



Cabinet

Tuesday, 10 December 2024

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review

Report of the Chief Executive

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor N Clarke

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. The Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a part of the Local Government Association's (LGA) sector support programme. It involves senior councillors and officers from other authorities acting as peers to review the Council, providing supportive, but also critical challenge. It aims to highlight areas of good practice, as well as identify areas for improvement and ongoing support.
- 1.2. The Council invited the LGA to conduct a CPC, which took place 15-18 January 2024. The feedback report from this visit and resulting action plan was presented to Cabinet in April 2024.
- 1.3. Progress reviews are now a core component of all CPCs. Every council that has a CPC is required to have a progress review and publish its findings within 12 months of the original CPC. The Council's progress review took place on 6 November 2024.
- 1.4. This report provides an overview of the process, progress against the original CPC recommendations and the progress review feedback report, which is presented in its entirety in Appendix A.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet accepts the LGA's feedback report as presented in Appendix A.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

The Council is required to publish the feedback report within 12 months of the original CPC which was in January 2024.

4. Supporting Information

Overview of the Progress Review Process

- 4.1. The progress review took place on 6 November 2024. The review focused on each of the CPC's main recommendations. The Council shared an overview of progress made against each of the recommendations in advance of the visit, see Appendix B, which was explored in greater detail on the day.
- 4.2. The following members of the original CPC team participated in the progress review:
 - Member Peer - Peter Fleming OBE, former Leader, Sevenoaks District Council
 - Chief Executive Peer – Scott Logan, former Chief Executive, Basildon Council
 - LGA Peer Challenge Manager – Vicki Goddard

Progress Against CPC Recommendations

- 4.3. The Council has completed or progressed all nine of the recommendations made by the CPC team in January 2024, which the team reported to be impressed by.
- 4.4. Progress against all nine recommendations is presented in Appendix A, with particular highlights including:
 - A Corporate Projects Team has been established, which now acts as a central hub for project management within the authority. The rollout of a refreshed project management approach is planned for January 2025, which will provide a consistent approach for all officers delivering projects across the Council. Project management training is planned for the new year for a cohort of officers who are involved in project work. Not only does this new function provide consistency in terms of project management approach, but it also provides greater oversight for the Executive Management Team.
 - A new Capital Programme Officer Working Group has been established, which is linked to the newly adopted Economic Growth Strategy. The purpose of this Group is to ensure that the programme is being well managed in terms of its strategic outcomes, prioritisation and capacity to deliver. It also draws links to the Economic Growth Strategy and will assist with identifying possible additions to the programme.
 - The Council's values have been revised and reduced to five: commitment, collaboration, excellence, inclusivity and integrity. This process was led by the Council's Employee Liaison Group, with all colleagues involved in the consultation. The result is a more impactful and meaningful set of values, which colleagues relate to and can remember.

Feedback from the CPC Team

- 4.5. Feedback received on the day was extremely positive. The team recognised the amount of work done by the Council since their visit in January 2024, and the Council's commitment to responding positively and meaningfully to the recommendations made.
- 4.6. The team remarked on the day and in the feedback report, that they were impressed with the progress made in the context of such significant local and regional change since their visit, including the establishment of the East Midlands Combined County Authority, a new MP for Rushcliffe and the announcement of the departure of the Chief Executive.
- 4.7. The team reported that they were particularly impressed both by the Council's 'careful consideration of, and building on, these recommendations to best enhance Rushcliffe's agenda, rather than just actioning them at face value' and also the Council's 'recognition of how to progress each main recommendation further, to get the fullest value out of them'.
- 4.8. The feedback report which can be viewed in full in Appendix A, includes a great deal of positive feedback and observations, including:
 - Rushcliffe has undertaken significant work on this [*approach to project management*] since the CPC.
 - This [*regional partnership working*] is already enabling Rushcliffe to further build its relationships and trust with its partners, so that partners can take up Rushcliffe's offers, as well as its asks.
 - The Council's Housing Design codes, including those in the GNSP, currently include eco credentials and targets far higher than their current equivalents and building regulations. This is to meet Rushcliffe's ambitious climate change agenda for its communities. The codes notably build on the Council's successful Abbey Road housing development, whereby Rushcliffe and the developer have agreed many environmental features.
 - All Rushcliffe's services contribute to the [*carbon management*] plan through their aligned service area action plans. Notable examples include reducing Rushcliffe's refuse fleet's carbon emissions by 90% by replacing diesel with biofuel and securing external grant funding to improve carbon efficiency of the Cotgrave Leisure Centre and Gamston Community Hall. Through such work, Rushcliffe is making much progress towards its 2030 climate related targets, with more to come.
 - The Council has responded to this challenge [*engaging with diverse and interconnecting communities*] in many positive ways. It has, for example, developed various initiatives to identify and engage more with its younger stakeholders, potential service users and hard to reach groups. The peer team was particularly impressed with the Council's work with high schools, whereby students articulately present and discuss issues they want to address. Rushcliffe is continuing to engage with communities – and empowering local stakeholder representatives to lead on projects – in specific work areas such as the environment.

4.9. A small number of comments in the feedback report require some additional context or response, as follows:

CPC comment	RBC response
<p>Pg 5 - Rushcliffe has not been able to introduce its new performance management framework including staff appraisals... It has however scheduled the rollout for November 2025, alongside which the Council will align its programme and project management processes.</p>	<p><i>The Council has established a new Corporate Projects team and is working on strengthening the approach to corporate project management. However, the Council is confident in its current approach to performance management. There is a clear golden thread which aligns performance from the Corporate Strategy, through service plans, down to individual appraisals.</i></p> <p><i>The reference to a new performance management framework including staff appraisals appears to confuse two separate pieces of work, firstly the roll out of a new project management framework and secondly embedding our new values into our appraisal process. These are two distinct pieces of work, unrelated to performance management.</i></p>
<p>Pg 6 – All this [<i>improved training</i>] may be contributing to Councillors asking fewer questions.</p>	<p><i>The Council has no wish for Councillors to ask fewer question. It essential that Councillors do ask questions and that officers provide the right level of support to ensure Councillors understand their role and any issues they are considering or scrutinising.</i></p>
<p>Pg 7 - The Council recognised that its EMT needed greater oversight and alignment between its Economic Growth Strategy and five-year capital programme to ensure best use of resources and best outcomes.</p>	<p><i>EMT has always had robust oversight of the Capital Programme. This is not a concern. The added value of the new Capital Programme Working Group is to identify resource pressures and considering the pipeline of capital schemes to aid financial planning.</i></p>
<p>Pg 8 - Rushcliffe is also reviewing the health and progress of its high streets. These can be too small to implement effective business improvement districts but the Council is open to reconsidering the concept.</p>	<p><i>The Council has explored ‘business improvement districts’ a number of times in the past and currently does not feel they are a good fit for the Borough and will not be pursuing this further at present.</i></p>
<p>Pg 12 - The Council and the peer team also recognise that some of Rushcliffe’s current methodology for</p>	<p><i>The approach taken to resident surveys is fairly standard across local authorities of Rushcliffe’s size and the Council does not believe the findings to be without value.</i></p>

engaging/surveying its residents is not statistically valid.

However, the Council is willing to explore alternative approaches in future, depending on resources.

- 4.10. The Council is glad to see recognition of the positive progress made since January 2024. This recognition builds on many of the original observations of the CPC team in respect of the Council as an exceptional partner, with Councillors who have a strong role within their communities and exceptionally hard-working staff.
- 4.11. The CPC process has been a positive one and the Council would like to thank the Corporate Peer Team and the LGA for their time and commitment.

5. Alternative options considered and reasons for rejection

The Council could choose not to accept the feedback from the CPC progress review. However, it is important that the Council remains open to feedback and learning, particularly from experienced peers and the LGA. This is in the best interests of residents and the Borough.

6. Risks and Uncertainties

There are no known risks associated with this report.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

7.3. Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

7.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no crime and disorder implications associated with this report.

7.5. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

There are no biodiversity net gain implications associated with this report.

8. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	The CPC is designed to ensure that the council is meeting its corporate priorities across the board.
Quality of Life	
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	

9. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet accepts the LGA's feedback report as presented in Appendix A.

For more information contact:	Kath Marriott Chief Executive 0115 914 8291 kmarriott@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Cabinet – April 2024
List of appendices:	Appendix A – Progress Review Feedback Appendix B – RBC Progress Update