

**NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY**

**REPORT TITLE:** PEER REVIEW OF THE AUTHORITY'S GOVERNANCE

**REPORT OF:** CLERK

**FOR SUBMISSION TO:** AUTHORITY MEETING

**DATE:** 31 OCTOBER 2022

**SUMMARY OF REPORT:**

This report outlines plans for the Authority to benefit from a corporate peer challenge undertaken in association with the Local Government Association.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Authority is recommended to:

- A. Comment on and approve the terms of reference and plan for the review
- B. Note that recommendations from the review and follow-up action will be reported at future meetings.



**SIGNED:** ....

**Clerk**

**DATE:** 19 October 2022

.....

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. It is good practice for organisations from time to time to undergo peer reviews. This is so that they can gain the benefit of an external perspective and apply lessons taking account of experience and successes elsewhere.
- 1.2. The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national membership organisation for local authorities. It is a cross-party body which works on behalf of councils to support, promote and improve local government. One way in which the LGA acts to support local government is by offering a corporate peer challenge (CPC) service. A CPC for an authority brings together political and managerial leadership – involving councillors and officers from outside the organisation – to provide robust, strategic and credible challenge and support to that authority. The LGA also notes that CPCs enhance the capacity of the local authority sector overall and help to avoid insularity within councils. The CPC service has been taken up by many local authorities. Among constituent boroughs of the Authority, Camden, Haringey and Islington have benefitted from CPCs since 2018.
- 1.3. Prompted by the Authority Chair, and supported by Members, officers have been liaising with the LGA to organise a CPC for the Authority.
- 1.4. The terms of reference for the CPC are at Appendix A. They reflect the specialist nature of North London Waste Authority's statutory role while also bringing in applicable elements which feature in peer reviews of councils with wider responsibilities.

## **2. NEXT STEPS**

- 2.1. Officers are liaising with the LGA to confirm the team who will conduct the CPC, comprising both councillors and officers. The intention is for the CPC to be undertaken in early December. Officers and advisers will consider recommendations from the review team and report back to the Authority in 2023.

## **3. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1. The review will assist the Authority in ensuring that it is following best practice in carrying out the public sector equality duty.

## **4. COMMENTS OF THE LEGAL ADVISOR**

- 4.1. The Legal Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report and comments are incorporated.

## **5. COMMENTS OF THE FINANCIAL ADVISOR**

- 5.1. The Financial Adviser has been consulted in the preparation of this report and comments are incorporated.

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## APPENDIX A



### Introduction to the LGA and peer challenge

The [LGA is the national membership body for local authorities](#) and we work on behalf of our member councils to support, promote and improve local government. Our core membership comprises 328 of the 333 councils in England and includes district, county, metropolitan and unitary authorities along with London boroughs and the City of London Corporation.

The LGA's sector support programme is underpinned by the following key principles:

- councils are responsible for their own performance and improvement
- councils are primarily accountable to local communities
- councils have a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector
- the role of the LGA is to maintain an overview of performance of the sector and to provide tools and support.

Peer challenge is central to the LGA's support offer to authorities and represents a tried and trusted method of improvement providing authorities with a robust and effective improvement tool which is owned and delivered by the sector, for the sector. The peer challenge approach involves a team of experienced officers and members spending time with another organisation as 'peers' to provide a 'practitioner perspective' and 'critical friend' challenge, and share learning. At the end of a peer challenge, the 'host' organisation receives a comprehensive report and recommendations from the peer team, and then identifies its own action plan to respond.

Peer challenge is an established tool that supports councils and authorities to drive improvements and efficiency in specific areas, including finance, communications, health and wellbeing, equalities, housing, planning and more.

### Scope and focus

We would propose a peer challenge scope that would enable the peer team to explore the following themes that are key to effective governance and successful organisational delivering (please note that the questions set out below are not prescriptive, but are included to illustrate the types of elements the peer challenge would explore):

1. **Local priorities and outcomes:** Are the organisation's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the organisation delivering effectively on its priorities and achieving improved outcomes for all its communities? Does the organisation have clarity on purpose and goals? Are those visible, both from within the organisation and outside it? Are successful results being delivered and is there transparency over risks, challenges and setbacks? Has the authority the resources and skills to deliver its priorities?
2. **Organisational and place leadership:** Does the organisation 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 respect, challenge and scrutiny? Does the authority communication with boroughs appropriately support openness and transparency? Is there a shared

understanding with boroughs of the priorities and challenges for the authority, especially over long-term direction? Do members gain appropriate coordinated support from authority and borough officers to enable them to carry out their role successfully? Within its legislative framework, is suitable monitoring, audit and scrutiny in place to ensure plans are delivered as intended? Are there appropriate checks and balances in place to protect the Authority's systems?

4. **Financial planning and management:** Does the organisation have a clear understanding of its current financial position? Does the organisation have a strategy and a clear 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? Does the NLWA/LEL organisation have a responsible and comprehensive approach to risk management and are both organisations preparing appropriately for future challenges? Is expertise in boroughs mobilised to help deliver the authority's agenda, with members having well-founded evidential advice to support decision making?
6. **Engagement & the community:** Is the Authority successful in explaining its plans and ambitions? Does the Authority successfully communicate, from the information it has? Does the Authority have the necessary engagement and impact with other organisations to achieve its outcomes?