

CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE:

Appendix A: Action Plan summary

Updated Q1 2025/26

Introduction

Since receiving the corporate peer challenge (CPC) report in July 2024, we have:

- Developed an action plan setting out how we will address the eight formal, and other informal, recommendations in the report.
- Appropriate officers have been identified to ensure appropriate responsibility for delivery and governance, and a lead Member to aid with political accountability and ownership (whilst the overall response to the CPC remains within the remit of the Leader and Chief Executive).
- The action plan contains **27 actions** linked to the **eight recommendations**.
- The CPC Team completed a progress review in March 2025 with 3 actions linked to additional suggestions.
- There are now **10 actions** linked to the **additional suggestions**.

Overview of the Action Plan

27 Actions linked to 8 Formal Recommendations

- 5 recommendations have been completed and fully met
- 3 recommendations remain outstanding with 5 actions in progress to be completed

Recommendation	Number of completed actions	Number of action in progress	Total actions	Status
One	1		1	Completed
Two	3	2	5	Outstanding
Three	2		2	Completed
Four	5		5	Completed
Five	6		6	Completed
Six	2	1	3	Outstanding
Seven	2		2	Completed
Eight	1	2	3	Outstanding
Total	22	5	27	

10 Actions linked to Additional Suggestions

Number of completed actions	Number of action in progress	Total actions
6	4	10

Section 1 - Formal Recommendations: Outstanding with actions in progress

Formal Recommendations outstanding and actions in progress

Recommendation two

Strengthen the internal approach to engagement which ensures the voice of residents/service users are at the heart of decision making.

STATUS

Outstanding

Ongoing actions

- **CPC004 Policy decision to strengthen internal approach.** To more effectively manage consultation and engagement activity aligned to Senior Team restructure. Collaboration is now taking place with services to develop a funding proposal for a fixed term resource, with a paper set to go to CLT in July. **In progress, due Sept 25**
- **CPC006 Focussed resources to support delivery of engagement events.** And to ensure there is a co-ordinated approach for the delivery of the Corporate Consultation Schedule. Areas of consultation for 25/26 have been identified and resources to support co-ordination of engagement activities are on track to be in place by the end of August. **In progress, due Aug 25.**

Recommendation six

Continue to strengthen the council's approach to governance, compliance and risk.

STATUS

Outstanding

Ongoing actions

- **CPC020 A Constitution Review Working Group** has been established and key areas of focus identified. Meeting in February 2025 completed to review Council Procedure Rules and Scheme of Delegation, LGR being factored in whilst setting priorities. Meetings have continued through June, with the next scheduled for September 4th. **In progress, due February 2026**

Recommendation eight

Define and communicate your approach to transformation/ continuous improvement.

STATUS

Outstanding

Ongoing actions

- **CPC026 A new approach to service planning** has been established, approved by SLT, and launched for 2025/26 in December 2024 to generate a single Transformation Plan focused on change projects (replaces the Annual Delivery Plan and Productivity Plan). This has a shared ambition of a 15% net reduction in expenditure through efficiency savings and/or increased income/commerciality. The approach has now been drafted with proposals for CLT and heads of service ready for comment in August. Slight delay on original delivery of July. **In progress within tolerance, due August 2025.**
- **CPC027 Improvements to data management** and use of data to drive risk-based decisions is underway. A data quality audit was conducted in quarter 1, with the subsequent action plan being developed. The data maturity assessment is also set to conclude in July, with over 60 respondents reflecting input from all service areas. **In progress, due September 2025**

Section 2 - Additional suggestions: Outstanding with actions in progress

Additional suggestions outstanding and actions in progress



Suggestion: To meet the council's ambitions for enhanced partnership working, review the skills and capacity needed to support this work with senior stakeholders and partners.

- CPC028 Action: To identify a maturity assessment tool and develop the partnership working model and proposals for how it is used by September 2025. Implementing the model with supporting training and action plan by December 2025. Work due to commence in July in assessing options for Partnership review. **In progress, due December 2025**

Suggestion: The council to continue driving efficiencies and value for money across the organisation through service improvement and contract management to enable focused delivery on political priorities.

- CPC034 Action:
 - Additional support in Contract Management; Audit and Transformation services has been completed by February 2025
 - CLT have set a shared organisational target of a 15% reduction in net expenditure driven through either efficiency, savings or income opportunities as a clear driver behind the 2025/26 Service Planning. All services are to contribute towards this target. The service planning process is focused on transformational actions to contribute towards this target. This quarter has also seen the drafting of a unit costing proposal ready for review in quarter two, being slightly later than expected July delivery. **In progress within tolerance, due September 2025**

Additional suggestions outstanding and actions in progress



Suggestion: Develop the PAS review action plan and utilise the Councils scrutiny functions to oversee the action plan and implementation of recommendations.

- CPCUpdate.2 Action: To develop the PAS review action plan and to develop appropriate governance for scrutiny. **In progress, due September 2025.**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPCU2 The report has been approved and work on the 16 recommendations has now started, with four being completed.

Suggestion: Peer suggest further communication on the process and timeline for how reviewing the 121 processes, working with Unison looking at performance management and L&D will be linked to pay increments and remuneration in the future.

- CPCUpdate.3 Action: To provide further communications for staff regarding the expectations of the 121s for managing performance and development, and how this aligns to the pay increment and remuneration process. **In progress, due September 2025**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPCU3 April saw the launch of the new 121 process, to positive feedback, and works on incremental progression are set to be completed within the set timescales.
 - ✓ Pay review completed with Council on NJC for negotiated pay settlement

Section three - Formal Recommendations and actions completed

Recommendation one

Align finance and workforce to deliver the agreed political priorities including a review of organisational structure.

STATUS

Completed

Completed action

- A consultation with senior staff was conducted on restructuring the senior leadership team.
 - Following the closure of the consultation in December, the final proposal presented on 17th January 2025.
 - The new structure has been fully implemented. Heads of Service are now meeting portfolio holders and internally there is clear governance for leadership direction in setting priorities **Completed March 2025**
- ✓ **Evidence:** CPC001 Senior Leadership Team consultation outcome January 2025

Recommendation two

Strengthen the internal approach to engagement which ensures the voice of residents/service users are at the heart of decision making.

STATUS

Outstanding

Ongoing actions – two actions are in progress and reported in section one

Completed actions

- **Policy decision about Communications being accountable for engagement.** The new Senior Leadership structure has been fully implemented. Heads of Service are now meeting portfolio holders and internally there is clear governance for leadership direction in setting priorities for Communications and engagement. **Completed March 2025**
 - ✓ **Evidence:** CPC003 Senior Leadership Team consultation outcome January 2025
- **Community Health and Wealth building – co-design.** Three community co-production workshops took place in August and September 2024, which were as demographically balanced as possible to garner a share of voices from across our communities. Further focus groups have taken place with seldom heard groups, including young people and people living in low-income households, rural communities, and from ethnic minority backgrounds. **Completed December 2024**
 - ✓ **Evidence:** CPC003 Overview and Scrutiny Panel 5 June 2025 item 8. Community Health and Wealth Building
- **Champions.** A network of communications champions has been established with services across the council to provide more co-ordinated communications messages, share learning and develop key campaigns. **Completed January 2025**
 - ✓ **Evidence:** CPC005 The Communication Network Champions internal group have been meeting once a quarter with an updated list of pipeline activity.

Recommendation three

Develop a resourced Communications and Engagement Strategy which defines the HDC brand and strategic narrative.

STATUS

Completed

Completed actions

- **A Communications Strategy** and supporting Communications Action Plan has been developed and shared with Cabinet. **Completed December 2024**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC007 The development of a Communications Strategy 2024-28.

- **A new corporate narrative** has been developed, and work is now underway to embed this across the organisation. **Completed December 2024**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC008 The Corporate Narrative has been completed.
 - New additional action suggested by Peer Review Team March 2025 is to produce an elevator pitch for the Corporate Narrative. See additional suggestions page

Recommendation four

Review the planning service to ensure that within the planning policy framework the council's priorities are being delivered, for example climate, environment and inclusive growth.

STATUS

Completed

Completed actions

- **Engagement with the team.** From November, monthly member briefings are being used to encourage a holistic view to delivering the Council's growth and development ambitions. All Member briefings are now embedded as part of the wider approach to information sharing and council decision making. Further work will continue with Planning specifically, alongside the action plan for this service.

Completed March 2025

✓ Evidence: CPC011 The May 2025 Member Briefing

- **A Planning Service Peer Review** was completed, recommendations provided, and an action plan developed to take into 2025/26. Draft report received and comments fed back with action plan linked to service planning for 2025/26. **Completed March 2025**

✓ Evidence: CPC009 Development Management Committee 19 May 2025 item 7 - Planning Service Peer Review

- **The Council wide continuous improvement journey** was one of the key objectives for the Service Planning process rolled-out early 2025. All Services have now submitted actions and projects focused on continuous improvement and transformation efficiency and change. This continued focus across the Council is linked into the budget setting process, regular review of service plan projects and actions, and identified audits and external reviews.

Completed March 2025

✓ Evidence: CPC013 Presentation to Leadership and Service Managers early 2025, with service plans submissions completed in March 2025.

Continued Recommendation four

Review the planning service to ensure that within the planning policy framework the council's priorities are being delivered, for example climate, environment and inclusive growth.

Completed actions continued

- **A Local Plan consultation** on issues and options was conducted December 2024. And in March 2025 a response to the Government's National Planning Policy Framework expectations to produce an updated Local Development Scheme plan was completed and submitted to MHCLG. **Completed March 2025**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC010 Consultation for 'Further Issues and Options Paper' Local Plan November 2024
- **Delivery board, strategic board and lessons learnt** at both the tactical project level, and the sponsor level, to inform future HDC delivery of significant change programmes requiring planning. The recommendations from an independent project review were endorsed in January 2025, identifying lessons learnt for earlier engagement with Planning Services. **Completed February 2025**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC012 An independent review of the major project at Hinchbrook Park identified lessons learnt.

Recommendation five

Deliver the imminent Workforce Strategy at pace – including addressing staff concerns.

STATUS

Completed

Completed actions

- An action plan, which includes a schedule of prioritised actions, timeframes and resources, was approved by Employment Committee, and is now underway with regular quarterly reports being provided. **Completed December 2024**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC014 to CPC019 Employment Committee 25 Feb 2025 item 6 Workforce Strategy Update

This includes:

- Awareness of impacts to team performance and absence with implementation of robust policies and practices.
- Development of an employee value proposition is scheduled between January to March 2025, which will feed into the corporate narrative.
- Staff pay review is underway.
- A new provider in place to provide Employee Assistance Programme to support wellbeing for staff.
- A review of policy and practice is continuously ongoing.
- Shortlisted for an LGC Workforce 2024 award for the 'best innovation in recruitment' category

Recommendation six

Continue to strengthen the council's approach to governance, compliance and risk.

STATUS

Outstanding

Ongoing actions – One action in progress and reported in section one above

Completed actions continued

The development of a full program of Member training to help develop and upskill our members. **Completed June 2025**

- ✓ Evidence: CPC022 A full training program is now established and ongoing, with Democratic services logging completed sessions. Members briefings and special LGR briefings are also available periodically.

Recruitment of a Monitoring and Deputy Monitoring Officer to follow completion of the Senior Team restructure (recommendation one). **Completed June 2025**

- ✓ Evidence: CPC021 Monitoring officer is now fully embedded at HDC full time.

Recommendation seven

Support and develop a member led scrutiny work programme and prioritise areas where they can add value and help mitigate risk – SLT support.

STATUS

Completed

Completed actions

- **Processes and approach to briefings** has been reviewed and developed in partnership with the Member Development Group. A best practice guide and topic submission form process are now in place. The agendas have changed and are published ahead of time with the Chair's briefing including the future plan for meetings and tracking of actions. **Completed June 2025**
 - ✓ **Evidence:** CPC023 Future agenda items are readily available and are shared with both panels ahead of time.
- Training has also been provided by EELGA regarding self-scrutiny, Member Development Group supporting best practice and topic submission. **Completed December 2024**
 - ✓ **Evidence:** CPC024 Reflection on the training has resulted in an agreed Overview and Scrutiny process map for how topics are requested, considered and decided upon for future work programmes. This has been shared with members.

Improvements identified

- Ensure less pre-decision scrutiny and less of information items
- Develop a clearer forward plan of items for scrutiny consideration; making use of service plan actions
- Identify additional topics outside of service plan scope
- Identify policy development involvement
- Identify agenda items following monthly member briefings
- Identify external partners to present to panel to strengthen partnership working

Recommendation eight

Define and communicate your approach to transformation/ continuous improvement.

STATUS

Outstanding

Ongoing actions – Two actions in progress and reported in section one above

Completed actions

- Appointment of a new Chief Digital Information Officer across the shared IT service reporting to the Chief Executives to drive focus change.
Completed November 2024.
 - ✓ Evidence: Employee recruited
- A new appointment to the role of Business Performance and Transformation Manager, with the Improvement Team becoming the Transformation Team. **Completed November 2024**
 - ✓ Evidence: Employee recruited
- Action identified to combine the outputs from the Annual Delivery Plan process with the three cross-cutting service reviews; customer, leisure, planning - with appropriate governance in place. **Completed January 2025**
 - ✓ Evidence: CPC025 Cabinet Away Day Briefing 2025 Service Planning
- 2025/26 Transformation Approach **Completed February 2025**
 - ✓ Evidence: Framework was approved by CLT in February 2025 for implementation Q1 2025/26.

Section four – Additional suggestions and actions completed

Additional suggestions

Suggestion: Create and communicate key points of entry into the council for partners and stakeholders.

- Action: Simplify the reporting arrangements and responsibilities through Senior Team restructure. The new structure has been fully implemented. **Completed March 2025**
- ✓ **Evidence:** CPC029 Senior Leadership Team consultation outcome January 2025

Suggestion: Facilitated top team development would assist the new team in building relationships, understanding leadership styles and create space for strategic visioning.

- Action: CEX has appointed team development coaches to work with CLT and HoS. CLT team coaching commenced in December and HoS commenced in March. **Completed March 2025**
- ✓ **Evidence:** CPC030 Development training and coaching programme for Senior Leadership Team

Suggestion: Further work is needed with service managers to improve horizon scanning and feed this into the budget setting process.

- Action: To be undertaken as part of annual service planning and budget setting.
- Action: The updated and simplified service planning process for 2025/26 requires all services to undertake a SWOT analysis to be the basis of the actions for change in the next three years for each service area. This is linked to the Contextual Information for Huntingdonshire established in 2024/25 as part of the Council's Performance Management Framework. **Completed March 2025**
- ✓ **Evidence:** CPC031 New approach rolled-out across the Council and service planning process including looking ahead three years.

Additional suggestions

Suggestion: The Ideas Board should be taking a more strategic approach to reviewing requests for funding, making sure any bids are aligned to the councils' priorities and clearly drive innovation. There also needs to be consideration given to how any projects funded on a trial basis could be sustained in the longer term if deemed successful.

- Action: A review of the Ideas process was completed in May 2025, with actions to improve the process and controls identified and implemented.

Completed May 2025

- ✓ Evidence: CPC033 Delivery Board Presentation (20th May)

Suggestion: Consideration should be given to undertaking a full staff survey.

- Action: A full staff survey was completed in September. Results have been reported to SLT with any concerns raised with relevant Managers.

Completed September 2024

- ✓ Evidence: CPC032 A review will happen in September 2025 to assess whether a further survey is required.

March 2025 Peer Team Revisit - Additional suggestions

Suggestion: Produce a short punchy statement to accompany corporate narrative. Communicate to staff and members, and use this narrative statement for internal and external communication.

- Action: To produce an elevator pitch to provide a brief and introduction for the corporate narrative document. **Completed June 2025**

- ✓ Evidence: CPCU1 The elevator pitch has been uploaded to the intranet alongside the Corporate Narrative.