



## **North Devon Council**

Report Date:

Topic: Corporate Peer Challenge

Report by: Chief Executive

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Corporate Peer Challenges (Peer Reviews) are undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA) and are offered to every local authority. They are carried out by a team made up of councillors and officers from other authorities and the LGA and will help assess how a council is operating, either generally or in relation to specific issues.
- 1.2 A Peer Review of North Devon Council was undertaken in October 2019 with a report issued in February 2020.
- 1.3 The Peer Review team was asked to revisit the Council in September/October 2021 in order to refresh the report that was issued and this report presents the results of both reviews

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That Council note the two reports, instruct officers to publish the same, and make any recommendations based on the contents.

### **3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1. To finalise the Peer Review process

### **4. REPORT**

- 4.1 Following the issue of the original Peer Review report in February 2020, an informal meeting of Council was held to present its findings with the intention of presenting the report to a formal Council meeting. Unfortunately, the first lockdown then occurred and Council meetings were suspended and resources and attention were diverted elsewhere.
- 4.2 When the issue was revisited, it was felt, after consultation with the LGA and the Leader, that it would make more sense to revisit the review and ask the Peer Review team to refresh the original report based on the position of the Council now.
- 4.3 The Peer Review team therefore revisited the Council in October 2021 and has now issued a final report.
- 4.4 Both the original report from February 2020 and the revised report are attached and the intention is to publish both with an explanation as to why publication did not take place in February 2020.
- 4.5 The 2021 Peer review focussed on 3 main themes; Organisational Leadership and Capacity, Strategic and Financial Planning and Partnership

Working. It is very pleasing that the Peer Review team recognised the considerable steps that the council has taken to change the way in which it works and also recognised that the council had already actioned and implemented many of the recommendations within the first review report.

4.6 In particular, they noted the successful steps taken to further the commercialisation agenda, create senior capacity, embed a behaviours framework and to raise the profile and influence of the council on a regional and national footing.

4.7 The report does however identify some challenges that we still need to overcome. Some main points include ensuring that the new Heads of Service have the capacity to deliver the challenging objectives, engaging all councillors in reviewing the corporate priorities and enhancing the partnership working with neighbouring councils.

4.8 At the time of writing this report, a councillor workshop is due to be held to discuss the council's priorities and the programmes that will be introduced to deliver those priorities. Included within those discussions will be an outline of the additional capacity needed in order to deliver the priorities and satisfy the council's ambitions.

4.9 The Peer Review process has been a very positive one for the council. It has helped us focus on particular issues to address but equally important is how it has highlighted the many areas of good practice and work undertaken by the council and how we need to do more to publicise this and celebrate our achievements.

4.10 Both reports will be publicised through the council's website and social media channels.

## 5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1. There are no implications from this report

## 6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

6.1. (Please detail if there are/are not any equalities implications anticipated as a result of this report. If so, please complete the Equality Impact Assessment Summary form available on Insite and email to the Corporate and Community Services Team at [equality@northdevon.gov.uk](mailto:equality@northdevon.gov.uk)).

6.2. There are no equality implications from this report.

## 7. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

7.1. Article 4.5.15 provides that Full Council may take decisions where the function is not delegated to another committee which is the case here.



## 8. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

8.1. This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1. The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:  
(The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

9.2. Peer review reports

## 10. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

10.1. The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers: Leader and SMT