North Herts Council Corporate Peer Challenge – November 2024
Action Plan

Number	Recommendation	Action	Led By	Timescale	Update
No 1	Develop the golden thread	We will use the Council Delivery Plan to continue to reflect the major projects that will support the delivery of our Council Plan. We will review our corporate KPIs (supported by an Internal Audit) to assess how they can be improved to reflect our priorities and also provide challenging targets that help to drive improvement	Exec Member & Director – Resources	Report to 24th June Cabinet/ 17th June O&S as part of the annual update of the Council Delivery Plan.	
		Alongside the Council Delivery Plan, we will continue to use internal Service Plans to reflect the other key tasks in each Directorate. These will have a focus on supporting the Council Plan, but will also incorporate other statutory requirements. Where appropriate, we will use Service KPIs to support Service Managers and Directors to assess performance.	Executive Members and Directors	From start of new civic year	
		Leadership Team will review all the projects on the Council Delivery Plan and Service Plans on a quarterly basis. This will help manage the delivery of projects and also ensure that they continue to align with the Council Plan and priorities. Executive Members will also be kept informed of progress against Service Plans. Cabinet (through quarterly updates on the Council Delivery Plan) will have regular opportunities to determine any projects that should be included at that level, as well as assess delivery of existing projects, KPIs and risks.	Executive Members and Directors	From start of new civic year	
		We will carry out a budget consultation exercise during summer 2025 to help		Summer 2025	

		inform our budget setting process for 2026/27 onwards. We will use this alongside the 3-year settlement for 2026-29 to assess our funding priorities. This will inform the areas where we will make savings to achieve a balanced budget.	Exec Member & Director – Resources		
		The Digital Transformation oversight group will review what software and processes should be a transformation priority to maximise the organisational benefits. These could be direct financial benefits or through reducing effort that frees up Officer time.	Director – Customers	April 2025	
		We have carried out a review of the capital programme to assess the likely timing of delivery and any projects no longer needed. The budget setting process for 2025/26 has also provided an opportunity to assess new and existing proposals. We will add new capital projects (e.g. Churchgate) when we have a defined plan and a reliable estimate of timing and costs.	Exec Member & Director – Resources	Ongoing review	
		As staff regular performance reviews are carried out, the priorities within them will be linked to the priorities in the Council Plan, Council Delivery Plan and Service Plans.	All managers	Ongoing	
No 2	Prioritise	We will use the Council Delivery Plan to track progress against our key corporate projects. As well as the formal discussion of this at Cabinet, we will also start to discuss it on a regular basis at Political Liaison Board. We will agree which are the most important priorities for North Hertfordshire. This will allow earlier discussion of how the projects are helping to deliver our priorities and any blockages	PLB	Ongoing	

		to delivery. Where blockages are caused by staffing resources we can assess where there may be opportunities to prioritise projects, based on the staff required (as usually requires specialist knowledge and skills) and relative importance of projects.			
No 3	Place Narrative	Subject to securing suitable funding, we will seek additional capacity to identify the opportunities available to promote our North Herts Place Narrative across the district. The most effective opportunities will then be included in a Marketing & Communications plan that the consultancy will be responsible for creating, executing, and measuring, with support from the North Herts Council communications and Economic Development teams.	Exec Members & Director - Customers, Director – Enterprise	Summer 2025	
No 4	Partnerships	We will continue to look for opportunities with partners, wherever interests can be aligned. We will continue to work closely with Herts Growth Board, HCCSP and others, taking leading roles where appropriate. The new leadership team structure includes a strategic health lead, which seeks to work more closely with the NHS through the work of the ICB.	Cabinet and Leadership Team Cabinet and Leadership Team Director Regulatory	Ongoing Ongoing From 1 April 2025	
No 5	Leadership	A leadership team restructure has been agreed and will be in place from 1 April 2025. There will also be further changes in the leadership team during the course of 2025, with two retirements. We will put in place a learning and development	Chief Executive and Directors	From 1 April 2025	

		programme to integrate new members to the Leadership Team, build relationships and explore ways to re-energise the organisation, with visible officer leadership and more strategic impact. We will look to create opportunities for more in-person communications, for example an annual staff conference, attending different team meetings and visiting front line service areas.	Leadership Team	From 1 April 2025	
No 6	Organisational Development	We will create a new HR strategy that reflects our priorities and how we develop existing staff and recruit new staff to deliver them. As we know that there will be some changes in the Leadership Team over the summer, we will do the majority of this work over the Autumn to ensure that it can capture the views of the new Directors. We will be clear on the importance of learning and development, even when there is a need to reduce our spend. We will use our new Learning Management System to help with accessing training. We will review how we carry out our Regular Performance Reviews (appraisal) to make it simple, effective and aligned to the golden thread. We will use workforce data to inform how we address succession planning, recruitment and retention, with appropriate plans in place.	Exec Member & Director - Resources	Autumn 2025	
No 7	Ways of Working	We will relaunch our values with Officers and Councillors. This includes listening to and considering the views of each other,	Member training champions and Leadership Team	Summer 2025	

		and work together and support each other to be the best organisation we can be. Executive members will present committee reports at meetings We will look at light touch staff surveys to check in with staff, which can also be used to reinforce expectations of behaviour. We will review our approach to whistleblowing training, in order to raise awareness across the organisation. We will consider adoption of any new model Code of conduct for Councillors	 Cabinet Director - Resources Director - Governance Standards committee/ Director - Governance	 Ongoing Summer 2025 and ongoing Start of new civic year When available	
No 8	Performance Management	We have updated the Council Delivery Plan to be clearer on any indicators that do not meet the green performance threshold. The report highlights the actions that will be taken to seek to improve performance, and we will continue to work on the explanations that Cabinet and O&S need. Internal Audit will benchmark our performance indicators to see how the measures and the target values compare to others. We will use that audit report to reflect on how we use the indicators to drive improvement We will also have an annual review of indicators that consistently achieve a green rating to assess how realistic it would be to set a more stretching target, and the benefits to residents that it would provide.	Exec Member & Director – Resources	Completed Report to 24th June Cabinet/ 17th June O&S as part of the annual update of the Council Delivery Plan. Ongoing	

No 9	Modernisation	The digital transformation initiative is a key component of our corporate plan, guided by an Oversight group that provides strategic direction and prioritisation. This programme encompasses the upskilling of staff across the Council and the provision of appropriate tools to support their roles. Several workstreams are currently underway, including a partnership with an apprenticeship provider to develop skills in business transformation, AI, and data insights. A significant aspect of the digital programme involves the review and redesign of Council processes to enhance efficiency. We have recently recruited a dedicated Digital Business Analyst (BA) for this purpose, and through this work, we anticipate the transfer and upskilling of BA skills. Ongoing engagement with staff and Councillors is planned, alongside the development of our rolling communications plan. Additionally, a controlled pilot of using AI (Microsoft Copilot) is underway to identify use cases and assess the potential efficiency impact across various areas within the Council.	Exec Member & Director - Customers	Ongoing Ongoing Ongoing	
No 10	Project Management	See response to recommendation 2, which covers resourcing of ongoing projects. For larger capital projects we will move towards incorporating project management into the capital cost, to reflect the required capacity and ensuring the total cost is considered as part of the overall project appraisal. We have a process for collecting lessons learnt from projects. By improving the	Exec Member & Director - Resources	Ongoing Ongoing	

		project reporting to Leadership Team (included in the response to recommendation 1) we will have better understanding on when smaller projects have completed, so can work with those project managers to ensure that we collate lessons learnt. Having more lessons learnt, which may also be more relevant to a wider audience, will allow us to produce regular updates to share across the Council.			