and accreditation fees to enable the Legal Services team to achieve Lexcel accreditation.

2.7 The Council has now successfully recruited a new officer to the role of Lexcel Administrator. The successful candidate started at Woking on 22 December. Prior to the appointment the Council has sought assistance from Spelthorne Borough Council (which has been awarded accreditation) to ensure that it is in the best position to start the working towards accreditation. The Council has received quotes from Lexcel consultants and is taking steps to appoint its preferred consultant. The Legal Services team has embraced the prospect and remains confident that it shall achieve accreditation.

2.8 It was agreed in the body of the report to Full Council, that the Legal Services Team shall report back to Full Council to confirm that it has been awarded accreditation. It is anticipated that accreditation shall be achieved by the Autumn.

2.9 Recommendation 6

2.10 Recommendation 6 was that:-

"Part II confidential information in reports dealing with development projects should be limited to information that should not be in the public domain at that point in time and should not apply to the entire report."

2.11 The Council aims to consider all matters concerning development projects or otherwise in the public domain but sometimes this is not possible, particularly given the nature of commercial developments. The use of Part II shall be kept to a minimum and continues to be carefully considered by the Monitoring Officer in line with the statutory framework.

2.12 At its meeting on 7 October 2021, the Executive considered the first annual report in respect of Part II items.

2.13 Recommendation 13

2.14 Recommendation 13 (ii) was that:-

"(ii) WBC should allocate a part-time Scrutiny Officer post to Overview and Scrutiny Committee to assist with their work."

2.15 A part-time Scrutiny Officer is now in place to assist the Overview and Scrutiny Committee with its work. The Council's Director of Planning, Giorgio Framalitto, has also taken on the role as the Corporate Leadership Team sponsor to the Committee. This demonstrates the Council's continuing commitment to support the valuable work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. As such, compliance has been achieved in respect of the recommendation.

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3.0 Local Government Association Peer Challenge

- 3.1 The Council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2019. The report of the LGA was considered by the Executive on 16 July 2020.
- 3.2 Overall, the report was positive about the Council, its ambition, its political leadership and its management capacity. The value of such reviews is that over time there are always things that can be improved. In that regard the LGA has made a series of recommendations. The Executive determined the Council's response to these recommendation in July 2020. These recommendations provide a "roadmap" to the Council for improvements it can make in order to progress further on its journey to complete its good governance framework and enhance its transformation. Substantial work has been undertaken to address the recommendations highlighted in the Peer Challenge report, and the further actions planned will ensure continuing improvements. The Council's response and action plan can be found at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.3 The Council's response to the recommendations shall continue to be monitored by the Corporate Leadership Team and the actions highlighted shall be implemented.

4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The Council has undertaken an extensive programme of change to ensure continuing improvement in all areas of public life but particularly in those areas addressed within this report. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's observations and feedback on these matters is welcomed to assist and inform the programme of change.

5.0 Corporate Strategy

- 5.1 The actions undertaken by the Council support the Council's Corporate Plan objectives and directly influence the development of the Corporate Strategy.

6.0 Implications

Finance and Risk

- 6.1 None specifically arising from this report.

Equalities and Human Resources

- 6.2 None specifically arising from this report.

Legal

- 6.3 None specifically arising from this report.

7.0 Engagement and Consultation

- 7.1 None specifically arising from this report.