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| <b>Report To:</b>             | <b>CABINET</b>  |
| <b>Date:</b>                  | <b>22 JUNE 2022</b>                                   |
| <b>Heading:</b>               | <b>LGA RECOVERY AND RENEWAL PANEL-KEY REFLECTIONS</b> |
| <b>Executive Lead Member:</b> | <b>CLLR ZADROZNY, LEADER</b>                          |
| <b>Ward/s:</b>                | <b>ALL</b>  |
| <b>Key Decision:</b>          | <b>NO</b>   |
| <b>Subject to Call-In:</b>    | <b>NO</b>   |

### **Purpose of Report**

On 23 March 2022, Ashfield District Council (ADC) hosted a Local Government Association (LGA) Recovery and Renewal Panel. The Panel focused on the Council's current approach and potential future direction of travel as it seeks to best support its residents and businesses post the Covid 19 Pandemic.

The report outlines the Key Reflections that the Panel presented and how these will be integrated into the Council's Strategic Direction (2022-27), annual refresh of the Corporate Plan and other strategic and operational plans.

### **Recommendation(s)**

**Cabinet is asked to consider:**

**That the LGA Recovery and Renewal Panel-Key Reflections be noted by Cabinet and reported to Full Council.**

**That the proposed Next Steps be endorsed.**

### **Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

In order to endorse the LGA Recovery and Renewal Panel's findings and to take full advantage of the insight provided by the work undertaken with the LGA with the Council.

## Alternative Options Considered

To not note the Panel's Key Reflections and/or not integrate these into the Council's strategic and operational leadership planning. This would fail to adopt and integrate identified best practice and fail to fully address critical success factors in further maximising the Council's leadership role and influence.

## Detailed Information

### Background

The Council's overarching 5-year, Strategic Direction is being refreshed covering the period 2022-2027. The Council's Corporate Plan, which underpins the Strategic Direction, is refreshed every 4 years aligned to the political administration term.

To assist with the sense check and both external and internal challenge and review of these key strategic leadership documents, the LGA have been commissioned to undertake a number of reviews involving:

- **Financial Health Check:** Completed and reported to Cabinet on 22 February 2022 and Extraordinary Council on 3 March 2022.
- **Decision Making Accountability (DMA):** DMA is a re-organisation tool which looks at the number of layers of management that an organisation has, and what it needs to deliver its aims and objectives in the most effective way. It also looks at the different layers of decision making in order that managers and employees feel empowered. Commenced March 2022-work in progress.
- **Place Brand Narrative:** Involves dedicated support from experienced communications and brand associates to help a Council review/develop the place narrative. Commenced March 2022-work in progress.
- **LGA Recovery and Renewal Panel.** The Panel focuses on the Council's current approach and potential future direction of travel as it seeks to best support its residents and businesses post the Covid 19 Pandemic. Completed March 2022-outcomes as per this report.

### LGA Recovery and Renewal Panel-Key Reflections

On 23 March 2022, Ashfield District Council (ADC) hosted an LGA Recovery and Renewal Panel. The Panel focused on the Council's current approach and potential future direction of travel as it seeks to best support its residents and businesses post the Covid 19 Pandemic.

The Council requested reflections from the team on:

- Ashfield District Council's approach and direction of travel
- How this is shaping the longer term aims, ambitions and opportunities for the District and the Council
- The LGA team's thoughts on ADC's priorities for recovery/renewal including:
  1. Maximising Council's role as a Strategic Leader and an Enabler rather than always a provider; and

## 2. Capacity to manage/deliver in a changing context.

The Panel Team involved the following participants from Ashfield District Council:

- Cllr Jason Zadrozny (Leader)
- Cllr Matthew Relf (Executive Lead Member for Regeneration and Planning)
- Theresa Hodgkinson (Chief Executive)
- Craig Bonar (Director, Resources & Business Transformation)
- Ruth Dennis (Director, Legal and Governance)

The LGA Team was:

- Lead Peer: Donna Nolan (Managing Director at Watford Borough Council)
- Member Peer: Cllr. Jim McKenna (Independent Cornwall Councillor for Penzance)
- Review Manager: Ernest Opuni (LGA Improvement Manager)

**The LGA Panel findings and Key Reflections report is enclosed at Appendix A. In summary, the report:**

- Acknowledges and recognises the **significant strength of leadership demonstrated** by the Council throughout the Pandemic including internally and externally via partnerships and as a Leader of Place. *This leadership has been well documented via Cabinet, Council and Covid Scrutiny meetings over the last 24 months.*
- Applauds the Council for accelerating its pace of change and delivery of its priorities and aspirations through the Pandemic including fast tracking its Digital and Services Transformation Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme and successes in obtaining external funding via the Towns Fund and Future High Streets Fund.
- Makes a number of Key Reflections and actions for consideration grouped under the following themes:

### Workforce and ways of working

- Now is a good time to reflect on where the Council is on its journey toward hybrid working and ensure that Member and staff engagement is embedded to ensure success.
- Supportive leadership from Cabinet and Chief Officers is essential in ensuring the Council's workforce continue to be committed at a time of significant change.
- Apply lessons learned from the pandemic to better understand the resilience and upcoming challenges.
- Refresh of the health and wellbeing offer.
- Think more radically about ADC's approach to recruitment and retention. Utilise the opportunities afforded by devolution.

### Recalibration of the functions and contributions from Members and officers

- Collaboration continues to be important whilst recognising the need to return to some form of normality and separation of duties between Members and officers.
- Work with SOLACE and LGA is important to Ashfield in the recalibration of the respective roles.
- Both the Cabinet and senior officers have a vital and distinct role in representing the District in utilising all opportunities to exert full influence.

## Devolution and resource implications

- It is important for the Council to undertake an urgent and realistic assessment of the capacity needed to influence the devolution agenda whilst at the same time delivering on its ambitious place shaping aspirations.
- Has ADC fully taken stock of, and considered, the impact devolution could have on Ashfield?
- How can ADC maximise Ashfield's influence in its role as a devolution pathfinder?
- It is essential that ADC continues its efforts to build effective relationships outside of the organisation in order to achieve the greatest benefit for the residents of Ashfield. Gaining the greatest possible benefit from devolution will depend to a great extent on how effectively ADC engages at all the relevant 'tables' as this agenda evolves.

## The 'Golden Rope'

- Ensure learning and opportunities from Covid are knitted into the forthcoming five-year Strategic Direction (2022-2027) for Ashfield and the underpinning annual refresh of the Council's Corporate Plan-Action Plan- that would explicitly link resources to the achievement of future priorities whilst ensuring that existing services can continue to be provided to a high standard
- Ensure that the Corporate Plan reflects the political ambition of the administration.
- Ensure digitisation is carefully embedded within the workings of the Council and facilitate appropriate training for all staff involved, together with clear messaging for service users.

## Commercial Risk

ADC should consider implementing a Commercial Risk Mitigation and Opportunity Tracker across the Council's Capital Programme in order to manage the Authority's risk.

## **Next Steps**

The Key Reflections under the respective themes will be integrated into existing strategic and operational strategies and work programmes as outlined in Appendix B. Progress against these will be included in a monitoring report that collates actions from the respective LGA reviews.

## Implications

### **Corporate Plan:**

The Key Reflections identified by the Panel will be reflected as appropriate within the 2022-27 refresh of the Council's Strategic Direction and the annual refresh of the Corporate Plan-Delivery Plan.

### **Legal:**

There are no significant legal issues identified as a direct result of the Panel's findings or the recommendations within the report. [RLD 14/04/2022]

**Finance:** There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. [PH 05/05/22].

| <b>Budget Area</b>                          | <b>Implication</b> |
|---|--------------------|
| General Fund – Revenue Budget               | N/A                |
| General Fund – Capital Programme            | N/A                |
| Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget    | N/A                |
| Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme | N/A                |

**Risk:**

| <b>Risk</b>                                  | <b>Mitigation</b> |
|--|-------------------|
| There are no risks identified in the report. |                   |

**Human Resources:**

There are no direct HR implications arising from this report [KB 05/05/2022]

**Environmental/Sustainability**

Not applicable

**Equalities:**

Not applicable

**Other Implications:**

Not applicable

**Reason(s) for Urgency**

Not applicable

**Reason(s) for Exemption**

Not applicable

**Background Papers**

Not applicable

## **Report Author and Contact Officer**

**Theresa Hodgkinson**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**  
[theresa.hodgkinson@ashfield.gov.uk](mailto:theresa.hodgkinson@ashfield.gov.uk)  
**01623 457250**

**Craig Bonar**  
**DIRECTOR-RESOURCES AND BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION**  
[Craig.Bonar@ashfield.gov.uk](mailto:Craig.Bonar@ashfield.gov.uk)

**01623 457203**

**Ruth Dennis**  
**DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE**  
[ruth.dennis@ashfield.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.dennis@ashfield.gov.uk)  
**01623 457009**