

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

LB Haringey

Feedback

August 2024





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1. Introduction

The Council undertook a LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) in May 2023 with the Council publishing the full report with an action plan.

The Progress Review is an integral part of the Corporate Peer Challenge process. Taking place approximately ten months after the CPC, it is designed to provide space for the Council's senior leadership to:

- Update peers on the early progress made and receive feedback on this including how the action plan aligns with the CPC's recommendations.
- Consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were 'on-site' including any further support needs.
- Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date.

The LGA would like to thank Haringey Borough Council for their commitment to sector-led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in the ongoing, open, and close relationship the Council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review was held on 25th June 2024 in-person at the Council offices.

The Progress Review focussed on each of the recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge, under the following theme headings:

- **Local priorities and outcomes** – Developing a vision and embedding leadership of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)
- **Governance and culture** – strengthening the member/officer relationships and a review of scrutiny
- **Financial planning and management** - Capital programme oversight and financial developments
- **Getting the basics right** – Performance and programme management and development of key lines of business enquiry systems
- **Relationship with the community** – Engagement with Haringey's communities

and strengthening community partnerships.

For this Progress Review, the peer team included the following members:

- Althea Loderick, Chief Executive at LB Southwark
- Cllr Sir Steve Houghton, Leader at Barnsley Metropolitan Council
- Carol Culley OBE, Commissioner at Woking BC
- Matt Wilton, Deputy Chief Executive at Newcastle City Council
- Yolande Burgess, Strategy Director: London's Communities at London Councils
- Rebecca Ireland, LGA Peer Challenge Manager
- Shadow peer- Ellie Greenwood Senior Regional Adviser, LGA

In addition to a day of meetings with the Council to conduct the Progress Review, members of the peer team had meetings ahead of being onsite with the Chief Executive and the Director of Resources to receive feedback on developments in the Council and progress against the recommendations since the CPC. The Council provided an updated and RAG-rated CPC action plan, a short position statement, and a number of background documents for the peer team to review.

3. Progress Review — Feedback

The peer team welcomed the opportunity to return to Haringey to see what progress the Council has made over the past year in meeting the recommendations from the original CPC Report.

At the CPC held in 2023 the peer team recognised Haringey as a dynamic and improvement-focused local authority, and an authority that had already achieved significant improvement in recent years. At the peer team's return to the Council for the Progress Review, it heard more examples of improvement and success and saw a more confident and improved Council. The peer team observed officers and members proudly talking about the achievements of the last year including the best possible OFSTED judgement for SEND services, and Haringey's success in securing the London Borough of Culture status for 2027; the team also noted the pride with

which staff talked about their projects, the enthusiasm for change and their place and purpose in the organisation. The team also heard again of the strong and visible leadership provided by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

The council is very open and transparent about the areas still requiring improvement and additional attention, including the challenging financial position, the need to improve services across the Council's landlord function, addressing a backlog of complaints and preparing for an imminent CQC inspection of adult social care services.


Overall the peer team were impressed at the level of progress made by Haringey since the CPC and noted the detailed and structured approach taken by the Council for making improvements and changes to achieve the peer team's recommendations.

Local priorities and outcomes

No.	Recommendation
1	Establish a long-term vision for the Borough.
2	Embed leadership of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) agenda in the Council.

As part of the CPC feedback, the peer team reflected that Haringey would benefit from crafting a long-term vision for the borough to complement their Corporate Delivery Plan and the Haringey Deal, as well as incorporate the manifesto commitments of the administration. The vision should be developed in collaboration with members and officers and engaging with partners and Haringey's communities.

At the time of the Progress Review, the Council were on track to take the Borough Vision to the Cabinet in early autumn having spent the time since the CPC completing a robust residents and partner engagement project, including holding two partner workshops and community engagement that resulted in over 700 residents completing an online survey on a vision for the borough. At the CPC, the peer team praised the community engagement work completed across Tottenham, Wood Green, and other areas. The team suggested that these should be celebrated by the



Council, and that learning about effective engagement activities like these should be captured to help other areas in the Council to emulate successful approaches. The peer team were therefore pleased to hear that this approach was considered in crafting the Borough Vision and in how Haringey communicated with their communities and partners.

As part of the CPC, the peer team observed a committed, engaged, and passionate workforce at Haringey, with staff and members proud of their work and the leadership of the Council. The peer team heard from staff that the Council cares about their employees' wellbeing and that they are pleased they can bring their whole selves to work, with the Council fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment. It was clear that the Council is committed to ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across the Council, with the peer team hearing about the Council's work to achieve this. From speaking to the staff networks, the peer team recommended that this work be strengthened and that leadership of the agenda and work to ensure EDI be led by senior leaders in the Council.

On returning to the Council for the Progress Review, the peer team found a lot of work has been completed on this recommendation with a slight delay attributed to the appointment of a new EDI lead. An EDI Action Plan had been developed with engagement with staff, and the goals and actions in the plan had an identified senior officer owner, with performance measured, monitored, and presented to the Equalities Steering Group. The actions resulting from the peer team's recommendation are impressively broad and detailed and include the development of an EDI Ambassadors programme, senior leaders having an EDI personal development plan, and a commitment to clarify the roles of the staff networks and ensure responsibility for EDI improvements is not solely reliant on staff networks but that the time spent on supporting EDI and their colleagues be recognised as important and protected. This last action has been delivered through the creation of facility time for the leaders of our Staff Equality Networks. The peer team heard at the Progress Review about the concerted efforts made by the senior leadership at the


Council to broaden, promote, integrate, and lead the EDI commitments of the Council. Overall, there has been an improvement with the peer team hearing commitments and the actions agreed are still being implemented and those started still need to embed.

In addition to the peer team noting how Haringey has embraced the EDI recommendation, making good progress on the actions, they were also impressed with how the Council has embraced the wider external EDI agendas in the borough and worked hard to meet the challenges of the last year, providing strong, recognisable place leadership to all communities. The Council appreciates its equalities leadership role for the borough and has led work across partner agencies through the Coordinating Group Addressing Racism. The objectives and actions of this workstream are wide-reaching, with the Council having led on coordinating the partnership, creating space for peers to support each other and air challenges. The next stage of the work includes engaging with members to recruit representatives for the community networks and arrange six-monthly meetings with Cabinet members and Network chairs to hear about challenges and opportunities.

Governance and culture

No.	Recommendation
6	Strengthen member/officer relationships within the Council by creating time and space for members and officers to interact outside of formal meetings to understand each other's roles and responsibilities and build trust
8	Review the scrutiny function within the Council and look at opportunities for building mechanisms that enable the Council to measure the impact of scrutiny activity.

In the CPC feedback, the peer team commented that member-to-member and member-officer relationships were good at the strategic level, with the Cabinet Strategy Meeting observed as a good example of collaborative joint working. The peer team saw evidence of a culture of reciprocal respect and understanding



between members and these officers of each other's roles and responsibilities, in addition to examples of positive working within teams where team members feel safe to speak up and share their insights. Trust by members in the ability and decision-making skills of the wider staff group, however, was observed to be patchy in certain areas, with concerns attributed to legacy issues with members' queries and underperformance in some key service areas. It was recommended that Haringey look at opportunities to enable members and officers to interact outside formal meetings to understand each other's roles and responsibilities and build trust.

Work on this recommendation has progressed more slowly than the peer team would have liked, a point acknowledged by the Council themselves. Sessions were arranged at the end of 2023 but were postponed due to a critical incident and then general election work made the June 2024 session unfeasible. Some work has been completed including arranging for a peer member from another authority to speak to senior leaders about their personal reflections and take questions and work to ensure officers attend more formal Council meetings in person to facilitate greater interaction with members. The peer team heard that there was still work to be done with the wider member cohort to ensure clarity of processes for them, for example on casework queries. The peer team were pleased to hear the Chief Executive confirm that this recommendation remains a priority for the Council and the actions proposed to strengthen relationships will be completed.

At the CPC, the peer team commented that, overall, there was a good approach to governance at Haringey and an appetite to ensure there is effective scrutiny and challenge going forward. The peer team noted that scrutiny work programmes appeared to be set every two years and with mechanisms to measure the impact of scrutiny activity inconsistently adopted. The peer team recommended the Council conduct a review of the scrutiny function, looking at opportunities to enhance the operation of meetings and further enhance the decision-making processes of the Council, whilst also facilitating broader member engagement.

At the Progress Review, the peer team heard that a constructive meeting was held with scrutiny chairs to discuss the recommendation towards the end of 2023 with the group agreeing that a joint meeting with the Cabinet and the Council's leadership team would be arranged to take stock and identify positive practice and examples, and opportunities for scrutiny to be more impactful. This meeting was scheduled for

June but was postponed due to the General Election. The planned joint session on scrutiny has been rescheduled, with good attendance anticipated. The peer team commented that work against this recommendation was less developed than anticipated, which was acknowledged, and accepted by the Council. However, Haringey have stated that it remains a priority for them, asserting that effective scrutiny is a mechanism by which they learn and is pivotal to their continuing improvement journey.

Financial planning and management

No.	Recommendation
4	The Council should develop and embed mechanisms to improve oversight and management of the Council's capital programme.

In the CPC feedback, acknowledging the Council's ambitious and expanding capital programme, the peer team recommended the Council expand its oversight and management of the capital programme, embedding robust processes to ensure effective financial planning, risk management, and resource allocation.

At the time of the Progress Review, Haringey reported having to navigate a very difficult financial year, managing a challenging Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) position against a backdrop of relatively low reserve levels. Additionally, the rising costs of borrowing and wider financial pressures the authority is experiencing resulted in a challenging budget-setting process for 2024/25 with a significant amount of work completed to review the entire capital programme. This has led to a significant number of schemes being paused, delayed, or ended, reducing the overall costs of the capital programme by approximately £500 million as well as reducing future borrowing costs by around £64 million. The Council reflects that this represents a substantial change in the scale of the ambition, moving to a position more commensurate with the changed financial context for the borough.

Alongside the reprofiling and reduction of the capital programme the Council report that there is increased oversight, with the capital programme having higher prominence within the Council and now being included in the work to instil cross-Council budget literacy and engagement. The Council's Budget Week initiative, a process the peer team praised in the CPC feedback as demonstrating an innovative approach to budget setting that recognises the need for a whole organisation approach to addressing the budget challenge, had two sessions dedicated to

reviewing the capital programme this year. It is anticipated that Budget Week and the wider budget process in summer 2024 will generate proposals to further reduce the size and cost of the capital programme, with choices being put to the Cabinet for decision in autumn 2024 alongside revenue proposals for achieving a balanced budget for 2025/6 and the wider MTFS.

The peer team reflected that clearly a lot of work has been done on reviewing the capital position, with some difficult decisions having been made in light of the Council's challenging financial position. The peer team cautioned that although their view was that the Council is currently in control of the financial position they are at a critical point and there are still some very difficult decisions to be made around the reality of capital and borrowing.

The peer team advised that Haringey should prioritise work to develop a longer term Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and an aligned 10 year plus Capital Strategy to manage and control their financial position. Furthermore it is important that the Council ensures that the longer term capital programme is aligned to protect capacity for future priorities. Haringey must ensure that they have a compliant Minimum Revenue Provision policy to pay down the capital financing requirement.

The peer team heard the Council's commitments to invest in their housing stock to ensure health and safety and regulatory works are complete, alongside their regeneration priorities and the need to deliver new homes. Both require a significant amount of investment with the peer team questioning if this could be achieved without further borrowing which will place strain on the HRA and noted that some trade offs are likely to be required. It is clear that senior financial staff at the Council met as part of the Progress Review to understand this challenge and the steps that must be taken, it is less clear that there is whole Council recognition that the local government sector is unlikely to see an injection of cash that will result in a halting or delay in the need for those difficult decisions to be made. The Council's financial sustainability will be dependent upon the corporate ownership of the reality of its position.

The peer team heard that Haringey's revenue budget has comparatively high levels of capital financing costs and debt. Combined with pressures on social care and homelessness this could put the budget into an unsustainable position. And the higher than expected overspend at outturn has placed further strain on the financial position. Whilst there was consistent feedback about the step change in understanding the budget position this needs to translate into action and options to balance the budget.

It is important that the Council employ rigour on delivery of cost avoidance and savings, across the whole programme and not only the category 'A rated' projects.

The Council has low reserves remaining to manage risk. The peer team heard that further work is underway to ensure effective management of council reserves. Stronger and clearer communication with members and staff about the importance of building and sustaining adequate reserves, alongside a longer term reserves policy to support the MTFP will assist with this.


Getting the basics right

No.	Recommendation
5	LB Haringey should look at ways to strengthen and embed performance and programme management arrangements across the Council.
9	Continue the work on developing the key lines of business systems to increase efficiency in operations and enhance customer service.

The peer team recommended as part of the CPC that Haringey look at ways to strengthen its performance and programme management arrangements across the Council. This includes ensuring there are clear, established performance measures to monitor progress and evaluate outcomes. By having robust performance management systems in place, the Council can track its progress towards its goals, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions.

Since the CPC, alongside creating the Borough Vision the Council has been updating its Corporate Delivery Plan (CDP), which was due to be presented to the Cabinet in June. This includes a refreshed and rationalised set of performance metrics to be monitored on a quarterly basis and reported publicly via the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny every six months. The Council report that this covers around 50 metrics. Additionally, the Council report the CDP itself will be RAG-rated every quarter and reported alongside the metrics.

A further development in programme management across the Council is the creation of a new change team to oversee and support change programmes and in particular category 'A-rated' projects, which have project initiation documents (PIDs) or project plans and require the appropriate amount of corporate support and oversight. Haringey report these changes have taken a little longer than they hoped as it required a significant restructuring of staff. The team sits in the new Digital and



Change function under a new Chief Digital and Innovation Officer. Haringey have also brought the Council's Performance and Data team into this service. The peer team as part of the Progress Review reflected that this work on strengthening the performance and programme management is impressive and that a significant amount of work has gone into building the foundation, capacity, and oversight to support the successful delivery of the change and improvement programmes. The changes are funded initially for a 2-year period in which the Council will need to see significant progress to enable them to justify continued investment in this dedicated change function.

During the CPC the peer team were impressed with the Council's efforts to focus on getting the basics right to improve the quality of services provided to residents. The Haringey Deal is about forging a new way of working within the Council and with residents. A desire to measure the success of The Haringey Deal further underscores the Council's commitment to transparent and accountable governance. Part of this work includes investing in key line of business enquiry systems including Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tools, and procurement management systems which can help enhance operational efficiency, improve customer service, help with making data-driven decisions, aid transparency and help with resource management. At the time of the CPC the peer team were impressed with the level of ambition the Council had to implementing the new systems at the pace it identified, with the peer team recommending that concerted focus would need to be given to developing this area and meeting the Council's ambitions.

At the time of the Progress Review the peer team heard of how significant improvements had been made for both residents and staff through the delivery of modern, and fit-for-purpose technological solutions. The implementation of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system in customer services with 90+ Council staff trained and logging over 250 thousand resident cases across services. Haringey are rightly proud of winning an award for Digital Innovation for the CRM programme of activities. A procurement modernisation programme is underway and will put in place new technology to consolidate procurement activity, and the introduction of corporate contract and performance management standards will bring about significant improvements. The peer team were impressed by the progress made against this recommendation and heard of the positive impact the systems

changes have had on day-to-day operations and improvements to managing service queries and demands.

Relationship with the community

No.	Recommendation
3	The Council should continue proactive work with local communities and make it clear which methods of engagement will be used in different service situations.
7	Maximise your links with partners and stakeholders using your place leadership role to build coalitions that help with the delivery of local priorities.

During the CPC the peer team quickly appreciated that establishing a collaborative relationship with Haringey's communities and partners was a key priority for the Council, and part of a wider aspiration for the Council to imbue a renewed sense of purpose in the organisation in serving residents and the Haringey communities. The peer team were impressed with the work done with communities to consult on changes to their homes and the local area. Furthermore, in some parts of the Council engagement had moved to co-production, where conversations were happening and ideas and solutions co-produced and owned. The peer team identified that an impressive volume and quality of work was happening, but it was not always clear to staff, partners or residents which method of engagement the Council would be using. The peer team recommended that the Council should continue proactive work with local communities and make it clear which methods of engagement will be used in different service situations.

At the time of the Progress Review the council have been working on establishing an approach to determine engagement types and methods and when to apply them, in consultation with partners and residents. The council created a participation framework at the end of 2023 that has been developed and published an updated version as of May 2024. The council report the framework has helped to support consistency of approach and excellent outcomes. Partners reported to the peer team that relationships with the Council are good overall, with some having seen some improvements in the consistency of engagement across the council service areas.

The peer team heard that an area of continued frustration is follow up after an event or consultation, with some partners reporting not knowing what is next and what they should expect from the Council following their work together. The peer team also reflected that the detailed and very structured approach taken by Haringey in some projects and consultations could result in partners not seeing the results of their contribution for extended periods as the work internally at the council is progressed. This can often be the nature of change projects, but the peer team encourage Haringey to identify ways to keep partners and residents informed and engaged throughout the different stages from consultation or co-production to delivery or implementation.

At the CPC the peer team recommended that Haringey maximise their links with partners and stakeholders using their place leadership role to build coalitions that help with the delivery of local priorities. In particular the peer team suggested that Haringey look at opportunities to reestablish and take a leading role in bringing partners together around issues and policies that all partners have a significant role in working to deliver or challenges they are looking to resolve or mitigate.

As noted previously in this feedback note there are strong examples of Haringey taking this leading role for the borough including work done after the tensions in the Middle East and their work leading the addressing racism initiative. Furthermore, the work to successfully secure the London Borough of Culture for 2027 required the Council to lead a consortium of partners, all agreeing with the leadership of Haringey to participate for the benefit of residents in the borough. Haringey have stated that they are focused on bringing partners together for specific, purposeful and focused collaboration, with the peer team seeing the fruits of that work. In conversations during the Progress Review, the Council committed to continuing to review how to ensure and maximise local collaboration with partners in the most effective way. For the time being the Council does not see any added benefit to creating a local strategic partnership, stating that the existing mechanism fit better to their circumstances and the partners working within their borough.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Haringey Borough Council for undertaking an LGA CPC



Progress Review.

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

Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an ongoing offer of support to Councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Kate Herbert, Principal Adviser for London, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Kate is available to discuss any further support the Council requires — Kate.Herbert@local.gov.uk