

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Corporate Peer Challenge Report

Scrutiny Overview Committee (20 Apr 2023)



Walsall Council



IMPROVE
outcomes and
customer experience



IMPROVE
employee satisfaction
and engagement



IMPROVE
service efficiency
and performance

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge - background

- Recommended that councils undertake CPC every 5 years – Walsall’s last was in 2017.
- Not an inspection: peers provide challenge and share learning (final report with recommendations)
- On site in Walsall 16-19 January 2023
- Structured around **EPICC priorities** plus LGA **core elements**:
 - Local priorities and outcomes
 - Organisational and place leadership
 - Governance and culture
 - Financial planning and management
 - Capacity for improvement



Progress to date

- **LGA Feedback Report:** received 21 February and final version agreed with LGA (to identify factual errors, agree tone etc).
- **Recommendations:** peer team set out **11 recommendations**, spanning the five themes.
- **High level Action Plan:** produced by Walsall Council in response to final LGA Report and recommendations (Cabinet approved these: **22 March**)
- **Chief Exec/Leader statement** circulated and published online alongside report, with separate comms to members, staff and partners

In our own words...

Peers met with 120 staff, at all levels and across all services, during their four-day visit

“I can go to the Chief Exec directly”

“I feel listened to”

“I feel consulted”

“It feels like a good place to work”

“I have good relationships with colleagues across the council”

“There is intent in the organisation to change”

“It’s a great place to work”

“The council has moved on”

“PROUD transformation work was owned by the whole council”

“Strong political leadership”

“PROUD attracted me to Walsall”

“The council is seen as a good place to work”

“It feels positive”

Findings- strengths

- We understand our challenges and have lots of areas of good practice to build on
- Proud transformation evident
- Building blocks for future are in place (Hub)
- Strong controls – scrutiny, finance and audit (Audit Committee “one of the strongest they have seen”)
- Positive performance in challenging service areas
- Strong partnership working locally and regionally
- Strong political leadership and good officer/member relationships
- Talented and passionate staff
- Culture of improvement
- Be proud of the 2040 engagement work
- Good work in equality, diversity & inclusion



Next Steps

- **Six-month check-in** with peer team: an opportunity to discuss progress and next steps
- **Wider discussions:** using this CPC process as a starting point to think about where we want to be as a Council in 5 years' time (in the same way the last CPC helped to shape Proud)
- **Internal Delivery Plan:** now being worked up to maximise the value of the review and its recommendations
 - Workshops conducted with Directors/EDs and senior managers to identify existing/potential activity
 - Seek to align actions to existing workstreams, ensuring delivery and accountability, fit to EPICCC/Proud etc
 - Identify officers to work up actions/make appropriate links to other activity

Action plan

Recommendation 1: **Maximise the opportunities that are presented to the Council through partnership and convening arrangements.**

Actions:

We are Walsall 2040 engagement

Strengthening and alignment of Walsall Partnerships

Strategic approach to Voluntary community sector



Action plan

Recommendation 2: Consider the Council's approach to inclusive growth in delivering the 2022 Economic Strategy and maximising the impact of the "Walsall Pound".

Actions:

Promote our social value policy

Re-establish Walsall Economic partnership and deliver the Economic strategy

Recommendation 3: Define the content and deliverables that will be included in the "Proud" initiative going forward.

Actions:

Design and implement outcomes based budget process to determine next phase of transformation deliverables

Action plan

Recommendation 4: There is a framework of Plans and priorities that exist across the Council; however, consideration should be given to their alignment and support staff understanding.

Actions:

Implement culture workplan aligned to Enabling Communications & Culture workstream of Proud
We will align Our Council Plan and Values, Proud promises, Key Areas of Focus and 2040 borough plan



Action plan

Recommendation 5: Provide a coordinated approach to issues of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) to support the workforce to better represent local communities.

Actions:

Planned EDI work to review Equalities governance and strengthen corporate approach

Implement new workforce strategy

Future workforce activities such as the Coaching for Career Development programme on underrepresented groups.

Work with West Midlands Employers to deliver a bespoke Allyship programme for senior leaders at Walsall



Action plan

Recommendation 6: Review the Council's approach to flexible working in the round and communicate this clearly to staff.

Actions:

Staff engagement and communication, consistency of message and management practice
We are reviewing and enhancing our induction, training and coaching offer to staff to ensure effective management in relation to customer focussed ways of working.

Recommendation 7: Articulate and consider the contribution of Organisational Development to the next stage of the Council's transformation.

Actions:

Strengthen the Council's OD functions and align to our transformation plans.
Deliver workshops to embed our PLATE values in day-to-day behaviours.



Action plan

Recommendation 8: Maintain effective financial control and establish a sustainable and resilient financial future post-COVID.

Actions:

We will maintain effective financial control and continue working towards implementing an outcome-based budgeting approach for 2024/25

We will consider continuity planning in Audit Committee – ensuring it remains an exemplar.

Recommendation 9: Consider the Management Responsibilities of Senior Officers at the Council.

Actions:

We will continue to consider Management responsibilities and succession planning as part of our new Workforce strategy implementation.



Action plan

Recommendation 10: Consider the knowledge transfer required from the Council's strategic partner to support the newly established Corporate Hub.

Actions:

We will continue the knowledge transfer processes that are underway across the Council and develop the existing prioritisation processes and workplans that are in place for the Hub.

Recommendation 11: Ensure that internal processes are proportionate and consistently applied

Actions:

Continue work aligned to Proud workstreams and conduct an officer governance review in Spring/Summer 2023

Implementing tools to support governance processes and further strengthen officer Member communications