



Chelmsford City Council

Corporate Peer Challenge - Action Plan 2025

In December 2024, we were pleased to welcome a Peer Review Team from the Local Government Association to conduct a Corporate Peer Challenge.

The final report of the review team set out a series of nine recommendations for action which are set out below. We will be working on developing an action plan to deliver these recommendations and this should be published within 5-months of the CPC, this would be no later than 2nd May 2025.

Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

Action	Detail	Lead	Planned response	Timescale and status
Scrutiny Effectiveness	Review and strengthen overview and Scrutiny.	Director of Connected Chelmsford	<p>To complete a full review of overview and scrutiny arrangements to equip scrutiny/opposition members in fully engaging in scrutiny activities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and development of Chair and Vice Chair • Training for all committee members • Consideration of more active pre scrutiny activity • Review of call in arrangements <p>This will result in better understanding of the role of overview & scrutiny, more appropriate challenge of decisions and effective understanding and pre-scrutiny of specific proposals.</p>	Phased approach with review to be completed by end of September 2025
Policy Development	Alongside the above recommendation, review the council's approach to policy development	Director of Connected Chelmsford	To increase wider/opposition member engagement in policy development e.g. continue Chief Executive briefings and subject specific member briefings. This will result in all Members, including opposition Members, having a greater voice in policy development.	Introduced and Ongoing
Strengthening Governance	Strengthen our approach to governance relating to the provision of information, member involvement and decision making and reporting	Director of Connected Chelmsford	Member briefings have been introduced to enhance early engagement with opposition members in relation to specific large project decisions as they arise (e.g. Chelmer Waterside, Local Government Reorganisation South Woodham Ferrer strategic site). New member intranet site being developed to bring information together in one place. Training has been arranged by a specialist adviser for Officers and Members to increase understanding in relation to executive and non-executive decisions.	<p>Ongoing - Member briefings to continue where appropriate issue arises.</p> <p>New member intranet site – date TBC</p> <p>Date for Member decision making training being finalised</p>

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Opposition Engagement	Formalise briefing and engagement of opposition members by officers	Chief Executive	Both opposition Group Leaders were contacted to explore how engagement with their groups could be improved and they both confirmed that they had consulted with their Members and felt that there was nothing more that they needed. Further investigation into how other Councils engage with opposition Members is being undertaken to explore best practice.	Complete January 2025. Ongoing
Performance Management and Assurance	Ensure there is an organisation-wide approach to corporate assurance and performance management, including reporting to members	Management Team	Management Team receive reports quarterly on agreed corporate KPI's and operational level performance management continues to be the driver for delivering effective and efficient services. Organisation wide oversight and reporting of performance data will enable the Council to join up learning/trends, target areas for improvement and help inform future decision making for CCC and the shadow Unitary Council, including those relating to LGR.	May 2025 and Ongoing
Future Challenges	Ensure that members and officers are prepared for the challenges ahead and are clear about what is achievable and politically acceptable	Management Team	The landscape has changed since our review took place and now the future challenges are centred around the preparation for Devolution and LGR. A Core Change Management team has been established to plan for this with various workstreams addressing various internal and external pressures that are likely to arise over the next 3 years. An LGR Risk Register has been created which is ultimately owned and overseen by Management Team. It will be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that risks and issues are reassessed, monitored and escalated as new information becomes available as the LGR process continues.	LGR Risk Register first review - May 2025, with regular review scheduled thereafter. Initial meeting of Core Change Management team April 2025 and ongoing

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Member Training	Deliver a programme of external member training and development to support continuous improvement in decision-making, governance, and accountability	Democratic Services	<p>A number of initiatives have been developed to support continuous improvement for Members including: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Member Development Champions group has been established whereby they are invited to identify learning needs within their Groups and sessions are organised as necessary. (e.g. the decision-making session detailed above). • Members SharePoint area which houses further training and development resources including links to the LGA e-learning platform. 	Training date likely Autumn 2025 Ongoing
Workforce Planning	Develop, formalise and implement a workforce plan that ensure structure, skills and capacity are fit for the future to meet challenge and priorities	Human Resources	Revised workforce plan is being developed to meet future staffing needs as a result of reorganisation. Objectives are embedded in the Core Change Management Group TOR. The LGR risk register will assist in monitoring this emerging risk.	Ongoing
Resident Engagement	Increase resident engagement and consultation about local priorities and use of resources	Management Team	<p>Within the context of LGR, our objectives must now be to increase resident/business engagement and consultation on local priorities, use of resources and the implications of local government reorganisation and devolution.</p> <p>As well as residents and local businesses, we want to also target community groups, partners and hard to reach or disengaged groups, developing a focussed communication campaign to consult, inform and engage with our residents and, in partnership, with other Essex authorities.</p>	Commenced December 2024 and ongoing