

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Initial Action Plan

Date: 8th February 2023

Report of: Chief Executive

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

In December 2022, Executive Board received a report outlining the findings and recommendations of the Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge which took place in November 2022. The findings and recommendations have been fully accepted and initial action planning has been carried out in response to them. Whilst the initial Action Plan has been in development, activity to respond to the LGA Peer Challenge recommendations has continued through a range of existing programmes.

This report provides an overview of the initial Action Plan (at Appendix 1) to enable progress, as further engagement takes place with Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board (February 2023 meeting with the Chairs of other Scrutiny Boards invited), with council colleagues and partners (such as the Anchor Network and Third Sector).

As agreed at Executive Board in December 2022, the Action Plan will provide supporting evidence for a follow-up visit from the Peer Challenge team in summer 2023. In addition, the Action Plan will inform and form part of our refreshed organisational planning in Spring 2023, our financial planning as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy refresh and budget setting cycle, and a refresh of the Best City Ambition later in 2023. Monitoring and reporting will be through regular reporting routes, such as the Annual Performance Report.

Monitoring and reporting progress against the Action Plan will take place through existing reporting routes, for example the Annual Performance report and Equality Improvement Priority reporting and using existing communications and engagement routes.

Recommendations

Members of Executive Board are asked to:

- a) Note the progress to develop the LGA Peer Challenge Action Plan (Appendix 1) in response to the findings and recommendations of the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge.
- b) Note that the initial Action Plan alongside the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge final report will be considered by Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board at their February 2023 meeting, in line with the recommendation from December 2022 Executive Board.

- c) Note that the Peer Challenge Action Plan will inform organisational and financial planning as well as the Best City Ambition refresh, and that monitoring, and reporting will be through existing routes such as the Annual Performance Report.

What is this report about?

- 1 This report provides Executive Board with an overview of the initial LGA Peer Challenge Action Plan, attached as Appendix 1, developed in response to the findings and recommendations of the LGA Peer Challenge which took place in November 2022. Background to the Peer Challenge can be found in the [report](#) which went to the December 2022 Executive Board meeting, as well as the [Peer Report](#) itself.
- 2 As agreed by Executive Board in December 2022, the LGA Peer Challenge report and initial Action Plan will be considered by Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board at their February 2023 meeting, with the Chairs of other Scrutiny Boards invited, to ensure that strategic and organisation wide implications are considered.

The initial Action Plan

- 3 There is a great deal of activity taking place across the council and our wider Team Leeds city partnerships to deliver our Best Council Ambition to drive poverty and inequality, three strategic pillars: Health and Wellbeing, Inclusive Growth and Net Zero; our ambitions on community and locality working, child friendly city and to be a Marmot city, with so much of this being done in line with the Team Leeds approach set out in the Best City Ambition. Alongside this, as an organisation we continue to transform how we work in relation to our people, our finances and assets, exploiting digital opportunities, improving customer service, and engaging with citizens and communities. This Action Plan aims not to duplicate existing activity, but to complement those plans and highlight areas where further action is needed to respond to the Peer Challenge recommendations.
- 4 The purpose of the Action Plan is to provide supporting evidence for a follow-up visit from the Peer Challenge team in summer 2023. In addition, the approach will inform and form part of our refreshed organisational planning in Spring 2023, our financial planning as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy refresh and budget setting cycle and a refresh of the Best City Ambition later in 2023. Whilst the initial Action Plan has been in development, activity to respond to the LGA Peer Challenge recommendations has continued through a range of existing programmes.
- 5 For the purposes of our action planning, the recommendations are grouped around five themes:
 - Values, culture and workforce.
 - Locality and community working.
 - Transformation approach across the organisation.
 - Financial planning.
 - Work beyond the city.

Best City Ambition and strategic planning

- 6 Actions taken because of the peer review will be an important input to the next refresh of the Best City Ambition, along with noting that the Peer Review found good ownership of the Best City Ambition. The Ambition will be influenced by the opportunities and insight the Peer Review has given us, alongside the important updates of the Health and Wellbeing and Inclusive Growth strategies, the release of Census 2021 data, and the crucial work happening to further improve how we work with communities, the progression of the Leeds Community Anchors Network (LCAN) and the Anchor institutions programme. As the Peer Review indicated,

ownership and resonance are already in a strong position and the transfer from the Best Council Plan to something more broadly owned has been welcomed. We are confident however that there is more to achieve, and through discussion and engagement over the coming months we will explore ways to further strengthen and embed our Team Leeds approach and shared understanding of goals and priorities.

- 7 Given this fluid and quickly developing local and national context, we are intending to bring forward the first full refresh of the Best City Ambition to later this year, rather than leaving it until 2025 as originally planned. Initial proposals are planned to be reported to Executive Board in November 2023, with scrutiny and formal consultation to follow. As with the first Best City Ambition, there will be engagement on the initial proposals. Full Council will receive the refreshed Ambition alongside the Budget in February 2024.
- 8 In the interim, a programme of implementation work will continue looking at:
 - Refreshing our broader strategic planning framework and communicating and engaging about the Best City Ambition (including a plan on a page).
 - Embedding new performance measures (including the Social Progress Index) and monitoring arrangements.
 - Ensuring our partnership arrangements are fit-for-purpose.
- 9 How the LGA Peer Review action plan aligns within our strategic planning framework is outlined below.



How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

- Health and Wellbeing
 Inclusive Growth
 Zero Carbon

- 10 The focus of the Peer Challenge was on the Best City Ambition, with the on-site phase including a focused group discussion on each of the three pillars and the position statement providing background information as well as links to more detailed individual strategies and performance reports. The recommendations from the Peer Challenge will inform the Best City Ambition refresh and work to progress the three pillars, including the strategy refresh process that is underway for the Health and Wellbeing and Inclusive Growth strategies (due for reporting to Executive Board in Summer 2023).

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

11 The initial action plan has been informed by ongoing engagement with officers and drawing in views from members and partners.

What are the resource implications?

12 There are no specific resource implications from the Peer Challenge Action Plan at this stage. Any subsequent implications will be picked up as part of the regular budget planning, monitoring, and reporting cycle.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

13 As the Action Plan is progressed, risks will be a consideration in line with the Risk Management Policy and reported through the regular risk management reports.

What are the legal implications?

14 There are no specific legal implications arising from the Peer Challenge report or Action Plan. Any that arise will be picked up as part of progressing the recommendations through the council's regular governance routes.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

15 There is an expectation that councils having a LGA corporate peer challenge will commit to publishing the feedback report and progressing action planning in response to recommendations.

How will success be measured?

16 Developing a clear Action Plan is the first stage of success, leading into the refresh of the Best City Ambition and organisational and financial planning. The follow-up Peer Challenge visit in summer 2023 will be a further method of assessing progress with the recommendations. Success will then be measured by regular reporting through the Annual Performance report, which will include reporting about engagement and satisfaction.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

17 The Action Plan is being reported to Executive Board in February 2023 via this report and will be considered by Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board in February 2023, with the Chairs of other Scrutiny Boards invited. The result of the follow-up Peer Challenge visit is likely to be reported to Executive Board in September 2023, depending on the timing of the visit and follow-up report. The Director of Resources is responsible for implementation.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Initial Action Plan.

Background papers

- None.

Peer Challenge Review Initial Action Plan – February 2023

This Action Plan is our council response to the LGA Peer Challenge that took place in early November 2022. The Peer Challenge team made 15 recommendations which have been accepted by the council.

There is a great deal of activity taking place across the council and the wider Team Leeds city and community partnerships to deliver our Best Council Ambition to tackle poverty and inequality, make progress on the three strategic pillars: Health and Wellbeing, Inclusive Growth and Net Zero; further improve our ambitions on locality and community working; be a child friendly city and a Marmot city – all being progressed using the Team Leeds approach. Alongside this, as an organisation we continue to transform how we work in relation to our people, our finances and assets, exploiting digital opportunities, improving customer service and engaging with those who call Leeds home. This Action Plan aims not to duplicate activity that is already taking place within existing programmes but to complement and progress areas where further action is needed to respond to the Peer Challenge recommendations.

This Action Plan will provide supporting evidence for a follow-up visit from the Peer Challenge team in summer 2023. In addition, the approach will inform and form part of our refreshed organisational planning in Spring 2023, our financial planning as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy refresh and budget setting cycle, and a refresh of the Best City Ambition later in 2023. Monitoring and reporting against the Action Plan will take place through existing reporting routes, for example the Annual Performance report, Equality Improvement Priority reporting, and using communications and engagement routes. The successful delivery of the action plan will require cross council delivery, as well as work with partners, with key accountable officers identified within the plan.

For the purposes of our action planning, the recommendations are grouped around five themes:

- Values, culture and workforce.
- Locality and community working.
- Transformation approach across the organisation.
- Financial planning.
- Work beyond the city.

Theme	Corporate Peer Review Recommendations	How we will progress this	Who is accountable	Timescales
<p>Values, culture and workforce</p> <p>(Supporting our ambition to be the best place to work where all staff can be their best.)</p>	<p>Keep being Leeds, keep being ambitious and living the values of collaboration, compassion and convening.</p> <p>Be mindful of the risk of staff burnout and provide clarity about priorities especially as budgets further reduce. Capacity at some levels is stretched and some employees are worried about the health and wellbeing of their colleagues.</p> <p>Build on the success of the EDI champions network and strengthen corporate champions at the senior level to support the further development and embedding of EDI in the council.</p>	<p>Continue the communications and engagement inside and beyond the council about the Best City Ambition.</p> <p>Evaluate and refresh the Communications and Engagement framework including leadership engagement arrangements, to simplify and improve visible representation of under-represented groups.</p> <p>Linked to work already taking place as part of People Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further enhance the Be Your Best Leadership and Manager Development Programme. • Refresh #TeamLeeds behaviours. • Evaluate, refresh and relaunch Wellbeing Offer and further improve the offer for Mental Health. • Refresh appraisal approach with a focus on prioritisation, burn out, and personal development. • Continue to tackle main recruitment and retention challenges. • Refresh EDI strategy (as an employer, a service provider and a convenor/community connector) and governance arrangements so there is consistency across directorates. Develop EDI champions at all levels of the organisation. • Review of Staff Networks to ensure consistency of role expectation, support and ability to influence council policy. <p>Linked to Be Your Best Leadership and Manager programme, develop a targeted Leadership Programme for under-represented groups.</p> <p>Build a focus on prioritisation/ stopping things/ consistent approach to service planning, including consistent data sets to inform prioritisation.</p>	<p>Director of Resources & Chief Officer, Human Resources</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>February – April 2023</p> <p>February – June 2023</p> <p>Summer 2023</p> <p>February – June 2023</p>

Theme	Corporate Peer Review Recommendations	How we will progress this	Who is accountable	Timescales
<p>Locality and Community Working</p> <p>(Supporting our city ambition to tackle poverty and inequality.)</p>	<p>Review locality working to improve clarity and coherence for the council, partners and communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure shared understanding of priority areas, underpinned by work on indices of deprivation. ○ Map out services and existing assets, and through a collaborative process, review locality arrangements to potentially cluster and consolidate where this would add value and efficiency. ○ Review and align service provision geographies with health, education/clusters, and the voluntary sector. ○ Consider how to further strengthen place-based networks. ○ In this context, review and develop the community committees and draw on the work of the Social Progress Index to measure progress. <p>Invest in member development on strengths-based community development. Councillors' ambitions for their communities are clear but as the council's resources reduce members have an important role to play in supporting communities to be able to do more for themselves.</p>	<p>Use the Peer Review recommendation steps to take stock of Locality and Community approaches with a focus on People, Assets and Governance, using this as the primary vehicle for delivering the Best City Ambition right across the city.</p> <p>In tandem take forward the service and asset management review activity to inform opportunities for integration and rationalisation.</p> <p>Review how locally based services are developed and delivered with partners including the NHS, Education and Third Sector.</p> <p>Continue to support the development of the Community Anchor Network and encourage further connections with the Inclusive Anchors Network.</p> <p>Continue and enhance the development of all our strength and asset-based approaches, including a clearer narrative about these and the impact they can have.</p> <p>Refresh member development programme to include City Ambition, #TeamLeeds culture and strengths-based approaches.</p> <p>Linked to Be Your Best Leadership and Manager development programme upskill staff on understanding role and working with councillors.</p>	<p>Director Communities, Housing and Environment, with Director of City Development (locality assets), Director of Children and Families (School Clusters) and Director of Adults and health (Local Care Partnerships), Director of Resources (Best City Ambition)</p> <p>Director of Communities, Housing and Environment & Director of Resources</p>	<p>February – June 2023</p> <p>Over 2023</p> <p>Over 2023</p> <p>Over 2023</p> <p>February – April 2023</p> <p>Ongoing during 2023</p>

Theme	Corporate Peer Review Recommendations	How we will progress this	Who is accountable	Timescales
<p>Transformation approach</p> <p>(Supporting our ambition to be a more Efficient, Enterprising, Healthy and Inclusive Organisation, ensuring our financial sustainability and resilience.)</p>	<p>Develop capacity for transformation and change. Incorporate a stronger user design focus, bringing existing teams together horizontally across the council and bringing in new capacity and skills.</p>	<p>Refresh Organisation Plan to achieve greater consistency and drive change on more integrated basis. Develop clear narrative on how digital can support not only financial savings but also staff burn out.</p>	<p>Director of Resources</p>	<p>April 2023</p>
	<p>Take best practice on specialist commissioning and robust financial management from the Adults and Health directorate into the Children and Families directorate.</p>	<p>Take stock of transformation capacity to understand scope of programmes, funding, approaches, and workforce. Clarify what additional capacity is required, how that will be funded and how all the capacity across the council relates to each other (and partners where appropriate).</p>		<p>March – June 2023</p>
	<p>Use the opportunity of the new leadership team to review and develop strong practice in Children's Services in light of the MacAlister review and strengthen collaboration between Children's and Families, and Adults and Health services in communities.</p>	<p>Linked to integration within Children and Families, develop an approach that moves toward greater integration at a locality level across Children and Families, Adults and Health (including Public Health), Communities, Housing and Environment and partners.</p>	<p>Director of Communities, Housing and Environment, with Director of Adults and Health & Director of Children and Families & Director of City Development</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p>Use the opportunity of the digital transformation to co-produce with middle managers a system that is more agile and responsive to their needs on the ground.</p>	<p>Further develop user centred design capacity and approaches within change and transformation programmes to maximise opportunities through Core Business Transformation and other significant developments, such as the website, customer contact, PowerApps and Microsoft Dynamics Platform.</p>	<p>Director of Resources, Chief Officer IDS & Chief Officer HR & Chief Finance Officer</p>	<p>2023/2024</p>
		<p>Within Be Your Best Leadership and Manager development programme invest in managers so that they can be good transformation and change managers.</p>		<p>2023/2024</p>

Theme	Corporate Peer Review Recommendations	How we will progress this	Who is accountable	Timescales
<p>Financial Planning</p> <p>(Supporting our objective that the council is financially resilient, stable and sustainable for the future.)</p>	<p>Consider a more outcomes focused and evidence-based approach to medium-term financial planning. As budgets reduce the development of a more consistent and clearer set of guiding principles and criteria to drive the budget process is needed to help bring consistency across the council.</p> <p>Prepare for the financial challenges ahead. Although there is some awareness of future budget pressures, it is not yet widely understood in terms of the scale and impact on council and its ability to deliver. The council needs to develop a clear and robust plan and process to address the council’s budget gap, which further mitigates risk.</p> <p>Take best practice on specialist commissioning and robust financial management from the Adults and Health directorate into the Children and Families directorate.</p>	<p>Ensure Best City Ambition/ 3 Pillars outcomes are explicitly reflected and help steer the MTFP, budget and Capital Programme.</p> <p>Linked to Core Business Transformation programme – develop financial data and information to support decision making at all levels.</p> <p>Continue a focus on developing People and Place commissioning.</p> <p>Consider opportunities to work with partners on further developments with the Leeds £ on both revenue and capital priorities.</p> <p>Continue through Third Sector Partnership develop a sustained approach to Third Sector funding to support resilience of the sector so it can continue to make the best possible contribution to the Best City Ambition.</p> <p>To develop consistency and buy in to MTFP, within the Be Your Best Leadership programme develop modules covering financial planning, budgeting, and prioritisation.</p> <p>Closer working between Adults and Health and Children and Families directorates to develop joint approaches to commissioning and contract management and financial management at the front line.</p>	<p>Director of Resources & Chief Finance Officer</p> <p>Director of Resources, Director of Communities, Housing and Environment</p> <p>Chief HR Officer, Chief Finance Officer</p> <p>Director of Children and Families, Director of Adults and Health</p>	<p>2023/ 2024</p>

Theme	Corporate Peer Review Recommendations	How we will progress this	Who is accountable	Timescales
<p>Work beyond the city</p> <p>(Supporting the Best City Ambition by making the most of regional and national opportunities and relationships.)</p>	<p>As the Mayoral Combined Authority develops use the Leader's and Chief Executive's leadership roles to help further strengthen relationships.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to be a new national exemplar for community-led integrated public service delivery. For example, starting with a new model of home care and a wide range of community services and activities, and net zero projects.</p> <p>Continue to influence and improve policy and practice in partnership with national and local government. Leeds could work with anchors and city partners to strengthen further their campaigning and lobbying on the financial challenge and the need for investment in the Leeds transport infrastructure to maintain their major contribution to the city and the economy.</p>	<p>Continue the work of the Leader (and other members involved in WYCA), along with the work of the Chief Executive (chairing the WY Chief Executive's meetings) to identify shared priorities for the region and progress those in a collaborative way.</p> <p>Consider further exemplar opportunities such as: Net Zero, Adult Transformation, award winning services such as Drug and Alcohol, a shared best practise through award submissions.</p> <p>Consider connections to key Whitehall networks with a stock take of existing relationships and consideration of further opportunities and networks. Continue Core Cities work and other influencing opportunities where it is considered a good return on investment.</p> <p>Develop communications and engagement framework, with clear key messages and narrative, along with the key account management approach to enable others to advocate for the city's needs i.e. funding and transport.</p>	<p>Chief Executive, Director of Resources & Director of City Development (as key link to WYCA)</p>	<p>2023/2024</p>