

<b>Meeting:</b>	Executive Decision Making Session : Executive Leader, Policy, Strategy and Partnerships
<b>Meeting date:</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
<b>Report of:</b>	Chief Officer HR and Support Services
<b>Portfolio of:</b>	Executive Leader

## Decision and Progress Report: Corporate Improvement Plan

### Subject of Report

1. This report provides an update on the progress of the Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP) that has been produced following the approval of the Corporate Improvement Framework at the Leader’s Executive Member Decision Making session on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024. The Leader agreed the framework and for the Chief Operating Officer to create an action plan to be monitored which meets the recommendations made by the Peer Team in February, and also picked up other planned improvements.

### Recommendation

2. For the Leader of the Council to note the progress of the Corporate Improvement plan and ongoing work.

### Background

3. The Council’s improvement plan is a key document that helps maintain focus on our journey and have in sight what we have achieved. The day-to-day ethos is to seek improvement, our key workforce values reflect this “*we work together, we improve and we make a difference*”, so our journey is one of striving for continuous improvement and efficiency rather than needing to improve due to poor performance. We are proud of our achievements to date, we receive positive responses to our progress and ambition and relationships we have worked hard to establish and grow. We have a strong employer brand which attracts a quality and resilient workforce who are key to delivering our ambitions. We continue to strive to

ensure that we can work in an agile and dynamic manner whilst ensuring our residents are at the heart of what we do.

4. The Corporate Improvement Framework (**Annex 1**) was created in response to a number of workstreams and action plans as well as the Peers recommendations. The framework is the internal response to how the Council operates to meet the objectives set in the Council Plan, ensuring we have a culture of continuous improvement, and being responsive to the many local and national challenges whilst ensuring that our services and our workforce are adaptive to change.
5. The framework is based on four themes and provides the structure of the Council's ongoing continuous improvement, these are:
  - a. Strengthen strategic leadership
  - b. One City, One Council
  - c. Harness the commitment to the city to deliver ambitions
  - d. Building a strong foundation
6. Since February, extensive work has been undertaken to complete the recommendations identified by the peer review which were formulated in an action plan (**Annex 2**). The action plan gives an overview of where we are on the journey to meeting the recommendations identified, prior to the peers return visit on 9<sup>th</sup> December.
7. Welcoming the peers back in December gives the opportunity to showcase our 8-month journey against the 12 month action plan. Peers will be invited to listen and observe the progress that has been made through a series of presentations, discussions and evidence documents.
8. The Council will receive a formal update report, from the Peers second visit which the Council will agree to publish. This is likely to be received in the New Year

### ***Action Plan Progress and Recommendations Review***

9. The action plan included wider actions drawn from other plans already in track, these were added as they complimented the peer recommendations. For example, some of the leadership and workforce actions and the proposed work with the Combined Authority were already underway or planned, and as these met the

peer recommendations, they were included in the corporate improvement action plan.

10. The improvement plan will continue to be a live document which will evolve, so although, there is an initial timescale of 12 months, many projects have a longer and ongoing impact. Actions will continue to be monitored by the Chief Operating Officer as part of the Corporate Improvement Board agenda, alongside other key projects.
11. As can be seen from **Annex 2** the majority of the action plan is either completed, underway or is part of a continuous journey that will evolve. Each action is set within the themes of the Corporate Improvement Framework (*as described in paragraphs 4 and 5*) and some actions cross over and compliment more than one recommendation.
12. The following is a high-level summary of the action taken to meet the recommendations to date which can be read in addition to the action plan at *Annex 2*.
13. *Recommendations 1 to 5* look at leadership priorities, strengthening culture for our future delivery and meeting the ambitions of the Council Plan. A key part of this delivery is seizing opportunities available across York whether this is with partners, local employers and business or our community groups.
14. Our workforce is at the heart of these five recommendations and work has been undertaken to restructure the corporate management team and governance arrangements. A leadership framework has been developed and communicated alongside an ongoing 'Let's Talk Leadership' engagement dialogue which highlights and reinforces that leadership is at all levels of the organisation. Accountability and responsibilities have also been reinforced and refocused with a reminder to managers and employees of the expected values and behaviours. A new buddying system and shadowing opportunities have been launched including the promotion of opportunities from the Working as One City strategic projects, where staff will be invited to get involved and learn new skills and experience through secondment opportunities. The launch of a trauma informed council narrative has also started, some training has been delivered and more is to follow. Leadership

and management development training has also been renewed and will be launched in the new year.

15. *Recommendation 6* looks at performance which is at the heart of 'how' we do our work, performance scores and key performance indicators have been reviewed, simplified and linked to service plans where appropriate. Standard agendas for departmental management teams and consultative meetings with trade unions includes performance and workforce data, and where appropriate service data too. A Core Services Performance Board has been introduced to support and focus on frontline services performance.
16. Performance is also discussed at CMT meeting on a monthly basis, with additional dedicated performance discussed for adults and children's services as the two largest directorates in terms of financial funding and statutory front line services. Members equally have oversight of performance at Audit and Governance and Scrutiny.
17. A key part of performance monitoring is recognition of the hard work of our workforce, there continues to be a high energy of praise to teams which is welcomed.
18. *Recommendation 7* looks at internal engagement with staff including celebrating success. Engagement has taken place with all levels of the workforce from the cohort of senior managers (Leading Together) to front-line staff working hard to ensure our community needs are met and internal processes are understood.
19. We have significantly strengthened internal communications and engagement and used different communication platforms to inspire our workforce in ways that appeal to them - in addition to the traditional email and intranet. We have introduced What Key Three Messages – sharing three messages every six weeks to give time to be cascaded through team meetings and reinforcing the messages across all internal channels. A new staff suggestion hub has also been launched and been a valuable tool of engagement on a 'you said, we did basis'.
20. *Recommendations 8 to 10* are finance focused. Reports and staff communications have ensured that the scale of the financial challenge is succinct and accurate with a clear plan of how and what savings are proposed. Communication is promoted in a

positive manner, includes updates following effective control measures and the reasons for any proposals which are a key part of the narrative to both the workforce and residents. Proposals and cost saving ideas have been invited and welcomed from the workforce, residents, trade unions and partners. A temporary head of transformation has been advertised, this post will direct and lead on the council's transformation change programme reporting to the Director of Finance. Regular reports will be submitted to the Corporate Improvement Board, Corporate Management Team and Executive Members.

21. *Recommendation 11* focuses on member development. The Members Induction Programme and the Members Training programme has been under regular review since the elections in 2023, with verbal updates presented to the Joint Standards Committee (JSC), and meetings between Democratic Services and Internal Audit officers. As a result, the training programme is being updated, and will include training in respect of scrutiny (following the conclusion of the review of Scrutiny Review by the LGA's Centre for Governance and Scrutiny), with bespoke training being provided to members as and when required. A small project group has been established within the Democratic Services team, to review the training and development opportunities currently on offer to elected members. The group will explore different options for delivering training and will commence planning for both an induction programme and a schedule of ongoing training. The Constitutional review is underway, and a report was presented to Council in November to revise the Council Procedure Rules, and a streamlined process for constitutional review is being implemented to ensure swifter progress is made in revising key elements of the constitution.
22. *Recommendation 12 to 14* covers developing a clear strategy and building relationships with city partners to harness capacity to help the city improve and achieve its ambitions. This includes growing developing and working with the Combined Authority.
23. Partner workshops have been held seeking feedback on the LGA peer challenge recommendations. Considering how the council and partners can work better together. This has resulted in a partnership approach and a new Place making partnership board. One of the first remits is to formulate the city wide response to

refreshing the local plan following the introduction of the revised National Planning Policy Framework.

24. Corporate Management Team Members will now join the City Partners meetings with Executive Members. This will ensure we are positioned and proactively able to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible, whether this is leading, influencing, co-designing or being a champion for key stakeholders, local business, community groups and our residents.
25. The Combined Authority was established in February 2024, in fact it was only two weeks old when the peer team was on site. There has already been significant ground work and relationships built with the new Mayor and Deputy Mayor to ensure that York's interests are best represented to the Mayor, unlocking ambition set out in the Council Plan.
26. In July 2024, the Leader approved a “pipeline of proposals” – developed by the Council's policy network, as an example of ‘One Council’. The pipeline was informed by every scrutiny committee for genuine cross-party, one-council approach – with the pipeline showing the council plan actions it responds to.
27. The Mayor has funded c£18m of York proposals – aligned to the council plan, and 10 year strategies, including net zero funding, including feasibility study for an energy park, Brownfield sites to accelerate affordable housing, EV charging, Co City centre spatial plan and regeneration, movement and place plan and cultural passports for young people.
28. *Recommendation 15* is the implementation of an Action Plan to address the recommendations which is presented at Annex 2, this will continue to evolve. The pace of delivery of the actions since publication of the Plan in May is testament to York as both a place, with a resilient and ‘*fantastic*’ workforce, the Council's strong new senior team, the hard work of our partners and community groups and the ongoing commitment to maintain an ambitious but carefully planned agenda for York to be a good place to live and work and meet the objectives outlined in the Council Plan.
29. Our commitment to transparency and openness and to take action continues. and it is pleasing to report that actions identified within the action plan are either completed or significantly underway and

there is already a plan to continue with the themes of the improvement plan for future projects. It is also pleasing to report that partners and our workforce are supportive of our commitment and continue to want to grow and develop York.

## Consultation Analysis

30. The Corporate Improvement Framework was developed in consultation with the Corporate Leadership Group and the Executive. It was also shared with partners, residents and officers. The outcome of the consultation on the framework helped shape the action plan presented.
31. The action plan has been reviewed and monitored on an ongoing basis by the Chief Operating Officer as part of a standard agenda item on the Corporate Improvement Board; a new governance group established as part of the recommendations of the peers relating to strengthening governance.

## Organisational Impact and Implications

32. **Financial:** costs associated with the implementation of any aspects of the Corporate Improvement Action Plan will be considered on an ongoing basis and be mindful of the current financial challenges.
33. **Human Resources (HR):** Many aspects of the Corporate Improvement Action Plan links with the Workforce Strategy and the HR Service plan. These documents are key to developing and ensuring that the Council has a workforce fit to deliver all its priorities.
34. **Legal:** The Director of Governance and legal team will provide any legal challenges associated with the individual actions associated with the action plan
35. **Procurement:** The head of procurement and team will provide any procurement support associated with any action in the plan.
36. **Health and Wellbeing:** The Director of Public Health and team will be contacted where there are any actions that require public health intervention and consideration.
37. **Environment and Climate action:** There are no known environment and climate implications.

38. **Affordability:** The Director of Finance will be contacted where there are any actions that required intervention and consideration.
39. **Equalities and Human Rights:** any aspects of the action plan that requires equality impact assessments will be considered on an individual basis as part of the project planning process.
40. **Data Protection and Privacy,** any aspects of the action plan that require a DPIA will be considered on an individual basis as part of the project planning process.
41. **Communications:** The Head of Communications and their team will be contacted where there are any actions that require communications to the workforce.
42. **Economy:** There are no known economy risks.

## Risks and Mitigations

43. There are no known risk implications associated with the recommendations in this report, work will continue to develop good partner and stakeholder relations and ensure that the workforce remain supported to be able to deliver the required services to our residents. It is important that all services are delivered in an effective and efficient manner and our officers have the ability to grow, be creative, take responsibility, be accountable and be proud to work for the Council.

## Wards Impacted

44. All Wards are impacted.

## Contact details

45. For further information please contact the authors of this report.

## Author

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<b>Date:</b>	



## **Annexes**

Annex 1 - Corporate Improvement Framework

Annex 2 – Corporate Improvement Plan

## **Background papers**

Executive approves Corporate Improvement Framework Agenda for Executive on Thursday, 9 May 2024, 5.30 pm (york.gov.uk) item 129 Corporate Improvement

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s176279/Local%20Government%20Association%20Peer%20Challenge.pdf>

LGA City of York Corporate Peer Challenge Report 2024

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s176280/Annex%20A%20>  
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Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee Agenda for Corporate Services, Climate Change and Scrutiny Management Committee on Monday, 8 July 2024, 5.30 pm (york.gov.uk) item 9

[https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s177327/CSCM%20Scrutiny%20%20CIP\\_v01.pdf](https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s177327/CSCM%20Scrutiny%20%20CIP_v01.pdf)

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s177328/Annex%20A%20Corporate%20Improvement%20Action%20Plan%20DRAFT.pdf>

Executive Decision-Making Session – 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024 approval of Corporate Improvement Framework

<https://democracy.york.gov.uk/documents/s177424/Corporate%20Improvement%20Action%20Plan%20Report.pdf>