

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Mid Devon District Council

1st – 3rd March 2022

Feedback report





1. Executive summary	3
2. Key recommendations	4
3. Summary of the peer challenge approach	5
4. Feedback	7
5. Next steps	18

1. Executive summary

Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) is a good council. It has shown real leadership of place and should be proud of the way it has supported residents and businesses throughout the last two years in responding to the pandemic. The council is well aware of the set of new challenges it faces as we learn to live with covid, challenges such as workforce availability, material supply, inflationary pressures, and an unequal recovery across sectors and is actively looking for solutions. The council is also clear that there will be no going back to the pre pandemic normal – even if this was something to be desired, and that its plans and priorities need to be reset to reflect this.

The council's achievement in delivering operational efficiencies to date continues to see it well-placed corporately as government funding reductions continue. Owing largely to sound financial stewardship over recent years, the council is in a relatively good financial position, and this should enable it to deliver a refined set of priorities over the next 12-18 months.

The council's Corporate Plan was adopted in January 2020 – just as the pandemic struck. It has wisely scheduled a 'Mid Term Review' of this in May this year, and we would urge officers, and particularly members, to use this opportunity to reflect on what matters most now to the residents and businesses of Mid Devon and draw up a list of priorities which are deliverable within the resources available.

MDDC's commitment to place shaping is impressive – and remains undiminished by the pandemic. The successful bid to create a train station in Cullompton is an impressive achievement and is testament to the council's successful approach to exerting influence and achieving improved outcomes through partnership working. This is again evident in the Team Devon approach the council, along with all the other local authorities in Devon (including Plymouth and Torbay Councils) took to addressing the pandemic. This legacy is paying further dividends as MDDC plays its role in the emerging County Deal pilot, with MDDC senior officers and members playing leading roles in key areas such as housing.

We heard from some partners that they would welcome a stronger narrative of place emanating from MDDC – something which encapsulates the array of activities the

council is already undertaking, clearly setting out the council's vision for Mid Devon, and how partners can engage, influence and co-deliver.

The workforce is passionate about Mid Devon the place and MDDC – they are committed to doing their best for the community and are rightly proud of how they worked together in responding to the pandemic. The council is facing real and immediate issues with recruitment, not only in the areas where this has historically been a problem (such as Planning and Environmental Health), but across the piece. There are some national and sectoral factors at play, which may be beyond the council's immediate control, but there are other more localised factors such as organisational culture and post-pandemic working practices, that can be readily addressed, and we would encourage the council to do so.

The council is part of a Devon wide approach to addressing Climate Change, having signed the Devon Climate Emergency Pledge in 2019. In addition to this, MDDC members set their own local target of aiming for the council to become carbon neutral by a more ambitious date of 2030. To support the delivering of these ambitious plans, a MDDC specific Action Plan (as opposed to the County Wide Action Plan which is already in existence) would be help MDDC officers and members to prioritise actions and more effectively map resource allocation.

Some Member/Officer and some Member/Member relations have been challenging – and the impact of this is permeating throughout the council. Some behaviours remain challenging, and whilst the issues are recognised by officers and senior members, seeking a positive, externally supported resolution involving all members will be an important next step in rebuilding a culture of respect and trust and allowing the council to reach its full potential.

2. Key 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:

- Develop a stronger narrative for the place that encapsulates the wide range of projects and ambitions that you have for your place so that partners, stakeholders, and residents understand the council's vision –

and the role they can play in delivering it.

- Use the mid-term re-set of the corporate plan as an opportunity to review priorities in light of capacity constraints and ensure member/political ownership of both the process and the outcomes.
- Proactively seek to engage your residents/communities in the re-set process, using the different communications channels you have begun to embed.
- Seek external support/advice to ensure a culture of respect between officers and members and between members so that you can realise your potential.
- Provide training and development to all members so that they make best use of existing democratic structures e.g., Scrutiny and Policy Development Groups to provide effective oversight of organisational performance AND positively influence policy and decision making – ensuring the best possible outcomes are delivered for residents.
- Provide clarity as a priority to officers and members around your plans for hybrid working going forward – building on the successful approaches you have developed during the pandemic and reflecting the needs of all stakeholders in the ‘new normal’.
- Continue to play a visible and positive role in key regional and sub-regional partnerships – particularly Team Devon and the emerging County Deal.
- Consider developing a MDDC Climate Change Action Plan to reflect the district’s circumstances, to sit under the county umbrella plan.
- Communicate the Action Plan you have developed to address the issues identified through the recent staff survey.

3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

3.1. 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 on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

Councillor Sarah Rouse	–	Leader, Malvern Hills District Council – IND
Councillor Sam Chapman-Allen	–	Leader, Breckland District Council - CONS
Vic Allison		Chief Executive of Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils
Katherine Steel	–	Assistant Director of Resources and s151 – Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils
Karl Roberts	–	Director of Place, Arun District Council
Emily McGuinness	–	LGA Peer Challenge Manager
Kathryn Trant	–	LGA Advisor

3.2. 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?
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?
5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

In addition to these questions, the council asked the peer team to provide feedback on organisational performance management and their plans to deliver an ambitious growth programme alongside recovery. The team have reflected on these additional areas of focus **within** the 5 core areas reflected above.

3.3. 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 in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. Over the course of 2 days, the team:

- Engaged with over 60 councillors, officers, and partners across 2 days of interviews in addition to further research and reading.
- Collectively spent over 190 hours to arrive at our findings, the equivalent of one person spending over 5 weeks in MDDC.

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.

4. Feedback

4.1. Local priorities and outcomes

MDDC led an impressive response to the Covid pandemic – working in partnership to support all communities and quickly redeploying staff to meet the constantly changing demands of a dynamic response. The effort taken to deliver such an effective response, which included setting up and maintaining a Shielding Hub to co-ordinate food deliveries etc for vulnerable residents, as well as running testing centres and administering over £35 million of various Covid Support grants, should not be underestimated. The residents and partners we spoke to really valued the

leadership shown by the council during these difficult times and members and officers should reflect with pride on their achievements.

Similarly, officers have supported over 75 refugees who have been placed in the district through various resettlement schemes – often going beyond minimum requirements to ensure as positive an experience as possible for the refugees. Whilst the support from officers is valued by the agencies supporting these initiatives, we heard that in this area opportunities exist for the members of MDDC to have a more visible role, and that many organisations would actively support them in achieving this, thus supporting an improved community leadership role for members.

Whilst the past 2 years have been challenging in so many ways, there have been some positive outcomes for the council – for example, staff have valued the opportunity to be part of a genuine ‘team effort’ and are collectively proud of what the council has achieved. Relationships have been established and improved with residents and partner agencies, and the council is viewed positively amongst most stakeholders we spoke with. Maintaining and enhancing these channels of communication will help ensure the views of all stakeholders more consistently inform the work of the council.

It is positive to note that the council now has a Corporate Plan in place that was approved in January 2020 – just before the first lockdown. The Corporate Plan is comprehensive and references a wide range of key ambitions, plans and projects with a strong emphasis on growth and sustainability. As explored later in this report, the planned mid-term review of this plan will be an important opportunity to reflect on the changed context within the council as well as in the wider community and sector as a whole. Given that the Plan was introduced prior to the pandemic response period, it is perhaps understandable that not every part of the organisation is fully conversant with all its contents. Staff are generally aware of the key priority areas of Homes, Environment, Community and Economy. The planned review will help develop a shared understanding as to how their activities in the post pandemic ‘new normal’ will align with these priorities with particular reference to organisation capacity to deliver which is currently causing some concern amongst staff. See also later section on capacity for improvement.

There is more to do to ensure effective ownership of the Corporate Plan at a member level, so that they are able to provide cohesive and strategic leadership to the organisation around key priority areas – and equally important for them to provide clarity around areas which are of less importance in the short term. This will help organisational resources to be deployed to maximum effect. We heard from members who are passionate about particular issues – which is of course positive and to be commended. However, a recognition that delivery of the whole Corporate Plan is a shared objective would help in setting a clear direction for the council over the next 18 months as officers and members navigate a recovery phase alongside renewed activity to deliver key projects, such as Culm Valley and at Junction 27 of the M5.

The relatively positive financial position of the council should allow for delivery of these key projects if they are effectively prioritised through the reset of the Corporate Plan.

There are some very impressive projects being delivered across the district, for example the planned new railway station in Cullompton (with construction due to start in 2024), the Heritage Action Zone in Cullompton and innovative development solutions through the council's wholly-owned development company. Pulling all these plans and projects, and the many others we heard of, together into a stronger overall vision will help MDDC develop a more cohesive narrative of place that would be welcomed by external stakeholders, as well as clarity as to how and when they can contribute to creating and delivering shared outcomes.

The council has taken many positive steps to address Climate Change. In 2019, MDDC signed the Devon Climate Change Pledge for the County to be Carbon Neutral by 2050. In addition to this, MDDC members have set their own local target where the council is aiming to become carbon neutral by a more ambitious date of 2030. The council has taken positive steps to achieve these ambitious targets, such as appointing a Climate & Sustainability Officer, setting up a Net Zero Working Group and including Climate Change in a Cabinet Member Portfolio. They have also commissioned Exeter University to baseline the council's carbon footprint in order to have a benchmark to help prioritise actions and measure progress against. The Council has recently secured in excess of £300k of Government funding towards decarbonising the three leisure centres and have recently heard that they are likely to

be successful in obtaining £2.8m from the Salix fund to make further investment in the leisure centres.

Whilst officers, members and partners were able to confidently refer to the Countywide Climate Action Plan, we didn't hear of a specific MDDC Action Plan that provides strategic oversight of these positive climate agenda actions within the council and would suggest that producing one would help raise the profile of this important work and ensure all activities (and associated resources) are accurately mapped, reviewed, and monitored.

4.2. Organisational and place leadership

The peer team spoke with a wide range of local, regional, and sub-regional partners; from this we found that MDDC is well regarded by all and is seen to positively contribute to the delivery of shared outcomes. This is particularly well demonstrated by the 'Team Devon' approach which was initially developed as a mechanism to coordinate the Covid response across all tiers of local government in Devon and has continued as a meaningful forum for collaboration on a county footprint. Both the council's Leader and the Chief Executive play active roles in these arrangements and lead on priority issues such as addressing the housing crisis in Devon. Positive engagement in these emerging local structures will greatly enhance the council's ability to address some of the big issues they are facing (housing, recovery etc). As discussions and plans progress around the Devon County Deal, ensuring that the potential benefits for MDDC are understood and articulated at all levels of the organisation will be important so that members and officers are sighted on, and can maximise, all opportunities.

Partners are ready and waiting to work more extensively with MDDC and are keen to continue to work with the council to shape the post pandemic 'new normal'. Some partners stated that they would welcome a more proactive approach to engagement e.g., through regular Town and Parish Council Liaison and Business Forums. There is a perception amongst some partner organisations that MDDC can sometimes take a reactive, rather than proactive, approach to engagement. We understand that engagement arrangements, particularly with the Business Sector, are being reset following the pandemic, this is positive and will inevitably help ensure the voices of all

stakeholders are heard in the planned review of the Corporate Plan. Building on existing positive relationships to create community capacity will support the delivery priority outcomes.

As previously referenced, there is a significant growth agenda in Mid Devon, with some key projects moving towards delivery – not least the construction of a new train station in Cullompton. In taking a leadership role in helping to bring this project to fruition, the council has demonstrated an impressive ability to use its position to influence major development and should now confidently build on this experience to bring forward other key development projects forward at pace.

The council recognises the need to improve the level of engagement with residents. A recent Residents survey indicates that residents are generally positive about their local area as a place. However, the Council scored less on the perception of value for money or acting on concerns of residents. How the council chooses to use this information to inform priority setting going forward will be important in addressing these concerns and maintaining trust and credibility with residents.

There is a need to improve the digital infrastructure across the district to support the wider economy and corporate ambitions. A high level strategy on broadband coverage for the district would help to demonstrate a commitment to engagement with residents and help to secure decent digital connectivity to support economic opportunities in rural areas.

We heard that there has been no large scale transformational ICT activity in recent times and that there have been significant staff shortages – this has undoubtedly impacted on the council's ability to deliver large scale digital change. However, whilst the last two years have presented challenges to the ICT function of the council, opportunities have been embraced e.g., supporting staff to work from home. The council has committed to learning from how these issues were addressed and factor this in to future projects, such as the development of a digital platform to allow improved customer engagement and service delivery – a project that should continue to be progressed at pace.

4.3. Governance and culture

Staff feel that they were communicated with well during the pandemic and there was an increase in the number who felt they had the freedom to ‘get on with their job’. This is borne out by the recent staff survey which additionally reported that 84% of staff feel managers treat them with respect. Given the challenges presented by the pandemic, this is a positive reflection from staff on organisational culture from their perspective and provides a good basis for continuous improvement.

The staff we spoke with expressed a wish for a clear and cohesive plan in respect of returning to the council offices/workplaces following the pandemic. As stated above, after some initial challenges with ICT capacity, the council successfully enabled staff to work remotely during the pandemic. Planning for a return to office based working is an opportunity for the council to build on this success and to investigate the potential to use new ways of working to help address recruitment and retention issues e.g., being able to recruit staff from outside the normal travel to work area and maximising agile working practices. Clarity on these plans at the soonest opportunity will be welcomed by staff, members and customers and will provide clarity around access to staff - managing the expectations of all stakeholders in this process will be critical to avoid an exacerbation of current recruitment and retention issues whilst balancing the needs of residents and members.

Inevitably, the pandemic has created some perceived inequities between teams – and this is not unique to MDDC. The roles of some staff – predominantly those working in the satellite sites at Carlu Close and the Old Road Depot – remained largely unchanged by the pandemic, whilst others may have been redeployed or furloughed. We heard that whilst internal communications is seen as strong by staff working at the corporate centre, those working in satellite locations would value a more inclusive approach – and cited the use of new communications channels used in Housing Services to produce videos as a particularly strong example. A post-pandemic review of working practices is a good opportunity to address concerns around parity and build on a ‘one council’ ethos.

Alongside the positive feedback from the staff survey, a number of issues were also identified, including:

- communications between teams,
- a belief that not everyone is treated equally and fairly; and
- that only 31% of staff felt that senior leaders make an effort to listen to them.

The council is well sighted on the responses to the survey and is committed to addressing the concerns raised. Consideration should be given to development of an action plan which can be clearly communicated to all staff and against which progress can be measured – this will not only ensure the issues raised are purposefully resolved, but that staff will see their concerns being actively listened to by the organisation.

Only 21% of staff feel that they have a good working relationship with members. The last council election in 2019 returned a change in political control for the council – of the 42 members 20 are Conservative, 11 are Liberal Democrat, 6 are Non-aligned Independent, 3 are New Independent Group and 2 are Green Party. The Cabinet consists of 5 Conservative members and 3 Independent, the Leader is Independent, and the Deputy Leader is from the Conservative Group – there is no formal or informal coalition. Given this complex political context, the period since 2019 has not been without its challenges, which have been managed well by the Chief Executive, and relations amongst Cabinet members and between senior members and officers now seem to be stable. These positive working relationships now need to be developed with senior officers and senior members working as a more effective ‘Top Team’, meeting together and working through a shared agenda that reflects the context the council is operating within and agree a set of deliverable priorities, with members being seen to think and act strategically rather than perhaps spending a disproportionate amount of time involved in operational matters. In doing so, they will be better able to provide sound political and organisational strategic leadership and one would hope improve staff perceptions.

Whilst stating the above, it is evident that some member to officer and some member to member relations have become strained and are effecting the council’s capacity to deliver due to the impact this is having on both councillor and officer time and resources. There is widespread recognition of the issues in most quarters and a belief that they need to be proactively addressed. The Council may benefit from

external support, mediation, and guidance so that issues are resolved and the council, both members and officers, can focus on the delivery of priorities, allowing a culture of respect to be reset and rebuilt.

Structures for non-executive members to positively engage with and influence both decision and policy making exist through the Policy Development Groups and Scrutiny. However, there is a need for all members to fully understand their roles and responsibilities, and engage positively with these structures, so that the best outcomes for the residents of Mid Devon can be achieved.

Senior Officers and members may benefit from spending some time collectively reflecting on what 'good' looks like for governance at MDDC and what are the roles and responsibilities of members and officers to ensure this is realised – we met with officers and members who are passionate about their place and have huge ambition to deliver for their communities. It is important for officers and members to recognise that there is much that the council has done, and is doing, well.

MDDC collects and analyses a significant amount of organisational performance data, which is used by officers to inform service and resource planning to a certain extent. However, the peer team felt that Members do not appear to make best use of the performance data that is available to them – either in their Executive roles, or through regular reporting to Overview and Scrutiny. The council would benefit from a more robust and rigorous performance management framework that clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of members in relation to this and supports a culture where performance and financial data are more routinely considered as part of strategic management discussions.

Finally, in this section the team felt it important to note that all 33 recommendations made by external reviews of 3Rivers Development Ltd (a MDDC wholly owned company) have now been delivered. This has been a significant undertaking and should provide the necessary levels of assurance and reassurance going forward.

4.4. Financial planning and management

Within the challenging national financial context and given the significant uncertainty facing the sector, MDDC is in a reasonably good financial position, owing largely to a

history of sound financial management and a successful track record in delivering savings by reducing headcount, moving more service provision on-line, working with partners to share costs, examining all fees/charges (including the introduction of fees for discretionary services that were previously provided for free), as well as looking to more commercial ventures. Such ventures include major leisure centre investment targeted to help reduce the level of council tax subsidy, investment with the CCLA and a loan to NHS Hub and renting out a large part of Phoenix House to the Department of Work and Pensions and co-located services for customers. Furthermore, the council set up its own property development company in March 2017, benefitting the council by over £500k in 2022/23.

These measures have resulted in a Medium Term Financial Plan which shows current reserves standing at circa £2.2m in the General Fund and £2.0m in the HRA, with a significant amount of earmarked reserves set aside to cover future known/estimated cost pressures or agreed funding commitments. In previous years the council has refrained from using significant amounts of New Homes Bonus (NHB) to underpin revenue budgets due to the fact that this funding source was never guaranteed over the longer term. The 2022/23 General Fund Budget does include a contribution of £0.5m from NHB but is predominantly used to fund one-off revenue items and a small contribution towards the capital programme.

This medium-term financial position is based on prudent assumptions - and in some cases worst case assumptions - with realistic assessments of when initiatives will be delivered, and options are already being developed and were shared with Cabinet in October 2021 to address the financial challenge for 2023/24 and beyond, demonstrating a mature approach to financial planning and managing challenges.

There is a strong and supportive working relationship between the Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Finance, allowing for regular discussion and formulation of budget proposals throughout the year. It is also clear that the wider membership has confidence in the Cabinet Member for Finance and the Section 151 Officer but a greater understanding of the council's financial position amongst leading members needs to be developed as the council looks to review the Corporate Plan and prioritise activities in line with financial resources. Establishing shared ownership of the council's financial position across the Cabinet is an important next step as in the medium-term more difficult budget decisions may need to be taken, and

members will need to recognise the need to support this.

The council has some shared service arrangements with neighbouring authorities in services such as Building Control, Spatial Planning/Economic Development and Procurement, but consideration should be given to exploring further options to achieve greater efficiency savings e.g., ICT and Legal Services and thereby protecting frontline services.

MDDC has a number of well established Policy Development Groups (PDGs) which were intended to provide a forum for non-executive members to purposefully engage with policy development and review. There is an opportunity to work with the Policy Development Groups around the budget setting process to enable them to take full ownership of their budget areas and contribute to assessing options with Cabinet.

There is open and transparent reporting around the wide range of earmarked reserves as part of the budget monitoring, but consideration should be given as to the extent to which these reporting mechanisms aid understanding of the council's overall financial position amongst the wider membership of the council.

As is the case in many local authorities, over recent years there has been significant slippage in the capital programme at MDDC. A review could be undertaken, possibly alongside the mid-term review of the Corporate Plan, to establish the reasons for this and ensure resources are appropriately (and realistically) allocated to support the delivery of a set of refocused priorities.

4.5. Capacity

The way in which MDDC responded to the pandemic shows that the council has the ability to learn and adapt to new ways of working at short notice – and the subsequent investment the council has made in ICT has helped build on this and provide greater organisational resilience, improved bandwidth and helped to mitigate cyber risks.

The peer team met with positive and motivated staff who have a clear passion for Mid Devon and demonstrate an impressive commitment and enthusiasm for the council. It is worth noting that the flexible and agile way staff responded to the pandemic is appreciated by members and partners and has created significant

'community capital' for the council and MDDC should seek to ensure this is retained as 'new normal' working practices are devised and implemented.

The council is currently facing significant recruitment and retention issues beyond the more traditional 'hard to recruit' professions such as Planning and Environmental Health. The council is fully aware of the extent of the issue – and the significant impact on the organisation both now and in the future. There are some sectoral factors which are beyond your immediate control (e.g., skills shortages generally, and the cost of living in the South West etc), but there are others which are in your gift to address such as organisational culture and setting out your approach to working practices. Addressing these issues in particular will ensure that the council is as well placed as possible to resolve these issues. We heard that the councils' HR Team are actively reviewing staff benefits and recruitment practices and this is a positive step. We would also encourage the council to establish clarity on new ways of post pandemic working arrangements as a priority, setting out how the expectations of members, customers and staff will be met and providing reassurance that there will be appropriate technology to support this. Staff are keen to embrace hybrid working and developing a sustainable approach to this could help with some elements of recruitment and retention.

Opportunities may exist for the council to explore further joint working with other councils e.g., IT and Legal Services as part of the Team Devon approach. Looking to pool resources in key, but hard to recruit to service areas, could help improve resilience as well address recruitment and retention issues by giving staff a wider breadth of experience. Alongside this there is also the potential to generate efficiency savings.

The Council's Corporate Plan is rightly ambitious for Mid Devon, but given the extent to which the world has changed since the plan was adopted in 2020, the planned 'Mid-Term Review' will be an important opportunity for members and officers to reflect on what has been achieved (both in terms of planned activities to deliver the aims of the Corporate Plan but also the huge amount of unplanned work to support the pandemic response), to comprehensively appraise the capacity of the organisation moving forward, and consider what the new post-pandemic normal will look and feel like in Mid Devon, as the country learns to live with Covid. This review process should look to achieve a set of priorities and activities which are realistically

deliverable (whilst retaining the ambition for place which is so clearly evident within the council and amongst stakeholders) taking into account the workforce and financial constraints facing the council.

A more clearly defined set of corporate priorities resulting from the 'Mid Term Review' will help the 'Top Team' of senior members and officers to re-deploy resources to deliver maximum impact in key areas. In order to achieve this, it will be crucial for elected members to acknowledge that activities will need to be prioritised to align with organisational capacity. A more focused and targeted approach over the next 12 -18 months, will allow the council to reap the benefits of a relatively strong financial position - as well as a strong track record in securing external grant funding - and deliver tangible outcomes for the residents and businesses of Mid Devon.

ICT investment has been behind the curve in recent years but is now moving forward with the importance of this now widely recognised e.g., the impending roll out of the new telephony programme and enhanced broadband bandwidth. It is important that this investment continues in ICT to support the transformational ambitions of the council, a key component of which is to deliver more effective channels for digital engagement with residents. The Council now needs to ensure that staff and members are fully able to use the technology now in place and that this technology also creates further channels for residents to inform and influence the work of the council.

5. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss, and reflect on these findings.

Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the peer challenge. The CPC process includes a six-month check-in meeting. This will be a short, facilitated session which creates space for the council's senior leadership to update peers on its progress against the action plan and discuss next steps.

In the meantime, Paul Clarke, Principal Adviser for South West, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Paul is available to



discuss any further support the council requires. paul.clarke@local.gov.uk