

Public
Key Decision – No

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title: Corporate Peer Challenge Actions Update

Meeting/Date: Performance & Growth – 8 July 2025

Executive Portfolio: Councillor Sarah Conboy, Executive Leader

Report by: Head of Policy, Performance and Emergency Planning

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

This report presents an update to the Scrutiny Panel on the progress against the actions arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken in May 2024, and the progress review completed on 4th March 2025. The actions are presented in Appendix 1.

The Corporate Peer Challenge report was received by the Council on 17th July 2024. This is the third update following an update to Performance and Growth on 2nd October, 16th October 2024 and 2nd April 2025.

Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. The CPC assists councils to meet part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years. The CPC is part of the Council's approach to deliver the corporate plan priority of **doing our core work well**, the 2025/26 Corporate Plan includes the action to:

60. Implement the recommendations and suggestions made from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, continuing to drive transparent continuous improvement.

Since completing the CPC in May 2024, an action plan to address the eight formal and additional informal recommendations was established.

The CPC Team undertake a progress review around six months after the publication of the council's action plan, this took place on the 4th March 2025. The Team confirmed good progress had been made by the Council, with some additional feedback to support further actions. As a learning Council this feedback has also been incorporated within the action plan. The progress review report has been published (Appendix 2).

The approach for monitoring progress and reporting completion of the action plan has been changed to reflect the feedback from the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 2nd April 2025. The summary (Appendix 1) now includes a breakdown of actions that are in progress or have been completed with supporting evidence where relevant. This shows continued progress since March 2025 with 22 actions completed, and 15 in progress.

Within the action plan, appropriate officers and a lead Member have been identified to ensure responsibility for delivery and governance. The action plan contains 27 actions linked to the eight recommendations and 10 actions linked to additional comments.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Performance & Growth) (Environment, Customers & Partnerships) is invited to comment on the contents of the report and make any comments for Cabinet.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides a summary (Appendix 1) to update the Scrutiny Panel on the progress against the actions identified from the Corporate Peer Challenge undertaken May 2024, and the progress review undertaken in March 2025.

2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY?

- 2.1 Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. The Challenge assists councils to meet part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years.
- 2.2 Council on 16th October 2024 requested an appropriate mechanism for reporting back to Council Members on progress with the actions identified through the Corporate Peer Challenge.

3. SUMMARY

3.1 Corporate Peer Challenge

- 3.1.1 The CPC provides an opportunity for external peers from other Local Authorities to assess how effectively we deliver our services and measure our ability to deliver on our plans and vision for the future. This will help inform and shape our improvement journey and share learning.
- 3.1.2 The CPC is focused on five core components that underpin good performance that all LGA Corporate Peer Challenges cover. They are:
- **Local priorities and outcomes:** Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities and achieving improved outcomes for all its communities?
 - **Organisational and place leadership:** Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
 - **Governance and culture:** Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of respect, challenge and scrutiny?
 - **Financial planning and management:** Does the council have a clear understanding of its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a clear plan to address its financial challenges?
 - **Capacity for improvement:** Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities?

3.2 Update

3.2.1 The summary progress position at the end of March 2025 as set out in Appendix 1 with examples of how the actions across the 8 recommendations is:

27 Actions linked to 8 Formal Recommendations:

19 actions completed*	Green
8 actions in progress	Orange
0 action not started yet	Grey

* Evidence supporting the 19 actions completed has been listed as background information.

10 Actions linked to Additional Recommendations:

3 actions completed	Green
7 actions in progress	Orange
0 action not started yet	Grey

3.2.2 The detailed progress against each action is shown in Appendix 3.

4. **RISKS**

4.1 Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) is a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. The Challenge assists councils to meet part of their Best Value duty, with the UK Government expecting all local authorities to have a CPC at least every five years.

4.2 The Peer Challenge provides an opportunity for external peers from other Local Authorities to assess how effectively we deliver our services and measure our ability to deliver on our plans and vision for the future. As such the CPC and actions contribute to the governance of the Council and control of risk.

5. **LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN, STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

5.1 Huntingdonshire Futures sets out the shared ambitions and collective endeavour to realise a place renowned for doing things the right way to influence better outcomes for our residents and communities. The Corporate Peer Challenge is a robust, strategic, and credible form of external challenge and support, that supports Councils to improve performance and deliver better outcomes for their communities.

5.2 The Corporate Plan provides a 'golden thread' throughout the organisation, linking activity at strategic levels from Huntingdonshire Futures through to activity in service plans, filtering through to objectives set for teams. The CPC is part of the Local Government Association's

(LGA) sector-led improvement framework designed to be a supportive, non-inspection-based process where experienced peers from other councils assess how effectively a council is performing in delivering the outcomes they set out to achieve.

5.3 Priority 3 – Doing our Core Work Well is focused on:



The Corporate Plan had a specific action in 2024/25 which was completed:

58. Deliver an independent Corporate Peer Challenge of the Council that will assess, challenge and improve what we do

The Corporate Plan updated for 2025/26 includes the action to:

60. Implement the recommendations and suggestions made from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, continuing to drive transparent, continuous improvement.

6. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no additional resource requirements arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge or the Action Plan derived from the recommendations.

7. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

7.1 This report presents Council members with an update on the progress with actions arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge 2024, and revisit March 2025.

7.2 The approach for monitoring progress and reporting completion of the action plan has been changed to reflect the feedback from the Scrutiny Panel meeting on 2nd April 2025.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 - Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan Summary Update
March 2025

Appendix 2 – Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Revisit report 4th
March 2025

Appendix 3 - Corporate Peer Challenge Detailed Action Plan

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Council 16th October – [Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge](#)
- [Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, item 40.](#)  PDF 109 KB
- [Appendix 1 - Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, item 40.](#)  PDF 89 KB
- Evidence for action CPC001 and CPC002: Senior Leadership Team consultation outcome January 2025
- Evidence for action CPC003: Community Health and Wealth Building Strategy. Overview & Scrutiny Panel 5 June 2025. Agenda item 8
- Evidence for action CPC005: The Communication Network Champions internal group have been meeting once a quarter with an updated list of pipeline activity.
- Evidence for action CPC007: The development of a Communications Strategy 2024-28
- Evidence for action CPC008: The Corporative Narrative has been completed
- Evidence for action CPC009: Development Management Committee 19 May 2025 item 7 - Planning Service Peer Review
- Evidence for action CPC010: Consultation for 'Further Issues and Options Paper' Local Plan November 2024
- Evidence for action CPC011: The May 2025 Member Briefing
- Evidence for action CPC012: An independent review of the major project at Hinchingsbrooke Park identified lessons learnt.
- Evidence for action CPC013: Presentation to Leadership and Service Managers early 2025, with service plans submissions completed in March 2025
- Evidence for actions CPC014 to CPC019: Employment Committee 25 Feb 2025 item 6 Workforce Strategy Update
- Evidence for action CPC024: Overview and Scrutiny process map for how topics are requested, considered and decided upon for future work programmes.
- Evidence for action CPC025: Cabinet Away Day Briefing 2025 Service Planning

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