

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE	
Report of Camden's 2025 Corporate Peer Challenge (CS/2026/04)	
REPORT OF	
Leader of the Council	
FOR SUBMISSION TO	DATE
Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee	13 January 2026
Cabinet	14 January 2026
STRATEGIC CONTEXT	
<p>We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. It sets out the Council's commitment to working in alongside our partners and our communities to meet our citizens' aspirations for their lives and the places where they live, and to address the challenges that too many people in Camden experience.</p> <p>We Make Camden and The Way We Work articulate how Camden will adapt over time and develop our ways of working to ensure that we have the capabilities to play our part in meeting our communities' aspirations, in partnership with businesses, the voluntary and community sector, and our wider partnership.</p> <p>The Corporate Peer Challenge regime is a key feature of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. Camden's Corporate Peer Challenge is a tool to help the Council improve and ensure that we are equipped to meet our communities' ambitions and respond to our shared challenges.</p>	
SUMMARY OF REPORT	
<p>Corporate Peer Challenges are offered and run by the Local Government Association as part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government. This offer is underpinned by the principles of sector-led improvement to support continuous improvement across local government.</p> <p>A Corporate Peer Challenge for Camden Council took place in November 2025 and was conducted by a Peer Team led by the Chief Executive of Hackney Council and the Leader of Milton Keynes City Council, and also including senior</p>	

officers from other local authorities and officers from the Local Government Association.

Following a Corporate Peer Challenge, a report outlining the key findings and recommendations from the Peer Team is shared with the host council. In the spirit of openness and transparency, host councils are required to publish their reports. This report to Cabinet presents the Peer Team's report of the Corporate Peer Challenge in Camden Council.

A further report will be brought to Cabinet within six months that sets out Camden Council's detailed response to the recommendations within the Corporate Peer Challenge report.

Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information

No documents that require listing were used in the preparation of this report.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report and make any recommendations to Cabinet.

Cabinet is asked to:

- Note the report of Camden Council's Corporate Peer Challenge
- Agree with the interim steps detailed at paragraph 3.2
- Note the intention to bring a report that sets out in detail how Camden Council will respond to the recommendations within the report of the Corporate Peer Challenge within six months

Signed: Kathryn Myers, Interim Executive Director Corporate Services

A handwritten signature in black ink on a yellow rectangular background. The signature reads "K Myers" and is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Date: 2nd January 2026

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Corporate Peer Challenge programme is run by the Local Government Association (LGA). Its purpose is to support continuous improvement and assurance across local government and to assist local authorities in meeting their Best Value duty. As such, the programme is a key part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government.
- 1.2. Corporate Peer Challenges are underpinned by the principles of sector-led improvement. Teams of peers visit host local authorities for up to a week and spend this time reviewing key finance, performance, and governance information; speaking with officers, members, and partners; and visiting public services and community locations. Peer Teams write reports based on their findings from the week, which include recommendations for host local authorities to consider. In the spirit of transparency, host local authorities are asked to publish these reports.
- 1.3. Camden Council's previous Corporate Peer Challenge took place in December 2019, and its report was published in January 2020. In addition to the core themes of a Corporate Peer Challenge, set out at para. 2.2, Camden Council asked that the Peer Team focus on Camden's model of participation and partnerships. Cabinet received a report on the Council's response to this Corporate Peer Challenge in December 2021.

2. CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

- 2.1. The LGA recommend that local authorities have Corporate Peer Challenges approximately every five years. In line with this recommendation, Camden Council invited a team of peers to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2025. The Peer Team was led by Councillor Peter Marland, Leader of Milton Keynes City Council and Dawn Carter-MacDonald, Chief Executive of Hackney Council.
- 2.2. The LGA stipulates that every Corporate Peer Challenge includes a focus on five core themes, so that it is possible to provide assurance of a local authority's corporate health and performance. These are:
 - 2.2.1. Local priorities and outcomes
 - 2.2.2. Organisational and place leadership
 - 2.2.3. Governance and culture
 - 2.2.4. Financial planning and management
 - 2.2.5. Capacity for improvement
- 2.3. In addition to these core themes, Camden Council asked that the Peer Team to focus on Camden's model of promoting inclusive economic growth. This request recognised that Camden has excellent and innovative initiatives that seek to ensure that local communities are able to contribute to and benefit

from the economic growth that is generated in Camden, but that these are not yet fully joined up into a clear, collective approach that everyone inside and outside the Council can recognise. Camden is also home to economic opportunities of national significance, including Euston and HS2. The request that the Peer Team focus on inclusive economic growth sought to ensure that Camden Council's approach to these questions benefits from external support and challenge.

- 2.4. The Corporate Peer Challenge took place from Tuesday 11th November to Friday 14th November. During this week, the Peer Team conducted 22 one-to-one interviews and 15 roundtable conversations with officers and members, went on seven visits to services and community locations across Camden, and conducted five focus groups with Council staff and representatives of partner organisations. In total, the Peer Team spoke with approximately 150 people in Camden during the Corporate Peer Challenge.
- 2.5. The Peer Team's report of the Corporate Peer Challenge for Camden is appended to this report at Appendix 1. It sets out the Peer Team's findings from their week in Camden and review of Camden documentation, and on the basis of these findings it sets out a series of recommendations for Camden Council to consider.
- 2.6. The Peer Team's report recognises that Camden is a well-run and high performing Council, with a purpose and values-led culture that supports psychological safety among staff, good relationships between Members and officers, and productive partnerships between the Council and the wider local partnership. The report notes that Camden's model of relational practice is a key enabler of good decisions at a leadership and governance level and has improved outcomes for residents. While the report notes that Camden faces a significant financial challenge, it notes that planning for how the Council will address this challenge is well underway. The report also notes that the Council could leverage its investment in data and insight to more effectively prioritise and target resources.
- 2.7. Recognising that Camden Council requested a specific focus on inclusive economic growth, the Peer Team's report notes that the Council is in a positive position to unlock opportunities for residents and communities from growth initiatives such as the redevelopment of Euston that have national and international significance. The Peer Team's report recommends that Camden Council develops its approach to bottom-up and community-driven economic growth and resources the Council's Capital Programme and regeneration ambitions in such a way that recognises their scale.

3. RESPONSE TO THE CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

- 3.1. The detailed recommendations of the Corporate Peer Challenge are set out in the report at Appendix 1. A report will be brought to Cabinet within six months that sets out Camden Council's considered responses to each of these

recommendations.

- 3.2. At this early stage, Camden Council can make a number of initial commitments in response to the findings and recommendations set out in the Corporate Peer Challenge report.
 - 3.2.1. The Council will develop and publish an Inclusive Economic Growth strategy in the coming year.
 - 3.2.2. The Council will continue to progress existing plans to develop and publish a new Medium-Term Financial Strategy in the coming year that responds to the financial challenges that the report identifies.
 - 3.2.3. The Council will further develop its approach to organisational focus and data- and insight-driven prioritisation. This development will be set out in future iterations of the Council's Insight, Learning, and Impact report, which are published on a bi-annual basis.
 - 3.2.4. The Council will continue to develop and embed its model of relational practice.
 - 3.2.5. The Council will build on the member induction programme operated after the last local elections as the starting point for the next member induction programme. The Council will continue to deliver a comprehensive induction and training programme for elected members following the local elections in May 2026.

4. PROPOSAL AND REASONS

- 4.1. Cabinet is asked to:
 - 4.1.1. Note the report of Camden Council's Corporate Peer Challenge
 - 4.1.2. Agree with the interim steps detailed at paragraph 3.2
 - 4.1.3. Note the intention to bring a report that sets out in detail how Camden Council will respond to the recommendations within the report of the Corporate Peer Challenge within six months

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1. Do Nothing
 - 5.1.1. Cabinet could decide not to note the report of the Corporate Peer Challenge. Doing so would be non-compliant with the Improvement and Assurance Framework for Local Government and so this option is not recommended.

- 5.2. Note the report and consider how Camden may choose to respond to its recommendations
 - 5.2.1. This option aligns to Camden's commitments to openness and transparency and meets the expectation that councils respond to the reports of Corporate Peer Challenges. As such, this option is recommended.

6. WHAT ARE THE KEY IMPACTS / RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

- 6.1. There is a reputational risk associated with the report of the Corporate Peer Challenge, in terms of any feedback from the Peer Team that may have negative connotations. This risk is outweighed by the reputational risk associated with choosing not to note or respond to the report, which would suggest that Camden is not being open or transparent about feedback from our peers. The reputational risk is also outweighed by Camden's commitment to transparency, learning and improvement.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. It is noted that any proposals that result from the peer review such as those listed at 3.2 in the report will need to go through the appropriate decision making routes. There are no other legal comments.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The Director of Finance has been consulted and his comments incorporated into the report.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. The proposals in this report have no specific environmental impacts. Where there are environmental impacts associated with the actions that Camden Council intends to take in order to respond to the recommendations within the Corporate Peer Challenge report, these will be set out in the report to Cabinet that sets out the detailed responses to the recommendations.

10. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

- 10.1. A further report will be brought to Cabinet within six months that sets out in detail how Camden Council intends to respond to the recommendations set

out in the Corporate Peer Challenge report. This will include a timeline for implementation of the actions that respond to each recommendation.

11. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Report of the Corporate Peer Challenge for Camden Council

REPORT ENDS