

**North Norfolk District Council**

**Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge**

**Action Plan – Progress Report to December 2024**

Peer Challenge Recommendation	Proposed response	Target completion date	Progress made to date – December 2024
<p><b>Recommendation 1</b></p> <p><b>Stronger focus on strategic finance</b></p> <p>a) MTFS – three plus one rolling year to allow better and more accurate considerations and forecasting.</p>	<p>a) New Medium Term Financial Strategy to be prepared as part of the 2024/25 budget process to reflect settlement announced on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023.</p> <p>Agree a framework and approach for undertaking a rolling programme of service reviews to inform future savings and efficiencies over the next two years to March 2026.</p>	<p>a) End Feb 2024.</p> <p>September 2024</p>	<p>Significantly restructured and redrafted MTFS document prepared autumn 2024, presented to and received positive comments from O&amp;S at its meeting of the 13<sup>th</sup> November and approved by Cabinet on 2<sup>nd</sup> December with further work to be undertaken in respect of Section 8 Closing the Budget Gap following receipt of the Financial Settlement anticipated for w/c 16<sup>th</sup> December</p> <p>High level review of services undertaken in preparation of the 2025/26 budget – including review of fees and charges; beach hut and chalet charges; car park charges; proposed transfer, sponsorship or closure of some public toilets; proposed cessation of the North Norfolk Visitor Centre service, review of SLA for car park management and enforcement – all of which were undertaken in-house.</p> <p>Separate reviews undertaken of the IT service and the Council’s approach to the management of Temporary Accommodation undertaken by EELGA Talent Bank</p>

<p>b) More regular monitoring and reporting of the budget and capital programme to better inform decision-making and promptly identify under/over-spending so that issues can be addressed.</p>	<p>b) New financial reporting processes to be agreed in terms of frequency, format of reports, scrutiny arrangements etc.</p> <p>This will be undertaken alongside reviewing and clarifying the relationships and types of business considered by Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny and GRAC which is to be externally facilitated.</p> <p>Financial management training has also been provided to elected members and budget holders to inform better budget management moving forward.</p>	<p>b) New report format and reporting cycle be introduced for start of new civic year – ie from the May 2024 cycle of meetings.</p>	<p>consultants – with the recommendations of each report now being taken forward</p> <p>Response to Government request for Productivity Plan submission – attached.</p> <p>Limited progress has been made against the objective of new report style and cycle due to capacity issues within the Democratic Services Team;</p> <p>Appointment of new AD Finance and Assets from July 2024 and agreement to focus resource on clarifying and improving the relationship between Cabinet, O&amp;S and GRAC.</p> <p>With respect to this latter point, independent consultants report of April 2024, appointment of experienced chair of GRAC from May 2024, O&amp;S workshop May 2024, revised O&amp;S arrangements agreed in July 2024, training for O&amp;S members on constructive questioning and new pre-agenda and O&amp;S work programme arrangements implemented from September 2024 which has seen better attendance, debate and outcomes supporting corporate improvement through pre-scrutiny of some key budget decisions and Homelessness Task and Finish Group.</p>
<p>c) Alignment of financial capacity with corporate priorities – Statutory Officers are overloaded.</p>	<p>c) Review of service areas falling within remit of the two Assistant Directors within the Resources Directorate to bring greater focus, service team alignment and increase capacity for financial oversight and governance. Customer Services moves from this Directorate to be directly managed by Steve Hems, Director of Communities.</p>	<p>c) End of April 2024.</p>	<p>Agreement reached following consultation on a change in the line management responsibilities of the two Assistant Director positions reporting to the Director of Resources, resulting in recruitment of AD for Finance and Assets from July 2024 which has increased finance and governance capacity.</p> <p>Regular (with aim for fortnightly) Statutory Officer meetings between Chief Executive, Director of Resources (S151 Officer) and AD Legal and Governance</p>

			<p>(Monitoring Officer) to further strengthen strategic financial management, corporate governance and risk management issues – implemented from April 2024. Proposed that MO join CLT meetings formally from January 2025.</p> <p>Significant progress made with sign off of annual accounts by external auditors with the 2021/22 and 2022/23 accounts signed off in last six months, 2023/24 accounts completed for sign off in January 2025 and then planned for 2024/25 accounts to be prepared and signed off by external auditors as per planned timetable.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2</b></p> <p><b>The Corporate Plan needs to drive the delivery of new priorities alongside core services</b></p> <p>a) Align the Corporate Plan to the MTFS and properly resourced to make sure there are the funds to deliver aspirations and enough skilled and experienced officers to deliver them.</p>	<p>a) Agree allocation of resources – both staff and finance, to deliver the Council’s aspirations as detailed in the 2023 -2027 Corporate Plan and 2024/25 Annual Action Plan, aligned with the updated MTFS.</p>	<p>a) End Feb 2024.</p>	<p>Significantly restructured and redrafted MTFS document prepared autumn 2024, presented to and received positive comments from O&amp;S at its meeting of the 13<sup>th</sup> November and approved by Cabinet on 2<sup>nd</sup> December with further work to be undertaken in respect of Section 8 Closing the Budget Gap following receipt of the Financial Settlement anticipated for w/c 16<sup>th</sup> December</p> <p>Significant focus from July 2024 on preparation of 2025/26 budget recognising pressures on budget, particularly in respect of Temporary Accommodation costs and need to identify savings and efficiencies to deliver a balanced budget for 25/26.</p> <p>Submitted Productivity Plan to Government in July.</p>

<p>b) Ensure the golden thread through the delivery plan, service plans, team plans and check-ins, so that all staff understands how they contribute and can feel pride in achieving them.</p>	<p>b) Service/Team Plans and individual personal objectives agreed through the Check-in process.</p>	<p>End of March 2024.</p>	<p>An annual Action Plan for 2025/26 (from April 2025) is to be presented to Cabinet at its 3<sup>rd</sup> March meeting and O&amp;S on 19<sup>th</sup> March – this is delayed from previous years because of the uncertainties of the local government financial settlement and agreement of our budget, as well as the pressures on capacity which will arise from the English White Paper in respect of preparations for a Combined Authority for Norfolk and Suffolk and local government reorganisation which will impact on capacity and priorities for the Council over the next fifteen months and should therefore be reflected in the annual Action Plan.</p> <p>Development of new performance management system following end of contract with In-phase. New performance management system based on a spreadsheet approach developed in-house to go live from January 2025 – including workshop with Overview and Scrutiny Committee in October 2024 to agree key performance indicators, measures and data sets and linked to implementation of three new Strategic Oversight Boards – Performance and Productivity; Major Projects and Decarbonisation.</p> <p>Significant progress maintained on delivering Corporate Plan priority objectives – including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• taken our Local Plan through Examination;</li> <li>• have, with partner authorities “unlocked” development delayed by the Nutrient Neutrality issue;</li> <li>• secured £174,000 for solar panels on the Victory Swimming Pool roof – project delivered December 2024;</li> <li>• implemented a trial electric car pool (2 cars) with Enterprise to reduce the impact of business mileage in the district</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p> <p><b>There is a need for a comprehensive Organisational Development Plan which includes:-</b></p> <p>a) Labour market analysis and workforce planning to help research future jobs in the local area, understand the skills needed for certain future roles and the demand for future employment working with business partners.</p> <p>b) Talent management / learning and development to attract, identify, develop, engage, retain and employ officers valuable to the Council.</p>	<p>a) The Council has a good level of knowledge in this space but needs to demonstrate this understanding more clearly through a People or Workforce Plan to assist with the recruitment, development and retention of staff at a time of increasing workforce challenges.</p> <p>b) The Council has a strong record of workforce learning and development but could more clearly state and present this through better branding of the support for both existing staff and new recruits to the Council.</p> <p>Articulate our workforce development offer more clearly to existing staff, new recruits and managers so that we are more agile in the recruitment and development of our staff.</p>	<p>a) By end June 2024.</p> <p>b) As above.</p>	<p>Final draft of new Workforce Development and People Strategy agreed December 2024 (after some slippage in the original completion date for this work from September 2024) – to be approved in March 2025 – prepared with facilitation by an EELGA Talent Bank resource following some staff workshops.</p> <p>New Workforce Development and People Strategy has incorporated previously drafted Learning and Development Strategy and Role Model Manager Framework by member of the HR team to be presented as a single document for completeness.</p>
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<p>c) Employee survey and action plan – this is needed and will help to improve organisational culture by delivering on the results.</p> <p>d) Organisational Culture Plan – to help attitudes shift and make the council more agile to future demands.</p>	<p>c) Undertake an Employee Survey to establish some baseline data from which an Organisational Development and Culture Plan can be developed.</p> <p>d) Development of Organisational Development and Cultural Plan.</p>	<p>c) Survey to be completed by end February 2024.</p> <p>Results / report to be received by end March 2024.</p> <p>d) By end June 2024.</p>	<p>Achieved February 2024 and results used to inform development of new Workforce Development and People Strategy.</p> <p>See comments above.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p> <p><b>To continue to improve the Council needs to rethink:-</b></p> <p>a) Senior leadership of change and transformation – who is responsible for driving this is the organisation?</p>	<p>a) Articulate more clearly that CLT should lead on the change and transformation agenda for the authority – this being separate to the operational focus on Management Team; with the strategic direction being agreed between CLT and Cabinet and then CLT leading the internal change and transformation agenda as an internal organisational development activity in support of the</p>	<p>a) New model to be agreed and implemented by end February 2024.</p>	<p>Three new Strategic Oversight Boards have been established and have met regularly since July to create clear separation between strategic and operational management, and reporting to political structures creating additional capacity through streamlined processes.</p> <p>Each Board is chaired by a Director, with a focus on monitoring progress and performance and reporting to members by exception.</p>

<p>b) Distributed leadership – ownership, responsibility and accountability – Management Team need to work in sync and provide more operational capacity for transformation and change, compliance with programme and project management governance, creating more space at CLT for strategic planning.</p>	<p>political aspirations as agreed through the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>b) See above.</p>	<p>b) New model to be in place by end March 2024 at the latest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decarbonisation Oversight Board</li> <li>• Major Projects Oversight Board</li> <li>• Performance and Productivity Board</li> </ul> <p>See above commentary on the new Strategic Oversight Boards.</p> <p>Good progress made on service reviews and engagement in the two EELGA facilitated reviews by ADs and service teams.</p> <p>Both of the above have created space for the Chief Executive to deliver the General Election in the district and for the Chief Executive and Leader to lead on development of opportunities at the Bacton Energy Hub site (major summit event to be held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025); campaign to retain older persons in-patient health facility in Cromer; engagement with the Rural Services Network, DCN and in recent weeks with district partners in Norfolk and Suffolk around devolution and potentially LGR proposals.</p>
<p>c) Digital vision and strategy to drive improved outcomes and cost efficiencies – need to agree how digital services will enable the delivery of</p>	<p>c) Engage a consultant or EELGA Talent Bank resource to support the Council in the development of a new digital strategy and IT Plan to support further service improvement / transformation.</p>	<p>c) End October 2024.</p>	<p>EELGA consultant’s review of IT service completed November 2024 – confirmed that the Council has a strong team and processes in place with regards IT service delivery but concluded need to appoint a Strategic IT Manager to further develop IT strategy and digital vision. Recommendations made within report now being taken forward.</p>



<p>modernised, streamlined delivery of services and priorities.</p> <p>d) Use data to inform decision-making, improve performance and drive commercial aspiration – smarter, clearer, more targeted performance measures which are effectively used to drive improvements along with more articulated reports, submitted on time and with clear recommendations.</p>	<p>d) Develop and agree a new set of key objectives and performance framework moving forward following decision not to use a proprietary performance management system in the future and develop spreadsheet framework for recording and reporting moving forward.</p>	<p>d) By end March 2024</p>	<p>Development of new performance management system following end of contract with In-phase. New performance management system based on a spreadsheet approach developed in-house to go live from January 2025. This action has taken longer than anticipated to deliver due to capacity issues, but is now ready for presentation and adoption from January 2025 and was demonstrated to the Peer Review Team at their 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024 visit.</p> <p>All corporate performance data to be presented to the new Performance and Productivity Board and onwards to O&amp;S and Cabinet removing this responsibility from the Chief Executive and Leader.</p>
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