

BwD LGA Corporate Peer Challenge 2023 - Action Plan

Recommendation	Response - what we plan to do	Lead Officer(s)
Recommendation 1 - Financial management		
<p>Maintain focus on the delivery of the required savings and ensure council wide understanding and ownership of the on-going financial challenges and associated savings requirements.</p> <p>Develop clear, realistic delivery plans for 2024/2025 and future year's savings with regular monitoring reports focussing on the delivery of those savings to both the leadership team and Executive Board.</p>	<p>The Council has a clear Financial Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Plan, (MTFP) 2023/24 to 2025/26, which we will continue to implement alongside the BwD Capital Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26.</p> <p>Further work is required to develop detailed proposals and related delivery plans so that the Council can set a balanced budget for 2024/25 and over the medium term, including reviewing and updating the MTFP. The work to do this will start during Autumn 2023 and, when it is considered necessary to do so, proposals will be brought forward for consideration by the Executive Board, Council and with public consultation as appropriate.</p>	<p>Dean Langton Strategic Director, Finance and Resources</p>
Recommendation 2 – Prioritisation		
<p>A wide range of strategies plans and frameworks have been developed and are in place or planned. The peer team were impressed with the ambitions of the council. Similar to many other councils, the capacity of the council is constrained with the on-going financial challenges faced and the capacity of 'back office' functions.</p> <p>The council should undertake a rationalisation and prioritisation exercise to help bring focus, where possible, and to consolidate into a fewer number of these whilst ensuring they are aligned to the new Corporate Plan, resources and capacity to deliver. This prioritisation exercise will also support the 'grow or stop' elements of the council's Finance Strategy.</p>	<p>We will complete the current policy and strategy mapping and review exercise and report on the findings and next steps to ensure that the policies and strategies of the Council are up to date, relevant and aligned to the Corporate Plan and compliant with any statutory or regulatory requirements.</p> <p>We will progress a review of corporate 'back office' functions across the Council aligned to our future operating model and financial strategy.</p>	<p>Corinne McMillan Director, Chief Executive's Department</p>

Recommendation 3 – Performance Management

It is recognised the council is in the process of revising and finalising a suite of key performance measures aligned to the Corporate Plan (2023 -2027). The council should finalise this work at pace to enable it to report quarterly on progress and achievements against the new Corporate Plan to staff, residents, partners and stakeholders.

We are implementing our revised suite of Corporate Key Performance Indicators which support the Corporate Plan and have undertaken a soft-launch of collecting data for Quarter 1, with formal reporting continuing from Quarter 2 onwards to Executive Board and Policy Council.

We will continue to publish updates of Corporate Key Performance Indicators alongside an Annual Report to highlight progress against the deliverables in the Corporate Plan.

Corinne McMillan
Director Chief Executive's

Recommendation 4 – Growth

The council has exciting and ambitious growth plans aimed at creating a more prosperous borough. As schemes are brought forward, they should be underpinned by robust business cases including options appraisals, detailed financial modelling, risk analysis and legal implications.

The Council undertakes extensive business case development for all major growth opportunities and will continue to ensure:

- All Growth initiatives are subject to robust business case development and approval processes, consistent with national guidance.
- Council funded and co-funded projects are subject to approval/considerations of viability/risk.
- All Growth initiatives are subject to transparent internal and external governance processes, including appropriate Executive Board decision approvals and capital programme management and reporting measures – in line with the Council's Financial Strategy.
- Evidence of regular reporting/monitoring by Government Departments

Martin Kelly
Strategic Director Growth and Development, Deputy Chief Executive

Recommendation 5 - Inclusive Growth

The council should continue to challenge itself to ensure regeneration schemes are not viewed only as physical regeneration but are aligned to people, improved outcomes for residents and the boroughs wider priorities including health, housing, skills, climate change and business growth. The council should strengthen its narrative for residents in this regard.

The Council is building on local growth plans to lift BwD's economic performance - which is now matching/out-performing key regional and national benchmarks.

Undeterred by major reductions in government investment, availability of council core-funding and challenging macro-economic conditions, we will continue to focus on the following to enable businesses and residents to prosper and improve their quality of life:

Martin Kelly
Strategic Director Growth and Development, Deputy Chief Executive

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates of increase in GVA • Health • Employment • Skills • Climate change • Business growth • Physical change and place-making – via new housing developments and major growth initiatives <p>We will ensure our narrative for residents, partners, businesses and other stakeholders highlights the implementation of our Corporate Plan, which sets out our ambitions for BwD and articulates how growth and wider Council priorities combine, linking with our partners and community to ensure “no one is left behind.” This is our local reference to our ‘inclusive growth’ ambitions.</p> <p>We are updating and aligning plans, including the Skills Plan for BwD to re-focus on cross-sector partnership priorities for the borough.</p> <p>We are undertaking extensive research to better understand key issues impacting residents and to help re-focus measures of local/national partners to address the scale of economic inactivity, and the needs of key target groups.</p> <p>We will utilise our Levelling Up Partnership opportunity to realign national “economic inactivity” policy and measures to help ensure they effectively address local needs to reduce inequity, make better use of public funding and deliver better economic outcomes.</p>	
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Recommendation 6 - Social Care (children and adults)

<p>Similar to other councils, rising demand in both children’s and adult social care social care presents a key challenge. The council needs to maintain focus on these core services and the ongoing improvements in children’s social care following the Ofsted ‘requires improvement’ judgement in 2022.</p>	<p>Work is already underway to tackle challenges relating to the continuing rising demand for both children’s and adult social care. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing and implementing the next steps following a review of Safeguarding Adults and Safeguarding Children Boards to develop and reinstate BwD arrangements • Implementing changes to the staffing structure following a review of Adults Safeguarding Practice in the context of CQC Inspection • Developing Provider Services Improvement Plans 	<p>Joanne Siddle Strategic Director, Children & Education</p> <p>Mark Warren Strategic Director, Adults and Health</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Strategic Commissioning Plans • Complying with increasing and evolving statutory returns, including new performance reporting requirements • Working on Place-based Integration and workforce transformation with health colleagues • Continuation of a dedicated resource from the Service Design Team in both Adults and Children’s areas working with the operational departments and with the users to co-design services and processes • Maintaining sharing of data with corporate and political leadership – providing a better narrative of the demand for Children’s and Adult Social Care. 	
Recommendation 7 - Corporate Capacity		
<p>7. Ensure the work already underway to review and test the council’s existing operating model includes a specific focus on the capacity of core services. This will support the council in ensuring its ambitions and priorities are aligned with available people and resources. It will also be important, as this work develops, to engage wider staff and councillors and to set out the steps and resources to get there.</p>	<p>We will complete the work on redesigning, implementing and embedding our operating model in line with the ongoing development of our digital and transformation programmes, aligning with the Medium Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>As referenced in recommendation 2, we will progress a review of corporate ‘back office’ functions across the Council aligned to the future operating model and financial strategy, engaging staff and elected members to ensure our corporate services can effectively support our operational services and corporate priorities.</p>	<p>Corinne McMillan Director, Chief Executive’s Department</p>
<p>7.1 Build greater clarity for staff and councillors on the vision for transformation and how this will lead to measurable improvements in efficiency, effectiveness and resident satisfaction.</p>	<p>We will continue our work to further develop a range of service performance and financial metrics which will track progress over time and be valuable in our decision-making and used as evidence of achievements.</p> <p>We will further develop our governance around growing demand for our corporate services and develop a 3–5-year strategy for Transformation which sets our vision and performance measures. This strategy will be co-produced with elected members, staff and residents and will link in with our developing financial strategy and align to plans related to Digital service models, Communications and engagement, Organisational</p>	<p>Corinne McMillan Director, Chief Executive’s Department</p>

	Development, Digital Inclusion and will also reference our Customer Standards and Front Door model for service users.	
7.2 Engage councillors and officers in work to enhance and embed a culture of effective overview and scrutiny across the council. Consideration should also be given to the officer resource required to support effective overview and scrutiny at the council.	<p>A revision of scrutiny support has taken place this year and a senior officer supports each committee. This pilot will be reviewed regularly with recommendations for further development of the scrutiny support function. Each overview and scrutiny committee has agreed areas for focus and a work plan is in place for each of them for 23/24.</p> <p>The Council will continue to enhance and embed the culture of effective scrutiny with appropriate support.</p> <p>This will include creating a Corporate Parenting Panel, the launch of a new induction programme and improving the wider training and support plan for chairs and all members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committees.</p>	<p>Dean Langton Strategic Director, Finance and Resources</p> <p>Corinne McMillan Director, Chief Executive's Department</p> <p>Asad Laher Deputy Director, Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)</p>
7.3 Building on the Statutory Governance Officers Group, review opportunities to further enhance the golden triangle of good governance by ensuring the council's Chief Legal Officer (monitoring officer), chief executive (head of paid service) and Section 151 officer are involved in all relevant senior decision-making forums.	<p>The Statutory Governance Officers Group established by the Chief Executive will look to ensure continuous improvement in promoting good governance and decision making across the Council through reviews of key processes and compliance, including ensuring there is appropriate information, training and development for Council officers and members.</p> <p>We will also continue to review and ensure that statutory governance officers and other relevant officers are sighted on and involved in key decision making processes and groups.</p>	<p>Denise Park, Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service)</p> <p>Dean Langton Strategic Director, Finance and Resources (s151)</p> <p>Asad Laher Deputy Director, Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)</p>
7.4 Increase the visibility of core governance practices. This includes ensuring greater consistency in the way minutes are published on the democratic services webpages and in the publication of officer decisions are published. It also includes opportunities to develop the Corporate Risk Register shared with the Audit and Governance Committee into a more comprehensive document which captures risks, impact, likelihood, mitigation actions and timeline for actions.	<p>We will review the website layout to ensure visibility and access to the Council's Forward Plan, meeting papers, decisions and minutes liaising with Modern.Gov and the Web Team as appropriate.</p> <p>We will also review how we utilise the Modern.Gov system to its full potential to unlock additional functionality and transparency for stakeholders, meeting organisers, committee members and residents.</p> <p>We will continue with current robust core governance practices, including regular reviews and updates of detailed Corporate Risk Register entries, including the details</p>	<p>Dean Langton Strategic Director, Finance and Resources</p> <p>Asad Laher Deputy Director, Legal & Governance (Monitoring Officer)</p>

	noted at our (officer) Corporate Leadership Team meetings, and we will also share the full Corporate Risk Register supporting information with the Audit & Governance Committee as part of its regular briefing sessions on the Corporate Risk Register.	
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