

Corporate Peer Challenge – Recommendations and Action Plan			
Recommendation	Comments and actions	Officer lead	Deadline
(01) Test the approach to the Local Plan through external expert advice	<p>It has been the public position of the Council since 2022 that the emerging Local Plan would not in all likelihood be able to meet the need for housing or employment development. Analysis through the Sustainability Appraisal for the Draft Local Plan has shown that there is no development strategy available to the Council which would meet the need for development. This position was worsened significantly with the update to the standard method for calculating housing need in December 2024.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Following analysis of the responses to the recent consultation, Advisory visits will take place with the Planning Inspectorate which will enable an inspector to critically assess the draft plan and the available evidence base and provide comment. 2. A further external ‘critical friend review’ of the plan and its supporting information will also take place to ensure it is as robust as possible. <p>These steps will be put in place with sufficient time for the plan and its supporting information to be updated if necessary prior to submission to the Secretary of State. Nonetheless, it is notable that these steps will help to improve the likelihood of the eventual examination finding the plan legally compliant and sound, however no steps can be put in place to guarantee that.</p>	Head of Planning	Prior to submission of Local Plan

<p>(02) Establish a set of key performance measures and report these regularly politically and managerially to ensure focus on what really matters</p>	<p>We welcome the comments about the comprehensive performance tool that has been developed in terms of our Corporate Performance Scorecard but appreciate that we should look to further refine a key set of performance metrics to focus on what really matters. With that in mind we will be undertaking the following activities over the coming months to further refine the key performance metrics.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hold a dedicated session with Cabinet and Executive Leadership Team to consider the current suite of performance metrics and propose summary metrics to take forward. 2. Review the proposed performance measures against our Corporate Strategy and Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan to ensure it they are focussed on the aspirations of the Council. 3. Utilise and review the proposed Local Government Outcomes Framework recently published as a guide to potential key measures to monitor and benchmark. 4. Once measures have been finalised bring forward regular CIPFA benchmarking information into the performance reports to review and consider how we are performing against our CIPFA nearest neighbours. 5. Ensure continued quarterly reporting of progress against Corporate Strategy and key performance metrics to Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Committee. 	<p>Chief Policy Officer</p>	<p>By December 2025</p>
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<p>(03) Ensure a clear and consistent political direction, focussed on the strategic, around which there is collective Cabinet ownership and responsibility</p>	<p>The Council has an established Corporate Strategy and Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan which are the two main documents which guide the strategic direction the Cabinet.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to ensure regular review of the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan to ensure it is delivering against the strategic priorities of the council with regular reviews by Cabinet. 2. Take forward outcomes from a recent joint Cabinet and Management session, to secure prioritisation and focus on Corporate Plan items. This to ensure that any new items are assessed, and any elements which can stop or be paused are identified. 	<p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>By December 2025</p>
<p>(04) Invest further in 'top team' working across the Cabinet and Executive Leadership Team to aid decision making and further develop relationships</p>	<p>Informal Cabinet Briefings will continue every two weeks to ensure the necessary top team time is allocated for Cabinet and Executive Leadership Team development.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dedicated time will be set aside for Cabinet and ELT awaydays to further develop working relationships. To date Cabinet/ELT awaydays have taken place during summer of 2024 and most recently in June 2025. The next planned awayday session will be September 2025 2. Utilise specific LGA support packages designed to facilitate the effective working of a Coalition, both for 	<p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>By December 2025</p>

	Councillors and the managers who work with them, sessions booked in August and October 2025		
(05) Address what is highlighted in relation to Planning Committee and Planning service	Actions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure additional strategic planning management support, for service leads, Committee and the Cabinet Lead. 2. Review products and supporting material issued to Committee, to account for stakeholder feedback. Implement improvements indicated. 	Head of Planning	By January 2026
(06) Establish urgently a single savings (or increased income) programme that is robust, has clear accountabilities and appropriate officer and elected member governance	<p>We recognise the comments from the Peer Challenge team on the need to bring together into a single programme the requirement to balance our budget over our medium-term financial strategy (MTFS).</p> <p>Initial work has taken place to identify initiatives which can be taken forward around potential savings and/or increased income and this will be established into a programme.</p> Actions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A programme team of officers will be established with dedicated project management support to ensure robust governance is in place to drive forward the savings/income programme to balance the MTFS. 2. A budget working group made up of Councillors and previously utilised for budget setting will be established with a fuller remit to consider the medium and longer term financial plans to balance the budget and not just focussed on the annual budget. 	Chief Finance Officer (s151)	By March 2026

	<p>3. Regular reports (monthly) will be brought to Executive Leadership Team and there will be quarterly reporting to Cabinet as part of the regular budget reporting.</p> <p>4. Full report to be brought forward as part of the budget setting process for 2026/27</p>		
(07) Consider the options and opportunities around the £9m capital funding that is ringfenced for 'regeneration' but currently unallocated to projects	<p>Provisions in regards to this allocation are managed through the Capital Programme. This will be reviewed ahead of budget setting, for 26/27 onwards, including specific commentary on use of these ringfenced reserves.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>1. To clearly identify and account for planned utilisation of these reserves, with specific focus on the impact they will have on delivery of priorities.</p>	Chief Finance Officer	
(08) Continue the investment in training for managers at the Operational Leadership Team level to develop understanding at that level around corporate responsibilities and collective working and include closer engagement with the Executive Leadership Team	<p>A dedicated corporate training pot has been established within the budget for 2025/26 and this is in addition to service training budgets.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>1. Source appropriate management training utilising the dedicated corporate training budget.</p> <p>2. Review of Operational Leadership Team meetings terms of reference and amendment to ensure the meetings are chaired by either the CEO or Executive Head.</p>	Chief HR Officer	By March 2026

	3. Progression of corporate training options such as contract management and data apprenticeship opportunities.		
(09) Reassure yourselves in relation to the level of risk being carried in relation to the quantum of change activity being undertaken over the coming months and the effectiveness of the council's key corporate processes and systems and the capacity to support this	<p>We acknowledge the significant change that is happening over the coming months, in particular up to October 2025 as a result of the ending of a significant corporate contract.</p> <p>A dedicated programme team and budget has been established to ensure a smooth transition and regular reporting is in place to ensure the programme remains on course to deliver.</p> <p>To date, significant milestones have already been achieved around the implementation of a new waste reporting system, an upgraded HR system, an upgraded elections system and the role out of new laptops and IT infrastructure for staff.</p> <p>Internal Audit have reviewed the programme, in particular the governance arrangements around it and have given the highest assurance rating of 'Substantial' assurance with no recommended actions.</p> <p>Actions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitor remaining services to go live over the coming months and report as per reporting arrangements in place. 2. Review of our project management support will be taking place in September 2025 to ensure we have the right resources in place to deliver our key corporate projects and programmes. 	Executive Head Internal Services	By October 2025

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">3. Complete the insourcing of procurement with a full review of processes and procedures and completion of up to date Contracts Register.4. Finalise delivery of the Property Asset Management system to ensure our process around asset management are managed within a dedicated system.5. Continued training around corporate processes and review by the Corporate Governance Board of training uptake and adherence to corporate processes including report writing.		
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