

North Tyneside Council

Report to Cabinet

Date: 20 September 2021

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

Portfolio(s):	Elected Mayor	Cabinet Member(s):	Norma Redfearn
Report from Service Area:	Corporate Strategy and Customer Service		
Responsible Officer:	Jacqueline Laughton, Assistant Chief Executive	(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 from 18 – 21 June 2019. The Peer Team made six recommendations for the Authority's future planning in a written report. Cabinet have received two updates on the progress made with the six LGA recommendations on 14 October 2019 and 24 May 2021.

Cabinet also agreed on 24 May 2021, to a follow up remote visit by the LGA from 29 – 30 June 2021. This remote visit was to review the progress of the six corporate peer challenge recommendations and to carry out a Covid-19 recovery and renewal challenge. Appended to this report is the feedback and key reflections report from the LGA team following their visit.

The feedback and key reflections from the LGA team are extremely positive and supportive of the Authority's plans for the Borough to recover and renew from the challenges faced by the Covid pandemic

The LGA was impressed that the Authority had successfully delivered against the action plan it had produced in response to the six corporate peer review challenge recommendations, during the very challenging times caused by the pandemic.

Feedback from the LGA described 'great political and managerial leadership that balances passion and compassion'. The LGA report cited clear evidence of the organisation's values beginning to embed and noted how long standing, positive relationships with many partners, had enabled agile and innovative decision making during the pandemic.

The LGA noted the work to analyse and understand the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic on local communities and how this will inform a refreshed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Borough, through the Health and Well Being Board.

The Authority's plans for Covid-19 recovery were found to be impressive, with a clear focus on people and customers.

The following four recommendations have been made by the LGA team, to support the Authority's ongoing work on recovery and renewal:

- complete work to strengthen the workforce and organisational development client function
- finalise all strategic plans, with buy-in from all stakeholders
- identify and consider further investment opportunities and integrated pathways with health partners, and
- continue to play into the regional and sub-regional space, to bring in tangible benefits to the residents of North Tyneside.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (1) note the LGA feedback key reflections in Appendix 1
- (2) note the four recommendations from the LGA, as set out in section 1.5.2 of this report and ensure that these are built into the ongoing work to deliver the Our North Tyneside Plan and the Organisational Business Plan.

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 16 July 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.

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 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 and the final action plan update was subsequently noted by Cabinet at its meeting on 24 May 2021.

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.

At its meeting on 20 September 2021, Cabinet will consider a report to successfully conclude and close the Covid-19 Recovery Programme.

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.

d. LGA Recovery and Renewal Panel Visit 29 – 30 June 2021

The purpose of the review was 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.

The remote review took place over two days, 29 – 30 June 2021, and involved remote meetings with a range of council leaders, partners and teams, as set out in the report to Cabinet on 24 May 2021.

The LGA team members were -

- Jim Taylor (Former Chief Executive - Salford City Council)
- Mayor Ros Jones (Elected Mayor & Leader - Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council)
- Amy Harhoff (Corporate Director of Regeneration, Economy & Growth – Durham County Council), and
- Satvinder Rana (Programme Manager - LGA)

- Rachel Stevens (Programme Support Officer – LGA).

1.5.2 Feedback and Key Findings from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Follow Up and Recovery and Renewal Remote Visit

a. LGA Feedback and Key Findings

Feedback and key findings from the LGA are detailed in Appendix 1 to this report. The feedback and key reflections are extremely positive and supportive of the Authority's recovery and ambition for the Borough.

The LGA found that the Authority had successfully delivered against the action plan it had produced in response to the six recommendations from the corporate peer challenge in 2019, namely:

- crystallise the 'we listen, we care' narrative into a coherent strategy and implementation plan and develop council-wide strategic capacity;
- from the existing positive culture, articulate and communicate clear key values for the organisation;
- realign the corporate enablers to better develop and deliver service reform with a particular focus on digital enablement;
- develop an inclusive economic strategy for North Tyneside having regard for commercial opportunity, sectorial strengths, skills provision and social inclusion;
- through a whole council approach, deliver a four-year medium term financial plan to meet the challenge which will enable the council to deliver its priorities; and
- maximise North Tyneside's influence and participation in the new Combined Authority with particular emphasis on joint development of priorities.

Feedback from the LGA described 'great political and managerial leadership that balances passion and compassion'. The LGA saw clear evidence of the organisation's values beginning to embed and noted how long standing, positive relationships with many partners, had enabled agile and innovative decision making, during the pandemic.

In addition, the LGA stated:

- frontline staff appreciated visibility and support of senior leadership, particularly during the pandemic
- the Authority had moved immensely on strengthening the client function, developing the digital strategy, and putting in place a robust Medium Term Financial Plan which wraps around all the strategic plans, although the workforce and organisational development client function was less developed
- great OFSTED and Youth Justice results, and
- great progress made on creating space within the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) and having positive relationships with strategic partners.

The LGA noted the work to analyse and understand the direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic on local communities and how this will inform a refreshed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the Borough through the Health and Well Being Board.

The Authority's plans for Covid-19 recovery were found to be impressive and challenging, with a clear focus on people and customers.

b. LGA Recommendations

The LGA stated that North Tyneside Council is on a successful transformation journey that is now beginning to reap rewards for the organisation and the Borough's residents. To keep this journey on track and accelerate it further, the LGA recommended four areas.

1. Complete the work to strengthen the workforce/human resources/organisational development client function; and build on the good practice developed during the pandemic to connect, empower, and support the workforce, making creative use of technologies to engage with staff and residents, and support agility and pace in decision making.
2. Finalise strategic plans, secure buy-in from all stakeholders, and start demonstrating the impact its ambitions and customer promise are making across the Borough.
3. Identify and consider the opportunities that may be available to:
 - attract inward investment and government funding through a shared and compelling local economic and growth narrative
 - support local investment interventions through commercial activity, where appropriate, and
 - work closely with NHS partners to develop more integrated pathways to health and care services for residents.
4. Continue to play in the regional and sub-regional space to bring in tangible benefits to the residents of North Tyneside.

1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

Option 1

(i) To note the feedback, key findings and four recommendations from the LGA, as set out in section 1.5.2 of this report and ensure that these are built into the ongoing work to deliver the Our North Tyneside Plan and the Organisational Business Plan.

Option 2

(i) To note the feedback, key findings and four recommendations from the LGA, as set out in section 1.5.2 of this report and not build these into the ongoing work to deliver the Our North Tyneside Plan and the Organisational Business Plan.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

- the recommendations made by the LGA, are based on detailed discussions with the Elected Mayor, Cabinet and the Authority's Chief Executive and senior leadership team during the course of the LGA's remote corporate peer challenge follow up and recovery and renewal remote visit on 29 and 30 June 2021
- the recommendations reflect the feedback and key findings from the LGA.

1.8 Appendices:

- Local Government Association Remote Peer Support and Recovery & Renewal Panel – Feedback and Key Reflections

1.9 Contact officers:

'Jacqueline Laughton, Assistant Chief Executive, 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) 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>

- (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 - Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge Follow Up and Recovery and Renewal Remote Visit 24 May 2021
[North Tyneside Council](#)

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 corporate 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, involved a schedule of meetings with Members, officers and partners, as set out in the report to Cabinet on 24 May 2021.

2.4.1 External Consultation

The corporate 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 the report to Cabinet on 24 May 2021, was shared with those residents and tenants, who took part in the June 2019 Peer Challenge.

Feedback and key findings from the LGA in this report, will be used to shape and influence future planning, including the refresh of the current Our North Tyneside Plan. The Authority is currently seeking views from residents and partners to help shape the Elected Mayor and Cabinet's refreshed vision for the Borough – aimed at building a better North Tyneside. The draft plan features five themes aimed at creating a North Tyneside that is thriving, family-friendly, caring, secure and green. The consultation questionnaire asks for views on these five themes and was open until 15 August 2021.

2.4 Human rights

There are no human rights 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
- Director(s) of Service X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) X
- Chief Finance Officer X
- Monitoring Officer X
- Assistant Chief Executive X