

# LGA Corporate Peer Challenge


Breckland Council

13 – 16 June 2022

Feedback report







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# 1. Executive summary

The peer team recognise the phenomenal physical and cultural change which has taken place at Breckland over the last two years. We were very much struck by the warm, genuine, and unified culture at Breckland Council, which is clearly at the start of an exciting period of change and transformation. As is later highlighted in the full report, this was evidenced by the modern new workspace at Elizabeth House, the agile working approach and the 'do different ethos' which came through in our conversations with officers and partners.

Breckland Council is one of the fastest growing districts in the country with a population of 140,000 and shift to increased urbanisation. The districts ambition is encapsulated in 'Future Breckland, thriving people & places' a project started in early 2021 which will provide an evidenced based approach to place shaping across the districts five market towns.

The project will support strengthening the districts position for obtaining external funding and attracting inward investment. The shared vision will support galvanising local partners around a common purpose to ensure effort and resources are focused on place shaping. This approach characterises the strong ambition and leadership from the council Leader in partnership with the Chief Executive. The Leader and Chief Executive are both trusted and respected by staff and partners providing a positive basis for driving this agenda forward and taking an increased focus in the wider region.

However, this approach is not unilateral and ambition and aspiration for place needs further embedding across the organisation, requiring more specialist resources, for example, programme and project capacity supported by wider member engagement.

The council has been through significant change during the past few years with additional challenges including supporting communities with the covid pandemic and more recently the ending of a ten-year strategic relationship with South Holland District Council. The decoupling from the partnership has been seen by staff and partners as positive with the transition managed sensitively ensuring the workforce risks were mitigated throughout and support to communities not adversely impacted. One notable outcome has been a greater focus on Breckland whilst achieving

increased management resilience, all factors that positively support the councils' priorities.

The councils covid pandemic response was excellent, ensuring communities were protected and supported during a significantly challenging and unprecedented time.

During the covid pandemic, the council took the opportunity and associated risks to refurbish their HQ building, Elizabeth House in Dereham. The refurbishment is significantly more than an office refresh. The design and space planning has successfully created a work environment that encourages collaboration and working together to support the council's priorities. There was an observable buzz and energy about the work environment. Staff are proud to work for the community and for Breckland which is captured in the council's progressive aspirations for work culture #Teambreckland.

The transition from the strategic partnership resulted in the recent appointments of a new Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and two Executive Directors. A team of Assistant Directors have been in post for just over twelve-months and there are still some transitional arrangements to work through as the organisation evolves and adjusts to best support the council's priorities.

The majority of staff and members were able to talk about the council's priorities. The Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Directors each have allocated leadership responsibilities for the council's priorities. Further embedding will support greater understanding, ensuring staff and member contributions are fully aligned and working towards achieving the council's required outcomes. The council's programme to support climate change 'Breckland 2035' could be making faster progress. There is a need for a stronger climate focus to ensure all related aspirations and desired outcomes are supported throughout the organisation in policy making and operations. Peers strongly suggest Breckland 2035 is a collective organisational responsibility beyond the current leadership and portfolio arrangements

The council is on a journey to operate from an evidence-based model. There are positive examples of data and analytics being used to develop policy and work programmes designed to deliver aspects of the council's priorities. The 'Inspiring Communities' programme is a good example of this. It has been well received and supported by the community and partners and was informed from the outset by data

and community needs.

The council is working towards making improvements to data and performance measures to ensure there is a robust provision of evidence to support the council's priorities. Performance measures have recently been reviewed to better align to evidence performance and outcomes against the council priorities, although further work is needed to ensure this is effective, an appropriate narrative is required to ensure there is effective governance and staff and members are held to account.

The council's delivery of extra temporary housing is excellent, however there is a need to go further to tackle the wider housing challenges. A flexible housing strategy aligned to the council's priorities, underpinned through planning would deliver better outcomes.

Viability of social housing has seen a reduction in planned outturn leading to a distinct lack of social housing in the system. The council could play a role in increasing social housing availability, one way of doing this could be through its joint venture company, Breckland Bridge although the numbers would not be considerable.

The current financial position is sound in the short-term, although future years will become more challenging with significant budget gaps to close. In previous years the council has used its excellent commercial acumen to generate income to balance the budget. Peers suggest a mix of more divergent strategies may be required to close the forecasted budget gaps and are pleased the emergent 'Evolve' programme will seek to address these challenges. The current and future financial challenges are not unilaterally recognised and are often seen through a historical perspective, an example of this is the council's approach and perspective on risk management in relation to financial borrowing which seems to be inconsistent with the scale of ambition.

There are some longstanding contracts coming to an end of the contractual period which should be subject to an options appraisal to determine in each case if an outsourced delivery model is the best outcome for cost efficiency, greater operational control and alignment to the council's priorities.

## 2. Key recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the council:

### 2.1. Recommendation 1

There are financial challenges ahead; it should be the collective responsibility of all staff and members to ensure financial targets are met.

### 2.2. Recommendation 2

Consider whether the council needs to raise finance through borrowing in order to meet council priorities.

### 2.3. Recommendation 3

Align housing operation, housing strategy and strategic planning to achieve the desired outcomes.

### 2.4. Recommendation 4

Consider how to mobilise all members around developing and delivering the councils priorities.

### 2.5. Recommendation 5

Breckland 2035 – shared ownership to deliver and fully integrate across the organisation, including democratic decision-making.

### 2.6. Recommendation 6

Continue to gather and analyse data to inform evidence-based decisions and policies.

### 2.7. Recommendation 7

Ensure all your performance measures align with and demonstrate achievement of your priorities.

### 2.8. Recommendation 8

Building on the good relationships of the Leader and Chief Exec externally, continue to develop the role Breckland plays in the wider region / economy.

## 2.9. Recommendation 9

Increase programme and project management capabilities to deliver your projects and priorities.

## 2.10. Recommendation 10

Explore the opportunities that will arise in advance of contracts ending.

# 3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

## 3.1. The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- Lead Peer - **Kevin Dicks**, Chief Executive, Bromsgrove & Redditch Councils
- Lead Member Peer – **Cllr Peter Fleming**, Leader, Sevenoaks Council
- Member Peer – **Cllr Darren Rodwell**, Leader, Barking & Dagenham
- Officer Peer - **Lisa Wills**, Community Safety Strategy and Partnership Manager, Portsmouth Council
- Officer Peer - **Chris Brook**, Director of Place and Enterprise, South Hams and West Devon Council
- LGA Peer Challenge Manager – **James Mehmed**
- LGA Advisor – **Aimee Wittams-Smith**



### 3.2. Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

1. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities?
2. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
3. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management** - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges?
5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

In addition to these questions, the council asked the peer team to provide feedback on its established 'Inspiring Communities' Programme. This programme was established in 2019 with the aim of reducing vulnerability within the district, either directly through the programme, improved partnership working, early intervention services and community funding. The council has committed £1 million of funding from reserves to support its delivery. After engaging with residents and partners the following four priorities have been identified to focus activities: -

1. Domestic abuse
2. Social isolation and loneliness
3. Mental health
4. County lines

The Council asked peers to look at: -

- Is the programme delivering its identified outcomes?
- What next, is there any learning from the peer's knowledge or experience that could shape the future direction of the programme?
- Make suggestions on how the council could fund the programme in the long term as it is currently funded for a fixed term period through reserves?

### **3.3. The peer challenge process**

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. 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 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 four days onsite at Breckland Council, during which they:

- Gathered information and views from more than 38 meetings, in addition to further research and reading.
- Spoke to more than 90 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members.

## 4. Feedback

### 4.1. Local priorities and outcomes

The council's priorities are detailed in the corporate plan and are designed to ensure people and local businesses can thrive. Local growth is set in balance with a strong commitment to influencing and delivering a greener future through the 'Breckland 2035' priority. Although the Breckland 2035 priority is aspirational and has positive senior leadership, the delivery would benefit from being embedded throughout the organisation to ensure decision-making is integral to all areas of the council from policy making through to operational delivery. A decision wheel approach or similar may be appropriate to elevate Breckland 2035 in the minds of decision makers

To ensure the ambition of Breckland 2035 is realised, the structure and delivery model would benefit from being reviewed. Aligning HR policies to incentivise electrical vehicle ownership is a noteworthy example of joining up policy whilst contributing to the achievement of the climate priority.

Throughout the corporate peer challenge process, staff and members were able to talk about the priorities and make the connection with their work. Further communication and support will help to fully embed them and ensure all effort is focussed on the shared ambition of the council. Council priorities were less understood outside the organisation amongst the community with some external support not recognised as being delivered by the council. Increased communication may help the community to understand the council's priorities and how projects and delivery link up with the ambition for place.

The council needs to be clearer on the vision for place and embed and communicate this widely to increase the understanding locally and ensure the community and partnership capacity is closely aligned.

There was a positive link between data and evidence when informing policy making or underpinning the objectives of a project, for example, the 'Inspiring Communities' programme. The council aspires to be an evidence-based organisation and is on a journey to improve local data and information to create insight to inform future work priorities.

Further investment is required to ensure the provision of evidence and insight is

congruent with the future aspirations for place and that priorities are informed by current and local data that look towards the future and shape decision-making. The council has made excellent use of internal capability by seeking volunteers to join a self-selecting group referred to as the 'Geek Squad' to discuss how to improve data provision, as well as contacting other councils to learn from their experience.

A positive example is the current housing needs assessment which will support informing the future housing and planning strategies.

The performance management framework has been recently reviewed with revised performance metrics and is still work in progress. Peers highlighted the need to ensure the performance metrics are complimented by appropriate narrative that explains further detail and provides a richer context to the performance outcomes. This will enable a more detailed follow up to allow learning to be extracted for future improvement. There should be an explicit link between the metrics collected and the council priorities, ensuring the performance management system provides the most relevant information to inform decision-making and planning.

The council's medium term financial strategy (MTFS) and forward financial planning also needs to be aligned to the priorities and ambition, ensuring there is a positive flow of investment and available resources to achieve the desired outcomes. This may require more divergent thinking around borrowing and risk taking which has not been a requirement in the past, due to projects being funded by alternative income sources.

The councils covid pandemic response was excellent, ensuring communities were protected and supported during a significantly challenging and unprecedented time. As a result of the swift response peers were given many examples of how teams and individuals were able to work effectively across organisational structures and by embracing technology to work remotely. The current working arrangements are positively supported by a redesigned workspace, ensuring the experienced collaboration and team working is further built on to support the council's priorities. Peers were impressed by the leadership and risk exercised to invest in the physical work environment whilst the future views on work practises and working out the 'new normal' were emergent and open to debate.

Upon peers arriving at Elizabeth House, Dereham (Council HQ) there was an explicit

reference to diversity and inclusion through the physical display of posters, bunting and images supporting the 'Norwich Pride' month. Breckland is an official supporter of Norwich Pride month helping to raise awareness of LGBT+ issues in the region.

The council has events and programmes planned throughout the year to raise awareness within the workplace and wider community of the district as being fully inclusive to everyone and the council as a welcoming employer for all staff. Peers commended the senior management team on their equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) working group that will further embed equality in the workplace and with communities through operational delivery. Peers were also pleased to hear policies will be reviewed and a positive push on collecting and using EDI data.

#### **4.2. Organisational and place leadership**

Throughout the many peer challenge meetings and focus groups there was a consistent message that the council has strong collaborative leadership from the Leader of the council and the Chief Executive, both are trusted and respected by partners.

Partners speak positively about their engagement with the council and how working together has and continues to provide effective support to communities, for example the [Daisy Project](#), the [Charles Burrell Centre](#) and the [Riverside Leisure Complex](#).

Peers found that there was often minimal recognition from the community for projects the council has supported or facilitated. It may be the intention to work quietly behind the scenes to support partners fronting initiatives and delivery, however, peers suggest there is benefit in developing a corporate communication plan aligned to the corporate priorities.

The future of Breckland is encapsulated in one of the council's priorities 'Future Breckland – Thriving People and Places. The strategy for place will be underpinned and informed by a robust evidence base informing needs and aspiration that will be captured in a shared vision. The strategy will have a focus on the five market towns detailing projects that deliver outcomes for each location and collectively for the Breckland district. Peers were impressed with the level of engagement with 20,000 people consulted so far in the development of place-based visions.

Peers recommend building on the good relationships of the Leader and Chief

Executive externally and continue to further develop the role Breckland plays in the wider region and economy, for example infrastructure and links with neighbouring Cambridgeshire and the tech corridor.

Peers understand that a recent residents survey has been conducted with the responses and analytics currently being prepared. The refreshed survey will provide the opportunity to cross-check against the current plans ensuring the council's priorities are informed in an iterative way, ensuring latest community need can be considered and inform policy making.

The end of the ten-year strategic partnership with South Holland District Council concluded over a year ago. Reference to the 'de-coupling' from staff, members and partners is consistently positive. The de-coupling has delivered notable increased management capacity and a refreshed and stronger focus on Breckland as a place. Staff and partners feel that the sole focus on Breckland has increased management resilience, as well as feedback that wellbeing is likely to have been improved.

Staff referred to the de-coupling being managed very sensitively and praised management for handling the transition with respect and dignity. Peers saw this as positive and consistent with the culture the council is seeking to nurture as part of the #Teambreckland way of working and behaving.

Peers were informed that cabinet and senior management relationships are good and, in most cases, the agile working arrangements have not been a barrier to good communications and collaborative working.

Cabinet is collegiate and in early stages of team development following a reallocation of roles and portfolios. Council priorities are allocated to each cabinet member for leadership. Resilience would be improved if the collective cabinet universally shared ownership for outcomes e.g. every cabinet member owns Breckland 2035. Peers recognise the cabinet is in early stages of development and would expect increased collaboration and shared ownership over time and note this dynamic as a helpful observation.

### 4.3. Governance and culture

The relationships and working practices between officers and members were described as good and effective. Staff spoke passionately about a culture of kindness. People care about each other and staff feel supported, trusted, valued and empowered in their roles. Staff specifically highlight how well they were supported through the pandemic.

Peers were given multiple examples where the individual requirements from staff dealing with significantly personal challenges have been carefully considered with supportive interventions to enable them to continue at work and be productive whilst balancing the health and wellbeing implications. #Teambreckland cannot always be described fluently by staff and members, however the behaviours and stories shared with peers clearly demonstrated the sentiment and willingness to create a work culture that allows staff to bring their whole selves to work and respect diversity.

The design of the Headquarters office space has acted as a catalyst for improved working practices and stimulus for creating a new work culture and identity for the council. Although many staff benefit from the new working environment some remain in the Thetford Office (Breckland House) and therefore do not experience the new working arrangements. Staff based at Breckland House refer to themselves as being based a long way from the HQ building. Peers were impressed with the design of the different work spaces and see and feel the notable 'buzz' around the building and see how the different zones were being used from team collaboration, quiet independent working, using touch down bench working and enjoying the social space for downtime over lunch.

The council is open in sharing their learning and experiences within the sector by showcasing the work environment to multiple councils. Peers saw this as positive support to sector led improvement.

Staff and managers are clearly proud of their work environment and see it as their responsibility to drive further development and ensure staff have what they need to be most effective in their roles. Peers were made aware of some plans to change the work environment, based on staff engagement and feedback. A further example of the culture of empowerment and #Teambreckland, ensuring staff are supported to deliver the councils priorities.



Culture development will be an iterative process and will also be underpinned by some of the policy, custom and practice exercised within the organisation. New more unconventional policies will reinforce change and support the development of organisational culture. Some historic views or practices may be holding the council back, serving as a corporate memory, for example there was repetitive reference to risk and financial borrowing which may have served you well for the past, however with fast changing external factors and with a high desire for place shaping through 'Future Breckland' the approach to risk management and borrowing will need reviewing to ensure this is congruent with your direction of travel.

More formal arrangements are in place for staff engagement through a staff forum, this was seen as effective and working well as the council continues with its transformation and organisational development. The forum serves as a consulting body, sounding board for policy development, testing concepts and planning social events.

Peers were given many examples of how career development has been positively achieved through access to learning and development and involvement in projects and live work experiences. The opportunity to grow skills and experience was viewed as an important factor in staff engagement and the council was seen to be doing this well. The commitment to learning and development is further evidenced by the implementation of a new 'General Purposes Committee' which has oversight of all member and staff development.

As the council works towards achieving the council priorities, peers feel it would be prudent for all members, including the opposition to have a stronger understanding of the roles and responsibilities within their communities to ensure improved engagement and in line with how the council wishes to operate.

Communication with all members is critical to ensure there is a focus and clarity around priorities. A clearly understood and repeated narrative should be considered to allow all members to understand the current challenges and context for decision making. Finding new ways to communicate with members will support with engagement and drive an increased shared ownership e.g. Breckland 2035 and shared responsibility for the council's financial transformation 'Evolve'.

The Governance and Audit Committee provides robust oversight on risk and has a



forward programme running into 2023. The risk appetite is heavily influenced by a historic narrative and past experiences which needs challenging to ensure there is more congruency with the council's direction of travel and ambition. The move towards social value in balance with commercial returns runs through to the committee and is consistent with the direction of the council.

Businesses indicated that the current planning application process could be improved, citing the amount of time taken to review applications. Peers suggest further feedback from the business community may provide the opportunity for related process improvements. It is recognised that some of the challenges noted as part of the planning process are not just local to Breckland, they are national issues.

#### **4.4. Financial planning and management**

The council's current financial position is sound and is well managed. A balanced budget for 2022/23 was approved by full council in February 2022. General fund reserves are maintained above the minimum level at £2.5m. The financial position has been positively supported by excellent commercial acumen and a historic track record of delivery to generate revenue income, this in turn has led to very low levels of council tax income. There is also a notable shift from a full focus on commercial return to being balanced with social return.

Over the duration of the current medium term strategic financial plan there are clear budget gaps that need closing with savings or income generation or a combination of both. £0.5m of savings are required this year, with further savings beyond the next two-years as documented in the council's budget setting report 2022-23. The view from managers confirms the easier and less risky savings options have already been taken, leaving more complex decisions to be taken, for example, charging for services that are currently funded to off-set budget gaps with necessary new income.

External financial pressures are evolving and changing at pace providing additional challenge to ensure those risks are managed, for example peers were informed that the cost pressure of inflation currently stands at circa £200k and increasing and contractual cost of living increases for staff pay will need to be funded whilst national negotiations are still live (circa £180k at 2%).

The current custom and practice and shared views around financial borrowing

appears to be incongruous with the scale of ambition. There was a consistent sense of pride that the council does not have any financial borrowing and very low levels of council tax and historic investments may be adversely impacting approaches to risk taking. Given the scale of ambition and focus on the five market towns, discussing the attributes such as risk appetite and approach to financing associated programmes and projects is advised to ensure those options are explored now in readiness to speed up decision-making and not adversely impact delivery.

The council's joint venture with the 'Land Group' referred to as 'Breckland Bridge' is well placed with a pipeline of projects which could reduce the costs associated with temporary accommodation as a vehicle for directly tackling social housing issues. A review of governance arrangements is advised to ensure the joint venture continues to be fully aligned to the council's priorities and outcomes with robust oversight and challenge, ensuring associated financial benefits are realised.

The emerging housing strategy needs to be realised and funded and should be seen in the round, for example, in context to accessing investment funding, reducing temporary housing costs and the MTFS budget gaps.

The 'Inspiring Communities' programme is embedded with the ability to extend through third sector partners. The ongoing financial sustainability will be achieved through the partnership arrangements, having been initiated through council investment.

The financial challenges and solutions need to be owned collectively by all officers and members. The financial challenges were inconsistently understood, although peers understand the plans for closing the financial gaps are emergent and in early stages of development. All staff and members need to be fully aware of the financial context, this will support a collective ownership and drive diversity and creativity in achieving the outcomes.

The scheduled financial awareness training for non-finance officers will support greater ownership and understanding throughout the council.

#### 4.5. Capacity for improvement

The transition from the strategic partnership with South Holland is seen as extremely positive and impactful with benefits throughout the council and has driven a more focused and stronger emphasis on place. Staff describe working for the same goal and the organisation being more coherent. The structure feels more simplified with a stronger focus on Breckland, offering more breadth and depth.


#Teambreckland lives throughout the organisation. Staff are talking and living #Teambreckland in their work behaviours. The Leader, Chief Executive and senior team have been exemplar in role modelling new behaviours. The culture is different and continues to evolve driven by high levels of empowerment, flexibility and being treated as individuals.

The council is experiencing the same national trends concerning recruitment challenges, although the new work environment, organisational culture, progressive equality, diversity and inclusion is positively attracting candidates to apply for vacant roles. Traditional approaches to attracting candidates have been replaced with more uplifting and inspiring personal recruitment videos and in person building tours which showcase the council and maximise the refreshed work environment. Peers were impressed with the creativity and innovative approaches being taken and could see how empowerment is driving the workforce to think outside the box to overcome issues.

The positive investment in the headquarters office environment is exemplary and is providing tangible return on investment with the workforce, morale, organisational culture, collaboration and recruitment.

The council has invested in 10 apprentices, ensuring there is a good internal supply of skills and capacity contributing to the workforce plan. A new CMT programme will support leadership with acquiring skills in leadership, coaching, mentoring, finance, governance and political awareness.

There is a drive for efficiency through reviewing low level transactional activities to automate and to free up resource and capacity for value added work. Managers can bid for investment to support processes improvement projects. Peers were given examples of plans to automate payments and use chat bots with staff central to driving quality outcomes.



Managers seek early engagement with HR on service changes and the relationship with Unison at local and regional level is positive. The council are evolving their work practices and there is a risk this will outpace or be limited by national terms and conditions. Members receive weekly reports on service reviews and policy changes providing oversight and for awareness.

The councils 'Inspiring Communities' programme and external relationships are a springboard for positive change in the community. The convening role played by the council has enabled partners to take forward their respective areas to protect and support the community.

The council has strong place-based relationships and should pivot towards an increased outward focus and explore the opportunities outside of the Breckland district further within Norfolk and neighbouring geography, for example Cambridgeshire's tech corridor.

Investment is required in a place strategy with strong emphasis on housing and business growth opportunities. The council should consider how it can maximise the opportunity to use strategic planning levers to deliver the council's priorities.

There is an opportunity to strengthen alignment between the housing functions to ensure the housing system benefits from increased social housing output. The council should review bringing housing operations, housing strategy and strategic planning together to support improved joined up working and development of shared performance objectives. The best way to embed positive strategic outcomes through development management should also be considered, when the contract with Capita comes up for renewal. .

Increased capacity should be explored through extending the partner base providing more community insight and a broader platform for delivery.

#### 4.6. Inspiring Communities

The council were keen to support the most vulnerable within the district and by facilitating a conversation with partners whilst investing £1m focused on protecting and supporting the community with a social return. From the outset, the council was comfortable that not all benefits would directly be attributed the council for example prevention could influence reduction in demand for other partners in the system, saving money and delivering better health outcomes.

The 'Inspiring Communities' programme is understood and well supported internally and externally with partners and the community.

Inspiring Communities has realised its ambition to the extent that the programme seems to be self-sustaining. The council's investment is delivering considerable social value and provides the opportunity for long-term benefits to health and social care with cost avoidance within the broader health system.

The model was seen as positive by peers, with upfront start-up investment now sustained by voluntary and community resources. Opportunities for further funding, should they be needed, could be drawn down through UKSPF funding, if that was deemed a priority.

The [Charles Burrell Centre](#) serves as a hub to many supportive community services and also hosts the districts first social supermarket. Peers were impressed with the concept, designed to support low-income households with purchasing discounted food and household items with dignity and respect. This is the same model applied to the rural food bus, ensuring food finds its way to those in need living within more rural settings.

Although the performance metrics and evidence base for Inspiring Communities is still largely work-in-progress, there is evidence of the success through the domestic abuse support and social prescribing activity which alongside the anecdotal evidence suggests the programme is delivering. Current performance measures require further development to determine successful delivery.

The future of the programme could be improved through the provision of data from partners. More local and detailed data may contribute towards more focused support and creating insight that informs planning and where best to target resource and interventions.

Building on the positive relationship with the CCG would be helpful to increase the understanding and opportunities the Inspiring Communities model could provide to further prevention projects.

The council should reflect on the next steps for the model, exploring how other health inequalities can be supported. Working with the CCG and the community should inform the residents survey outcomes and contribute towards further planning and targeted activity.

## 5. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings. Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the peer challenge. The CPC process includes a six-month check-in session, which provides space for the council's senior leadership to update peers on its progress against the action plan and discuss next steps.

In the meantime, Rachel Litherland, Principal Adviser (East of England Region) is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Rachel is available to discuss any further support the council requires.

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