

Corporate Peer Challenge Bristol City Council Feedback Report Action Plan

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Action Plan has been produced in consultation with the Local Government Association (LGA) and Bristol City Council's (BCC) Corporate Leadership Board following the publication of the LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) Feedback Report in November 2018.
- 1.2 The aim of the Action Plan is to provide the framework for delivering the on the seven key recommendations as out in the LGA CPC Feedback Report (see Table 1, section 5 of this report).
- 1.3 There are actions for each of the recommendations identified, which have been allocated to BCC's Corporate Leadership Board for implementation.
- 1.4 This Actions Plan should be reviewed bi- annually by Cabinet with quarterly updates to be provided to the Deputy Mayor with responsibility for Finance, Governance and Performance.
- 1.5 This Action Plan should serve as the starting point for developing and influencing a wide range of projects across Bristol City Council. This document will contain actions that will be part of other projects due to be implemented in 2019 such as BCC's Organisational Improvement Plan.

2. Context

- 2.1 The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge was undertaken in September 2018 by a team of councillors and senior officers from local authorities around the UK who examined the council's leadership, governance, financial planning and capacity to deliver its priorities.
- 2.2 The team spent four days onsite at BCC, during which they:
 - spoke to more than 200 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders
 - gathered information and views from more than 60 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading
 - collectively spent more than 460 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 13 weeks in Bristol.
- 2.3 The peers who delivered the peer challenge at Bristol City Council were:
 - Sir Steve Bullock, former Mayor of the London Borough of Lewisham
 - Carolyn Downs, Chief Executive, London Borough of Brent
 - Cllr John Lamb, Shadow Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing, Trafford Council
 - Cllr Joyce McCarty, Deputy Leader, Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
 - Anthony Payne, Strategic Director for Place, Plymouth City Council
 - Lynne Ridsdale, Director of HR & OD at Manchester City Council
 - Tasnim Shawkat, Bi-borough Director of Law, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster City Council
 - Guy Ware, Director of Local Government Performance & Finance, London Councils
 - Paul Clarke , Peer Challenge Manager- LGA
- 2.4 Peer challenges are improvement focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement.
- 2.5 The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing.
- 2.6 The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

3. Scope and focus

3.1 The peer team considered the following five questions which form the core components looked at by all Corporate Peer Challenges cover. These are the areas which the LGA believe are critical to councils' performance and improvement:

1. Understanding of the local place and priority setting: Does the council understand its local context and place and use that to inform a clear vision and set of priorities?
2. Leadership of Place: Does the council provide effective leadership of place through its elected members, officers and constructive relationships and partnerships with external stakeholders?
3. Organisational leadership and governance: Is there effective political and managerial leadership supported by good governance and decision-making arrangements that respond to key challenges and enable change and transformation to be implemented?
4. Financial planning and viability: Does the council have a financial plan in place to ensure long term viability and is there evidence that it is being implemented successfully?
5. Capacity to deliver: Is organisational capacity aligned with priorities and does the council influence, enable and leverage external capacity to focus on agreed outcomes?

3.2 In addition Bristol City Council asked the LGA CPC team to address the following questions which the CPC team has sought to address within the body of the Feedback report:

1. Is BCC's vision and strategic direction of travel appropriate for achieving its aims and how well understood and embedded are they amongst colleagues and partners?
2. Is BCC well placed to maximise the benefits of partnership working as part of the proposed 'One City Approach'?
3. Is it appropriate and timely to reduce the burden on colleagues of a more restrictive 'compliance-based' operating culture?
4. In the context of continued financial pressure, are BCC's ambitions considered achievable and well-enough focused?

4. Next Steps

4.1 BCC is keen to continue the relationship it has formed with the LGA throughout the peer challenge. BCC will update the LGA on progress it has made to meet the recommendations set out the CPC Feedback Report and outlined in this Action Plan.

4.2 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Team will be invited back to Bristol City Council for a follow up visit. The purpose of the visit is to help the council assess the impact of the peer challenge and demonstrate the progress it has made against the areas of improvement and development identified by the peer team. It is a lighter-touch version of the original visit and does not necessarily involve all members of the original peer team. It is expected that the follow up visit will take place in September 2019. This Action Plan will help form the basis for the follow up visit.

5. Key recommendations

5.1 Table 1 set out CPC team's 7 key recommendations to the council.

Table 1: Key Recommendations

Recommendation	Description
1.	The council should continue to implement its new cultural plans, values and behaviours and regularly review their impact (through for example staff surveys - with a view to improving the level of staff satisfaction with the council's leadership). This should include staff engagement and communication plans.
2.	To ensure sufficient capacity, stability and help reinforce confidence of partners and staff, BCC should seek to complete as soon as is practicable the outstanding permanent appointments to the rest of its senior structure.
3.	In collaboration with partners establish a narrative and plan which underpins the One City Approach: key stakeholders and BCC's staff, so that the One City Plan is known, understood and enacted.
4.	Given that the mayoral model is still relatively new to BCC, there needs to be collective responsibility to make this work and BCC should review its governance arrangements to ensure they are more effective in enabling good decision making. Specifically addressing : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. forward plan arrangements to make them more transparent and open, ensuring information is shared in good time and used responsibly by all b. structure, focus and impact of its Scrutiny arrangements c. the effectiveness of the application of its member and officer protocol
5.	The council should ensure it has in place an effective performance management framework and culture. As part of which it should specifically ensure: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. all officers have a performance appraisal, starting from the very top of the organisation b. alignment between the One City Plan, BCC's new Corporate Strategy, MTFP, resourcing and delivery plans c. it regularly reviews delivery plans so that it maintains focus and pace in this area d. key performance issues for the council or across partnerships e.g. DToC, are flagged and then tackled e. there is an effective balance between empowerment and control: equipping, enabling and then holding to account managers to deliver the outcomes required of them
6.	At this critical stage of change, BCC's top team of Mayor, Cabinet and Executive Directors should prioritise their own development and working practices so they set the tone for the council in terms of values, behaviours and focus on delivery of priorities.
7.	The council needs to ensure it maintains a strong financial oversight and accountability. It must continue to develop its transformation plans and approaches to demand management so that its high level budget plans become detailed delivery plans which are credible and seen through.

6. Action Plan

6.1 It should be noted BCC is in the midst of establishing a new suite of strategic policies and is aware of the need of ensuring synergy between them all. This Action Plan refers to several documents that are due to be published in 2019 such as the Organisational Improvement Plan that contain actions which will, if delivered enable capacity covering: An empowering organisation, Diversity and inclusion, Performance and talent management, Workforce health and wellbeing, Structure, pay and policy, brand and recruitment.

6.2 Table 2 sets out the actions BCC will undertake in response to the recommendations made by the LGA Peer Review Team.

Table 2: Action Plan

No.	Recommendation	Action	Time Frame	Officer Responsible
1	The council should continue to implement its new cultural plans, values and behaviours and regularly review their impact (through for example staff surveys - with a view to improving the level of staff satisfaction with the council's leadership). This should include staff engagement and communication plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To publish and implement BCC's Organisational Improvement Plan, which includes actions to continue to embed BCC's organisational values and behaviours through workshops and celebrating success; with values included in every process from recruitment through to annual reviews. Refresh and publish an Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy, which is aligned to the council's Corporate Strategy priorities and values. Improve the cascade of strategic updates. Run an annual staff survey and feedback mechanism to measure awareness, engagement and wellbeing of staff. 	<p>January 2019</p> <p>May 2019</p> <p>March 2019 and annually thereafter</p>	<p>Mike Jackson/John Walsh</p> <p>Tim Borrett</p> <p>Mike Jackson/John Walsh</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All performance reviews assess how values are understood and applied. To bring the values to life, BCC to produce case studies on each value demonstrating how the values have been implemented in the work place. 	Annually	John Walsh
2	To ensure sufficient capacity, stability and help reinforce confidence of partners and staff, BCC should seek to complete as soon as is practicable the outstanding permanent appointments to the rest of its senior structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head of Paid Service confirms senior leadership structure Senior Leadership Structure to be published on the source. Increase visibility of BCCs Corporate Leadership Board and Directors among the workforce and elected members. To host a 'market stall – meet the directors' event for workforce and elected members. 	November 2018 December 2018 March 2019	Mike Jackson Mike Jackson Mike Jackson/John Walsh
3	In collaboration with partners establish a narrative and plan which underpins the One City Approach: key stakeholders and BCC's staff, so that the One City Plan is known, understood and enacted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implement the One City Governance Structure and launch of One City Plan. Internal and External communications strategy to support promotion of One City Plan going forward, including regular updates and workshops for BCC colleagues to increase awareness. Design and launch an Economy Board with key stakeholders to focus on 'good growth 	January 2019 March 2019 April 2019	Tim Borrett Mike Jackson/Tim Borrett Tim Borrett

		<p>for Bristol?'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSM members to be updated on the progress of One City Approach including Action Plan on the 17th January 2019. One City Approach to be part of the ongoing scrutiny programme. 	January 2019	Tim Borrett/Andrea Dell
4a	<p>Given that the mayoral model is still relatively new to BCC, there needs to be collective responsibility to make this work and BCC should review its governance arrangements to ensure they are more effective in enabling good decision making. Specifically addressing :</p> <p>a. forward plan arrangements to make them more transparent and open, ensuring information is shared in good time and used responsibly by all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implement a new approach to Mayor's Forward Plan to include a 12 month forward view of items expected to come to Cabinet. Supporting documents to be published with Mayor's Forward Plan to ensure information is shared in good time. Design and implement a new Key Decision Making Pathway to enable good decision making. Review the procedure regarding exempt materials and update guidance for members. Briefings and development session to be offered members. 	<p>December 2018</p> <p>December 2018</p> <p>February 2019</p> <p>April 2019</p>	<p>Mike Jackson/ Ben Mosley</p> <p>Mike Jackson/ Ben Mosley</p> <p>Mike Jackson/Tim O'Gara/ Ben Mosley</p> <p>Tim O'Gara</p>
4b	Structure, focus and impact of its Scrutiny arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LGA to be invited to provide further training for all members on good scrutiny. Review structure and work programme of 	<p>May 2019</p> <p>May 2019</p>	<p>Elected Members/Lucy Fleming</p> <p>Elected Members/Lucy Fleming</p>

		<p>Scrutiny Commissions and ways of working.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members to be offered additional briefings on WECA and its role with BCC and the wider region. Updates to be provided as requested. 	On going	Mike Jackson
4c	the effectiveness of the application of its member and officer protocol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Member Officer Protocol and guidance for members. Member briefings and development session to be offered by the monitoring officer. Members in consultation with Democratic Services to design and implement a comprehensive induction programme for the 2020 cohort of new councillors. Members to be offered briefing on the corporate values. 	<p>April 2019</p> <p>December 2019 (Implementation May 2020)</p> <p>April 2019</p>	<p>Tim O’Gara/Lucy Fleming</p> <p>Elected Members/Lucy Fleming</p> <p>Steph Griffin</p>
5a	The council should ensure it has in place an effective performance management framework and culture. As part of which it should specifically ensure: a. all officers have a performance appraisal, starting from the very top of the organisation	<p>As set out in greater details in BCC’s soon to be published Organisational Improvement Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and implement a new Performance Management and Talent Pipeline Strategy – to facilitate good quality performance management, set clear objectives linked to BCC’s Corporate Strategy, organisational leaders and managers reflect the diversity of the city and reflect on how our organisational values are being demonstrated. 	Starting February 2019 and incremental to April 2020	Mike Jackson/John Walsh

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and deliver a senior leadership development programme for the council's 1st and 2nd tier Directors. • Design and deliver a senior leadership development programme for 3rd tier managers (such as Heads of Service). Performance reviews confirm all senior leaders visibly demonstrate our values and leadership qualities – and a development plan in place for any gaps. • Pilot and roll-out a new 360 degree feedback review programme for senior leaders. Managers and directors use feedback to create their personal development plan – measured through performance review scores 	<p>Launch April 2019</p> <p>Starting February 2019 - incremental until April 2020</p> <p>Starting February 2019 - incremental until April 2020</p>	<p>Mike Jackson/John Walsh</p> <p>Mike Jackson/John Walsh</p> <p>Mike Jackson/John Walsh</p>
5b	alignment between the One City Plan, BCC's new Corporate Strategy, MTFP, resourcing and delivery plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Team to refresh Corporate Strategy in the context of the One City Plan approach. 	March 2019	Tim Borrett
5c	it regularly reviews delivery plans so that it maintains focus and pace in this area	<p>As set out in greater details in BCC's soon to be published Organisational Improvement Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh Equalities Strategy and Policy. • Design and deliver a programme of activity to improve recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups 	<p>December 2018</p> <p>Starting January 2019</p>	John Walsh

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All services have a workforce plan in place, aligned to the annual business planning cycle. Develop and implement a Corporate Workforce Plan. 	<p>Starting January 2019</p> <p>Starting January 2019</p>	
5d	key performance issues for the council or across partnerships e.g. DTOC, are flagged and then tackled	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that key performance issues are appropriately highlighted and addressed through regular performance reporting to cabinet. 	Ongoing	Tim Borrett
5e	there is an effective balance between empowerment and control: equipping, enabling and then holding to account managers to deliver the outcomes required of them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a 'first steps to leadership' programme to cover the main principles of leadership and Bristol City Council policies and processes. Design and implement a new way of recognising and rewarding success, sharing learning and celebrating colleague achievements. 	September 2019	John Walsh
			September 2019	John Walsh
6	At this critical stage of change, BCC's top team of Mayor, Cabinet and Executive Directors should prioritise their own development and working practices so they set the tone for the council in terms of values, behaviours and focus on delivery of priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise development opportunities with the Mayor, Cabinet members and Executive Directors. Design and deliver a senior leadership development programme for the council's 1st and 2nd tier Directors. 	Starting January 2019	Mike Jackson
			Starting February 2019, ongoing thereafter	John Walsh
7	The council needs to ensure it maintains a strong financial oversight and accountability. It must continue to	Adopt an upstream approach to improving resilience against financial shocks, central and local policy changes or demographic pressures and ensure the	Ongoing	Denise Murray Denise Murray /Colin Molton

	<p>develop its transformation plans and approaches to demand management so that its high level budget plans become detailed delivery plans which are credible and seen through.</p>	<p>basic financial management systems are working effectively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a MTFP and corresponding budget for approval that creates a stable medium term planning platform to enable sufficient development of the actions necessary to ensure the agreed savings can be delivered. • Ensure that the financial framework that underpins the revised Financial Regulations (approved by Council May 2018) is refreshed, fully documented, widely communicated and published on the Source. • Improvements to the process of capital programme development, governance and accountability arrangements through Quarterly CLB review, monthly delivery challenge - Housing, Property and Growth & Regeneration Board, with the tracking of delivery to be overseen by Delivery Executive. 	<p>February 2019</p> <p>September 2019</p> <p>March 2019 and Ongoing thereafter</p>	<p>Denise Murray</p> <p>Denise Murray</p> <p>Denise Murray</p>
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