

Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan



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Introduction

Southwark is home to more than 300,000 people, 18,000 businesses, engaged and supportive communities, and a world class cultural scene. We are powered by our people, whose heritage and history make our borough dynamic and diverse.

Residents have told us they want to live in a borough that is green, safe and caring - a borough that provides a fair chance for everyone to get ahead through a relentless focus on tackling inequality and discrimination. Southwark people want to live in a decent home that supports their health and wellbeing, and have fulfilling and stable work that enables them to thrive and enrich their lives and that of their families.

Our constant aim is to provide the best services, partnership and interventions that we can to help our borough thrive. The cost of living crisis, the impact of inflation, critical funding shortfalls and the overwhelming pace of societal change continue to present significant challenges to our residents and our organisation.

We know that in order to best serve our residents, we need to be transparent, open to learning and willing to do things differently. It is against this backdrop that we invited a Local Government Association Team to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge in October 2023.

The Team spent three days on site, had access to a full suite of council documents and evidence, and met with over 100 members of staff, councillors, residents and partners.

The nature of a CPC means the focus of the challenge is based on the council's stated aims, progress in delivery and organisational capacity. The team have offered insightful feedback which will help us to redouble our effort on the continuous improvement that will ensure we are the best organisation that we can be.

This plan is focussed on the actions which will deliver the team's recommendations. The recommendations are firmly rooted in the council as an organisation, so the focus of the action plan is organisational effectiveness and enabling our staff to serve our residents and our borough.

The recommendations will serve as both an initial focus and ongoing guide for our work.

We would like to thank the LGA team for their time, commitment and honesty. Their recommendations will help us become a better organisation, and we look forward to sharing our progress with them later in the year.

Cllr Kieron Williams
Leader of the Council

Althea Loderick
Chief Executive

A guide to this plan

Work began on an action planning process as soon as the peer team delivered their recommendations. The outline recommendations from the CPC can be described under three broad action planning themes. We are using these as workstreams for action planning and reporting:

1. Strategic direction of the council

- Use Southwark 2030 to reinforce place priorities (the what) and focus the change programme (the how)
- Maintain prudent financial management with a clear and well-owned Council Delivery Plan
- Play a bigger role in London and national sector leadership

2. Service specific recommendations

- Enhance the Anchors network and introduce key account management for top 50 council partners
- Prioritise housing repairs improvement plan and stabilise HRA via strategic oversight of the capital programme and revenue budget
- Improve resident access for requests, complaints, FOI, SARs to enable effective performance monitoring and feedback.
- Agree a digital strategy that utilises technology, AI and innovation to drive change, with sharper use of data insight to improve performance

3. Future Southwark capacity and corporate infrastructure

- Introduce a clear, resourced change programme with ambition, values, behaviours, linked to appraisal and internal success measures e.g. EDI
- Create a well owned new corporate centre that can make it easier to work in the council and drive transformation, prioritising internal communication
- Streamline informal governance structures, improve ward member support function, standardise member-officer briefing and Cabinet/CMT engagement
- Clarify success measures for People Power, Closing the Gap and Neighbourhoods

Delivering the plan

The timeframe for the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) action planning is:

Short Term (quick wins)	November – December 2023
Medium Term (full mobilisation)	January – March 2024
Long Term (into core delivery)	April 2024 onwards

Many of the CPC recommendations relate to work already underway. The council is taking a streamlined and pragmatic approach to delivering and monitoring the CPC action plan, utilising existing teams and governance wherever possible.

There are three areas in the recommendations which have extensive existing plans and reporting. Updates from these areas will be fed into the review process and reported to the LGA as part of their monitoring of the action plan.

These are:

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Council Delivery Plan
- Housing Repairs Improvement and HRA development

Where existing work programmes are in place, leads have been asked to review existing plans utilising the CPC feedback. They will outline the changes that they will make as a result of the CPC feedback and findings, and accelerate specific outcomes which relate to the recommendations.

The strategic lead for each recommendation area will ensure that there are detailed plans in place to deliver the work outlined.

Programme governance has been established in line with existing internal best practice. Reporting on the specific CPC action plan will be to the council's Corporate Management Team and the Leader's Board.

By the summer, the LGA will organise a progress review visit. This will create space for the council to explore progress and challenges with peers, and discuss next steps.

Workstream 1 – Strategic direction of the council

Recommendation	Key milestones and description	Strategic owner	Timescale
<p>Use Southwark 2030 to reinforce place priorities (the what) and focus the change programme (the how)</p>	<p>Milestone: Completion of the 2030 Strategy.</p> <p>The 2030 is in its last phase of development. Specific, partner wide commitments are being developed, and the full strategy will be ready to go to Cabinet and then Assembly in the spring.</p> <p>The Strategy will be used to develop a corporate change programme called Future Southwark which will support the organisation in delivering the change and improvements required to deliver the vision and goals of the 2030 strategy.</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive - Strategy and Communities</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>Maintain prudent financial management with clear and well-owned Council Delivery Plan</p>	<p>Milestone: Three year MTFS to Council Assembly in February</p> <p>The council is developing its first three year Medium Term Financial Strategy(MTFS) which will form the basis of the 2024/25 budget onwards. This is the result of a wholesale review of the budget planning process, and a Cabinet and CMT budget planning process throughout the autumn.</p> <p>Regular budget monitoring will continue via Cabinet.</p>	<p>Strategic Director of Finance</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
	<p>The Council Delivery Plan is currently being refreshed to reflect a three year delivery approach. This will deepen the clarity of expectations in delivery, outcomes and ownership. Monitoring will continue via the Leader’s Board and reports to Cabinet.</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive- Strategy and Communities</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Play a bigger role in London and national sector leadership</p>	<p>Milestone: Agreement of a public affairs and sector engagement strategy</p> <p>The council will develop a public affairs and sector engagement strategy for agreement with cabinet members and the corporate management team.</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive- Strategy and Communities</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>

Workstream 2 – Service specific recommendations /1

Recommendation	Key milestones and description	Strategic owner	Timescale
<p>Enhance the Anchors network and introduce key account management for top 50 council partners</p>	<p>Milestones: Creation of partnership capacity and partnership action plan</p> <p>In line with the development of the 2030 strategy and the Anchor Network, the Strategy and Communities department is undergoing a significant restructure. Part of this restructure will establish capacity to support the Anchor Network. Once this is complete, a stakeholder and partnership engagement action plan and account management process will be created.</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive Strategy and Communities</p>	<p>Long Term</p>
<p>Prioritise housing repairs improvement plan and stabilise HRA via strategic oversight of the capital programme and revenue budget</p>	<p>The housing repairs improvement plan and HRA review are existing long term priorities for the council.</p> <p>Extensive delivery plans are in place with internal council and external tenant governance and reporting systems. There is close monitoring of progress. Housing will continue to be the council's number one priority. CPC reporting to the LGA will include updates on these issues.</p>	<p>Strategic Director of Housing</p> <p>Strategic Director of Finance</p>	<p>Ongoing, long term commitment with timescales in specific plans</p>
<p>Improve resident access for requests, complaints, FOI, SARs to enable effective performance monitoring and feedback.</p>	<p>Milestones: Current state analysis and performance improvement plans and delivery</p> <p>The service will develop a current state analysis to deepen understanding of current issues and performance. This will then inform a staged performance improvement plan with clear targets and milestones for service improvement, which will be agreed and monitored by the Corporate Management Team and at the Leader's board.</p>	<p>Strategic Director of Finance</p>	<p>Short - Medium Term</p>

Workstream 2 – Service specific recommendations /2

Recommendation	Key milestones and description	Strategic owner	Timescale
<p>Agree a digital strategy that utilises technology, AI and innovation to drive change, with sharper use of data insight to improve performance</p>	<p>Milestones: Scoping and programme plan, strategy and delivery plan.</p> <p>Work has started on the Digital and Technology Strategy. This will be rescoped in light of the CPC feedback, and a revised scope, methodology and delivery plan will be agreed by the Corporate Management Team and relevant cabinet members.</p> <p>The strategy development will be completed by the end of the spring, and will include expert consultation support to ensure consultation is inclusive and includes people with all needs. Delivery of the strategy will begin in early summer, with regular reporting to CMT and the Leader’s Board.</p>	<p>Strategic Director of Finance</p>	<p>Short term - Long Term</p>

Workstream 3 – Future Southwark capacity and corporate infrastructure /1

Recommendation	Key milestones and description	Strategic owner	Timescale
<p>Introduce a clear, resourced change programme with ambition, values, behaviours, linked to appraisal and internal success measures e.g. EDI</p>	<p>Milestones: Creation of the Future Southwark Programme and People Plan</p> <p>An internal change programme called Future Southwark is being created. The programme is being scoped to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People plan, revised values and behaviours, associated HR policies and capacity ▪ Accommodation Strategy ▪ Corporate resources review ▪ Internal systems and process review ▪ Response to CPC <p>The Future Southwark programme will be launched at a staff conference at the end of January, with work starting on the programme in February.</p> <p>A key deliverable of the programme will be the People Plan, which will set out how we will develop, retain and attract people, and will be used for current and prospective staff. The plan will be developed via extensive staff engagement and will include new values and behaviours. Work will be complete on this in late spring.</p> <p>A phased Future Southwark delivery plan will be developed, with stage one launched in February 2024, stage 2 in April and subsequent stages planned and launched throughout the year.</p> <p>Appropriate governance processes and an outcomes framework will be established with the programme. Monthly programme reporting will be put in place.</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>Short term – Long term and ongoing</p>

Workstream 3 – Future Southwark capacity and corporate infrastructure /2

Recommendation	Key milestones and description	Strategic owner	Timescale
<p>Create a well owned new corporate centre that can make it easier to work in the council and drive transformation, prioritising internal communication</p>	<p>Milestones: Strategy and Communities restructure and creation of Organisational Development and Internal Communications Team</p> <p>Strategy and Communities Senior Management Structure, PPP structure, LOCO structure will be completed, and a recruitment campaign will be launched. This will ensure that the council has the capacity and skills to deliver the 2030 Strategy and related transformation.</p> <p>A new Organisational Development and Internal Communications Team will be created under the Director of People and Organisational Development. The team will also assume responsibility for the delivery of the Directors Forum and Leadership Network.</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive - Strategy</p> <p>Director of People and Organisational Development</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
	<p>Milestones: Strategy and Communities service offer, corporate performance framework and transformation framework</p> <p>Once the Strategy and Communities structure is in place and staffed, a clear service offer and impact measures will be developed in partnership with council departments. This will lead to new corporate performance and transformation frameworks, driven by the 2030 Strategy.</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive - Strategy and Communities</p>	<p>Medium – long Term</p>
	<p>Milestone: Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy</p> <p>A new Internal Communications and Engagement Strategy will be codesigned with staff across the organisation. This work will be carried out concurrently with the development of the People Plan and will underpin the organisation’s communications and staff involvement approaches. The strategy will be completed in the spring.</p>	<p>Director of People and Organisational Development</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>

Workstream 3 – Future Southwark capacity and corporate infrastructure /3

Recommendation	Key milestones and description	Strategic owner	Timescale
<p>Streamline informal governance structures, improve ward member support function, standardise member-officer briefing and Cabinet/CMT engagement</p>	<p>Milestones: Two stage informal governance review and findings implemented</p> <p>In the short term, a stage one 1 informal governance review will be conducted of high level informal governance, member-officer briefing at Cabinet and CMT levels. This will be focussed on streamlining processes and ensuring strategic informal governance is efficient and effective. Findings will be implemented in the medium term.</p> <p>Stage 2 will broaden out to governance which includes partners and residents. This will begin in the long term once the 2030 Strategy is agreed and the structure for Strategy and Communities, including resource to support the Anchor Network, is in place.</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p> <p>Assistant Chief Executive Strategy and Communities</p>	<p>Short - Long Term</p>
	<p>Milestone: Services to members review programme, to include developing a Members Support Service and a rapid improvement plan for Members Enquiries</p> <p>Throughout the report the CPC Team made reference to services and support to members. We will launch a Services to Members Programme to improve all aspects of support to members.</p> <p>In the short term, a rapid improvement plan for Members Enquiries will be developed and put into delivery. The plan will have targets and clearly defined outcomes. This will be monitored regularly with officer and member reporting mechanisms in place.</p> <p>The council currently does not have a members support service, which is inconsistent with other authorities across London. A new service will be co-designed with members in the medium term for delivery in the long term.</p> <p>All other aspects of council support and interaction with members will be included in the programme with the aim of ensuring that members are well supported to carry out their roles.</p>	<p>Strategic Director of Finance</p> <p>and</p> <p>Assistant Chief Executive - Governance and Assurance</p>	<p>Short - Medium Term</p>

Workstream 3 – Future Southwark capacity and corporate infrastructure /4

Recommendation	Key milestones and description	Strategic owner	Timescale
Clarify success measures for People Power, Closing the Gap and Neighbourhoods	<p>Milestone: Corporate Outcomes Framework developed for the 2030 Strategy</p> <p>The 2030 Strategy will define the vision and goals for the borough. The People Power, Closing the Gap and Neighbourhoods programmes will be rescoped in order to support the delivery of the 2030 Strategy goals</p> <p>A corporate outcomes framework will be developed to set out the outcomes we expect to see as a result of the delivery of these programmes. This will be agreed at Cabinet.</p>	Assistant Chief Executive - Strategy and Communities	Long term