

# Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

## January 2023



In May 2022 the Council undertook a Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge. Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected Member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

1. **Local priorities and outcomes:** Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities and achieving improved outcomes for all of its communities?
2. **Organisational and place leadership:** Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
3. **Governance and culture:** Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of respect, challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management:** Does the council have a good understanding of its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a clear plan to address its financial challenges?
5. **Capacity for improvement:** Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

The Peers highlighted 6 key recommendations and this Action Plan outlines the Councils response to implement the change required.

Recommendation 1 - Pause and reflect on the Council's strategies to address organisational overload and fatigue, and address capacity issues.

Recommendation 2 - *Condense the key priorities for the Council for the next three years and set annual delivery targets.*

Recommendation 3 - *Simplify and communicate key messages in a more tailored manner, particularly internally.*

Recommendation 4 - *Continue to plan for the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on local communities and the delivery of council services.*

Recommendation 5 - *Reassess the Council's corporate risk appetite.*

Recommendation 6 - *Celebrate the Council's achievements and consider sharing learning and good practice with the wider local government sector.*

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Pause and reflect on the Council's strategies to address organisational overload and fatigue, and address capacity issues.</b>
<b>What the Peers Said:</b>	This will mean taking the time out to think through in detail its existing plans and priorities and work out clearly how they are to be delivered. It will also mean addressing some of the organisational capacity issues such as recruitment and retention in some of the core service areas as well as embedding new ways of working across the organisation.
<b>What we plan to do:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We will deliver the Your Way of Working Programme ensuring staff and services have the right flexibility for well-being and productivity.</li> </ol>

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b><i>Condense the key priorities for the Council for the next three years and set annual delivery targets.</i></b>
<b>What the Peers Said:</b>	This will help to better communicate the priorities to all parts of the organisation and clarify how and by whom the priorities will be delivered. It will also help to engage communities in the planned programme of work, address organisational capacity issues in a targeted way, and allow investments to be made in the right areas.
<b>What we plan to do:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. We have agreed a Doncaster Delivering Together Investment plan (22-23) and will set out our investment priorities for the year ahead in a refreshed plan in April 23 for 2023-24 so it is aligned to the budgetary and policy delivery cycles.</li> <li>3. We will refresh our Service Planning process for 2023-24 alongside a slimmed down Corporate Plan for the organisation with a focus on supporting Doncaster residents to tackle the Cost of Living Crisis tackling the cost of living crisis and supporting the economic growth and investment</li> <li>4. We will bring forward our Regenerative Council programme which will deliver internal improvements, efficiencies and savings.</li> <li>5. We will reflect on the shape of the organisation and ensure that it is fit for purpose to deliver the challenging ambitions</li> </ol>

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b><i>Simplify and communicate key messages in a more tailored manner, particularly internally.</i></b>
<b>What the Peers Said:</b>	This will provide clearer direction to key stakeholders on their roles and responsibilities in delivery, and at the same time strengthen the relationship between strategy and benefits to local communities by promoting a consistent yet simplified message which clearly spells out the benefits of actions being taken for people across the Borough.
<b>What we plan to do:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. We will deliver a staff engagement programme in autumn 2022 to communicate and share the Action plan but also use this engagement to set out a new set of values for the organisation that are owned and recognised by staff</li> </ol>

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b><i>Continue to plan for the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on local communities and the delivery of council services.</i></b>
<b>What the Peers Said:</b>	The cost-of-living crises will impact on the Council's resources and financial capacity as income through Council Tax collections and other collections could decrease, whilst at the same time demand for services and Council support to residents may increase as people start feeling the impact of the rising cost-of-living on their household budgets and lives.
<b>What we plan to do:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. We have set up a Well-being Essentials group made up of key partners to co-ordinate activity across key elements including Debt and finance, housing, food, digital inclusion, employment and skills.</li> <li>8. We have bolstered the Household Support Fund with an extra £4million to continue to deliver support to those people that need it most.</li> <li>9. We will set up a Fairness and Well-being Commission looking at the key ways we can make the borough a fairer place in the future.</li> </ol>

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b><i>Reassess the Council's corporate risk appetite.</i></b>
<b>What the Peers Said:</b>	This will enable the Council to consider investing its own resources in some of its flagship projects; provide seed funding to get them off the ground; inject greater confidence and commitment among its delivery partners; and help attract further private and public sector investments because of the increased confidence in the schemes being supported.
<b>What we plan to do:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. We will review our risk appetite through active examples and taking a 'learning by doing' approach to support greater investment and the role the Council can have in achieving that investment including negotiations about the future of Doncaster Sheffield Airport.</li> </ol>

<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b><i>Celebrate the Council's achievements and consider sharing learning and good practice with the wider local government sector.</i></b>
<b>What the Peers Said:</b>	The peer team thinks the Council has come a long way and is now in a good place with its transformation and improvement agenda. It would therefore encourage the Council to promote its achievements across the local government sector so that others can learn and benefit from these achievements. There is much to celebrate, and the Council should take every opportunity to do so.

**What we plan to do:**

11. We will look to celebrate success more often and on a wider scale, sharing good practice both internally and across the local government community. We have shared some of our experiences in the August edition of the Municipal Journal, as well as via local media already. New Local? JRF? RSA? To promote what we do /have done