

**Report to  
Communities Select Committee  
Date of meeting: 4<sup>th</sup> September 2018**



**Subject: Museum, Heritage & Culture LGA Peer Challenge**  
**Officer contact for further information: J Chandler (Extn.4214)**  
**Committee Secretary: J. Leither (Extn. 4756)**

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**Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

- 1) That the Communities Select Committee receives a report on the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge review of Museum, Heritage and Culture Services.

**Report:**

Earlier this year, the Council's Museum, Heritage and Culture service was successful in securing a competitive Peer Challenge Review of its services undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA). The cost of £7000 was fully funded by Arts Council England and the Local Government Association.

Ours was one of only three authorities in the country selected for this type of review which was undertaken by the following team of experienced professionals from the museum and cultural sector;

Mark Harrison – LGA Peer Challenge Manager;

Councillor Nick Worth – Executive Member for Culture & Emergency Services, Lincolnshire County Council and Deputy Leader South Holland Council; and,

Tony Witton – Cultural and Creative Economy Service Manager, Kent County Council

The team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. They then spent two days onsite at Epping Forest Museum, during which they; spoke to more than 25 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders; gathered information and views from more than 12 meetings and, collectively spent more than 75 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 2 weeks in Epping.

It is important to highlight that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement and 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.

**Scope and focus of the review**

The peer team considered a range of aspects of the service as identified with senior managers and particularly, recent work undertaken to support long –term sustainability,

including the establishment of a Cultural Development Trust and development of commercial activity. This included the following;

1. EFDC MHC capacity to deliver its ambition; is a small organisation being overstretched?
2. Are the key areas of focus the right ones, with specific reference to:
  - engaging with harder to reach audiences to inform service planning
  - building sustainable fundraising support for MHC and the new development trust
  - providing off site services across Epping and Broxbourne
  - maximising the benefits of partnership working
3. Provide Members with an external perspective on current processes and emerging options.
4. Provide a view on whether local need is being met, programme mix and approach to income generation.
5. Is there clarity in the strategic vision of the MHC service and have all service delivery and development options been fully considered?

### **Peer Challenge Report**

The attached report at Appendix 1, provides a summary of the peer team's findings over the course of the review, which includes areas of work that were already in progress and new recommendations for action. These will all be included within the Museums, Heritage and Culture 5 year Business Plan, which is currently being produced.

**Reason for decision:** N/A

**Options considered and rejected:** N/A

**Consultation undertaken:** A range of consultation was undertaken as part of the Peer Review, as contained within the attached report.

**Service review:** The MHC Business Plan will include recommendations from the Peer Challenge and a range of already planned service changes.

**Resource implications:** The Peer Review was fully funded by Arts Council England.

**Personnel:** Staff and Members of the Council and external partners and were interviewed and consulted as part of the process.

**Land:** N/A

**Community Plan/BVPP reference:** Corporate Plan 3.2, 6.3,7.1,9.2

**Relevant statutory powers:** N/A

**Background papers:** LGA Culture Peer Challenge Epping Forest District Council.

**Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:** N/A

**Key Decision Ref (if required)** N/A