

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

East Lindsey District Council

12 - 14 November 2024

Feedback report



Corporate Peer Challenge



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1. Introduction

Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a highly valued improvement and assurance tool that is delivered by the sector for the sector. It involves a team of senior local government councillors and officers undertaking a comprehensive review of key finance, performance and governance information and then spending three days at East Lindsey District Council to provide robust, strategic, and credible challenge and support.

CPC forms a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. It is underpinned by the principles of Sector-led Improvement (SLI) put in place by councils and the Local Government Association (LGA) to support continuous improvement and assurance across the sector. These state that local authorities are: Responsible for their own performance, Accountable locally not nationally and have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector.

CPC assists councils in meeting part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years.

Peers remain at the heart of the peer challenge process and provide a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge.

This report outlines the key findings of the peer team and the recommendations that the council is required to action.

2. Executive summary

East Lindsey is the largest shire districts in the country, covering almost the entire Lincolnshire coastline, including the resorts of Skegness, Sutton on Sea and Mablethorpe. The district is made up of market towns and villages, with its economy mainly based on agriculture and tourism.

East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) serves around 145,000 residents through a partnership with South Holland District Council and Boston Borough Council, known as the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (SELCP). The back-office functions for this partnership are provided by Public Sector Partnership Services

Limited (PSPSL), a local authority trading company owned by the three councils.

ELDC is an effective council with engaged, dedicated, and motivated staff who are proud of their area and community. The council has strong leadership, both politically by the Leader and cabinet, and managerially by the Chief Executive and the corporate management team. Its decision-making and governance processes are mature and thorough. The council is financially stable, although more clarity on the budget and reserves is needed for Members.

There are strong internal and external relationships and a good understanding across the organisation of the opportunities and challenges the council faces. This has allowed the council to attract substantial external funding to the area and deliver several high-profile regeneration projects, demonstrating its effectiveness. It is clearly punching above its weight.

To continue improving, the council should not lose sight of its day-to-day performance around its core services and ensure any new funding opportunities align with its social goals around addressing deprivation, health inequalities, the economy and connectivity.

The council's capacity is currently stretched due to the number of regeneration projects underway, the involvement of the same staff in the SELCP, and some roles working across more than one council. This requires a review of the workloads and where appropriate consider a pay review to address any compelling anomalies that may impact on recruitment and retention.

The council, and those it serves, would benefit from the improvement in the strategic effectiveness and influence of its internal and external communications to be able to tell the 'East Lindsey Story' to stakeholders - explaining what the council is doing, why it is doing it, and what benefits it will bring to the area and its residents in a compelling way. This includes clearly defining and mapping the customer/business journey in accessing council services and support to make the council more responsive to residents' and businesses' needs.

Like most organisations, the council faces risks with high-value and high-profile projects. It should maintain a robust risk register for scrutiny by Members. This also

includes getting on top of emerging risks and opportunities associated with devolution, local government reorganisation, flood risks and any statutory requirements by the Environment Agency.

3. Recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the council:

3.1 Recommendation 1

Measure the impact of regeneration projects against corporate priorities and the social challenges across the district.

This will demonstrate to residents and stakeholders that resources are used effectively and in line with strategic goals and that the council is committed to achieving positive outcomes for them. The council can do this by developing a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure success. These could include economic indicators (like job creation), social indicators (like housing availability), health indicators (like increase in physical activity), and environmental indicators (like green space creation).

3.2 Recommendation 2

Carry out a thorough review of the strategic effectiveness and influence of internal and external communication.

This will help to promote transparency, efficiency, and community trust as well as support the delivery of the council's ambitions. Internally, clear and effective communication fosters a collaborative work environment, enhances decision-making, and ensures that all Members and staff are aligned with strategic goals. Externally, it builds public trust, ensures that residents are well-informed and engaged, and demonstrates accountability and responsiveness to the community's needs.

To do this, the council can conduct resident surveys and focus groups, perform communication audits, analyse performance metrics, and regularly seek feedback from both staff and the public. Implementing tools like digital analytics for websites

and social media can provide valuable insights, while ongoing training and development can help improve communication skills and methods. By continuously assessing and improving communication practices, the council can create a more inclusive, effective, and transparent environment for everyone involved.

3.3 Recommendation 3

Seize opportunities for deeper Greater Lincolnshire and strategic county-wide conversations about the place.

Engaging in Greater Lincolnshire devolution and strategic county-wide conversations, particularly with the county council and other regional and sub-regional forums, is important for fostering collaboration and maximising the impact of local initiatives. By actively participating in these discussions, ELDC can ensure that its priorities align with broader Greater Lincolnshire and county-wide goals around job creation, environmental sustainability, health inequalities, etc. They can also lead to more efficient use of resources and help identify and address cross-boundary issues such as transportation networks, housing development, and public health concerns – all of which help to enhance the quality of life for residents and foster a more resilient and prosperous sub-region.

3.4 Recommendation 4

Prioritise EDI work around policies and embed it within the work of the council, including identifying a corporate lead.

Making EDI a priority for the council is crucial for fostering a fair and representative organisation that can better address the diverse needs of its citizens. It will also help to promote social cohesion, reduce inequalities, and create a more inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

Identifying a corporate lead for this work is essential for ensuring accountability and providing clear leadership on these issues. This role can help to drive strategic initiatives, monitor progress, and ensure that EDI considerations are integrated into all aspects of the council's operations. A dedicated corporate lead can also provide visibility and emphasis on its importance, as well as ensuring that it remains a priority

for the council.

3.5 Recommendation 5

Improve clarity and detail in financial and risk reporting to enhance governance and mitigate risk.

Given the sums involved, more detailed information should be made available to Members on the council's reserves position, anticipated financial risks and its savings plans to 2028/29. This is vital for the council to maintain transparency, accountability, and informed decision-making. Clear financial and risk reporting helps Members and senior managers understand the council's financial health and risk exposure. It also fosters trust, enables better strategic planning, and ensures that resources are allocated efficiently and effectively to deliver the council's priorities.

3.6 Recommendation 6

Continuously review and align organisational capacity in key priority areas to ensure ability to deliver ambitions.

This will help to ensure that the council has the necessary resources, skills, and structures in place to achieve its strategic goals effectively. This can be done by carrying out a skills and capacity audit of current skills, competencies and capacity of the workforce in key priority areas; and then developing a plan to address identified skills and capacity gaps, which may include training and development, recruitment, process improvements, and the deployment of new technologies.

3.7 Recommendation 7

Reflect on service performance and the impact on residents.

As part of its continuing improvement journey, ELDC should give more focus to improving its performance in core services so that it continues to meet the evolving needs of its residents, enhances public satisfaction, and ensures the efficient use of its resources.

As well as measuring performance against nationally and locally set metrics, the council should also adopt a systematic approach to measure the impact of its

services on residents. This involves regularly collecting and analysing data and engaging with residents to gather feedback. Tools like resident surveys, focus groups, and digital analytics can provide valuable insights into resident experiences and service effectiveness.

3.8 Recommendation 8

Share the good practice and achievements from ELDC more widely.

There is much to be proud of in ELDC. The council should make use of the various platforms such as social media, newsletters, case studies, and conferences to showcase its successes. Engaging in networks and regional/sub-regional forums can further amplify the council's achievements, good practices and profile.

4. Summary of peer challenge approach

4.1 The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected by the LGA on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- **Vic Allison MBE** (Joint Chief Executive, Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council)
- **Councillor Rory Love OBE** (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, Kent County Council)
- **Councillor Georgina Hill** (Independent Member, Northumberland County Council)
- **Kim Tagliarini** (Strategic Director for Place and Community, Elmbridge Borough Council)
- **Neil Taylor** (Associate Consultant and former Chief Executive at Bassetlaw District Council)
- **Satvinder Rana** (Senior Regional Adviser, LGA)

4.2 Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

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? Is there an organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, with frequent monitoring, reporting on and updating of performance and improvement plans?
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 challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management - Does the council have a grip on its** current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges? What is the relative financial resilience of the council like?
5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to bring about the improvements it needs, including delivering on locally identified priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

As part of the five core elements outlined above, every Corporate Peer Challenge includes a strong focus on financial sustainability, performance, governance, and assurance.

In addition to these themes, the council asked the peer team to provide feedback on

1. What more can the council do to deliver on its ambitions around infrastructure development, regeneration and addressing deprivation?
2. How are the more flexible ways of working across the council being viewed by staff and other stakeholders and whether this is improving the council's

visibility across the district?

4.3 The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. This included a position statement prepared by the council in advance of the peer team's time on site. This provided a clear steer to the peer team on the local context at East Lindsey District Council and what the peer team should focus on. It also included a comprehensive LGA Finance briefing (prepared using public reports from the council's website) and a LGA performance report outlining benchmarking data for the council across a range of metrics. The latter was produced using the LGA's local area benchmarking tool called LG Inform.

The peer team then spent three days onsite at East Lindsey District Council, during which they:

- Gathered evidence, information, and views from over 35 meetings, in addition to further research and reading.
- Spoke to over 100 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members.

5. Feedback

5.1 Local priorities and outcomes

There is a good understanding among Members and staff of the place and the issues affecting residents. The people the peer team met demonstrated pride in the place and commitment to improving the lives of residents.

The South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Sub-Regional Strategy for 2024/25 - 2028/29 clearly outlines the strategic goals and local priorities. This strategy is supported by a Partnership Alignment and Delivery Plan for 2024/25. It aligns the goals and ambitions of the three councils in the partnership while also highlighting the specific priorities of each individual council. The strategy acknowledges ELDC's role in the wider region and showcases the council's aspirations for the area and its residents. It was developed with input from key stakeholders, including council members, businesses, town and parish councils, and the public, as well as using local data. Going forward, there is an opportunity to involve residents more directly in setting priorities and reviewing progress through regular resident surveys.

ELDC, through the SELCP, has successfully secured significant external funding for ambitious regeneration projects. These include: two Town Deals for the Lincolnshire Coast worth over £70 million to support new and improved infrastructure, develop transport links, nurture skills, increase employability, grow businesses and enhance the overall quality of place; £8m for the Lincolnshire Wolds: Cultural & Heritage Programme to regenerate three culturally significant heritage sites are Alford Manor House, Alford Windmill and Spilsby Sessions House; £6.14m from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund as part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda to invest and empower local communities, enable local decision making and better target the specific priorities of places; and £1.96m from the Arts Council England for a three-year national portfolio project to create a strong sense of place, increase the visitor offer and to upskill and engage local communities.

The council has a strong track record for delivering projects and the peer team was impressed by their visit to see the ongoing developments at the Campus for Future

Living, Sutton on Sea Colonnade, Alford Manor House, and the newly opened Station Leisure and Learning Centre at Mablethorpe. These projects, along with others across the district - as well as the use of the £10m investment programme to invest in market towns, parishes and villages - have the potential to significantly enhance the area and improve the quality of life for residents.

The peer team encourages the council to ensure that the results of these projects address the district's social, economic, and environmental challenges. To do this, the council should establish strong methods to measure their long-term impact. This will also involve creating a strong narrative about how these projects link to the council's goals, supported by high-quality data and performance measures. It is also crucial to effectively communicate these achievements to residents and stakeholders to tell the 'East Lindsey Story'.

In addition to this, communication and visibility of the council should be improved by, for example, clearly outlining and mapping out the steps residents and small businesses need to take to access council services and support. Currently, they are finding it difficult to navigate the council's information and support channels. This will help make it easier for them to find what they need and improve the visibility of the council.

5.1.1 Performance

Nationally available benchmarking data¹ shows that, in the main, many of ELDC's corporate and core services are performing around the average mark when compared to all district councils in the East Midlands. Whilst there are no major outliers there is, however, scope to improve performance in some customer facing services as resources become available for investment in services.

The council has a clear performance management system that uses Red, Amber, and Green (RAG) ratings to measure progress on key strategic, corporate, local, and Office for Local Government (OFLOG) metrics every quarter. The next step is to measure and demonstrate how the council's work is impacting the social, economic,

¹ <https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/corporate-peer-challenge-information-report?mod-area=E07000137&mod-group=AllDistrictInRegion&mod-type=comparisonGroupType>

and environmental challenges across the district.

The council has a policy on equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and produces a workforce report every quarter. However, these reports currently only track age, gender, and disability, and do not include other protected characteristics. The peer team suggests that the council should expand its monitoring to cover all characteristics mentioned in its EDI policy. Additionally, EDI efforts should be prioritised, and a corporate lead should be identified to oversee and promote this work, ensuring that EDI principles are integrated into all policies, procedures, and council activities.

The council is committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040 with a 45% reduction by 2027 and has adopted a carbon reduction plan to achieve this. To ensure the impact of projects on the council's net zero ambition are fully explored during decision making the council has developed a climate change and environment impact assessment tool.

Monitoring of the council's carbon footprint is undertaken through an annual carbon footprint analysis. The most recent available on the website is 2021. In 2022 the council adopted SELCP's climate change strategy which looks beyond the council's own carbon footprint to wider climate change issues and opportunities. The council should ensure that the reporting and monitoring of its own carbon footprint is not lost in the wider strategic work of the partnership.

5.2 Organisational and place leadership

ELDC is a well-led council with strong, proactive leadership from both the Leader and the Chief Executive, who are highly respected both inside and outside the council. They are supported by capable cabinet Members who are knowledgeable about their specific areas and have clear plans for their portfolios. The senior management team is engaged, committed, and passionate about the council's goals, and they work well together as a team.

There are opportunities for local councillors to strengthen their roles as advocates and representatives in their wards. With appropriate support, they can become effective community champions, which will increase the council's visibility in local

communities, help communicate the council's goals and achievements to residents, and bring feedback on important local issues back to the council.

The council provides strategic place leadership through the SELCP to address the dynamics of Lincolnshire's public sector future. However, this partnership can sometimes appear insular within the county and the sub-region, and partners have invited the council to engage more in Greater Lincolnshire and strategic county-wide discussions, which they would welcome.

There are many complex partnerships and boards in existence, which can be hard for external stakeholders to understand. Mapping out this partnership landscape and showing how they connect to the council's strategic goals, including clearly stating their terms of reference, governance arrangements, accountabilities, and reporting lines, would be helpful.

5.3 Governance and culture

The council has good decision-making and mature scrutiny, audit and governance arrangements and these are working well. The peer team was impressed with the arrangements for scrutiny, the training provided, the scope of the business considered, and its subsequent reporting – where most scrutiny recommendations have been considered favourably by cabinet. This demonstrates the council's commitment to good decision-making and high standards of governance and accountability, which helps to foster trust and confidence among residents and stakeholders.

Appointing opposition Members on overview committee and audit & governance committee is commendable. This helps to promote transparency, political inclusivity and cross-party working as well as enhancing the council's decision-making process with diverse perspectives. Opposition Members can offer effective challenge, critical insights and alternative viewpoints, leading to more balanced and well-rounded deliberations.

There are positive, respectful and supportive Member-Member and Member-officer relationships leading to an effective team ethos, which is helping ambitions to be achieved. There is a Member development programme and the council plans to

establish a partnership-wide Member development group. Additionally, regular briefings keep Members informed about the council's work. To improve communication and protect the reputation of the council, it is important for Members to make better use of professional communications advice when speaking on behalf of the council so that messages can be landed clearly and accurately. The council may also benefit by providing media training to all Members.

The council has a workforce development strategy and strong staff well-being support, offering flexible working options and development opportunities, which staff appreciate. The council's organisational values - trust, delivery, teamwork, pride, and care - are well communicated across the organisation. There is a positive organisational culture where staff are engaged, dedicated and motivated with pride in the place - *"It's a good culture. It's a positive culture"*.

However, the council's capacity is stretched due to the number of regeneration projects underway and some staff working across the SELCP with heavy workloads. The peer team was given examples of disparities in pay and conditions for similar roles across the partnership. The council should review workloads and complete the work it has started in aligning terms and conditions to help maximise efficiency. There are also opportunities to harmonise back-office systems across SELCP as part of its transformation work.

5.4 Financial planning and management

The council is currently managing several important activities, including handling external funding, commercial operations through PPSL and Invest East Lindsey, collaborating within the SELCP, and addressing the financial challenges of daily operations. Additionally, the council is affected by some significant external financial factors beyond its direct control, for example:

- I. On business rates income: the offshore wind generation with two major projects Triton Knoll (£4.4m) which is operating now; and later the new Viking Link project. Combined, the business rates income will be circa £6.5m per annum.

- II. On expenditure: the Internal Drainage Board levies which have increased from £3.8m in 2021/22 to £5.3m in 2024/25 and will increase further by another 21% to £6.4m by 2027/28.

These factors have made the council's finances complex. However, with strong support and expertise, the council is in a stable financial position. It has a clear understanding of its finances and has long-term plans laid out in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) up to 2028/29. The council has a positive track record of securing investments, delivering projects, and achieving efficiency savings. It also identified issues with the Internal Drainage Board levy and provided national leadership to address them with government.

Nevertheless, the council is managing significant risks, with 11 out of 15 'high-risk' areas in the MTFP identified as having a 'high impact'. These risks should be clearly quantified in financial terms in the budget report so that Members can understand the overall effect these high-risk areas could have on the council's operations.

Additionally, these risks need to be synchronised with those reported to the audit and governance committee to build a more comprehensive picture.

Given the current economic volatility and the various financial factors the council is managing, it would be beneficial for the council to conduct some scenario planning. This means considering both worst-case and best-case financial outcomes. For example, if there are changes to the National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) arrangements, or if the government redirects income from renewables to other parts of their national Net Zero strategy, the council might need to return to a more traditional budget profile and set of service deliverables.

There are a significant number of specific reserves in the council but very little published detail for such large sums. The 2024/25 budget report outlined 16 different council reserves totalling £54.1m by 2028/29, and apart from the titles and sums involved there was no explanation of what each reserve is for. This should be addressed by providing details on the purpose of each reserve and how and when the funds can be used. It is also recommended to regularly update this information and report it to Members.

Similarly, there is an identified set of required savings and efficiencies of £5.1m up until 2028/29 in the budget report but to date there has been no detail published about how these savings will be achieved or the potential areas to explore. This needs thinking through and rectifying to avoid any possible double-counting or relying on areas where savings have already been exhausted.

The 2023/24 capital programme experienced some significant slippage of £20m. This emphasises the need to review capacity and undertake robust programme management and reporting. Given the sheer volume of capital programming this is an important area for the council that needs attention.

The council received an 'adequate' internal audit assessment for its frameworks for governance, risk management and management controls in 2023/24. It is well versed with the problems encountered with external audit signoffs for its final accounts from 2021/22 which is part of a national picture for the sector. However, there were qualifications to the accounts for 'Invest East Lindsey' (the arms-length company wholly owned by ELDC) and the council needs to press its new external auditors to provide their assurance promptly to maintain ELDC's positive reputation and organisational confidence.

Internal audit and the council's audit and governance committee had previously raised concerns about the operations and governance of 'Invest East Lindsey'. The peer team strongly recommends that all outstanding recommendations of internal audit and the audit and governance committee should be swiftly implemented to ensure that robust governance arrangements are in place within the company; and that lessons should be learnt from the 'Invest East Lindsey' experience for future projects and that strong arrangements around governance and transparency of financial information available to Members must be ensured.

5.5 Capacity for improvement

ELDC is a learning organisation and open to external challenge. There is a culture of continuous improvement which is shared by both Members and officers, and this is embedded within the council.

While there is a lot of goodwill and experience among staff, the council should avoid

relying too heavily on the efforts of a small group of people. A review of capacity and workload pressures on certain staff groups, including senior staff who are overly involved in day-to-day tasks rather than strategic planning, might be necessary.

The council also faces staff turnover issues, which can hinder relationship-building with partners and result in the loss of valuable knowledge, experience and corporate memory. To address this, the council should implement strategies to capture and retain the knowledge, experience, and corporate memory of key staff to ensure continuity and resilience.

The council's flexible working practices offer significant benefits, like improving staff work-life balance and making the organisation more responsive to residents' needs. However, these benefits must be balanced with maintaining the council's visibility and ensuring the community can easily access services. Some stakeholders have expressed frustration with contacting the council and finding the right person to address their queries. This issue needs to be addressed to improve accessibility and visibility for the community by for example:

- a) Putting in place a much clearer system to manage public (and Member) queries.
- b) Mapping out and communicating the customer/business journey and customer/business experience in accessing information, services and support.
- c) Communicating these internally and externally so that everybody understands the routes to the council and how and by when they can get a response back.

The council and its partners in the SELCP have heavily invested in PSPSL, making it one of the largest local council companies in the country. PSPSL has invested internally to transform its services and has delivered significant benefits for ELDC - and the transformation programme being led by PSPSL should deliver further improvements, including better aligning systems and utilising skills and experience of PSPSL for a fully joined up approach to drive transformation and service improvements across the council.

Furthermore, the local government landscape is constantly changing. It might be

worthwhile to review and commit as necessary to PSPSL's future in light of potential local devolution deals or local government re-organisation in the county, to ensure that the invested time and effort are not wasted. Additionally, ELDC should also ensure it continues to seek assurance on the robustness of PSPSL governance arrangements and that it gets the best value for money compared to the other councils within the SELCP.

There is a lot to be proud of in ELDC and its good practices and achievements, particularly around collaboration, partnership working, successfully attracting external funding, and delivering impressive regeneration projects. These should be shared widely across the sector to help foster a culture of innovation, learning and collaboration with other councils and to raise the profile of ELDC within the sector.

Other specific focus areas

The council asked for specific feedback on the following questions as part of the corporate peer challenge. The peer team has addressed both these themes throughout the main body of this report. In addition, it would draw out the following actions:

1. *What more can the council do to deliver on its ambitions around infrastructure development, regeneration and addressing deprivation?*

There are several steps and actions the council can take to deliver on its ambitions around infrastructure development, regeneration and addressing deprivation. These include:

- a) *Align funding with social and economic objectives* – Draw out the alignment of all current regeneration projects with the council's social objectives, such as reducing deprivation, addressing health inequalities, boosting the economy, and improving connectivity and make these explicit. Evaluate potential funding opportunities against these objectives to ensure they support the council's strategic goals.
- b) *Measure impact of regeneration projects* – Develop a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned to social objectives around job creation, housing

availability, health and environment to measure success; and then measure the impact of regeneration projects against these KPIs to see how they are contributing to corporate priorities and social challenges across the district.

- c) Engage in Greater Lincolnshire and county-wide strategic conversations - Actively participate in sub-regional and county-wide discussions to champion the district and ensure alignment of the district's needs with broader sub-regional and county-wide goals around job creation, environmental sustainability, health inequalities, etc.
- d) Work with partners – Draw out their linkages between what local statutory partners, the business community and the voluntary and community sector are delivering to measure impact against the council's strategic and social objectives and use the capacity of these partners to help address social deprivation.

2. *How are the more flexible ways of working across the council being viewed by staff and other stakeholders and whether this is improving the council's visibility across the district?*

The council's flexible working practices offer significant benefits, like improving staff work-life balance and making the organisation more responsive to residents' needs. However, these benefits must be balanced with maintaining the council's visibility and ensuring the community can easily access services. Some stakeholders have expressed frustration with contacting the council and finding the right person to address their queries. Improvements can be made by, for example:

- a) Establishing clear query management systems – These should be streamlined system for managing public and Member queries, ensuring that all enquiries are tracked, assigned, and responded to within set timeframes. This will reduce frustration among stakeholders and ensure that queries are directed to the appropriate person promptly.
- b) Mapping out and communicating the customer/business journeys – This will help everybody to understand how council information, services, and support can be accessed. This should include all touchpoints to provide clear guidance

on how residents and businesses can interact with the council and how and when they will receive a response. It will improve the council's visibility as well as user experience and satisfaction.

- c) Promoting agile and flexible working benefits - Highlighting the benefits of flexible working arrangements to staff and stakeholders such as improved responsiveness and the ability to address issues more efficiently will increase awareness and appreciation of the council's efforts to balance flexibility with effective service delivery.
- d) Increasing physical presence - Consider setting up more face-to-face interaction points, such as pop-up information desks or scheduled community drop-in sessions at various locations across the district. This will help maintain a physical presence in the community, making it easier for residents to engage with the council in person.
- e) Utilising digital tools and platforms – These can facilitate interactions between the council and residents. This could include online chat support and enhanced and simplified website functionalities. Digital solutions can bridge the gap created by flexible working practices, ensuring that residents have multiple avenues to reach the council.
- f) Collecting regular feedback – Carry out regular surveys and collate feedback to gather input from residents and stakeholders on the effectiveness of communication and service delivery. This will help the council to continuously improve its engagement and visibility.

6. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings. The LGA will continue to provide on-going support to the council. As part of the CPC, the council are also required to have a progress review and publish the findings from this within twelve months of the CPC. The LGA will also publish the progress review report on their website.

The progress review will provide space for a council's senior leadership to report to

peers on the progress made against each of the CPC's recommendations, discuss early impact or learning and receive feedback on the implementation of the CPC action plan. The progress review will usually be delivered on-site over one day.

The date for the progress review at East Lindsey District Council is September 2025.

In the meantime, Mark Edgell, Principal Adviser for East Midlands, Yorkshire & the Humber and North East, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. As outlined above, Mark is available to discuss any further support the council requires at mark.edgell@local.gov.uk Tel: 07747 636 910.



Satvinder Rana

Senior Regional Adviser, LGA
(On behalf of the peer challenge team)