


Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Corporate Peer Challenge

Feedback from the peer challenge team

3rd – 5th December 2024

Thursday 5th 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 6th 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