

# Corporate Peer Challenge

## **Oadby and Wigston Borough Council**

*21-23 March 2017*

Feedback Report

## 1. Executive Summary

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council is a relatively small and ambitious council in the County of Leicestershire. The council has staff and elected members who are very committed and focused on delivering the best possible services for the residents and businesses of Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston. The elected members and staff are proud to work for, and represent, the council and have a strong understanding of the local context. There is a clear member commitment to consulting with residents before making decisions.

The Council has prioritised Health and Wellbeing as one of its core priorities. The Council took a decision to make a significant investment in the Leisure offer which has proven to be a great success and continues to significantly outperform the estimated participation and income. The working relationship with the private sector Leisure provider SLM Everyone Active is an excellent example of partnership working which effectively delivers one of the core priorities of the Council and is an example of best practice. OWBC's private sector provider makes strong links between leisure, health and wellbeing agendas in its delivery and this aligns very well with the council's own well-being aspirations

Oadby and Wigston Council is keen to work in partnership where possible to improve capacity. It benefits from the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), making sure it has a seat at the various negotiating tables and is influencing partners. Partners highlighted Oadby and Wigston's positive contribution however there was also concern that there was insufficient capacity below the Chief Executive to progress external projects which can result in decisions being delayed and has resulted in the Chief Executive attending external meetings which were not the best use of his time.

For valid reasons the permanent organisational structure is incomplete and is placing limitations on organisational capacity. There are still a few key posts which are filled with interim appointments however there are plans in place to recruit to these positions. A fully functioning management structure will help spread responsibilities. It will also assist the Council to focus and deliver on key priorities and introduce stricter project management disciplines to key projects.

There is a need to invest in capacity and skills in order to deliver the ambitious agenda and savings programme. The council does not appear to have the project management structures or capacity for this. In the future, it will be important to ensure projects are properly resourced and defined, and underpinned by project management discipline.

The staff are encouraged to make suggestions. There are some excellent ideas from officers on using assets for income generation, but in order to realise this income this work

needs to be translated into a delivery plan with clear lines of accountability and robust performance management.

There is an occasional blurring of the roles and responsibilities between officers and members where officers tend to second-guess the decisions Members will make. This is particularly apparent in the medium term financial strategy and budget options put before Members to achieve the financial plan. Involving members of the administration in strategic planning will help to share the responsibilities and ensure that the challenges (particularly financial challenges) faced by the council can help the Members make more informed decisions in a timely fashion.

There is a clear priority for customer access and health and wellbeing, which is consistently understood by councillors. There is not necessarily a corresponding commitment to resources to support these priorities, such as increasing capacity in the teams. There is a concern that failure to invest in the programme of change will result in delays and incur additional costs.

The Customer Service centre is clearly popular with residents, and has high performing and dedicated members of staff who are meeting increasing demand. To ensure phase two is a success, outcomes and benefits will need to be clearly defined and appropriate objectives set at the outset in order to achieve them. The Council will need to be careful that it does not become a victim of its own success and inadvertently engineer a reverse channel shift, leading to increased costs.

Oadby and Wigston are considered to be a good partner that, although recognising the limitations due to its size and location, is maximising its influence and building productive relationships with others.

## 2. Key recommendations

The main section of this report contains a range of suggestions and observations that inform some quick wins and practical actions. Many of these came from the onsite interviews and conversations, which provided insight into the organisation, and are informed by ideas and examples of practice from elsewhere.

The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council

1. **Increase the investment in resources to achieve the council's modernisation agenda to deliver a more confident council.** Invest in programme management capacity to deliver projects - (for example exploring potential for Brockshill) - whilst ensuring that projects are planned and adequately resourced before they commence. This should help in populating a forward plan of significant decisions for members to consider and to help achieve greater focus on the corporate plan.

2. **Deliver the MTFS providing savings options for members which are fully worked up.** A clear plan which reflects accurately the timeframe in which further efficiency (current and future) are to be achieved would be of benefit. Ensure the plan clearly identifies priorities and resource implications. Encourage members to make decisions within the next 6 months regarding initiatives to satisfy the medium term funding gap. Ensure savings options contain the full breadth of options that members will need to consider, for example in relation to car parking strategy.
3. **Embed the vision for the borough and maintain a tight focus on priorities to deliver the ambitious growth agenda.** Further advance and accelerate the borough's investment strategy to effectively utilise the opportunities for re-purposing and creating new growth. Build on the newly established performance framework to ensure that decisions are evidence-based and that evidence is available to all members.
4. **Implement the ICT and Asset Management Strategies and consider the additional resources required.** Prioritise the completion of a longer term digital and channel shift strategy which utilises the progress and improvement made in relation to customer service transformation. Ensure the organisation as a whole is clear about what it wants from this part of its transformation vision. Utilise Customer Service Excellence framework and approaches as part of ongoing improvement. Focus on developing a longer term plan for the main council building and other parts of the council's estate.
5. **Finalise the structure linked to the modernisation agenda at the earliest opportunity to free the Chief Executive from operational matters.** Clarify the corporate journey for staff and members, and their distinct roles in this, to facilitate a policy-led, financially disciplined and customer focused council.
6. **Build into the communications plan a confidence about your achievements and celebrate your successes.**

### 3. Summary of the Peer Challenge approach

#### The peer team

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 Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (OWBC) were:

- Janet Waggott, Chief Executive, Ryedale District Council
- Councillor Peter Thornton, South Lakeland District Council
- Councillor Tony Jackson, East Hertfordshire District Council
- Chris Traill, Strategic Director, Neighbourhood and Community Wellbeing, Charnwood Borough Council
- Jane Clarke, Head of Policy and Governance, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Ernest Opuni – Local Government Association

## Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges. These are the areas we believe are critical to councils' performance and improvement:

1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
2. Leadership of Place: Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
3. Organisational leadership and governance: Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
4. 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?
5. Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

In addition to these questions, you asked the peer team to consider/review/provide feedback on:

- Oadby and Wigston's Customer Service transformation. In particular
  - (i) the effectiveness of Phase 1 and
  - (ii) potential to develop this as part of Phase 2
- Oadby and Wigston's Health and Well Being Board. In particular
  - (i) its effectiveness
  - (ii) its achievements so far and
  - (iii) how it may be developed further to provide better integration between health and physical activity in the future.

## 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. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. 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 peer 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 days onsite in Oadby and Wigston, during which they:

- Spoke to more than 60 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders.
- Gathered information and views from 25 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading.
- Collectively spent more than 230 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 6 weeks at Oadby and Wigston Borough Council.

This report 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 (21-23 March 2017). 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 addressing and progressing.

## 4. Feedback

### 4.1 Understanding of the local place and priority setting

It is clear that OWBC has a good understanding of the different communities within the borough and their demographics. The council is able to delineate and describe different area needs to offer choice to communities despite shrinking budgets. Evidence of this is demonstrated in the example of the new green waste service, which was able to achieve a saving for the council whilst still offering choice to residents.

The council can demonstrate a clear understanding of the importance of enablers such as transport in assisting regeneration of the borough. Road and rail links are prioritised in the Leicestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) plan and OWBC clearly recognises the need to support efforts for delivering the M1 motorway junction improvement. The council is taking a leadership role on behalf of other districts and 'punched above its weight' by gaining partners' consensus on progressing this infrastructure development.

There is a clear member commitment to consulting with residents before making decisions. Members consult well with residents before making significant decisions, such as the future options offered around waste.

The council's aspiration to stimulate its town centres is very clear. One example of this was bringing back into use the shopping units vacated by the closure of a significant retail outlet in the centre of Wigston. The council was proactive in attracting other high street stores and this space is now occupied by other retailers. The council is focused on supporting thriving town centres and it recognises the importance of helping these to be sustained in the face of out-of-town shopping centre development and improvement. The free car parking offer is one of the ways that the council has chosen to support its town centres in the face of this competition, and the team noted its popularity amongst traders and shoppers.

OWBC also demonstrates a good understanding that balances meeting housing need and economic growth and also supporting business requirements.

While the team found a clear description of different communities what was less clear was a compelling narrative on how the council will be tackling deprivation in the borough. Area action plans are in place but we were not certain that these go far enough in addressing identified need.

It was not always clear as to how embedded the vision for the borough is, or how clearly understood it is by staff and partners. There may be some value is more clearly defining what the longer term vision and overall model for future council services look like.

Whilst the commitment to consultation is positive, we did question whether the frequency of this activity might inadvertently lead to delays in decision making, which will become an increasingly important factor to consider as the budget gap widens. This should be considered when timetabling projects and future plans.

## **4.2 Leadership of Place**

The council is actively involved in Combined Authority discussions and recognises the importance of this to the future of Oadby and Wigston.

Councillors work hard at communicating with residents and Officers recognise this as a really valuable and effective link to the communities of Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston. There is good attendance by communities at these forums and typically there are 40-60 residents, members and partners present at these meetings. Partners such as the police attend regularly, and the council supports these financially leading to a current spend of around £10,000 per forum per year.

OWBC has constructive relationships with and a good reputation amongst town traders group and voluntary groups as evidenced by the support for the voluntary sector and community groups such as the Senior Citizens Forum.

The council can demonstrate a very clear and successful leadership in relation to the wider health and wellbeing agenda. OWBC has worked well with a range of partners in taking this forward and is very proactive in securing resources from bodies such as Sport England to support this work.

Staff describe the Senior Management Team (SMT) as being open to new ideas. A recent example of this is the proposal to set up a new housing company. The SMT is proactive in taking this forward and staff have bought into this as evidence that the council is willing to try new things. Staff feel therefore that if initiatives and ideas perform and work well, they will be supported and recognised by the council's leadership.

We would encourage the council to differentiate between its vision for the borough, and the policy interventions that will help to deliver it. Whilst the vision will remain consistent over time and across communities, the policies to deliver it may change and differ depending on local circumstances. One such example is free car parking in the borough, which is a policy choice to achieve the vision of 'vibrant town centres'. In the future the council may wish to implement different policies to achieve their vision. However in order to assess the viability and impact of the authority's policy choices, the council will need to be clear about what policy is and what vision is.

## **4.3 Organisational leadership and governance**

The Leader and Chief Executive of OWBC have developed a shared vision for the borough, and are aligned in terms of strategic thinking and business planning.

More widely, councillors were commended to the team for moving positively towards becoming bolder and less risk-averse in their decision-making, necessitated by the ongoing budget cuts facing the organisation. There are good examples of this leadership from the council's work in planning and engagement with children and young people.

There is a clear connection between members' vision for 'improving the health of residents' and the policy initiatives to improve health and wellbeing. This is a theme which represents a particular area of strength in what the council delivers. We found examples of this through members embracing the savings agenda and changing their approach to delivering the council's Planning function.

The 'Vision and Values' events and budget briefings were personally led by the Senior Management Team. All staff were invited to contribute. The positive outcome of this approach is that great progress has been made on securing buy-in from OWBC managers and staff alike: this commitment was palpable to the team. Staff also made clear to the team that they believed the council is more positively viewed as a good place to work as a result of the progress made towards the modernisation agenda. There is evidence of this in the increase in the numbers and quality of applications for jobs at OWBC that the council has received in recent months. .

OWBC decided to be tested against the new Investors in People (IIP) standard Level 6 instead of being assessed against the current less-challenging standard. This council has made good progress in this area. The peer challenge team viewed the decision to go for this level as a brave and forward thinking approach which took place at the right time to help raise organisational confidence. The council is being proactive on the recommendations received from this accreditation process as demonstrated by the Reward and Recognition Strategy, KPIs, Communications Strategy and Learning Pool.

Consequently the council's Personal Review programme and the use of one-to-ones are well planned and this links in with the vision within the OWBC Corporate Plan. This is clearly stimulating staff who told the team that 'we are not here to manage decline...we are here to manage the future'.

The different roles between officer and member responsibilities were not always clear. The Council would find value in a greater focus on objective and priority setting by both the SMT and Members.

Going forward we encourage members in particular to stay focused on the savings agenda and to take a stronger lead on this element of the council's business. The recent work developed to strengthen performance management needs to be driven from the top of the council to inform decision making. There is an opportunity for the council to focus the work of its various committees, and to consider whether there is more that could be done in relation to increased delegation.

#### **4.4 Financial planning and viability**

The council is well placed to deliver a balanced budget for 2019/20. An option list has been prepared and members understand that a 'stand still' or status quo maintenance approach is not viable. OWBC has some significant plans for identifying savings in relation to bin collection, Materials Recovery Facility (MRF), transfer of Brockshill, charging for disposal of green waste, car parking, one public business estate and the property company. Not all of these may be politically acceptable however it is important that sufficient plans and

proposals are firmed up and implemented sooner rather than later so that Members have worked-up options from which to make their decisions.

Shared services with other districts are also being considered and progressed. This includes land charges collaboration with Blaby, a universal credit shared programme with Blaby and Harborough, a potential offer of Human Resources support to other districts, vehicle servicing being shared with Blaby, ICT and Economic Development partnerships, and the potential for building control to become a shared service across a number of districts.

The council has developed savings plans from the options list it has prepared. Options for Brockhill Environment Centre are likely to produce savings of between £100,000 and £300,000 per annum, whichever option the council chooses. It will be important that OWBC ensure housing investment company and refuse/recycling options have been brought forward to include in 2019/20 budgets, which will require the 2017/18 savings to be firmly secured at the earliest opportunity.

The council is clearly confident in taking strategic decisions. One such example has been the decision to make a £9m capital investment in leisure in order to generate a revenue benefit of approximately £450k pa.

There is a potential income stream through the disposal or re-purposing of the council's depot once the county council's recycling credits are reduced, however timing is dependent on when this change is fully implemented.

We feel the council will need to do more to ensure it has enough capacity to deliver some of its more complex savings plans and this will need to be addressed in the short term to ensure these plans are delivered on time.

The council may wish to give some consideration to whether creating parishes in particular areas to create additional resource in area-based activities through precepting would be an option for Oadby and Wigston.

#### **4.5 Capacity to deliver**

The SMT is receptive and supportive of new ideas from staff and is clearly focused on providing opportunities for its workforce to innovate. There are very few hierarchies, which is enabling a feeling of empowerment for staff. OWBC is a small organisation making it relatively 'fleet of foot' in terms of operational delivery.

Managers feel developed through the organisation and are supportive of each other. As a group it is clear that they provide a check and challenge, as well as support for each other.

Staff are committed to delivering the best outcomes for the community. They value the place and the organisation and there is a willingness to improve. They described to us an environment which is engaging and inclusive and progressing well in order to

become clearer on service delivery imperatives and priorities. In their words 'we are here for the residents'.

OWBC has a track record of securing s106 contributions, which provide resources for improving estates. There is a wide recognition that this provides opportunity to secure return on investment or profit share options/opportunities. This is an integral part of the thinking which is taking place in relation to future options for Brockshill for example.

The Personal Review Programme and one to ones are well planned. IIP 6 was brave and forward thinking; it was the right time to do this. It prompted action on key performance indicators, a communications strategy, the learning pool, and a reward and recognition strategy, all of which needed prioritising.

The council's Information and Technology (IT) Strategy will support agile working but managers need to be clearer on what they want from it. It appears that this will require additional thought to ensure that what is delivered reflects clearly identified needs and clearly thought-through benefits.

There is a need to invest in capacity and skills in order to deliver the ambitious agenda and savings programme. The council does not appear to have the project management structures or capacity for this. In the future, it will be important to ensure projects are properly resourced and defined, and underpinned by project management discipline. We feel that there would also be some benefit in OWBC reviewing whether it currently has sufficient capacity and the right level of internal expertise for ICT initiatives. Specialist external help may be required for this, and also to review refuse and recycling options.

We were given clear feedback that the main council building is not fit for purpose and inhibits modern working. It will be important that all options for what is done next in relation to the future use of the building factors in all possible options

#### **4.6 Customer Service transformation**

Customer Service staff are very committed and enthusiastic, and feel empowered to make suggestions for continuous service improvements. In addition to enthusiasm the team are proactive in looking for opportunities to work more efficiently. One such example was a member of staff taking the initiative to develop a Google map of council services and their locations.

The Customer Service centre is successfully delivering its core operational functions, and there is a strong integration between front and back-office services. Due to this, the Customer Services team are able to take on more complex functions, such as the registration of electors for the up-coming elections. This relieves pressure on the back-office and provides residents with greater options for service delivery. However, the Council will need to be careful that it does not become a victim of its own success and inadvertently engineer a reverse channel shift, leading to increased costs.

Footfall and usage statistics for the Customer Service centre are increasing year-on-year due to its popularity amongst residents, and the successful location and delivery of this project demonstrates the council's deep knowledge of the local area.

Whilst there is significant potential to develop phase two of this project, the team did witness some issues with the delivery of phase one that would need to be resolved before phase two can be implemented successfully. **These issues include insufficient resources allocated to the project and a lack of strong project management discipline.**

The Customer Service centre is clearly popular with residents, and has high performing and dedicated members of staff who are meeting increasing demand. To ensure phase two is a success, outcomes and benefits will need to be clearly defined and appropriate objectives set at the outset in order to achieve them. Whilst not detracting from the success of phase one, it appears there could have been greater clarity about its objectives along with a more detailed description of the expected outcomes. Phase two would appear to provide good opportunity for this narrative to be developed ahead of delivery.

We have concerns about the capacity of the organisation to deliver projects with rigour and discipline, and greater project management resource and support for the Services Manager would have benefited the Customer Service centre project to ensure it was delivered on time and in budget. We also noted the strain placed on staff to deliver this within existing resources, and we would recommend that adequate resources are made available to support further progress.

#### **4.7 Health and Well Being Board (HWBB)**

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council's alignment between health and well-being and leisure services is exceptionally strong. All delivery is focused upon wider health outcomes for communities. The passionate staff supporting the HWBB have brought renewed energy and delivery, which has included proactively securing external funding and improving the council's reach into different communities.

OWBC has made a strategic decision to maximise the effectiveness and reach of its HWBB's work by aligning this with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) 'footprint'. This was clearly evidenced by collaboration across various districts' boundaries through working jointly with Blaby, Melton and Harborough (CCG partners) as well as with South Leicestershire.

OWBC staff supporting the HWBB are clearly committed to continuous improvement. They have proactively used learning from effective delivery by the CCG in the West of the county to improve delivery in their area. Lessons deployed relate particularly to expanding reach through mirroring partnership working and delivery across the CCG footprint.

Effective partnership working at all levels includes a strong focus by OWBC on getting the right partners who can drive change around the HWBB table. For example GPs, and representatives from the wider health economy and the private sector are an integral

part of the Board. The work of this Board is focused on delivering well-being and health outcomes through strong collaboration. All partners we met spoke of a clear focus from OWBC on delivering effectively and achieving greatest impact through partnership working with various colleagues.

OWBC is achieving strong engagement with GPs (including one who is an OWBC councillor) and is achieving joined-up delivery as a result. There is clear evidence of good collaboration at a county level on this agenda, such as the work with Leicestershire and Rutland Sports Partnership which is being used to promote sports activity and sports facilities. OWBC is well placed to take on a leadership role beyond the boundaries of the borough.

We found clear evidence of a strong and collaborative relationship between the council and its private sector partner SLM, which has a firm foundation based on alignment of values and priorities. OWBC's private sector provider makes strong links between leisure, health and wellbeing agendas in its delivery, and this aligns very well with the council's own well-being aspirations. This partner, which has a health arm to its business structure, and clearly understands the value of addressing health inequalities as a core part of leisure service delivery, is being effectively utilised by OWBC, and sits on the HWBB. The contract is a long-term one, which brings both financial certainty and the likelihood of positive outcomes being sustained into the future.

There is clear evidence that the HWBB is effective in its use of community input into designing and sustaining delivery of health outcomes from the service. The council has better targeted and increased the reach and effectiveness of its communications by strongly utilising the 'Active Oadby and Wigston' portal. Following initial design of the portal, the council used a demonstration session to get residents' views and used the feedback received for further development and design of a more community/user-friendly resource. In addition to this there is strong signposting from the council's website to make the 'offer' more accessible, whilst further raising the profile of this work.

We found good evidence of councillors playing a strong community leadership role in their localities. The HWBB is using member networks as a spring-board to deliver further outcomes. This is effective because councillors are both committed to and knowledgeable about this area of the council's delivery, meaning they are being utilised effectively as local ambassadors for the wider well-being agenda.

OWBC can demonstrate its targeted focus upon reducing health inequalities, which takes into account different community needs and prevention. This is being driven through a clear programme of work targeting officer support and effort to focus time and activity around specific themes in order to maximise impact achieved. This includes clearly identified themes such as dementia, diabetes, healthy eating and substance misuse linked to evidence of need and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) data. OWBC has supported the HWBB in producing a sound commissioning plan for encouraging sport and physical activity in order to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

OWBC can demonstrate very strong performance in terms of community engagement. There has been a significant increase in footfall in leisure centres from 270,000 in 2014

to 717, 000 by 2016. This performance in terms of usage is impressive in light of the fact that when the SLM contract began the target was to improve footfall by 3.5 percent – this has been comprehensively surpassed.

There is strong accountability and clear link to delivering corporate objectives, demonstrated by all staff delivering on the HWBB agenda. Staff are working to clear KPIs which link through to the front-line via one to ones. Aside from the clear reporting of HWBB progress through line-management responsibilities, this performance is subject to scrutiny by relevant council structures such as the Service Delivery Committee and Policy and Finance committee.

There is effective use of external funding and other resources to align sport and healthy lifestyles with wider health and well-being outcomes sought by the council and its partners. This includes securing and using Public Health and Sport England funding to deliver focused intervention. Through these sources £105,000 along with more than £65,000 in additional match funding has been secured. These resources are targeting initiatives focusing on the needs particular to different parts of the community. This includes Nifty@50, supporting BME community groups to secure funds and securing resources for 3G sports pitches. The strength of the relationship with SLM is integral to securing better health outcomes, whilst the quality of the commissioning bid to Leicestershire and Rutland Sport Partnership was instrumental in securing resources.

The council has secured free sports and leisure facilities membership for staff, demonstrating proactive encouragement of healthy lifestyles not only for residents but the council's own workforce. There is additional close working with the council's Human Resources department to support and cater for staff health needs whilst using their views to shape the leisure offer via consultation.

Whilst the amount delivered is extensive and is having a positive impact, issue of internal capacity could be a challenge into the future. However, there is recognition of this by the council, and therefore a keen approach to building resilience through community sustaining. OWBC provides support to constituted local groups to help them become self-sufficient e.g. assisting with funding applications. We feel the work on building community resilience and volunteering capacity should continue in order to address this.

The Brockhill facility has potential to add significant value. However a clear business case and vision for future use is not yet defined. It will be important for the council to identify the future direction it will take in order that the likely benefits can be realised at the earliest opportunity.

## **5. Next steps**

### **Immediate next steps**

We appreciate the senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support this. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this. Mark Edgell, Principal Adviser is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association (LGA). His contact details are: Email [mark.edgell@local.gov.uk](mailto:mark.edgell@local.gov.uk) and Tel: 07747 636910

In the meantime we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with the Council throughout the peer challenge. We will endeavour to provide signposting to examples of practice and further information and guidance about the issues we have raised in this report to help inform ongoing consideration.

### **Follow up visit**

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge process includes a follow up visit. The purpose of the visit is to help the Council assess the impact of the peer challenge and demonstrate the progress it has made against the areas of improvement and development identified by the peer team. It is a lighter-touch version of the original visit and does not necessarily involve all members of the original peer team. The timing of the visit is determined by the Council. Our expectation is that it will occur within the next 2 years.

### **Next Corporate Peer Challenge**

The current LGA sector-led improvement support offer includes an expectation that all councils will have a Corporate Peer Challenge or Finance Peer Review every 4 to 5 years. It is therefore anticipated that the Council will commission their next Peer Challenge before November 2021.