

Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan



Foreword

Over a four-day period in June and August 2023, we invited the Local Government Associated (LGA) to review how we perform. The process, called a 'peer challenge', was led by Andy Donald, Chief Executive of London Borough of Haringey, Councillor Grace Williams, Leader of the London Borough of Waltham Forest, and five other local government officers.

Peer challenges are an established tool that supports councils to drive improvements and efficiency in specific areas, including finance, communications, health and wellbeing, equalities, housing, planning and more. They are not mandatory, but it is a chance for councils to get feedback from local government colleagues.

Our LGA Peer Challenge was a welcome and a timely opportunity to ask for an objective view from peers on our journey to date and our plans for the future. We wanted to be challenged on our intentions, approach, ambition and plans for delivery.

This is a challenging time for Greenwich but it is also an exciting time. We see our Peer Challenge as a fantastic opportunity

to help provide some objectivity and constructive feedback that will help inform the journey we want our council to go on over the next few years, and make us an even better council that does more to deliver for the borough we serve.

The Peer Challenge team has described the Royal Borough of Greenwich as a solid council delivering good, services, ambitious and displays good partnership working.

They are pleased with Our Greenwich, the Council's corporate plan through to 2026, which they thought reflects ambitions around a refreshed approach to engaging communities and new ways of working within the Council.

The Team made suggestions of what we can do differently and where we can make improvements. This action plan has been prepared in response to these recommendations.

Cllr. Anthony Okereke
Leader of the Council

Debbie Warren
Chief Executive



Introduction

The Council is grateful to the Peer Challenge Team and LGA for their time and thoughtful recommendations to help make Greenwich an even better council. It recognises and agrees with all of them.

Like many councils Greenwich is currently in the midst of a challenging budget setting process which is requiring significant capacity and input from senior staff across all areas of the Council.

As always, the Council has to balance a finite resource across competing pressure and priorities to ensure it is able to deal with the challenges it faces and deliver for residents.

Therefore, in some cases this means that recommendations may not be able to be progressed right away, and may not be able to start until we are through this intense period of financial and strategic planning.

You will see from this action plan that this is certainly not in all cases with some recommendations already being acted upon.

This is not a reflection of the importance that the Council applies to this process and the recommendations made but the unfortunate reality it finds itself in with limited capacity in these times of significant financial pressures. The Council wants to make sure any action taken leads to embedded, long-term positive change to the organisation and borough.

We look forward to working with all staff, councillors, partners, and our communities on taking forward and delivering on these recommendations.



WOOLWICH WORKS
WELCOME TO YOUR FAVOURITE V
LIVE MUSIC
DANCE THEATRE
TALKS



LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendation 1

Urgently address ways of working and arrangements in Greenwich in order to aid decision-making; maximise the effectiveness of joint working between elected members and officers at the senior level; support councillors and political groups appropriately and effectively; aid the work of Cabinet; facilitate collective responsibility politically and corporately; and enhance involvement and engagement amongst elected members. This is central to ensuring good governance is upheld and the Administration's ambitions for residents are realised. To inform this, draw in learning around the variety of appropriate approaches that councils, Administrations, and political groups adopt in key aspects of how they operate.

Action	Detail	Lead	Timescale
1.1	<p>To facilitate more effective working between elected members and officers at a senior level the Council has established joint Cabinet and Greenwich Management Team (GMT) meetings called the Greenwich Strategic Leadership Team, this meets every fortnight.</p> <p>These meetings are used for discussion on key strategic issues and challenges facing the Council. They were used to good effect in supporting the budget setting process.</p> <p>This approach will continue to be reviewed and developed further.</p>	Leader of the Council and Chief Executive	On going
1.2	<p>The Council has begun looking into different approaches that other council's, administrations and political groups take in regard to involvement and engagement with elected members with a view to taking learning from these to develop Greenwich's approach in this area.</p>	Leader of the Council, Greenwich Strategic Leadership Team (Cabinet and GMT), All Members	Q4 2023/24



LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendation 2

Develop a more comprehensive approach to identifying and meeting the training and development needs of elected members in order to support councillors in fulfilling their roles to greatest effect.

Action	Detail	Lead	Timescale
2.1	<p>The Council will review the current training and development offer to elected members with an aim to make recommendations for improvements within the 24/25 financial year.</p> <p>Ahead of this, additional financial training has been provided for all councillors. This was in light of the challenging local government financial environment and bolster the Council's effective decision-making processes.</p> <p>In addition, the recently conducted casework review also contains recommendations for training for members which will be built into this training programme.</p>	Director of Communities and Environment and Director of Legal (Monitoring Officer)	Beginning Q4 2023/24



LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendation 3

Be 'bold and brave' in leading the development of a place vision for the borough and seize the 'place leadership mantle' – with partners very much encouraging this.

Action	Detail	Lead	Timescale
3.1	<p>The Council recognises the need to develop a vision for place and also recognises that to do this well it will require significant capacity, joint work with our partners and engagement with communities.</p> <p>The Council is committed to developing a detailed proposal for how we will take this work forward ready for the summer.</p>	Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Director of Regeneration Enterprise and Skills and Director of Housing and Safer Communities	Beginning Q1 2024/25



LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendation 4

Define and communicate what the ambitions around a changed council mean it will look like, in order to enable the ambitions of 'Our Greenwich' to be fulfilled.

Action	Detail	Lead	Timescale
4.1	The Council will continue to use Our Greenwich and future Annual Plans to articulate to communities, partners, and the borough its priorities and intention for change. The next annual plan will be considered by Cabinet for agreement in June 2024.	Greenwich Strategic Leadership Team (Cabinet and GMT), Assistant Chief Executive	Ongoing
4.2	<p>The Council has set an ambitious change agenda for the borough in Our Greenwich and we recognise that we need to build on this by articulating how the organisation will need to change to deliver on this.</p> <p>It is proposed that this is done through a phase 2 of the Council's successful Future of Work programme which helped to guide and steer the Council through COVID-19 and the changing work environment.</p> <p>A phase 2 would articulate our ambitions for the organisation, covering how we work, use of our facilities and how we communicate internally.</p> <p>It is important that this work is informed by the results of the all Staff Survey scheduled for last quarter of 23/24 and therefore will start following this.</p>	Chief Executive and Leader of the Council	Beginning Q1 2024/25



LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendation 5

Develop increased visibility of the senior managerial leadership; reinvigorate management forums at different levels and use them to help shape and drive the organisation; and enable greater staff awareness and engagement generally.

Action	Detail	Lead	Timescale
5.1	<p>The Council is committed to conducting an all Staff Survey in early 2024 to understand views from staff from across the organisation. This will also include views on internal communication and manager forums. This survey is currently in the process of being designed and to support this a number of different staff groups and forums are being asked to help shape the questions.</p> <p>The results from this survey will help to shape our medium and long-term action in this area set out below.</p>	Head of HR	Ongoing
5.2	<p>Increasing the visibility of senior leadership, reinvigorating management forums and improving internal communications to enhance staff awareness and engagement will be a key strand of the new Future of Work phase 2 programme. This project will use the feedback from the staff survey to inform medium term-action in this area.</p>	Adult Social Care Director	Beginning Q1 2024/25
5.3	<p>In the short-term the Council is committed to a number of changes and improvements in this area. Specifically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that regular Ask The Leadership sessions are occurring to give staff the opportunity to ask questions of senior leadership. • Re-instating Middle Leaders Forum. • Increasing levels of staff engagement in the development of the new Our Greenwich Annual Plan 	Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executive, Adult Social Care Director	Immediately

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendation 6

Establish greater rigour in the Council's financial planning and management in order to manage the risks that we see emerging for the Council financially and maximise the opportunities available to invest in council priorities.

Action	Detail	Lead	Timescale
6.1	The Council has this year taken a new approach to the budget setting process using targets coupled with corporate support and challenge to support Directorate Management Teams in generating proposals. This approach was very successful and led to over £40m of savings proposals coming forward to the Greenwich Strategic Leadership Team for discussion. This approach will be refined and used for the 25/26 budget setting process.	Director of Finance	Delivered and ongoing
6.2	The Council is currently part way through delivering on its Re-thinking Finance programme which has as a key objective improvement of its financial planning and management. This programme is making good progress but is a multi-year programme that will deliver improvements along the way. This programme will include reviews of financial processes, systems and businesses cases.	Director of Finance	Ongoing
6.3	One of the short-term actions that the Council will be taking to improve its financial planning is through the refresh of service planning across the Council. This refresh will see individual financial plans created for each service which will better help the organisation understand and manage financial risks and opportunities at a service and corporate level. The first stage of this wider service planning refresh is in process with the financial planning stage due to begin early 2024.	GMT, Assistant Chief Executive	Ongoing
6.4	The Council has set up financial management board which has 5 sub boards focusing on the 5 most significant overspend areas of the Council. The boards bring together political and officer leadership for the area as well as finance political and officer leadership. Their purpose is to provide further scrutiny to these areas and support the development of proposals to reduce overspends.	Director of Finance and Cabinet Member for Finance	Ongoing

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendation 7

Develop greater pace and clearer accountabilities in delivering changes in key aspects of how the organisation functions, such as 'Rethinking Corporate Services' and the review of Overview and Scrutiny.

Action	Detail	Lead	Timescale
7.1	The Council recognises the need to progress as quickly as possible on key change projects related to how the organisation functions. This needs to be balanced against recent acute financial challenges that have required senior officer and political attention. However, it remains committed to delivering its review of Overview and Scrutiny with changes due to be considered at the Council AGM in May 2024.	Leader of the Council, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, Director of Legal Services	Q1 2024/25
7.2	Re-thinking Corporate Services can be seen as a portfolio of work as opposed to an individual project or programme. There are a number of projects and programmes that make up this portfolio of work each with clear leadership for example Re-thinking Finance is led by the Director of Finance and Re-thinking HR is led by the Head of HR.	Director of Finance	Q1 2024/25



LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendation 8

Provide the Council's communications function with the necessary status and position in order to enable it to deliver against the needs and ambitions that exist around it.

Action	Detail	Lead	Timescale
8.1	The Council will use its network to reach out to other authorities and understand how they organise and involve their communications function with the aim of providing recommendations for changes in approach in 2024/25	Director of Communities and Environment	Beginning Q1 2024/25

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendation 9

Re-shape performance reporting within the Council to provide a more comprehensive and shared overview at the corporate level of how the organisation is performing and progressing and link this with financial reporting.

Action	Detail	Lead	Timescale
9.1	As referenced earlier the new refreshed approach to Service Planning sees defined KPI's for all services as well as dedicated financial planning sections for each service. Once established this will help to give a clearer view of service KPI's and financial performance.	Director of Finance Greenwich Strategic Leadership Team (Cabinet and GMT), Assistant Chief Executive	Ongoing
9.2	At a corporate level the Council will further develop its new Our Greenwich website to contain updates on key mission success measures as well as a suite of organisational health metrics.	Assistant Chief Executive	Q1 2024/25

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendation 10

Assist and support managers more effectively by addressing the barriers and disproportionate levels of bureaucracy presented by some corporate services and approaches; establishing greater clarity around their responsibilities and accountabilities; and providing the necessary training and development to meet their needs.

Action	Detail	Lead	Timescale
10.1	The Council will continue to press ahead with its delivery of its Re-thinking Corporate Services portfolio of work which includes re-thinking finance, re-thinking procurement and Re-thinking HR and new Workforce Strategy. A key priority of this portfolio of work is to reduce bureaucracy within these services.	Director of Finance	Ongoing
10.2	The Council intends to review the training and development needs of staff following the completion and agreement of its new Workforce Strategy and results from its all Staff Survey.	Head of HR	Beginning Q1 2024/25



