



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Employment Committee

22 September 2021

Report of: Councillor Linda Wootten,
Cabinet Member for Corporate
Governance



Local Government Association – Remote Peer Support – Final Report

This report sets out the findings of the Remote Peer Support, which was undertaken in July 2021, led by the Local Government Association (LGA) with input from leaders within the local government sector and also sets out the timetable for further engagement with the LGA peer support programme.

Report Author

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| Corporate Priority: | Decision type: | Wards: |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------|
| Administrative | Regulatory | All Wards |

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| Reviewed by: | Gary Smith, Director of Commercial and Operations | 13/09/2021 |
| Approved by: | Karen Bradford, Chief Executive | 14/09/2021 |
| Signed off by: | Councillor Linda Wootten, Cabinet Member for Corporate Governance | |

Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

1. That the Employment Committee notes the report from the Local Government Association and future actions, including a Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2021
2. That the Employment Committee formally thanks the Local Government Association and members of the peer team for their support in undertaking the review and developing the attached report

1 The Background to the Report

Local Government Association – Sector Led Improvement

- 1.1 The Local Government Association (LGA) runs a sector led improvement programme, the flagship of which is the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC). The CPC involves a team of political and officer leaders within local government spending time on site, meeting with internal and external stakeholders, to highlight the key strengths and areas for improvement for a Council. It is good practice for authorities to undertake a CPC approximately every five years and, following the appointment of a new Chief Executive, it was intended to undertake a CPC in 2020. However due to the restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic preventing on-site meetings the LGA suspended CPCs in 2020. Information about the CPC is attached in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 To enable them to continue to provide peer support to Councils the LGA developed the Remote Peer Support (RPS) offer, which involves a short period of online meetings between peers and internal stakeholders (and a review of key documentation).

Peer Support to SKDC

- 1.3 Following discussions with the LGA representatives it became clear that there was an opportunity for SKDC to take advantage of both of these offers in 2021 and to design them to ‘dovetail’ within one another to maximise the value of the support, and SKDC to action some of the findings from the RPS in July, ahead of a CPC in November.
- 1.4 Therefore, the Assistant Chief Executive worked alongside the LGA representative to develop a programme, which included:
- Remote Peer Support (July 2021) – Focus on People focused activity
 - Action Planning Session (September 2021) – Key actions to take forward from initial findings
 - Full Corporate Peer Challenge (November 2021) – Focus on all the activity of the Council
- 1.5 The scope of the RPS was developed to help SKDC in its thinking as it seeks to develop a programme of ‘people’ focused activity around culture, performance and change, by providing:
- A temperature check of where the Council is in terms of workforce culture and engagement, as well as alignment between corporate priorities and resourcing; and
 - Reflections on the key areas to focus on going forwards to drive performance and improvement.
- 1.6 For the RPS the LGA assembled a team of respected industry leaders, which included:
- Stephen Baker (Chief Executive of East Suffolk District Council) – Lead Peer
 - Cllr Abi Brown (Leader of Stoke on Trent City Council) – Political Peer
 - Kirsten Burnett (Head of Policy and Organisational Development) – Subject Matter Expert

The team were supported by two experienced LGA representatives Satvinder Rans (LGA Programme Manager) and Frances Marshall (LGA – Local Government Support).

- 1.7 In advance of the review SKDC provided a range of documents to the peer team to provide them with background information, these included; the Corporate Plan 2020-23, Performance Monitoring process, KPIs and targets, staffing structures and examples of engagement activity. In addition to this, as part of the process, a self assessment document was developed and provided to the peer team.
- 1.8 The RPS took place virtually over two days in July (alongside a range of 1-1 calls in advance) and involved interviews with a range of Members and officers, including Corporate Management Team (CMT) and other middle and senior managers, frontline staff from all departments, Cabinet Members and Opposition Members. Following the review sessions there was an initial feedback session to Cabinet Members, CMT and Opposition Group Leaders. A draft report was then issued, which was then finalised and issued to SKDC at the start of September and was issued to All Members shortly after.

Key Findings of the Report

- 1.9 The report is attached in Appendix 2, which highlights a number of things for SKDCs consideration, some of the headlines are:
- SKDC has a high degree of ambition, a Corporate Plan that sets out to achieve growth and will involve investment in the District;
 - The changes of leadership and in style of recent years has had a significant impact on staff but that there was now a clear sense of direction, with some of the key building blocks (i.e. Corporate Plan, Service Plans, Performance Appraisals) put in place to deliver the ambitions;
 - The new CMT (new and existing officers) are a strong team, in which Members have a great deal of confidence – the team are keen to work closely with Members, officers and partners to achieve the outcomes the District requires;
 - There is a very significant work programme for SKDC, which will require effective prioritisation and management to deliver, particularly arising from the reviews undertaken. Focus should be given to prioritising activity and communicating realistic and achievable timeframes for completing actions;
 - The Council is doing the right things and putting the building blocks in place to bring to life #TeamSK as a vehicle for promoting collective identity and shared values, and a joined-up operating model to deliver the ambitions within the Corporate Plan. However, this will take time and ongoing effort to deliver; and
 - Focus should be given to building on the successes to date with respect to workforce engagement and a two-way communication plan should be developed to reinforce this.

Next Steps

- 1.10 The LGA have also agreed to facilitate an action planning session to follow up on some of the key highlights from the RPS, the session will be an informal session, involving Cabinet Members and CMT with a focus on:
- Prioritisation of delivery activity; and
 - Building a culture of effective decision making.

This session is taking place on 28 September 2021.

- 1.11 It is intended that this session will dovetail with the CPC, taking place w/c 15 November 2021. The result of the CPC is a full report, which will be published on the Councils

website, debated at Cabinet and will support the Council in making progress against the actions ahead of the CPC.

2 Financial Implications

- 2.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report as the LGA provide peer support free at the point of delivery.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Richard Wyles, Assistant Director for Finance (S151 Officer)

3 Legal and Governance Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Graham Watts, Head of Democratic Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer

4 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

- 4.1 As this report is for information only there are no equality and safeguarding implications associated with this report.

5 Risk and Mitigation

- 5.1 There are no significant risks associated with this report.

6 Other Implications (where significant)

- 6.1 N/A

7 Background Papers

- 7.1 N/A

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – Local Government Association – Corporate Peer Challenge and Remote Peer Support
- 8.2 Appendix 2 – South Kesteven District Council – LGA Bespoke Remote Peer Support