

JOINT STAFF CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

22 April 2026

*PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT

TITLE OF INFORMATION NOTE: LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE FOLLOW-UP

INFORMATION NOTE OF THE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This information note sets out the details of the various reports relating to the Corporate Peer Challenge and the follow-up. It then details the contents of the follow-up report that relate to HR matters, including capacity, Leadership Team, People Strategy, Learning and Development, and communicating with staff.

2. STEPS TO DATE

- 2.1 As per the request at the last meeting, to update the Joint Staff Consultative Committee on the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge follow-up, specifically those matters of most relevance to the Committee.

3. INFORMATION TO NOTE

- 3.1 The background paper (Cabinet report from 17 February 2026) sets out that the Council had an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2024. This was followed by a report which was considered by Cabinet in January 2025. In turn this was followed by an action plan that was approved by Cabinet in March 2024. The peer team carried out a return visit in December 2025. This resulted in a follow-up report which was attached to the Cabinet report (February 2026).
- 3.2 The Peer Challenge (initial visit and follow-up) covered a wide range of Council service areas and projects. The findings and comments from the follow-up report that are most relevant to this Committee (i.e. HR related matters) are detailed below.
- 3.3 **Capacity (pages 6 and 7 of the follow-up report).** The peers recognised what the Council had achieved, both in terms of North Herts specific projects and the contribution to the early work on Local Government reorganisation (LGR). The peers warned about trying to maintain the same pace of delivery and the need to avoid adverse impacts on staff. They recommended the need to revisit project prioritisation or to identify additional resources/ funding.
- 3.4 The capacity to deliver projects was considered as part of the budget setting process for 2026/27. However, the extent of the LGR work that will be required is a risk, which is reflected in the Council Delivery Plan. Across 2026/27 and 2027/28, £2m of funding has been allocated into a specific reserve for costs of LGR. This includes potential capacity for backfilling to help maintain service and project delivery.
- 3.5 **Leadership Team (pages 7 and 8).** The peers noted the permanent implementation of the 7th Director role, and the alignment of Executive Member and Director responsibilities. They also highlighted that following two retirements, both replacement

Director posts had been filled by internal candidates. This reflects how the Council is growing its own talent, and is hopefully motivating for other employees who want to progress their career at North Herts.

- 3.6 **People Strategy (page 8)**. The peers heard about our work on developing a people strategy for the transition period through LGR. This was discussed at Leadership Team in February and key themes were agreed, which are retain and attract, develop and engage, and inclusion and wellbeing. This work will also include relaunching the organisation values to include an easily accessible description of what they mean, a new applicant tracking system for recruitment, continued work on retention including why our staff want to work for us and supporting employee wellbeing.
- 3.7 **Learning and Development (page 8)**. We have committed to making learning and development opportunities available to staff to put them in the best place in advance of LGR. We will also continue to offer apprenticeship and graduate placements.
- 3.8 **Communicating with staff (page 8)**. All the meetings that the peers had discussed the increased and improved communications and engagement with staff. This included the staff conferences that were held in September which were led by the Chief Executive and Leader. They also heard how staff were helping to shape the next iterations of these conferences. The meetings also covered the regular updates from the Chief Executive on LGR and that Directors are also taking turns in providing regular communications to all staff (e.g. through online and in person staff briefings). The peers noted the progress that had been made but also reflected that some staff would still want more.

4. **NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 The Peer Challenge follow-up was positive about the actions that had been taken since the first visit. The section above details that there is ongoing work. The Committee can comment on this and provide further comments and recommendations.

5. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 5.1 Cabinet report on the Peer Challenge follow-up (17th February 2026). See minute 24. <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=3792&Ver=4>

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