

Executive Response to the Newham Council LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report

From Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz OBE and Abi Gbago, Chief Executive

On behalf of the London Borough of Newham, we would like to thank the Local Government Association's (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge team led by Paul Dennett, the Mayor of Salford and Andy Donald, the Chief Executive of the London Borough of Haringey, for their diligence and support when they visited the Newham Council over a three-day period in November 2023 to consider our performance and commitment to improvement as a Council.

Some 130 people from across Newham Council, including elected representatives, officers and local partners from across the borough, were engaged over that period to generate important and useful insights for our collective learning. The 11 substantive recommendations across the five LGA Corporate Peer Challenge team themes included: local priorities and outcomes; organisational and place leadership; governance and culture; financial planning and management; and capacity for improvement; are set out in a final report published today, Friday 1st March 2024.

Newham is a special place. It is a borough enriched and strengthened by the diversity of our people and we all take pride in its unique character and dynamism. The challenges we face as a borough are also opportunities for growth and continued learning as we build a fairer Newham for all our residents.

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge team's report has come at a pivotal time for Newham Council, as we deliver an ambitious and transformative agenda of positive change across the borough. It is a time of unprecedented financial challenge for local government against the backdrop of continuing economic uncertainty, growing demand for Council services and a cost of living crisis facing our communities. These challenges require confident leadership and collective ownership across the Council and with the entirety of our valued partnerships in Newham.

The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge team's work has been comprehensive and far-reaching. It has also been valuable and insightful. All those that participated in sessions and discussions shared how they

found their experience with the peer team positive and useful, with many describing how the approach was open, honest and collaborative.

“This was my first experience of a peer review process, it has left me with a positive impression and I look forward to reading the report when published”

“I thought the session was really useful. Looking forward to seeing the report”

“Good session, lots of debate. Used some of the time to speak about the history of Newham and the journey of the organisation which was well received”

“Very friendly, open and approachable peers”

The insights and recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge team will form a critical part of our continuous development journey as a Council as we embrace them fully. We wanted to act on the insights and recommendations of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report swiftly, so we have developed a draft Action Plan through engagement with over 800 staff alongside Cabinet colleagues and the Council’s Corporate Management Team. We look forward to finalising the draft Action Plan in discussions with councillors, the wider workforce at the Council and our partners and stakeholders in the borough.

The draft Action Plan presents a comprehensive programme of change about how we will transform as an organisation in response to the recommendations in the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report and includes the intended changes and outcomes we want to see. They are structured across three core themes:

Theme 1: Getting the Basics Right

Theme 2: Supporting Our People

Theme 3: Meeting Our Financial Challenges

Additionally, a key recommendation by the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge team highlighted the importance of prioritisation in our future approach to delivery as an organisation, and as such our draft Action Plan embraces a clear prioritisation approach to ensure the organisation is able to deliver in a clearly planned way. We will continue to work with all of our elected representatives, staff, partners and stakeholders in the ongoing

development of our draft Action Plan, with a final Action Plan published by the end of May 2024.

While the draft Action Plan has a focus on the important organisational improvements we will need to deliver in the coming period; it also endorses the vision we have for our borough and the significant improvements in service performance and delivery delivered over the past 5 years. While these are strong foundations to build on, we know there is more to do to transform and improve as a Council as we accelerate our plans to build a fairer Newham over the coming period.

We are keen to embed our monitoring and oversight of this draft Action Plan in our well-established outcomes based performance framework. Consequently, we will be integrating our reporting on the delivery of this draft Action Plan (and the final version) into our quarterly cycle of public reporting on our performance as a council in delivering against our Building a Fairer Newham Corporate Plan. We will also embed the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan into our service and business planning regime.

We look forward to sharing the impact and outcomes of this work when the LGA Peer Challenge team come back to visit and review our progress later this year, and thank them once again for their valued feedback.



Rokhsana Fiaz OBE
Mayor of Newham



Abi Gbago
Chief Executive