

Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan – Draft v 1.3

Appendix 2

Foreword

In October 2024, over a three-day period, we had the privilege of inviting the Local Government Association (LGA) to undertake a thorough review of our performance through a process known as a ‘peer challenge.’ Led by Rebecca Huddleston, Chief Executive of Wyre Council, Councillor Alan Rhodes, Cabinet Member for Corporate and Financial Services at Bassetlaw District Council, and Councillor Nick Worth, Leader of South Holland District Council, alongside four other experienced local government professionals, this challenge provided us with invaluable external insights.

Peer challenges are an established and voluntary tool used by local councils to drive improvements and enhance efficiency across key areas such as finance, communications, health and wellbeing, equalities, housing, planning, and beyond. While not mandatory, this process presents a unique opportunity to receive constructive feedback from colleagues in local government. Our LGA peer challenge was both timely and welcomed, offering us a critical opportunity to gain an objective assessment of our progress and to help guide our future direction.

We invited the peer challenge team to scrutinise our intentions, approaches, ambitions, and plans for delivery. While we acknowledge the significant challenges facing Tamworth, we also recognise the exciting potential for growth and transformation. We view this peer challenge not only as an external evaluation but as an essential tool for refining our approach and strengthening our resolve. The feedback received is instrumental in shaping the next phase of our journey, making sure we continue to evolve as a council that delivers more for the people of Tamworth.

During their visit, the peer challenge team was struck by the immense pride held by our staff, members, residents, and stakeholders, particularly in relation to Tamworth’s rich history and unique heritage. This sense of pride forms the foundation of our ambitions, as we seek to build on our past while focusing on key priorities for the future. These include driving forward digital transformation, fostering innovation, enhancing visibility, advancing equalities, promoting community wellbeing and cohesion, and delivering excellent services. We are also committed to continuing the major regeneration projects that are reshaping our town centre.

While we face considerable financial challenges in the months and years ahead, the peer challenge has helped us to better align our limited resources with the areas that will underpin our long-term financial resilience and responsibility. In response, we will review our organisational structures and governance frameworks to make sure they are fit for purpose, transparent, and provide confidence in our plans. Strengthening our communication and consultation strategies will also be a priority, making sure we effectively engage with our stakeholders.

The peer challenge team has made several thoughtful suggestions for improvement. This action plan has been developed in direct response to these recommendations, to address the key points raised and continue to build a stronger, more effective council for the future.

Cllr. Carol Dean, Leader of the Council & Stephen Gabriel, Chief Executive

Introduction

The council would like to express its sincere gratitude to the peer challenge team and the Local Government Association (LGA) for their time, insights, and thoughtful recommendations. We fully recognise and agree with the feedback provided.

Like many councils, Tamworth is currently navigating a particularly challenging budget-setting process, which demands considerable time and capacity from senior staff across all areas. In this context, the council must balance finite resources across competing pressures and priorities, making sure we address immediate challenges while continuing to deliver for our residents. As a result, some recommendations may not be implemented immediately and will be actioned once we move past this critical period of financial and strategic planning.

However, this delay should not be interpreted as a lack of importance placed on the corporate peer challenge process or its recommendations. In fact, we are already taking steps on several of the suggestions put forward, as outlined in this action plan. The timing of certain actions reflects the current limitations on our capacity, given the intense financial pressures we are facing.

The council is committed to making sure that any actions taken result in lasting, positive change for both the organisation and the borough. We are eager to work collaboratively with staff, councillors, partners and the community to bring these recommendations to life and make meaningful progress toward our shared goals.

Delivering the plan

Our work on action planning began as soon as the peer team delivered their recommendations. The outline recommendations from the corporate peer challenge can be described under three broad themes. We are using these as workstreams for action planning and reporting:

- 1. *Financial resilience***
- 2. *Engagement and service delivery***
- 3. *Organisational capacity and governance***

Many of the recommendations relate to work already underway. The council is taking a streamlined and pragmatic approach to delivering and monitoring this action plan, utilising existing teams and governance wherever possible.

Where existing work programmes are in place, leads have been asked to review plans utilising the peer challenge feedback. They will outline the changes to be made and accelerate specific outcomes which relate to the recommendations.

Programme governance will be established in line with best practice. Reporting on the specific peer challenge action plan will be to the council's corporate management team and the executive leadership group, with an update due to Cabinet in August 2025. By September 2025, the Local Government Association will organise a progress review visit. This will create space for the council to explore progress and challenges with peers and discuss next steps.

Measures of success

- Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) complete and aligned with the corporate plan
- Updated Housing Revenue Account business plan

- Establish and initiate the transformation plan for next two-three years
- Publish and adopt the asset management strategy with fully costed asset management plans
- Updated long-term capital strategy
- Equality, diversity and inclusion strategy in place with clear monitoring measures in place
- Social housing improvement programme complete and communicated
- Develop a council wide communications and engagement strategy
- Develop a town centre regeneration strategy
- Develop a community cohesion strategy with associated action plan
- Update the people and organisational development strategy
- Succession planning policy in place
- SMART working review complete
- Updated constitution
- Updated terms of reference for overview and scrutiny committees
- Updated member training offer with actions to increase attendance
- Updated ICT strategy and core project/programme methodologies to support

BRAGG key: **Blue** – ahead of schedule, **Red** – At risk of non-delivery, **Amber** – delayed or on hold, **Green** – on target, **Grey** – not started

No	Recommendation	Report detail	Existing Activities to support this	New Actions	Lead	Target date	Progress (BRAGG)
Financial Resilience							
1	Develop a clear plan to address your financial challenges incorporating tangible, costed and deliverable savings with robust governance oversight.	Develop a clear savings plan incorporating tangible, costed and deliverable savings with strong political and managerial leadership and oversight. Solidify a realistic plan for delivering the financial savings to close the funding gap and managing risks. Savings targets to be specific and measured.	Financial Resilience Strategy and Productivity Plan approved in July 2025	Create a financial resilience programme to deliver the delivery of 2025/2026 budget which includes measurable targets for delivery and track via a savings tracker	Executive Director Finance	February 2025	
2	Align your financial plans to your emerging new corporate plan	Finalise the new corporate plan and priorities in collaboration with residents and key partners.	Corporate Plan drafted and in consultation since August 2024	Use the budget process to finalise the corporate plan aligned to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)	Assistant Director Policy and Performance	February 2025	
		More precision and focus on priorities. Review the quarterly report template to be	New Assistant Director post appointed to	Create a corporate plan programme for the five years including a revised	Assistant Director Policy and Performance	April 2025	

		succinct/user friendly and strengthen the use of benchmarking data.	progress this work,	performance management framework to track corporate indicators against the delivery of priorities.			
3	Ensure you are fully meeting obligations, managing risk, and exercising control over the asset base and investments.	Exercise responsible ownership, manage risk and exercise control over the asset base. This will involve the need to take some clear decisions on the future of key assets.	Asset Management Strategy Approved in Autumn 2024. Work to progress Asset Plans underway.	Bring forward costed asset management plans developed.	Assistant Director Assets	October 2025	
		Make sure capital schemes are managed in accordance with agreed funding criteria and close monitoring by the asset strategy steering group. Maintain focus on monitoring and managing the costs of the capital programme included in the thirty-year housing revenue account business plan.	Steering Group Established and meeting regularly to oversee. Review of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) in progress as part of the MTFS	Review and strengthen monitoring and reporting activity of the asset strategy group. HRA Business Plan update completed.	Executive Director Finance	April 2025	
Engagement and Service Delivery							

4	Ensure the new equality, diversity and inclusion strategy is used to bring to life a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities, staff and councillors.	Lead and commit to this work to help embed equality, diversity and inclusion principles across everything the council does, including work to strengthen community cohesion. Use the new equality, diversity and inclusion strategy to help bring to life a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities, staff and councillors.	Equality Strategy developed and consulted. Approved in December 2024	Deliver new equality, diversity and inclusion strategy Training of all staff and members Equality, diversity and inclusion steering group created and meets regularly to oversee achievement of strategy objectives	Assistant Director People	January 2025 April 2025 February 2025	
5	Continue to deliver the social housing improvement programme, working with residents and the Regulator for Social Housing	Maintain focus and drive on our improvement journey. Continue to engage with residents to develop the plan.	Social Housing Regulatory Programme developed, immediate actions addressed and root causes identified	Finalise and deliver recovery action plan Social housing improvement programme communication and engagement plan in place.	Executive Director Communities	April 2025	
6	Review communication and consultation approaches.	Develop an overarching communications and engagement strategy. This should help to further strengthen closer engagement with communities.	LGA Review of Comms undertaken in 2023. Clear communication protocols in place.	Develop a council wide communications and engagement strategy.	Assistant Director People	April 2025	

		Use the outcome of the 'honest conversations' project to inform approaches. It should include a set of principles to underpin future consultation and engagement, and an overarching strategy to build more consistent, planned, timely, genuine and accessible approaches.	Plain English training rolled out in Autumn 2024.				
7	Develop your overarching town centre master plan and use this as an opportunity to strengthen communication approaches in relation to town centre regeneration	Work outlined above to strengthen communication and consultation approaches includes town centre regeneration. It will also be important to continue work, already started, to bring together recent and planned developments to formulate a single town centre master plan.	Transforming Tamworth project website live and updated Various studies commissioned to develop an evidence base to the town centre use Future high streets fund project board established with communication plans in place	Develop a town centre regeneration strategy - which will guide the town centre regeneration. Including communications and consultation.	Assistant Director Growth & Regeneration	April 2025	

		Maintain focus on the timeline for the development of the new Local Plan (2022 – 2043) as a key document to guide future regeneration and development in the borough.	Paper to approve the timeline for development presented in June 2024 with options	Deliver the agreed Local Plan timeline.	Assistant Director Growth & Regeneration	Submission Dec 2026	
8	Use the 'honest conversations project to build asset-based approaches to your work in communities and inform your community cohesion plan.	Inform work to build asset-based community engagement and strengthen community cohesion through the development of a new 'strengths based' community cohesion strategy and action plan for Tamworth.	Honest Conversations project commissioned and due to report in February	Develop a 'strengths based' community cohesion strategy and action plan. Include as part of Tamworth strategic partnership action plan.	Assistant Director Partnerships	Cabinet April 2025 Action Plan by July 2025 Develop strategy timeline by July 2025	
		Take account of the new national cohesion strategy (due in 2025), along with the outcome of the Home Office's 'rapid review' of counter-extremism.	Awaiting government advice on date of release to build into plans	Build in a review and plan for updated national guidance.	Assistant Director Partnerships	Develop strategy timeline by July 2025	
Organisational capacity and governance							

9	Ensure your organisational structure aligns to your priorities and ambitions.	Review organisational structure and future ways of working in support of priorities, making sure there is sufficient capacity and resource to deliver the agreed priorities, achieve efficiencies and deliver services that meet the needs of residents.	Organisational Development and Workforce Strategy Approved January 2023	Undertake discovery for a new organisational structure aligned to the new corporate plan priorities.	Executive Director Organisation	February 2025	
		Make sure there is sufficient capacity and resource to deliver against agreed priorities.	New Assistant Director role to support	Reassess resources available to each priority area and set key milestones for delivery.	Assistant Director Policy and Performance	March 2025	
		Align the council's new priorities and transformation ambitions to make sure staff are supported to develop new skills. Including work to attract and retain new talent.	Organisational Development and Workforce Strategy Approved January 2023	Update the people and organisational development strategy.	Assistant Director People	March 2025	
		Succession planning has been informal and unstructured, needs focus on development	Organisational Development and Workforce Strategy	Develop a succession planning policy.	Assistant Director People	March 2025	

		opportunities for existing employees.	Approved January 2023				
		Engage staff, customers and residents to review the current approach to agile working.		Review SMART working arrangements.	Executive Director Organisation	October 2025	
10	Strengthen the culture of assurance and good governance across the council, including how statutory officer functions work and are distributed across the authority.	Strengthen how the statutory officers of the council (head of paid service, section 151 officer and monitoring officer) work together to ensure a voice in all decision making.	Statutory Officers meet formally on a regular basis	Review statutory officer roles.	Chief Executive	May 2025	
		Continue to work to strengthen the culture of assurance and good governance across the council to make sure it is seen as everyone's responsibility. Audit and risk management culture to be embedded, for everyone to contribute. This should include training on audit and	Comprehensive member training in place including mandatory training for key committees	Increased training and awareness of audit and risk management.	Executive Director Finance	June 2025	

		governance for all councillors.					
		Review shared service to ensure capacity, expertise and resilience of internal audit.	Annual reviews are set out in the contract.	Review shared service to ensure capacity in advance of contract renewal.	Executive Director Finance	October 2025	
		Permanently appoint to the statutory section 151 officer position.		Recruit permanent S151 Officer	Chief Executive	May 2025	
11	Review the council's overview and scrutiny structures in support of your corporate priorities.	Review the health and wellbeing overview and scrutiny committee, to see a greater focus on community wellbeing and cohesion.	Annual review of constitution	Review constitution and terms of reference for the overview and scrutiny committees to align with corporate priorities.	Monitoring Officer	May 2025	
12	Develop a comprehensive plan to achieve digital transformation, putting customers at the heart.	A clear plan to address the ambition to strengthen digital transformation of council services. To be aligned to the new corporate plan priorities.	ICT Strategy 2022 to 2025 in place	Update ICT/digital strategy.	Assistant Director People	April 2025	
		Make sure there is sufficient capacity and resource to achieve	ICT Strategy 2022 to 2025 in place	Look closely at all use cases and prioritise those which	Assistant Director People	July 2025	

		digital transformation that delivers innovative, efficient and effective service delivery to the customers.		add value or reduce costs and significantly enhance customer experience.			
		<p>A comprehensive plan for digital and service transformation will help to guide investment decisions. This includes the future use of key assets such as Marmion House and digital technologies.</p> <p>Prioritisation, pace of change and sequencing will be key. It will also be important to see ongoing engagement with residents, staff and councillors and bring these on the journey.</p>	ICT Strategy 2022 to 2025 in place	Update ICT/ digital strategy and develop a prioritised implementation plan to be monitored by the corporate projects programme and supported by the financial resilience plan.	Assistant Director People	July 2025	
		Ensuring strong governance and oversight for service and digital transformation should be considered.		Corporate project/programme governance model established.	Assistant Director Policy and Performance	Feb 2025	

