

EAST HERTS COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE – 26 FEBRUARY 2019

REPORT BY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

EAST HERTS CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

WARD(S) AFFECTED: ALL

Purpose/Summary of Report

- To present the findings of the recent East Herts Council Corporate Peer Review

RECOMMENDATION FOR EXECUTIVE : That	
(A)	the Peer Review report as detailed within (Essential Reference Paper B) be noted:
(B)	The associated action plan detailed with (Essential Reference Paper C) be agreed.

1.0 Background:

1.1 Since the demise of the Audit Commission and the associated inspection regime for local government (Comprehensive Audit Assessment/ Comprehensive Area Assessment) 'sector led' improvement has become increasingly important for Councils. The Local Government Association (LGA) has a range of tools to help strengthen local accountability and explore how effectively councils are delivering services. One such tool is the 'peer review' which consists of a small team, composed of senior officers and Members from different councils, who spend a few days on site

gathering information, speaking to staff, Members and other stakeholders to reach a view about how the council is performing.

- 1.2 Peer reviews can be undertaken in service areas – eg. Planning (East Herts had a peer review on this service in 2013) or on the council as a whole (known as a ‘corporate peer challenge’). East Herts last had this done in 2012. The LGA encourages councils to have a peer review around every 5 years and the whole process is generally well regarded as an effective means of benchmarking council performance within the sector and identifying areas for improvement. There is no cost for having this undertaken. It is important to note the review is not an inspection. They are undertaken by invitation and are designed to provide critical friend challenge, highlighting things that have gone well and using best practice from elsewhere to identify areas for improvement.

- 1.3 After discussion and agreement between the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and LGA a peer review for East Herts took place between 4th – 8th December 2018. Initial findings were presented by the peer team on Thursday 8th December and their full report, detailing how information and evidence was gathered along with conclusions can be found at Essential Reference Paper B. A short action plan detailing how officers will take the forward the recommendations is attached at Essential Reference Paper C. The council would like to acknowledge and thank the following members of the peer team for their hard work and efforts over the 4 days of the review:
 - Lead Peer - Sandra Dinneen, Chief Executive, South Norfolk Council
 - Member Peer - Councillor Harvey Siggs, Leader, Mendip District Council
 - Officer Peer - Jo Yelland, Director, Exeter City Council
 - Officer Peer - Sal Khan, Head of Service, East Staffordshire Borough Council

- Officer Peer - Richard King, Director of Place and Community, Lichfield District Council
- Shadow Peer - Catriona Coyle, Events Manager, LGA
- Peer Challenge Manager – James Mehmed, LGA

Background Papers

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