

# East Lindsey District Council

Peer challenge team feedback

Thursday 23 May 2013

# Who we are

- Martin Connor, Chief Executive, Selby District Council
  - Councillor Duncan McGinty, Leader of Sedgemoor District Council
  - Andy Jones, Deputy Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer, Warwick District Council
  - Caroline Green, Lead Adviser, Policy and Development Programmes, LGA
  - Andrew Winfield, Peer Challenge Manager
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# Scope and purpose of the peer challenge

You asked us to look at:

- Explore the council's vision for the future (the transformation agenda), testing the realism of that and exploring the range of potential approaches available;
- Offer insight and challenge over future design and delivery options and programmes to bring that about; and
- Test the organisational capacity and mind set of staff to implement this.

# Scope and purpose of the peer challenge

In doing this the peer challenge team has considered the critical issues that provide reassurance about future performance and the ability and capacity to deliver future ambition:

- Leadership and governance
  - Understanding the context and priority setting
  - Financial planning and viability
  - Capacity
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# Scope and purpose of the peer challenge

Peer challenges support local government improvement and are tailored to meet individual council priorities and needs, while taking account of local circumstances. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement priorities. The peers use their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented from the people they meet, from what they have heard and material read.

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# Context

- Council has headlined the vision for the peer challenge
  - Broad impact over all areas of peer challenge
  - Current focus for the council is 2-3 years rather than longer-term
  - Delivering any vision requires a strong, committed workforce well led and properly resourced
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# Organisational capacity and mindset - strengths

- Staff are very proud of what they do
  - There is a real sense of wanting to achieve the best for the community you serve
  - Customer focus and flexible approach
  - Realisation that change is inevitable and a readiness to meet that challenge
  - Changes in work practices demonstrated by Compass Point have helped develop a different mindset
  - Training budgets are now being redirected to cover service development needs
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# Organisational capacity and mindset - challenges

- Morale is a fragile commodity
  - Capacity is being stretched
  - Clear vision is imperative for future workforce planning
  - Easy to lose sight of the importance of maintaining appraisals and proper HR practices
  - Need to ensure effective client side management arrangements for delivery of externalised services
  - IT infrastructure is an essential component for staff delivery of outcomes
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# Management and political leadership - strengths

- A strong Leader recognised as an advocate for ELDC
  - You have demonstrated:
    - Your concern for staff welfare
    - Willingness to try new delivery mechanisms (town centre management, Compass Point, Catalyst project, housing partnership, work with coastal communities, rural enterprise initiatives etc.)
    - Determination to preserve front-line services
  - Management culture under new Chief Executive
  - Partner comments include describing you as “a fantastic authority to deal with”
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# Management and political leadership - challenges

- Need to articulate what you want to achieve for the district in the medium- to long-term
  - Is your Transformational Agenda a short-term savings strategy?
  - Need for clarity on priorities
  - Sustainability of large number of initiatives
  - Consistent demonstration of the value you place on staff
  - Consistency in approach to partnership working
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# Financial planning and viability - strengths

- MTFS forecasts financial position up to 2017-18
  - Track record of delivering significant savings
  - Comprehensive understanding of the reserve position and reserves are not being used to support the base budget
  - Sound understanding of asset base and how this has potential to realise savings
  - Capital programme for investment in communities and infrastructure e.g. broadband, housing, rural grants, fleet replacement
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# Financial planning and viability - strengths

- Track of record of attracting external grants
  - Evidence of willingness to take bold/difficult decisions e.g. Green Waste, parking charges, Compass Point
  - Transformation lists projects where significant savings are anticipated
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# Financial planning and viability - challenges

- No clear evidence how resource allocation is determined – how resources relate/are targeted to priorities
  - Transformation agenda appears to be a list of savings projects with no clear link to what the council wishes to achieve through service delivery
  - Evidence of significant underspend year on year. What is opportunity cost from managing that better?
  - Compass Point judged a success so what is the plan to transfer further services to it?
  - Some NHB built into base budget from 2014-15 – what is plan if NHB ends?
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# Financial planning and viability - challenges

- How can Compass Point's more commercial approach be transferred to the wider council?
  - No evidence of an ICT, people and asset management strategies with linked resource implications
  - VfM analysis ELDC is in top 5% spend – housing, culture and sport and sustainable economy. Does this align to priorities and the council is obtaining VfM?
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# Governance and decision making - strengths

- Delaying has speeded up decision making and offered empowerment
  - Sound control and governance arrangements
  - Comprehensive performance management structure
  - The new arrangements for Scrutiny offer “potential” to support policy development and the Executive
  - There is a good communications framework e.g. Ello magazine, weekly e-bulletin, team cascades, appraisals etc.
  - Members are well informed about the council business
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# Governance and decision making - challenges

- Members are heavily involved in the operational decision making process – better used more strategically?
  - Community engagement arrangements e.g. Area Committees
  - Governance arrangements could be constraining innovation and transformation
  - Impression that ELDC can be driven by process e.g. view that planning is not ‘open for business’
  - With an ambiguous vision performance management is not able to measure outcomes
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# Vision - strengths

- Clear understanding of economic context and challenges for the district
  - Corporate Strategy in place and identifies aspirations
  - Evidence of initiatives designed to address these e.g. market towns, rural development fund, investment in housing, commitment to invest in waste
  - Local partners are positive about working with council and feel they have a way in. There are examples of good operational partnership working
  - The new management structure was intended to provide fit for purpose mechanism for delivering change
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# Vision - challenges

- Corporate Strategy provides a broad set of objectives with some not be readily measurable – expires 2014
  - What is the longer-term vision e.g. housing, spatial planning and growth, education and skills etc.
  - Local government funding outlook is bleak – need to plan longer-term
  - Partnership potential to be developed
  - Appreciate the distinction between control and influence
  - “I can’t explain our structure to my Mum”
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# Why a clear vision is important

- Would provide clear direction for driving out costs
  - Will ensure improved alignment of priorities, resources and delivery of outcomes
  - It would provide a clear and convincing transformation agenda
  - Will support clear communications
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# Reflections of the peer challenge team

- Develop a vision
  - Agree priorities, resources, outcomes and timescales
  - Thoughts on delivery mechanisms
  - Assign actions
  - Get the message right
  - Delivery and review
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# Follow-up activity

- Written report
  - Signposting and LGA support
  - Productivity Expert
  - Improvement and prioritisation workshop
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