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Chief Executive  
Hampshire County Council  
The Castle  
Winchester  
Hampshire SO23 8UJ

February 2014

Dear Andrew

**Hampshire County Council Corporate Peer Challenge**  
**28<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> January 2014**

On behalf of the peer team I would like to say what a pleasure and privilege it was to be invited into Hampshire County Council to deliver the recent corporate peer challenge as part of the Local Government Association (LGA) offer to support sector led improvement.

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge at Hampshire were:

- Nick Bell – Chief Executive of Staffordshire County Council
- Councillor Martin Tett – Leader of Buckinghamshire County Council
- Clare Marchant – Assistant Chief Executive, Worcestershire County Council
- Petra Marshall – Community Resources Manager, London Borough of Lewisham
- Fran Pollard – Executive Director, Catch 22
- Mona Sehgal – Principal Adviser, Local Government Association
- Paul Clarke – Programme Manager, Local Government Association

**Scope and focus of the peer challenge**

The peer team looked at the areas considered by all LGA corporate peer challenges in the context of your plans for the future:

1. Understanding of the local context and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?
2. Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?

3. Political and managerial leadership: Does the council have effective political and managerial leadership and is it a constructive partnership?
4. Governance and decision-making: Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change, transformation and disinvestment?
5. Organisational capacity: Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?

In doing this you also asked for peer observations on how the Council can develop its work in particular locations by harnessing all available community capacity including partners, infrastructure and facilities to improve outcomes, and also the way the Council works with the voluntary and community sector including suggestions for better or more effective working practice.

### **The peer challenge process**

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement-focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent 3.5 days onsite at Hampshire, during which they:

- Spoke to more than 140 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders.
- Gathered information and views from more than 35 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading.
- Collectively spent more than 260 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 7 weeks in Hampshire.

This letter provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit (28<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup> January 2014). In presenting feedback to you, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already considering, addressing and progressing.

## **Summary of feedback: overall observations and messages**

Hampshire County Council is a strong and successful local authority. It is a well-managed and high performing organisation with a good professional pride and ethos, and one that benefits from political stability, visible leadership, and prudent financial stewardship. All of these factors have combined to enable the Council to serve the people of Hampshire well and develop a reputation for excellent service delivery. They put the organisation in a strong and resilient position in terms of responding to the continued financial challenges facing the sector.

The Council is rightly confident and proud of what it delivers. There is an array of excellent services, and impressive examples of strategic partnership working and other collaboration and joint working that are delivering local priorities and enabling positive outcomes across the county. The Council is clearly committed to working with others, and recognises this as an increasingly important means through which the needs of communities can continue to be met. There has been notable progress in working more within communities to enhance local services and deliver joined up, co-ordinated, cost effective and responsive activity. You know there is potential to do much more and have made it a stated priority to do so.

Although the current position is one of financial strength and resilience, you are determined not to become complacent. There is an awareness and appreciation that the challenges ahead are likely to be greater than those already faced by Hampshire. The Council has been prudent in taking rapid action to begin to plan its response to those challenges, and in doing so there is an emerging recognition and understanding that the operating models and approaches that have been successful in the past may not be enough to meet the challenges of the future. You appreciate the next phase of the Council's transformation is likely to require different skills and capacity, including evolving leadership roles and styles. It may be that a clearer articulation and earlier dialogue with staff and partners around the longer term challenges will maximise the opportunity and head room created for you, and partners, to begin developing the proposals for wider public service transformation that may be required.

The Council works with a range of partners to deliver its services. Partners and other stakeholders are generally pleased with the interactions they have with the Council. They recognise a strengthening of these under the new political leadership, and a renewed desire to engage and collaborate to pool resources and capacity, increase resilience and responsiveness, and improve outcomes. There is potential to generate even more collective capacity and develop co-produced solutions and interventions through earlier and timelier engagement of partners around key proposals. There is an appetite for this from both existing and potential partners, who appear well-positioned and committed to help determine and deliver shared outcomes. To enable this there may be a need to review and refresh your strategic relationship with the voluntary and community sector.

The Council clearly has strong service departments which are at the heart of your current operating model. Your desire to be a 'modern business providing public services' means there is a strong focus and commitment to delivering high quality and cost effective services. Your reputation for professionalism, quality and expertise has seen you take over the delivery services for others. There may be potential to generate more organisational capacity, speed up delivery of financial savings and cost reduction, and more effectively deliver the Council's stated commitment to working with communities' through an increased focus on outcomes and by embedding a matrix approach across the organisation. There are some good examples of this happening already, but making this a more systematic way of how you work, particularly through the Transformation Programme, is likely to bring further and faster successes.

**Summary of feedback: priority setting, financial viability, leadership, governance and capacity to deliver future ambitions**

*Understanding of local context and priority setting*

We experienced and encountered a Council that demonstrates strong stewardship, a clear sense of place, and a good understanding of its context and needs. Senior councillors and a range of officers and other stakeholders spoke with knowledge, pride and passion about the county. A range of comprehensive information, intelligence and data - including the Local Economic Assessment Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and national census - provides a thorough analysis of the local context and issues, and has evidently informed the Council's strategic priorities.

Given the local context of a growing and ageing population, rising unemployment, increasingly diverse communities and continued financial challenges, the four priorities articulated in the 'Shaping Hampshire' Strategic Plan 2013-2017 of improving health and well-being, promoting economic prosperity, working with communities to enhance local services and delivering high quality, cost effective services seem relevant. However, few people we met during our visit referenced the Strategic Plan, and we challenged whether the Plan drives what departments do, particularly in terms of enabling more cross-departmental working focused on key outcomes. We also questioned whether there is an explicit link between the Strategic Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Transformation Programme.

In terms of priorities for the Council beyond 2017, we know there are on-going discussions and evolving thinking about these, particularly in terms of the potential shape and style of the organisation required to deliver priorities with a reduced budget and expenditure. You are understandably focusing the attention and energy of the organisation on the 'Transformation to 2015' programme of activity and the efficiencies required to reduce expenditure by £93 million in 2015/16, and will then ramp up the focus on a further tranche of activity to reduce expenditure by a further

£100 million by 2017/18. This approach of short term transformational focus has clearly served you well to date, and you are confident it is a robust strategy moving forward.

We questioned whether the approach risks causing uncertainty across the organisation and partners about longer term priorities and ambitions. It may be that a clearer, regular articulation and dialogue around longer term priorities and challenges will be beneficial to staff and partners across Hampshire as a means by which to focus energy and attention more on developing future solutions and wider public service transformation now. This is about ensuring transformational thinking across partners is aligned. It is also about ensuring that the shorter term decisions and action to meet departmental savings targets for 2015/16 do not curtail the potential and capacity for future cross council and public sector transformation and innovation. Developing and communicating a narrative about the longer term vision might be beneficial.

#### Financial planning and viability

There is little doubt that Hampshire is a financially strong, stable and resilient Council. Some £130 million of expenditure reductions have been delivered in the past five years, and a 'steady state' budget for 2014/15 is proposed, with transformation proposals being progressed to meet the target for 2015/16. The Council has impressive levels of reserves which you are drawing on not only to mitigate the impact of grant reductions, but to support 'invest to save' and transformation projects that will achieve future revenue savings.

Relative to many other local authorities you are in a good place, and in an excellent position to plan for and respond to future challenges. You have a good hold on the scale of those challenges, and have set cost reduction/savings targets accordingly – for example Departments have been set a 12% efficiency target to achieve by 2015/16 (albeit this approach does seem to enable departments to opt in or out of the cross council transformation programme). Prudent and robust financial planning has clearly been highly effective in enabling the Council to reach the current position. The latest Annual Audit Letter suggests there are effective monitoring arrangements, that budgets are being delivered and that financial planning is supported by a robust system of risk management.

However, given the scale of the potential future challenges we suggested you might wish to consider a longer term approach to financial planning based more on cross-cutting priorities. We suggest this will better enable you to continue to meet the medium and longer term financial challenges. We acknowledge that your current approach has delivered for you up to now, and your position of relative financial strength provides levels of resilience that many authorities would be envious of. However, most other councils are adopting a longer term planning horizon and

utilising scenario planning, modelling and assumptions to plan robustly for the 'what-ifs', but more importantly to inform the longer term direction of travel now so that decisions in the meantime about cost reductions, savings and income generation can be 'future proofed'.

### Political and Managerial Leadership

The political leadership at Hampshire is highly respected, both within the organisation and also across a range of stakeholders. We heard from many partners, including district councils, how there has been a notable and refreshed readiness to engage and collaborate more. Many people we spoke with suggested the Council has moved from being a 'parent' to a 'partner'. It will be important to continue this trend given your aspiration to work with communities, harness capacity within localities, and develop your relationships further with the voluntary sector, but also more generally as further collaboration and co-production become bigger features of modern public service delivery.

In particular, partners and stakeholders would welcome earlier engagement, for example in the commissioning cycle and policy/proposal development, but more generally a continued dialogue about the future challenges so that they can help inform and determine solutions. Notwithstanding the recognised intention to engage and listen more, the current relationship with the County Council was perceived by some as 'transactional', in that the Council often engages at a point when the decision has been made, or 'late in the day' so that the appetite of stakeholders to input is not maximised and the wisdom, expertise and experience of potential delivery partners is not sought or utilised.

There is clearly strong professional leadership and operational management that delivers excellent services through your Departments. There is a widespread and almost universal recognition of the high quality of your service delivery and professionalism, and the Council has a good reputation, evidenced in part by the arrangements in place for Hampshire to deliver services on behalf of other authorities, e.g. Children's Services.

The Council recognises the importance of being a strong and visible 'leader of place'. You have invested time and resource to develop key strategic partnerships and forums to enable multi-agency dialogue and collaboration on key issues facing the county, including the Hampshire Partnership and Civilian Military Partnership, as well as the statutory partnerships such as the Health & Well Being Board which is chaired by the Deputy Leader. The Council's leadership and involvement is viewed positively.

In some partnerships the Council's role may need to become more prominent, such as the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to ensure you maximise the capacity of

wider partners in meeting shared objectives. LEPs are clearly become the primary means to deliver economic growth, with more and more of Central Government funding streams being routed through them. The Council needs to ensure it remains a good and supportive partner on the two LEPs, but may need to raise its profile and assertiveness as 'leader of place' to ensure the partnerships deliver for Hampshire.

As you deliver your priorities and transformation, leadership roles and styles are likely to need to evolve. Internally there will be a continued need for strong leadership to drive the change programme, ensuring cross departmental challenge helps drive transformation and innovation. Externally, your aim to work with communities to enhance local services and harness community capacity will require active community leadership by councillors and officers. The role of the local County Councillor in particular will be critical in helping to co-ordinate and harness resource and activity.

### Governance and decision-making

The Council is committed to ensuring good corporate governance. Whilst we did not examine your governance arrangements in detail, the processes and systems one would expect to see in a well-functioning local authority look to be in place at Hampshire. There is a comprehensive Annual Governance Statement (for 2012/13) and the latest external audit did not identify any areas of concern. You regularly review and refresh elements of governance arrangements to ensure fitness for purpose – e.g. introduced a Conduct Advisory Panel, implemented a new performance management framework, revised the risk management strategy and assessed the Audit Committee's operations.

There are, though, some aspects of the current decision-making system, such as the Overview and Scrutiny function, that might benefit from evolving further to provide more internal challenge and support to policy development and decision-making. Scrutiny members feel generally engaged, but their role in providing challenge could be enhanced further to enable more impact, for example, through earlier engagement in the policy and budget development cycle which would allow a more timely input that informs and influences.

You recognise the importance of a more 'matrix' approach to transformation and have developed your approach to this. Further embedding of stronger cross council programme governance will help ensure relevant inter-dependencies between transformation work streams and sequencing of change projects and activity maximise the potential for savings. We think this is something that should be progressed with pace. Currently many of the Transforming to 2015 work-streams seem to be department or service specific projects. There could be more potential savings and cost reductions if there were more cross-council thematic work-streams, e.g. demand management.

The cross-party Member Development Group has, we understand, begun to consider the community leadership role of councillors and how that will need to evolve further to support the Council's priority aim to work with communities to enhance local services. Councillors will we suggest need to be at the centre of this - as one person put it they will need to 'lead the leverage' of local resources and capacity. This is important work and will we suggest need to include consideration of the respective relationships with other key local roles such as district/borough councillors, as well as the information and support requirements of councillors. You may need to consider how this work feeds into and/or complements the transformation work stream looking at your approach to enabling and working with communities.

### Organisational Capacity

The Council is clearly committed to working with others, and you appreciate this as an increasingly important means through which capacity and resources can be maximised to continue to meet the needs of communities across Hampshire. There are a range of impressive examples of multi-agency working, co-location and collaboration to pool, increase capacity and resilience, and share expertise and intelligence to deliver better interventions and outcomes.

We were impressed with the work you are doing on the Supporting Families Programme, and there are an array of other good examples including early intervention, the Armed Forces Community Covenant and Civilian Military Partnership, developing a more 'Dementia friendly' Hampshire and community safety projects and plans. There are undoubtedly many more we could list. The Havant Plaza is obviously helping you to break down some of the traditional organisational boundaries and encouraging informal as well as formal collaboration. You understand capacity can be increased by adopting a more cross-functional approach in other areas and have started to do this.

Formal partnership working and integration is also being pursued as a means by which to increase organisational capacity and resilience. An obvious example is the development of the Integrated Business Centre (IBC) with Hampshire Fire Service and Hampshire Police which provides an excellent platform for the delivery of shared services in the future. Beyond the key business support services of HR, Finance and Procurement being rolled out from April, we know you are also exploring the potential for improved joint or shared working in a variety of other functions such as fleet management, learning and development, research & analysis, and property services.

This, combined with the strong management capacity and technical expertise, forms a current operating strategy/ethos of creating capacity to trade, reducing operational costs and spend, and maintaining a strong emphasis on high quality professional

services. This has proven to be very successful to date. It has contributed greatly to the current strong position you are in as a Council. In some ways it makes thinking about the longer term operating model and transformation required to get you there more difficult. There is no obvious 'burning platform.' Nonetheless you have prudently started to consider this.

You appreciate the next phase of change and transformation is likely to require different skills and capacity. You have started to develop mechanisms to address this, such as through the engagement of a private sector partner to provide additional intellectual capacity, and the roll out of a management development programme focusing on the development of skills for the future such as commercial awareness. We agree that the capability and capacity of the organisation to change needs to be an ongoing consideration.

More immediately health and well-being is a key priority for the Council and one where continuing strong engagement with the Health & Well-Being Board and alignment with neighbouring authorities will be critical in joining up and maximising resources/capacity from the 'whole system'. You appreciate that the health economy is not co-terminus with the county, and that the Better Care Fund provides an opportunity to harness capacity further and the scope to work across economies.

### **Harnessing community capacity**

You asked the peer team to consider and comment on how the Council can better work in particular locations by harnessing all available community capacity including partners, infrastructure and facilities to improve outcomes. You also asked us to consider the way the Council works with the voluntary and community sector. Some of what is covered in the sections above relate to these areas. The following sections provide a summary and/or reiteration of the peers' key observations.

The Council has made an explicit commitment to work with communities to enhance local services, develop local capacity and solutions, and improve access to services. It is one of the four priorities in the Strategic Plan 2013-17 and one of the work streams of the 'Transformation to 2015' programme. The work stream is usefully providing an opportunity to test and stretch potential approaches in two districts – Test Valley and Havant – and together with those authorities you will be drawing on learning and consultancy support from the Public Service Transformation Network. We think this is a good way of ensuring you develop a considered and informed approach.

There is already an abundance of current practice to draw on of course. We learnt about a number of notable programmes, initiatives and activity happening on the ground that enable community capacity building or improve the responsiveness to local needs. We were impressed with the Village Agents and Parish Lengthsmen

schemes, which are evidently delivering positive outcomes for localities. We have already mentioned the Supporting Families Programme as a good example of multi-agency working at a local level. There also looks to be some excellent work going on with specific communities of interest such as the Ghurkha/Nepalese community, and the Care Ambassadors project.

The work you have already done with Havant and Test Valley councils – such as the development of The Plaza and Community Conversation Project - demonstrates a track record, and in a sense the work you are looking to progress is the next iteration of this, rather than a revolutionary new direction of travel for the County Council. It will be important therefore that the learning from the transformation work stream and Public Service Transformation Network informs your thinking not only about the models and practice that work, but also focusses on how they can be scaled up and rolled out across other areas the county.

There is a need to consider the offer to other areas as soon as possible, and whether this is a bespoke offer for each area, a consistent offer that can be tailored or a standard model. As part of this you will need to consider the County Council's (and councillor) role in leading, co-ordinating and managing the interface with localities, and also the governance arrangements to support that. There are a variety of different approaches being taken by councils up and down the country. For example:

- Staffordshire has eight District Commissioning Leads (DCLs) who act as the local strategic lead for the county council, and work directly with County Councillors, senior officers, district and borough councils and other local partners to draw together locally responsive solutions and service delivery to improve outcomes for local communities.
- Wiltshire has 18 Area Boards that promote and enable the development of stronger and more resilient communities across Wiltshire's community areas. They are made up of local councillors, officers, partners, and supported a Community Action Manager who provides a link between the Board, local people and organisations in the local community
- Buckinghamshire have established Local Area Forums and Local Community Partnerships to strengthen local democratic accountability by empowering local councillors to take decisions, shape and influence service delivery in the local area. Forums include county, district and parish councillors and representatives from police, health and other organisations.
- Worcestershire has an approach focussed on the local county councillor being the 'go to' as community leader and a community leadership service that brings together a number of teams that work towards creating stronger communities and improving the council's links with local people, with strong links to district-level local strategic partnerships.

Whatever the model or offer proposed, there will be a need to share information and intelligence to map the current activity, resources (expenditure and grant) and services going into a particular area from all partners (public and voluntary sector), the assets and facilities and the community activity and capacity that can be called on. The time and resource to do this should not be underestimated. You appreciate this, and there is already excellent ongoing work with some district and borough councils. But if the intention is to roll out an approach countywide from 2015/16 then progress for all district areas across the county may need to accelerate. The mapping exercise may of course be one of the mechanisms that inform the model adopted for a given area.

You have been clear that the work is not necessarily about saving money, albeit by increasing community resilience and empowerment and creating a more coherent 'whole system' or 'one public sector' offer you hope to reduce demand for public services over time. It will be important we think to have a set of agreed performance measures and outcomes, focussing on the added social value (happiness, wellbeing, health, inclusion and empowerment) and perhaps proxy indicators re reduced demand on certain services, so that there is a cross-agency agreement on what the return on investment should be.

Informed by the knowledge that more of Hampshire's residents now regularly volunteer, you are basing some proposals on there being capacity within communities to draw on. To ensure this is a sustainable approach, you will need to continue to develop your understanding of how future volunteer capacity will evolve and develop, and how you can shape and support that development. Trends are inevitably changing, for example a rise in the number of people volunteering as a means by which to gain work experience. An understanding of the age demographic and incentives of volunteers can inform a strategic approach to engaging new and diverse volunteers through innovative mechanisms such as time banks and time credits.

### **Working with the voluntary sector**

There is a willingness and appetite from the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to engage with the County Council, and they recognise the Council's desire to improve and further develop how this happens. Current engagement was described as often being activity that seeks to 'inform rather than involve'. Engagement that occurs earlier in the procurement or decision-making process would be welcomed by many who feel this would facilitate a more meaningful and on-going dialogue, and one that can help jointly determine solutions and commissioning outcomes.

There appears to be a substantial dependence on grants to voluntary sector organisations as the mechanism by which to deliver outcomes. Many of these are presumably historical and no longer linked strongly to the delivery of Council priorities. It may be timely and prudent to consider a greater focus on outcome-

based and local commissioning. We suggest there is scope to seek more 'market' input into the specification of contracts pre-tender, which will in turn help further evolve commissioning from the procuring of 'traditional' service delivery to the commissioning of new interventions and activity.

All of this of course will require further evolving the relationship between Council and sector, and you will wish to consider how you want to shape your strategic relationship with the sector in the future. Our observation was that there is a large and complex Voluntary and Community Sector infrastructure with some apparent duplication. Given your 'Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector' Policy Statement was developed in 2010 it appears timely to review and refresh this and use this exercise to facilitate a dialogue with the sector about the future relationship. Alongside this you may wish to consider reviewing the Compact and specifically the opportunity that the Social Value Act provides.

We suggest that this may also help to develop better cross council and local understanding of the existing Voluntary and Community Sector capacity, and help determine where there are gaps in capacity that the Council can help develop and strengthen. This should be part of a deliberate strategy to ensure, working with others, that there is sufficient capacity in the right places in the sector so that the Council does not necessarily have to be a direct deliverer of services. Supported by the Council, the Voluntary and Community Sector can play a lead role in developing communities to do more for themselves.

### **Our recommendations: suggestions and ideas for your consideration**

The peer team developed some key suggestions for you to consider. These are based on what we saw, heard and read. Drawing on our experience of the sector and knowledge of local government improvement, we have made several suggestions throughout the letter of things you may wish to consider, including:

1. Consider whether a clearer articulation and earlier dialogue with staff, partners and other stakeholders around the longer term challenges is needed to ensure transformational thinking across partners is aligned and future proofed
2. As the scale of financial challenges become more significant, consider if a longer-term financial planning horizon, based more on council-wide priorities and cross-cutting themes, will help maximise the financial resilience you have built to date
3. Continue to evolve and strengthen the overview and scrutiny function, including an earlier engagement in the policy and budget development cycle to enable a more timely input from non-executive members that supports and informs decision-making and policy development

4. Drive and enable a more cross-council and matrix approach to transformation by embedding a stronger programme governance that ensures relevant inter-dependencies between work streams and sequencing of change projects and activity to maximise the potential for savings and cost reductions

The following are things we think will help you progress the work you have embarked on harnessing capacity in communities and the relationship with the voluntary and community sector:

5. Develop options for the interface and governance with localities including consideration of:
  - current practice and engagement mechanisms within the districts
  - approaches adopted by other councils and lessons learnt
  - the role of the local county councillor
6. Further strengthen the work to map capacity in all localities and continue it at pace so that it helps inform the offer to areas, and the County Council and Councillor role and governance arrangements required
7. Consider scaling up and broadening the role of Village Agents as an initiative to enhance community capacity and resilience
8. Develop a more strategic approach to volunteering that engages new and diverse volunteers using innovative mechanisms
9. Consider how you want to shape your strategic relationship with the sector in the future – to simplify relationships and funding arrangements. Refresh “Working with the Voluntary and Community Sector” and the Compact – and plan jointly with the sector – so that it reinforces the new strategic relationship
10. Seek to engage the Voluntary and Community Sector earlier in procurement, commissioning and decision-making processes (e.g. pre procurement and pre decision)
11. Maximise the opportunity of the Social Value Act

We will provide further information and signposting separately on some of the above to help inform your ongoing consideration and thinking.

## **Next steps**

You will undoubtedly wish to reflect on these findings and suggestions made with your senior managerial and political leadership before determining how the council wishes to take things forward. As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of continued activity to support this. In the meantime we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with you and colleagues through the peer challenge to date. We will endeavour to signpost you to other sources of information and examples of practice and thinking.

I thought it helpful to provide contact details for Heather Wills who, as you know, is our Principal Adviser (South East). Heather can be contacted via email at [heather.wills@local.gov.uk](mailto:heather.wills@local.gov.uk) (or tel. 07770 701188). She is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Hopefully this provides you with a convenient and continued route of access to the Local Government Association, its resources and any further support.

All of us connected with the peer challenge would like to wish you every success going forward. Once again, many thanks to you and your colleagues for inviting the peer challenge and to everyone involved for their participation.

Paul Clarke - Programme Manager (Local Government Support)  
Local Government Association  
On behalf of the peer challenge team