

Richard Sheard
Chief Executive

South Hams District Council

Follaton House, Plymouth Road, Totnes

West Devon Borough Council

Kilworthy Park, Tavistock

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Dear Richard

South Hams and West Devon councils - Corporate Peer Challenge

On behalf of the peer team, I would like to say it was a pleasure to be invited into South Hams District and West Devon Borough Councils to deliver the recent peer challenge. The team felt privileged to be allowed to conduct its work with the support of you and your colleagues who were open and engaged with the process.

You asked the peer team to provide an external view of the two councils and give recognition, where appropriate, of progress made; and supportive challenge and feedback on how you are prepared to meet future issues and opportunities for South Hams and West Devon.

You also asked the team to provide specific feedback on:

- Progress on shared services and future opportunities
 - To test the will and commitment of the two councils (Members and staff) to the shared services programme and how it may be developed
 - Consider the financial basis for shared service delivery and capacity (leadership and organisational) to progress this
- Review the internal transformation process
- Review and comment on the progress that the two councils have made on 'Localism' and working arrangements with the voluntary/community and business sectors and town and parish councils.

To do this the peer team considered the ability, resilience and capacity of the council to deliver its future ambitions by looking at:

- Understanding of the local context and priority setting
- Financial planning and viability
- Leadership and governance
- Capacity to deliver

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement-focused and tailored to meet councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement plans. The peers 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.

This letter amplifies the feedback that was presented at the end of our recent onsite visit. In presenting this the peer challenge team has done so as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. Our intention is to provide recognition of the progress the two councils have made in recent years while also stimulating debate and thinking about future challenges.

Key conclusions

The two councils have made very positive progress on collaborative working arrangements. This began in 2007 but was accelerated in 2010, with the appointment of the current Chief Executive for the two councils, and the subsequent decision that all services would be shared by the end of 2011.

The establishment of a Joint Steering Group, to progress shared working, and the corporate blueprint 'Shared Services and Beyond', adopted in March and April 2011, provided the framework. Besides the substantial financial efficiencies obtained by shared services the process has enabled the councils to develop shared corporate and operational priorities, along with a high level of 'shared ownership' from staff and Members across the two councils.

The two councils work very well together. They have a good understanding of their similarities and differences and have worked well to retain distinctive organisational identity while making good progress in melding shared services. The councils are well run (politically and managerially) and are generally delivering good quality services. There are positive relationships between politicians and senior staff.

The councils are extremely well thought of by the majority of external partners. In early 2011 the councils embarked on a series of listening and dialogue events with town and parish councils, with representatives of the business sector and the voluntary and community sector. This engagement informed the development of the Connect Partnership, the councils' approach to Localism and a commitment to ongoing dialogue with these sectors via South Hams Voice and West Devon Voice.

The councils have dealt with financial challenges well to date and have a positive track record. They can face the future with some confidence. This is supported by good governance and risk management arrangements. However, there is a looming budget gap for the two councils, particularly for West Devon, from 2013 -2014 and succeeding years. Members will need to lead on the councils' intentions to bridge this gap and work with SMT to ensure that future planned savings are clearly directed to address this.

Both councils are ambitious and this has been an important driver for the success of shared services. Part of this ambition has been a commitment to not cut 'front line' services but this position may be difficult to sustain. Shared services have achieved

financial efficiencies but a consequence is reduced staff resources and service managers now working across two sites, rather than one. It was clear to the peer challenge team that this has stretched organisational capacity. As the councils move forward with their transformation programme, this will need to be managed more effectively.

The recent journey

Leadership and governance

It was evident to the peer challenge team that there are strong officer and Member working relationships. These extend to positive relations between political groups and between the councils and the trade unions. The Chief Executive's style is open and inclusive and gains wide respect. These elements are important features that have facilitated the commitment made in 2007 and the changes that have followed. This shows a climate of care and trust that will be important in the delivery of future change.

Throughout the change of the last five years it is noteworthy that the identities of the two councils have not been compromised. Both councils were clear from the outset their intention to retain separate organisational identities. This has been achieved even though both organisations have made a full commitment to making the partnership work.

The governance arrangements across the two councils appear sound. Governance arrangements have a heightened importance for two councils committed to shared services while retaining separate council identities. This will need continuous monitoring in a fast changing environment, where governance can subtly shift. For example, the Joint Steering Group (JSG) was originally established by the two councils to oversee the shared services programme. Given the progress made on this the JSG is now giving more attention to the transformation programme.

The two councils have good political decision-making arrangements. South Hams operates the Cabinet model while West Devon continues with the committee system. The latter has recently moved from three to two principal committees for a trial period.

Both councils are highly ambitious. Part of this is shown in the commitment to collaboration, where a driver was to gain savings to avoid the need to make service reductions. To date this has been largely successful but the peer challenge team believe that in the future this ambition may need to be even more pragmatic. With a significant financial gap looming for both councils and more public spending pressures projected, cuts to services will need to be considered unless a structured approach to meeting this challenge is devised. This point was made to the peer challenge team in a number of interviews with one stating that there was a "dissonance" between the ambition of Members and what the officers' capacity could actually deliver with existing resources. Future political decision-making will be required to prioritise objectives to enable difficult decisions to be made.

The peer challenge team wondered if the scrutiny function could be strengthened. The team did not investigate this too deeply but formed the impression that the function could be more productive and robust to perform an even more important role for the two councils. Possible areas for future activity could include joint scrutiny challenge of specific shared services and to review the two councils' performance management arrangements and their

use of performance indicators. If the scrutiny function were able to assume an enhanced role the benefit would be to support both councils in making difficult decisions in the future.

Member leadership development is an area that could be beneficial. The two councils and their staff have undergone significant change in a quickly changing environment. Change will be a feature for the future and leading Members could benefit from leadership training to provide them with the additional skills to work in a changing environment.

Working in partnership and supporting communities

Partners were positive of the two councils' willingness to engage. This is very encouraging at time when partnership working for local government is becoming increasingly important to combine resources and generate capacity. It is also consistent with the role of local government undertaking an active community leadership role.

There is evidence of intervention to support local communities in need. The closure of food processing plants in 2011 in Okehampton led West Devon and partners to establish 'Okehampton Works' to enable the provision of food banks for families, counselling for those made redundant, skills training etc. We had no doubt that South Hams would take a similar community leadership role if a comparable problem arose in its area.

There is a strong commitment to encourage local solutions. This is evident by the partnership vehicle Connect Partnership – 'Connecting with communities' – formerly the Local Strategic Partnerships for each council, that is working across the two councils. It is also exemplified by the TAP (Town and Parish) initiative with funding from Devon County Council and the two councils to support local community initiatives. This 'localist' approach is supported by a commitment to community engagement that is directed by the councils' Community Engagement Strategy.

One area that the councils may need to be watchful is partner buy-in into the Connect Partnership. This is a very ambitious programme and important for the councils' priority to progress Localism. A number of partners told the peer challenge team that it seemed to them to be the councils' agenda, rather than a partner agenda, that some partners didn't feel engaged and that the agenda was too diffuse and insufficiently focused on the big issues of importance. The councils are intending to review the Connect Partnership and that would be an opportune time to check with partners on areas for adjustment.

Financial planning

Strategic financial planning information is good and provides sound data to develop financial targets during a time of change. There is a proactive approach to financial modelling to update the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The short-term financial planning arrangements are sound and have been confirmed by auditors' unqualified opinion of the councils' accounts and their arrangements to secure value for money. The MTFS has good layout and makes a clear connection between councils' priorities and resources to ensure that these are aligned.

However, in 2013 – 2014 there is a budget gap for each council and this continues in succeeding years. By 2016 – 2017 the cumulative gap will be £4.7m for South Hams and £4.1m for West Devon. The challenge is more acute in West Devon because of its relative

lack of revenue reserves. These are significant gaps and are unlikely to be resolved by the shared service model alone, adopted by the two councils to date.

The councils intend to bridge the budget gap by net budget savings achieved from the 2015 transformation programme, with this delivering 10 per cent and the services' blueprints another 15 per cent. The peer challenge team wondered if the current programme plans and efficiency targets are realistic and deliverable and believe that these will require keen challenge from senior managers, Members and Scrutiny.

We were not persuaded that the councils have fully acknowledged the extent of this budget gap and, in particular, the scale of change activity likely to be required to successfully bridge it. Certainly the gap each financial year may appear less threatening than the above cumulative figures but the scale of the financial challenge can be gauged by appreciating how these figures compare to the entire savings achieved by the two councils on shared services since 2007. Members will need to collectively take ownership for the budget gap and work with SMT to ensure that future planned savings are clearly directed to bridge this.

We were made aware of some of the options for savings that are under consideration while on site. Some of these have implications for service delivery and staff. We think that this is a time for tough decisions and that it is unrealistic to avoid these, as this will only store up even bigger challenges for the future.

It might be understandable if the councils were to consider the New Homes Bonus (NHB) as an option to bridge the funding gap. We believe that this would be a mistake for two reasons. First, there is no certainty that NHB will continue into the future, in its current form or at all. Where authorities use NHB to bridge financial gaps, and become reliant upon this, they would be found wanting should that funding come to an end. Second, there is good reason to expect that the councils might choose instead to use a proportion of NHB for their priorities, for example these could be linked to the Localism agenda. The team were made aware that both councils are looking to develop a New Homes Bonus strategy by the end of November which would seek to address these issues.

The councils have made good preparatory arrangements for the impact of the Welfare reforms. The impact of the reduction in Council Tax Support is anticipated to be in order of between £500k and £600k and, as in other parts of the country, a number of vulnerable people will be adversely affected. There was good evidence of a county-wide approach to dealing with the reduction. The next stage of the councils' preparations might be to engage with other partners, for example Citizens Advice Bureaux and housing associations, who are working with a similar constituent base, to develop further joint support arrangements.

Performance management

Service performance is generally good overall and this is no mean achievement, given the resources reduction in recent years, when performance might have been expected to dip. The review team identified from the information provided, and through reviewing performance reports to the council's respective scrutiny committees, that some performance is below target and not aligned with what other councils are achieving. Development management and the processing of benefit claims are examples. The other is legal services that has recently been subject to a separate external review.

The two councils have agreed to commit additional resources to clear the planning applications backlog and also to review business processes to avoid problems recurring. Both councils need to be clear whether under-performance in specific services is an issue or not, with this to be ascertained by comparative performance checks, and by determining at what levels service performance should be set. If it is felt to be an issue, then the councils will need to develop time-bound plans to secure improvements.

The performance culture needs further development. The peer challenge team did not pick up a strong corporate lead on performance. We did recognise that to some extent this was inevitable with the two councils focused on establishing shared services.

Certainly work has been conducted on developing Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that are more relevant to the two councils than the former national performance indicators, as well as a balanced scoreboard. These are reported to SMT, Executive/Resources Committee and to Scrutiny. However, the peer challenge team did not find a strong follow through on evaluating performance from corporate to service levels and a relative absence of strong Member interest in reported performance or challenging what was being done in response to poor performance.

More focus on performance management from SMT and Members would be beneficial. For example, there are clear service outliers from the two councils, compared to other councils, which could be used to stimulate internal discussion. It would also be useful to compare performance levels across the two councils – we did not find any evidence that this is currently done in any systematic way. It may be expected that performance levels will vary across the two councils due to different resource inputs and different circumstances. However, there could be an opportunity in some service areas to bring performance into closer alignment for the benefit of service users.

Capacity

It is clear that the two councils have taken out a significant quantity of managerial resource, without major impact upon services. This has been an important aspect of the savings achieved to date and has been achieved with some aplomb. Inevitably the reduction in resource has required new ways of working and one of these is an increase in multi-skilling, for example housing officers dealing with benefits enquiries. This may be an area for further development to ensure that service capacity can be enhanced.

Although systems reviews have taken place in different teams with the objective of improving efficiency the peer challenge team saw no evidence of a coordinated or corporate approach to the utilisation of a distinct methodology, such as systems thinking or lean working. Instead it appeared ad hoc. The councils certainly recognise that this will be important to gain future efficiencies and it may be helpful to consider how this could be more co-ordinated. A corporate programme of service reviews could provide a structured approach and align resources to priority projects.

The recent changes have seen reductions in staffing levels and this has led to some capacity issues. Part of this might be attributed to the ambition of the two councils wanting to do 'more with less' but it is also clear that in some parts of the two councils staff have

lost capacity and feel stretched. Many staff raised capacity as an issue with the peer challenge team.

Related to this were staff saying that there had been a significant reduction in the visibility of management. Again this is not surprising when senior managers are working across the two principal worksites of Follaton House and Kilworthy Park. This is made more difficult by the travelling time from one site to the other which can take nearly one hour. The councils will need to consider if there are smarter ways of working across the two councils, although both have invested well in technology to support distance working, for example video links.

Staff capacity is an important area to be managed by the two councils to provide services to a desired standard and to provide organisational resilience for future change.

Shared Services

The two councils have jointly progressed some excellent work on shared services and generated significant quantifiable savings, being £2.15m for each council since 2007 and annual savings in excess of £600k. The context of this can be appreciated with these annual savings equating to a council tax increase of 11 per cent for South Hams and 14.5 per cent for West Devon.

At the same time the peer challenge team found no evidence that service performance has suffered as a result of shared working. However, there were no obvious examples where the team saw improved performance either. This could be due to the understandable priority of the two councils on driving shared services with less emphasis given to service performance. This would tally with the separate observation in this letter on the need to strengthen performance management arrangements.

The programme of developing shared services arrangements has been supported by the generally positive approach taken by Members from both councils. They have clearly enabled the process to go forward by looking ahead to the wider benefits from shared services and have put these ahead of parochial interests.

The point was made to the peer challenge team several times that it was more 'shared management' than shared services and that many services were little changed with separate teams in South Hams and West Devon, joined by shared managers. The team were also told that many services were operating separate business processes, systems and practices. This might be expected in the relatively short time since senior and middle managers became shared (April and October 2011) but it may be that the next phase might look to unite and consolidate business processes. This could be productive: to gain further service efficiencies; to develop capacity leading to service improvements; and to move beyond the 'shared management' of services.

The peer challenge team do not feel that efficiency savings have yet been maximised and this was supported by views within the councils that expressed that to date the focus had been on 'low hanging fruit' and recognition that the next phase would be more difficult. If the two councils want to progress further efficiency savings then they will need to be clear on where these can be obtained and then to prioritise so that resources can be put to realising these benefits. There could raise some big questions for the two councils to

consider. For example, significant efficiencies could be derived by the two councils moving to one site. This may be a difficult political decision in the short term but consideration could be given to the evaluating the benefits of combining back office services and co-location of some services.

On the same point the two councils will need to consider whether they have the appetite to develop shared contract and service arrangements. For example, the current West Devon waste contract ends in 2017. The two councils should begin giving consideration on whether they will bring the two services together at that time, which from experience would achieve significant savings provided that there is a largely common specification across the two council areas. For South Hams there is the additional consideration of whether it is really committed to achieving best value or whether it prefers to maintain its in-house operation

More imminently, the leisure contracts come up with West Devon in 2014 and South Hams in 2016. If they were to be let as one contract then it is likely that significant savings could be achieved, not least because the peer challenge team did not consider that the existing contracts for either council offered good value. Political decisions will need to be taken on whether this next phase of shared services would be acceptable.

It is clear that the drivers for shared services in 2007 are different to those in 2010 and 2012. This is an obvious but important point for the two councils to recognise. The new drivers need to be understood and used to inform the future shared services programme.

Internal transformation

The councils have understood that ongoing small scale service change programmes are unlikely to meet the future savings required and have committed to a 'Shared services and beyond transformation programme', detailed in a 'Blueprint', approved in March and April 2011. The key focus for this programme is to "transform the way we work" by 2015 and aims to achieve a saving of 10 per cent on the councils' net budget.

The 2015 programme has adopted good methodologies for project management and governance and has identified a range of key projects to achieve objectives. However, they have also included many low level, business as usual type projects within the programme which arguably dissipates its strategic focus. For example, the Blueprint identified more than 30 separate projects, with this reduced to 16 active projects.

The peer challenge team believe that this is still too many and provides insufficient focus. It also carries the risk of consuming a high level of scarce staff resources. Senior managers acknowledge that progress on the programme projects is still at an early stage. This presents an opportunity to reflect where the programme has got to and resetting it so that there is clarity of project focus, objectives and outcomes, underpinned by proportionate project management principles.

The councils' MTF identifies significant budget savings for the next four years. The strategy outlines the sources of savings coming from two principal work streams:

Service blueprints – charged with delivering 15 per cent efficiencies

- Each service area has been asked to develop a service review programme to run through to 2015
- These will consider how changing business processes will yield the required efficiencies while preserving or enhancing service levels.

The 2015 transformation programme – charged with delivering 10 per cent efficiencies

The principal projects designed to deliver savings are currently identified as:

- Agile Working
- Asset Review.

This strategy may have the potential to bridge the looming budget gap. However, each work stream is at a very early stage and there is no empirical view on the ability of the initiatives, within the two work streams, to deliver their savings targets.

An alternative strategy for delivering the internal change and savings agenda could involve a change in emphasis for savings to be achieved from this programme. This could lead to, for example, reducing the service blueprints' target to a level that would provide a focus on continuous improvement rather than step change. This could include rationalisation of business processes, systems and practices across the shared services of the two councils. It could also involve increasing the 2015 transformation programme target to a level which is sufficient to not only close the budget gap but to exceed it by an appropriate level.

The benefits of this approach can be summarised as:

- Providing a clear stretch programme target which will give greater 'tension' and add urgency and momentum to the programme
- This tension will focus attention on key decisions and the true cost/benefit issues behind them
- It would provide some 'breathing space' for service areas which are currently struggling with capacity and/or performance
- Capacity could be significantly improved through a more effective process of prioritisation and/or sequencing of initiatives
- Allowing the councils to take advantage of significant windfall opportunities as they arise during the next several years, for example combining the waste and leisure contracts mentioned above and harmonisation of existing procurement/contract activity
- The combination of the reduced shared service savings and windfall savings, along with early 'quick wins' from transformation projects, should provide the councils with sufficient savings to manage the budget gap. An example of possible quick wins could be via the Asset Review. This has identified that currently South Hams spends £700k per annum on the provision of 50 public conveniences. The councils could question this, along with other assets and services provided, to ask: what service is needed, who could/should provide this, options for efficiency savings etc.

The peer challenge team found some internal confusion on the current twin track approach of service blueprints, targeted to deliver 15 per cent savings, and the transformation programme, targeted to deliver 10 per cent net budget savings, by 2015. The team believe that the councils would benefit from a single approach that would provide clarity on what the councils are seeking to achieve; instil confidence that targets are deliverable; and would consolidate changes already introduced on shared services.

Localism

Both councils have made a commitment to progressing new ways of working made available by the Localism Act 2011. The councils see this as an important opportunity to engage with other public, voluntary and community and private sectors to ensure that there is engagement with these sectors on future service delivery, partnership working to meet community needs and as part of the councils' wider transformation programme.

This commitment is supported by high levels of volunteering and public involvement across the two areas. For example South Hams was fourth and West Devon first nationally in the percentage of people volunteering in the Place Survey 2008. This suggests a natural propensity for residents and communities to be involved in community initiatives.

The evidence of this commitment is clear from: the visibility of the Chief Executive with partners; from established working relationships with Devon County Council which led to the TAP initiative; good working arrangements with town and parish councils, the voluntary and community sector, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Dartmoor National Park Authority etc. Feedback to the peer challenge team was that stakeholders have noticed perceptible improvements in their relationships with the two councils over the last 18 months.

There are a number of structures in place to support this engagement, for example Voice forums that deliver targeted communications to the sectors of Business, town and parish councils and the voluntary sector, with this to be extended to Young People and the Community. The Connect Partnership is also a significant partnership vehicle that came into being after an extensive round of council-arranged listening and dialogue events with partners. This is underpinned by a Community Engagement Strategy and a more detailed annual Community Engagement Action Plan.

To support this commitment the councils have developed a Localisation strategy. This sets out a flexible model to "influence the service within existing resources; raise additional money locally for an enhanced service; or investigate the feasibility of devolving services to town or parish councils ...". This approach has been responsive to the perception that the councils might be regarded with some suspicion in transferring asset/service responsibilities to town and parish councils, along with the concomitant financial costs. Instead the localisation model emphasises a 'win, win, win' approach.

The peer challenge team believe that this flexible model is well suited to taking forward the options provided by Localism. Future success might require a longer-term Localism programme so that partner relationships can be developed, along with the trust that is necessary, and a clearer understanding by all of what Localism may mean and what this might look like in different scenarios. Inevitably this will require sustaining relationships by continuing engagement and communications.

However, the ambiguity of the Localism Act could be given more shape by the two councils with them taking a lead on what this might look like for South Hams and West Devon. This would provide a focus and clarity for partners that is currently lacking.

This would be important so that the two councils can provide leadership for their communities but will be imperative to ensure that this can be aligned to the financial challenges that both councils face. For example, how will the councils respond to the requests for support to develop neighbourhood plans without affecting other planning service priorities? This is a live issue with the councils having five frontrunner neighbourhood pilots. It was clear from talking to these pilots that there was considerable uncertainty on the respective roles of the pilots and the two councils in supporting these. The two councils are trialling a 'Parish planning support service' but they may need to consider other arrangements that can balance advice, support and communications from already stretched resources to the pilots. This at the same time as encouraging relative autonomy for the pilots to shape their plans in the way they choose, within the parameters of plan viability.

A related point is about resource capacity to support key Localism initiatives. A number of town and parish councils told the peer challenge team that they found it more difficult to access the councils' services than they used to. This is despite the councils introducing designated Link Officers to work with clusters of town and parish councils. This again highlights the stretched capacity of the two councils – referred to already in this letter.

Providing shape for Localism will also be important so staff can understand the direction being taken and that concerns of increased workloads/reduced capacity can be addressed. It will also be important to be clear on what role partners might have and this will assist partners to better understand the choices available to them. The Connect Partnership, which involves a significant range of partners, presents a potentially important vehicle to progress the councils' Localism programme.

Moving forward - suggestions for consideration

Based on what we saw, heard and read we suggest you consider the following actions to build on the councils' undoubted successes. These are things we think will help you improve and develop the effectiveness and capacity to deliver your future ambitions and plans.

1. Members need to lead on the councils' intentions to bridge the imminent budget gap and work with SMT to ensure that future planned savings are clearly directed to this.
2. Continue to manage the capacity of the councils' staff that has become stretched due to reduced resources and shared management across the two council sites.
3. Evaluate the opportunities for multi-skilling as a means to maintain and enhance staff capacity.
4. Assess whether the scrutiny function could be strengthened to be more productive and robust and to assume an even more important role for the two councils. This would support the councils in making difficult decisions in the future.
5. Arrange for leading Members to be provided with leadership training to equip them with the additional skills to be effective in a quickly changing environment.

6. Ensure that the performance culture is developed further and that there is a strong corporate lead on performance.
7. Rationalise the 2015 transformation programme to address both transformation and the services' blueprints. A single approach, rather than the current twin track, would: provide clarity on what the councils are seeking to achieve; instil confidence that targets are deliverable; and consolidate and build on some of the changes already introduced.
8. Systematically rationalise business processes, systems and practices across the shared services of the two councils to gain efficiencies, develop capacity and to improve services.
9. Evaluate the extension of shared services opportunities in bringing contracts together, particularly the imminent ones for leisure.
10. Provide clarity for partners by adding shape to the Localism agenda which describes how the councils see this working across South Hams and West Devon.

We have attached a set of slides that summarise the above feedback. The slides are the ones used by the peer team to present its feedback at the end of the onsite visit.

Next steps

You will undoubtedly wish to reflect on these findings and suggestions made with your senior managerial and political leadership before determining how the council wishes to take things forward.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of continued activity to support this. In particular the LGA is able to offer up to 12 days support around Agile Working and transformation related development. We would also wish to offer an improvement and prioritisation workshop to the council to take place some time after this letter is received by the council. I look forward to finalising the detail of that activity as soon as possible.

In the meantime we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with you and colleagues through the peer challenge to date. Howard Davis, Principal Adviser (South West and West Midlands) is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Howard can be contacted via email at howard.davis@local.gov.uk (or tel. 07920 061197) and can provide access to our resources and any further support.

In the meantime, all of us connected with the peer challenge would like to wish you every success going forward. Once again, many thanks to you and your colleagues for inviting the peer challenge and to everyone involved for their participation.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Winfield
Peer Challenge Manager (Peer Support)
Local Government Association

Tel. 07786 542754

Email andrew.winfield@local.gov.uk

On behalf of the peer challenge team:

- David Buckle, shared Chief Executive, South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse Councils
- Cllr. Paul Middlebrough, Leader, Wychavon District Council
- Cllr. Paul Cullen Richmondshire District Council
- Julian Osgathorpe, Deputy Chief Executive, Eastbourne Borough Council
- Rina Singh, Strategic Director, South Somerset District Council

Appendix 1 – Feedback slides

Appendix 2 – Signposting note