

**OPEN**

**Full Council**

**17 July 2024**

**Establishment of Assurance Panel**

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**Report of: David Brown – Director of Governance and Compliance**

**Report Reference No: C/7/24-25**

**Ward(s) Affected: All**

### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 In March 2024 Cheshire East Council undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge through the Local Government Association (LGA). This review highlighted a number of significant challenges facing the Council, including areas requiring improvement. One outcome of the Peer Challenge was a recommendation that an externally chaired independent Assurance Panel be established to support the Council with this work.

### **Executive Summary**

- 2 The above recommendation was made in response to the breadth of financial, cultural and transformation challenges facing the Council, and the urgent need for action to support the Council's financial sustainability.
- 3 This report sets out the reasons for the proposed establishment of the Assurance Panel (the Panel), its proposed Terms of Reference, and membership.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Full Council is recommended to:

1. Approve the establishment of an Assurance Panel.
2. Approve the membership and terms of reference of, and other arrangements for the Assurance Panel, as set out in the report.
3. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to make all necessary arrangements to ensure that the Assurance Panel is appointed to and ready to begin its work with the Council, in accordance with the Terms of Reference, as quickly as possible.

## Background

- 4 The proposal for the establishment of the Panel arises from the recent Corporate Peer Challenge. It will consist of advisors to support, challenge, and advise the Council on issues and areas of overall improvement including the Council's response to the Corporate Peer Challenge findings and recommendations.
- 5 The Panel will provide two letters per annum on the Council's progress towards improvement and transformation. Additional reporting from the Panel will be via the Chief Executive to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and other stakeholders.
- 6 The Panel will also be empowered to provide such additional progress updates to Members of the Council as it considers to be necessary.
- 7 The Terms of Reference for the Panel, which includes details as to membership and other arrangements, are attached at Appendix 1 for consideration and approval.

## Consultation and Engagement

- 8 Members, officers and external stakeholders were consulted as part of the LGA Peer Review.

## Reasons for Recommendations

- 9 To comply with and address the findings of the LGA Peer Review.

- 10 To ensure financial sustainability of the Council is achieved through a financial recovery plan for years 2024/25 through to 2026/27.

## Other Options Considered

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	The Council will not address the breadth of financial, cultural and transformation challenges facing the Council.	The Council will not achieve a balanced budget or meet the needs of residents and staff.

## Implications and Comments

### *Monitoring Officer/Legal*

- 11 There are no direct legal implications relating to the establishment of the Panel. It is an advisory board. However, there may be legal implications resulting from its recommendations should these be followed. Further legal advice and support will be required in due course.

### *Section 151 Officer/Finance*

- 12 Costs associated with the Panel, will in part be met by LGA support and the remainder met by Cheshire East Council. This includes the officer time required to support the Panel.
- 13 There will be financial implications resulting from the recommendations of the Panel.
- 14 No budget has been allocated for this panel and the costs will be a pressure against the Council's budget for the two years of operation.

### *Policy*

- 15 There may be policy implications arising from the recommendations from the panel, which will need to be considered in detail at that stage.

<b>An open and enabling organisation.</b>
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### *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*

- 16 There may be equality implications arising from the recommendations from the Panel, which will need to be considered in detail at that stage.

### *Human Resources*

- 17 There may be human resources implications arising from the recommendations from the Panel, which will need to be considered in detail at that stage.

### *Risk Management*

- 18 There may be risk implications arising from the recommendations from the Panel, which will need to be considered in detail at that stage.

### *Rural Communities*

- 19 There may be rural communities' implications arising from the recommendations from the Panel, which will need to be considered in detail at that stage.

### *Children and Young People including Cared for Children, care leavers and Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)*

- 20 There may be such implications arising from the recommendations from the Panel, which will need to be considered in detail at that stage.

### *Public Health*

- 21 There may be public health implications arising from the recommendations from the Panel, which will need to be considered in detail at that stage.

### *Climate Change*

- 22 There may be climate change implications arising from the recommendations from the Panel, which will need to be considered in detail at that stage.

<b>Access to Information</b>	
Contact Officer:	Brian Reed – Head of Democratic Services and Governance  Brian.reed@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference of the Assurance Panel.
Background Papers:	None