

# LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Feedback report





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## 1. Introduction

A team of local government peers, led by the Local Government Association (LGA) delivered a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) from 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025. This was the council's second peer challenge, with the previous one being delivered in September 2021 (report available [here](#)).

CPC is a well-established and respected improvement and assurance tool that provides robust, strategic and credible challenge and support to councils. Further details about the CPC process can be found in Appendix A.


Our peer team consisted of highly experienced and knowledgeable senior local government councillor and officer peers (see section four). We considered the five core areas covered by all CPCs: local priorities and outcomes, organisational and place leadership, governance and culture, financial planning and management and capacity for improvement.

This report provides NBBC with feedback on the peer team's findings. It provides the council with a set of a high-level recommendations alongside further recommendations under each of the CPC's core areas. There is an expectation the council will publish this report and a clear action plan to respond to all the recommendations highlighted.

## 2. Executive summary

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's councillors and officers care deeply for the communities of the borough and are passionate about the area. They are knowledgeable about the place and there is a clear commitment to delivering good outcomes and positive change for communities. This is particularly evident through the significant physical regeneration work being delivered in both Nuneaton and Bedworth where there are some very significant and ambitious projects which the council is delivering.

The leadership of NBBC understands the issues its communities are facing, and particularly the health and economic challenges. Addressing these is a key focus for




activity which is reflected in the refreshed corporate plan. There are clearly set out priority areas which articulate the vision and ambition. However, the council does need to ensure that the plan is well understood by staff and councillors as well as partners, as the peer team found that this was not consistently the case.

The council is in a period of transition and whilst it should maintain momentum on delivering change it does need to recognise and respond to its capacity constraints. The council feels very busy: on the range of business as usual activity; external activity where it is leading significant local work on regeneration and leisure centre redevelopment and refurbishment; responding to the needs of local government reorganisation (LGR); and at the same time modernising its internal ways of working. This is making considerable demands on the limited capacity of the council. It will be challenging for NBBC to maintain a focus on all of these simultaneously so it will need to keep its capacity under review at this time of numerous competing demands.

NBBC should consider some aspects of governance, particularly around decision-making. The current approach is in line with the constitution but the peer team reflected that the council may wish to review the principles which govern decision-making, including delegation levels, so that it is clear which decisions can be made by officers under delegated powers, and how those delegated powers will be exercised and overseen. The council will want to consider what works best for NBBC in terms of ensuring councillors remain focused on the strategic direction of the council whilst officers can focus on the delivery of these policies.

Although it is recognised that NBBC is facing a financial challenge to set a balanced budget in future years, its challenges are not insurmountable and primarily link to how member priorities and ambitions can be delivered beyond statutory service provision. However, further action is needed to articulate how the council is addressing the funding gap which is a cumulative total of £11m over the life of the current MTFP (2025/26 to 2028/29). This will be better understood following the outcome of the Fair Funding Review but the council does need to further develop its thinking on addressing the budget gap now for 2026/27 which stands at £2.076m.

NBBC would benefit from clarity on what is being delivered now and the timescales for completion for some of its projects, as colleagues and partners were unclear.



Sharing forward plans will also help with managing expectations, as it should also not take for granted that others – both internal and external - know what the council is delivering. It can use this approach to share realistic timescales about lead in times for significant projects so people understand the longer term outcomes, and the steps required to achieve that, for example around economic development.

The peer team heard from those within and outside of the council about how NBBC can improve its approach to both internal and external communications. There is an opportunity to utilise social media channels and take a more coordinated approach to convey the vision and ‘tell the story’. Internal communications would also benefit from reviewing how to effectively communicate with staff who are working in a more hybrid way and are not coming together in the office, and how formal and informal methods can support this including opportunities for more networking.

### 3. Recommendations

The following are the peer team’s key recommendations which have been prioritised on the grounds of urgency and importance.

#### 3.1 Consider how to further embed the council’s corporate plan


NBBC’s leadership needs to maintain its focus on embedding and delivering the corporate plan, as the priority areas were not consistently articulated by councillors, officers and partners.

#### 3.2 Develop further detail on how the council will meet the gaps in the MTFP and the approach it will take

The council needs to articulate how it will meet the budget gaps and clearly set out what will be delivered by when. In doing so it should be clear about the potential impact of commercial income and activity on its budget.

#### 3.3 Review the council’s delegations and decision making

The current approach is in line with the constitution but one where some



significant decisions have been delegated to officers which might be expected to be made by councillors, and vice-versa. Consider what works best for timely decision making and how councillors can fulfil their strategic role, with officers focused on the delivery of priorities.

**3.4 Be clearer on how the ambitious regeneration links together as part of a programme, and the focus this has on economic development**

Provide clarity on the overall plan and how all of the elements fit together as part of the vision.

**3.5 External and internal communications need to convey the vision and tell the story**

Improve the approach to both internal and external communications to provide a narrative about what the council is doing. As part of this utilise up-to-date social media channels and take a more coordinated approach to convey the council's vision.

**3.6 Consider the impact of different ways of working on the organisational culture**

Consider the impact of remote and hybrid working on the council's culture.

**3.7 There are opportunities to reflect on scrutiny**

This should be reviewed regularly to ensure scrutiny remains effective for the needs of the council.

**3.8 Review staff and member development needs and develop an approach**

Staff and member development needs to be continuously reviewed to ensure it is based on need and the current context. Use the people plan and engagement with staff to develop this for officers. Consider dedicated budget for member development and utilise other external support providers, including the LGA.

### 3.9 Undertake a staff survey and use this to inform staff engagement routes and networking opportunities

The previous staff survey was delivered in-house. Using an external provider will provide an independent view and allow benchmarking of the current position and allow monitoring of outcomes.

In addition to the key recommendations section five of this report captures our detailed feedback and additional recommendations within each of the CPC's core areas of focus.


## 4. Peer team

Peer challenges are conducted by experienced LGA peers, including elected councillors and senior officers. The composition of the peer team was shaped by the specific focus of the challenge, with the LGA selecting peers based on their relevant expertise. The peers for this CPC were:

- **Cllr Bryony Rudkin** - Deputy Leader of Ipswich Borough Council and LGA Regional Peer for the South East and East of England. Labour Member peer
- **Cllr Craig Leyland** - Leader of the Council - East Lindsey District Council. Conservative Member peer
- **Jane Eaton** – Chief Executive, Horsham District Council
- **Alison Scott** - Director of Finance, Three Rivers District Council
- **Liam Hornsby** - Associate Director of Customer and Corporate Services and Monitoring Officer, Watford Borough Council
- **James Millington** - Peer Challenge Manager (LGA)

## 5. Detailed feedback and recommended actions

This section of the report provides detailed feedback along with additional recommendations related to the five core areas of focus.



When developing the action plan (in response to the CPC's findings), the council should consider both the key recommendations presented in section three and the additional recommendations set out below.

### **5.1 Local priorities and outcomes**

There is a strong feeling of pride in the borough from both councillors and officers. The passion and knowledge for the place is shared across the areas of both Nuneaton and Bedworth and it feels like there is parity in the energy and enthusiasm the council has for these two distinct places. This is a sound basis for collective working and to make impactful and positive change for the communities of the borough especially in this time of change for the council locally.


Following the change in administration at the 2024 elections NBBC's corporate plan has been refreshed, outlining clear priorities for the council. There is good recognition from the leadership of the challenges facing the borough particularly around health and the economy. NBBC has clearly set out these challenges and arranged the priority areas in the corporate plan around these themes. However, this is not yet clearly embedded across the council. The priorities in the plan are clearly articulated and accessible and it can be utilised further and reflected in the approach to other future council documents and strategies.

### **Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context?**

The peer team found that the refreshed corporate plan was focused on the issues facing the borough and the priority areas of: Place and prosperity; Housing, health, and communities; Green spaces and environment; and Your Council. These priorities are informed by the local context and the plan was designed to meet the challenges of addressing the core needs of residents, ensuring a strong economy, delivering good jobs, affordable, good quality homes, and facilities and services that support healthy lives.

Within the borough five areas are classed as being in the top 10% most deprived nationally, there are low median weekly pay levels when compared regionally and






nationally, and there are relatively low economic activity rates. The health challenges facing the borough are significant and include below average cancer diagnoses, above average preventable cardiovascular mortality, and mental wellbeing indicators which are below the national average. NBBC is leveraging its power to improve the determinants of health including by improving the condition of its own housing stock, promoting active travel, and improving the quality of and access to fitness facilities. The council has a housing stock of around 6,000 properties, and is intending to expand this through housebuilding, with a series of new developments, and via acquisitions.

NBBC is investing in its housing stock and a full stock condition survey was completed in 2024, which identified that 92% of homes complied with the Decent Homes Standard. NBBC has also received £6m of funding from Homes England to support the building of more than 100 new homes, all with energy efficiency measures to support the health and wellbeing of tenants.

Following changes to national planning policy in 2021 NBBC is currently reviewing its local plan – the current one adopted in June 2019 covered up to 2031. The refreshed plan is at the examination stage and is due to be published in Autumn 2025. The plan seeks to deliver 9,810 homes and 87 hectares of employment land by 2039.

The borough demographics are predominantly white British, with Indian and Polish communities as the largest non-British communities. There is a significant Nepalese community, of around 1500, with the majority veterans. The peer team found that there is a good understanding of the diversity of the communities e.g. Gurkha community and with faith groups. The council understands this and recognises where future demographic changes are coming.

The peer team recognises that similar to other councils NBBC is in a period of change through the impact of LGR. This was a feature of many conversations the peer team had whilst onsite and the council leadership will want to continue to play an active role locally and keep the impacts of this on the council and the community under close review. People are concerned for the future and what this means for them personally, and for the communities of the borough.



NBBC wishes to continue developing relationships with the County Council and with County councillors in particular. The peer team heard about productive relationships between officers and councillors, and for instance the joint working of NBBC's Deputy Leader and locality funding.

### **Delivery against priorities and comparative performance**


The peer team reviewed NBBC's performance using [LG Inform](#) when compared to Cipfa near neighbours. The council demonstrates particularly good performance in relation to:

- In 2025/26 (quarter one), the council processed 100 per cent of planning applications for major and minor developments on time. This compares to 89 per in the comparison group of nearest neighbours.
- In 2023/24, at 487 the council had the highest level of affordable homes delivered within its comparison group, where the average was 119.

Despite this positive service performance, NBBC does recognise the challenges within the Borough, particularly around health and the economy for its communities. This is highlighted in the LG Inform performance benchmarking where the council perform less well, and in the council's own data and performance monitoring, as referenced above - particularly regarding the economy and health. Overall, the peer team think there is an opportunity with the use of Power BI and NBBC's own published data and monitoring to be more closely aligned to the priorities set out within the council plan.

### **Is there an organisation-wide approach to continuous improvement?**

Although there have been some recent improvements to the performance management approach NBBC acknowledges that there is more to be done.



Following an external audit report, the council has recently refreshed its performance framework and the key performance indicators (KPIs) have been reviewed for 2025/26. The council is also refreshing the approach to collecting and presenting KPIs and is beginning to utilise Power BI, implementing the system to make performance easier to view and respond to across the council. Reporting to the Corporate Executive Team (CET) and Overview and Scrutiny Panels, this will be expanded to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) with dashboards for service areas, and rolled out further for external reporting. This is a new approach for the council, and the peer team encourage it to continue to embed this.

NBBC does have a performance management policy in place and a framework to support officers and their development. However, it recognises that the annual development review process is not widely used and there is no system in place to track if 1:1s are being conducted. The council is currently developing a new people strategy which will help address this. NBBC should prioritise the completion and delivery of the people strategy to embed the approach so that staff are clear on their contributions to delivering council priorities, aligned to the corporate plan, and the important role they play in council-wide continuous improvement.

NBBC should consider the impact of different ways of working on the organisational culture. The peer team had mixed perspectives within the council on the impact of agile working on the culture. Developing and maintaining working relationships were important to many people the peer team met and there were some concerns raised that effective mechanisms were not in place to foster a shared culture. There were concerns from managers about the impact of less space within the Town Hall on their ability to support effective working relationships but some managers conversely felt that some staff were resistant to changes in working practices rather than there really not being enough desks to work at. The peer team encourage the council to consider how it can address these perception differences.

In addition to the recommendations made in section three of this report, including **consider how to further embed the council's corporate plan**, we recommend the following actions:

- In the LGR process continue to play an active role locally and keep the impacts of this on the council and the community under close review
- NBBC can continue to develop relationships with Warwickshire County Council and with County councillors in particular
- Continue to modernise and embed the approach to performance management
- Finalise the new people strategy, consider staff development and the links to the council plan priorities and the annual development process


## 5.2 Organisational and place leadership

The council is committed to improving the lives of the communities within Nuneaton and Bedworth. Both officers and members described a pride in the place and a commitment to improve lives through positive interventions and work of the council. The peer team found that the leadership role the council has can be further enhanced through closer working with partners to deliver priorities.

### Does the council provide effective local leadership?

Since the previous CPC in 2021 there have been some significant changes to the leadership of the NBBC. Following the elections in 2024 NBBC changed to a Labour-led administration. There has also been a new chief executive officer in place since June 2024, with changes also made to the management structure to bring in a new management level of assistant directors (ADs). This was designed to deliver operational leadership and create resource with capacity and skills to ensure services are being delivered effectively. Above these ADs four strategic director posts were created, designed to set direction for NBBC, working collaboratively with councillors, cabinet, and service areas.

The peer team found there was strong positive collective working across both the




cabinet and the CET. There have been some recent changes to cabinet and councillors are working well together with energy and ambition for the borough, advocating for Nuneaton and Bedworth. Similarly, the CET are demonstrating leadership, with collective support for each other. Cabinet and CET work well together with mutual respect. Having effective working relationships were described as being important to the council and the peer team found evidence that the political and managerial leadership had invested time in developing these. Councillors also understood the importance of cross-party relationships and there was an appreciation that these should be developed further.

The dominant issue at present is around LGR, and the leadership is focused on ensuring that NBBC has a strong voice in discussions with the other borough councils and the County Council. The peer team heard about the positive relationships with the other borough councils in Warwickshire, putting forward a case for a North and South Warwickshire unitary model. This has included working with other councils to jointly commission research and options. The peer team heard that NBBC and Warwickshire County staff relationships are good and County officers hold staff in high regard and they are recognised for their knowledge, experience and skills.

The peer team recognises that LGR does present potential challenges to: local relationships; maintaining council service delivery at a time of change; and the nervousness of staff, partners and communities for the future. The peer team urges NBBC to continue to consider how it can provide reassurance and engage and communicate with stakeholders about what this means for them. Change will happen and NBBC needs to consider what the future will be like and what the legacy of the council will be.

The council is a strong voice on place leadership and understands its issues. There is an ambitious regeneration programme to support this including The Grayson Place development in Nuneaton which will provide mixed-use commercial units which opens up the town centre and creates a number of units aiming to provide a new hub for food, drink, and a leisure offer. In Bedworth the Bedworth Physical Activity Hub is replacing the former leisure centre with up-to-date pool facilities, a 100-station fitness




centre, studio, and four court sports halls. The peer team think there is an opportunity to be clearer on how these link together as part of the overall vision for the borough and a communications strategy with consistent messaging, both internally and externally, would help.

### **Are there good relationships with partners and local communities?**

Partners were very complimentary about working with NBBC and positively described how the council engages with them. There are opportunities for further building on and developing these relationships, including with the arts sector, MIRA Technology Park, Business Improvement District and Towns Fund Board. NBBC can continue to work closely with these organisations and groups on shared ambitions for the borough. For example, the MIRA Technology Park is an internationally important centre which is of significant importance to the communities of NBBC and the priorities around economic development and supporting communities with accessing high quality and well-paid jobs. NBBC should be clear on the opportunities for harnessing the benefits of this development and its wider impact on the borough.

There are opportunities to improve the approach to external and internal communications to convey the vision and tell the story of what NBBC is delivering. This was a common theme and the council can consider how to be clearer on developing a narrative around what it is doing to 'join the dots' for people. NBBC can consider how it does this, by using capacity within the organisation or looking externally to other organisations or for example, to local students who may be able to provide additional capacity and creative thinking for the council. In doing this it can consider how to increase the reach across multiple platforms and move beyond more traditional approaches such as a reliance on issuing press releases.

NBBC should be clear on the functions outside of a borough council's usual span of activity which it delivers. The council does some great activity which is actually the responsibility of other organisations. For example, the work being done by NBBC on prevention to address health and wellbeing issues facing its communities. NBBC can be clearer what it is delivering and how this is benefiting communities at the local



level. The council will also want to consider how it can continue to fund this activity in the context of future financial challenges.

In addition to the key recommendations in section three including, **Be clearer on how the ambitious regeneration programme links together as part of a programme, and the focus this has on economic development and External and internal communications need to convey the vision and tell the story**, we also recommend the council progress the following actions:

- **Partners including the voluntary and community sector were very complimentary about working with NBBC and positively described how the council engages with them. There are opportunities for further building on and developing these relationships**
- **Be clear on the functions outside of a borough council's usual span of activity which the council delivers on to be clear on who is best to deliver.**


### **5.3 Governance and culture**

The peer team saw examples of recently enhanced corporate governance and assurance processes. However, NBBC will want to continue improvements in this area including ensuring that its decision making thresholds are appropriate, as this is especially important during a time of change for the council.

#### **Are there clear and robust governance arrangements?**

Although in line with the council's agreed processes, the peer team recommend that NBBC reviews its approach to delegations and decisions. While NBBC's constitution is detailed, and the council operates with in it, the peer team observed instances where decision-making responsibilities could be reviewed in line with best practice, with certain decisions being taken by officers rather than members, and vice versa. For example, with the refreshed corporate plan now in place cabinet can now focus on delivering the strategic priorities; the bigger projects with cabinet approvals; whilst





lower level policy decisions, for example, can be made by the head of paid service (HoPS) where there are delegated functions.

The approach to completing the annual governance statement (AGS) has been updated for 2024/25 but this should be further strengthened to capture necessary improvements. The updates have provided a different feel to the document but should more clearly cite strengthened governance and reflect these in the AGS alongside articulating a plan of how it intends to address these.

The risk management approach has been reviewed and updated following audit findings. The strategic risk register is reviewed at least quarterly by strategic directors and the chief executive, and the operational risk register is maintained within directorates by assistant directors, and updated at least annually, or when significant changes to risks occur. Operational registers are now due to be reviewed at the corporate governance group to ensure that they are adequate and that appropriate mitigations are in place. The peer team urge the council to continue to focus on this and maintain a grip on the new approach.


NBBC was unsuccessful in appointing an Independent Member onto the audit committee. The peer team recommend that this is revisited as this position is highly valued by other councils and this approach can be very helpful to the work of the committee especially when working with the external auditor.

### **Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?**

There are good relationships in place on many levels across the council. Senior officers and members work well together, working closely on shared aims for NBBC. Officers across the council also describe a 'family feeling' where they enjoy supporting each other, and many staff have worked with each other for a long time. The peer team also heard that relationships were strong for NBBC officers and other councils' officers, between the council and partners and also between the council and the unions. There are strong relationships in place which provides a sound basis for collective working towards a shared endeavour.

The three statutory officers have had regular meetings in place since February 2025





and describe being open and transparent with each other. These meetings also include the lead auditor from the Central Midlands Audit Partnership (CMAP). The peer team heard these meetings allow them to have challenging but positive discussions.


The leader and cabinet are keen to ensure that scrutiny is playing an active and important role in council governance. There are opportunities to reflect on this and improve support for scrutiny to maximise the impact of members and officers in terms of both accountability and policy development.

NBBC has a relatively new Monitoring Officer (MO) who was clearly well regarded by colleagues and they have started to make improvements to a range of processes. This includes the standards process where investigations which were taking up to 12 months had now been reduced to 3 months and councillor conduct appears to have improved as a result of this work. The MO may wish to look at development opportunities, such as the LLG Inspire programme, which also provides a broader support network of MOs from across the country.

### **How does the council provide Member and officer support?**

The peer team heard about the difficult time NBBC has had in relation to mental health within the organisation and the importance which the council has placed on supporting its staff. The peer team was impressed with the support which has been put in place for example around mental health first aiders, and the chief executive's approach to speaking to all staff on World Mental Health Day. Recent challenges had not formed part of the psyche of the organisation and people were positive about the leadership which has been demonstrated.

Officers the peer team met with commented very positively on the training opportunities available for staff. There were reflections that with the refreshed corporate plan there was now an opportunity to link a more strategic organisational development approach to this so there is a workforce which is well equipped to deliver, and taking a more coordinated organisational development approach would support this. Some staff did feel that the number of compulsory training courses they



had to take part in, and the requirement to attend these in person, was burdensome. We suggest the HoPS considers this reflection when reviewing the people strategy.

The council is due to complete the development of the people strategy in October. Following the launch of this NBBC may wish to commission an external staff survey to baseline where the council is in relation to the workforce currently, and then this can be used to track the outcomes of what is being delivered through the strategy.

The peer team heard that members were passionate about their own development and were keen to make the most of the opportunities which are available. The peer team do think that the member development programme and budget needs refreshing, as it has only recently commenced member briefings again.

The peer team heard that staff value the opportunities of coming together and networking. Officers want opportunities to come together in the room collectively. The council can continue to focus on how important it is to do this, particularly at a time of great change to the council such as LGR.

In addition to the key recommendations in section three of the report including: **Review the council's delegations and decision making; There are opportunities to reflect on scrutiny; Review staff and member development needs and develop an approach; and Undertake a staff survey and use this to inform staff engagement routes and networking opportunities**, we also recommend the council progress the following actions:

- **Within the annual governance statement strengthen governance and reflect these changes and improvements alongside an action plan**
- **Continue to focus on risk management and maintain a grip on the new approach**
- **Seek to appoint an independent member onto the audit committee**
- **Link the organisational development approach to the corporate plan so there is a workforce which is well equipped to deliver**
- **Create opportunities to bring officers together face to face, they value the**



**time together, especially at a time of significant change like LGR**

#### **5.4 Financial planning and management**

Although NBBC is facing a financial challenge to set a balanced budget in future years, this can be addressed by the council. In recent years, general fund reserves have been strengthened with the objective of achieving adequate levels to manage the risk profile of the authority. NBBC is not in a position of requiring exceptional financial support (EFS).


However, further action is needed to address the council's funding gap which is a cumulative total of £11m over the life of the current MTFP (2025/26 to 2028/29), as well as considering identifying additional financial capacity to meet its demands.

#### **Does the council have a clear understanding of its financial position?**

NBBC takes a prudent view of budgets and has strengthened its reserves. The council delivered within its budget in 2024/25 and the general fund outturn position at the end of 2024/25 with a budget of £21.153m was a small underspend of £0.251m, which was contributed to reserves. The housing revenue account (HRA) also had an underspend in 2024/25 of £0.4m. As at 31 March 2025, the council held £18.99m in specific earmarked reserves, capital earmarked reserves total £3.34m with revenue reserves totalling £15.65m.

The council has benefited from significant external funding. This has included £23.2m from the Towns Fund, Future High Street fund £13.3m, £14.95m of Levelling Up and £2.5m Sport England funding. Attracting this has allowed the council to progress its priorities for both Nuneaton and Bedworth.

The section 151 officer and deputy are bringing stability to the leadership of the finance team and a focus on financial administration and capacity. The council now has the basic building blocks in place and understands where it is in relation to its budget and the financial administration.




As required as part of the audit backlog programme, NBBC considered its 2023/24 statement of accounts at its audit and standards committee in February 2025. However, the auditors indicated an inability to issue an opinion due to the absence of an opinion on the 2022/23 accounts reviewed by the councils' previous auditors. This position reflects the wider national picture of audit backlogs and the auditors felt that the council had moved forward positively in the publishing of the accounts.

The auditors report on the 2023/24 accounts finds: *“a significant weakness in the Council’s governance arrangements. High staff turnover within the finance team has resulted in considerable delays in the preparation of financial statements in recent years”*. They also reported significant weaknesses in securing arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. At the time of the review the peer team spoke to external auditors and the audit work had not yet started.

Capacity within the finance team does still remain a concern. Although there has been some good work on adding capacity through Cipfa trainees and AAT trainees there may be a need for temporary additional capacity as the team gets up to strength. The peer team think that temporary additional capacity may give capacity for the senior finance team to focus on more strategic financial issues, such as addressing the projected shortfall in the MTFP and maximising the benefits of the regeneration projects.

### **Does the council have a strategy and plan to address its financial challenges?**

NBBC has a four year MTFP to 2028/29, which indicates the need to use reserves over the next four years in each year, despite building in some transformational savings (£1.2m each year for the final three years). The cumulative gap over the MTFP period is more than £11m. The peer team recommend that plans need to be further developed to address this position beyond indicating that the MTFP will be updated once the multi-year settlement is known later in the year. The council should have a better view of the impact of the fair funding review (FFR) in due course, and it will be a position to consider the financial risks in the MTFP.



The financial risk register requires further development. The council now has capacity to look at this in greater depth, for example in looking at the more strategic commercial risks to build on what it already has there. In reviewing the MTFP for 2026/27 NBBC should explicitly consider financial risks and ensure it takes a balanced and prudent view. This is part of the council now building on having the basics in place to move to the future.

The peer team recommend that the earlier full business cases for the Nuneaton town centre investments should be revisited to ensure the current cabinet and CET understand the whole life financial implications and risks. Updated businesses cases, including a full analysis of risk, should be presented formally to cabinet and incorporated into the MTFP to ensure that councillors understand the full impact of investment decisions.

NBBC has transferred its Internal Audit to the CMAP who are currently working with the finance team to ensure recommendations are effectively reviewed and implemented. This is helping with strengthening the approach on risk reports and following up internal audit recommendations and will bring independent challenge and help with sharing the best practice from others into the council.

With recent investment both within Nuneaton and Bedworth and the wider area, the economic profile of the area is changing and there is increased potential for additional investment. The council is currently reliant on grant income and its own borrowing for investment in the area. Previous consideration of community infrastructure levy (CIL) had determined that the imposition of CIL would lead to viability issues for development. The recent development to the North of Nuneaton suggests that development values are changing and the council may wish to review this decision.

The council should consider whether it needs additional external support to review the scope for leveraging private sector investment into its regeneration programme. Leveraging in private sector investment has the potential to exponentially increase the benefits of the council's own town centre investment and bring a complementary commercial perspective to ensure investment is targeted alongside reducing cost and maximising income. Additional external support may also help the council harness



the changing economic profile of the borough.

In addition to the key recommendations in section three including: **Develop further detail how the council will meet the gaps in the MTFP and the approach it will take**, we also recommend the council progress the following action:

- **Consider temporary additional capacity as the finance team gets up to strength to allow the senior finance team to focus on strategic issues, including addressing the projected shortfall in the MTFP**
- **Further develop the financial risk register**
- **Revisit the earlier full business cases for the Nuneaton town centre investments to ensure the current cabinet and CET understand the whole life financial implications and risks**
- **Consider the need for additional external support to review the scope for leveraging private sector investment, particularly in respect of the opportunities created by the regeneration projects.**


## **5.5 Capacity for improvement**

Officers and councillors are dedicated to the borough and the council and are receptive to change. They acknowledge the need for transformation in certain areas of the council, particularly where there are opportunities to modernise.

NBBC needs to reassess its current approach to agile working. It must find the right balance between remote work and office work, as well as between face-to-face and digital interactions.

### **Is the organisation able to bring about the improvements it needs, including delivering on locally identified priorities?**

There is clear recognition from NBBC on areas where it seeks to make



improvements. This is particularly in the areas of communications, how it manages performance and in its IT arrangements. It is positive that the council recognises that there are opportunities for improvement and it is putting in place plans for this. The peer team encourage the council to maximise this. For example, in the work around strengthening and embedding the performance, the council can more consistently strengthen delivery plan and KPI commentary ensuring it is forward looking and aligned to the corporate priorities. It can use this to identify service improvements and developing the narrative on performance monitoring, including outlining more fully why performance is improving, or what steps which are being taken to address under performance.

NBBC deliver a lot of projects and built into the approach of the council is an awareness of the opportunities of utilising lessons learnt. Formalising this approach and creating an atmosphere of reflecting and acting on this is a good basis for improvement.

The council's positive engagement in regional groups demonstrates a willingness to look beyond the borough. For example, the council is a non-constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority and it prioritises attendance in order to be around the table and have an active role in discussions.

It is important that the strategic director capacity is able to be strategic. The structural management changes were intended to produce more strategic leadership capacity and the peer team think the council should consider how to do this in the context of ensuring officers are taking ownership at the appropriate levels. There was a perception that otherwise the strategic directors are absorbed in operational activity and not able to lead on the strategic activity.

The council should further build on the value of external support and partnership working – NBBC does not have to do it all. There are great communities and business in the borough who are already able and keen to deliver alongside the council and work with NBBC and could do more. For instance, the arts sector are keen to engage and promote all that is to offer within the borough – they recognise that this is a creative place and the council is not always necessarily the best placed organisation to do this, and smaller scale commissioning of activity by the council



may support this.

### **Does the council have the capacity to improve?**

Both the workforce and councillors have a desire for personal development and utilise this to improve the outcomes of the council.

The peer team met both long standing and relatively new councillors who are keen to engage in their development. The council is also developing the member induction programme for following the 2026 elections and what support it can put in place itself and also commission from others, including the LGA.


There are good opportunities for staff development and career progression. There is a mix of routes for staff, with some of the assistant directors rising through the organisation, and some have been brought in externally to bring different perspectives and ideas to NBBC.

The peer team heard that there is an honest and open atmosphere even when there are challenging or a difference of opinions. Between officers and members there was honesty and any disagreement is handled appropriately. People are prepared to say what they think and this is the sign of an organisation which welcomes productive debate.

The peer team think there is merit in the council now considering its approach to hybrid working. Reviewing the approach and the impact this has on organisational culture and staff networking will be useful as the current approach appears to be patchy. Some staff also reflected that they could consider how to better engage with one another, particularly those colleagues who do not come into the office frequently as some staff were feeling disconnected to colleagues. When the peer team met with staff they were not clear on the arrangements and some staff were keen to come into the office more frequently but the perception was that this was not possible.

In addition to the key recommendations in section three of the report, including to  
**Consider the impact of different ways of working on the organisational culture,**





we also recommend the council progress the following actions:

- **Maximise the improvements the council is making in internal arrangements.**  
**For example, in the work around strengthening and embedding the performance it can more consistently strengthen delivery plan and KPI commentary in a more forward facing way**
- **Consider how the strategic directors can fulfil their role for the organisation in the context of ensuring officers are taking ownership at the appropriate levels and SDs remain focused on strategic rather than operational issues**
- **Recognise and build on the value of external support and partnership working – NBBC does not have to do it all.**

## 6. Action plan and progress review


The senior political and managerial leadership of the council should review and reflect on the findings and recommendations from this CPC.

To promote the principle of transparency, it is a requirement of the CPC process that the final report of the peer team is published in-full within three months of the review being completed. In this instance, this requires the report to be published no later than 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

There is a requirement for Nuneaton and Bedworth BC to develop and publish an action plan within five-months of the peer team being onsite, no later than 15th March 2026. This action plan should provide clarity on the activity, milestones, and timelines that the council will work to in responding to the team's findings.

The action plan will also be central to the peer team's re-engagement with NBBC through a progress review which is due to be completed by 15th August 2026.

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have published the Best Value Standards for Local Authorities. These standards expect



every council to engage in a Corporate or Finance Peer Challenge at least every five-years.

## 7. Contact details

In the meantime, Helen Murray, Principal Adviser for the West Midlands, is the main contact between your council and the Local Government Association. As outlined above, Helen is available to discuss any further support you require and can be contacted on:

Helen Murray, LGA Principal Adviser for the West Midlands

Email – [helen.murray@local.gov.uk](mailto:helen.murray@local.gov.uk)

Tel – 07884 312235

Further information, support, and resources on LGR/Devolution, can be found on the [LGA's devolution and LGR Hub website](#).



## Appendix A – What is CPC?


CPC is a valued improvement and assurance tool that is delivered by the sector for the sector. It involves a team of senior local government councillors and officer peers undertaking a comprehensive review of key information and spending three days at the council to provide robust, strategic, and credible challenge and support.

CPC forms a key part of the [improvement and assurance framework](#) for local government. It is underpinned by the principles of [Sector-led Improvement](#) (SLI) put in place by councils and the LGA to support continuous improvement and assurance across the sector. These principles state that councils are responsible for their own performance; accountable locally, not nationally; share a collective responsibility for the performance of the sector; and rely on the LGA to provide the tools to support them. CPC is also key to councils in meeting their [Best Value duty](#). UK Government expect all councils to have a CPC at least every five years.

### Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five areas which form the core components of all CPCs. These 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? Is there an organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, with frequent monitoring, reporting on and updating of performance and improvement plans?
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? What is the relative financial resilience of the council?

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5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to bring about the improvements it needs, including delivering on locally identified priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

As part of the five core areas outlined above, every CPC has a strong focus on financial sustainability, performance, governance, and assurance

### **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 to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. This included a position statement prepared by the council in advance of the peer team's time on site. This provided information on the local context at the council and what the peer team should focus on. It also included a comprehensive LGA Finance briefing (prepared using public reports from the council's website) and a LGA performance report outlining benchmarking data for the council across a range of metrics. The latter was produced using the LGA's local area benchmarking tool called LG Inform.

The peer team spent three days onsite at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council during which they gathered evidence, information, and views from more than 30 meetings, in addition to further research and reading and spoke to over 100 council staff together with councillors and external stakeholders.