

# Public Document Pack

**HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**



## **Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council**

**AGENDA FOR THE  
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

**TO BE HELD ON**

**TUESDAY, 13 MAY 2025**

**AT 6.30 PM**

## Fire Evacuation Procedures

- On hearing the fire alarm, leave the building **at once** quickly and calmly by the nearest escape route (indicated by green signs).
- *There are two escape routes from the Council Chamber – at the side and rear. Leave via the door closest to you.*
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- **Do not** use the lifts.
- **Do not** stop to collect belongings.

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To minimise disturbance to others attending the meeting, please switch off your phone or other mobile device or turn it onto silent or vibrate mode.

Thank you



**Hinckley & Bosworth  
Borough Council**

**Date: 02 May 2025**

Dear Member

I hereby summon you to attend a meeting of the Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council in the Council Chamber at these offices on **TUESDAY, 13 MAY 2025 at 6.30 pm**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RK Owen'.

Miss RK Owen  
Democratic Services Manager

**A G E N D A**

**1. Appointment of Mayor for the ensuing year**

To appoint the Mayor for the 2025/26 municipal year.

**2. Appointment of Deputy Mayor for the ensuing year**

To appoint the Deputy Mayor for the 2025/26 municipal year.

**3. Apologies**

**4. Declarations of interest**

To receive verbally from Members any disclosures which they are required to make in accordance with the Council's code of conduct or in pursuance of Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. This is in addition to the need for such disclosure to be also given when the relevant matter is reached on the Agenda.

**5. Establishment of and appointment to council bodies**

To confirm the establishment of bodies including size, proportionality and terms of reference and to appoint chairs, vice-chairs and membership. Recommended appointments will be listed in the supplementary agenda.

6. **Appointment to working groups (Pages 1 - 2)**

To appoint to standing working groups. Recommended appointments will be listed in the supplementary agenda.

Members are also recommended to approve amended terms of reference for the Asset Strategy and Regeneration Group.

7. **Appointment to Leicestershire Partnership Joint Committee**

To appoint two members to the Leicestershire (Revenues & Benefits) Partnership Joint Committee.

8. **Appointment of representatives to outside bodies**

To appoint representatives of the Council to outside bodies. Recommended appointments will be listed in the supplementary agenda.

9. **Corporate Peer Challenge (Pages 3 - 46)**

To report on outcomes of the Corporate Peer Challenge and present the action plan.

## 1. Asset Strategy & Regeneration Group

- 1.1 Membership will consist of six members appointed by Council. The group will be politically balanced and will be chaired by the Executive member with responsibility for asset management. There will be officer representation from key functions within the local authority.

Further consultation will also take place with relevant ward members as appropriate.

Further service specific representatives to be co-opted as and when necessary e.g. car parks, heritage, leisure.

- 1.2 Meetings will be held on a bi-monthly basis and will be informal and not open to the public. Should disposal/acquisition decisions be needed in between scheduled meetings and additional meeting will be called. Meetings will be conducted in accordance with the council procedure rules contained within this constitution, where applicable.

- 1.3 Its purpose and role is:

- To make recommendations on asset acquisition and disposal proposals to the appropriate decision making body. (Further consultation will also take place with relevant ward members as appropriate).
- To receive updates on key regeneration sites and projects
- To receive updates on key policy developments such as the Town Centre Masterplan.
- To discuss opportunities for future regeneration within the Borough.
- To receive updates on key strategies such as the Economic Regeneration Strategy, Corporate Asset Management Strategy and HRA Investment Strategy

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## Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Council 13 May 2025

Wards affected: All wards

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### Corporate Peer Challenge

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Report of Chief Executive

#### 1. Purpose

To report on the outcomes of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) that was undertaken in December 2024, along with the draft action plan responding to the recommendations set out in the accompanying report.

#### 2. Recommendations

- i) That Members note and endorse the extremely positive outcomes from the external Corporate Peer Challenge, as set out in the attached report and feedback presentation from the LGA (appendix I);
- ii) That Members agree the action plan attached as appendix II which responds to the recommendations of the Peer Team;
- iii) That Members communicate the positive report outcomes to our residents, partners and internally to staff;
- iv) That members, officers and partners be thanked for their positive engagement in the Peer Challenge process.

#### 3. Background

- 3.1 The Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a highly valued improvement and assurance tool that is delivered by the local government sector, via the LGA, for the sector. It involves a team of senior local government councillors and officers undertaking a comprehensive review of key financial, performance and governance information, informed by meetings internally with staff and councillors and externally with partners and stakeholders. A CPC assists councils in meeting part of their Best Value Duty with the Government expecting local authorities to now have a CPC at least every five years.

- 3.2 The LGA CPC team lead by Ian Davidson, Chief Executive, Tendring District Council, comprised eight senior representatives, including senior elected member peers and senior officers from councils across the country and supported by a peer challenge manager from the LGA.
- 3.3 HBBC's Peer Challenge was undertaken over 3½ days between the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

#### **4. Scope**

The scope of the review covered the following five themes:

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

#### **5. Key Findings**

- 5.1 The Council received extremely positive feedback from the peer challenge, encapsulated in the summary points below:
- HBBC is an ambitious and forward-looking council focussed on economic growth
  - It is dedicated to serving its communities and actively leads on, promotes and supports major development projects
  - The community leadership role of the council is considerable, over and above what many councils achieve
  - The Council has an excellent track record of partnership working
  - There is strong and visible leadership
  - There is a positive, inclusive organisational culture which is led from the top
  - There is complimentary leadership between the Leader and Chief Executive and there are good councillor /officer relations
  - The Council and its Chief Executive are highly regarded by partners and businesses and play an important role in strategic partnerships
  - Senior leadership is seen as accessible and plays a key role in facilitating major projects
  - There is strong leadership from Executive members who are clearly visible and demonstrate understanding of their portfolios
  - The organisational culture is very positive, open and supportive
  - There is a strong emphasis by members and officers on supporting communities and responding to diverse needs
  - There is a good understanding of the socio-demographic and diverse needs of the borough - resulting in tailored projects and community support programmes



- The passion and loyalty of staff and members is palpable in day-to-day and community-based work
- There is a strong sense of trust, respect and support amongst the workforce
- Financial management and budget setting is clear and effective
- The Council has many initiatives that it carries out that are not common in many councils, but which have a great public benefit
- The Council punches above its weight!

5.2 A range of improvements were identified which are incorporated within the seven recommendations set out in the attached CPC report. By his own admission, when he fed back the findings of the review to staff and members, the lead Chief Executive for the Review indicated these recommendations were “low hanging fruit” ranging from celebrating the organisational culture and ethos and passion of our staff and councillors and belief in place; addressing some governance matters around timely publication of officer decisions; continuing work on a savings plan; further work on raising awareness on officer delegations; improvements in the work of the Audit Committee; and further enhancing performance reporting linked to strategic key decisions.

5.3 The Council is required to prepare an action plan to address the recommendations within five months of the publication of the CPC report. Officers have already made advanced progress on this, and a draft action plan is attached at Appendix II for consideration and support.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 The Council, its staff and members and indeed residents, can feel rightly proud of the incredibly positive outcomes and conclusions of the external Peer Challenge. Views were gathered from over 150 people, including businesses, other stakeholders and from staff at all levels of the organisation. This also extended to capturing feedback from councillors of all political parties to inform the Peer Challenge.

## **7. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules**

None.

## **8. Financial implications**

None

## **9. Legal implications**

None

## **10. Corporate Plan implications**

The changes proposed in the White Paper could have significant implications on the Council's ability to deliver on the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan, impacting on communities and local businesses.

## **11. Consultation**

None.

## **12. Risk implications**

- 12.1 It is the council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.
- 12.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.
- 12.3 The following significant risks associated with this report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) risks

Risk description	Mitigating actions	Owner
Impact on the Councils reputation arising from a negative Peer Challenge	Preparation of comprehensive Position Statement and facilitation of wide external partner, staff and member engagement in the process to evidence the positive work of the Council, resulting in a positive Corporate Peer Challenge report.	Chief Executive

## **13. Knowing your community - equality and rural implications**

- 13.1 Extensive evidence was provided as part of the Council's Peer Challenge (CPC) to demonstrate the work that the Council undertakes in supporting its communities

## **14. Climate implications**

- 14.1 Evidence was provided as part of the CPC of the positive work the Council undertakes to address climate change challenges and to reduce the carbon footprint of its activities.

## **15. Corporate Implications**

- 15.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data protection implications
- Voluntary sector

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Contact officer: Bill Cullen, Chief Executive  
Lead Member: Cllr Stuart Bray, Leader of the Council

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# Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Corporate Peer Challenge

Feedback from the peer challenge team

Page 6 – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024

**Corporate Peer Challenge**

## The peer challenge team

- Ian Davidson, Chief Executive, Tendring District Council
- Dave Hodgson, former Elected Mayor, Bedford Borough Council
- Councillor Simon Minas-Bound, Conservative Group Leader, Basingstoke and Deane District Council
- Clare Chester, until recently Director of Regeneration and Prosperity, East Hampshire
- Officer peer: Jonathan Noad, Chief Officer Sustainable Growth, Lancaster City
- Officer peer: Emma Diakou, Head of Business Insight, Policy and Partnerships, North Somerset
- Shadow officer: James Wrathall, Impact Graduate at Dacorum Borough

## The purpose of Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC)

- Key part of the LGA's improvement and assurance framework for local government
- Managed and delivered by the sector, for the sector.
- Complements your own performance and improvement focus.
- Assists councils in meeting part of their Best Value duty; UK Government expects councils to have a CPC every five years.
- HBBC's last CPC was in 2016
- Conducted by a team of peers using 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 process of peer challenge

- The CPC process has a strong focus on financial sustainability, performance, governance, and assurance.
- Peers reviewed a range of information and evidence to ensure we were familiar with the council, the challenges it is facing and its plans
- The peer team gathered information and views from nearly 40 meetings, in addition to further research
- We spoke with over 150 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders
- This is the equivalent of one person spending over ten weeks in the council



## Scope and brief for the peer challenge

1. Local priorities and outcomes
2. Organisational and place leadership
3. Governance and culture
4. Financial planning and management
5. Capacity for improvement
6. Economic Development and Regeneration
7. Supporting Communities

## Performance

- Performance Management Framework is well developed and there are examples of innovative performance management e.g. Housing
- Continue your work to embed this across all services to ensure consistency
- Consider how performance management can support officer, council and executive decision-making

## Local priorities and outcomes

- You are strong community leaders and recognise your socio-demographic challenges
- You have an excellent record of working in partnership for example health, rural areas, community safety, town initiatives, children and young people, employment and skills partnerships other councils and voluntary and community sectors
- Excellent partnership working especially around economic development
- Strong emphasis on caring about your communities and responding to their needs
- Ensure awareness of the breadth of formal consultation involvement in the development of strategies and action plans recognising future local government requirements

## Organisational and place leadership

- Strong and visible leadership; chief executive is highly regarded by partners and businesses and seen as very accessible
- Complementary leadership between CEO and Leader
- Strong member/officer relations
- Positive, inclusive organisational culture, led from the top
- Passionate, committed and loyal staff and members who have a belief in place
- Council punches above its weight
- Supportive of economic development, town centres, tourism and inward investment
- Strong support for addressing the borough's social challenges
- Continue to develop succession planning, resilience, and capacity with such an ambitious agenda

## Governance and culture

- Councillors are encouraged to be involved with East Midlands Councils' training and development opportunities
- Building on strong induction programme, support a member programme of continuous improvement and information awareness of key local government challenges and your own ambitious programme
- Continue developing the process of recording and publishing of decisions
- Audit Committee continues its improvement journey
- Corporate Risk Framework is sound, but ensure clarity of risk management roles and that it supports decision-making



## Financial planning and management

- Financial management and budget setting process is clear but may not be widely understood
- Budget is based on utilisation of reserves
- Draft Income and Savings Plan coming forward in the next budget setting process. This will need to be shared and owned by members and senior officers
- Budget setting process needs to allow enough time for appropriate engagement with members, officers and residents and other stakeholders
- Be clear about borrowing position and associated risks
- Reassure yourselves that you have sufficient reserves held for capital liabilities e.g. assets

## Capacity for improvement

- Strong sense of trust, respect and support amongst the workforce
- A dedicated and stable workforce forms the backbone of current success
- Flexible and hybrid working has been introduced and has been positively received but with some reported inconsistencies
- Build on strong People Strategy and ensure action plan is delivered in a timely way

## Capacity for improvement

- While pursuing ambitious goals, assess organisational capacity to deliver
- Ensure that senior staff continue to develop awareness of delegations and roles and responsibilities
- Prioritise documenting key processes to safeguard institutional memory and enable any future transitions
- Continue to develop programme and project management practices to ensure consistency and compliance



## Economic development

- Council has a strong and positive ethos to economic growth
- Clear demonstrable successful portfolio of projects
- Clear and demonstrable evidence of positive relationships with key partners across business, landowners, developers, education providers, skills bodies etc.
- Positive step change in Planning Service
- Continue to strengthen how the council manages its role in major projects including exposure and liabilities

## Recommendations

1. Celebrate your organisational culture and ethos and the passion of your staff and members, recognising the passion, commitment, loyalty and belief in place
2. Ensure the extent of your community leadership work is well communicated and celebrated
3. You have a strong role in the community as a deliverer, facilitator and influencer but will need to define that changing role in the future of local government
4. Ensure consideration of resilience and capacity challenges with existing work and when considering new projects and initiatives

## Recommendations

5. Continue to develop your income and savings plan with Members and senior staff to minimise future impact of service delivery
6. Ensure that senior staff continue to develop awareness of the of delegations and roles and responsibilities
7. Continue developing the process of publishing and recording of decisions
8. Ensure that performance management visibly supports strategic decisions
9. Ensure clarity of Risk Management roles and that it supports decision making

## Next steps

- Opportunity for questions/discussion now. Public report to follow.
- In the spirit of openness and transparency, you are asked to:
  - Publish the CPC report by March 6<sup>th</sup> 2025 (three months after the CPC). LGA will also publish this on their website by this date.
  - Develop and publish your Action Plan by (no later than 5 months after the CPC).
  - Schedule a Progress Review – this is an opportunity to discuss progress (let us agree the date for this over the coming weeks).
  - Progress Review to take place within ten months of the CPC by September 2025 and the Progress Review Report to be published within twelve months of the CPC

# **LGA Corporate Peer Challenge**

**Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council**

**3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

**Feedback report**

## Contents

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## 1. Introduction

Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a highly valued improvement and assurance tool that is delivered by the sector for the sector. It involves a team of senior local government councillors and officers undertaking a comprehensive review of key finance, performance and governance information and then spending three days at Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) to provide robust, strategic, and credible challenge and support.

CPC forms a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. It is underpinned by the principles of sector-led improvement (SLI) put in place by councils and the Local Government Association (LGA) to support continuous improvement and assurance across the sector. These state that local authorities are: Responsible for their own performance, Accountable locally not nationally and have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector.

CPC assists councils in meeting part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years.

Peers remain at the heart of the peer challenge process and provide a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge.

This report outlines the key findings of the peer team and the recommendations that the council are required to action.

## 2. Executive summary

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) is an ambitious and forward-looking council focused on economic growth. It is dedicated to serving its communities and actively leads on, promotes and supports major development projects to achieve this goal. There is strong and visible leadership with the leader and the chief executive complementing one another. The chief executive is highly regarded by partners and businesses and plays an important role in strategic partnerships. He is seen as accessible and plays a key role in facilitating major projects.

There is a strong emphasis by members and officers on supporting communities and

responding to their diverse needs. There is a good understanding of the socio demographic and diverse needs of the district, which has resulted in tailored projects and community support programmes to the communities. The passion and loyalty of staff and members is palpable in day-to-day and community-based work.

Financial management and budget setting is clear and effective. The council is developing its savings plan. The delivery process will need to be communicated to councillors and officers and define any future borrowing position.

With the challenges to budgets and capacity, the council will need to clearly define its role in any future partnerships: whether it is as a deliverer, facilitator, or influencer of others in achieving its goals. This should also be clearly articulated and understood by partners. Currently, some of the partnership working relies heavily on individual relationships.

The council would benefit from clearly and publicly re-defining the roles of the executive, scrutiny and audit. Although senior councillors are confident that all processes are transparent and compliant, continuing to develop the process of publishing all officer decisions in a timely manner and in an accessible location would demonstrate this transparency. This would ensure that all councillors are aware of where decisions are made and the approach the administration takes to taking reports to full council for discussion by all, rather than to executive.

### 3. Recommendations

There are several observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the council:

#### **3.1 Recommendation 1: Celebrate your organisational culture and ethos and the passion of your staff and councillors, recognising the passion, commitment, loyalty and belief in place**

The organisational culture is very positive, open and supportive. Staff and councillors are committed to the local agenda and doing the best for the borough, including for the workforce.



### **3.2 Recommendation 2: Ensure the extent of your community leadership work is well communicated and celebrated**

The community leadership role of the council is considerable, over and above what many councils achieve and is sometimes overlooked. This should be highlighted and celebrated.

### **3.3 Recommendation 3: Ensure that the council's roles as a deliverer, facilitator and influencer are clearly defined**

Some of the relationships and partnerships are built on trust. This is testament to excellent working relationships and is currently delivering successful outcomes. The strength of the relationships is palpable, however, with the changing face of local government some of the governance arrangements may need to be more formalised in order to ensure the transition into the new public sector landscape.

### **3.4 Recommendation 4: Consider resilience and capacity challenges with existing work and as well as when considering new projects and initiatives**

There is limited capacity in some teams across the Council which may impact on resilience. Ensure that capacity is considered when planning new projects and initiatives. Succession planning in a number of key areas should be considered.

### **3.5 Recommendation 5: Continue to develop an income and savings plan with councillors and senior staff to minimise future impact of service delivery**

Work is underway to develop a robust income & savings plan and this should be accelerated and prioritised. Some officers are already talking about income generation and exploring ways for this to take place. Ensure that councillors as well as officers are involved in the income and savings plan to close the budget gap. The plan should be consulted on as part of the budget setting process and shared with all staff so they are fully aware and can contribute to its delivery.

### **3.6 Recommendation 6: Ensure senior staff continue to develop awareness of delegations, roles and responsibilities**

The council should continue to assure itself that delegations, roles and responsibilities of senior councillors and senior officers are clearly understood by all, including the administration, opposition and officers. This information should be clearly communicated and easily available. The role of the overview and scrutiny function in the 'call-in' process and broader scrutiny work should be publicly available and clear to all.

### **3.7 Recommendation 7: Continue developing the process of publishing and recording of decisions**

The council should assure itself that all decisions are taken in accordance with the Constitution and Local Scheme of Delegations. Decision notices (including delegated officers' decision notices) should be produced and published regularly. This will demonstrate transparency and help HBBC protect itself from external challenge about its decision-making processes.

### **3.8 Recommendation 8: Ensure that performance management visibly supports strategic decisions**

Whilst a range of key decisions are taken by the executive, performance is also reported to the Executive and Scrutiny Commission. At the leader's request a number of key decisions are taken in full council to engage wider member engagement. The council should ensure that performance reporting supports priority monitoring and decision making.

### **3.9 Recommendation 9: Ensure the roles for managing risks are clear and that they support decision-making**

Clarify how councillors are involved in the management of corporate risks, and that corporate risks are considered when making strategic decisions.

## 4. Summary of peer challenge approach

### 4.1 The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected by the LGA on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- Ian Davidson, chief executive, Tendring District Council
- Dave Hodgson, former elected mayor (Liberal Democrat) Bedford Borough Council
- Councillor Simon Minas-Bound, conservative group leader, Basingstoke and Deane District Council
- Clare Chester, until recently director of regeneration and prosperity, East Hampshire
- Jonathan Noad, chief officer sustainable growth, Lancaster City
- Emma Diakou, head of business insight, policy and partnerships, North Somerset
- James Wrathall, impact graduate at Dacorum Borough
- Becca Singh, peer challenge manager, LGA

### 4.2 Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

1. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities? Is there an organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, with frequent monitoring, reporting on and updating of performance and improvement plans?
2. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local

communities?

3. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management** - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges? What is the relative financial resilience of the council like?
5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to bring about the improvements it needs, including delivering on locally identified priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

As part of the five core elements outlined above, every corporate peer challenge includes a strong focus on financial sustainability, performance, governance, and assurance.

In addition to these themes, the council asked the peer team to provide feedback on how it supports communities, and specifically about economic development.

#### **4.3 The peer challenge process**

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. 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 by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. This included a position statement prepared by the council in advance of the peer team's time on site. This provided a clear steer to the peer team on the local context at

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and what the peer team should focus on. It also included a comprehensive LGA Finance briefing (prepared using public reports from the council's website) and a LGA performance report outlining benchmarking data for the council across a range of metrics. The latter was produced using the LGA's local area benchmarking tool called LG Inform.

The peer team then spent three days onsite at Hinckley Hub, during which they:

- Gathered evidence, information, and views from more than 40 meetings, in addition to further research and reading.
- Spoke to more than 150 people including council staff at all levels together with councillors and other external local, regional and national partner stakeholders.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and councillors.

## 5. Feedback

### 5.1 Local priorities and outcomes

HBBC is a strong community leader, and the organisation recognises the key socio-demographic challenges around balancing rural / urban needs, an ageing population and an increasing economic base providing potential opportunities for young people in employment. There is a strong emphasis on caring about local communities and responding to their needs.

HBBC has an excellent record of working in partnership on a range of agendas, for example: economic development, health, rural areas, community safety, town initiatives, children and young people, employment and skills, other councils and voluntary and community sectors. However, with increasing strain on local government finance, it is important to maintain balance between issues district councils have responsibility for, and those where it needs to influence others to deliver. Partners speak very highly of individual council officers, however governance arrangements around some of these partnerships need strengthening to make them sustainable and not solely reliant on individual relationships. Further, some partners

were not clear on the role of Councillors.

It is important for HBBC not to overstretch its capacity in these partnerships. Whilst it is acknowledged that work with public health and other partners is very positive and embraced to add value to council services, particularly in areas such as housing and community safety, these are areas where it may be necessary for HBBC to clearly define its delivery, facilitation and influencing roles better, especially when capacity in the organisation is stretched.

### **5.1.1 Performance**

There is a well-developed performance management framework, and there are innovative examples of performance management, for example in Housing. The peer team recommend that this is embedded across all services to ensure consistency in approach and that performance management can support officer, council and executive decision-making.

Performance on Planning has been improving in recent years, culminating in the council being awarded “Planning Authority of the Year – East Midlands” at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) East Midlands awards in 2024, and finalists in national RTPI Awards. This was after a period of challenging performance, following significant changes in personnel and structure in 2021/22.

The peers used the LG Inform report on published performance management data, using East Midlands district councils as a comparator group. The LG Inform data indicates that HBBC is performing reasonably well across the board. Key issues to note:

- Total core spending power (mostly from government revenue grants) was the lowest in 2022/23 at £187.08 compared to the median of £241.61
- Debt servicing for capital expenditure as a per cent of core spending power was 27.2%, above the median of 14.8 per cent in 2023/24
- Total debt (capital finance requirement; amount of capital expenditure not yet funded by capital receipts, capital grants or revenue contributions) as a percentage of core spending power was 1,085 per cent, above the median

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Local Government Association company number 11177145 Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government company number 03675577

**Chair:** Councillor Louise Gittins

**Chief Executive:** Joanna Killian

**President:** Baroness Grey-Thompson

percentage of 73.7 per cent in 2022/23

- HBBC spent £26.07 on housing services per person, compared to £82.09 in England, and £30.10 in East Midlands districts
- HBBC has one of the highest numbers of households in temporary accommodation in the region at 1.23 households per thousand, but it should be noted that this is still low compared to national average of 4.87 per thousand

## **5.2 Organisational and place leadership**

There is strong and visible leadership in the organisation with the chief executive and the leader complementing each other well. Both are engaged, along with other senior officers, on regional and national organisations, for example the District Councils Network, LGA, East Midlands Councils and Crimestoppers. Partners and businesses see the chief executive as very accessible and regard him highly.

There is strong leadership from executive members who are clearly visible and demonstrate understanding of their portfolios. Regular meetings take place between Executive members and senior lead officers.

There is an excellent record of working in partnership for example economic growth health, rural areas, community safety, town initiatives, children and young people, employment and skills partnerships, other councils and voluntary and community sectors.

There are good councillor/officer relations. Councillors clearly believe in place and place leadership and there are examples where councillors are visible in communities, for example in rural plans, attending parish councils and children and young people events. Councillors are supportive of the focus on economic development, town centres, tourism and inward investment as well as supporting communities, housing and voluntary sector.

There is a positive, inclusive organisational culture which is led from the top. Senior officers demonstrate this culture and encourage staff to develop. Staff are passionate and committed to doing the best for the communities they serve.



There are good examples of cross-council working, for example several services work with their counterparts in other district councils across the county and in regional networks such as waste, communications and human resources (HR). Waste services provided an excellent example of how working with contractors, developers and other councils - they regularly pick up litter on the A5 during planned road closures to improve safety. HBBC officers shared information on how this works by developing a toolkit and sharing it with other councils along the A5.

The council will need to ensure that succession planning, resilience to cope with change, reduced resources, and staff capacity to address such an ambitious agenda is considered. The council should continue to ensure that governance arrangements around partnerships are clear, easily accessible and available. This is particularly critical for partnerships that may be at risk with reduced resources or solely dependent on particular individuals. It is important to put safeguards in place to ensure that there are no “single points of failure”.

### **5.3 Governance and culture**

The council elections in 2023 saw a continued term for the Liberal Democrat administration and an intake of new councillors. There was an induction programme for new councillors. Whilst councillors found this to be excellent, it had a lot of information for them to absorb in one go. Therefore, parts of the training should be reviewed and updates provide on a regular basis. Councillors are also informed about the East Midlands Councils' and LGA's training and development opportunities and encouraged to be involved. The council is developing a programme of continuous councillor improvement and information awareness of key local government challenges as well as the council's own ambitious programme.

There have been so many changes in local government in the last few months, it is important to ensure that all councillors, not just those new to the role, fully understand how all the changes affect the decisions the council makes.

As part of the work on improving the council's governance arrangements, work is underway to develop the process of recording and publishing of decisions.

Whilst the executive meets to take a range of key decisions, the administration takes

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the view that decisions made in full council meetings gives all councillors the chance to debate issues and is more transparent. The council should continue to ensure that this approach is well-known and understood. Some clear communications would also be helpful to outline the council's approach to delegated decision-making, being clear about roles and responsibilities for both councillors and officers, further assisting in demonstrating transparency in decision-making.

The scrutiny function currently has a wide remit. This could be strengthened by continuing to use different mechanisms such as task and finish groups, building on the task and finish commissions, for example in housing services and planning, to undertake deep dives into specific topics to support decision-making and constructive challenge to the executive. It has an important role to interrogate data and evidence to ensure decision-making is robust.

The work and importance of the audit committee is recognised as is the value of the recommendations from the auditors (both internal and external). There is work underway to further develop the audit committee role and continue its improvement journey to maximise its potential to ensure that all governance arrangements, decision-making and finances are appropriately documented and published. The audit function should provide the council with assurance that all governance arrangements, decisions and strategies are evidence-based and compliant with both the council's constitution and the legal responsibilities of all councils.

#### **5.4 Financial planning and management**

Financial management procedures and budget setting processes are clear, but not all councillors demonstrate clear understanding.

The current budget is based on utilisation of reserves. The council is developing its Income and savings plan as part of the next phase of budget setting- This plan will need to be shared and owned by councillors and senior officers. It will also need to be shared with wider staff to ensure they understand the challenge and the actions they need to take. To maintain reserves long-term, this plan needs to help the council close the funding gap. Income generation is a positive way to do this, and some officers are already considering income generation plans (for example in the waste

service).

The budget setting process needs to allow enough time for appropriate engagement with councillors, officers, residents and other stakeholders. At the time of the peer challenge, the council's budget strategy was programmed to go to Scrutiny along with the reporting pathway for the medium term financial strategy and other budgets. It is increasingly important for councils to demonstrate how resident engagement affects decision-making, particularly for housing stock-holding councils and there is strong evidence of resident engagement with the council's tenants.

The peer team recommend ensuring that all public consultation (forthcoming and past) continues to be published on the website, along with the conclusions from that consultation, and how it has affected decision-making.

The corporate risk framework is sound but could be enhanced by ensuring that there is clarity of risk management roles and that it supports decision-making. High level corporate risks and mitigating actions should be planned when conducting scenario planning and options appraisals. It is important to monitor borrowing, and its associated risks, with particular regard to potential changes in interest rates. Servicing debt can outstrip council tax for some councils. As part of this work the council should be clear about its borrowing position and how it will be serviced,

## **5.5 Capacity for improvement**

There is a strong sense of trust, respect and support amongst the workforce. The dedicated and stable workforce forms the backbone of current successes. The recent people strategy is strong. Going forward it will be important to ensure that its action plan has clear deadlines and targets and that it is delivered in a timely manner.

Flexible and hybrid working has been introduced, and has been welcomed by staff, thereby improving morale and productivity. However, officers reported that there were some inconsistencies in its implementation that may be reflected in the nature of the roles within the council. The HR team are proposing to remind staff and managers of the expectations and responsibilities involved in hybrid and flexible

working.

Officers in some teams across the council are often stretched by the council's ambitious goals. The peer team recommend assessing the organisational capacity to deliver on the council's current ambitions before taking on more major projects. Additional capacity may be needed in corporate services to address some of the audit concerns that basic procedures and decisions are not always published in a timely fashion.

HBBC is a small organisation, with a significant number of senior officers having been in the organisation for many years. It is important to safeguard institutional memory; if it is not written down, it will get lost. In addition, it is important to support and protect officers and councillors through documented evidence.

There are good examples of programme management (e.g. the projects under the Levelling Up Fund). However, the council should ensure project management practices are consistent across all projects, by extending your work on programme management to support officers delivering major projects and ensure consistency and compliance, including risk management.

## **5.6 Economic development and growth**

The Council has a strong and positive ethos to economic growth, recognising the benefits to the local communities. There is a clear demonstrable successful portfolio of projects with tangible benefits, for example, the Atkins Building, Hinckley Leisure Centre, MIRA Technology Park and the Crescent. There is skill and passion amongst officers and good demonstrations of joint working across disciplines, for example Culture and Leisure with Development Management to encourage active travel and increase health benefits for communities.

There is clear, demonstrable evidence of positive relationships with key partners across businesses, landowners, developers, education providers and skills bodies. HBBC is clearly highly respected in the economic development and growth field, and there are numerous examples where HBBC has supported (directly or indirectly) and influenced developments to have real impact. "Punching above their weight" was a phrase used by several partners throughout the peer challenge.

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There has been a great turnaround in the planning service. There is excellent officer leadership and there has been a clear improvement in performance. There are some outstanding challenges about the local plan, but these are known about, and the team is working to address them.

Officers told the peer team that robust processes are in place for performance and risk around programme management and decision-making (based on robust business cases) for major projects or investments. HBBC should reassure itself that there is a clearly understood and documented decision-making and accountability audit trail for all major projects and investments.

## 6. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings. The LGA will continue to provide on-going support to the council. Following publication of CPC report you need to produce and publish an Action Plan within five months of the time on site. As part of the CPC, the council are also required to have a progress review and publish the findings from this within twelve months of the CPC. The LGA will also publish the progress review report on their website.

The progress review will provide space for a council's senior leadership to report to peers on the progress made against each of the CPC's recommendations, discuss early impact or learning and receive feedback on the implementation of the CPC action plan. The progress review will usually be delivered on-site over one day.

The date for the progress review at Hinckley and Bosworth will need to be early October 2025 to comply with these timescales.

In the meantime, Mark Edgell, principal adviser for the East Midlands, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. As outlined above, Mark is available to discuss any further support the council requires.

[mark.edgell@local.gov.uk](mailto:mark.edgell@local.gov.uk).

## Peer Challenge Recommendations 2025

	Recommendations	Actions	Progress	Owner
1.	Celebrate your organisational culture and ethos and the passion of your staff and councillors, recognising the passion, commitment, loyalty and belief in place	<p>Celebrate organisational ethos and culture and passion and commitment of staff and councillors via internal comms mechanisms</p> <p>Borough Bulletin article following final CPC report to highlight organisational ethos and culture</p> <p>Consider internal branding on our culture and ethos</p>	<p>Day off given to staff following Peer Challenge</p> <p>Target Summer Edition of Bulletin</p> <p>June 2025</p>	<p>Bill Cullen</p> <p>Jacqueline Puffett</p> <p>Jacqueline Puffett</p>
2.	Ensure the extent of your community leadership work is well communicated and celebrated.	<p>Increase communications on our community leadership work and ensure comms are clear in terms of how we, as a council, have taken a lead</p> <p>Use portfolio of partner testimonies to further celebrate</p>	Incorporate our leadership work on service partner news bulletins-ongoing 2025	<p>ELT</p> <p>SLT/ Jacqueline Puffet</p>

## Peer Challenge Recommendations 2025

	Recommendations	Actions	Progress	Owner
		and communicate our leadership work	Testimonies provided to be incorporated in LGR Proposal Submission March 2025	
3.	Ensure that the council's roles as a deliverer, facilitator and influencer are clearly defined	<p>We are clear that our role and that it depends on the setting. We will continue to adapt and clearly define our role as we move through LGR. We will continue to work to influence the shape of any new entity under LGR.</p> <p>Review partnership governance to ensure it is robust across the partnership landscape</p>	<p>Audit Partnerships and define our role – June to Sept 2025</p> <p>Audit Partnerships and ensure governance /terms of reference in place – June to Sept 2025</p>	<p>SLT</p> <p>Rachel Burgess</p>
4.	Consider resilience and capacity challenges with existing work and when considering new projects and initiatives	Consider current and new projects in line with capacity and resilience needed for LGR.	Quarterly Reviews from July 2025	SLT/ELT

## Peer Challenge Recommendations 2025

	Recommendations	Actions	Progress	Owner
Page 43		Project Management documentation in place and includes assessment of capacity	September 2025	Julie Kenny
		Succession planning elements delivered via People Strategy. To include buddying up/mentoring to pass on knowledge/skills.	Roll out of internal mentoring programme Sept 2025	Julie Stay
		Put in place practices to capture institutional memory, assess for gaps in documentation of procedures.	On going from June 2025	ELT
5.	Continue to develop income and savings plan with Members and senior staff to minimise future impacts of service delivery.	<p>Draft shared with Peer Team</p> <p>Income and Savings plan to be further developed in line with sustaining services for next 3 years in advance of potential LGR on 1<sup>st</sup> April 28.</p>	<p>Develop further in context of LGR on Budget Process 2025/26</p> <p>From Autumn 2025</p>	<p>AW/SLT</p> <p>SLT</p>

## Peer Challenge Recommendations 2025

	Recommendations	Actions	Progress	Owner
Page 44		<p>Ensure councillors as well as officers are involved in the income and savings plan to close the budget gap</p> <p>Consult on income and savings plans as part of the budget setting process and share with all staff so they are fully aware and can contribute to its delivery</p>	TBC	SLT
	Ensure senior staff continue to develop awareness of delegations, roles and responsibilities.	Produce briefing note for officers on delegations	A <a href="#">briefing note for officers</a> has been added to the intranet which gives a brief outline of different types of decisions and the requirements around them. It includes information to help decide whether a decision should be made by the Executive or by Council, delegated decisions taken by officers or an individual Executive member and the requirement to record them, and the requirement to include items on the forward plan.	Rebecca Owen



## Peer Challenge Recommendations 2025

	Recommendations	Actions	Progress	Owner
Page 45		Ensure the role of the overview and scrutiny function in the 'call-in' process and broader scrutiny work is publicly available and clear to all.	Workshop held with ELT to discuss capturing delegated decisions and n  June 2025	Julie Kenny
	Continue developing the process of publishing and recording of decisions	Refreshed plan in place re: publishing of decisions.  Dedicated ELT meeting to discuss delegated officer decisions and recording	Briefing note as above.  Dedicated ELT meeting arranged for 28 <sup>th</sup> March to further discuss delegated officer decisions and recording	Rebecca Owen
8.	Ensure that performance management visibly supports strategic decisions	Members of Executive and scrutiny are sighted on performance reports  Housing Performance Framework to be considered in other areas, in the first instance in Streetscene	Performance reports have been added to Executive agendas.  ELT workshop completed. Housing showcased their performance dashboard so services can determine how it could be applied in their areas.	SLT  Julie Kenny/Maddy Shellard

## Peer Challenge Recommendations 2025

	Recommendations	Actions	Progress	Owner
		Ensure that performance reporting supports priority monitoring and decision making.	<p>Presentation circulated to wider teams. Skill share sessions to be arranged.</p> <p>This has commenced with reports to Executive March 2025. Officers advised of key reports required.</p>	SLT/ELT
Page 46	Ensure the roles for managing risks are clear and that they support decision-making	<p>Risk Management Framework to be refreshed</p> <p>Deliver actions from Audit Committee Report</p> <p>Clarify how councillors are involved in the management of corporate risks, and that corporate risks are considered when making strategic decisions.</p>	<p>July 2025</p> <p>February 2025 – Revised TOR have been agreed by Audit Committee January 2025 and agreed at Council February 2025</p> <p>Terms of reference for Audit Cttee have been amended to clarify their role in relation to risk management.</p>	<p>Julie Kenny</p> <p>Julie Kenny/Ashley Wilson</p> <p>Julie Kenny</p>