

No.	Recommendations	Actions	Timescale / Status	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>See paper due for Executive in February 2025</p> <p>Re-develop the prioritisation tool to allow consistent classification of projects</p> <p>Tool being developed further</p> <p>Mid Term refresh of the Council Strategy (review priorities)</p> <p>Complete and fed into the paper for Executive of the 'top 20' priorities</p> <p>Rationalise number of strategies and KPIs</p> <p>KPIs significantly reduced. Strategy review due to C Board on 6th January</p> <p>Review of Council's Capital Programme to align with reviewed priorities</p> <p>Full Review of capital programme at Budget and significantly revised</p>	<p>Sep 2024 Annually Complete</p> <p>Jul 2025 In progress</p> <p>Mar 2025 Complete May 25</p> <p>Sep 2024 Complete</p> <p>Oct 2024 Complete</p>	<p>Executive (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Corporate Programme Board (Vicky Poole/Gabrielle Mancini)</p> <p>Council (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Council (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>(Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p>

		<p>Refresh approach to internal communications to ensure that corporate priorities are universally understood</p> <p>Internal comms survey complete and 'Lets chat' pulse survey. Revised approach to Let's Chat Relaunched Leadership Forum Interim CEO updates Introduction of 'top ten' measures for staff to have full access to All Directorate sessions delivered by EDs to reinforce corporate priorities and share corporate news</p>	Sep 2024 Complete	Corporate Board (Joseph Holmes)
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> <p>Seek out opportunities to build policy knowledge, develop skills and glean good practice through networking (including through dedicated time at Away Days)</p> <p>Members to be provided with details of learning and development support they can access including training and networking offered by the LGA</p> <p>Complete and many members of the Executive undertaking LGA training. Chair of Scrutiny attending CPFS training event.</p> <p>Plan an annual programme of Strategy Boards on items which will impact priorities</p>	<p>Mar 2025 Complete</p> <p>Ongoing Complete</p> <p>Ongoing Complete</p> <p>Sep 2024 Ongoing</p>	<p>Council (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>SLT/Executive (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p>

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> <p>Full change – established 4 weekly cycle of CB / SLT / CB / ELT and communicated</p> <p>Make permanent appointments to relevant Service Director posts</p> <p>Plan opportunities for team building/leadership development for Senior Leadership Team, including workshops offered by the LGA for both Officers and Members</p> <p>Complete for Jan/Feb 25.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Sep 2024 Complete – ongoing</p> <p>Sep 2024 Complete</p>	<p>SLT/Executive (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Executive (Jeff Brooks/ Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p>
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 Vision 2050</p> <p>Opportunity through Vision 2050 – ToR being drafted</p> <p>Refresh membership and remit of the Health & Wellbeing Board and its subgroups to encourage greater partner participation MP review with LGA</p> <p>Develop a strategic Memorandum of Understanding with the Voluntary and Community Sector, co-produced with Newbury Volunteer Centre</p> <p>Complete – see Executive paper</p> <p>Co-design Scrutiny Committee's work programme to focus on shared objectives</p>	<p>May 2025 In progress</p> <p>Dec 2024 In progress</p> <p>Jan 2025 Complete</p> <p>Jan 2025 Ongoing</p>	<p>SLT/Executive (Jeff Brooks/ Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>HWBB (Heather Codling/Matt Pearce)</p> <p>Building Communities Together (Patrick Clark/Paul Coe)</p> <p>Scrutiny Commission</p>

		<p>Play a shaping role in the Berkshire Prosperity Board and devolution discussions</p> <p>Range of discussions – Leader is the business board representative of the leader’s group</p> <p>Explore opportunities to form inter-local authority links outside of Berkshire</p> <p>Regional fostering hub and regional care co-operative network; waste mngt. Transport Contract Renewal at Berkshire level and Hampshire discussion. Representation through the LGA on peer reviews, national groups and networks. See preventative work with CIPFA, Merton and other Councils.</p> <p>Involve partners in town centre master planning work _</p> <p>Ongoing work with Newbury and Hungerford Town Council. Liaison with Thatcham TC.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>(Carolyn Culver/Jospeh Holmes)</p> <p>Place Directorate (Nigel Foot/Clare Lawrence)</p> <p>Executive/Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Place Directorate (Nigel Foot/Clare Lawrence)</p>
C. Peer Challenge Theme: Governance and culture				
5.	<p>Key recommendation: Simplify the governance structure to increase pace and agility.</p>	<p>Review the new Governance approach</p> <p>Implemented from December 2024 – greatly simplified</p> <p>Liaise with other Chief Executives to compare with their authorities’ governance models.</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Sep 2024 Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Chief Executive (Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Chief Executive (Joseph Holmes)</p>

		Refresh guidance and training to assist with understanding of governance arrangements for officers – Good governance / report writing training delivered July/Aug – completed in Nov.	Sep 2024 Complete	Statutory Officers (Joseph Holmes / Sarah Clarke/Shannon Coleman-Slaughter)
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.	<p>Implement arrangements for HR, Legal and Finance to sign off reports prior to access to Corporate Board. – see governance review</p> <p>Corporate Board to meet more frequently, fortnightly complete – see above</p> <p>Key officers invited to new Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meetings as required – see revised governance paper</p>	<p>Oct 2024 Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Corporate Board/Executive (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Senior Leadership Team (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Senior Leadership Team (Jeff Brooks/Jospeh Holmes)</p>
7.	Key recommendation: Test the extent to which the behaviour framework has been embedded within the organisation (e.g. through staff survey/ pulse survey).	<p>Pulse surveys to be undertaken every six months</p> <p>Will be undertaken post EES</p> <p>Employee Attitude Survey to be undertaken every three years</p> <p>Complete – awaiting results</p> <p>Roll out amended appraisal process and performance management framework</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Produce an action plan based on the feedback to the Employee Value Proposition Survey and engagement through Let’s Chat</p>	<p>Commenced and ongoing</p> <p>Autumn 2024 Complete</p> <p>Oct 2024 Complete</p> <p>Sep 2024 Complete</p>	<p>Human Resources (Jeff Brooks / Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Human Resources (Jeff Brooks / Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks / Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks / Joseph Holmes)</p>

		To be completed – new employee group to be set up representing the whole of WBC		
D. Peer Challenge Component: Financial planning and management				
8.	<p>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.</p>	<p>Develop a new approach for future Council budgeting for 2025-26 and beyond (ABB, star chamber and prioritisation)</p> <p>In progress</p> <p>Increase level of reserves above the minimum level required in the MTFS.</p> <p>Not delivered – likely to remain significantly low post LGFS – ongoing discussion with MHCLG</p> <p>Savings monitoring will commence from month 1 to ensure services are on track to deliver a break even position</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Introduce Star Chamber review process for in-year pressures</p> <p>Complete – has not delivered a break-even position though pressures better understood and mitigations put in place</p> <p>Refresh internal communications approach to facilitate pan-organisational understanding of financial position</p> <p>Communication occurred and is ongoing across range of comms channels</p> <p>Introduce training for budget managers</p> <p>Complete for this year but ongoing</p>	<p>Mar 2025 – In progress June 2025</p> <p>May 2025</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Commenced Complete</p> <p>Sept 2024 Complete and ongoing</p> <p>Complete but ongoing</p>	<p>Budget Board (Iain Cottingham / Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Budget Board (Iain Cottingham / Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Star Chamber (Iain Cottingham / Shannon Coleman-Slaughter)</p> <p>Executive (Iain Cottingham / Shannon Coleman-Slaughter)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Finance (Shannon Coleman-Slaughter)</p>

E. Peer Challenge Component: Capacity for improvement				
9.	<p>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.</p>	<p>Ensure clear visibility of all transformation-focussed projects through Transformation & Corporate Programme Board – revised reporting developed – working with Local Partnerships programme in Dec. 2024.</p> <p>Proceed with the implementation of the Business Support Review and centralisation of support services including project management resource</p> <p>Underway – opportunities developed – restructure to consult from Jan. 25</p> <p>Further transformation opportunities to be identified linked to areas of high spend or poor performance TVI work from November – highlighted opportunity of £4m. Decision due on selected opportunities in June.</p> <p>Develop prevention strategy in collaboration with Health partners DASS co-ordination across BOB ICS; DASS chairs SE mental health network; West Berkshire is one of 3 Councils involved in forthcoming CIPFA preventative study</p>	<p>Aug 2024 Complete</p> <p>Sep 2025 Work in progress and ongoing</p> <p>Jun 2025 Work in progress and ongoing</p> <p>Dec 2024 In progress</p>	<p>Corporate Programme Board (Vicky Poole /Gabrielle Mancini)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke/Gabrielle Mancini)</p> <p>Corporate Programme Board (Vicky Poole /Gabrielle Mancini)</p> <p>HWBB (Heather Codling/Matt Pearce)</p>
10.	<p>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.</p>	<p>Publicise consultation responses externally to close the loop (You said, we did)</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Review consultations toolkit to include a mechanism to notify residents when results of consultations have been published (e.g. through the newsletter)</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Complete and ongoing</p> <p>Nov 2024 Complete</p>	<p>Consultation Team (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p> <p>Corporate Board (Jeff Brooks/ Sarah Clarke)</p>

		<p>Chief Executive to be involved in Comms briefings with the Leader</p> <p>Complete – interim CEO has fortnightly meetings. Comms rep on SLT and ELT</p> <p>Chief Executive to attend the Communications Steering Group</p> <p>Revised – see above</p> <p>Undertake regular representative Residents Survey</p> <p>Will be developed for 2025 in house</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Jun 2025 In progress</p>	<p>Chief Executive (Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Chief Executive (Joseph Holmes)</p> <p>Consultation Team (Jeff Brooks/Sarah Clarke)</p>
F. Peer Challenge Component: Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)				
11.	<p>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>	<p>Co-produce a SEND and Inclusion Strategy and an Alternative Provision Strategy</p> <p>Complete</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>Complete – coming to CBoard</p> <p>The activity of the programme will be overseen by scrutiny as agreed with Chair.</p> <p>Regular updates to Scrutiny taking place</p>	<p>Sep 2024 Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Apr 2025</p> <p>Quarterly Complete</p> <p>Jun / Dec each year</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>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</p> <p>Organise assistance from the LGA SEND adviser</p>	<p>May 2024</p> <p>September 2024</p> <p>Complete</p>	<p>Schools Forum (Heather Codling /AnnMarie Dodds)</p> <p>SEND Strategic Improvement Board (Heather Codling /AnnMarie Dodds)</p>
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