

Report for: 10 December 2024 Cabinet

Item number:

Title: LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report and Action Plan Update

Report authorised by: Andy Donald, Chief Executive

Lead Officer: Claire McCarthy, Assistant Director for Strategy, Communications and Collaboration

Ward(s) affected: N/A

**Report for Key/
Non-Key Decision:** Non-key decision

1. Describe the issue under consideration

1.1. There are two issues under consideration:

- To formally publish the report which sets out the findings from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review, which took place in June 2024. The review assessed progress made by the council against the recommendations from the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge that took place in May 2023.
- To provide an update on the action plan, which was agreed at Cabinet in October 2023. The action plan sets out the work the council would do to respond to the recommendations from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge that took place in May 2023

2. Cabinet Member Introduction – Leader of the Council

- 2.1. The Corporate Peer Challenge is a key part of our commitment as a council to be open and honest about the challenges we face and to getting the basics right. The review shows the key areas where we need to improve, as well as some of the real improvements we have made in response to the recommendations we received last year.
- 2.2. On some of our core Haringey Deal priorities the report demonstrates that we have made good progress. Our efforts to empower communities to participate in decision making processes are starting to be felt.
- 2.3. The Council's Participation Framework was updated this year and the review finds that both council officers and local residents have noticed positive

improvements in the consistency of our engagement. More than 700 local residents helped us shape our 10-year Borough Vision.

- 2.4. The report celebrates progress on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), highlighting the numerous initiatives that we are introducing to make Haringey a safe, accessible and supportive workplace, as well as supporting all our residents and communities to embed EDI principles right across Haringey.
- 2.5. Some areas are highlighted as requiring further improvement. We haven't created as many opportunities as we'd like to for members and senior officers to interact outside of formal meetings to improve trust and confidence, though the report acknowledges that more attempts are being made to set aside time for this.
- 2.6. Whilst the report celebrates the enthusiasm and determination across the Council's operations to embed a collaborative approach with our communities, it notes that sometimes our stakeholders were not clear about the eventual results of their engagement.
- 2.7. The extent of our engagement work across the council has been ambitious, but we know there is more to do in how we communicate this to residents who have given up their time.
- 2.8. I want to thank the Peer Review panel for continuing to support us, as well as all our Council staff for their perseverance on implementing our action plan and everyone in the Borough who is helping us to deliver on our shared vision for Haringey.
- 2.9. There is plenty to celebrate in this report, but we are focused on the journey of improvement still to come. I look forward to meeting the challenges outlined in this report and delivering more for our residents.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. Cabinet is asked to:
 - Note the findings set out in the report at Appendix A, which was produced by the LGA following the Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review that took place in June 2024
 - Note the updates to the recommendations set out in the action plan at Appendix B.

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1. There is an expectation that all councils who take part in LGA Corporate Peer Challenges publish the reports that are produced as part of the process and take action in response to them.

- 4.2. This paper publishes the report that was produced by the LGA following the Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review that took place in June 2024.
- 4.3. The recommendations are important in helping the council improve, including building stronger relationships with residents and communities in Haringey and providing better, more efficient services.
- 4.4. Alongside the LGA's report, the update on the action plan sets out what the council is doing to respond to the recommendations from 2023, including specific actions, when they will be delivered, and who will be responsible for delivering them.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1. As this report is to share information and provide an update on committed actions, the only alternative is to not publish or share updates on this. It was decided this is not an appropriate option as the LGA expect the council to be open and transparent and this is consistent with our approach and values.

6. Background information

- 6.1. In May 2023 Haringey welcomed a team from the Local Government Association to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge. This involved senior officers from councils across the country, led by Althea Loderick the Chief Executive at Southwark Council and a lead councillor peer, Cllr Sir Steve Houghton the Leader at Barnsley Metropolitan Council. All councils are given the opportunity to have a Corporate Peer Challenge every 4-5 years as part of a local government-led approach to improvement and mutual support.
- 6.2. The LGA team spent four days on site meeting with staff, councillors, partners and stakeholders. The team also had access to a range of documents and information in order to support their work.
- 6.3. A Peer Challenge is not an inspection but nonetheless it is an important way for local authorities to identify and prioritise areas for development or improvement.
- 6.4. A report from the Peer Challenge was produced and published at Cabinet in October 2023, along with an action plan setting out a series of actions against the Peer Team's recommendations
- 6.5. As part of the Peer Challenge Process, a progress review visit was arranged with the same peer team, who visit for a day to undertake a review of progress made against the actions they recommended. This return visit took place in June 2024.
- 6.6. A progress review report was produced. This sets out the progress the peer team feel has been made.

7. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-26

- 7.1. The Corporate Peer Challenge responds to a number of the themes in the Corporate Delivery Plan, in particular 'Resident Experience and Enabling Success'. In addition, implementing the Peer Challenge recommendations will support improvements across council services in line with both the detail and the spirit of the Corporate Delivery Plan.

8. Carbon and Climate Change

- 8.1. This action plan does not have direct impacts on carbon and climate change, but does support the council to deliver more efficient, resilient and resident-focused services. This may have a positive impact on reduction of carbon and helping services deliver on the council's climate change ambitions.

9. Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance (procurement), Assistant Director of Legal and Governance, Equalities)

Finance

- 9.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report and its appendices. The peers' reflections on the challenges facing the Council in its financial planning and management, notably around the capital programme, savings delivery and the position on reserves, are recognised and are being monitored and reported corporately in the quarterly financial update and addressed in the MTFS Budget reports.

Procurement

- 9.2. Strategic Procurement note the contents of this report and confirm there are no procurement matters preventing Cabinet approving the recommendations in paragraph 3 above.
- 9.3. Strategic Procurement has been consulted on the progress of the relevant procurement actions in Appendix B to this report and confirm they are an accurate reflection of the progress to date.

Assistant Director of Legal & Governance

- 9.4. The Assistant Director of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) has been consulted in drafting this report. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Equality

- 9.5. The council has a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not
 - Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.
- 9.6. The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.
- 9.7. Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.
- 9.8. The Peer Challenge report made a few specific proposals on improving the Council's approach to tackling inequalities. This includes a specific recommendation to further embed leadership of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) agenda in the council. Several actions have been initiated (Appendix A, Items 1 and 2) to further this agenda and positively impact the way in which the Council and its senior leaders approach EDI at the workplace and in decision-making. The Borough Vision - the 10 year strategic vision for the borough also specifically commits to tackling inequalities in health and wellbeing as one of its key action areas. In addition, it includes a cross-cutting approach towards advancing equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination through creating a borough 'where we can all belong and thrive'. The vision recognises the existing inequalities and commits to tackling them through its Calls to Actions, such as supporting greener choices or feeling safe and being safe.
- 9.9. Secondly, the report recommends the continuation of proactive work with local communities and clearly stating which methods of engagement will be used in different service situations.
- 9.10. This report highlights the progress that has been made on implementing those recommendations including significant work on both advancing our EDI ambitions internally within the council but also within the wider borough. The publication of the progress review report is therefore a positive step towards tackling inequalities in the borough and transparency and accountability in measures being undertaken to progress those agenda.

9.11. **Use of Appendices**

Appendix A – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report
Appendix B – Peer Challenge Action Plan Update

10. Background papers

N/A