

North Tyneside Council

Report to Cabinet

Date: 24 May 2021

Title: Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Follow Up and Recovery and Renewal Remote Visit

Portfolio(s):	Elected Mayor	Cabinet Member(s):	Norma Redfearn
Report from Service Area:	Corporate Strategy and Customer Service		
Responsible Officer: and engagement	Jacqueline Laughton, Head of Corporate Strategy and Customer Service	(Tel: (0191) 6435724)	
Wards affected:	All		

PART 1

1.1 Executive Summary:

As part of the national sector-led improvement programme, the Authority took part in a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge. The challenge took place in North Tyneside from 18 – 21 June 2019 with experienced colleagues and was led by a serving Chief Executive of a similar Authority and an Elected Mayor.

The Peer Team presented feedback on 21 June 2019 to Cabinet Members and the Senior Leadership Team. That feedback was very positive about the Borough, its communities and businesses, and the Authority. The Peer Team also made six helpful recommendations for the Authority's future planning in a written report.

The Peer Team written report, and resulting action plan from the Authority, was reviewed and agreed by Cabinet, at its meeting of 14 October 2019.

As part of the peer challenge process, the LGA provide further support, advice and guidance. The process also includes a follow up visit which is expected to take place within two years of the original visit.

When COVID-19 and national lockdown measures began in March 2020, the LGA suspended the physical delivery of peer challenge work, including their peer challenge programmes. To continue to support councils during this period, the LGA have refocused their offer, adopting a new approach to the peer support offer, focusing on supporting the recovery and renewal of local government and communities.

This report sets out a proposed approach to carry out an LGA remote recovery and renewal challenge for North Tyneside, alongside the follow up visit from the corporate peer review challenge. This joint, remote visit would take place from 29 – 30 June 2021.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (1) note the updated action plan in Appendix 1
- (2) note the planned follow-up visit in June 2021, and
- (3) agree that a Local Government Association remote recovery and renewal challenge for North Tyneside, take place in June 2021.

1.3 Forward Plan:

Twenty eight days' notice of this report has been given and it first appeared on the Forward Plan that was published on 1 April 2021.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report is directly concerned with the delivery of the entire Our North Tyneside Plan.

1.5 Information:

1.5.1 Background

a. Corporate Peer Challenge 18 – 21 June 2019

Peer Challenges are delivered by experienced elected members and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team in 2019 reflected the Authority's requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected based on their relevant experience and expertise.

In advance of the site visit, the Peer Team were sent a standard set of documents relating to the Authority's planning and financial management. In addition, they received a short statement which provided an overview of the place and the organisation. The site visit comprised of a range of meetings, focus groups and one to one discussions with a cross section of members, officers and partners.

The Peer Team were very positive about the Borough, the organisation and its partners. They saw North Tyneside as an attractive and vibrant place with members, staff, partners and residents all passionate about the Borough.

The Peer team felt the Authority was effective, well led and well managed, providing good quality services and with a very positive culture. They identified successful regeneration across the Borough recognised by partners and residents.

Their recommendations focussed on four important areas; how the organisation tells its story, explains its plans and aligns its enabling services against those plans; ensuring regeneration work is inclusive; making sure a four-year medium term financial plan is in place to deliver the priorities of the Mayor and Cabinet and maximising participation and influence in the North of Tyne Combined Authority.

The Peer Team presented feedback on 21 June 2019 to Cabinet Members and the Senior Leadership Team. The Peer Team made six helpful recommendations for the Authority's future planning in a written report.

The Peer Team written report, and resulting action plan from the Authority, was reviewed and agreed by Cabinet, at its meeting on 14 October 2019.

b. North Tyneside Council's Covid-19 Recovery Framework

The Authority's COVID-19 recovery framework was agreed by Cabinet on 29 June 2020 and set out an 18-month programme of work to move the Authority and Borough, through three phases of recovery from June 2020 to July 2021. The Framework was based on the Government's Covid-19 Recovery Strategy (May 2020,) as well as the regional economic recovery framework. The framework and its associated programme has 3 phases of work.

- Immediate "restart" phase (June – September 2020)
- Medium "transition" phase (October 2020 to March 2021)
- Long term "rebuild and grow" phase (April 2021 – July 2021).

The recovery programme established 33 workstreams, each designed to manage the local implementation of national restrictions and of the pandemic.

The North Tyneside recovery programme was in line with wider regional work around recovery across the whole of the seven local authorities in the North East.

The recovery programme has been managed by the Authority's Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG), reporting in weekly to Cabinet Members via the Lead Member Briefing meeting. An update on the progress and learning from the recovery programme, was provided as part of a report to Cabinet, on the Authority's customer service programme, on 22 February 2021.

Two in depth end of phase reviews have now been completed for the recovery programme, in October 2021 and March 2021. These reviews assessed the progress of the programme at each of its three phases, against the recovery framework objectives and planned deliverables of each of the workstreams.

At the most recent end of phase review, completed in March 2021, a further eleven of the programme's remaining workstreams were successfully closed as part of this review. The third and final phase of the Authority's recovery programme, has six remaining workstreams; these mainly relate to the reopening of services, in line with Government's COVID-19 Response, Spring 2021, Roadmap Out of Lockdown.

c. Local Government Association Recovery and Renewal Challenge

When COVID-19 national lockdown measures began in March 2020, the LGA suspended the physical delivery of peer challenge work, including their peer challenge programmes. To continue to support councils during this period, the LGA have refocused their offer, adopting a new approach to the peer support offer, focusing on supporting the recovery and renewal of local government and communities. All work is undertaken remotely.

1.5.2 Progress since the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge 18 – 21 June 2019 and Follow up Visit

a. LGA Recommendations and North Tyneside Action Plan

Appendix 1 of this briefing shows the action plan and progress made, with the six peer review recommendations. All actions from each of the recommendations have been successfully completed or are in place or underway.

The follow up visit will help review and assess progress and development in response to the feedback and recommendations made by the peer team, in June 2019, specifically:

- has the Authority fully considered the recommendations made by the peer team and delivered against the agreed action plan,
- identify any barriers or opportunities in progress, as result of the pandemic, and
- consider any changes in political leadership, as a result of local and Mayoral elections.

b. COVID-19 Recovery Programme

The Authority's COVID-19 recovery framework and associated work programme is driven by senior political leadership and oversight, and management from the senior officer team.

The two formal end of stage reviews undertaken in October 2020 and March 2021, have evidenced a wealth of products, deliverables and learning, that is shaping and influencing the Authority's future plans.

- The recovery programme has already delivered a wide range of benefits and in some areas, exponential service transformation. Cabinet reviewed this progress as part of an end of phase review of the Authority's customer service programme, on 22 February 2021.
- Learning from the approach to manage the Authority's recovery programme and the products and deliverables it has realised, is shaping every element of the Authority's future planning. The customer service programme and the Authority's digital strategy, agreed by Cabinet in January 2020, are both being flexed to respond to the longer term impact of the pandemic.
- The Authority and its partners are clear that many socio-economic inequalities, have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. At its meeting of 24 May 2021, Cabinet are reviewing a new inclusive economy strategy for the Borough. This is an overarching approach to building a more inclusive North Tyneside, particularly using the local economy as a route to make that happen. It provides a framework for a range of projects and activities which aim to make North Tyneside and its economy, more inclusive as part of work to address the health and wider socio-economic inequalities.

The impact of the pandemic on wider socio-economic inequalities was initially assessed as part of the end of phase review in March 2021. Detailed work is now underway to finalise this assessment and this will be discussed by the Mayor and Cabinet as well as with external stakeholders to determine the best approach to

tackle the issues identified. Further reports will be brought back to Cabinet on this in due course.

1.5.3 LGA Recovery and Renewal Panel 29 – 30 June 2021

The purpose of the review is to:

- consider the Authority’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- review the current priorities for the Borough, as a result of COVID-19, and
- consider the longer term impact of the pandemic, on the ambitions of the Authority for the Borough.

In doing so, the review will assess the following.

Progress made by the Authority’s recovery programme.

- Leadership of place, economy and supporting people.
- Effective partnership working.

Considerations and planning post July 2021:

- Consideration of the Our North Tyneside Plan priorities and objectives for recovery.
- Understanding of, and plans to address, impact of the pandemic on socio-economic inequalities.
- Making the most of new ways of organisational working and new ways of serving our customers, through the Authority’s customer service programme.
- Protecting recovery and planning for the future; understanding and addressing business and economic impact of the pandemic.

Schedule and Information for the LGA Remote Visit

The remote review will take place over two days, 29 – 30 June 2021, and will involve remote meetings with a range of council leaders and teams.

Table 1 below shows the draft schedule for the visit, agreed at the time this report was produced but may be subject to minor change, as final arrangements for the visit are established.

Table 1 - LGA Remote Visit Schedule

29 June	
Introduction / meet and greet session (2hrs)	All peer team Elected Mayor Deputy Mayor Lead Member for Finance Chief executive Head of Resources Head of Corporate Strategy Head of Regeneration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Position statement / overview presentation from the Authority 	

Workstream 1	Workstream 2
A review of recommendations from the previous corporate peer challenge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We listen we care Values and Digital 	A review of recommendations from the previous corporate peer challenge: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive economy NTCA
Meeting with Elected Mayor	Meeting with Chief Executive
Meet with Chairs of the Authority's Recovery Coordinating Group and workstream leads	Meet with members of the North Tyneside Strategic Partnership (NTSP) for an overview of recovery and future plans
Staff focus group - managers Recommendation 3 - from the existing positive culture, articulate and communicate clear key values for the organisation	Staff focus group – frontline staff Recommendation 3 - from the existing positive culture, articulate and communicate clear key values for the organisation
30 June	
Meeting with Cabinet Members	Meeting with Leader of the Opposition
Recovery Panel – forward looking	
Recovery panel – forward looking	
Debrief with the Elected Mayor and Chief Executive	
Peer Team Feedback	

1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

Option 1

(i) To note the progress made with the Authority's action plan (Appendix 1) and follow up visit by the LGA and agree the approach for a recovery and renewal challenge in June 2021

Option 2

(i) To note the progress made with the Authority's action plan (Appendix 1) and follow up visit and not agree to undertake a recovery and renewal challenge in June 2021

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

- the action plan and agreement for a follow visit with the LGA was approved by Cabinet at its meeting of 14 October 2019.
- When COVID-19 national lockdown measures began in March 2020, the LGA suspended the physical delivery of peer challenge work, including their peer challenge programmes. To continue to support councils during this period, the LGA have refocused their offer, adopting a new approach to the peer support

offer, focusing on supporting the recovery and renewal of local government and communities. All work is undertaken remotely.

- The proposed approach and schedule for the recovery and renewal panel visit, has been designed with the LGA, lead Members and senior Authority officers.

1.8 Appendices:

Appendix1 - Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

1.9 Contact officers:

Jacqueline Laughton, Head of Corporate Strategy, tel. (0191) 6435724
Haley Hudson, Manager Customer Service and Digital, tel. (0191) 6437008
David Dunford, Acting Senior Business Partner, tel. (0191) 643 7027

1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- (1) Government's COVID-19 Response, Spring 2021, Roadmap Out of Lockdown
[COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021 \(Summary\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/covid-19/roadmap-out-of-lockdown)
- (2) Report to Cabinet – Covid-19 A Framework for Recovery in North Tyneside 29 June 2020
<https://democracy.northtyneside.gov.uk/documents/s4039/Covid-19%20-%20A%20Framework%20for%20Recovery%20in%20North%20Tyneside.pdf>
- (3) Report to Cabinet – A Digital Strategy for North Tyneside 20 January 2020
<https://democracy.northtyneside.gov.uk/documents/s2638/A%20Digital%20Strategy%20for%20North%20Tyneside.pdf>
- (4) Report to Cabinet - We Listen and We Care NTC Customer Service Programme 28 May 2019
<https://democracy.northtyneside.gov.uk/documents/s798/We%20Listen%20and%20We%20Care%20North%20Tyneside%20Council.pdf>
- (5) Report to Cabinet – Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge - Report and Action Plan 14 October 2019
<https://democracy.northtyneside.gov.uk/documents/s1226/Local%20Government%20Association%20Corporate%20Peer%20Challenge%20Report%20and%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

2.2 Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

2.3.1 Internal Consultation

The Peer Challenge in June 2019 involved extensive engagement during the on-site exercise outlined in the report to Cabinet on 14 October 2019.

The follow up visit from the peer challenge and proposed recovery and renewal challenge, planned for 29 – 30 June 2021, will involve a schedule of meetings with Members, officers and partners, as set out in this report.

2.4.1 External Consultation

The Peer Challenge in June 2019 included focus group meetings with residents, some of the Authority's housing tenants, as well as partners.

A copy of this report will be shared with those residents and tenants, who took part in the June 2019 Peer Challenge.

2.4 Human rights

There are no human right's implications arising from this report.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

2.6 Risk management

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no environment and sustainability implications arising from this report.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Chief Executive X
- Head(s) of Service X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) X
- Chief Finance Officer X
- Monitoring Officer X
- Head of Corporate Strategy and Customer Service X