

Cabinet – 5th February 2024
Rugby Borough Council
Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

INTRODUCTION

Rugby Borough Council's Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) took place between 10th and 12th October 2023. During the 3 days the peers spoke to over 90 stakeholders, councillors and staff; gathered feedback from over 30 meetings and interviews; and undertook research by reviewing a wealth of council documentation.

Following the CPC, a Feedback Report has been produced by the peers. The report makes 8 key recommendations, which are all in line with the Council's direction of travel and many of which are already addressed in the council's Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan. The recommendations provide a helpful basis from which the organisation can move forward.

Whilst recognising that a number of additional recommendations are made within the body of the CPC report, this action plan considers the 8 key recommendations, setting out the Council's current position in relation to the recommendations and defining the future actions that will be taken. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council:

- Recommendation 1: Consideration should be given to RBC's priorities in relation to its available resources (money and people), which would improve capacity. This would also provide clarity, internally and externally, on the Council's key areas of focus.
- Recommendation 2: Give further consideration to what success looks like for the Corporate Strategy Priority Outcomes through the development of a Performance Management Framework which reflects the 'golden thread' through to service plans and individual objectives.
- Recommendation 3: The Council should consider adopting a longer term approach to financial planning by extending the planning horizon of the MTFP and ensuring it is informed by a range of financial scenarios (best to worst) to reflect the uncertainty in local government funding. A longer term financial approach would also help with the delivery of the new Corporate Strategy.

- Recommendation 4: The Council should continue to proactively investigate innovative ways to address the significant identified funding gap. There is an opportunity to utilise the time offered by the Council's solid financial position to proactively investigate innovative ways to address the significant identified funding gap (e.g. through 'invest to save' initiatives) and protect service delivery.
- Recommendation 5: The Council should continue to invest time in developing Member/Member and Member/officer relationships, capitalising on the current appetite to 'reset' the relationships and move forward and work positively for the benefit of Rugby and its communities.
- Recommendation 6: RBC should continue to develop its HR Strategy and its approach to being a learning and development organisation, and implement some of the quick wins as soon as possible for the benefit of its staff.
- Recommendation 7: The Council should continue to proactively harness its network of partners to collectively deliver better outcomes for their communities. Partners value the role and contribution of the Council and this can be built upon for benefit of Rugby and its residents.
- Recommendation 8: The Council should continue to encourage and empower officers to identify and implement best practice through sector-led improvement as part of the Rugby Blueprint journey.

ACTION PLAN

Recommendation	Current Position on Recommendation	Further Action to be Taken	Lead Officer	Timescale
1. Consider RBC's priorities in relation to its available resources to improve capacity.	The Corporate Strategy, agreed in 2020, sets out the Council's priorities through four clear outcomes. An annual Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan (CSDP) is produced to identify actions which will be taken to address the four corporate outcomes. At present, all actions within the CSDP are given equal priority.	1.1 Produce draft prioritisation guidance for the CSDP, considering factors such as relevance to the Corporate Strategy outcomes and financial implications.	Deputy Chief Executive	March 2024
		1.2 Officers and Councillors to agree a prioritisation of CSDP projects and take forward projects based upon that prioritisation. Consideration should be given to including a scoring mechanism to help to set and prioritise projects.	Deputy Chief Executive	April 2024
		1.3 Ensure that the formation of the Council's new Corporate Strategy (during 2024) will pay due regard to this recommendation, ensuring a prioritised and suitably resourced strategy and delivery plan is produced	Deputy Chief Executive	May 2024 to December 2024

2	Give further consideration to what success looks like for the Corporate Strategy Priority Outcomes through the development of a Performance Management Framework	<p>During 2022, officers developed a new suite of KPIs, key statistics and performance measures which are now presented to Members quarterly. Prior to adopting these performance indicators, it was recognised that this would be an iterative process with the performance indicators requiring refinement and development over time.</p>	2.1 Implement and embed further initiatives, including the use of external benchmarking tools (LG Inform, CFO Insights etc.), to enable performance relative to other councils to be measured. This action relates to 4.1a of the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan.	Chief Officer Finance and Performance	Throughout 2024
		<p>In addition, the Council has subscribed to CFO Insights which enables the Council to compare its performance across a whole range of areas to other local authorities.</p>	2.2 Implement and roll out employee PDR/Appraisal process, including key performance information. This may be through a phased approach, with the Leadership Team leading a pilot. This action relates to 4.9 of the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan.	Chief Executive	Throughout 2024
		<p>It is recognised that a suite of performance indicators which measure progress against the Corporate Strategy outcomes is required.</p>	2.3 Ensure that the development of the new Corporate Strategy has performance measures included from the point of adoption.	Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer Finance and Performance	May to December 2024

		From 2024/25 employee appraisal forms will enable objectives to be set for employees and ensure that a “golden thread” runs through all of the Council’s work.			
3.	Consider adopting a longer term approach to financial planning by extending the planning horizon of the MTFP	The Council maintains a four year rolling Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and three year rolling Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), supported by annual budgeting.	3.1 Produce and agree budgets for 2024/25.	Chief Officer – Finance and Performance in consultation with Budget Working Group	Feb 2024
			3.2 Update and agree a three-year rolling Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for 2024 – 2028	Chief Officer – Finance and Performance in consultation with Budget Working Group	Feb 2024
			3.3 Consider implementing a longer term Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) from 2024/25	Chief Officer – Finance and Performance in consultation with Budget Working Group	Feb 2024
			3.4 Within the MTFS, ensure that the full range of local government funding scenarios are considered, with high level responses set out.	Chief Officer – Finance and Performance in consultation with Budget Working Group	Ongoing
4	Continue to proactively investigate innovative ways to address the significant identified funding gap.	The Council has, for a number of years, taken the prudent decision to maintain a Business Rates Equalisation Reserve by contributing growth above the sustainable baseline. This reserve supports minimising the impacts of future funding gaps	4.1 In early 2024, a Commercial Strategy will be brought forward for Member consideration, setting out the principles behind future commercial activity. This should relate to the current Investment Strategy and established Commercial Pillars. This action relates to 4.1c of the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan.	Deputy Chief Executive / Chief Officer Finance and Performance	April 2024
			4.2 The Council will continue to consider investment opportunities which	Leadership Team	Ongoing

		<p>and allows funding to be made available for transformation projects which can help to address any future gap.</p> <p>A budget Working Group has now been established to consider matters such as detailed savings delivery plans</p> <p>Further, a number of commercial initiatives have been implemented, with a view to addressing potential future funding gaps.</p> <p>Supplementing this, a transformation reserve has been established to support the Council's Blueprint journey, including ensuring financial sustainability.</p>	<p>support future financial sustainability, including those presented through major projects such as town centre regeneration</p>		
5	Continue to invest time in developing Member/Member and Member/officer relationships	In 2022, the Council agreed a new Councillor/ Officer protocol. The protocol was formulated through engagement of both officers and councillors through joint	<p>5.1 Officers will continue the roll out of Member open days to facilitate greater understanding of the work which services carry out</p> <p>5.2 Following the elections, a comprehensive induction programme will be delivered to ensure that all new</p>	Chief Officer – Legal and Governance/ Leadership Team	Ongoing
				Chief Officer – Legal and Governance/ Leadership Team	May 2024

	workshops and the LGA the council to implement.	Members are fully briefed on council services		
	<p>In addition to individual Group Leader Meetings, each month the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Legal and Governance meet with the leaders and deputy leaders of all three political groups for an 'All Leaders Group'.</p> <p>The Council has in place various working parties/ groups and hosts regular 'All Member Conversations. These are cross party, supported by relevant key officers and used to enable engagement with members on matters that will be brought forward via the formal decision-making process.</p> <p>More recently, Member 'Open Days' have been introduced to allow</p>	5.3 Further workshops regarding the Member/ Officer protocol will be delivered as required	Chief Officer – Legal and Governance	Ongoing
		5.4 Where appropriate, sector bodies such as the LGA will be engaged to support the embedding of the Member Officer protocol	Chief Officer – Legal and Governance	Ongoing
		5.5 Implementation of Councillor case management system to support Councillor/Officer communication.	Chief Officer-Legal and Governance	April 2024
		5.6 Seek support from external stakeholders such as the LGA and the CFGS to ensure the Council is undertaking effective scrutiny. This shall also include bi-annual survey of Councillors in respect of feedback on Scrutiny.	Chief Officer-Legal and Governance	May 2024

		<p>Councillors the opportunity to meet service teams and gain a greater understanding of their work.</p> <p>The Council will also be launching its Councillor case management system to deal with Councillor queries. This will enable stronger communication between Councillors and Officers.</p> <p>The Council is also seeking to support Councillors with effective Scrutiny through the support of the LGA/CFGS.</p>			
6	Continue to develop HR Strategy and approach to being a learning and development organisation, and implement some of the quick wins as soon as possible	The Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan identifies a project to produce a HR strategy, and in doing so, review and update all policies and procedures relating to HR processes and workforce development.	6.1 Continue the development of an HR strategy. This action relates to 4.9 of the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan.	Human Resources Manager	Throughout 2024
			6.2 Continue the roll out of the Councils learning and development programme and undertake a review to ensure alignment with the Rugby	Human Resources Manager	Ongoing

		Blueprint. This action relates to 4.9 of the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan.		
		6.3 Seek further opportunities to embed the Rugby Blueprint, targeting those services where the principles are less well understood. This action relates to 4.9 of the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan.	Leadership Team and Management Team	Ongoing
		6.4 Make best use of the forthcoming PDR process to identify and enable SMART individual performance, learning and development objectives. This action relates to 4.9 of the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan.	All People Managers	Ongoing
7	<p>Continue to proactively harness its network of partners to collectively deliver better outcomes for their communities.</p> <p>The Council maintains positive relationships with key partners through formal partnerships, informal partnerships and day-to-day multi agency working.</p> <p>Much work has already been undertaken in this regard, for example a fundamental review of the membership and functioning of the Community Safety Partnership to ensure it is fit for purpose.</p>	7.1 Ensure that stakeholder identification takes place early for each individual project within the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan. This action relates to 4.6c of the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan.	Leadership Team	Ongoing

8	Continue to encourage and empower officers to identify and implement best practice through sector-led improvement as part of the Rugby Blueprint journey	The Council actively encourages a culture of improvement, utilising industry best practice through formal and informal routes. This is achieved through the use of national networks such as the DCN and LGA as well as Local Networks such as the Warwickshire Waste Partnership	8.1 Ensure ongoing representation at key sector events such as the LGA Conference.	Leadership Team	Ongoing
			8.2 Continue to make best use of benchmarking tools such as CFO Insights and LG Inform to set performance targets. In doing so, ensure that performance conversations become the norm.	Leadership Team	Ongoing
			8.3 Utilise the forthcoming appraisal process to identify service specific best practice, for example by understanding approaches taken in neighbouring authorities. This action relates to 4.9 of the Corporate Strategy Delivery Plan.	All Managers	April 2024 onwards
			8.4 Make best use of networks (such as the DCN) to assess the Councils effectiveness against that of peers	Leadership Team	Ongoing