



Council

02 November 2020

**Subject : LGA Peer Challenge Outcome and Update**

Report by:

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Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To provide Members with an update on progress against the recommendations from the LGA Peer Challenge.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

Members are asked to;

- 1 - Accept the final report of the Peer Challenge Group
- 2 - Agree the report should be published on the Council website
- 3 - Welcome the progress made against the recommendations

## IMPLICATIONS

**Legal:** No legal implications

(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report **MUST** be seen by the MO

**Financial : FIN REF : - FIN/95/21/TJB**

No Financial implications as process was free of charge

(N.B.) All committee reports **MUST** have a Fin Ref

**Staffing :** No staffing implications

(N.B.) Where there are staffing implications the report **MUST** have a HR Ref

**Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :** *NB: Please explain how you have considered the policy's impact on different groups (for example: young people, elderly, ethnic minorities, LGBT community, rural residents, disabled, others).*

**Data Protection Implications :** No Data Protection implications

**Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:** N/A

**Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:** N/A

**Health Implications:** N/A

**Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :**

**Risk Assessment :**

**Call in and Urgency:**

**Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?**

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

**Yes**

**No**

**Key Decision:**

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

**Yes**

**No**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In January 2020, West Lindsey District Council received a visit from a Peer Team provided by the Local Government Association. The peer challenge is free of charge although we are expected to make our Officers available to participate in Peer Challenge in other areas as part of the scheme.
- 1.2 The final report was expected to be presented to the Annual Council in May 2020, however due to the impact of Covid 19 we were not able to proceed with that meeting.
- 1.3 We are therefore presenting the report to Full Council and provide an update on progress against the recommendations.

## 2 Final Report

- 2.1 The full report is available as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.2 The overall message from the Peer Group was very positive and they were particularly complimentary about the passion and commitment of both elected Members and Officers.
- 2.3 The final report made ten recommendations. These were shared with Members as part of the Strategic Leaders panel held on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020, and are set

**1. Implement the new structure** – this should be completed as soon as possible and include the senior management structure as well as the structure of council departments including the resolution of temporary arrangements. As far as possible this new structure should seek to ensure the right number of employees with the right skills and experience are in place in substantive posts in order to provide clarity and a firmer footing to enable delivery of the council's priorities.

**2. Reduce the Customer First Programme to its core and 'rebrand' it** – its objectives are sound but the vision is currently too big and undeliverable, with some confusion about its overall purpose or vision. It has had its successes, eg in service redesign, so has potential for more. Engage your staff, who want to serve customers to full effect, to consider what customers really need and therefore what you need to do to meet those needs. Develop a new programme that offers a clean break from the current one.

**3. Use the 'purposeful pause' regarding commercialisation and financial planning to understand and identify where future income and savings should come from** – there is understandable uncertainty about local government funding, Brexit and economic conditions generally but use your financial strength, commercial success,

*momentum and strategic economic thinking to shape your next steps. Much of your potential could be lost if you do not make the most of this pause.*

**4. Clarify what ‘social regeneration’ means to the council, what it will deliver and how to resource it** – *the peer team heard about this new concept throughout its visit as a possible development or even replacement as a new approach to growth. There were however different interpretations within WLDC of what it could mean. The council therefore needs to clarify and agree exactly what it is and is not. This clarity will enable WLDC to decide if social regeneration should be part of its longer-term plans. If so, the council can then confirm its purpose, and plan the required activities and resources.*

**5. Improve communications with all stakeholders** - *to keep staff and councillors abreast of developments and decisions so they are clear about what they need to do. To improve relationships and trust, inform all district stakeholders regularly about what the council is doing, why and explain how they can be kept updated and get involved.*

**6. Use the Local Plan Review process to ensure the viability and deliverability of allocated housing sites across the District** – *the current Local Plan sets challenging housing targets, a review of the objectively assessed housing need, alongside the proposed allocations required to ensure targets remain deliverable. It will be essential to use your political leadership to inform and influence the next Local Plan.*

**7. Review the overview and scrutiny function** – *there are mixed views and questions about the function generally, including its effectiveness and purpose. This was reviewed about 18 months ago but there are already differing opinions about the value it adds. A further review is therefore needed to identify the function’s value and how it can be most effective, in particular how it can engage all members constructively.*

**8. Ensure a structured approach to workforce and succession planning** – *WLDC has an ageing workforce, there are pressures on staffing capacity and potential ‘single points of failure’ – where there will be no or insufficient cover if certain staff are absent or if/when they leave the council. You also have a large number of staff on secondment and acting up, and this has added to an air of uncertainty for your teams which has also informed recommendation 1. All of this needs addressing before these issues reach crisis point.*

**9. Ensure performance management processes are consistent at service level** – *you have a corporate performance management team that want to support team managers to improve performance rather than report it. Further engage with team managers as necessary to enable this.*

**10. Consider a cultural strategy** - *there is potential to align and increase the use of, and maximise income from, your portfolio of existing and planned cultural assets.*

### **3. Update**

- 3.1 The presentation attached as Appendix 2 provides an update on progress against the recommendations and I am pleased to say that we have made good progress in particular implementing the Senior Structure and simplifying Customer First.