



Report to: Cabinet Meeting - 5 March 2024

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Peacock, Strategy, Performance & Finance

Director Lead: John Robinson – Chief Executive

Lead Officer: Deborah Johnson, Director - Customer Services and Organisational Development , Ext. 5800

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Report, Non-Key Decision
Report Title	Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge
Purpose of Report	To update Cabinet on the Council’s Peer Challenge, its approach and timeline.
Recommendations	That Cabinet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) notes the rationale and practicalities for an LGA Peer Challenge; and (b) welcomes the Peer Challenge and agrees to progress with the provisional arrangements.
Alternative Options Considered	<p>The LGA is the national membership body for local authorities which works on behalf of member councils to support, promote and improve local government. There are no other organisations that provide this kind of service.</p> <p>There is no compulsion to undertake a peer challenge but as best practice it would be expected to participate every 5 years.</p>
Reason for Recommendations	A peer challenge which looks at how we work, how we deliver for our residents and how our culture operates will enable us to focus on areas of improvement to assist in delivering our community plan.

1.0 Background

The Local Government Association has a membership which comprises 315 of the 317 councils in **England** and includes district, county, metropolitan and unitary authorities along with London boroughs and the City of London Corporation.

The LGA operate a peer challenge programme which supports continuous improvement by providing effective insight, guidance and challenge to enable continuous improvement, as well as assurance to local leaders and residents.

Newark and Sherwood District last took part in a Peer Challenge in 2016. It is considered good practice to undertake a peer challenge every 5 years.

2.0 Proposal/Details of Options Considered

As our last peer challenge was 8 years ago, with the agreement of the Leader one has been provisionally schedule for June 2024.

What is a Peer Challenge?

A team of local authority peers look at our approach across five core elements detailed below as well any other specific challenge we may wish to highlight.

1. Local priorities and outcomes
2. Organisational and place leadership
3. Governance and culture
4. Financial planning and management
5. Capacity for improvement.

They hold up a mirror to the organisation, acting as critical friends and let us know how we are doing. A Peer Challenge celebrates what we are doing well so we can build on it as well as making recommendation where we could improve. The team are able to consider how we perform referencing a wide range of experience of what 'good' looks like in other local authorities.

Who will undertake the Peer Challenge?

The team will, as a minimum, consist of a Political Leader, Chief Executive Officer and one or two Directors. They are from a range of different councils who have some synergy with ourselves in terms of size, political make up and service provision. Each Peer Challenge Team will have a Peer Challenge Manager who works for the LGA and undertakes the coordination of the visit and the final reports and presentations.

What does a Peer Challenge look like?

We will be asked to provide a statement about who we are and what we stand for and any specific insights we would like to gain from the Peer Challenge. We will provide a number of documents in advance which enables the team to consider information prior to the in-person visit. The document pack will include things like our Community Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan, results of staff and resident consultation, performance reports etc.

The Peer Challenge Team are on site for 3-4 days and will speak to as many people as possible. This will include our partners to find out how we work as a leader of place, staff groups across and at all levels of the organisation and key officers. The team will also speak to elected members including the Cabinet, leaders of other groups and chairs of

PPIC and Audit and Governance. They can ask to speak to anyone and where possible this would be accommodated.

What is the outcome of a Peer Challenge?

The team will provide a presentation of key findings on the last day and follow this up with a full report within a few weeks. We would then examine those findings and produce an action plan on how we will use the recommendations to improve our performance. We will need to publish the report and the improvement plan on our website.

What are the benefits of a Peer Challenge?

It is a sector led way we can sense check how we are doing, it is undertaken by people who work in similar local government organisations and has been proven to be the catalyst for real and tangible improvements. It is a positive and constructive way to structure priorities for improvement.

3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None.