

LDC response to Peer Challenge Recommendations

	Recommendation	Response
1	Re-consider staffing structures, job titles, and pay. Align resources to core business and key priorities, supporting and developing staff with more training opportunities including apprenticeships.	Initial discussions taken place with LGA. Looking to amend job descriptions - moving away from specialist advisor / senior specialist advisor roles. Also looking at corporate back-office functions and numbers. Continued focus on training and development, detailing the number of opportunities on offer including apprenticeships which are available to existing as well as new staff and can result in qualifications from the same level as GCSE's through to bachelors or master's degrees.
2	Create strategic frameworks to guide the delivery of key priorities and empower middle management to deliver them.	Noted that some key areas, e.g. sustainability and community wealth already have strategies. Others now to be developed to address relevant priority areas, with involvement of middle managers.
3	Invest in improved ICT (including mobile working solutions), back-office systems, and automation, with a focus on service delivery to ensure tools are fit for purpose.	Continuing to review and align ICT systems - through the Digital Transformation programme of the Recovery & Reset portfolio. A range of projects are in progress to update the ICT systems used by the councils e.g. replacing revenues/benefits with single system in autumn 2023. Project to replace the 2 Planning systems with single system started in Jan 2023. Considering further investment in improved mobile working solutions - discussions commenced - timeline to be set shortly. Considering further investment in automation - the Artificial Intelligence and robotics project maximising benefits of existing technology and explore opportunities for further automation. Business case on next phase of chat bot - ELLIS - on the phones, is being finalised.
4	The peer challenge team strongly recommends revising the members allowance from the very low base in time for the new municipal term, taking onboard the views on the Independent Panels.	LDC reviewed recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel for increases to member allowances in 2020. However, in light of the current financial challenges these recommendations were not accepted. LDC will review the situation again in 2024.

5	<p>Improve cross-department communications and joint working. Create opportunities for staff to meet in person and across teams</p>	<p>Following the discussion at the Senior Managers Forum in February, an Internal Communications Working Group has been created to lead the implementation of the new Internal Communications Strategy. The first meeting of the group was held on 24 April 2023.</p>
6	<p>Continue to closely monitor the finances and consider a longer-term approach to financial planning.</p>	<p>A new fully integrated business and financial planning process has been devised and will be delivered this year, addressing both revenue and capital requirements in a joined-up way. Training for Senior Managers Forum will be delivered in June. The Medium-Term Financial plan also now shows a detailed 4-year position more strongly than previously.</p>
7	<p>More use of financial scenarios to evaluate the impact of inflationary pressures, cost of living and increased borrowing costs.</p>	<p>This will be considered, and awareness created at the Senior Managers Forum in June to ensure relevant data/info are provided when writing future reports and for future business plans.</p>
8	<p>Undertake an asset review to ensure assets contribute and align to core services, key priorities and have a demonstrable value. Re-evaluate the cost of upcoming projects and returns on investment.</p>	<p>The capital programme now only contains items which address health and safety issues, or which can be funded by identified capital receipts.</p>
9	<p>Demonstrate commitment to the key corporate priority of sustainability and carbon neutrality by assigning a suitable budget to ensure delivery.</p>	<p>Commitment to this corporate priority remains for 2023/24 and activity to deliver the corporate climate action plans. Regular meetings with members and climate change scrutiny panels (outside of the pre-election period) to ensure this work remains on track. £500,000 allocated in HRA to sustainability. Various sustainability related projects in the capital programme including Landport Brooks, £1m sustainability measures across the council's leisure estate, capital for sustainability investments.</p>
10	<p>Housing Delivery Tests have not been met and the Local Plans are still under development and have been delayed due to external issues. Addressing this needs to be a priority so the councils retain control over the local planning and place making, which will be essential to meet their ambitious goals.</p>	<p>The Council has published a revised Local Development Scheme (agreed/endorsed by Cabinet) which gives new milestones for the delivery of the Local Plans. Cabinet has agreed to support financially (with a dedicated payment) the delivery of the evidence to support the Local Plan Production. The Council have produced/published an</p>

		<p>Interim Policy Statement that outlines and hopefully guides development to suitable and sustainable locations. This document shows that the Council is not blinkered to accepting and supporting growth within the District. Committee Member Training established on appeal decisions received and reporting the same to Planning Committees. Reporting on appeal decisions to Members of Planning Applications Committee to advise and inform of the trends and lessons learnt.</p>
11	<p>Continue the partnership with the National Park Authority and the secondment arrangement. Strengthen the joint working ensuring there are adequate resources.</p>	<p>There has been strengthened connections/relationship between the National Park and Lewes District Council who are acting as its agent for planning activity within the Parks coverage within the Lewes District. Measures that have been instigated include,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established a dedicated team responsible solely for the Park • Enrol a Team Leader for this team funded 50/50 • Park Link Officer embedded within this team to support and direction for Park related matters to customers and staff • Monthly catch-up meetings at Director level • Established performance monitoring that is reported to the Director at the National Park and their committees.