

Cabinet – 14 February 2018

LGA Corporate Peer Review Action Plan

Portfolio: Councillor S. Coughlan (Leader of the Council)

Related portfolios: All

Service: Council Wide

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary

The report presents a draft action plan that responds to the recommendations and suggestions for improvement identified and reported by the LGA following the Corporate Peer Challenge that took place at the end of September 2017.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Approve the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.

3. Report Detail

3.1 The Council participated in the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) process with fieldwork conducted in September 2017.

3.2 In addition to the core framework of the CPC process the Council requested that our approach to transformation and our communications function was included within remit of the CPC.

3.3 The draft action plan (**appendix 1a**) includes the recommendations and suggestions for improvement as detailed in the LGA report along with context for the Council, suggested action and dates. The Executive Director for Resources & Transformation will be the lead officer in co-ordinating, and overseeing the delivery of the action plan.

3.4 Much of the action plan links to the proposal that a full stock take is undertaken as a way of providing a full assessment of where the Council is, and to scope what activity and resources are required to move from the

current to the future state. The final report from the LGA was shared with Cabinet members. Some of the key issues that have informed the development of the plan include:

- a. Identifying the scope of vision, so that it reflects people/community as well as place.
- b. Timescales needing to be realistic and achievable.
- c. Determining the role the vision has in managing demand/agreeing a 'contract' between the Council (and public sector) and our residents/businesses
- d. What do we stop doing?

4. Council Corporate Plan Priorities

- 4.1 The action plan has been developed at the same time as and has informed the refresh of the current Corporate Plan, including a new Vision for the Council, refreshed purpose, priorities and a streamlined approach to performance monitoring of the Plan's key outcomes.

5. Risk Management

- 5.1 There are no significant risks associated with the action plan other than potential risk to the Council's reputation if it fails to deliver. Effective risk management practice is incorporated into the planning of projects and initiatives that will support the delivery of the actions identified.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications related to the action plan itself but there may be financial implications regarding the delivery of suggested actions.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 There is no legal requirement to take action following a LGA Corporate Peer Challenge however to do so does promote good governance and transparency.

8. Property Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct property implications associated with the approval of the action plan.

9. Health and wellbeing implications

9.1 There are no direct health and wellbeing implications from the action plan.

10. Staffing Implications

10.1 There are no direct implications of the action plan itself, however there is a potential impact on staffing resources from the delivery of some of the suggested actions in the plan relating to, for example, the review of the workforce strategy, the delivery of the transformation programme, channel shift and the development of the communications function.

11. Reducing Inequalities

11.1 One of the key actions from the Corporate Peer Challenge was to agree a new Vision for the Council. This has been incorporated into the updated Corporate Plan as *'Inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised'*. The Plan has fully adopted the Marmot principles which are reflected in the vision and priorities. The Marmot Review clearly identifies the role of councils in supporting individuals, families and communities and reducing health inequalities.

12. Consultation

12.1 The progress report has been informed by evidence gathered and submitted during the LGA CPC process and via consultation with Cabinet members and senior managers.

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James Walsh
Executive Director
Transformation and Resources

14 February 2018



Councillor Sean Coughlan
Leader of the Council

14 February 2018

	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendations	What it means for the Council?	Suggested Actions	Suggested Timescale
	1. Develop a coherent narrative of place and your ambitions:			
1a	Much of this already exists in a variety of places but it needs bringing together as a coherent vision for the long term future of Walsall the place. This will enable all members and managers to articulate that narrative consistently both internally and with external partners.	Being clear about the ambition for the place will inform the vision for the organisation. Work with the Walsall Economic Board (WEB) has been significant in formalising relationships across business sectors and delivery of the Council's economic growth priority.	Develop a narrative that can be promoted by the Walsall Economic Board and present the borough as a place to do business. This can be used as part of narrative for 2a below. Incorporating into overall vision narrative about our place within the region (WMCA etc.)	January 2018
			Include as part of a refreshed Corporate Plan for wide distribution internally and externally	Approval at Cabinet 14.2.18 Full Council 28.2.18
			Proud' brand work & Vision Principles incorporated into Corporate plan	Approval at Cabinet 14.2.18 Full Council 28.2.18
1b	It will also inform more clearly Walsall's role and investment requirements within the West Midlands Combined Authority to deliver a Strategic Economic Plan for the region.	Use the narrative to position council in wider WMCA and ensure opportunities to promote Walsall and attract funding to the town are maximised	When available ensure this is shared widely across WMCA. Attendance at appropriate WMCA meetings to maximise opportunities to inform the Strategic Economic Plan.	May 2018 Ongoing
	2. Use the narrative to place shape more effectively with partners:			
2a	This stronger narrative would help partners understand the Council's priorities more clearly and would also enable the Council to focus its resources on the partnerships and relationships that are most important in achieving that vision.		Refresh Corporate Plan so includes a narrative that links priorities to the needs of the borough, including 'Proud' brand work & 'Vision Principles' Continue to develop the Strategic Locality Partnership Boards to ensure the strategic priorities for the Borough are delivered within each locality. Narrative - tying narrative through Corporate Plan into corporate priorities	Approval at Cabinet 14.2.18 Full Council 28.2.18 May 2018
2b	Consider a Place Shaping Board to join up regeneration with other activities.	Ensuring that place shaping happens firstly across E&E, Adults, Children's and C&G – the role we can all play in making the places of the borough and people's lives better.	SPG to be shape placing board. Terms of reference to be updated. PROUD work to be submitted for discussion.	
		A number of partnership bodies already exist and the 6 monthly partnership summits provide an opportunity for strategic planning across all existing groups and boards.	Consider how membership of SPG could be reviewed to include more focus on Place Shaping?	March 2018
		Emphasise the importance of place Marketing as a route to Market confidence, attraction of regeneration and monies – as distinct from the communications function per se.		
	3. Make best use of newly appointed Chief and Executive Director roles:			
3a	Strengthen corporate oversight and drive transformation change at pace through the newly appointed Chief Executive and new role of the Executive Director for Resources and Transformation (currently in recruitment process). This should include an increased appetite for managed risk.	Connects to suggestions to improve Transformation Programme.	Identify a provider to assist the delivery of independent stock take against vision principles. Consistent with a whole Council approach	January 2018
T1	Transformation is a means of achieving the 'future Council' : Currently the transformation programme has a narrow focus in terms of putting in place corporate enablers, attempting to leverage the asset base and dealing with growing demand in adults and children's services. It is not broadly perceived as the mechanism that will achieve the whole organisation change required to take the organisation forward. In contrast, CMT do describe the programme as 'the only show in town' in terms of change management. The likelihood is this misalignment is due to the 4 year plan and the transformation programme being developed separately and this needs to be addressed.	LGA challenged whether all transformation and change activity was included in the programme and whether there was a risk of resources being diverted to activity not included in the programme. Completing a full stock take to map all change activity across the council will enable the transformation board to consider whether scope of current agreed programme should be updated. A full stock take will provide a holistic understanding of all change activity and enable leadership to make an informed decision regarding future phases.	Procure and Appoint provider to deliver stock take. With option to deliver phase actions	End May 2018
			Conduct an independent stock take of all change activity.	May - Aug 2018
			Stock take is completed and provides options for moving Council to where it wants to be.	Sep-18
T5	Commerce development of strategic transformation intentions for next phase: The next phase of transformation will have a deeper and broader reach than currently and the appetite is for this phase to occur at an accelerated rate. To achieve this, planning for the next phase needs to commence before the turn of the year which is timely given the introduction of the new Chief Executive and DCS. Initial soundings suggest that this is already a key deliverable.		Assess the outcomes of the stock take and re-evaluate the scope of the Transformation Programme (including the refreshed Corporate Plan). Decide which options are done in house which go to provider. Redesign and reinvigorate transformation programme	September October 2018
3b	Ensure the newly appointed Executive Director for Children's Services is adequately supported to meet future financial and service challenges.	Budget setting process enables a continual review of demands on all directorates and any demands identified by the DCS will be given full and appropriate consideration.	Completed as part of continual process of 121s with CEX	November 2017
	4. Review Workforce Strategy:			
4a	The forthcoming planned review of this strategy needs to ensure it is reflective of the direction of travel of the organisation and the ambitions of the staff. This will ensure it will facilitate and support the objective of the future organisation and its workforce by addressing skill gaps, nurturing internal talent through formalised succession planning and empowering staff to be creative and innovative.	The review of the workforce strategy will take into account outcomes from stock take to ensure aligns with the direction of the Council. Key to this is clear/strong leadership and effective communication to ensure that the actions identified/implemented are understood and owned by all staff, to ensure workforce strategy is embedded and effective as quickly as possible.	The actions identified in the strategy will be continually reviewed and refreshed to ensure that the strategy supports the delivery of the Council's priorities Vision and Values Review of Workforce Strategy needs to reflect feedback from Staff Survey Design and agree corporate change management methodology train and embed linked to workforce strategy	April - June 2018 (refresh and communication plan) ongoing - delivery of actions and communications
T4	Address the significant culture change that will be required at all levels: The hard system approach to transformation has limited effectiveness without properly addressing the softer cultural change requirements. The development of a HR Strategy (i.e. the Corporate Workforce strategy) is a positive step in this regard but needs to be further developed, in tandem with the future vision, needed to embed the right cultural attributes to fit and realise the future organisation.	That the council is clear as to the kind of 'back-office' function required from support functions in order to deliver tools/products, services aligned to the workforce strategy. Key work stream within the workforce strategy is 'leading change' which in part relates to creating a culture and working environment which inspires staff.	The refreshed workforce strategy will include detailed reference to use of coaching at all levels of the organisation. A detailed communication plan relating to delivery of workforce strategy will be developed and delivered. Ensure the refresh of the workforce strategy aligns to refreshed corporate plan and transformation programme so it supports key organisational change.	

	LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Recommendations	What it means for the Council?	Suggested Actions	Suggested Timescale
	5. Channel Shift as a key strategic priority for the Council:			
5a	There needs to be full engagement with the customer to align the outcomes with customers' expectations and not just a focus on driving savings. Harness the appetite within the organisation to embrace digitalisation and ensure investment in training to maximise the benefits from this.	Links to stock take and refocused transformation programme with an emphasis on our improving customer experience then achieving savings. The experience and expectations of customers will refine and shape the specifics of the channel shift programme to ensure the outcomes that are ought are achieved.	Connects to C4 below. Review Microsoft navigator work. Build business case for MS Runway Refocus transformation programme to digital enabling	Feb 2018 Sept/Oct 2018
5b	This must include funding for provision of fit for purpose IT with the systems upgraded rapidly, to allow staff to use it as an enabler for other transformational activities.	Links to stock take Investment in ICT will enable change activity - Capital Programme refresh includes investment in ICT infrastructure.	Continually review the investment to ensure service is able to meet the needs of the Channel Shift programme at the required pace of delivery to ensure there is no loss of momentum. Agree or not new Runway. Agree turning on of new functionality linked to Digital by Design principle	Date TBA

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	Transformation - Suggestions for Improvement			
	1. Transformation is a means of achieving the 'future Council':			
T1	moved to 3a			
	2. The Transformation programme has to be set within the context of the vision for the Council and strategic priorities:			
T2	Given the challenging financial environment, the necessary shrinkage of available resources and the appetite to take the organisation forward it is clear that the organisation needs to undertake a visioning exercise to establish its strategic direction and key priorities for the medium to longer term. Resource alignment should follow facilitated by the transformation programme that should be the vehicle used to transition the organisation from its current to future state, as opposed to being an 'add on' as it is currently.	A refocused transformation programme that aligns with the budget cycle but focuses on improving the customer experience	Complete a full stock take and analysis of all change or project activity to capture breath of change activity. Evaluate the outcomes from the stock take against the vision to ensure there is alignment (if appropriate refresh the vision).	Aug-18 Sept/Oct 2018
	3. Confirm the broad service transformation intentions, share, engage and consult:			
T3	Although some areas of the organisation had relatively high visibility of the programme, broad understanding was patchy at best. The content and intentions of the programme need to be communicated well to provide clarity regarding the desired outcomes and to smooth any unintended consequences of potentially competing priorities.	Wider communication of the programme has been deferred whilst the 'story' for each programme is built post stock take and dedicated resources are appointment to manage communications for the programme.	Develop a full communication plan for whole transformation programme supported by plans for each project. Communication plan to include key messages; purpose, full scope of activities and events to promote and communicate regarding the programme to a wide range of stakeholders and audiences. Communication on PROUD; Transformation, and the future.	PROUD February - March 2018 Transformation February 2018 Future - October 2018
	4. Address the significant culture change that will be required at all levels:			
T4	moved to 4a			
	5. Commence development of strategic transformation intentions for next phase:			
T5	moved to 3a			
	6. Establish clear accountability for the programme at a senior level:			
T6	Given the transitional arrangements in place for the leadership team it is understandable that when the peer challenge was undertaken the lines of accountability were not clear. There were some assurances provided that the programme will be located under the remit of the new Executive Director for Resources and Transformation; this would seem a sensible fit going forward.	Decision made prior to receipt of report that Change and Governance Directorate would be changed to Resources and Transformation and that responsibility for transformation would move to this directorate.	Completed Executive Directors to be sponsors of each of the projects in refocused transformation programme.	June 2018 Sept/Oct 2018
	7. Accelerate appointment of permanent transformation resources:			
T7	There was also broad agreement that the programme needs to be adequately resourced and although this may already be underway some acceleration would be appropriate to drive momentum.	Recruitment process for core team of 8 has been completed.	Establish and embed core team. Assess whether team is sufficient for demand (CMT Transformation Board). Following completion of stock take, review and update the level of resources required.	January 2018 January - June 2018 September - October 2018
	8. Embed appropriate levels of programme and project management and performance management:			
T8	Although there were some initial examples of a programme and project management approach there did not appear to be consistency across each of the programme elements. There was also a marked absence of any consolidated approach to performance management. This is a key weakness in the current delivery system which needs to be addressed as a priority.		CMT Transformation Board to agree minimum requirements for all Transformation Programme work streams pre and post stock take and refreshed programme	September - October 2018
	9. Consolidate plans:			
T9	The 4 year plan, although a significant step in the right direction, was developed after the transformation programme and doesn't appear to be properly aligned. There were clearly discrepancies between the efficiencies assigned to the programme and those included in the plan. To properly consider the changes across the system and enable performance management these plans should be consolidated. See also T2	Financial and transformation plans are aligned but it is recognised a review of any strategic plan (e.g. transformation, corporate plan or medium term financial strategy) necessitate a review of the other plans to ensure continued alignment. Refresh of corporate plan and the setting of the budget will also require a review and refresh of overall transformation programme and visa versa.	Review transformation programme post stock take to ensure alignment with the refresh Corporate Plan and updated Medium Term Financial Strategy.	September - October 2018
	10. Allocate funding to projects on the basis of well-developed and intelligence based business cases			
T10	Without a business case the deliverables, resources and planning are absent.	Connects to T8 above.	Post stock take and refocused transformation programme; all funding to projects follows robust business case.	September - October 2018

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	Communications - Suggestions for Improvement			
	1. Articulate a clear vision for Walsall and the Council:			
C1	Do this in collaboration with residents and staff, make sure it passes the 'pub test' and feels right to residents. Then go out and communicate it.	A vision will provide an overarching sense of purpose and direction, contributing to development of organisation wide sense of belonging and purpose. Connects with 1a.	Connects also to C4 below. Utilise employee staff survey network to develop and test emerging vision. Map current ways we collect resident information feedback, complaints compliments etc. What are the gaps? Plan to fill those gaps. Communications campaign for a year. PROUD goes internal and external. Need for Marketing support?	Approval at Cabinet 14.2.18 Full Council 28.2.18 June - July 2018 Jan/Feb 2018 Internal - March 2018 External - June 2018 onwards
	2. Tell the good stories and 'shout out' about them:			
C2	Put in place mechanisms to ensure that communications is at the heart of the organisation and knows what is coming up. Make sure it knows about potential risks or opportunities as early as possible so it can provide advice and prepare.	Outcomes from employee survey have provided an opportunity to gain insight regarding how communications is valued in the organisation and how it can be better utilised.	Review comms work plan, develop proactive approach, generate stories for comms to 'market and sell' the Council i.e. Directorate 'feed' comms team. Focus on 'marketing' the council and telling the stories - related to Corporate Plan and Proud brand. Post stock take review comms team capacity and foci.	now until May 2018 Sept/Oct 2018
	3. Establish communications intentions and resource accordingly:			
C3	You need to determine what kind of communications team you want to have? For a fully integrated communications team you would need a media function, digital officer, internal communications officer and a Marketing officer.	links to stock take	CMT discussion. Cabinet / CMT discussion. Accompanying business plan developed based on the agreed communication intentions. Post stock take	September - October 2018
	4. Undertake a regular resident survey to understand what your residents think of you and where they get their information from:			
C4	This should take place at least once a year.	Connects to 5a above. Understanding how residents receive information regarding the council and the services to improve the customer experience.	Develop process to capture residents feedback and utilise this to inform service delivery and communications. Create an Intelligence Hub	Jan/Feb 2018 Nov 2018
	5. Adopt a campaign-based approach which is researched and evaluated:			
C5	In terms of what to prioritise, once the vision has been articulated, the team should draw up a list of campaigns to deliver based on the administration's priorities, service area requirements and what the resident survey is telling you. I would suggest five to ten campaigns for a team of five including telling the story of how Walsall is being regenerated, explaining how the Council is getting people into work/skilling them up, recruitment of social workers, etc. See also C5	Communications strategy agreed in 2017 seeks the alignment of all communications with the corporate priorities.	Communications work plan and schedule to be populated and maintained with campaign information mapped against the corporate priorities.	May - September 2018
	6. Use insight from the staff survey to develop an internal communications strategy and deliver a staff communications plan:			
C6	Develop an internal communications strategy using customer insight from the staff survey and other relevant forums. In addition, develop a staff communications plan that is corporately owned.	Outcomes from employee survey have provided an opportunity to gain insight regarding how communications is valued in the organisation and how it can be better utilised.	Internal communications work plan and schedule to be populated and tested e.g. core brief, Friday Bulletin, hard to reach staff.	May 2018
	7. Work with public sector partners to deliver joint communication objectives:			
C7	Develop the existing partners' communications group to create a work programme of campaign activity for the next year.	Discuss with the Strategic Partnership Group (SPG) the development of a strategic communications plan based on the requirements of SPG and the various partnership bodies it represents. This will inform the work programme for the partnership communications group	SPG to set the strategic communication needs for the partnership which will inform a partnership communication plan based on the priorities in the Walsall Plan.	May 2018