

City of York Council

Annex A Corporate Improvement Action Plan

Council Plan action: How the council operates (actions: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8)

Background

This action plan lists the detailed actions that responds to the [Corporate Improvement Framework](#), feedback from staff surveys, together with engagement with officers.

Actions are council-wide and will be developed and delivered in close collaboration with the Corporate Management Team and all directorates. The four themes in the Corporate Improvement Framework provide structure for this action plan.

The action plan has been developed in consultation with partners, residents, officers and [Scrutiny](#) – through both a series of workshops and a consultation which took place throughout May and June. It will continue to be added to throughout the next three years as the council listens and responds to residents, officers and partners.

Objectives

1. **Strengthen strategic leadership:** By September 2024, we will have embedded clear expectations for our senior managers to work as one council delivering a shared vision throughout the organisation;
2. **One City, one council:** By September 2024, we will have co-designed both an internal and external approach to what it means to work together in partnership, uniting the council, officers, members and partners together, as one team;
3. **Harness the commitment to the city to deliver ambitions:** Develop and implement a communication strategy, establishing different activities to strengthen partnerships and engage the workforce, with a plan prepared by September 2024;
4. **Build a strong foundation:** By December 2024, we will have embedded council plan priorities and the performance framework throughout the organisation, reviewing how we support personal development plans and service plans, with a refreshed internal governance structure

Governance

The Corporate Improvement Framework sets the structure for this action plan. The Framework was approved at Executive in May 2024. [Agenda for Executive on Thursday, 9 May 2024, 5.30 pm \(york.gov.uk\)](#) item 129

This action plan will be monitored at the newly established quarterly Corporate Improvement Board, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer. The Corporate Improvement Board reports issues by exception to the Corporate Management Team.

The Corporate Improvement Board monitors and steers the council’s continuous corporate improvement journey, with reports covering this Corporate Improvement Action Plan, the Working as One City programme, budget savings plans and progress against the Council Plan.

The Corporate Improvement Action Plan has been developed in response to the Council Plan priority “how we operate” and the significant financial pressures the council is experiencing. It was informed by the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge which took place in February 2024 together with staff surveys and feedback from partners. As part of that process, LGA will assess progress against this action plan in December 2024. Actions have been described in such a way that allows for progress to be clearly recorded and evidenced.

Progress against this action plan will report publicly to Executive in November 2024 and May 2025.

This Action plan will continually be refreshed as part of our journey of continuous improvement, dates and interdependencies may change as a result.

Action Plan key

Key	Complete	Underway	At risk	Not started
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Action Plan

Objective 1 Strengthen strategic leadership: By September 2024, we will have embedded clear expectations for our senior managers to work as one council delivering a shared vision throughout the organisation;

Action	Detail	Accountable officer	Deadline
1. Refresh the Corporate management team	1. Create a working environment for senior leaders to work together with ease and enable officers and the workforce to have access to senior teams.	Chief Officer HR	March 2024
	2. Build on the senior management restructure to reflect the new structure and support officers understand their directorate and how they contribute to the organisation's vision.	COO	July 2024
	3. Ensure opportunity for senior management policy and strategy discussions continue to reinforce the organisation's vision and ambition.	AD PS	June 2024
2. Co-design a Leadership framework	1. Co-design with senior managers of the council expected leadership behaviours, values and actions. Leadership to be embedded across all levels of the organisation including building relationships with communities.	Chief Officer HR	Sept 2024
	2. Establish senior manager buddying system and shadowing opportunities for support and challenge to help build confidence, capabilities and share good practice.	Chief Officer HR	Oct 2024
3. Redesign the roles, relationships and responsibilities	1. Following approval of the new Corporate Management Team, develop the framework for the review of roles which directly report into the Corporate Management Team, including job naming conventions (known as the CLG review 2).	Chief Officer HR	Completed May 2025

	2. Develop a Managing Customer Relations Policy to help ensure both residents and officers understand their own roles and responsibilities	Director of Housing and Communities	Nov 2024
	3. Start the journey to become a trauma-informed council, training to ensure all officers understand their own role in supporting residents and each other during different transactions, including sharing videos and interactive learning for key roles.	Chief Officer HR	April 2025 and ongoing
	4. Introduce an annual process with senior managers to share and support each other's Service Plan development with opportunity to contribute to each other's delivery of ambitions.	COO Director of Finance AD PS	Nov 2024
4. Mid-term financial strategy	1. Design a budget setting process that provides opportunities for co-design and consultation with residents, partners and the workforce.	Director of Finance AD PS	April 2024
	2. Share the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) with residents, members, partners and officers, being clear on the savings target for the next three years.	Director of Finance HOC AD PS	Nov 2024
	3. Provide great opportunity for senior managers to understand and engage in setting their annual budgets, through the budget setting process and ongoing.	Director of Finance	June 2024 ongoing
	4. Design short financial literacy courses for Senior Managers to learn how to manage the financial management system, setting out the key dates for each year.	Director of Finance	Oct 2024 and ongoing

Objective 2 One City, one council: By September 2024, we will have co-designed both an internal and external approach to what it means to work together in partnership uniting the council, officers, members and partners together, as one team

Action	Detail	Accountable officer	Deadline
1. Co-design a culture Improvement Plan	1. Celebrate success with operational and delivery teams highlighted for personal thanks from the Leader and Chief Operating Officer (COO) following achievements.	COO	ongoing
	2. Refresh internal governance arrangements, bringing greater visibility to how decisions are made and providing greater oversight to how the council operates internally.	COO	June 2024
	3. Following CLG review 2, co-design with senior managers cohort ways of working, confirming what good looks like when considering the six themes presented to Audit and Governance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build stronger relationships by understanding expectations • Define the culture you want to see • Communicate the change • Lead by example • Embed training and support • Align systems and processes Monitoring Officer report: Agenda for Audit and Governance Committee on Wednesday, 19 July 2023, 5.30 pm (york.gov.uk) item 9	Chief Officer HR AD PS	March 2025
2. Co-design a partnerships plan	1. Following partner workshops and recent city leader's events, develop a partnership plan that takes a one council approach to developing partnerships for approval at an Executive Decision Session (following further discussion with partners)	AD PS	EDMS Sept 2024

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	2. Provide greater visibility of partnership working, with communications during or after events to show city partners coming together to discuss strategic issues, at both local and regional level.	HOC	Ongoing
	3. Co-design with partners the top 5 things to focus on to harness energy and commitment to the city, working with partners on plans to deliver change, including increasing public affairs activities	COO/AD PS	Sept 2024
3. Build capacity and capability to transform council services	1. Establish the Corporate Improvement Board chaired by the Chief Operating Officer to monitor and steer corporate transformation, including the Working as One City programme, budget savings and delivery of the council plan	AD PS	June 2024
	2. Explore the best way to develop change and project capabilities to lead transformation, working closely with directorates, taking a one council approach to deliver end benefits such as improved customer experience and a more efficient council	AD PS	August 2024 and ongoing
	3. Develop a series of Strategic Reviews that will take a council wide approach (for example, improve customer experience, embed safe and effective social care practice, and launch integrated neighbourhood teams) that together form the Working as One City Programme, providing Executive oversight in September 2024 as part of the MTFS budget setting process	AD PS	Executive Sept 2024 ongoing
	4. Identify action plans related to corporate improvement to bring to the Corporate Improvement Board for oversight and steer – including Equalities action plan, budget savings plans, etc.	AD PS	June 2024
4. Deliver an Induction programme for	1. Introduce the newly elected Mayor to key York leaders, including Executive, Corporate Management Team, city leaders and key officers, facilitating tours of key sites, eg. York Central	AD PS	May 2024

the newly elected Mayor to best represent York's interests	2. Present the Mayor with the York pipeline of proposals, for mayoral consideration, following cross-party scrutiny	ADPS	EMDS July 2024
	3. Centrally coordinate Combined Authority business cases that have regional impact for council plan action to maintain oversight of projects progressing with Mayoral support, working with York's policy network to prepare business cases ready for further discussion	ADPS	July 2024 Ongoing
	4. Work with the Combined Authority to establish working groups between officers in York, North Yorkshire and the Combined Authority to explore opportunities in key themes	ADPS	June 2024 ongoing

Objective 3 Harness the commitment to the city to deliver ambitions: Develop and implement a communication strategy, establishing different activities to strengthen partnerships and engage the workforce, with a plan prepared by September 2024;

Action	Detail	Accountable officer	Deadline
1. Develop and implement the Communications Strategy	1. Define a clear corporate narrative through the Working as One City Programme	AD PS	Oct 2024
	2. Develop a new Communications Strategy that aligns to the Council Plan and Working as One City programme, setting out a clear corporate narrative and refreshing channels.	HOC	Dec 2024
	3. Develop an internal engagement plan that shows how different internal meetings and communications are integrated, with key strategic issues discussed and providing opportunity for staff to get involved and meet the Corporate Management Team (CMT).	Chief Officer HR HOC	June 2024
	4. Launch senior management weekly blogs to introduce senior management to officers and share their ambition for the organisation, celebrating success and sharing resident's experiences.	HOC	Sept 2024
	5. Share the clear narrative throughout all internal communications with three key messages from CMT every month.	HOC	July 2024
	6. Refresh how we share information to better equip officers with the information they need and consider all workforce including those without access to council-provided ICT.	ADPS HOC	April 2025

2. Establish and facilitate the City leaders annual events programme	1. Establish a partner plan to provide greater opportunity to build relationships.	ADPS	July 2024
	2. Share with partners the annual partner event plan in advance, with invitations.	ADPS	Sept 2024
	3. Establish a City Developments Group that oversees and steers regeneration projects informed by partner task and finish / working groups and with opportunity for Scrutiny review.	Director of City Development	Dec 2024
	4. Through the City Developments Group, reignite the York Narrative to embed the city values in built infrastructure and design.	Director of City Development	Dec 2024
3. Explore and launch an e-ideas hub	1. Launch the staff ideas hub to encourage staff to take part in corporate consultations, including the budget consultation and workforce improvements.	HOC	June 2024
	2. Every month, share 'you said, we did' information based on staff ideas.	HOC	July 2024
4. Strengthen the role of Leading Together role	1. Develop an induction and training guide for Senior Managers, including scheme of delegation, financial management, performance and managing high performing teams (through the Personal Development Review process).	Chief Officer HR	Dec 2024
	2. Share the forward look and decisions made through internal governance arrangements every month with Senior Managers to keep them informed about how the council operates, and their role in delivering ambitions.	COO	Sept 2024

	3. Explore options for a management development programme for all Senior Managers to help embed expected ways of working and sharing learning.	Chief Officer HR	Dec 2024
	4. As part of the Working as One City programme, develop small task and finish group for Heads of Service to work together on cross-council issues, eg. how to make it easier for Head of Service to manage their service through greater oversight of HR and Finance data.	AD PS Head of BI	ongoing
	5. Reset the regular senior officer meetings to provide space to explore organisational strategic issues together, publishing the schedule well in advance	Chief Officer HR	June 2024 ongoing

Objective 4 Build a strong foundation: By December 2024, we will have embedded council plan priorities and the performance framework throughout the organisation, reviewing how we support personal development plans and service plans, with a refreshed internal governance structure

Action	Detail	Accountable officer	Deadline
1. Confirm the Council plan priorities	1. Publish a six-month snapshot of progress on the website and to city partners, with a report to Executive and internal comms	AD PS	ongoing
	2. Confirm priority council plan actions with Executive, recommending different delivery models when the council is not funded to support	COO/CMT	Jan 2025
	3. Work closely with CMT, senior managers and Executive, develop a roadmap of council plan action, showing which service is accountable for delivering which action (informed by Service Plans)	AD PS	Jan 2025
2. Review Personal development and performance management	1. Establish a Core Service Performance Board, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer, to provide oversight and monitor performance, scrutinising poor performing services and exploring how to support improvements	COO	July 2024
	2. Scrutinise Service Plans bi-annually in the Core Service Performance Board, taking a 'one council' approach to consider how ambitions are effectively and efficiently delivered and customer experience improved.	COO	Oct 2024
	3. Identify the 4-5 key performance indicators for each Senior Manager to be responsible for delivering through their teams	CMT	Dec 2024
	4. Initial review of the Personal Development Review process, reinforcing the link of service plans and performance management to ensure <u>all</u>	Chief Officer HR	Jan 2025

	<p>officers are aware of how they contribute to ambition, setting SMART objectives based on Service Plans and EACH (Equalities, Affordability, Climate and Health) and holding regular performance discussions with staff, which may be followed up in a further review for the 2025/26 reporting year. Reinforcing the importance of regular 121 discussions for all staff to ensure the understanding of expectation, performance and opportunity to celebrate.</p>		
3. Review Internal governance structures	1. Establish how internal governance arrangements create clear lines of accountability for CMT, introducing new arrangements for any gaps in corporate oversight and leadership.	AD PS	April 2024
	2. Establish a Corporate Governance Board, chaired by the Director of Governance and Director of Finance, to review decision reports and governance arrangements, escalating issues to Corporate Management Team and prior to publication.	COO	June 2024
	3. Establish new internal governance arrangements to provide structures to support strategic and priorities and organisational management discussions.	COO	June 2024
	4. Launch new internal governance arrangements making it easier for Senior Managers to know who to engage with and when, publishing terms of reference and forward plans for each meeting	COO	June 2024
4. Review Scrutiny oversight and member induction programme	1. Continue the development of the ongoing member induction programme informed by member feedback.	Head of Democratic Services	Ongoing
	2. Update the Member's Portal to signpost access to information and member support.	Head of Democratic Services	December 2025

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	3. Work with Chairs of Scrutiny to agree a process for reviewing scrutiny practices and identifying annual workplans	Head of Democratic Services	October 2024
	4. Review scrutiny officer's role considering how they can support a continuous review of Scrutiny	Head of Democratic Services	April 2025
	5. Continue to work with a cross-party representative group to review the Constitution.	Director of Governance	Ongoing
	6. Review the role and responsibilities of independent members and how they can best support constructive scrutiny	Director of Governance	December 2024