**London Borough of Harrow
Peer Review Response**

In February 2023, the London Borough of Harrow invited a peer challenge from the Local Government Association (LGA) having gone through a period of significant change. The LGA identified it is an exciting time for Harrow: a time of transition with new ambitious plans for the organisation and the borough, notwithstanding areas of improvement.

This action plan has been prepared in response to the recommendations made by the LGA Peer Challenge team in their feedback report.

	Recommendation	What are we going to do?	Lead	Timescale
1	**Corporate Plan** Whilst the flagship actions are helpful in providing focus, the council should ensure that they do not distract from the business as usual. The council should take steps to embed the Corporate Plan across the council and establish alignment with other key policies and strategies.	The Corporate Plan is being developed over the autumn, with engagement from key political and officer stakeholders. This will ensure that there is alignment between the new suite of flagship actions and 'business as usual' for the council. The Corporate Plan timelines will run in tandem with the drafting of the budget for 2024/25 and as such the flagship actions will be costed and budgeted for in the 2024/25 budget.	Assistant Director of Corporate Strategy	Corporate Plan and budget to be agreed at Cabinet, February 2024
2	**Improvement, transformation and capacity** There is a need for a defined strategic improvement programme with sequenced actions, supported by further capacity for transformation and change. A properly established and resourced Project Management Office (PMO) alone will not solve this (but	The major projects and improvement programmes across the Council have been identified, mapped and prioritised. These are monitored at the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) Improvement Board with updates from the Head of PMO on a monthly basis. PMO will be developing a Project Management framework and Centre of Excellence / Community of Practice. This will clearly define best practice for those	Assistant Director of Digital, Data & the Customer Experience	Ongoing

	would be a helpful start); capacity is required across the organisation. There is a need to urgently reprioritise programmes and allocate resource accordingly. This may involve moving resource around and the revision of milestones and targets. There is also a need to acknowledge not everything that needs doing can be done now so some phasing with clear communications and expectations is required.	working with projects and provide sufficient support to achieve successful outcomes. Project Management framework will account for processes for the whole project lifecycle, from early idea to closure, including gateways. New improvement projects and transformation programmes will be categorised through the PMO and signed off at CLT.		
3	**Organisation** A determination is needed as to whether to agree and require (or not) a standard operating model for the council and all service areas. If this is agreed clarity should be provided with clear design principles for either devolved or centralised services, and the overall model of service delivery. At present, it is unclear what the future operating model preference is for the council. There is currently a mixture of devolved and centralised corporate services and they vary across departments.	CLT has established an Organisational Design Authority to oversee the organisational redesign and restructure. This is ongoing and, in the future, this will be embedded in HR processes.	Director of HR & OD	Ongoing
4	**Financial planning and management**		S151 Officer	Ongoing

	Continue to develop alignment between the Corporate Plan, MTFS and other financial strategies	The Council's Budget and MTFS is aligned to the Corporate Plan and other strategies.		
5	**Savings and MTFS** Ensure a relentless tracking and reporting system is in place with clear ownership of budgets with a focus on delivering the agreed savings proposals and avoiding double counts that might arise from changes to the operating model.	This tracking has taken place historically, and is in place for 2023/24 to 2025/26 to track the delivery of MTFS savings. The tracker is updated on a monthly basis and reported for cabinet on a quarterly basis along with the revenue monitoring.	S151 Officer	Ongoing
6	**Internal systems** Identify, agree and implement a range of options to urgently resolve key system issues (e.g. Microsoft Dynamic 365 and planning). Consider what alternative options might be available to help deliver the necessary urgent improvements	Dynamics 365: Most elements of Phase 1 project have been completed successfully: - Discovery workshops for development of product roadmap completed and detailed recommendations including costs produced - New support contract awarded to HCL and successfully transition from PwC in July 2023 - My4Cast successfully used for Period 3 reporting in Resources and Place Directorates, rolling out to Peoples Directorate in September 2023. - New client-side team manager appointed with interim resources in place, new structure design and costings completed and will be presented to ODA at end of September 2023 Meeting with members in mid-September confirmed high level Phase 2 scope and costings, to be reflected in future updates.	S151 Officer / Director of ICT	

7	**Performance** Introduce a consistent council-wide performance framework which provides organisational assurance. Ensure this performance monitoring is used to inform service delivery and decision making. Develop a suite of performance information and data packs which go through formal council governance arrangements e.g. reports to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny.	Directorate scorecards created with Portfolio Holders and agreed at Cabinet. Leader of the Council and Managing Director chair quarterly Performance Boards for each directorate. Performance Board reports presented at Cabinet on a quarterly basis. Corporate Plan has been agreed by Cabinet. CLT meets monthly as a Performance Board to consider corporate performance. Outcomes of OFLOG consultation will share key performance indicators. With new performance framework embedded into the organisation, processes for performance monitoring by scrutiny function are being re-introduced. This includes quarterly performance briefings for the Chair and Vice-Chair of Performance & Finance Scrutiny Committee (P&F) using corporate scorecard, developing a watchlist of areas where performance is raising concerns, escalating to Scrutiny Leadership Group (informal) and P&F (formal committee consideration) where trends persist.	Assistant Director of Digital, Data & the Customer Experience	
8	**Human Resources and Organisational Development** Systems, processes and policies need to be reviewed, refreshed and made fit for purpose to deliver the council priorities as a matter of urgency. It is important that a culture is developed to ensure that all council	Council wide appraisal and target setting has been reintroduced with promising compliance results. A Management Competency Framework has been developed and will be implemented with a soft launch until 31st March 2024 and a more formal embedded approach from 1st April 2024.	Director of HR & OD	

	services understand and comply with agreed corporate policies. This needs to be closely monitored and any non-compliance identified and appropriate corrective action taken. A robust annual appraisal system should be developed that aligns individual and organisational objectives, values and behaviours as set out by the new Corporate Plan.	Additional (short term) investment has been secured in HR to support with the Council wide reorganisations. Clarity has now been provided in terms of the sign off of HR policies. HR Policies will now be signed off by the Head of Paid Services (with advice from the Director of HR) after it has been discussed with CLT. There is a need for a thorough review of several HR policies. In light of the ongoing reorganisation and the numerous consultations with trade unions, HR will be prioritising the main policies that require review. This approach will enable meaningful consultation with the unions. The key policies will be implemented by 1st April 2024. All other remaining HR policies will be reviewed and implemented by 1st April 2025.		
9a	**Workforce strategy and culture** The council should develop a workforce strategy setting out plans to attract, recruit, retain and develop the workforce with the skills and capabilities required to achieve the council objectives.	Workforce strategy has been developed. The five main priorities of the strategy are: • Culture and Performance Change - creating a resilient, high performing Council with a culture and way of working that enables everyone to perform to their best for the benefit of residents. • Provide the framework for effective intervention to ensure our workforce is future proofed and is fit for purpose. • Engagement, involvement and collaboration happen across all levels in the organisation. • Strong and sustained commitment to	Director of HR & OD	

		equality, diversity & inclusion and to wellbeing.		
		• Leaders and managers are developed, supported and challenged to be their best. One of the main aims of the strategy is to enable the London Borough of Harrow to become an Employer of Choice. The Workforce Strategy will provide guidance to Directorates in developing Workforce Action Plans, supported by HR Business Partners, which align with service operational plans and reflect future workforce priorities and needs. This approach will effectively integrate the strategy into the council's daily operations.		
9b	LBH could also look to zone the council office by service area to enhance team working and support collaboration The council should discuss and agree with staff a set of expectations about when and why they should be in the office, informed by service need and job roles. Thereafter monitoring will be needed to ensure compliance is in line with the agreed approach.	Hybrid working habits and expectations to be developed. Office zoning has been agreed. Further discussion is required between colleagues in Place, Communications and HR around office zoning and staff engagement. To take forward: - Assess office zoning feasibility based on building capacity constraints. - Encourage employee use of office space. - Establish a dedicated working group for execution. - Refine hybrid work habits and promote agile methodologies. - Collaborate with managers to empower employees.	Corporate Director, Place	Ongoing

		- Improve clarity in office zoning. - Maintain regular communication with staff. - Review and integrate information for new employee onboarding.		
10	**Member development** The existing member training and development offer should be evaluated and in line with member feedback should be expanded, targeting key roles such as Cabinet members and committee chairs.	Agreed that the offer will be evaluated with members surveyed regarding their requirements. Existing training offers have been advertised and promoted. An application for charter status will be considered. Discussions ongoing around member development approaches.	Director of Legal & Governance	
11	**Governance** The council's schedule of meetings should be reviewed to allow for sufficient pre-decision engagement and the timely issuing of reports.	Work of this nature is under constant review. The calendar has been reviewed in response to the peer review comments. A full schedule that allows time for engagement is available and timetabling allows for additional meetings should business needs require. Special care has been taken with the calendar. Published schedule of meetings – no further action required.	Director of Legal & Governance	No further action needed
12	**Commissioning** The council should develop a long-term commissioning strategy and implementation plan. Longer term planning is needed in areas such as extra care housing and leisure provision.	Within People Services Commissioning and Strategy there is a continuously developing Commissioning function responding and planning for demographic changes and demand for services, developing partnership arrangements with Health and the VCS, implementing Government policy changes and continually seeking to increase the efficient use of resources. There is a mixed approach to service delivery including commissioned services, spot	Corporate Director, People	

		purchasing, in-house and decommissioning where appropriate. Market position statement in place, and a refresh of the People Services commissioning plan is in progress. A Housing needs assessment has been completed with Public Health and Housing and Adult Social Care colleagues. A plan with short, medium and long term objectives is being developed. This includes considering the future extra care strategy, once the next facility opens during Spring 2024.		
13	**Health partnerships** Build on the strong relationships established locally and the role the council plays in the borough partnership. The council should look to be more influential across the ICS footprint to make sure Harrow residents get their fair share of resources	Harrow's Managing Director is the local authority lead for all 8 boroughs on the Integrated Care Board, making him a strong representative for Harrow and he will be leading on the community health services review and the Better Care Fund. As part of the wider transformation in People Directorate (Children's Services and Adults' Social Care), we are currently working to: • Establish the leadership teams for our integrated neighbourhood teams, drawn from clinical and professional teams and local communities. • Finalise the services forming the core integrated neighbourhood teams and confirm the associated workforce. • Design with local teams a development programme that will support to work together in new ways.	Corporate Director, People	

		• Various joint focus groups, service development workshops have been held and will continue to do so.		