



## **LGA Peer Challenge Action Plan**

# Summary

Lewisham Council is committed to continuous learning and improvement, in a culture where accountability and scrutiny is welcomed with a bias towards openness. During the Autumn of 2021, the council invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge of the council. On top of the standard areas that always form part of a Challenge; Local priorities and outcomes, Organisational and place leadership, Governance and culture, Financial planning and management and Capacity for improvement, the team were asked in particular to focus on “*Leading and embedding a shift in workforce culture, engaging and motivating staff across the organisation to deliver corporate priorities at pace*”.

The LGA peer challenge team spent four days on site in Lewisham speaking to councillors, officers and partners. Before that, the team had reviewed a range of documents, including a position statement the council had provided. At the end of the site visit, the peer challenge team provided a report on their findings and this action plan responds to those.

The actions below outline the actions that we either have taken since the Peer Challenge took place, or intend to take in the near future as part of our overall response to the Peer Challenge. In addition to the specific actions we take, the Peer Challenge Report will be used as one of the pillars making up our Corporate Strategy (2022-2026).

The report from the LGA, and the action plan, will help us with our work to continually learn and improve for the benefit of our residents. The work below will be built into the business of the Council, not added on as an additional pressure on resources. The responses to recommendations outlined below have been designed to ensure they do not require additional financial resource and can be implemented using existing staffing and financial capacity.

Key Recommendations				
<u>Peer Recommendation</u>	<u>Response</u>	<u>Timeline</u>	<u>Lead</u>	<u>Resource</u>
<b>(1) Continue to capture learning from the Council's excellent Covid-19 response</b> and do not miss the opportunity to capitalise on	a) A refreshed volunteering strategy, aimed at connecting our staff more with our borough. This strategy will be developed with consideration to our partners who rely on volunteers.	a) 2023	SM	

the partnerships and innovation put in place.	a) The Council's work relating to Borough of Sanctuary has been moved to within the division of the 'Head of Partnerships'. This will ensure that partners who are required for the success of this programme can work more closely with it.	b) September 2022	TB	
	b) The creation of a 'Future Working' programme will ensure that staff have the correct tools and equipment to do their jobs effectively in a hybrid environment.	c) October 2022	SM	
<b>(2) Develop a more formalised approach to partnership working outside statutory partners,</b> building on the great work engaging with black-owned businesses, and the strong work on one public estate. Lewisham has more capital outside the organisation than it thinks.	a) Creation of a Local Strategic Partnership, aimed at tackling borough-wide issues and supported with additional capacity at Lewisham Council. This partnership will focus on the following areas: - New Jobs and Skills - Cost of Living - Race Equality - Inward Investment	a) Launched June 2022	KW	
	b) The Council will tackle the Cost of Living crisis through a partnership response. Working with organisations across the borough we will create joint campaigns to provide warm spaces for those who requires them, signposting towards available support and the capacity required to provide joined-up advice from partners across the borough.	b) Launched October 2022		
<b>(3) Look for opportunities for the council's energetic directly elected political leadership to</b>	a) The newly created Local Strategic Partnership will be chaired by the Mayor of Lewisham.	a) Launched June 2022	KW	

<p><b>take an even stronger leadership of place role</b>, convening residents and partners around key challenges for Lewisham.</p>	<p>b) The Corporate Strategy is centred on the 'Mayor and majority party's priorities', ensuring they are an organisational focus.</p>	<p>b) November 2023</p>	<p>KW</p>	
	<p>c) Created an opportunity for the Executive Management Team and Cabinet to discuss leadership at a facilitated away day. These may become a regular occurrence based on feedback from the initial session.</p>	<p>c) October 2022</p>	<p>KW</p>	
<p><b>(4) Ensure that the council is focussing externally as much as internally</b>, think about how to build on the local assemblies to ensure that residents are front and centre in policy/strategy and service decisions. Could there be more clarity about where this sits in the organisation and better links to member priorities? There is an opportunity to build on strengths such as the health inequality work, the devolving of NCIL and work on Catford regeneration.</p>	<p>a) The Resident Experience Programme will continue to be progressed with the aim of driving transformation and culture change, user-focused service design and digital innovation across all services. We will ensure that every major programme and project within the Council considers first and foremost its impact on residents. .</p>	<p>a) All stages to be completed by October 2022</p>		
	<p>b) The creation of Ward profiles to ensure that Members can effectively assess what their wards priorities are. These profiles have been offered to all Members of the Local Strategic Partnership, as part of an effort to ensure better data sharing with our partners.</p> <p>These Ward Profiles will be regularly updated as more tranches of 2021 Census data are released. We will also be reviewing them every 6 months to ensure that the information they contain is most useful to our Members and partners.</p> <p>Ward profiles form a key element of our <a href="#">data observatory</a>, where data, information</p>	<p>b) Completed (May 2022)</p>		

	and research about the borough is collated so it can be effectively used by all our partners, officers and Members.			
	c) Continuing our local assemblies programme into the new administration.	b) Ongoing	TB	
<b>(5) Lewisham has great practice that should be shared outside of the borough</b> and 'Borough of Culture' is a huge opportunity to tell the story and contribution of Lewisham's diverse community and create a jointly developed legacy. Lewisham has an important contribution to make to the debate in London and nationally.	a) We are delivering a comprehensive LBOC communications plan, which is led by a dedicated officer and supported by the Media and Campaigns, Digital Communications and Internal Comms managers.	a) Ongoing	TB/ SM	
	b) Creating a programme of work to encapsulate the Legacy of Lewisham's year as London Borough of Culture.	b) March 2023	JD	
	c) We continue to work closely with delivery partners, local organisations and the GLA to maximise opportunities.	c) Ongoing	JD	
<b>(6) Develop the Council's communications strategy and plan such that opportunities to</b>	a) Introduction of staff awards, created by the Change Network as part of their 'Reward and Recognition' strand of work.	a) January 2023	SM	

<p><b>build on and celebrate success;</b> amplify great work and ensure residents, partners and staff are always clear about next steps and action to be taken following consultation or engagement exercises.</p>	<p>b) Creation of a full Communications Strategy to support the delivery of our Corporate Strategy. This will include working closely with services and Cabinet members to identify and plan opportunities to celebrate success.</p> <p>We are also specifically thinking about the way in which we target seldom heard from voices. Identifying which stakeholders need special assistance in order to participate on an equal footing.</p> <p>We will be using our recent Residents' Survey to ensure that our communications goes beyond social media and reaches as many residents as possible in the way that's most convenient for them.</p>	<p>b) By end of 2022</p>	<p>All</p>	
	<p>c) We've taken steps to ensure the Council puts forward a number of nominations for local government awards. This new focus on awards has resulted in us being nominated for the following during 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Response – LGC</li> <li>• Best Contribution by a New Apprentice - London Borough Apprenticeship Awards</li> <li>• Best Apprentice Working in Schools - London Borough Apprenticeship Awards</li> <li>• Best Manager or Mentor - London Borough Apprenticeship Awards</li> </ul>	<p>c) Steps taken in January 2022 and will continue</p>	<p>SM</p>	

	<p>We also won an award for Best Borough Led Project – London Planning Awards, and received a commended entry in the Rising Star category of the MJ Awards.</p>			
	<p>d) Regular (6 monthly) all staff meetings to be held with the Mayor/Chief Executive to update everyone</p>	<p>d) Meetings held in: - January 2022 - October 2022</p>	<p>SM</p>	
	<p>e) Regular (quarterly) Extended Leadership Team meetings to ensure managers are sighted on work across the council.</p>	<p>e) Meeting held in September 2022 and scheduled quarterly</p>	<p>KW</p>	
<p><b>(7) Review the constitution to align it to the ambition of the Mayor and his Administration</b> regarding senior appointments, scheme of delegation, scrutiny and member officer working and roles.</p>	<p>a) Full constitution review to be conducted. This will be delivered in three phases:</p> <p><b>Phase 1 – During 2022</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Proper Officer designations</li> <li>- Scheme of Delegation</li> <li>- Council questions</li> <li>- Cabinet appointments</li> <li>- Key Decision definition</li> </ul> <p><b>Phase 2 – March 2023</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of meeting structure (including scrutiny bodies)</li> <li>- Council Procedure Rules</li> </ul> <p><b>Phase 3 – During 2023</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Member Code of Conduct</li> <li>- Officer Code of Conduct</li> <li>- Member/Officer Protocol</li> <li>- Financial Procedure Rules</li> </ul>	<p>a) All phases to be complete by December 2023</p>	<p>JC</p>	

	- Any other elements			
<p><b>(8) Ensure that there is a strong leadership and management plan to provide mentorship/ coaching for those who are stepping into larger roles with broad portfolios.</b></p> <p>The Council should consider a refreshed employee wellbeing programme that is clearly communicated to recognise impact of service delivery demands, Covid recovery and change fatigue.</p>	<p>a) Creation of an EMT leadership development programme – specifically aimed at top tiers, with the aim to cascade to next tier (SLT) with EMT acting as champion/ facilitators for the programme at this level</p> <p>This leadership programme included a Cabinet/ EMT away day, to encourage strong communication and collaboration between the political leadership of the Council and the Executive Management Team.</p>	a) Launched October 2022 and complete by April 2023	SM	
	<p>b) Creation of a refreshed Wellbeing Programme which will be reviewed quarterly.</p>	b) Launched Summer 2022		
	<p>c) Creation of a Mandatory Development Programme for all managers that is refreshed quarterly. This programme will be available to almost 500 members of staff.</p> <p>This includes the planned creation of a staff welfare app.</p>	c) Launched Autumn 2022	SM	
	<p>b) Manager and Staff Induction – Mandatory programme for all new recruits to Lewisham. To ensure all know the expectations upon them and where to find support for themselves and others, including staff welfare provision</p>	c) Rolled out, will be reviewed and improved continuously	SM	



	d) Introduction of MyMentor scheme – provision of a mentoring network, along with mentoring training for managers and aspiring managers who want to move up in their role. Includes training to volunteer mentors.	e) Rolled out March 2022 – calling for sign-up now and expected to become a permanent service to managers	SM	
	f) Annual Workforce Events – A set of workshops/events and/or e-learning packs linked to world days/month-long events that address people’s well-being, development and support. E.g. April’s Stress Awareness Month includes techniques to reduce staff pressure	g) January 2022	SM	
<b>(9) Review the Council’s relationship with Lewisham Homes</b> and the options for bringing them more in line with the new culture and resident focused practice in the Council	<p>a) Following a manifesto commitment from Lewisham Labour to: “Review the future of Lewisham Homes and, following consultation with residents, consider options that include returning it to an in-house, council run service”, the relationship with Lewisham Homes is being actively reviewed by the Council.</p> <p>A steering group has been created to provide strategic oversight of the options appraisal and further work on the Housing Futures Programme as agreed by Mayor and Cabinet.</p>	a) During 2022	JD	

	Lewisham Council has agreed to begin consultation with residents on whether Lewisham Homes could be brought in-house.			
<p><b>(10) Post May provides the opportunity to engage with 3-year budget planning and plan to transform the large service areas in the borough such as adults and children's services.</b> The council as part of this may want to consider whether it could benefit from a zero based or outcome-based budgeting exercise to ensure spend is aligned with priorities. In setting those future year budget's the council will want to jointly plan its longer-term sustainability with elected members, external partners (statutory and non-statutory) and communities.</p>	a) We will refresh the MTFs regularly and with at least a three year view, offering it for Member pre-scrutiny and approval at M&C. Where savings continue to be required early engagement, this will be undertaken across Council services and with Members to develop proposals.	a) July 2022	KF	
	b) We will improve on the activity and cost driver trend analysis, linked to more robust and regular performance reporting, to continue to improve the social care monitoring and forecasting reports.	b) In evidence in June/July 2022 M&C papers	KF	
	c) We will review the new 2022-26 Corporate Strategy and present the Council's budgets (GF, HRA, DSG, Grants/Benefits, etc...) for revenue and capital spend aligned to priorities – using the CIPFA financial management framework.	c) Commenced during Summer 2022	KF	
	d) We will include additional commentary and sensitivity analysis in the MTFs on possible scenarios where opportunities and risks are identified, this will support wider engagement (e.g. with partners, residents, businesses, government, etc...) on spending choices in the medium term.	d) July 2022	KF	

	e) We will look at the options for an annual report to supplement the financial statements presented to Council that combines comment on progress with delivering budget, performance, and strategic priorities.	e) November 2022	KF	
	f) We will endeavour to pilot ZBB around a selected service area when capacity exists within our Finance Team to do so – the approach and results will be reviewed by PASC.	f) Discussions with PASC and plans for a pilot are ongoing	KF	
<b>(11) New projects or initiatives over a financial threshold across the organisation should follow a consistent programme management approach</b> that clearly articulates cost, risk and potential benefits before proceeding.	a) A proposal will be brought to the Executive Management Team that any Mayor and Cabinet decision, costing over £500k, will require a consistent PMO approach. This will be reviewed regularly with a view to lowering the threshold if required and if the appropriate support mechanisms and tools are in place.	a) January 2023	KF/ SM	