

Ray Harding
Chief Executive
Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Kings Court
Chapel Street
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22 April 2014

Dear Ray

**Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Corporate Peer Challenge – 4th-6th February 2014**

On behalf of the peer team, I would like to say what a pleasure and privilege it was to be invited into the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (KLWN) to deliver the recent corporate peer challenge as part of the LGA offer to support sector led improvement.

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge at KLWN were:

- Colin Carmichael – Chief Executive, Canterbury City Council
- Cllr Martin Veal – Vice Chairman, Bath and North East Somerset Council
- Karen Edwards – Head of Strategy and Communications, Rushmoor Borough Council
- Dr Andrew Brown – Planning and Conservation Director, South East, English Heritage
- Jonathan Trubshaw – Peer Challenge Manager

Scope and focus of the peer challenge

You asked the peer team to provide an external 'health-check' of the organisation by considering the core components looked at by all corporate peer challenges:

1. Understanding of the local context and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and has it established a clear set of priorities?

2. Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
3. Political and managerial leadership: Does the council have effective political and managerial leadership and is it a constructive partnership?
4. Governance and decision-making: Are effective governance and decision-making arrangements in place to respond to key challenges and manage change, transformation and disinvestment?
5. Organisational capacity: Are organisational capacity and resources focused in the right areas in order to deliver the agreed priorities?

Within this framework you asked us to comment on the on-going fitness for purpose and longer term sustainability of the organisation. Additionally you asked the team to consider how the council can effectively use King's Lynn's tourism, arts, culture and heritage. We have endeavoured to do this.

The peer challenge process

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement-focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus. 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 for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent 3 days onsite at KLWN, during which they:

- Spoke to more than 70 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders.
- Gathered information and views from more than 25 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading.
- Collectively spent more than 240 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 6 weeks in KLWN.

This letter provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit (4th-6th February 2014). In presenting feedback to you, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

Summary of feedback: overall observations and messages

There is strong political and managerial leadership at KLWN, with mutual respect between political leadership and officers. The senior leadership believes the Council has a clear view of its identity and ambitions, as do external partners. All the staff that we met are proud of their Council's ambitions and there was a positive 'can-do' delivery culture. Plans to improve local wage levels, educational attainment and health are ambitious and demonstrate the council's vision for the borough. There is an emphasis on staff development and the Council has adopted a "*growing our own*" approach to gaining the skills required. The Council is prepared to be innovative, attempting a variety of projects and accepting the risk that some of these will fail. The ability to deliver has been maintained despite a reduction in headcount of 90, two years ago.

The Council has a clear understanding of its current financial situation with a medium-term financial plan that provides for balanced budgets. There is an awareness of forthcoming deficits and plans are in place with work underway to identify reductions in costs to meet target savings. Historically the Council has a good track record of managing its overall financial position. The financial reserves are healthy and these offer the Council options when considering its future plans.

King's Lynn has a fabulous heritage offer with unique buildings, a character waterfront and open public spaces. You work well with partners to secure external funding and have demonstrable success in undertaking large scale projects, including the Tuesday Market. You have clear ambitions to improve the awareness of your heritage assets through projects that include the Town Hall's transformation, drawing visitors beyond the High Street shops.

The Council now needs to have robust conversations about alternative, future business models and longer-term financial considerations. Scrutiny was regarded as ineffective and more robust challenge needs to be undertaken to ensure new ideas are thoroughly tested and fit within the council's strategic aims. Increasing the involvement of the Policy Development Panels before Cabinet decisions are made and in reviewing the impact of decisions taken could help with this. To ensure that the scrutiny process as a whole is effective and robust you should consider a wide ranging review of scrutiny arrangements, undertaken with external, sector based support. Elected members and staff appear to be enthusiastic and committed to working for KLWN, although communication and understanding of the council's strategic goals could be clearer and the corporate strategy post 2014/15 needs to be plainly stated and worked on earlier.

The strategy for dealing with budget deficits seems evolutionary rather than radical. The Council now needs to be clearer about its financial plans for 2017/18 onwards and whether evolution will deliver. The Council may find it beneficial to

state clearly its ambitions in one place, focus efforts on securing projects and funding that deliver these and communicate this so that it is understood by staff, partners and residents. The Council considers that it has poor political relationships with Norfolk County Council (NCC) and these need to be addressed. It is recognised that this is not a one-way process. The Council takes a lead on significant and high profile projects which would traditionally be led by other public agencies such as the Improving Attainment initiative with local schools. Such projects are not 'taken on' as a consequence of the poor political relations but due to the Borough Council's determination to respond to the needs of its community and local economy. This approach has been effective in stimulating a positive response from County.

We were concerned you may be 'held hostage by your heritage', in that preservation is the primary concern and the contribution the buildings might make to the local economy and the Council's broader objectives appears to be considered as a secondary issue. We think you need to be clearer about King's Lynn's 'brand' and this then needs to be marketed in a coherent way: for local people, to attract tourists and to attract businesses. To do this the heritage offer needs both better integration with the tourism and cultural offers and promotion to the sorts of businesses whose brand values would fit well. At present there is a lack of capacity to deliver the broader regeneration and cultural aims. Consideration needs to be given to the resources available and the possible appointment of additional specialist staff, appropriately skilled so that the heritage plays its part in the borough's overall offer.

Summary of feedback: current performance, ability and capacity to deliver future ambitions

Understanding of local context and priority setting

We encountered a council with a strong identity, and one which is clear about its ambitions for King's Lynn and the surrounding area. We were impressed by the Council's willingness to tackle issues which might be seen as outside of its remit, such as addressing low educational attainment and poor transport infrastructure. The Council is aware of the borough's low ranking academically in the context of Norfolk as a whole and is working with partners, including the local Further Education College, to provide residents with the skills that potential business investors will require. Partners also identified difficulty in attracting key workers and people with higher level skills to the area, despite the high quality of life. We think this challenge needs to be addressed alongside the work on the King's Lynn 'brand' so that the heritage offer supports the broader economic growth that is necessary for the area to thrive.

The Council has clearly developed a good understanding of the processes for identifying and bidding for external funding to deliver (particularly heritage related) projects. Partnership working and local networks are very strong and these are used effectively to deliver regeneration projects such as the Tuesday Market. There is a good record of success in terms of delivering key projects, including for example: the Walks, Red Mount Chapel and the Hanse House and this expertise is also being used on other projects including the Town Hall regeneration. However, these are by their very nature focused on specific projects and seem to lack a clearly expressed and commonly understood overarching strategy and long-term focus that can easily be explained to residents, visitors and potential business investors.

It was evident that there is a wide spread acceptance, from the Council and partners, of the priority given to heritage. The issue for the Council is how to make best use of the historic part of King's Lynn and the waterfront area. The priority for the heritage area needs to be about usage and bringing people to that part of the town; broadening the focus from preservation with access directed at the informed and interested. You and your partners are optimistic that the funding bid for the Town Hall development will be successful and that this will encourage people into the southern part of the town. However, more needs to be done to promote the 'Discover King's Lynn' information, including information available through mobile technology, with more attractions within heritage buildings to progress customers along the 'Heritage Trail'. At present the High Street acts as a barrier; people stop at the shops and do not go on to discover the waterfront and heritage areas. Creative means could be used to help people 'way-find' through the shops to attractions nearer the river.

The Council has a positive approach to project working; identifying and creating regeneration projects. Members and senior managers saw these as being positive and there is a general trust from them that these projects are the right things to do. However, some staff we met suggested the identification of projects can on occasion be opportunistic, and that sometimes there is no clear and distributed understanding of why particular projects were being undertaken. The Council needs to be clearer why it undertakes projects, how individual projects have been decided on and how these projects support the council's strategic direction and key priorities.

There appears to be a high level of trust within the organisation and people we met during our visit were positive about working for the Council. However, there does seem to be a lack of understanding around strategic direction, with for example, some staff not being clear on the Council's current approach to shared services and the outcome of earlier discussions about having a joint management team with two neighbouring authorities. It was also suggested to us that insufficient information flows out of senior management team meetings to the rest of the organisation. The

recent revamp and re-launch of the Extended Management Team (EMT) structure, following an externally led review, should be built upon so that it links closely into the next round of corporate cross cutting projects, which are aimed at working more effectively and producing the next tranche of savings.

Financial planning and viability

The Council has managed its finances well to date, and there is a balanced budget proposed for 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 in the Financial Plan 2013-2017. However, the strategic business plan post 2014/15, when there will have been local elections, is not clear. There is an opportunity to work with the political parties ahead of those elections to understand and agree on the areas of consensus to enable longer term priority setting and planning. The approach taken in Canterbury, for example, is to develop indicative forward plans based on agreed themes, which are drawn from the regularly conducted Residents' Survey, maintaining a strategic direction for the council as a whole and enabling the new administration to then shape their particular areas of interest.

The Council is forward looking and is planning for the medium-term. The current approach is to secure a balanced budget for the next two years and to work on solutions for the third year. This approach seems to be serving you well, and savings made by reducing the headcount by 90 two years ago have meant that money has been paid into the general account reserve and financial reserves are healthy. This is a managed approach, paying money into reserves so that you cover identified shortfalls in income. You have forecast a £1.6m deficit in 2016/17 and there is a range of approaches underway to tackle this, including a planned drawing down from reserves, which have been built up to give this flexibility whilst the next round of savings are being implemented.

However, like most authorities there is currently no clear financial plan for 2017/18 and beyond. There are inevitably further very significant funding reductions to come, and many of the financial 'easy wins' will have been implemented. There has been a political decision to freeze the Council Tax and parking charges for a number of years in recognition of the residents' low economic base. It is estimated that these decisions are costing the council about £800,000 per annum. As a result there is an erosion of the tax base and which in turn may inhibit the Council's ability to deliver on its ambitions. With this in mind we suggest your 'evolution' approach to budgeting may not be sufficient to meet future levels of government grant reductions projected by some commentators. It may therefore be beneficial to reconsider (in addition to the range of income and cost saving projects already being undertaken) whether shared management/shared staffing arrangements, recently successfully adopted by districts such as Suffolk Coastal and Waveney, have merit.

The Council has considered and subsequently rejected sharing a management team with other authorities. Three out of five of the Council's own senior managers are approaching retirement and we posed the question about whether this presents an opportunity to be radical in your approach to considering alternative business models as part of ensuring long-term financial viability. The Council does share some services with other authorities, although the preferred approach is to export what you are good at and sell services to other authorities. You have taken significant steps to increase income through the provision of contracted services for other public authorities including; CCTV monitoring for Breckland, on street car park management for districts, off-street car parking management for North Norfolk. You have also expanded income through increased commercialisation of leisure facilities including the Corn Exchange and through driving housing and business growth (maximising New Homes Bonus and Business Rates retention), which have and will continue to make a significant contribution to offset reductions in Government grant. The challenge to you is to have sufficient capacity to build those services, with the potential to earn even more income, while other parts of the workforce may need to reduce.

Political and Managerial Leadership

The Leader is keen to promote inward investment and wage growth and together with key cabinet members gives a clear political lead to the Council. These members are also involved in overseeing the delivery of projects through a number of task groups. We noted that there were two separate task groups dealing with Heritage and Regeneration, which reinforced our view that King's Lynn's heritage offer was more focused on preservation than active usage to promote the town to wide variety of interests. A common view expressed to the team was that there was a "*Constant tension*" at cabinet level between a laissez-faire market led approach and Council led interventions that delivered a more strategic vision. This is potentially sending mixed messages across the Council and to external partners. . We suggest the Cabinet and management team should consider how it reconciles these 'tensions' and ensures there is a clear focus and agreement on key areas that could be taken forward.

The Leader takes a lead on the budget, ensuring that he is briefed to present the budget to Cabinet colleagues. Members now need to work closely with the management team to take a longer-term view of the financial situation and consider different ways of managing with less resources, this may include; working through different business models.

The chief executive takes an active lead on regeneration issues, which include the need to improve the transportation infrastructure, educational attainment and the

health and wellbeing of residents. His approach and ambition for KLWN are recognised and appreciated by members and staff alike. There is a cohesive management team that work together to both challenge and to help ensure projects are delivered. Staff we spoke to said that the management team could do more to ensure their processes and decisions are understood by staff and partners. Suggestions for building on existing good practice included: increasing face to face communications, particularly after management team meetings.

The dispute over the proposed location of an incinerator plant has evidently led to strained political relationships with NCC. As a consequence KLWN members need issues researched and addressed, which uses significant amounts of officer time and impacts on key projects with the county, such as recycling. With the incinerator issue now awaiting a decision from the Secretary of State and with the change of senior members and officers at the County Council, the Council seemingly has an opportunity to re-engage and re-establish effective political relationships and we encourage this to happen.

Governance and decision-making

There are good relationships between members and officers with member led priorities being supported and delivered by senior officers. However, members also had a project focused approach. In performing this role, it is important members maintain a focus on outcomes, and what projects will achieve against overarching strategic objectives, so as to prevent them becoming too involved in detail and process driven.

The Heritage portfolio holder was well briefed and was respected by her colleagues. Our view is that there is not currently an overall coherent offer linking heritage with tourism, the wider cultural offer of the town and marketing. The way in which task groups were structured did not appear to help with this lack of coherence and members now need to be bold in deciding on how to join up these areas and who is best placed to lead on the offer, which will also need to support regeneration and attract investment. We believe the regeneration offer for King's Lynn will benefit greatly from incorporating the approaches to tourism, increasing cultural activity on a regular basis, and promoting a family-led approach to the appreciation of the town's heritage offer.

The structure in which scrutiny operates would benefit from a review to identify approaches to reduce the scope for overtly political scrutiny. Processes should be in place for reappraisal or for 'non-political' challenge so as to aid the democratic process, develop proposals and engage members not involved at Cabinet level. To enable this to happen effectively the Chairman should be well trained and versed in their role so as to provide strong direction and guidance.

The Council has a good track record in undertaking project work, including large-scale regeneration work such as the Tuesday Market. To maintain high levels of success the Council needs to ensure that projects are allocated to the most appropriately skilled individuals/teams (including at a member level) and not be led by the expediency of having available personnel. Given the increasing financial challenge and shrinking resources, it will be increasingly important that when considering new projects to undertake the Council produces a transparent business case, including a clear identification of the opportunity costs, so that the benefits are seen by all concerned to be aligned to strategic priorities and appropriate resources are allocated to achieve these.

Our view is that the process for the project to revivify the Tuesday Market place was exemplary. Partners and stakeholders were engaged, their views demonstrably listened to and appropriate funding secured. The space now offered is clean, uncluttered and flexible, which allows the magnificent framing buildings to be displayed to their best advantage. A formal lessons-learned exercise might help to ensure the success of future projects.

Capacity

The external view, including from neighbouring authorities, is that the council is still, comparatively, well-resourced. The team heard from staff that they were concerned about their future ability to meet the ad hoc demands of members and senior managers, including research for projects that do not deliver on their ambitions. With some of the senior officer team heading into retirement; we encourage the Council to use the opportunity to consider radical, alternative business models, including what services you provide directly, selling even more high performing functions to other authorities and sharing management teams. The Council works well with partner organisations, particularly in managing the heritage offer and an increasingly collaborative approach may also help address any forthcoming internal capacity issues.

We noted that middle managers were strong on delivery but that they were increasingly worried about “*dropping balls*” and not delivering due to reduction in capacity. There is a perception amongst some staff that the Council undertakes too many projects managed by an insufficient number of people so that key knowledge was held by just one person. We felt that an improvement in internal communication would be helpful. The EMT seems to work for managers in sharing information between peers. More use could also be made of the EMT to ensure information also flows up and down the organisation and to use their enthusiasm and knowledge to contribute to the council’s future strategic development. EMT have now formed a series of cross service project teams to carry forward the next

phase of the Council's cost reduction programme including council wide rollout of 'lean' reviews, asset rationalisation, procurement rationalisation. This approach is designed to fully engage EMT in driving forward a major priority for the Council. It needs to be emphasized to middle managers that communication is an essential part of their day-job and not a desirable adjunct to it, with a commitment that time spent on communication was valued. This also includes communication with partners, which is particularly important given the high number of projects managed and supported by people from external organisations, including: Tuesday Market Place, Attainment, improving integrated health and social care, Town Hall, etc., could potentially increase.

There is an organisational culture of staff development, particularly for managers and the 'grow our own' approach is still highly regarded. We saw evidence that succession planning is in place for at least one of the retiring senior management team with opportunities provided to take on senior responsibilities and engage more with members. Taking a longer-term approach, beyond the scope of the medium-term financial plan, will require the council to undertake some enhanced workforce planning, including how services and could be delivered in partnership with a wider variety of organisations. You will want to ensure that you have the skills in place to deliver this, especially in presenting differing delivery and business models to members and partners. One external perspective is that the Council has "*More energy and capacity than other councils*". This could be built upon to further develop the Council's in-house offer that is then sold to other authorities

Senior politicians regard the officer workforce as being very engaged, supportive and capable. However, some of the officers we spoke with feel there is a culture where they have to say 'yes' and that members have a tendency to push to find a way around obstacles. Although this was generally seen as a positive approach, there may be a need for a greater sense of objectivity so that strategic objectives are considered above the short-term aims.

The chief executive's 'can do' approach is on occasions opportunistic and he accepts the risks that not all projects will come to fruition. The organisation's tolerance and acceptance that some projects will fail approach is recognised by the staff. However, this approach takes a lot of investment in staff time when capacity is seen as being stretched.

The resources for culture, arts and heritage are disparate, are not co-ordinated and do not provide a clear link to delivering on regeneration for the whole borough. Marketing and events promotion expertise needs to be developed so that the borough as a whole is promoted attracting visitors and businesses to the area. We suggest this is an area that needs review. The scope for this work will need to take into account how you recognise, work together with and build on the expertise held within partner organisations. We also posed the question about whether

organisational capacity may need to be increased to support your regeneration aspirations and ambitions.

Utilising King's Lynn's Heritage

The review team were asked to look in particular at how King's Lynn could use its heritage offer to greater effect.

The town's rich heritage seems disconnected from the town centre and there are few natural flows from the retail area to the historic river front. The events offer is strong and linked with specialist markets could be developed ensuring something was always happening to attract visitors both those on holiday and from KLWN and surrounding districts and provide opportunities for increased spend in the town particularly.

However, the temporary re-homing of the market to the High Street has meant that stalls are now in the heart of the town's shopping area and stall holders are reluctant to return to their tradition place. A suggestion from the team is that the Tuesday Market is also used to hold a variety of specialist markets and so reclaim its function, these could include:

- Farmers and market-garden food market - local produce only, local meat producers, cured meats, fish stalls, artisan produce, forest foods, etc. – to appeal to visitors
- European markets - French cheese, German preserved meats etc.
- Spring Flower/Plant show - market to sell flowers with prizes awarded, garden centre produce
- Christmas Market - trinkets, preserves, shawls, ironmongery, wood craft
- Wine Fair - tasting & selling weekend including fortified wines
- Restaurant 'Taste-it' event, ticket based with refund when visit restaurant
- Traditional building skills fairs
- Etc.

You may wish to consider appointing a market development officer (initially on a temporary basis) so that the council could test out the viability of this approach.

There is also an opportunity to develop the relationship with the Showman's guild and run steam events at different times of the year and discussions with the Dorset Steam Fair may help with this. These should be timed to coincide with other cultural events such as; vintage car rallies/time trials on airfields, balloon and kite fairs etc.

Tourism targeted at specialist groups is seen by staff as an area for growth, taking into account the better financial position of this demographic. This could provide an economic boost outside peak holiday times if well-coordinated between local hotels, restaurants and those partners who run the historical assets. However, there is not

a clear offer for families and other 'day' visitors and there are limited opportunities for these visitors to spend money in the historic areas and waterfront. King's Lynn could perhaps be positioned well as a 'holiday day out' combined with longer stays based around the broader attractions in the local area.

We suggested adopting a Destination Management approach, similar to that used in Margate and Canterbury for example, which would involve promoting all the assets of the borough in an integrated way. The approach behind the Destination Management Plan is to bring together all those organisations involved in marketing the 'place' in question and to work through questions of brand, message and audience to achieve a single, agreed approach which all can use in a consistent way.

In similar places such as Margate and Folkestone, fostering the creative businesses that are often a good fit with inspirational but vulnerable historic buildings has helped to resolve the tension between preservation and regeneration: find the right users and the buildings tend to look after themselves. Many cultural businesses are moving out of London to the lower rents of East Kent and South Hampshire, for example, and King's Lynn may be missing out on the same opportunity.

We noted there is no single manager responsible for coordinating, commissioning and promoting the borough's cultural offer. There are a number of significant, individual attractions, including the Corn Exchange venue, the King's Lynn festival and Festival Too and these should be promoted as a coherent offer, which also includes events from elsewhere in the borough. The role of bringing together a cultural programme will be key to success; a role which will require strategic vision, credibility and the people skills to combine the various strands of your cultural offer without losing the identities of the individual contributors. The Arts Development post was cut when you took steps to reduce headcount and the team would encourage a review of this decision, with a new post focusing on cultural development rather than just 'Arts'.

Key suggestions and ideas for consideration

The peer team developed some key recommendations for you to consider. These are based on what we saw, heard and read. Drawing on our experience of the sector and knowledge of local government improvement, the following are things we think will help you to make best use of your skills and experience, deliver some quick wins, and develop the strengths you will need to see your change agenda through:

1. Formalise and refocus the Destination Management Organisation – the council needs to bring together the passion of the interested partners from across the

borough to provide a single, coherent point of contact and leadership for promoting all the borough's attractions, particularly bringing together vision and activity in culture, heritage and tourism

2. Develop a Destination Management Plan as a device for agreement over branding and marketing – a single document that clearly shows how organisations, events and buildings comprise the unique offer of KLWN for residents, visitors and businesses
3. Create capacity to commission and coordinate cultural activities – be clear on what you need and if the expertise is not readily available do not shy away from bringing it in
4. Bring together delivery of events into a specialist, more commercially focused vehicle – currently events and activities are 'siloed' and these need to be commissioned in a more coherent way to bring events together
5. Work to develop an outline forward business plan for the period after May 2015, looking not only at the council's objectives but whether a more radical business model would be appropriate to deliver those objectives in what will be very difficult financial circumstances
6. Chief executive to communicate priorities more – build on current engagement activities with the staff, be seen and talk with staff even more, further use the EMT and be clearer about future capacity and skills issues that could result from these priorities
7. Strengthen internal communications – ensure the EMT understand that communication and engagement with staff is a vital element of their 'day job'
8. "*Bury the hatchet*" with Norfolk County Council – work with third party intermediaries (at a regional level) to engage with political colleagues in the County and move on from resource hungry disputes
9. Be creative about 'way-finding' - engage with the creative community in King's Lynn to produce cost-effective lighting, temporary art installations, etc. to draw people in little stages through to the heritage area of the town and waterfront
10. Quick wins on the waterfront: visitor friendly cafes, activities, remove cars – draw people down to the waterfront so that they overcome the barrier of the High Street
11. Use the Town Hall project as the catalyst for further progress – build on people's enthusiasm for project and use digital information that can be

accessed through mobile technology to create personalised tours, forth-coming events, audio information, etc.

We have attached a set of slides that summarise the above feedback. The slides are the ones used by the peer team to present its feedback at the end of the onsite visit. We will provide signposting to examples of the above and other information that will help inform your thinking.

Next steps

You will undoubtedly wish to reflect on these findings and suggestions made with your senior managerial and political leadership before determining how the council wishes to take things forward. As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of continued activity to support this. In the meantime we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with you and colleagues through the peer challenge to date. We will endeavour to signpost you to other sources of information and examples of practice and thinking.

I thought it helpful to provide contact details for Rachel Litherland who, as you know, is our Principal Adviser (London and East of England). Rachel can be contacted via email at rachel.litherland@local.gov.uk (or tel. 07795 076834). She is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Hopefully this provides you with a convenient route of access to the Local Government Association, its resources and any further support.

All of us connected with the peer challenge would like to wish you every success going forward. Once again, many thanks to you and your colleagues for inviting the peer challenge and to everyone involved for their participation.

Peer Challenge Manager
On behalf of the peer challenge team