

No.	Recommendations	Actions	Timescale	Governance
A. Peer Challenge Theme: Local priorities and outcomes				
1.	<p>Key recommendation: Give greater clarity regarding priorities and focus on things that will make the most difference and that can be delivered within the council’s financial envelope and capacity. This will involve deprioritising things.</p>	<p>Review of the Council Strategy Delivery Plan for 2024/25 and beyond to strengthen prioritisation (Gold, Business as usual, deprioritised areas).</p> <p>Re-develop the prioritisation tool to allow consistent classification of projects</p> <p>Mid Term refresh of the Council Strategy (review priorities)</p> <p>Rationalise number of strategies and KPIs</p> <p>Review of Council’s Capital Programme to align with reviewed priorities</p> <p>Refresh approach to internal communications to ensure that corporate priorities are universally understood</p>	<p>Sep 2024 annually</p> <p>Sep 2024</p> <p>Mar 2025</p> <p>Sep 2024</p> <p>Oct 2024</p> <p>Sep 2024</p>	<p>Executive (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn)</p> <p>Corporate Programme Board (Vicky Poole/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Executive (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Council (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn)</p> <p>(Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Nigel Lynn)</p>

B. Peer Challenge Theme: Organisational and place leadership				
2.	<p>Key recommendation: Executive members should continue the good work settling into their new roles, taking up opportunities to develop their skills, and owning and leading their portfolios to ensure effective political leadership for the council.</p>	<p>Member Development Programme approved by Council (May 2024) and delivered during 2024/25. Further member briefings on specific services and issues to be delivered.</p>	Mar 2025	Council (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn)
		<p>Seek out opportunities to build policy knowledge, develop skills and glean good practice through networking (including through dedicated time at Away Days)</p>	Ongoing	Corporate Board (Nigel Lynn)
		<p>Members to be provided with details of learning and development support they can access including training and networking offered by the LGA</p>	Ongoing	Corporate Board (Nigel Lynn)
		<p>Plan an annual programme of Strategy Boards on items which will impact priorities</p>	Sep 2024	SLT/Executive (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn)
3.	<p>Key recommendation: Invest time to strengthen relationships and ensure that the newly formed CLT are equipped as an effective senior officer leadership team to provide clear and consistent direction and stewardship for the organisation. This should be an ongoing area of work. Similarly, create more space for the Executive and CLT to jointly develop as a 'Top Team' to reinforce close working relationships and trust. Now that you have a permanent CLT in place, urgently stabilise the leadership below executive director level.</p>	<p>Reinstate bi-monthly Executive/SLT meetings</p>	Complete	SLT/Executive (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn)
		<p>Make permanent appointments to relevant Service Director posts</p>	Sep 2024	Executive (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn)
		<p>Plan opportunities for team building/leadership development for Senior Leadership Team, including workshops offered by the LGA for both Officers and Members</p>	Sep 2024	Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn)

4.	<p>Key recommendation: Build on strong and positive operational relationships between the council and partners, including contractors, and develop strategic relationships that create opportunities to deliver activity that will support wider council and partner objectives (e.g. apprenticeships, social value). As part of this, develop a strategic Memorandum of Understanding with the Voluntary and Community Sector.</p>	<p>Jointly compile ‘offers and asks’ to clearly articulate opportunities for the district’s development</p> <p>Refresh membership and remit of the Health & Wellbeing Board and its subgroups to encourage greater partner participation</p> <p>Develop a strategic Memorandum of Understanding with the Voluntary and Community Sector, co-produced with Newbury Volunteer Centre</p> <p>Co-design Scrutiny Committee’s work programme to focus on shared objectives</p> <p>Play a shaping role in the Berkshire Prosperity Board and devolution discussions</p> <p>Explore opportunities to form inter-local authority links outside of Berkshire</p> <p>Involve partners in town centre master planning work</p>	<p>May 2025</p> <p>Dec 2024</p> <p>Jan 2025</p> <p>Jan 2025</p> <p>Commenced</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>SLT/Executive (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn)</p> <p>HWBB (Heather Codling/Matt Pearce)</p> <p>Building Communities Together (Lee Dillon/Paul Coe)</p> <p>Scrutiny Commission (Carolyne Culver/Nigel Lynn)</p> <p>Place Directorate (Louise Sturges/Clare Lawrence)</p> <p>Executive/Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn)</p> <p>Place Directorate (Louise Sturges/Clare Lawrence)</p>
<p>C. Peer Challenge Theme: Governance and culture</p>				
5.	<p>Key recommendation: Simplify the governance structure to increase pace and agility.</p>	<p>Review the new Governance approach</p> <p>Liaise with other Chief Executives to compare with their authorities’ governance models.</p>	<p>Sep 2024</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Chief Executive (Nigel Lynn)</p> <p>Chief Executive (Nigel Lynn)</p> <p>Chief</p>

		Refresh guidance and training to assist with understanding of governance arrangements for officers	Sep 2024	Executive (Nigel Lynn)
6.	Key recommendation: Ensure that strategic legal, HR, communications and transformation expertise has a place at the 'top table' in a meaningful way and at the right point of policy development and delivery.	Implement arrangements for HR, Legal and Finance to sign off reports prior to access to Corporate Board. Corporate Board to meet more frequently, fortnightly Key officers invited to new Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meetings as required	Oct 2024 Complete Complete	Corporate Board/Executive (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn) Senior Leadership Team (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn)
7.	Key recommendation: Test the extent to which the behaviour framework has been embedded within the organisation (e.g. through staff survey/ pulse survey).	Pulse surveys to be undertaken every six months Employee Attitude Survey to be undertaken every three years Roll out amended appraisal process and performance management framework Produce an action plan based on the feedback to the Employee Value Proposition Survey and engagement through Let's Chat	Commenced and ongoing Autumn 2024 Oct 2024 Sep 2024	Human Resources (Jeff Brooks / Joseph Holmes) Human Resources (Jeff Brooks / Joseph Holmes) Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks / Joseph Holmes) Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks / Joseph Holmes)
D. Peer Challenge Component: Financial planning and management				
8.	Key recommendation: Urgently address overspending in children's and adult services and build reserves, develop a clear plan that has buy-in from the whole organisation.	Develop a new approach for future Council budgeting for 2025-26 and beyond (ABB, star chamber and prioritisation) Increase level of reserves above the minimum level required in the MTFS. Savings monitoring will commence from month 1 to ensure services are on track to deliver a break even position	Mar 2025 May 2025 Complete	Budget Board (Iain Cottingham / Joseph Holmes) Budget Board (Iain Cottingham / Joseph Holmes) Star Chamber (Iain Cottingham / Joseph Holmes)

		Introduce Star Chamber review process for in-year pressures	Commenced	Executive (Iain Cottingham / Joseph Holmes)
		Refresh internal communications approach to facilitate pan-organisational understanding of financial position	Sept 2024	Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Nigel Lynn)
		Introduce training for budget managers	Complete	Finance (Joseph Holmes)
E. Peer Challenge Component: Capacity for improvement				
9.	Key recommendation: Transformation needs to be embedded across the organisation with strong leadership from the political leadership, CLT, and an empowered central team to drive and enable transformation activity. Linked to this, the transformation programme needs to be bolder to help ensure that the council can get a grip of finances, particularly the overspends in children's and adult services, and home to school transport.	Ensure clear visibility of all transformation-focussed projects through Corporate Programme Board	Aug 2024	Corporate Programme Board (Vicky Poole / Joseph Holmes)
		Proceed with the implementation of the Business Support Review and centralisation of support services including project management resource	Sep 2025	Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)
		Further transformation opportunities to be identified linked to areas of high spend or poor performance	Nov 2024	Corporate Programme Board (Vicky Poole / Joseph Holmes)
		Develop prevention strategy in collaboration with Health partners	Dec 2024	HWBB (Heather Codling/Matt Pearce)
10.	Key recommendation: Strengthen communications and engagement activity further, by using internal communications expertise earlier in project planning, closing the communications loop via consistent feedback on outcomes of consultations, and embedding approaches that engage wider groups of people earlier in the process and in more meaningful ways.	Publicise consultation responses externally to close the loop (You said, we did)	Complete and ongoing	Consultation Team (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)
		Review consultations toolkit to include a mechanism to notify residents when results of consultations have been published (e.g. through the newsletter)	Nov 2024	Corporate Board (Lee Dillon/ Joseph Holmes)
		Chief Executive to be involved in Comms briefings with the Leader	Complete	Chief Executive (Nigel Lynn)
		Chief Executive to attend the Communications Steering Group	Complete	Chief Executive (Nigel Lynn)

		Undertake regular representative Residents Survey	Jun 2025	Consultation Team (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)
F. Peer Challenge Component: Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)				
11.	Key recommendation: Ensure that there is traction on the delivery of the Delivering Better Value SEND programme and have a plan to resolve the High Needs Block Deficit.	<p>Co-produce a SEND and Inclusion Strategy and an Alternative Provision Strategy</p> <p>Establish a DSCO (Designated Social Care Officer)</p> <p>Establish a strategic Local Area Improvement Partnership for SEND and Alternate Provision (AP)</p> <p>Regular reports will be provided to Corporate Board.</p> <p>The activity of the programme will be overseen by scrutiny as agreed with Chair.</p> <p>Heads Funding Group (sub-group of the Schools Forum) complete a 7-year deficit recovery plan between LA Finance/Children’s Services Colleagues with school leaders.</p> <p>Review all High Needs Block existing spend</p> <p>Appoint a Delivering Better Value Programme Lead Organise assistance from the LGA SEND adviser</p>	<p>Sep 2024</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Apr 2025</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>Jun / Dec each year</p> <p>May 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>Complete Complete</p>	<p>SEND Strategic Improvement Board (Heather Codling /AnnMarie Dodds)</p> <p>Strategic SEND Improvement Board (Heather Codling /AnnMarie Dodds)</p> <p>Corporate Board</p> <p>Scrutiny Commission (Heather Codling /AnnMarie Dodds)</p> <p>Schools Forum (Heather Codling /AnnMarie Dodds)</p> <p>SEND Strategic Improvement Board</p>