



**Governance and Audit
Committee**

**Tuesday, 26th September
2023**

Subject: LGA Peer Challenge Update Report

Report by:

Chief Executive

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To update members on the latest position
regarding the Council's next LGA Corporate
Peer Challenge, due by 2025.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That members note the change in timing for the Council's next LGA Corporate Peer Challenge from 2024 to 2025.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

No legal implications arising from this report. There is no legal requirement for local authorities to undergo a Peer Challenge, however, member councils of the Local Government Association are expected to undergo a full Corporate Peer Challenge every five years; and for the outcome to be published on the Council's website.

Financial : FIN/57/24/GA/SL

No financial implications arising from this report. Corporate Peer Challenges are fully funded by the Local Government Association.

Staffing :

No staffing implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

A Corporate Peer Challenge will include an appraisal of the Council's approach to equality and diversity as part of the scope of the review.

Data Protection Implications :

No data protection implications arising from this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

Not applicable to this report. A Corporate Peer Challenge will appraise the Council's approach and commitment to tackling climate change.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

Not applicable to this report.

Health Implications:

No health implications arising from this report.

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

Outcome of the LGA Follow-up Peer Review, 2022

Report to Council on 22nd July 2022

<https://democracy.west-lindsey.gov.uk/documents/s31349/Outcome%20of%20the%20LGA%20Follow-Up%20Peer%20Review%202022.pdf>

Risk Assessment :

Not applicable

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

x

Key Decision:

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

Yes

No

x

Introduction

The Local Government Association (LGA), of which West Lindsey District Council is a member, offers all local authorities a Corporate Peer Challenge once every five years, including a follow-up review to monitor progress against any recommendations made. The Council last undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge in January 2020, with a follow-up review taking place in February 2022; therefore the Council's next full Corporate Peer Challenge is due no later than 2025.

A report to Council on 4th July 2022 stated under 'Next Steps' that: "*West Lindsey's next, full peer challenge is scheduled to take place in 2024 and officers will begin work to prepare for this in collaboration with key stakeholders and decision makers.*" This report asks members to note a change to this timetable, the reasons for which are outlined below.

Context

As stated by the LGA, Peer Challenges are "*an established tool that support Councils to drive improvements and efficiency in specific areas.*" In agreeing to undergo a Corporate Peer Challenge, Councils are assigned a peer team comprised of experienced and fully trained political and managerial leaders to provide robust and strategic challenge and support.

Peer Challenges are fully subsidised by the LGA with changes currently being implemented by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) placing a focus on two types of peer challenge: Corporate Peer Challenge and Finance and Governance Peer Challenge. Service specific challenges previously on offer to councils will no longer be available under the LGA's new model. A Corporate Peer Challenge focuses on five core areas, these being:

1. Local Priorities and Outcomes
2. Organisational and Place Leadership
3. Governance and Culture
4. Financial Planning and Management
5. Capacity for Improvement

There is scope to include further areas for review at the discretion of the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive and in agreement with the peer team.

Timeline for the Council's Next Corporate Peer Challenge

The decision for when to hold the Council's next Peer Challenge sits with the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chief Executive. Under the previous administration, it was agreed with the former Leader of the Council that this would be held in January 2024, eight months after the 2023 local elections. This would be exactly four years since the last Corporate Challenge in January 2020, which was eight months after the 2019 local elections.

Due to a significant intake of newly elected members, and following the recent adoption of a new Corporate Plan in June 2023, the new Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Chief Executive, has requested that the next Corporate Peer Challenge be scheduled for 2025. This change in timing allows new members time to become fully familiar with their roles and duties, and with the

Council as an organisation. It also allows 12 months for the new Corporate Plan to become embedded so that delivery of the strategic aims and objectives can be assessed as part of a Corporate Peer Challenge. Holding a Peer Challenge in 2025 meets the five-year expectation on Councils, with West Lindsey's next Challenge due no later than 2025.

Members are asked to note the change in timing for the Council's next Corporate Peer Challenge. Officers will work with the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Local Government Association to agree the scope and timing, which will be communicated back to this committee in due course.