



## London Borough of Enfield

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<b>Report Title</b>	Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge report 2023: Enfield Council
<b>Report to</b>	Council
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	14 June 2023
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Cllr Nesil Caliskan, Leader of the Council
<b>Executive Director</b>	Ian Davis, Chief Executive
<b>Report Author</b>	Shaun Rogan, Head of Corporate Strategy Shaun.Rogan@enfield.gov.uk
<b>Ward(s) affected</b>	All
<b>Key Decision Number</b>	Non-Key – report is for information
<b>Classification</b>	Part 1
<b>Reason for exemption</b>	Not applicable

### Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to share the findings made by the Local Government Association (LGA) arising from their conducting a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) review of Enfield Council between 25 November 2022 and 28 November with Full Council and the agreed response of the local authority with elected members for noting.
2. The final CPC report produced by the LGA was published on 19 May 2023. It provides an independent summary assessment of the current operational position and outlook for the local authority conducted by a team of expert peers from local government. The full report can be found at Appendix 1.
3. The LGA has made ten recommendations to Enfield Council in the report and the local authority Executive Management Team has agreed an action plan to respond to those recommendations. The action plan can be found at Appendix 2.

## Recommendations

- I. To note the contents of this report and its findings/recommendations as set out at Appendix 1.
- II. To note the agreed action plan of Enfield Council to meet recommendations made by the Local Government Association in its Corporate Peer Challenge report.
- III. To note that it is the intention of the Local Government Association Corporate Challenge peer assessment team to return to Enfield Council in October 2023 to conduct a 6-month progress review against recommendations made as set out in the action plan at Appendix 2.

## Background

4. In summer 2022, Enfield Council approached the Local Government Association to request a Corporate Peer Challenge be undertaken at the local authority. This would be the first peer challenge of this nature conducted at the council and would be an opportunity to receive an independent evaluation of how the local authority is performing by an independent peer team of local government experts.
5. The Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) seeks to assist local authorities by bringing together political and managerial leadership using member and officer peers.
6. A CPC is not a formal inspection - it is a supportive but challenging 'critical friend' approach to help local authorities to celebrate strengths and identify areas for improvement. It is suggested that every local authority invites a CPC every four years.
7. The peer team considered the following five themes which form the standard core components of all corporate peer challenges.
  - Local priorities and outcomes – Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities?
  - 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 challenge and scrutiny?
  - Financial planning and management – Do the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges?
  - Capacity for improvement – Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?
8. In addition to these themes, Enfield Council asked five specific questions:

- Given the transformational objectives in housing and regeneration – what are the peer team’s thoughts on how to configure our programmes given the current economic conditions and pressures?
  - We are transforming our planning service and welcomed the peer team’s views on how to enhance member-officer relationships.
  - Can the peer team provide their views on the approach to establishing and maintaining financial resilience?
  - How might LB Enfield increase positive outcomes for residents and improve customer experience?
  - How might LB Enfield gather and share data and information across the local authority to support evidence-based decision making?
9. Once the scope was agreed, in preparation for the peer challenge, a literature review was compiled by the local authority of relevant documentation and submitted to the LGA along with a newly drafted position statement set against the five main strategic areas covered by the peer challenge covers and a further ask from the local authority to consider specific areas of priority interest. These were customer service, digital and planning.
  10. The peer team visited the borough between 25 and 28 November 2022. During this time, they conducted extensive engagement activities with officers at the local authority, elected members and a selection of statutory and non-statutory partners. The intention of this ‘face to face’ work was to add a further layer of understanding in addition to the assessment and analysis of the local authority operations as provided by the literature review and other external assessment data/materials the team had gathered to help build a comprehensive picture of the council and its operations. The peer team also conducted site visits to flagship housing and regeneration sites in Upper Edmonton to see capital projects in development and delivery.
  11. Over the four-day period onsite at Enfield Council the peer team gathered information and views from more than forty meetings, including observing planning committee, in addition to further research and reading. It spoke to more than eighty people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.
  12. Following the visit, the LGA peer team compiled a draft report which was agreed with the local authority and signed off in its final iteration in 2023. Shortly thereafter, a final draft action plan setting out the council’s commitment to meet the ten recommendations for further improvement set out in the report were agreed by the Executive Management Team and the LGA.
  13. The final report and action plan were published on the council website on Friday 19 May 2023. This report is attached at Appendix 1.
  14. The Corporate Peer Challenge process will conclude with a progress review meeting with the LGA that should take place six months after the publication of the final report and action plan. The meeting will consider progress made against the ten recommendations set out in the report and action plan.

15. The date for the progress review meeting is currently being finalised for October 2023.

### **Relevance to Council Plans and Strategies**

16. The Corporate Peer Challenge report provides valuable independent evaluation of how the local authority is configured and sets out to deliver its strategic objectives for the residents of the borough. The commentary in the report and the recommendations made have relevance to all aspects of the present and new Council Plan as evidenced by the report and its recommendations.

### **Financial Implications**

17. The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) welcomes the findings and recommendations of the report. The report recognises that the Council actively manages its finances and has a well-developed understanding of its financial position and of likely future challenges. The CFO also notes the key recommendation of creating strong communications routes to deliver timely and crucial information regarding the Council's financial position. In relation to the current financial challenges, the report goes on to state that the Council will need to have the ability to make timely, risk-based, collective, and difficult decisions. This is a useful and timely reminder as the Council moves into the new financial year and the next round of Medium-Term Financial Planning.

18. The majority of the recommendations arising from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge report and action plan will be delivered within existing resources as part of day-to-day operations. However, it should be noted the restructures of Property and Planning (recommendations 9 and 10) will need to be delivered in line with savings within the Medium-Term Financial Plan as agreed in the 2023/24 Budget Report and will be covered in their own individual reports. Whilst recommendation 6 relates to the delivery of the Digital Services Strategy and the main body of the report refers to significant investment in digital, this has been subject to a separate Cabinet report 18th January 2023 "A Modern Council-Digital Business Portfolio Update (KD5573) and sets out the investment within the capital programme. These will be kept under review and monitored as part of the Council revenue and capital reporting process and updates provided to Cabinet in the regular Revenue and Capital Monitoring Reports.

### **Legal Implications**

19. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **Equalities Implications**

20. There are no additional equalities implications arising from the circulation of this report and the action plan set out in response which is for noting.

### **HR and Workforce Implications**

21. There are no additional HR and Workforce Implications arising from this report and the action plan set out in response which is for noting.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Implications**

22. There are no additional environmental and climate change implications arising from this report and the action plan set out in response which is for noting.

### **Public Health Implications**

23. There are no additional public health implications arising from this report and the action plan set out in response which is for noting.

### **Property Implications**

24. There are no additional property implications arising from this report and the action plan set out in response which is for noting.

### **Safeguarding Implications**

25. There are no additional safeguarding implications arising from this report and action plan set out in response which is for noting.

### **Crime and Disorder Implications**

26. There are no additional crime and disorder implications arising from this report and the action plan set out in response which is for noting.

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### **Appendices**

Appendix 1: The Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge report on Enfield Council 2022-2023.

Appendix 2: The Enfield Council action plan in response to the ten recommendations made by the Local Government Association in its report as at Appendix 1.

### **Background Papers**

None.