



## Northamptonshire County Council

### Response to the LGA Financial Peer Review of Northamptonshire County Council

The Corporate Leadership Team would like to thank the LGA Peer Review team for their recent visit to the County Council and for giving their time to look in some detail at our approach and mechanisms for financing the vital public services we are charged to deliver for the people of Northamptonshire.

Reviews such as these give senior managers the opportunity to have full and frank discussions amongst critical friends. They allow for discussions around the operational context and challenges facing the County Council and to learn from their experience.

We are clear that the Council is relatively underfunded compared to similar authorities. Council tax increases have been kept low over many years. It has low reserves and few high value assets to sell. Northamptonshire has a population that is growing faster than the national average with demand pressures in all of our service areas, especially social care, often set against relatively fragile supply markets.

The LGA Financial Peer Review report is blunt in some of its observations. We respect and accept the majority of the observations and recommendations, but there are some conclusions we would question. However, we accept the report in the spirit in which it was written. What is important now is that we respond in a positive, focused manner that serves to accelerate our programme of change and improving the realisation of associated benefits.

The report acknowledges the additional financial management controls already put in place. This includes work to shore up some of the fundamentals of financial reporting and financial planning. The management team acknowledges the need to keep up this momentum. Processes will be strengthened to provide robust plans and budget proposals that are deliverable and will achieve what they say they will. Innovation will be important but only at manageable levels of financial risk.

Connections with our stakeholders will be strengthened, those in government, those who use and rely on our services and those who can help us continue our journey of modernising public services across health, care and other areas of our responsibility.

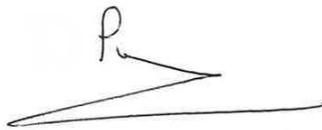
It is unquestionable that financial pressures facing the authority are significant, and this can lead to tough decisions. The amount of money available for local government services in the county has been reduced substantially over the last seven years. Yet the challenge is not insurmountable. The management team and political leadership are confident that together, we can rise to the challenge and ensure we make best use of the resources available to us.

The Council has a strong track record for innovation. The quality of service provision and the fact that this council has done as much as it can to keep long standing services open, at the same service levels, for so long should not be discounted. We are here to serve the best interests of the residents and businesses in the county at optimum value for money.



Management team will oversee a thorough review of the way in which we plan for the future of this authority. We will be accountable to Cabinet in ensuring the actions we take are rigorously tested and grounded in the fundamentals of good business practice.

As part of that commitment I have commissioned an action plan to address each of the recommendations highlighted in the report. The management team will be developing a new vision and strategic plan for the County Council over the coming months. I will also engage with our funders, local MPs and other stakeholders to inform them of our intentions and to ensure that we create a sustainable financial future for this great county.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized capital letter 'D' followed by a horizontal line that extends to the right and then curves slightly upwards at the end.

**Damon Lawrenson**  
Interim Chief Executive

14<sup>th</sup> November 2017