

CPC Peer Review - Action Plan



Key: CEx – Chief Executive; DoEHR – Director of Environment, Housing and Regeneration; DoCS – Director of Corporate Services; MO – Monitoring Officer

CFO – Chief finance Officer

	Recommendation	Action(s)	Owner(s)	Timescale	Progress Update
1	Create a shared vision for Epsom and Ewell, be clear what your priorities are and deliver these over a five-year period.	<i>The council needs to build a shared narrative of the place and develop its vision and priorities around this, which in turn should drive the council's financial strategy. The vision should articulate Epsom and Ewell's 'story' setting out a shared vision which is collectively owned by staff, members and partners and clearly shows how stakeholders are working collaboratively together to address the challenges the community faces and which celebrates key successes along the way. It is important that the council is inclusive and listens to the whole community, and proactively engages with the silent majority particularly residents in marginalised groups not just those who are the most vocal, in developing the vision, and demonstrates a 'one council' approach where members and officers understand their distinctive but complementary roles in achieving the council priorities and collaboratively lead the council together.</i>			
	1.1	Establish a task and finish group to develop the corporate priorities into a five-year plan, which is linked to the Corporate Transformation Programme, Place narrative and the plan to address the shortfall in funding.	CEx/RA Group Leader DoCS	Sept 2024	Meetings have now taken place with Councillors to begin developing the corporate priorities for the next five years. Follow up meetings with officers will now be scheduled.
	1.2	Develop a Place narrative for the borough alongside a vision which can be used internally and externally.	Task and Finish group DoEHR	March 2025	A Task & Finish Group is being established. An officer project team is also being established to take this work forward, drawing on the work around place narrative recently undertaken in developing the Local Plan.
	1.3	Revisit Future40 and agree which areas continue to be corporate priorities	Task and Finish group DoCS	March 2025	A Task & Finish Group is being established following initial work by members to revisit and refocus as part of the new 5-year plan. An officer project team is also being established with and a project brief in the process of being agreed.

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	1.4	Consult with officers and Members.	CEx/ DoCS/Task and Finish group	March 2025	This action will commence on completion of the preceding actions.
	1.5	Consult with a cross-section of residents and interested parties on the five-year plan and Place narrative.	CEx DoCS	July 2025	Digital means of consultation are being explored to widen participation rates alongside the more traditional consultation methods. Technology with the means to translate content into different languages, and with inbuilt accessibility features will help to reach a wider and more diverse cohort of residents.
2	<p>Create capacity for strategic political and managerial leadership. <i>There has been a lack of strategic leadership capacity over time, both politically and managerially, and a lack of officer capacity in some areas which has inhibited the council's ability to be proactive and look at the bigger picture. Clear prioritisation, and realistic dates given for implementation, for example of audit recommendations, would help to manage capacity issues and alongside consideration of building some of this capacity back in. It is important the Chair of the RA Majority Ruling Group continues to champion for the borough, influence and lobby on the council's behalf around issues which impact on Epsom and Ewell residents, such as housing, and this relies on senior members' willingness to deputise in the political leadership space in her absence.</i></p>				
	2.1	As part of the Workforce Transformation project, focus on creating officer capacity through new ways of working and ensuring leadership roles at all levels are operating in the optimal way. Continue to explore succession planning and development opportunities for all staff. Link these actions to the Corporate Transformation Programme. See 3.3. below.	CEx/DofCS/ Head of People and OD/ Workforce Transformation Lead HR Principal Programme Manager	Ongoing	Significant attention has been paid to succession planning in the officer leadership team since the CPC peer review. New posts, including Deputy Chief Exec, Assistant Director and Assistant Head of Service have been introduced in the first phase of a renewed focus on succession planning within teams. This will increase capacity at Senior levels, alongside Leadership Development programmes. The apprenticeship programme has been widened with more staff enrolling in work based further education and study courses. A management development programme is being developed with

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					<p>input from a cross-organisational group of existing managers and supervisors.</p> <p>The draft Corporate Transformation Programme incorporates action 2.1.</p>
3	<p>Governance needs to be reviewed to empower the political leadership of the authority, considering the uniqueness of Epsom & Ewell. <i>All members should take ownership of the wider vision and priorities and use their local connections to clearly articulate and communicate the pressures facing the borough to residents. This is a role for all members not just a few, this is even more important when the political 'leadership' of the authority doesn't, under the current system of governance, have the powers that would normally be invested in the executive function. The Monitoring Officer should be supported to continue his work in reviewing the council's constitution.</i></p>				
	3.1	Political leadership to explore its current governance model and consider if it wishes to adopt a different model.	Political Leadership/CEX	Group to discuss options in Dec 2024 Decision by March 2025	The ruling political leadership have discussed this issue and have resolved to explore the options for a different model of operation. These will be presented for discussion in December 2024 with a decision to be made by March 2025.
	3.2	Continue the work already agreed to review parts of the constitution in 2024/25.	Monitoring Officer & CWG	April 2025	Work to review further parts of the constitution is underway including utilising the capabilities within Performance Hub (PHUB) to capture issues experienced in the operation of the constitution and scheme of delegation on a day-to-day basis, so that these areas can be considered by the Monitoring Officer and factored into the constitution working groups work programme.
	3.3	Refresh of the member development programme, identify those members who wish to take on more strategic roles and put in place development opportunities to support that.	Political Party/ Group Leaders/CEX /MO	Original date - Dec 2024 Amended date March 2025	Initial discussions have taken place with all political group leaders. Opportunities for development into more strategic roles within the ruling political group are being discussed.

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4	<p>Training for members and officers needed to improve understanding of roles and responsibilities and increase skills and capacity. <i>A high performing council has a shared vision and a ‘one council’ approach where members and officers understand their distinctive but complementary roles in achieving the council priorities and collaboratively lead the council together. There is a need for a better shared understanding of the separate but complementary roles and responsibilities of members and officers. Urgently improve the member development programme, which as a minimum should include finance, audit and scrutiny to ensure members fully understand the full extent of their governance role. A full programme of staff learning and development activity should be underpinned by a workforce strategy that identifies what skills the organisation needs for the future, as well as embedding the basics. Senior officers should be up skilled to operate at a more strategic level. There is a need to invest in updating the digital and technical skills of the organisation and a structured programme to roll this out should be developed as part of the council’s transformation programme.</i></p>				
	4.1	Establish a member task and finish group to develop a member development programme.	Political Party/ Group Leaders CEX/MO/Dem Services Mgr	Original date: Sept 2024 Amended date: Nov 2024	A member group has been identified and is in the process of being confirmed.
	4.2	Establish a task and finish group from those members elected for the first time in May 2023 to review Member Induction and feedback on how to shape the programme for May 2027 and work with officers on the review.	Political Party/ Group Leaders MO/Dem Services Mgr	Original date: Sept 2024 Amended date: Nov 2024	Initial discussions have taken place with all political group leaders. To date, no amendments to the existing member development programme have been identified. As above, a member group has been identified and is in the process of being confirmed.
	4.3	<p>i. Create a programme of staff and member briefing on the roles and responsibilities of different teams and departments to develop an understanding of each other’s work, issues, work pressures and ways of working.</p> <p>ii. Incorporate an input from members around the role of a ward councillor, committee Chair/Vice Chair and the political leadership function.</p>	CEX/HoS/RA Group Leader	April 2025 (i – iv)	<p>i-iv) This will be an output of the reviewed Member development programme in 4.1 above.</p> <p>This work is being led and co-ordinated by an officer as part of a development opportunity within their existing role.</p>

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		<p>iii. Incorporate an input around legal and corporate responsibilities of statutory and proper officers.</p> <p>iv. Highlight the distinct operational and political leadership roles and how this works together in a true 'one council' ethos.</p> <p>v. The Workforce Strategy will be developed as part of the Workforce Transformation Programme and will include any new skills required to enable progression of the corporate priorities, once finalised.</p>		Dec 2024	<p>v) The Workforce Strategy is being developed. A management development programme and work with the 'top (officer) team' is continuing ahead of strategy finalisation and will support progression of the corporate priorities.</p>
	4.4	<p>Develop and put in place a structured programme to increase the digital and technical capability of the organisation (officers and members).</p>	<p>DoCS/Head of IT/Dem Services Mgr</p>	April 2025	<p>A structured programme of digital and technical capacity skills development is being developed, led by IT, with training materials being prepared to support in both written and video format. The training will be structured as drop-ins allowing those with greater levels of digital experience to opt in and out of the sessions they need, followed by more focussed sessions and finally 1:1 support where required.</p>
	4.5	<p>Continue the programme to upskill senior officers and members to operate at a more strategic level.</p> <p>Progress 'Top Team' work with LGA.</p>	<p>CEX/RA Group Chair</p> <p>Head of People and OD</p>	Dec 2024	<p>Work with the officer 'Top Team' is continuing.</p> <p>New roles such as 'Assistant Head of Service' have been implemented to upskill senior managers with the skills and experience needed to operate at a more strategic level.</p> <p>A management development programme is being developed as part of a 'new ways of working' focus for the same strategic intent.</p>

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					New initiatives such as a staff 'Think Tank' have offered opportunities to more staff to develop the skills needed to problem-solve, collaborate and influence at a corporate level.
	4.6	Offer member mentoring.	Political Party/ RA Group Leaders	Dec 2024	The Political Leaders are picking this up in their own Group.
	4.7	Understand the financial implications of funding the proposed member and officer programme.	CFO	Dec 2024	Benchmarking the member training budget against other authorities is underway, and alongside this a training needs analysis needs to be developed for consideration.
5	<p>Streamline and strengthen the council's decision-making process, ensuring that consensus is built. <i>There is frustration and confusion around the lack of transparency through the decision-making process, coupled with a lack of clarity around which items for decision should go to the senior leadership team and which should go to committee chairs. It is important to demonstrate each stage of how the council builds consensus through its decision-making process, by first considering whether the final decision will be made at committee or council, then clearly mapping out each step to develop the final report. This should be communicated to all staff and members. A number of key mechanisms for maintaining good standards are flagged in the Annual Governance Statement as 'areas for improvement', this should be addressed as a matter of urgency.</i></p>				
	5.1	Create a process which lays out the steps for committee reports to come to committee or full council.	MO/Dem Services Mgr	Original date: Sept 2024 Amended date: Nov 2024	A process note has been drafted which is currently under review by Democratic Service officers; the intention is that Statutory Officers shall have sight of this in November 2024.
	5.2	Put in place a programme of work which addresses the areas flagged in the Annual Governance Statement as 'areas for improvement'	DoCS	Sept 2024	A programme of work to develop all of the issues flagged in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) has been developed. The Performance Hub now tracks all the improvement actions flagged in the AGS through to completion. Progress on these actions is reported in the Corporate Performance

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					and Risk Report, which goes to Policy Chairs and Audit & Scrutiny Committee. The actions are also reported on in each edition of the AGS, which goes to Audit & Scrutiny Committee in July.
6	<p>Longer-term financial position must be urgently addressed in relation to corporate priorities which need to be delivered.</p> <p><i>The council has a strategy to address the challenge of the annual shortfall in funding, however it was not clear how effective this will be without clarity on the council's vision and corporate priorities. In balancing the budget, the council should look at innovative solutions to address its challenges. Opportunities for income generation, should be aligned with agreed priorities, and the council should make it clearer, what invest to save opportunities it is looking at. Difficult decisions about the future of non-statutory services, including the decision to stop or reduce the service may be needed. The full cost of the town hall move and determining what happens to the existing town hall and the financial implications of this, needs to be better understood by everyone in the organisation.</i></p>				
	6.1	As part of developing the five-year plan, link the Council strategy to address the challenge of the annual shortfall in funding to its vision and corporate priorities	DoCS/CLT and Policy Chairs	March 2025	This action flows from the development of the refreshed corporate priorities, the Member workshops for which have now taken place and need to be replicated with officers, including the financial implications and annual funding challenge.
	6.2	Continue programme of work to review statutory and mandatory services.	DoCS/CFO/CLT and Policy Chairs	Ongoing	Service Reviews were approved at Strategy & Resources Committee in July 2024. Work has begun on the service reviews scheduled to take place in Year 1 of the two-year programme.
	6.3	Progress options related to the Town Hall site.	Town Hall Working Group/Head of Property	Ongoing	Member workshops have been held to progress this action and will continue until final decision is made by Full Council.
	6.4	Progress agreed opportunities for income generation and economic development.	DoEHR/DoCS/ CFO	Ongoing	A number of new income generation opportunities are under consideration with business cases being prepared in some cases. Income generation projects will be pulled through to the Corporate Transformation Programme.

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	6.5	Continue to look at opportunities to decrease temporary housing costs.	C&W and S&R Chairs/ Strategic Housing Group	Ongoing	Housing are investigating several options including micro homes/ pods on vacant council land and the opportunities presented by the Local Authority Housing Fund 3 (LAHF3) grant funding round. An officer Strategic Housing Group comprised of officers from housing, planning and property meet regularly to share ideas on, and drive solutions for creating additional affordable and temporary accommodation.
7	<p>The council needs a shared organisational risk appetite. <i>The lack of shared understanding around corporate risk appetite across the organisation is inhibiting the council from making bold and innovative choices to tackle the challenges it faces. A corporate ambition to be more commercial needs to be underpinned by associated processes and organisational culture. The Asset Management Strategy under development, should make clear how retained assets will be maintained and improved.</i></p>				
	7.1	Carry out a review of the risk appetite of the organisation, including both members and officers, to understand what this now is, and create an updated framework to be adopted by consensus.	DoCS	March 2025	An external facilitator has been sourced to run an officer/member workshop which will inform this review.
	7.2	Carry out the Asset Review to understand how assets will be maintained and improved. Present outcomes to Policy chairs for discussion.	DoEHR/ CFO/ Head of Property & Regeneration	June 2026	Work is underway.
	7.4	<p>i. Undertake a review of local authorities outside of Surrey to understand how they have approached successfully being 'commercial' while balancing their appetite for risk.</p> <p>ii. Seek best practice from across the sector on guardrails to safeguard against unforeseen consequences. Seek advice of</p>	CFO/DoCS	March 2025	Extensive research on best practice has been undertaken by the business assurance team. Further work is underway.

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		professional associations (e.g., Institute of Risk Management)			
	7.4	Put in place a programme for officers and members to take them through the cultural shift and approach towards risk.	CEX/DoCS	Sept 2025	This task will commence at the appropriate point i.e. when the new Risk Governance framework has been developed.
8	<p>A properly resourced Corporate Transformation Programme is needed to deliver the council’s vision and priorities. <i>The council is delivering a range of transformation projects across the organisation and there is an opportunity to consolidate all of its transformational activity into one strategy which is shared with staff and members, so there is a broader understanding of the range of projects being delivered. It also provides an opportunity for senior managers to collectively ensure transformational activity taking place across the council is co-ordinated, duplication is minimised, capacity pressures are quickly identified, and that progress and impact is regularly tracked and evaluated. Building capacity in teams to deliver projects will be essential in doing this, and where necessary, the council should bring this in on a short term basis.</i></p>				
	8.1	Collate ongoing projects into a single Corporate Transformation Programme which includes all programmes, project owners, timelines and inter dependencies.	DoCS/ Principal Programme Manager	Sept 2025	<p>Existing projects and programmes that represent transformative work have been pulled together in a Corporate Transformation Programme (CTP) referencing the existing corporate priorities. As new priorities are agreed, the CTP will reflect these. Timelines and interdependencies are currently being mapped for the CTP.</p> <p>The CTP is being developed within existing staff and financial resources. To achieve this, the programme is being built into the Performance Hub to aid staff oversight, ownership and to minimise the staff resource needed to track and provide updates on progress.</p>
	8.2	Provide communication on what all the elements of our Corporate Transformation Programme are and quarterly updates on how they are being progressed and delivered.	DoCSPrincipal Programme Manager	Original date: Sept 2024 Amended date: Jan 2025	CTP is being finalised and following this a comms plan will be developed.

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	8.3	Incorporate the Corporate Transformation Programme into the five-year plan.	DofCS	Original date: Sept 2024 Amended date: March 2025	The officer workshops on the corporate priorities that will soon commence, offer the opportunity to achieve incorporation of the CTP into the five-year plan. The end date for this action has been amended to align with the development timeline for the Five-Year Plan
9	<p>Maximise partnership working to help build capacity to deliver and promote Epsom and Ewell's interests on the wider stage. <i>To achieve greater partnership working, (both with community partners as well as looking at shared opportunities with neighbouring boroughs) partners need to understand what the council's vision and priorities are. The council needs to build a shared narrative of the place and develop its vision and priorities. It is important that the council focuses its valuable resource on the agreed priorities of the council and builds in more organisational resilience. This can be achieved by better cross service working, as well as partnership working with neighbouring boroughs and local partners.</i></p>				
	9.1	Refresh the approach to engagement with key stakeholders, identifying who, politically and corporately, will lead and co-ordinate engagement with each. Ensure the council engages with partners as "One Council" and that information is shared to aid consistency of understanding and activity.	CEX/Group Leader	Oct 2024	Discussions are underway to progress this action.
	9.3	Explore options to support the Place narrative.	CEX/Chair of Group/Policy Chairs	Jan 2025	This is being explored - the CPC process elicited multiple offers of support from partners in developing the place narrative. These offers will be pursued as part of the engagement process.
10	<p>Taking a more strategic approach to tackling the housing challenge and addressing all steps on the housing ladder. <i>The delivery of housing, including affordable housing through the new Local Plan is critical to solving the issue in the longer term. While there is a collective recognition there is a need to solve the housing crisis, the Council needs to articulate a clear direction, which is shared and understood by the political and managerial leadership and implement it. The council should be more assertive in working with its partners to find solutions. There is an opportunity to work with partners and other services across the organisation to create an early warning system for residents who may potentially</i></p>				

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	<i>become homeless. Further strengthened engagement across planning policy will also be vital to realising the council's ambition to reduce reliance on expensive temporary accommodation. There is a lack of strategic focus and capacity in the housing team to follow through on the biggest (prevention) options that will make the difference, as well as missed opportunities to reach out to partners for their contribution.</i>				
	10.1	Use data to create an early warning system for residents who may potentially become homeless.	Strategic Housing Mgr	Ongoing	Monthly homeless statistics are generated from the homelessness module of the Abritas system which are then reported to the Homelessness Working Party (HWP) monthly meeting. One of the categories is "reasons for homelessness", which enables the service to focus resources to the areas of highest need. Housing are currently working with business assurance team to use the new function of the Performance Hub to ensure this information is also recorded and reported corporately.
	10.2	Strengthen engagement across Planning Policy to support the council's ambition to deliver affordable housing and reduce reliance on expensive temporary accommodation.	Planning Policy Maanger	Ongoing	Regular engagement between housing and planning policy are now embedded in working practices and have contributed to the development of policy around affordable housing contained in the emerging Local Plan, which will itself be a key mechanism to deliver additional affordable housing.
	10.3	Build and develop strong partnerships with internal and external stakeholders including housing associations and developers.	CEx/ DoEHR/Head of Housing & Community/ Strategic Housing Manager	Ongoing	The Strategic Housing Manager (SHM) has developed strong links with planning policy, finance and the estates team, and the Housing Delivery Group meets bi-monthly to consider and discuss internal and external development opportunities. The SHM is routinely involved in the affordable housing aspect of planning applications and liaises with development control and viability consultants to maximise the delivery of affordable housing obligations. In addition, the SHM has developed strong relationships with the key registered providers who operate in the area

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					and liaises with Homes England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on policy and funding matters.
	10.4	Create strategic focus and capacity in the Housing team to follow through on prevention options and create opportunities to reach out to partners for their contribution.	DoEHR/Head of Housing & Community/ Strategic Housing Manager	Ongoing	The SHM is undertaking a review of the housing service to assess where resources can best be focused in order to most effectively deliver, especially in relation to prevention and move on. Housing have recently held a landlord forum and continue to meet with key partners to develop work programmes in order to ensure the team work collaboratively wherever possible to meet shared aims.
11	<p>Options to decouple the Scrutiny and Audit function should be explored with scrutiny subsumed into policy committees.</p> <p>What the Peer team said:</p> <p><i>Concerns raised about audit and scrutiny being diluted by being combined under one committee. CIPFA recommend that audit should be stand-alone as a committee as both audit and scrutiny have specific roles. It is important that the council gives early consideration in separating the audit and scrutiny functions with scrutiny subsumed into policy committees.</i></p>				
	11.1	Explore how audit and scrutiny is carried out in other councils with a committee system.	CEx/MO/RA Group Chair	Sept 2025	<p>The CEx and MO have been exploring sources of external support to progress the conversations around this action.</p> <p>An external facilitator has been identified to enable this action to progress when schedules allow.</p>
	11.2	Arrange training for members and officers on committee system governance to understand the role of committees in proper scrutiny of policy.	CEx/MO/RA Group Chair	Oct 2025	As above.
	11.3	Explore compliance with national legislation to ensure statutory requirements are met.	MO	Sept 2025	This will be explored with the engaged external advisor.

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	11.4	Proposal put forward to Members for decision.	MO/CWG	Original date: Feb 2025 Amended date: Feb 2026 (Full Council)	It is proposed that the delivery date for this target should be February 2026, to align with the completion of the component parts of the task itself.
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