



Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme



# HMEP STRATEGIC REVIEWS BENEFITS REALISED

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## 1. Purpose of this report

1.1 To provide an overview of the lessons learned from the first tranche of Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) Strategic Reviews delivered across England by the Local Government Association (LGA).

1.2 This report is based entirely on the direct feedback from councils to three independent consultants David Armin, Mark Harrison and John Rylance. These three were commissioned by the LGA to independently undertake the interviews with councils and peers during 2017 and early 2018.

## 2. HMEP Background

2.1 HMEP was funded and supported by the Department for Transport (DfT) from 2012. The Programme's vision focused on supporting and embedding change across the highways sector. It outlined three strategic objectives which were:

2.1.1 Encourage Leadership: This was a focus on providing a more compelling case for change by working to secure the support and buy-in from elected members, senior officers and practitioners.

2.1.2 Build Capacity: This was a focus on helping the sector to help itself by connecting a broader range of people, organisations and networks.

2.1.3 Engage and Enable: This focused on offering targeted support which would enable and embed change helping the sector to measure its progress towards improved efficiency and effectiveness so that services are sustained long into the future.

2.2 The HMEP Strategic Review delivered by the LGA is an integral part of the 'Engage and Enable' stream in particular. It is a peer-led review of a council's performance to help identify radical transformational opportunities and potential for improvements in operating efficiency.

2.3 The purpose of the 'Engage and Enable' work stream was *'To be a trusted and effective review and improve service that enables individual councils and the wider sector to transform highway services, resulting in reduced costs and increased customer satisfaction'*. This included a focus on supporting the highways sector to reduce costs whilst transforming delivery so that roads and services are improved.

Outcomes sought from the 'Engage and Enable' work stream were to (i) support councils in providing highways services that contribute effectively to the delivery of corporate objectives and (ii) improve member and residents' satisfaction with service delivery and achieve savings.

2.4 The 'Engage and Enable' work stream was delivered by three partners - LGA, Local Partnerships and The National Highways and Transport Survey. This included the following components:

- Strategic Reviews, delivered by the LGA
- Gateway and Procurement Reviews, delivered by Local Partnerships
- NHT/CQC performance and cost benchmarking

### **3. HMEP Strategic review delivered by the LGA**

3.1 The HMEP Strategic Review is based on the LGA's tried, tested and trusted local government peer challenge model. The model emerged as a response to a desire within local government for councils to informally test their effectiveness and learn from others. It was traditionally applied on a corporate basis but many service-based models have emerged over a number of years. Over 1,100 peer reviews have been delivered in since 2011 and more than 90% of councils have had a peer review.

3.2 Peer challenge is one part of the sector-led approach to improvement, which also includes (i) leadership training and development for senior councillors and officers (ii) peer mentoring and support and (iii) tools to improve productivity and efficiency. All councils took up some part of the LGA's improvement offer in 2017/18.

3.2 The HMEP Strategic Review is a voluntary and flexible process commissioned by a council -as highway authority- to aid their improvement and learning. It involves a team of peers from local government -and sometimes those connected with it- who spend time onsite at the council to reflect back and challenge its practice. The aim is to help the council to reflect on and improve the way it works. The process involves a wide range of people working in, and with, the council and the findings are delivered immediately.

3.3 Since 2012 the HMEP programme of Strategic Reviews managed by the LGA has delivered in excess of 30 Strategic Reviews and Bespoke Support Projects at the following councils:

1. Surrey County Council – November 2012
2. Blackpool Council\_- January 2013. Action Planning Day February 2013
3. Cambridgeshire County Council - July 2013.
4. Oxfordshire County Council - July 2013.
5. Kent County Council - January 2014
6. Bristol City Council- March 2014.
7. Devon County Council – April 2014.
8. Hertfordshire County Council–June 2014.
9. Dorset County Council - September 2014.
10. Thurrock Council–October 2014.
11. Hull City Council\_- December 2014.
12. Hampshire County Council\_-January 2015.
13. Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council-January 2015.
14. Wokingham Borough Council - February 2015.
15. Suffolk County Council- February 2015.
16. Lincolnshire County Council- March 2015
17. Middlesbrough Council – July 2015
18. Northumberland Council – September 2015
19. North Yorkshire County Council – November 2015
20. Wigan Council – February 2016
21. Wiltshire Council – February 2016
22. St Helens Council – March 2016
23. Telford and Wrekin Council – March 2016
24. Gloucestershire County Council – September 2016

25. Kent County Council – September 2016
26. West Sussex County Council – October 2016
27. Wakefield Council – November 2016
28. Staffordshire County Council – March 2017
29. Buckinghamshire County Council – December 2017
30. East Riding of Yorkshire Council – June 2018
31. Southend on Sea Council – October 2018

3.4 The LGA was nominated by Department for Transport (DfT) as the Delivery Partner for all HMEP Strategic Reviews. Following ‘Early Enabler’ pilots the LGA developed a thematic framework based on HMEP’s Asset Management principles and learning from the early pilots. This is in Appendix 3 of this report.

3.5 HMEP Strategic Reviews were initially fully funded by DfT from 2012 to 2014. A costing model was phased in with a second tranche of reviews being partly subsidised by DfT and partly paid for by councils receiving Reviews between 2014 and 2016. Since 2017 councils receiving the Review have covered the full cost of delivery.

3.6 This report utilised feedback from eighteen councils. These were selected based on going back to councils nine to twelve months after the Review in order to allow impact to be more clearly assessed.

3.7 In addition fourteen member and officer peers were interviewed to get their views on the experience of being peers and how effective they found the process to be.

#### **4. Motivating reasons for councils receiving LGA Strategic Reviews**

These are not exhaustive but include:

4.1 Using Strategic Reviews to help councils better respond to continuing resource constraints the local government sector faces. This was often part of a wider council culture change and savings programme

4.2 Assessing the contribution of Highways to the wider place-making/place shaping agenda. Reviews were used to analyse and cement the role of highways in the wider cultural changes being taken forward.

4.3 Using external challenge to better understand customer feedback/experience.

4.4 Using Reviews to help councils focus on effective asset management approaches. Integral to this was a focus on getting the balance right between preventative and reactive maintenance.

4.5 Using Reviews as a preparation for a fundamental service reviews, consideration of new delivery models and means of procurement. To help thinking around a future road map for service development.

4.6 Using Reviews to take stock and plan the way forward following a recent or planned re-structure and/or management changes whilst providing reassurance to senior officers and councillors that proposed approaches were rationalised and sound.

4.7 Utilising Reviews in providing a considered analysis of procurement and contracting arrangements. This includes reviewing approaches to procurement, re-letting contract and exploring the potential for collaboration.

4.8 Consideration of the viability and best options for joint working/collaborative arrangements with neighbouring authorities with an in-depth consideration of the relevant risks and benefits.

## **5. What Reviews have helped deliver in terms of effectiveness**

5.1 The most frequently cited outcomes from Reviews related to asset management and a life cycle approach. These included:

5.1.1 Putting in place new asset management strategies on the back of these Reviews.

5.1.2 Securing member 'buy-in' to new asset management strategies.

5.1.3 Achieving a better understanding of life cycle approach to asset management.

5.1.4 Improving awareness of areas of risk, issues to anticipate and addressing change in a sensitive manner.

5.1.5 Non-cashable benefits in terms of improvements to quality of delivery. These included such as 'getting it right first time', longer term warranty and long term relationships with contractors leading to contractor investment

5.2 Other things which Reviews have helped councils to achieve include:

5.2.1 Improved performance management through a more holistic approach including customers and suppliers whilst using data to drive improvement.

5.2.2 Taking a more strategic approach to delivering the required savings.

5.2.3 Achieving greater clarity on how the highways service can contribute to corporate outcomes.

5.2.4 Achieving improved customer interface through better integration of teams.

5.2.5 Paying greater attention to skills -better understanding and learning and development, capacity, capability issues- leading to a new Learning and Development strategy.

5.2.6 Identifying and embedding an intelligence-led approach to asset management which was adopted corporately by other parts of the council.

- 5.2.7 Validation of the approach being taken by Highways and better understanding of the best approach to progressing with procurement. This was particularly helpful in bringing the Cabinet at one council up to speed. This made conversations between members and officers about service requirements and additional funding easier. Improved relationships between officers and members led to focussed investment at local level via local area committees. This in turn achieved better alignment with the wider strategic aim of the directorate enabling better and more effective action planning of future work.
- 5.2.8 Members becoming more confident about service delivery. This led to better integration of members and communities with the wider highways directorate in one authority.
- 5.2.9 Improving staff involvement and preparing people for corporate change.
- 5.2.10 Identifying new operating models which contributed positively to budget and service delivery improvements as assessed by DfT Banding.
- 5.2.11 Positive progress being made on the effective use of new technology to engage with the customer and manage responsive maintenance whilst maintaining strategic oversight.
- 5.2.12 Achieving a greater/better corporate understanding of highways' role both as a service and contribution to the place.
- 5.2.13 Helping councils to develop a better focus, improve service delivery, engage corporately, remove silo working and become more resilient in dealing with further challenges.
- 5.2.14 Adoption of systematic change management approach including scale and ambition of the change with use of empirical testing.
- 5.2.15 Revamp of a Transformation programme based on the findings from the peer review which helped identify what to assimilate and what to do differently.
- 5.2.16 Development of integrated teams with private sector provider (co-location, focus on function rather than geography alone area, working together effectively as one team). This led to an outcome and customer focussed approach and more efficient deployment of resources.
- 5.2.17 Effective consideration of in-house versus external provider as best delivery mechanism. The Review helped with the council's decision making on this key consideration.
- 5.2.18 Improvement in effectiveness of communications internal and external to the council by improving the functionality of website and revision of

communications policies. This resulted in traditional communications approaches to consultation being sharpened and contractors being more proactively involved in gathering customer feedback and information.

5.2.19 Prompting revisions to a council's tendering process and contracting arrangements as the Review raised greater awareness about the level of detail required for the council to do this more effectively.

5.2.20 Supporting a council to address one of its highest risks which was clearing its reactive maintenance backlog. This helped drive highways claims down by achieving a better network on the back of an asset management driven and project-based approach within a clear 30-year financial model.

5.2.21 Several councils said that the review helped them to shift their attention from the 'here and now' to longer term strategy.

5.2.22 Some councils received assurance that the service and improvement plans were on the right track.

5.2.23 Setting up a benchmarking club with 20 other councils to share performance information.

## **6 What Reviews have helped deliver in terms of efficiency**

6.1 The main financial benefit was often the access to the additional highways maintenance grant which comes from an improved efficiency assessment through the incentive element offered by DfT.

6.2 Although difficult to accurately cost, some councils indicated that there were evident savings within the supply chain due to more effective commissioning and appropriate and timely engagement/communication with contractors.

6.3 However a number of councils felt that Reviews had led to their making better use of resources. Specific examples of impact included:

6.3.1 Helping numerous councils to achieve Levels 2 and 3 of the DfT self-assessment banding. In the case of North Yorkshire Council attaining Level 3 gave it access to the maximum £5 million per annum incentive payment.

6.3.2 Wigan Council reported greater success in accessing DfT and Environment Agency funding.

6.3.3 Cambridgeshire County Council fed back greater transparency about how/where maintenance funding is spent and better member understanding of the balance between a strategic approach and local priorities.



6.3.4 Hampshire County Council realised efficiencies and received approval for growth in investment in a £10million per annum planned maintenance budget and a new more resilient and customer-focused service delivery model.

6.3.5 Suffolk County Council fed back achievement of £1.3 million savings in relation to reactive maintenance through the rationalisation of approach to delivery acting on the recommendations from a Review.

6.4 There were examples of specific savings made on the back of the delivery of Strategic Reviews:

6.4.1 Cambridgeshire County Council achieved £200,000 per annum reduction in maintenance spend without any fall in satisfaction measures following its use of the messages from a Strategic Review.

6.4.2 Kent County Council achieved £800,000 per annum saving following service re-design.

6.4.3 The work of a Strategic Review helped drive a £500,000 saving through highways maintenance contract and £500,000 per annum saving through LED street lighting for Thurrock Council.

## **7 Wider Learning for peers supporting Strategic Reviews**

7.1 Some of the wider benefits of the Review relate to the ability of peers to share their learning across the sector as well as within their own authorities. Some of the benefits of acting as a peer included:

7.1.1 Learning from fellow members of the peer team and from other councils' notable practice (for example innovation in the integration of health and well-being, utilising more environmentally friendly practice as part of a council's Highways strategy). This allowed for such practice to be implemented in the peer's own authority.

7.1.2 Increasing peers' own knowledge base (for example better understanding the concept of asset management in highways) and better understanding the right questions to ask about Highways back in their own councils.

7.1.3 Enhanced standing in senior arenas and professional bodies (for example DfT, ADEPT).

7.1.4 Personal development including confidence in dealing with senior members and officers both in both their own council and wider local government.

- 7.1.5 Enhanced personal skills. Peers described the benefit of tact, political awareness and learning how to present difficult issues without negatively disadvantaging colleagues. The value of being in different teams alongside colleagues with different skills and the opportunity to learn from them was repeated often.
- 7.1.6 Time out of the 'day to day' pressures to discuss interests of mutual interest and to think about transfer of ideas back into the peer's own council.
- 7.1.7 Building networks and continuing relationships. This was not limited to between team members but extended to ongoing communication with the councils hosting reviews. The benefits were felt to be valid both politically and in relation to sharing technical knowledge and advice.
- 7.1.8 The value of reflection time. Being free of the 'day job back at the ranch' gives the opportunity to take a wider perspective and recognise that all authorities have areas of strength and areas in which they could perform better. This gives greater confidence to acknowledge your own authority's strengths.
- 7.1.9 Professional development opportunity for officers when training budgets are constrained.
- 7.1.10 Fresh perspectives generated by an authority which may be very different to your own, but still provide transferable learning to your authority.

**Ernest Opuni**

*(Manager of the LGA programme of HMEP Strategic Reviews)  
December 2018)*

## APPENDIX 1 – CASE STUDIES

We are very grateful to the councils listed below who took the time to feedback on their HMEP experience. The councils interviewed were those who had undergone a Strategic Review and the Action Planning phase at least nine months prior to speaking to the independent consultants who contacted them. This was to allow enough time for councils to reflect on any impact resulting from their Reviews.

These case studies have been listed alphabetically for ease of reference. They give details of the person from the council who provided the feedback at the time of the interviews taking place.

1. Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
2. Blackpool Council
3. Cambridgeshire County Council
4. Devon County Council
5. Dorset County Council
6. Hampshire County Council
7. Kent County Council
8. Lincolnshire County Council
9. Middlesbrough Council
10. North Yorkshire County Council
11. Oxfordshire County Council
12. St. Helens Council
13. Suffolk County Council
14. Surrey County Council
15. Telford and Wrekin Council
16. Thurrock Council
17. Wigan Council
18. Wiltshire Council

### Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session** – January and March 2015

#### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- The service needed to move forward, current ways of working were seen as restrictive nor did it make use of asset management principles in improvement and forward planning.
- The way the service was configured and delivered did not link to wider corporate goals around regeneration, 'it was an island of operation'.

#### **2) Experience of the review process**

- Credible peers from the sector helped to clearly identify and set out potential areas for improvement.
- The review provided a reference point for why change had to occur and continues as an aide memoire as we move forward.

#### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- The review opened up the debate about the role of highways as a major asset in delivering regeneration, it facilitated a conversation within the workforce around change and promoted member understanding and engagement.
- The review provided a route map for future development, identifying areas such as asset management, benchmarking and business planning that were underdeveloped.
- It provided an external viewpoint that constructively challenged the authority and provided options for going forward.

#### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- The review complemented an approach that the director wished to pursue, challenging current ways of working to deliver a more effective service that was performing more efficiently and driven by asset management principles.
- The peers clearly identified and set out for members an improvement journey that would not only deliver technical and engineering solutions but also contributed to wider regeneration priorities and ambitions.
- The review provided a reference point for management – staff conversations about why things had to change and acted as an aide memoire on the journey.

#### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- The review helped to set the agenda for change, it offered an external challenge at the start of that process, it opened up the debate and highlighted new or different ways of working that we could adopt that would then deliver the efficient and cost effective service that we were aiming to develop.

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[ianwilson@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:ianwilson@barnsley.gov.uk)

## **Blackpool Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session – January – February 2013**

### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- To inform a major reinvestment programme and service redesign to address a deteriorating network
- To help support political decision making by a new administration on the proposals for investment that had been developed by the previous administration

### **2) Experience of the review process**

- The review was a very positive experience, helping move forward staff and member communications and engagement, provided valuable reassurance and a steer on focus, process and key issues in relation to the investment programme

### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- It helped to challenge our proposals, and informed the way we approached working with contractors and the DLO, the review, and the peers insight and feedback, has helped staff and members to understand and buy into new ways of working within a 30 year financial model that is now being delivered.

### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- The review has helped to inform decision making in relation to use of locally based contractors and the DLO, improved arrangements for member buy in and decision-making, changing work practices and a refocus of the main contractor relationship.

**5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- It's especially important that you open up to eternal scrutiny if money is tight or there are difficult decisions to be made, its very valuable to get an outside opinion and the peer feedback gives you just that and more. It has helped to reassure and steer our forward investment programme which is now delivering significant change and improvement

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**Cambridgeshire County Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session – July / September 2013**

**1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- Pressure on resources – how to make best use of these
- Wanted to consider the new asset management approach
- New structure introduced in 2012/13 – opportunity to take stock and consider new ways of working.

**2) Experience of the review process**

- Asset management approach was new and the review provided a focus on this and raised the profile of asset management.
- The team identified some gaps in Cambridgeshire's approach and opportunities to try new ways of working, aided by their external perspective. The team provided effective challenge and support, derived from their experience, credibility and objective approach.

**3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- The review kicked off new conversations, including between officers and members. It provided the opportunity to consider new ways of working.
- Member buy-in to asset management achieved. Greater transparency about where / how money is spent.

**4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- Cambridgeshire now has an agreed asset management strategy and policy, with a plan subject to annual review. Appropriate governance processes to enable life-cycle approach to asset management.
- A member-led working group develops annual maintenance plan prior to formal committee approval. This balances a strategic approach with local priorities and gives members a better understanding of this.
- Findings of review have informed terms of new highways management contract, let from July 2017 following expiry of previous 10 year contract

**5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- Difficult to be specific about the financial savings arising from the review, but annual reductions to the maintenance revenue budget have resulted in little impact to satisfaction levels as a result of the more proactive approach.

Council contact:  
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## Devon County Council

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session – April, May, August 2014**

### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- A critical friend challenge and assurance on our proposed options for service delivery and procurement.

### **2) Experience of the review process**

- It provided the critical friend challenge that we were seeking, enabling us to stand back from the detail, listen to an external perspective and gave us areas for consideration in terms of strategic and operational perspectives that informed our decisions making going forward. It was helpful that the team could place current developments in the context of a wider journey that the service had undertaken in recent years.

### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- It helped us to examine our approach to change and to become more conscious drivers of our road map, to refine our tender process, to increase member engagement and to make better informed decisions on DLO and joint procurement, it emphasised the importance of periodic horizon scanning to future proof our services.

### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- We reviewed our approach to tenderers to better engage with them and develop a culture that promoted working together in any future contracts
- We refined our joint procurement strategy to better reflect and meet our own needs and to reflect consideration not just of benefits but also of potential risks
- We increased our engagement with Scrutiny to widen member engagement beyond the Cabinet.

### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- The review enabled us to stand back and both listen and reflect, it provided light bulb moments on a number of issues and useful challenge on key areas of our road map, it emphasised horizon scanning as a way to ensure effective future proofing of services and made us reflect on how we should be drivers of change rather than react to it.

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## **Dorset County Council.**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session – SR 9-11 Sept 2014 with AP in Nov 2014**

### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- Preparation for a fundamental service review and consideration of a new delivery mechanism and means of procurement.
- To help thinking around a future road map for service development.
- To assess the effectiveness of a new senior management structure.
- Provide a health check for current service delivery.
- To demonstrate that DCC was open to challenge through a respected HMEP/LGA methodology and process.

### **2) Experience of the review process**

- The team were knowledgeable and credible and understood DCC issues. Team members were known in the highways industry, and this helped in assuring confidence that the strategic review was by critical friends and not an inspection.
- Sharpened up the performance framework.
- Produced a suite of key policy documents for consideration by Cabinet.
- Redefined service plan which became a model for other council service plans.

### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- Although good operationally DCC Highways needed to become more strategic and show links to corporate objectives, the SR really helped DCC to refocus on the reasons why they needed to do more than repairs and preventative maintenance. It provided head room to really think about the service without being distracted by the demands of the day job. The process reinvigorated the in-house team. A way of sharing problems and exploring solutions.

### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- Helped DCC to develop a business plan, demonstrating service benefits via 18 projects that are complete or nearing completion.
- Improved working with town and parish councils, who are now undertaking some small scale (aesthetic) works themselves with guidance and advice from DCC. Local precepts raised to fund these works that DCC cannot fund anymore.
- Much use of digital portal for public to register issues and track progress on improvement/repair.
- All front line staff trained in use of Facebook and Twitter to record problems.
- E. News for residents with 14,000 signed up.

### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- Members are more confident of service delivery.
- DCC attained Band 3 incentive element of Maintenance Block Grant.
- Achieved many other awards including APSE Highways, Winter Maintenance and Lighting best team of the year 2016 (this has further improved staff morale and productivity).
- DCC set up a benchmarking club with 20 other councils to share performance information.
- Staff go to other councils (Wilts) to see best practice, other councils go to DCC. This is via contacts made through the SR process (either as commissioning council or as a peer team member)

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Service Director Highways and Strategic Director, Dorset County Council  
Tel. 01305 228182

## Hampshire County Council

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session** - January and March 2015 including visits to 2 depots in March.

### 1) Reasons for requesting the review

- To seek reassurance on decisions already made about re - letting a Highways contract for the county
- To seek an external perspective about the direction of travel to be taken
- Undertake a gap analysis, had HCC missed anything?
- To find out what other councils are doing.

### 2) Experience of the review process

- Both were very effective, HCC chose a bespoke model for the review as the commissioning officer had been an officer peer on the Devon CC HMEP strategic review
- The SR confirmed that HCC had made the right decisions, had a positive direction of travel and provided a view on the completeness of the issues considered to date.
- It also provided some fresh thinking and helped generate some different ideas about writing the new contract
- The AP session worked well as LGA and HCC spent time planning the event. Suggestions made in the initial SR were taken up e.g., the review team visiting the depots, improved communications, consideration of ideas/documentation from members of the peer team were made available to HCC
- KI's were confirmed and HCC given supportive challenge to devise and assess solutions. It also gave HCC time to consider areas that may be progressed at a later stage, such as contracting across councils.

### 3) What the review helped the council to achieve

- The key element was the validation and reassurance the review gave to the County Council
- The challenge and HCC response encouraged the officers to try new ways of working. The LGA provided comfort that the previously risk adverse approach would not address all of the ambitions of HCC. The review added gravitas to the officers requests for increased funding and in presenting proposals to the CE and Treasurer.
- The SR helped identify areas for further consideration (these have been acted upon):
  - Contribution to the corporate agenda
  - Engagement with external stakeholders.
- Confirmation of the need for stronger contract management focussed on outcomes rather than process driven inputs
- Endorsement that HCC was on the right track and helped HCC explore where it was in terms of engaging staff, members, contractors in the contracting process. Providing reassurance that the timetable and key stages of re-letting the contract could all be achieved. Plus sufficient time to learn from others.



#### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- HCC made rapid progress on recommendations for the SR, including:
  - Staff involvement, including a preparing people for change programme (now adopted corporately) that looks at 4 aspects of change  
1. Commercial 2. Wellbeing 3. Political and 4. Customer dimensions. Backed up by individual questionnaires this helped identify areas of resistance
  - Improved communications
  - Providing a “golden thread” embedding corporate objectives within the contract
  - Not being afraid of ambiguity, HCC does not need to have the answers; these can be worked on jointly with the new service provider.

#### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- HCC has realised efficiencies from the new Contract which commenced on 1 August 2017. Additionally, it was able to demonstrate the need for Capital Highway Maintenance investment which resulted in continued additional HCC funding of £10m per year for the term and the full support of the political administration.
- The new 7 year (extendable to 12 years) Contract aligns with the corporate objectives of HCC, and is sufficiently flexible and agile to meet challenges that may appear over the life of the Contract.
- The Contract procurement route included negotiations with contractors which helped generate new thinking around service delivery, income generation and capital expenditure.

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01962 846753

### **Kent County Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session – January / March 2014**

#### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- To provide a ‘sense check’ – how well did the council perform compared to other authorities and what needed to be improved.
- Kent had re-tendered highways maintenance term contract in 2010/11 and re-structured the highways service in 2013. The review would provide an opportunity to take stock as to how well these arrangements were working in practice.

#### **2) Experience of the review process**

- The team acted as ‘critical friends’ – posing questions and asking us to consider options. The team triangulated evidence sources as the basis for their challenges to us.
- The process was effective in identifying the key issues which Kent needed to address and assisted access to good practice examples

#### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- The service had been paying too much attention to the ‘here and now’ – the review helped us to move our focus on to longer term asset management and life-cycle costing

- Identified the need to better integrate service response / customer interface and team structures to underpin this

#### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- Initiated a service re-design shortly after the review, to better integrate service delivery at the customer interface and tackle silo working.
- Improved performance monitoring, so that the data collected is used to drive service improvement and better management of the asset.
- Greater attention to longer term asset management. A risk-based asset management plan has been introduced, which is used to prioritise maintenance spend.

#### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- Service re-design and wider changes to highways management structures have led to savings of up to £800k per annum.
- Corporate management and members more aware of the extent of investment required to maintain the asset, which has enabled conversations around competing priorities
- Improved access to DfT incentive funding – currently band 2 for HMEP self-assessment, with a plan to reach Band 3 by the end of 2017.

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## **Lincolnshire County Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session** Jan 2015 (SR) and Mar 2015 (AP)

### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- To review the strategy for the highways service and its contribution to the corporate objectives and growth agenda through a commissioning model approach
- To consider how the work done with Cranfield gives assurance that contractual arrangements are being maximised
- To investigate whether the shift in balance from reactive to preventative maintenance supports the strategic approach to asset management
- To look at the potential for regional consolidation as part of the financial challenge
- To recognise and validate improvements as well as signposting to best practice elsewhere which would be of benefit to Lincolnshire

### **2) Experience of the review process**

- The SR confirmed key issues as identified by the Council. It added a different perspective on potential solutions for the Council and provided reassurance to the organisation. Holding up the mirror worked well and provided positive feedback from politicians and fellow professionals.
- Steve Willis and Paul Rusted from LCC are both peer reviewers and advocates of the benefits that can be achieved from peer reviews
- The Council put a good deal of effort into the AP session (a pre requisite for a good outcome).
- The Council Scrutiny process was used to report on the review and assist in developing proposals for a new operating model

### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

LCC acted on the review team recommended areas for attention:

- Need for a culture change to bring staff and customers on board, and to help them understand the commissioning model, asset management and ongoing financial pressures
- Evaluate collaboration opportunities
- Develop a new delivery model
- Need for asset management plan and new highways infrastructure to be linked to commissioning outcomes
- To manage responses in a planned and transparent way, while still recognising the political environment

#### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- Progressed according to plan, with new operating model in place from Feb 2017
- Traded service established with Cranfield University [ Proving Ltd ] for highway and infrastructure client intelligence
- HMEP Action Plan included in Business Plan for current Highways Alliance Contract

#### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- Budget and service delivery continue to improve [1 of 2 shires to make DfT Band 3 level status in 2016 and maintained in 2017]
- Achieved BS 11000 Collaborative Business
- New arrangements will be used in developing new Highways Alliance Contract planned for 2020

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## **Middlesbrough Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session – July / October 2015**

### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- To provide support and direction for planned service review, intended to deliver savings of £1.2m, to follow the HMEP review
- To provide the basis for further service transformation
- New Head of Service had just taken up the role and service had transferred to a new Directorate (revised council structure aligned to outcomes in the Council Strategic Plan) – opportunity to take stock of the new arrangements.

### **2) Experience of the review process**

- During the review, communication with Middlesbrough managers and staff was very good, enabling the team to pick up on concerns of staff and feed these back to senior managers and members. The team encouraged the open sharing of thoughts and experiences.
- The team provided support and advice and access to their experience for the action planning day. But it was clear that the day, and actions and changes arising, were owned and led by Middlesbrough.

### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- Highlighted that too much emphasis was being put on delivering required savings rather than on how the service is delivered and further, longer term transformation.
- Greater clarity about the ability of the Highways Infrastructure Service to contribute to wider corporate objectives, in particular economic development, regeneration and job creation.

- Greater visibility and accessibility of senior managers and recognition of the skills and commitment of staff.

#### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- HMEP review has led to improved asset management planning and planned maintenance.
- Improvements in area based delivery that have led to efficiency savings.
- To deliver these savings, the council has drawn on partnership arrangements across the Tees Valley.

#### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- The HMEP strategic review informed the in-house service review which followed it, making it more difficult to identify the impact of the HMEP review. However, it was helpful in framing the context for the in-house review.

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### **North Yorkshire County Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session** – November 2015 and April 2016 (the action planning session was slightly delayed due to the need to give attention to the major flooding event that occurred over Christmas 2015)

#### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- Aware of developing DfT thinking re importance of HMEP / asset management approach.
- Importance of efficiency related incentive element in Highways Maintenance block allocation – a review would be a helpful tool in reaching Band 3.
- Committed to continuous improvement – external assessment should help the council confirm where it was on-track and identify what else it needed to do.

#### **2) Experience of the review process**

- The peer team was well chosen, with experience of working in similar large, rural counties.
- Peer's experience as practitioners gave the team credibility and they were able to relate to our staff and issues.

#### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- Confirmed the council's gap analysis and development of plans which helped it to achieve a Band 3 in DfT asset management efficiency self-assessment.

#### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- Development of actions in the service plan to achieve Band 3 in self-assessment, including external audit of how the capital programme is developed and consideration of HMEP supply chain toolkit for adoption by North Yorkshire.

#### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- North Yorkshire has achieved Band 3 in self-assessment, allowing it to receive the full incentive related element of the highways maintenance funding block (enabling access to an additional £5 million per annum).
- Reassurance to members and senior officers that the service is performing well and that the review team shared the service's assessment of the issues we need to address.

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### **Oxfordshire County Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session** Review July 2013 and Action Planning September 2013

#### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- External challenge, engage with national agenda and sector, identify opportunities, seek reassurance and demonstrate to senior managers and councillors that elements of the service were good. Early adopters of the HMEP review.
- Oxfordshire are keen to collaborate with others to develop good practice within the industry and to promote both the good work and issues that Local Government faces in managing its local highway networks. To this end the council welcomed the setting up of the HMEP programme and were keen to support the process in its early stages. The opportunity for review was timely, as Oxfordshire was seeking to update its 2008 Highway Asset Management Plan (HAMP). The council therefore were keen to receive external review and challenge to help influence the revised document in accordance with good practice and to identify opportunities to adapt our ways of working to enable better outcomes to be achieved.

#### **2) Experience of the review process**

- Key issues already identified, but required “headspace” to think about solutions and action plan accordingly. The process helped engagement across the council.
- Whilst the review identified issues that the service was already aware, the process enabled, engagement an independent sounding board made up of peers and experts who helped us assess and adapt solutions. They were able to endorse where we were applying good practice already, or identify areas which deviated with how other authorities were delivering the service, with suggestion on how things could perhaps be undertaken better. This enabled a more focussed review of areas for development. The process also provided the headspace and capacity to think about solutions and develop an action plan, and the facilitated workshops ensured to develop the plan were useful in getting engagement from staff as there was clarity in the agendas being set and that the process was there to support rather than criticise.

### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- Provided an independent sounding board, made up of experts who helped us to assess and adopt solutions. A catalyst for change. Helped Highways gain permission to think about solutions differently.
- The review has assisted the authority in receiving buy in from Senior Managers, Councillors and staff in integrating better practice into our decision making and processes, and has been the catalyst for ongoing change beyond that identified in the review. The involvement of a councillor in the review enabled greater engagement from Oxfordshire's own members and greater ownership of the outcomes of the report.
- The independent validation of the general good work that the service delivered has assisted the service in dispelling some negative views about the service, both internally and externally. The good news was shared widely with councillors and staff and has helped in getting greater engagement with stakeholders in addressing the core issues within the county.
- Improvements arising from the review also subsequently assisted the Council in meeting criteria for the DfT Incentive Fund that it may otherwise not have met.
- The review also encouraged Oxfordshire managers to become reviewers themselves which has helped continued learning.

### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- It helped Oxfordshire develop a better focus, improve service delivery, engage corporately, remove silo working and become more resilient in dealing with further challenges.

The review was instrumental in the development of the Councils Highway Asset Management Plan. The raised awareness of the issues, and good practice in place, which enabled greater buy in from Councillors in working with officers to develop the document.

- The sound asset management footing that the Council has since taken has enabled better collection of data of all highway assets and greatly informed our investment strategies that now better reflect user need as well as whole life costings.
- The review also sparked discussions between various highway disciplines that enabled further issues and solutions to be identified. This became the catalyst for a Lean review of the service which has helped deliver further changes above and beyond the action plan.
- The Council has developed greater engagement with its supply chain which has enabled significant innovation and efficiency to be developed.
- The Council has improved its communications of what it is doing and now uses social media and other channels far more proactively than it has in the past to inform and promote activity that the council undertakes.

### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review?**

- Big changes now are being trialled in Highways around LEAN and major restructuring. Now into a "Big Bang" scenario and will be happy to share how this goes.
- The HMEP peer review was the catalyst for a change in approach to Highway Asset Management. Since the review the council has reduced its budgets by approximately £4.7m, however there has been limited impact in service delivery as a result. Indeed, more recently the service is often praised by its councillors for the

fact that service quality is now improving. This is as a direct result that the catalyst for change that review provided.

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## **St. Helens Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session** 1-3 March 2016 SR and AP  
19 May 2016

### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- Satisfy requirement for Band 3 incentive grant, and to secure the SR while the subsidy was still in play.
- Provide overview of key issues and look at alternative solutions.
- Motivation came from wanting to achieve Level 2 for the DfT SAQ Question 17

### **2) Experience of the review process**

- Very effective in helping SH confirm key issues. Provide additional focus on asset management, review maintenance processes, and improve customer feedback mechanism. Review approach to contracting and contract management
- Extremely helpful. The external reviewers were able to focus in on key challenges from a mass of procedures, systems, asset data and across different service areas. An internal only review would probably have been more fragmented and kept conclusions in service areas rather than strategic

### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- Confirmed issues and provided appropriate challenge.
- Helped SH refocus and recognise its strengths e.g. data rich but not using information consistently nor sharing info. All assets are now being transferred into one management database.

### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- Better focus on highway strategy and better management of data to achieve this (new Horizons software package funded by SH)
- Still need to fully engage with councillors.
- Following the review the council engaged a consultancy to confirm SAQ level (2) and provided an action plan to reach level 3 which is now being implemented.
- St. Helens is in a City Region and at risk from being scored at the level of the lowest District. This is acknowledged at the Combined Authority level and the experience with the peer review is proving useful.
- Joint procurement across the City Region is coming together with more opportunities to join shared contracts being taken up. Not all authorities participate in all contracts but they are being aligned.

### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review?**

- Longer term benefits are as yet to be realised. St Helens has recently engaged external consultancy support to help them regain impetus and refresh the improvement plan. Progress has been made on devising further procurement strategy, development of localised contracting and production of framework



contract and contract monitoring. Recognition that the service needed to clarify its strategic purpose and align with corporate objectives of SH.

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## Suffolk County Council

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session** – February 2015

### 1) Reasons for requesting the review

- To provide an objective viewpoint on the contract with Kier and the reasons for the lack of success to date

### 2) Experience of the review process

- The review was an extremely helpful exercise as it provided some clear guidance, not least of all on changing the relationship. Those directly involved from the County Council were no longer able to 'make out the woods for the trees' so the high level, independent assessment provided an excellent contrast.

### 3) What the review helped the council to achieve

- The review acted as a catalyst for change – of the Cabinet portfolio holder, senior management and the tone and style of the relationship between the two parties.

### 4) Specific changes arising from the review

- The HMEP strategic review findings **fed into the formation of an early 'Highways Transformation Programme'**. Once the Cabinet portfolio holder and head of service changed, a more robust Highways Transformation Programme was designed and implemented, launched off the back of the findings of the review.

### 5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review

- By October 2016, the relationship between Suffolk Highways and Kier had been fundamentally altered, resulting in the County Council extending the contract with Kier to the full 10-year term. By November 2017, the two organisations were operating jointly under one integrated structure – Suffolk Highways – and was assessed by the British Standards Institute as being compliant with ISO44001 (Collaborative Business Relationship Management).

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## Surrey County Council

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session** – November 2012 – January 2013

### 1) Reasons for requesting the review



- Challenge to our thinking in advance of embarking on five-year capital and change/savings programmes
- Health check and assurance on the forward direction/highlighting of any areas for concern and gaps

## **2) Experience of the review process**

- The review provided reassurance that the general direction proposed would resolve the issues that Surrey were seeking to address
- The review team were helpful in identifying a number of areas for consideration e.g. the pace of change, empirical testing prior to full roll out, key skill areas, capability and capacity to deliver the programme
- The member peer provided support to maximise political dialogue, increase member engagement and understanding and provided a way forward balancing local and county wide aspirations and control

## **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- The ensuing change management programme built upon the findings of the peer team
- The peer review was instrumental in fostering members and officers working together more effectively to deliver targeted benefits

## **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- A revised local committee approach that aligned wider corporate objectives with local priorities
- A measured and nuanced approach to the capital and change programmes that helped to ensure delivery of targeted benefits

## **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- 'the proof of the pudding is that it (HMEP strategic review) has delivered and has become part of how we work'
- 'a health check and assurance on our original proposals that has helped us to deliver the benefits that we were targeting'

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## **Telford and Wrekin Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session – March April 2016**

### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- To provide a new director with an up to date assessment of the service and to highlight any areas for improvement

### **2) Experience of the review process**

- It was a positive experience, and well worth the effort, it provided expert advice, shining a light on areas where we needed to improve, it promoted our own self-reflection, and has left a legacy of a network with the peer team that we continued to draw upon, it also provided reassurance on what we were doing well, there was a good balance and the areas for consideration were presented in a really positive way

### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- It gave us a steer on a number of areas which we wouldn't have pursued without the peer review, we were left with a lot of good stuff, and made some good allies of the peer team,

### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- We have addressed issues raised as areas for consideration within the review, such as the structure, the role of in house engineering services, performance management and benchmarking. It highlighted the need for a more strategic approach to policy and planning, we are absolutely putting this in place

### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- It was a real assessment by technically competent experts, peers and colleagues from the sector, which in a very positive way helped to move the service forward in areas where that was necessary and provided reassurance on areas where we were performing well, its left a legacy of good ideas and relationships

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## **Thurrock Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session –** October 2014 / January 2015

### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- Service being re-structured – previously outsourced highways maintenance function being brought back in-house alongside existing client function
- New permanent Head of Service recently appointed – chance to take stock
- Need to make savings as part of corporate programme
- DfT incentive funding – self-assessment Band 1, needed to improve this
- External challenge by experienced professionals would be valuable in this context.

### **2) Experience of the review process**

- Review was helpful in identifying the extent of improvement required to achieve sector norms and the quantum of resource needed to do this.
- The review was realistic in terms of what could be achieved initially and provided a helpful prioritisation of what needed to be tackled first, given that resources are limited.
- The review team provided credible, practical advice as fellow professionals and gave access to a network who can signpost to good practice examples and sources of advice.

### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- Helped to focus members and staff on the improvement agenda. Gave clarity around priorities for action and the need for a three year plan to deliver these.
- Including partners and neighbouring authorities in the interview programme led to improved engagement and wider networking with these partners and access to expertise.

- Recognition of the need for more proactive, strategic asset management; more streamlined business processes and better use of ICT.

#### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- Informed the development of a new highways maintenance contract, to be delivered through an SLA
- A more strategic approach to achieving the required savings
- Better use of ICT hardware and software to support improved ways of working

#### **5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- Achieved Band 2 of DfT efficiency ratings and plan to achieve Band 3 by the end of 2017
- New highways maintenance contract is delivering £0.5 million savings per annum (in addition to a further £0.5 million through LED street lighting)

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### **Wigan Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session** – February / April 2016

#### **1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- Changes to DfT funding regime and increasing emphasis on asset management
- Working through budget reductions
- Proud of what Wigan has achieved – but wanted an external perspective / challenge
- Changes in departmental structures shortly before the review – timely to have an external perspective on next steps

#### **2) Experience of the review process**

- Team brought a good mix of managerial, technical and political experience. The team were engaging, professional and insightful.
- The staging of the review process – initial feedback followed by the action planning day a couple of months later enabled us to reflect on, own and ultimately 'Wiganise' the findings as a basis for action and improvement.
- Action plan prepared to respond to review, subsequently incorporated into self-assessment action plan to achieve Level 3 in HMEP efficiency assessment

#### **3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- A planned and more strategic approach to asset management.
- Member involvement in planned highways maintenance budget – strategic approach to maintaining the asset and better understanding of priorities across the network.
- Improved management of and engagement with supply chain.

#### **4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- Integrated audit into the monthly business planning meetings to provide challenge and assist the Sec 151 officer in signing-off returns to DfT.

**5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- More successful in funding bids to the DfT (including the Pot Holes fund) and to the Environment Agency for flood protection for the network.
- Engagement of staff at all levels and members with the findings of the review. (Previously planning & strategy development and service delivery were undertaken in different departments and there was a silo-based approach).

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**Wiltshire Council**

**Date of HMEP strategic review / action planning session – February / March 2016**

**1) Reasons for requesting the review**

- Recently re-structured the service and the supply chain. So timely to have an external assessment of the effectiveness of these changes
- Aware of the increasing emphasis being placed on asset management by the DfT through the HMEP programme.

**2) Experience of the review process**

- Early engagement around the areas of focus for the review meant the review was tailor made and reflected areas of concern to Wiltshire. It was not just an asset management review, but did give sufficient attention to this issue. Reviews can also be helpful in looking at strategic alignment to wider council priorities, performance management etc.
- Findings of the review gave rise to a deliverable and realistic action plan (ie. one which did not require significant additional investment) prepared following the action planning day.
- Developed relationships and networks with review team members which are continuing.

**3) What the review helped the council to achieve**

- Provided the opportunity to think about longer term strategy.
- More focus on learning & development to strengthen skills and capability.
- Developing a more holistic approach to performance management, taking a wider customer and supply chain perspective.

**4) Specific changes arising from the review**

- Revised asset management policy and strategy introduced.
- New Learning & Development Strategy developed for introduction during 2017.
- New performance management framework introduced.
- Improvement plan prepared to achieve Band 3 in DfT efficiency self-assessment.

**5) What has been the value of changes arising from the review**

- Assurance that the direction of travel of the service is appropriate and that it was generally performing well
- Provided support for continuing innovation
- Achieved Band 3 in efficiency self-assessment in March 2017 and Wiltshire will access additional resources as a result.

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## APPENDIX 2 – QUOTES

### From Councils

***“A focused approach which did not drag on or lose momentum”*** (Head of Service, County Council)

***“A sound process which can lead to change and bring about greater member engagement”*** (Head of Service, County Council)

***“Credible, practical advice from fellow professionals, rather than the theoretical proposals often provided by consultants”*** (Head of Service, Unitary Council)

***“The Strategic Review raised areas for further consideration: Contribution to the corporate agenda, Engagement with external stakeholders. Contract management, these have been addressed post review”.*** (Assistant Director, Unitary Council)

***“Strategic Review and Action Planning were very effective. The team were knowledgeable and credible and understood our issues. Team members were known in the highways industry, and this helped in assuring confidence that the strategic review was by critical friends and not an inspection”.*** (Head of Service, County Council)

***‘Having a high profile politician helped raise the profile of the service with the Cabinet member, Leader and senior management. In turn this lead to an understanding of the funding needs of the service via the one unified conversation rather than having to keep saying the same thing over and over’.*** (Head of Service, County Council)

***“The review was invaluable. It was professional and insightful – the work of critical friends. It gave access to good advice at little or no cost”.*** (Assistant Director, Unitary Council)

***“I would recommend other authorities to have a review. It was both challenging and supportive. The review has been a milestone on our improvement journey, providing an external perspective on what can and needs to be achieved”*** (Head of Service, Unitary Council)

***“A very positive experience for the council. The review was comprehensive, reflected our areas of interest and was able to consider some key areas in depth in a relatively short period of time”*** (Head of Service, Unitary Council)

***“The peer review was absolutely invaluable. An opportunity to benchmark what you are doing and access best practice. A review offers constructive, critical friend challenge and should not be feared”*** (Head of Service, County Council).

***‘The new contract commences on 1 August 2017 and the LGA/HMEP has really helped ensure that it is fit for purpose. The SR helped the council to see the potential of new contracting outcomes and to develop the confidence to negotiate a new flexible contracting arrangement based on outcomes (as well as price and quality).*** (Assistant Director, County Council)

***“A way to get a constructive, objective, challenging view of the service provided by technical and political experts. Be sure of the scope and focus for the review,***

***ensure it looks at your key issues as well as the standard components of all SR's. Although good operationally DCC needed to become more strategic and show links to corporate objectives, the SR really helped DCC to refocus on the reasons why they needed to do more than repairs and preventative maintenance. It gives you some head room to really think about the service without being distracted by the demands of the day job. The process reinvigorates the in-house team. A way of sharing problems and exploring solutions.*** (Service Director, County Council)

***'Provides excellent challenge in a supportive environment. A fresh perspective on issues. High level external advice from respected individuals. Provides a reason to focus, and provided the impetus to implement some quick wins'.*** (Head of Service, Unitary authority)

***"The strategic review learnt itself to opening up...the sector credibility, the triangulation and the non-attribution helped"*** (Head of Service, County Council)

### **From Peers**

***'Member peers like the methodology and in particular the action planning aspect of the review. This allowing the council to consider issues and to derive solutions that can be challenged and modified in conjunction with the review team. Not sure that a full corporate peer review report is necessary, but feel main areas of review and action planning should be documented'*** (Member peer)

***'Every place I go I see something that sets something going in my head, nuggets that you can bring back to your own authority, where they are really on to something I take it back and explore'*** (Officer peer).

***'The value the experience (of being a peer) provides exceptional value in the time available – that's the payoff for the release'*** (Officer peer).

***'For my own council two things –pride and recognition – we must be doing something right to get selected – and coming back with policies papers and strategies, for me credence through that experience'*** (Officer peer).

***"It's always a privilege to be a peer. You are made welcome and given a licence to question"*** (Member peer)

***"I've gained tremendously. Increased knowledge and exposure to how other authorities do things, along with networking and learning from colleagues on peer teams"*** (Member peer)

***"Being a reviewer helped my confidence and gave me reassurance that my technical knowledge held up in a different council with peers. I found the team operated in a very collaborative fashion and did not observe traditional hierarchies. This helped me operate amongst equals. No egos to deal with"*** (Officer peer).

***"I love doing these. Its intense focussed and the coaching style encouraged by LGA promotes effective conversations, Its fantastically rewarding, space outside your own council and seeing things that are similar but different"*** (Officer peer).

***'You acquire or are aware of skills that are really useful in the job day to day - building relationships with people you don't know, coaching style conversations, presenting things back'*** (Officer peer).



## **APPENDIX 3– HMEP Strategic Review Themes**

The Strategic Review focuses on a set of headline questions and more detailed prompts. These frame the preliminary review of materials, the interviews, and the workshops that make up a Strategic Review. They are discussed and tailored in the context of each council.

### **1. Context**

1. What is the strategic vision for the Highways Service? What are the outcomes the vision seeks to deliver?
2. How clearly aligned is this to the corporate vision for the council?
3. How does the vision for highways contribute to the overall vision for the council?
4. How aligned is the local transport policy to national policy?
5. How clear is the service about who its various stakeholders are?
6. How does the service ensure that its delivery is reflecting the expectations of its stakeholders? What opportunities do stakeholders have in shaping the service?
7. How effectively does the service communicate with its various stakeholders (both internal and external?)
8. How clear is the service about delivering the best outcomes for its communities and various stakeholders in line with the legal and financial constraints all services face?

### **2. Planning**

1. How well does the policy framework for the Highways Service demonstrate its commitment to achieving community and stakeholder outcomes?
2. How clear is the strategy for Highways? How strong is the link between the strategy and clear outcomes for the local area?
3. How clearly are the objectives of the service contributing to the achievement of an overall vision?
4. What evidence is there of a long term, sustainable approach to managing highways in order to deliver the best outcomes for the area?
5. How well do service levels, targets and other measures reflect demand?
6. How does data use (in terms of what is required, collected, reported and managed) impact on what the service delivers (and how it is delivered)?
7. What is the Service's approach to life cycle planning? How is this reflected in the investment strategy? What is the impact on assessing what good performance looks like?
8. How are Highways works programmes developed? How well do annual programmes, forward programmes and scheme identification work together in producing coherent and appropriate works programmes?



### **3. Enablers**

1. How effective is the council's political and managerial leadership in delivering an effective Highways Service? How high a priority for the council is its Highways Service?
2. How well resourced is the service and what is the approach to ensuring the service is fit for purpose?
3. How does the Service empower its staff to deliver?
4. How is innovation embraced by the Service?
5. How well is the service identifying, evaluating and managing risk in its asset management and maintenance work?
6. What asset management systems does the council utilise and why?
7. How appropriate are these asset management systems in delivering the service's requirement for functionality, management, cost and effective procurement practice?
8. What is the service's approach to monitoring and managing its performance?
9. What service standards are being work towards and how have these been decided?
10. How clear is the service on what good performance looks like? How is this informing performance reviews and what is the service's approach to benchmarking?
11. What is the service's approach to continuously improving delivery? How effective is this?
12. What gap analysis has the service undertaken in developing its implementation plans? How dynamic a process is this and does it allow the service to respond appropriately to change (e.g. in available resources, shifting corporate priorities etc.)?

### **4. Delivery**

- How well does the Service utilise outcome focussed and programme management approaches in its delivery?
- How well does the Service's approach to procurement align with the outcomes it is working towards?
- How clearly do all the processes supporting delivery contribute to an effective service? How does the service rationalise its processes to ensure they are appropriate?