



Corporate Peer Challenge

Broxtowe Borough Council

24 June 2022

Agreement of scope of peer challenge



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Introduction

The Local Government Association offers all councils a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) at no cost every 5 years. CPC is a tried and trusted method of improvement; it provides councils with a robust and effective improvement tool which is owned and delivered by the sector, for the sector. Peers remain at the heart of the peer challenge process and provide a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge. In a recent survey, 98% of councils receiving a Corporate Peer Challenge said that it had a positive impact on the delivery of the council's priorities.

The challenges faced by councils in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic are unprecedented. The CPC offer takes into account the challenging context in which councils are operating. The refreshed CPC process also provides a greater focus on key issues such as equality and diversity and community engagement.

Thank you for agreeing to be part of the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge programme. This note provides details of the approach, scope and focus at Broxtowe Borough Council.

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Scope and focus

It was good to meet you again, on Friday 17th June 2022 to discuss the Corporate Peer Challenge for Broxtowe Borough Council. As we discussed, to get the most value out of your corporate peer challenge, the council needs to consider carefully the scope and focus.

The five high-level themes we have adopted for all LGA Corporate Peer Challenges provides the initial framework:

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 and achieving improved outcomes for all its communities?
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 respect, challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management:** Does the council have a clear understanding of its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a clear plan to address its financial challenges?
5. **Capacity for improvement:** Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

We discussed how to build in Broxtowe's Corporate priorities:

- Housing – including building as well as social housing
- Business Growth – considering bidding for and use of funds such as the Towns Fund and Levelling Up
- Environment – including Green Futures work, aiming at being at net carbon zero as a council by 2027 and subsequently as a borough
- Health – with a particular focus on dementia, but also how the Health Partnership can tackle health inequalities, and getting people moving more
- Community Safety – which has continued to be a priority

We agreed that we could build most of those into the overarching themes above but add Environment as an additional focus for the challenge.

Timing and duration

A peer challenge takes around six months lead-in time, including to secure time in peers' diaries. We discussed a duration of three days on site, starting on a Tuesday, looking at November or early December 2022. You will look at regular meetings during this time and consider how the peer challenge team could attend those meetings to aid timetabling and enable the team to see how the authority really works. This includes Member meetings such as Planning, Scrutiny or Cabinet as well as officer meetings such as Senior Leadership Team or partnership meetings.

Corporate Peer Challenge team

The LGA will source and agree a team of officer and member peers informed by the skills and experience required. There is also the opportunity to include peers from outside of local government, such as team member(s) with a community sector, central government or private sector experience. The LGA is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and it is important that peer teams reflect the diversity of local councils and the communities they serve.

We suggest a peer team of:

- Two councillor peers, one Labour, one Conservative, ideally Leaders from a council with a similar context to your Council (although not from the vicinity). In your case we could expect to source District/Borough Council Leader. We will work with you and the LGA Labour and Conservative Group Offices to identify potential councillor peers.
- A Chief Executive Officer peer, probably from a district council and ideally reflecting an area with a similar context, such as proximity to university and a mixture of urban and rural settings.
- A senior officer peer with a strong track record finance
- A senior officer peer, possibly with a track record on economic development.
- A senior officer peer with a track record on the environmental agenda

- LGA Peer Challenge Manager: Becca Singh
- LGA Project Support Officer: to be confirmed
- LGA Shadow peer: to be confirmed, but likely to be a graduate from the LGA's National Graduate Development Programme.

The peer team's composition will be informed by the final agreed scope. We will work with you to agree the team composition. One or more of the officers may come from outside the local government sector.

Process

The peer team will meet with a range of officers and members over the course of the peer challenge, as well as a range of external stakeholders. There will be informal feedback to the Leader and CEO at the end of each day.

On the final day the peer team will deliver headline feedback and recommendations to a selected audience which should include as a minimum: the corporate leadership team, cabinet members and, as appropriate, opposition members. During this feedback there is opportunity for clarification and questions.

This will be followed by a report detailing the strengths of the council, the issues considered, areas for further improvement and key recommendations. The council will receive the draft report within three weeks of the CPC. We will then agree the final report with you for publication. The council should then develop a detailed action plan that responds to the report's findings.

In addition, to get the most out of the onsite CPC activity some preparatory and post-CPC engagement will be beneficial.

Peer preparation and engagement

To help the peer team gain an in-depth understanding of the local issues before their onsite activity, we will work with Broxtowe Borough Council to develop an Information & Data Pack. The most important aspect of the pack is the Position Statement, prepared by the council. This provides a clear brief and steer to the peer team on the local context and what the peer team should focus on. It is an opportunity to set out the key issues, challenges and current thinking in relation to the CPC.

The peer team may also undertake some pre-onsite conversations with key officers and members. We will confirm the dates and times for this earlier engagement, which is likely to take place remotely.

Six-month check-in

Six months after the CPC, the LGA will organise a CPC Check-In. This will be a short-facilitated session which creates space for the council's senior leadership to update peers on its progress against the action plan and discuss next steps.

Following this, the LGA will produce a short note which reflects the council's progress and provides examples of any good or innovative practice.

The date for the Six-Month Check-in at Broxtowe Borough Council will be around June 2023.

Publication of corporate peer challenge report

To promote openness and transparency and share learning across the sector, the corporate peer challenge offer is made on the expectation that each council will publish both the CPC report and its subsequent action plan in response to the peer challenge's findings.

We expect the council to publish the CPC report within six weeks of its finalisation, with the subsequent action plan published within eight weeks of the report's publication. We do ask that the council commit to this principle at the outset. The LGA will also publish the CPC report on its website.



Practical arrangements and next steps

The council will need to identify a peer challenge co-ordinator who will act as a day-to-day contact and oversee the practical arrangements. I understand Sarah Tidy undertake this.

The council will need to prepare a timetable of meetings and focus groups for the team. The attached Preparation Guidance Note provides further details on preparing for the process, including the timetable. Becca would be happy to meet with Sarah to discuss the practical arrangements.

I hope this has been helpful and please can you confirm the approach by return of email.