

# LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Stratford-on-Avon District Council

4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Feedback report





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## 1. Executive summary


Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) is well-run, recognises its challenges and is ambitious for the future of the District. There is much to be proud of in how the Council is delivering for the communities of this large and diverse area.

The peer team found that overall there has been a smooth transition to the new Liberal Democrat led-administration after the elections in May 2023. The Council has developed its new Council Plan 2023-2027 and priorities in parallel with political and officer changes - and this has been delivered successfully with a clear vision and focus on the future ambitions of SDC. The emphasis for the Council is now on delivering the Plan and ensuring wider strategies are linked to this and follow through to SDC's operational activity.

The Council is in a stable financial position and has used the recent budget to support its priority areas. Central to this it has identified £2.2M for its Council Plan and Change Programme and just over £1M for the Climate Change Fund. This is a very significant commitment which SDC is able to make despite the current wider context of local government finance. There is an opportunity now to focus on how this work is defined, developed and structured to deliver these priorities and ensure they are understood consistently across the organisation.

However, SDC should prioritise the preparation of accounts to ensure it meets statutory requirements, as the draft accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23 have not yet been published, or considered by Councillors. This will allow SDC to prioritise the 2023/24 accounts to be completed in line with statutory deadlines to ensure a smooth transition to the new external auditors.

There are some exciting projects, including working with partners to deliver on the economic ambitions of the District. The Wellesbourne Campus and relationship with the University of Warwick is a great example of how the academic, public and private sectors can continue to work together to deliver ambitions for the District. The




Council's crucial role in this is significant and it should be commended for this work.

There is now an opportunity for SDC to co-design a compelling and long-term place based vision and narrative for the future of the District and to strengthen its political and officer 'leader of place' roles. Developing a place based partnership to co-create a longer term vision and place narrative is the 'next stage' of the Council's journey. With so many great things happening within the District and with internationally recognised stakeholders based locally, developing this approach would help SDC to strengthen its role as a leader of place, build on the existing work to support the delivery of shared ambitions and has the potential to make more effective use of the combined resources within the area.

There are generally good relationships across the Council: between Members and officers; Member to Member; with officers and the Management Team; and with the Trade Union. The Council has invested time and effort in developing these productive relationships and this represents a sound base for future improvement. Staff reported that overall they feel well informed and the peer team saw that they were loyal to the organisation – with many officers confirming that they have been working at SDC for many years - and enjoy working for the Council.

There was a large number of newly elected Members in May 2023 (21 out of 41) and the initial Member development programme was viewed as thorough and well received by Councillors. There is an opportunity to reflect and review this to now embed and roll-out the next phase, which will assist in the continued development of cross-party political relationships.

The peer team saw that the Council is a lean organisation and in some areas of SDC staff report feeling stretched - noting a lack of resilience. This is not a surprise in smaller organisations but with a perceived lack of resilience and potential single points of failure, SDC may want to consider this in the context of its future Change Programme.



SDC recognises that its approach to internal and external communications would benefit from a review on how it is engaging with all parts of the organisation, and with Partners, as part of the development of its new Communications Strategy. The peer team agrees that there is a need to devote time to this through a structured approach.

## 2. Key recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council:

### 2.1 Recommendation 1

Codesign a compelling and long-term place-based vision and narrative to define the District. Use this as an opportunity to galvanise partners and improve the District's economic and cultural strength

### 2.2 Recommendation 2

Strengthen political and officer leadership of place roles – map your anchor institutions, partners and stakeholders to bring focus, capacity and capability for place transformation

### 2.3 Recommendation 3

The Council should prioritise publication of Draft Accounts in line with the statutory deadlines for doing so, and work closely with their new External Auditors to ensure these are audited in a timely fashion

### 2.4 Recommendation 4

Further define the Change Programme, with a clear strategy based on objectives and plans relating to budget, resource and governance. Ensure the Change Programme is communicated and understood throughout SDC

## **2.5 Recommendation 5**

Strengthen the Citizens' Panel and develop a Parish Forum to engage more effectively with local people on a range of opportunities and challenges

## **2.6 Recommendation 6**

Ensure the Audit and Standards Committee is effective and reviewed in line with CIPFA best practice guidance.

## **2.7 Recommendation 7**

Deliver the Staff Strategy and ensure that it places emphasis on the employee lifecycle and aligns with delivery of the Council Plan 2023-2027

## **2.8 Recommendation 8**

Clarify how SDC's existing values will be further embedded with staff and define how they will help to achieve the Council Plan 2023-27 and its ambitions

## **2.9 Recommendation 9**

Further develop the Member Development Programme, including the opportunities in the use of MS Teams and consideration of the timing of sessions given the constraints of Members with additional commitments e.g. working, and caring responsibilities

## **2.10 Recommendation 10**

Continue the work on developing the internal/external communications strategy with stakeholders, and consider any external support, to amplify the voice of the Council

# **3. Summary of the peer challenge approach**

## **3.1 The peer team**

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected Member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- **Donna Nolan** – CEX, Watford BC
- **Cllr Richard Keeling** – LGA Lib Dem peer, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Corporate Resources, Teignbridge DC
- **Andrew Cummings** – Strategic Director of Resources (Section 151), Stroud DC
- **Alex Kinch** – Chief Officer – People and Policy, Lancaster City Council
- **Paula Maginnis** – Service Director – Corporate Services, Epping Forest DC
- **Ishbel Morren** – Executive Support Officer, Watford BC
- **James Millington** – Peer Challenge Manager, LGA


### 3.2 Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

1. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities?
2. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the council 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 challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management** - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a 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?

### 3.3 The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team 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.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent three days onsite at SDC, during which they:

- Gathered information and views from more than 30 meetings, in addition to further research and reading and a site visit to the Wellesbourne Campus
- Spoke to more than 70 people including a range of Council staff together with Members, external stakeholders, parish clerks and residents.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and Members.


## 4. Feedback

### 4.1 Local priorities and outcomes

Following the elections in May 2023 and with the new Liberal Democrat-led administration the Council has agreed a new Council Plan 2023-2027, underpinned by a Delivery Plan for 2024/25. The peer team were impressed with how this was developed following a programme of positive co-production which included 37 workshops and events with Members and officers as well as activity with stakeholders, and utilised performance and insight information for the evidence base, and undertook a public consultation where 430 responses were provided.

SDC understands the key challenges facing the District well, including: housing availability and affordability; the large geographic area and rural communities; the






ageing population; infrastructure challenges including broadband connectivity; and the economy - and these are reflected in the Council's priorities. The 4 year Council vision statement was also launched alongside the new Council Plan. The Council Plan includes the following key areas of priority:

- **Residents and Communities** - We will act in the best interest of our communities throughout our District understanding their needs to make responsible decisions.
- **Delivery of Service** - We will use your money responsibly in delivering the best services possible.
- **Climate Change** - The time to act is now, we will lead the fight against climate change.
- **Health and Wellbeing** - Health and Wellbeing will be at the heart of decisions we make.
- **Housing** - We will strive to deliver affordable well-built and maintained homes.
- **Local Economy** - We will create a larger, stronger, greener, and more inclusive economy.

The peer team do think that the Council may want to strengthen its approach further by clarifying the resourcing needs of the Council Plan and 2024/25 Delivery Plan to ensure that how it will be delivered is clear. For instance, most services do have service plans – with a process now in place to update to align service plans with the new Council Plan priorities, and the peer team would encourage the Council to ensure that the 'Golden Thread' weaves the 2024/25 Delivery Plan into service planning, resource allocation and setting staff objectives ensuring all involved can see how their work contributes to the achievement of the Council's objectives.

SDC has a well-developed and established framework for performance monitoring with its 'Golden Thread' running through its approach. This includes two parts: measuring the Council Plan targets set out in the yearly action plan on a quarterly basis and tracking the progress of key performance indicators of services. Regular engagement on performance is held with reporting and discussion by officers and




Members through the Management Team, the Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny. This also includes benchmarking against other councils and using data and insight from a number of sources including the Office for National Statistics and the inclusion of The Office for Local Government (Oflog) measures. Whilst onsite, the peer team observed thorough and constructive discussion at Cabinet on performance measures and targets.

Through the use of performance data, the Council is able to highlight some strong examples of service delivery. For example in the delivering of its waste services and recycling; customer services relating to the waste service; and land charges. This is further highlighted in the LGA's [LGIinform report](#) [accessed March 2024] which benchmarks SDC's performance against other CIPFA near neighbours. The peer team were really impressed with what has been achieved in the waste service, demonstrating effective delivery. Additionally, the peer team heard about the transformation in the Land Charges service, through a digitisation process. Historically the Land Charges service was underperforming, but the transformation has resulted in the service now being regarded as a top performing service. SDC also has an impressive record on housing delivery – with 3,000 new units delivered between 2021-2023 (1,000 affordable) – which is particularly impressive given the challenges in delivery in this largely rural District.

The joint working and shared services are working well and delivering for SDC and its partners and includes the waste contract, Local Plan, Legal Services, Occupational Health, and training. The Council recognises that one of its strongest partnerships is with Warwick District Council (WDC) where it shares an economic geography. SDC is developing a joint Local Plan with WDC and recently published a South Warwickshire Economic Development Strategy. The shared working arrangements are important to SDC and it recognises that, despite the planned creation of a South Warwickshire District Council not going ahead, WDC remains a close partner locally with shared service arrangements remaining in place.

The peer team saw that a key strength for the Council is its evidence-led



development of strategies and its strong use of data and feedback. The Council has invested in this approach, undertaking in-depth work to inform the development of its strategies. The existing Citizens' Panel is a good engagement mechanism and the peer team met with residents who clearly want to play a more active part in the future success of the District, engaging with the Council directly not only via consultations. The residents recognise the challenges facing the area, and the wider financial challenges facing the public sector, and the Council has the opportunity to develop the Citizens' Panel to one of direct engagement on a range of opportunities and challenges. The Panel could become a 'sounding board' for the Council, as well as a 'touchpoint' to test ideas, which could be valuable to the Chief Executive and Leader, particularly as they take the Council on the next stage of its journey. It will be important that the Panel has the opportunity to engage on matters that are important to them, particularly the range of communities outside of Stratford-upon-Avon, and that a feedback loop is provided so the Panel can see how they are influencing the Council.

Similarly, the Town and Parish Councils are also keen to engage fully with the Council and a regular engagement process in the form of a Parish Forum may facilitate this. A Parish Forum, or similar mechanism, may also provide the opportunity for all parishes across the large geographical area of the District to discuss issues, debate matters of interest and be informed about a range of relevant topics. The development of a Parish Forum may also present an opportunity to respond to recommendations from the recent LGA Planning Peer Review.


The peer team considers there is benefit in further communicating the Council's priorities more widely to residents and partners, and as part of this approach for the Council to act as a proactive convenor to bring together partners and resources. SDC has an important role in bringing together partners, including businesses, and resources from a range of stakeholders to deliver on the collective ambitions of the District and through enhanced internal communications and external communications it can further build on the current engagements.

## 4.2 Organisational and place leadership

The Council now has a Liberal Democrat-led administration with Leader, Deputy Leader and 5 Cabinet Members. The peer team heard how the political change since the elections has been handled well, with the new administration feeling well supported in turning their priorities into plans for the Council. The new administration is viewed as being knowledgeable and passionate for the District and is now keen to get on with the delivery of its ambitions.

The Council has a Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive and along with 5 Heads of Service - which includes the Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer – comprise SDC's Management Team. The CEX is described positively by all the team met with and as "*supportive and having an open door policy*". There have been some recent new appointments to the Management Team and these changes have had a positive impact in terms of learning and bringing experiences from elsewhere. The Management Team has also invested in senior officer leadership team development – organising a series of workshops and coaching to support continual improvement. There are 30 service managers reporting to the Management Team and the Council describes the structure as being intentionally flat. The officer management team has regular programmed opportunities to meet together and this includes Management Team meeting weekly and a Service Managers Forum every six weeks for wider discussions. This helps to support the development of good relationships and to mitigate against silo working across the Council.

The Council does recognise that there are challenges in recruitment and retention (particularly in Planning and Environmental Health) and the issues in an ageing workforce – with nearly half of staff aged over 50, which has increased from 35% in 2006. The Council's Staff Strategy has been developed and ensuring an emphasis on the employee lifecycle e.g. recruiting, retaining, developing and succession planning will help to address this. Following agreement all aspects of this new Strategy need to be delivered.




There are some good examples of how the Council is working well with partners within the District and regionally including around community safety, health and wellbeing, the culture offers and economic development. The peer team saw first-hand the impressive close joint innovative work with the University of Warwick and the Council on the Wellesbourne Campus to attract high end technology manufacturing to the District and deliver on shared economic ambitions. This is a great example of joint working and SDC should consider how it can build on the experience of this approach in working collaboratively with other partners. Partners we spoke to would welcome increased interaction with the Council and the new Cabinet Members. The peer team considers there is benefit in the Council mapping its partners and identifying how to maximise on these opportunities.

SDC has some good examples of where it is developing important strategic objectives across the District (and wider) with partners. This includes the approach to the joint Local Plan (where SDC and WDC are working towards a Preferred Options consultation in Autumn 2024, with adoption expected by 2027) and recent development of the South Warwickshire Economic Development Strategy. This creates a strong platform for the Council to progress a longer term place vision and narrative, for instance up to 2040, and also to bind together the Council's wider strategies including Growing Opportunities, which was the Council's response to the County Council approving a Countywide Approach to Levelling Up in Warwickshire in July 2022.

### **4.3 Governance and culture**

Officers and Members described the Council as having a supportive organisational culture where individuals can make positive changes for the District. There are good relationships between staff and the Management Team and officers feel they are empowered to make appropriate decisions. They enjoy working for the Council - this was clear from the Staff Survey, the peer team's focus group with staff, and discussion with the Trade Union.




SDC has undertaken regular staff surveys and developed action plans to respond to areas for improvement since 2000. The peer team saw this was a well-structured and thorough approach which ensures all areas are addressed. The Council has a positive working relationship with the Trade Union in supporting staff, including rolling out jointly funded menopause awareness training and developing HR processes and procedures. Staff the peer team met with were positive about working for the Council and described an organisation which was supportive with good employee engagement. Appraisals and 121s are well embedded throughout the Council and these are regular, with mid-year reviews in place.

An area for further attention is around the Council's values as the peer team found that they are not consistently known across the organisation. Staff were aware that the Council had values but could not name them all, so further work to embed these through the Staff Strategy may support this.

Staff did note that there appears to be a lack of consistency in how the hybrid arrangements are applied. The rationale and benefits for the hybrid arrangements post-Covid – requiring staff to be in the office for at least 40% of their working week - would benefit from being re-emphasising to staff as this was not consistently clear to them.

Member/Member and Member/officer relationships are good. This was heard across the organisation and cross-party and all Councillors the peer team met were keen to play a positive part in the future of the District. Cabinet meetings are efficient and with good constructive debate and input from non-administration Councillors. Scrutiny is also seen as effective with good relationships with the Executive, utilising task and finish groups, and is resourced appropriately. There are a range of tools as part of the scrutiny process and programme and the Council is keen to ensure that its approach continues to develop and remain effective.

There is an opportunity to build further on the positive Member and officer




relationships and organise more collaborative sessions to create a shared understanding of issues and enable delivery. For instance, the programme of activity between the Cabinet and the Management Team on the development of the Council Plan was well structured and collaborative and SDC may want to consider how this model can be built upon and applied to other work.

The support for Members following elections was seen as good and the Democratic Services and the Elections Team were highlighted as being particularly strong and supportive by Councillors. Members did reflect that some of the activity was “*fast and furious*” following May 2023 and that there may be opportunity now to reflect on what comes next for Member development. The Council recognises that given 21 new councillors were elected there may be an opportunity to now review the offer for Members and encourage all Councillors to take up these opportunities.

Members may also wish to consider a more consistent approach to collaborative working with Town and Parish Councils, including clearly establishing respective responsibilities, two way communication methods and a programme of training and events. This has now started and Members are having these conversations – with the Leader’s ambition to visit all the Parish and Town Councils widely praised. However, with over 110 parishes SDC may want to consider how this can be continued in a manageable format. Similarly there is an opportunity to further strengthen political and officer leadership engagement with the other district councils within the County.

The approach to risk and safeguarding across the organisation is seen as effective. Responsibility for risk sits with the s151 Officer and strategic risks are discussed regularly and collectively by the Management Team. Statutory officer meetings take place bi-monthly and as needed. This can positively be built upon with the inclusion of internal audit in some of these conversations which would add value and strengthen SDC’s approach.




The Council Plan and Change Programme is clearly important to the Council and it has a commitment to invest £2.2M in this. The Programme was widely referenced but would benefit from accountabilities being more clearly defined and understood. The peer team urges the Council to introduce a clear, resourced change programme with an ambitious vision. The peer team's observations on this programme in order to take this forward include: set a vision; ensure there is increased ownership from the Cabinet and Leadership Team; review the budget and resource allocation to the programme; and clarify the project management framework, including timeframes, implementation plans, and communication. The peer team also suggests that the Council considers how the change programme links with the Council's values, the identification of change champions from amongst staff and that there is early and consistent involvement from colleagues in Human Resources.

#### **4.4 Financial planning and management**

SDC has a stable and well managed financial position. The Council has comprehensively considered and mitigated the risks in the medium term and these are clearly set out in its financial papers. This includes the decline in Government grant funding and increased inflation pressures, where the Council has responded to meet these challenges. SDC is rightfully mindful of the potential challenges in the outcome of any Fair Funding Review and business rates reset and that additional activity by the Council may be necessary to respond to this. The budget considers ongoing risks and also opportunities to invest in delivering priorities – and the peer team considers this to be a very sound approach.

SDC has a good reserves position with a forecast position of £9.5M at the end of 2024/25 which has provided opportunities for investment in change activity, as well as the priorities in the Council Plan. The Council's minimum reserve is set at £3M and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is currently projecting that these will reduce to around £3M over the next 5 years. The Council's Change Programme is therefore important to implement over the coming years and safeguard SDC's






financial position.

The peer team considers that the budget monitoring process is effective and that the budget is regularly considered by Cabinet and by Scrutiny – with Members receiving regular updates. Service managers also receive monthly budget monitoring reports. The Council outturn from 2023/24 is expected to be favourable and with an underspend of £1.1M. The peer team considers that there is a good understanding of the Council's financial position by both Members and officers. The peer team saw a real pride in the financial position of SDC by Members and officers in delivering their priorities within budget, particularly in the context of the current financial position of other councils.

The peer team recognises the inherent difficulties in the current situation with regards to local authority audit for councils but the draft accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23 have not yet been published, or considered by SDC's Councillors. The peer team strongly recommends that the Council should now prioritise completing these which will allow SDC to prioritise the 2023/24 accounts to be completed in line with statutory deadlines to ensure a smooth transition to the new external auditors and effective oversight of its overall financial position.

There would also be a clear benefit in increased political oversight of the accounts production process and timelines, with Audit Committee having the opportunity to play a positive role. Additionally, with a new Chair in place consideration should be given to reviewing the effectiveness of the Committee in line with CIPFA best practice guidance. Internal Audit arrangements are operating effectively but would benefit from being re-emphasised to improve the controls in place to safeguard the organisation, with a focus on new activities arising from the Council Plan. This is good practice to keep under review and a new municipal year provides an opportune review point.

The peer team heard consistently how the Council was 'debt free' and whilst it does




not have any external debt it does have some existing internal borrowing. Some of the ambitious Council projects in future are likely to require external borrowing as the natural part of a capital programme. This is currently outlined in the financial strategies but effective communication on the implications will be required as this will be a change in thinking for some parts of the Council and they will need to understand and be comfortable with the rationale for this.

The peer team heard about the opportunities provided through the allocation of growth funding including the Climate Change programme. Funding has been agreed for the Change Programme and Climate Change Fund. However increased granularity on how this will be used, including the process for allocation by Members, is required as currently this is unclear. As SDC enters the next budget setting process there is a good opportunity now to review the process for how future growth bids would benefit from ongoing and clearer alignment with Council Plan activities and clarifying the governance for allocation.

#### **4.5 Capacity for improvement**

SDC has a strong staff cohort who are loyal and committed to the Council. There is good corporate knowledge from long service records and a huge amount of knowledge about the District, partners and the key challenges of the area. This is an important factor for future improvement and cannot be underestimated. However, the Council recognises that this is borne out of the fact that the Council has an ageing workforce and succession planning is therefore key to the Council's future, as well as meeting the challenges in recruitment. The Council will want to ensure that it continues to address the issue of succession planning and the peer team urges it to further consider how it can continue to support its staff – particularly the 'rising stars'. Within the organisation it will want to consider how it continues to identify and support these staff, nurture them with appropriate learning and development opportunities and retain them.




A Staff Strategy has been developed and this is currently going through the final approval processes. In this SDC has demonstrated how in the current environment it has put the time, effort and investment into staff. The peer team recognises that recruitment challenges are addressed within the Staff Strategy. It is a challenging environment but the Council represents a great opportunity for incoming staff and there is an opportunity to develop an 'employer of choice' approach which would outline the benefits of working for the organisation.

The Council also recognises that a Learning and Development Strategy needs to be developed. This should underpin the delivery of the Council Plan - to ensure there are the right people, with the right skills delivering the Council's ambitions for the future. Together, the Staff Strategy and Learning and Development Strategy put the Council in a strong place to continue its journey, delivered by skilled officers. It is acknowledged that the HR team is lean and perhaps some dedicated Organisational Development resource could support delivery of this work.

Officers the peer team met with discussed the value of staff networks and referenced the Respect Champion Group and the Health and Wellbeing Group which are to be established. There are opportunities to look at this more widely and staff would welcome further opportunities to network with one another and to look at wider issues, including Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion. Whilst staff most definitely feel well-informed, strengthening staff networks would give more staff the opportunity to influence work in the design phase.

The Ways of Working (Wow) project has been a really positive example of SDC delivering improvements in the way it is organised to deliver effectively. The project considered ways to empower and support staff and Councillors to work in different ways through 4 key areas: the workforce; work tools; workspace; and workflows to support cultural change through training, guidance, education, and communication. This has been important to SDC and positive changes have been delivered to the work environment and delivery processes. The Council can continue to build on the momentum of this in further developing its Change Programme – as this should be



the key focus of activity for how SDC will continue to improve as an organisation.

Climate change is a clear priority for SDC and it has committed financial resources and recruited a Climate Change Project Manager. This has signalled immediately to the organisation that this is a priority for the new administration.

SDC is reviewing its future approach to communications through the development of a new Communications Strategy. To support this there is an opportunity to engage the LGA to undertake a health check of the approach to internal and external communications. The peer team knows that the Council recognises there is more which can be done here and SDC can look at this to tell the ‘Stratford-on-Avon story’ and build upon its significant assets.

## 5. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings.

Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the peer challenge. The CPC process includes a progress review within twelve months of the CPC, which provides space for the council’s senior leadership to update peers on its progress against the recommendations from this report.

In the meantime, Helen Murray, Principal Adviser for the West Midlands, is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Helen is available to discuss any further support the Council requires [helen.murray@local.gov.uk](mailto:helen.murray@local.gov.uk).