

Finance Peer Review – Council Action Plan

The following Action Plan has been developed to address the LGA Finance Peer Review recommendations. The Council’s proposed actions are allocated to a responsible officer, with a clearly defined success measure and target date.

LGA Peer Recommendation		EEBC Action	Officer(s)	Success Measure	Target Date	RAG Status	January 2022 Update
1	Bring together into a clear strategic statement the change and recovery intentions of the Council.	<p>1. The Covid-19 recovery plan - Build Back Better - was approved at Strategy & Resources (S&R) Committee on 16 March 2021.</p> <p>2. Financial implications of the recovery will be assessed and factored into the Council's budget setting process for 2022/23.</p>	Chief Finance Officer	<p>1. The Council's budget framework and projections for 2022/23 will be reported to S&R Committee in September 2021.</p> <p>2. A balanced budget for 2022/23 will be presented to Full Council in February 2022.</p>	<p>1. September 2021</p> <p>2. February 2022</p>		<p>The Strategic Recovery Plan, linked to the 2040 Vision, was approved at S&R on 16 March 2021.</p> <p>The long-term financial implications of Covid-19 will only be established with reasonable certainty once ‘new normal’ service demand levels become clear, post-restrictions.</p> <p>The Council’s budget projections for 2022/23 were presented to S&R Committee in September. A balanced budget, including updated projections following central government’s funding settlement in December, has been prepared for Full Council in February 2022.</p>

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2	Review the approach to financial decision making and scrutiny.	<p>1. The Chief Finance Officer will review the Financial Regulations (within the Constitution), including the roles and responsibilities of different Committees.</p> <p>2. The review will report to S&R Committee in November 2021.</p>	Chief Finance Officer	The review will report to S&R Committee in November 2021, with any changes to the Financial Regulations (within the Constitution) presented to Full Council for approval in February 2022.	February 2022		The review is presented to this January S&R Committee. Should the changes proposed by the review be approved, they will then go on to Full Council for approval to be incorporated into the Constitution.
3	Consider how members and officers can adapt to support each other through the forthcoming period of change.	<p>1. Relevant Heads of Service will meet with new Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs, to establish new working relationships.</p> <p>2. The Chief Finance Officer will devise a four-year training programme on local government finance for members – with a minimum of one session per year.</p>	<p>1. Chief Executive</p> <p>2. Chief Finance Officer</p>	<p>1. Heads of Service to report to Leadership Team that meetings have taken place.</p> <p>2. Training programme presented for approval at S&R Committee, with members subsequently offered at least one training session per year on aspects of local government finance.</p>	<p>1. June 2021</p> <p>2. March 2022</p>		<p>1. New meeting patterns have been established.</p> <p>2. The proposed training is presented to this January S&R. It incorporates quarterly finance updates for members, plus a comprehensive, annual Members' Briefing around late Autumn to communicate the Council's overall financial position, progress on revenue/capital budget setting, and any government funding announcements.</p>

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4	Ensure budget monitoring is considered by the relevant committee(s).	<p>1. Material budget variances in excess of £100k are already reported to Committees, as per the Financial Regs.</p> <p>2. The Chief Finance Officer will review budget monitoring procedures within the Financial Regulations and report to S&R Committee in November 2021.</p> <p>3. In the meantime and pending the outcome of the above review, quarterly budget monitoring reports will be presented to ACDS, commencing 2021/22 Quarter 1.</p>	Chief Finance Officer	<p>1. Financial Regulations review to be presented to S&R Committee.</p> <p>2. 2021/22 Quarter 1 budget monitoring report presented to Audit, Crime & Disorder & Scrutiny Committee.</p>	<p>1. November 2021</p> <p>2. September 2021</p>		<p>The review is presented to this January S&R Committee. Should the changes proposed by the review be approved, they will then go on to Full Council for approval to be incorporated into the Constitution.</p> <p>Quarterly budget monitoring reports to ACDS Committee have commenced from September 2021.</p> <p>A message has been put on the council's website to direct the public to these budget monitoring reports.</p>
5	Refresh the approach to the Capital Programme.	<p>1. The Chief Finance Officer will review the Financial Regulations including the approach to the Capital Programme.</p> <p>2. The review will report to S&R Committee in November 2021.</p>	Chief Finance Officer	The review will report to S&R Committee, with any changes to the Financial Regulations (within the Constitution) presented to Full Council for approval in February 2022.	November 2021 / February 2022		<p>The review is presented to this January S&R Committee with a proposal that the capital programme be extended to a five year rolling programme (from the current three years).</p> <p>Should the change proposed by the review be approved, it will then go on to Full Council for approval to be incorporated into the Constitution.</p>

6	LGA Peer Recommendation	EEBC Action	Officer(s)	Success Measure	Target Date	RAG Status	January 2022 Update
	<p>Agree a new Local Plan as soon as possible.</p>	<p>1. A programme for producing the Local Plan by December 2023 was agreed by Licensing & Planning Policy Committee on 4 March 2021.</p> <p>2. Funding for the Local Plan programme was agreed by Strategy & Resources Committee on 30 March 2021.</p> <p>3. Progress against the programme will be reported twice yearly to Licensing & Planning Policy Committee. Should funding implications arise, these would be reported to S&R Committee as appropriate.</p>	<p>Head of Planning</p>	<p>Local Plan to be agreed by December 2023</p>	<p>December 2023</p>		<p>The Local Plan timetable is under review with a detailed project plan being prepared to identify the milestones for each key stage to December 2023. The Local Development Scheme will then be updated.</p> <p>The priority is on completing the evidence base required for the Regulation 18 consultation and draft plan preparation, to enable the Council to move soundly onto the Reg19 stage.</p> <p>The new Local Plan Working Group established in July 2021 will consider elements of the draft plan as they are progressed.</p>

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7	Given the Council's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2035, assess the costs of delivering this plan both in terms of revenue and capital	<p>1. The Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration will assess the cost of delivering the Climate Change Action Plan and report the updated, costed plan to Environment and Safe Communities Committee.</p> <p>2. The Chief Finance Officer will include any known/agreed financial implications in the Council's updated Medium Term Financial Strategy projections.</p>	<p>1. Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration</p> <p>2. Chief Finance Officer</p>	<p>1. An updated, costed Climate Change Action Plan will be reported to Environment & Safe Communities at the next scheduled update in January 2022.</p> <p>2. Updated MTFS presented to Council in Feb 2022 to include agreed implications of the Climate Change Action Plan.</p>	<p>1. January 2022</p> <p>2. February 2022</p>		<p>The Council is reviewing its major property assets, which will have significant implications for the Council's climate impact going forward. It is unlikely that all property reviews will be complete by the end of the year, in time to fully cost the Climate Change Action Plan for E&SC in January 2022.</p> <p>The plan will be costed as soon as the relevant information is available.</p>
8	Collectively reflect further on...progressing the work on shared services...in a phased and managed way.	<p>1. On 16 March 2021, S&R Committee authorised the Chief Executive to progress further collaboration opportunities in the following service areas: waste, building control, IT infrastructure, housing, revenues and benefits, procurement, economic development and leisure services.</p> <p>Authorisation was also given to explore opportunities for collaboration on other service areas and with other local authority partners outside the above priority areas.</p>	Chief Executive	At least one collaboration proposal, if viable, presented to Committee in the current financial year.	March 2022		<p>A report to S&R Committee in September resulted in collaboration arrangements for the Building Control Service being proposed.</p> <p>Other collaboration opportunities will be assessed as they arise.</p>

		<p>2. Any concrete collaboration proposals that do arise will be presented to the relevant Committee with a business case to include the financial implications.</p>				
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