

Corporate Peer Challenge: Draft Action Plan

No.	Recommendation	Action	Timescale
1	Continue strengthening your leadership role with partners across the region. Consider how the well respected and well-regarded reputation of the Leader and Chief Executive within and beyond the County could facilitate agreed policy positions on key issues impacting residents and businesses.	<p>Engage in the devolution and local government reorganisation programmes for Hampshire and the Solent</p> <p>Continue to strengthen key strategic partnerships such as the Test Valley Partnership.</p> <p>Build on our strong relationships with health as part of the Andover Integrated project as a catalyst for developing wider opportunities for public service reform.</p> <p>Actively engage with national networks such as New Local to share practice and learning and influence policy at a national level.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
2	Continue to build on the success of the Community Councillor approach through review and shared learning, whilst exploring longevity of funds available to community councillors.	<p>Deliver a bespoke programme of activity for councillors to support them in further developing the community councillor role through shared learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliver annual councillor market place - Deliver a renewed work programme for the Member and Community Development Group and Community Councillor Reference Group. - Deliver a series of communications workshops with councillors and staff to be able to better demonstrate the impact of the work and benefits achieved within communities. <p>Building upon initial place-based working undertake a programme of dedicated community planning workshops across our areas outside of Romsey and Andover. Working with local organisations such as parish councils to support communities in shaping their local priorities so that they can access the funds and resource to deliver key projects.</p> <p>Continue to strengthen and build upon the established community partnerships of Andover Vision and Romsey Future with community councillors to deliver local priorities and ensure their longer-term sustainability within the context of LGR.</p> <p>As a result of our ongoing engagement work, bring forward proposals for additional funding and resources to be in place for communities as part of our longstanding corporate plan commitment to deliver on local priorities as part of our place-based approach.</p>	<p>June 2025 July 2025</p> <p>June 2025 onwards</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>July-September 2025</p>
3	Communications is at the heart of all Council activity and success. Consider an LGA Led Communications review to build on this.	Undertake an LGA Communications Peer Review. Focus on how the council can build upon its communications strategy to embed a campaign-led approach to our corporate priorities.	Review expected June 2025
4	The changes to the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) and national housing targets will be a challenge for the Test Valley communities through the Local Plan process. The Council needs to	<p>Revise timescale for preparing Local Plan to take account of impacts and challenges from NPPF</p> <p>Undertake public consultation on a revised Regulation 18 Local Plan leading to future Regulation 19 consultation.</p>	<p>Approved at Cabinet Feb 26th</p> <p>September 2025</p> <p>September 2025</p>

	build on the success of its community engagement and bolster those robust and honest conversations at pace.	<p>Undertake joint project with the University of Southampton on developing the role of community-based researchers. Trained and employed to research local priorities, aspirations and preferences, with a particular emphasis on new housing developments</p> <p>Undertake two overview and scrutiny panels focusing on the supply of affordable housing and service-user experience of accessing affordable housing and the future role the council can play.</p> <p>Launch the updated Community Planning Toolkit which provides practical advice, guidance and resource to support communities in bringing forward proposals for development through neighbourhood plans.</p> <p>Explore opportunities through regular communication to inform people on the latest in regards the Local Plan by establishing a dedicated topic area on our gov delivery channel.</p>	<p>November 2025</p> <p>May 2025</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
5	The council is beginning its transformation journey and taking time to reflect; however, an articulation of what transformation means for the Council is paramount for clarity, whilst twin tracking some quick wins around digitalisation and IT.	<p>To articulate what transformation means the council will work with the Leadership Centre to deliver a bespoke six module transformation programme which 50 senior managers will take part in. The programme will initiate six practical areas of transformation based on the following themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The way we work with communities (place) - The way we work as an organisation - Digital change - Housing - Young People - Local Government Re-organisation / Public Service Reform <p>Each area of transformation will develop a clear mission and commission a series of projects to design, test and evaluate ideas whilst also developing the skills and capabilities of staff to deliver change.</p> <p>Establish a Transformation reserve as part of the 25/26 budget which will resource the delivery of projects.</p> <p>Lead by example and be clear about the channels we are expecting staff and councillors to use. Provide the right training to enable them to do so including guidelines on what goes where, how to find things. Consistent expectations/standards, including comms channels (use of teams vs emails etc).</p>	<p>March 2025- January 2026</p> <p>April 25</p>
6	Expediate your digitalisation strategy to improve service delivery.	<p>Digital is one of the six areas of transformation to be delivered as part of the change programme with the Leadership Centre.</p> <p>Digital Action Plan to be produced will set out specific priority areas for 2025/26.</p> <p>Strengthen digital capacity and skills to deliver programme of work at pace. Three new posts (x2 business analysts and a programme manager) to be recruited.</p> <p>Produce an updated IT (shared service) Strategy that sets out the technical and infrastructure requirements for both councils to meet their digital priorities.</p> <p>Invest in increasing digital literacy of staff and councillors and address underlying training needs. Undertake assessment of digital skills/training requirements leading to training programme upskilling around the use of M365.</p>	<p>October 25</p> <p>May 2025</p> <p>July 2025</p> <p>May 2025</p> <p>May 2025</p>
7	Continue to build on your current investment in the	Working with the Leadership Centre we will invest in the capacity of our top 50 managers to be equipped with the skills and behaviours to practically deliver change and transformation.	March – January 2026

	workforce to grow the leaders of tomorrow, today.	<p>Continue to embed the values & behaviours to shape the way we work within and outside of the organisation. Extend the roll out of the 360-degree appraisals to all senior managers which are based on the values and behaviours.</p> <p>Further develop the action learning sets as a way in which staff can develop their knowledge and skills of good leadership and management alongside exploring opportunities to develop beyond their specialisms.</p> <p>Undertake a review of training budgets and access to training opportunities with a view to standardising access to learning and development and training budgets across services.</p> <p>Explore and design a programme of development for the EDI network, supported by a dedicated budget. Promote and raise awareness of the group and its work by launching intranet pages, showcasing EDI related topics and information whilst advertising a wide range of activities/lunch and learn sessions.</p> <p>Build strategic relationship with Andover College (and neighbouring colleges) to support delivery of T-Levels offer / apprenticeships.</p> <p>Work with local schools to develop a “hear your voice” work experience programme which provides a holistic view and experience of the council, its services and promotes local democracy.</p> <p>Recruitment: Build on good practices and launch dedicated intranet pages which provide a toolkit for managers.</p>	<p>May 2025</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>January 2026</p> <p>July 2025- November 2025</p> <p>December 2025</p> <p>Launching July 2025</p> <p>June 2025</p>
8	Strengthen audit through the appointment of an independent member along with increased use of third-party internal audit services, such as the Southern Internal Audit partnership to develop skills, resilience and capability	<p>Recruit and appoint independent member to Audit Committee.</p> <p>Undertake a review of internal audit capacity and identify opportunities for development and to improve efficiency.</p>	<p>July 2025</p> <p>December 2025</p>
9	Strengthen the use of performance and data to better inform continuous service improvement, evaluation of impact, benefit and value for residents.	<p>Design an approach (based on survey and deliberative engagement techniques) to gain service-user feedback in a meaningful way to inform service improvement and transformation.</p> <p>Further embed the new performance management framework and explore the use of Power BI in helping to bring together performance dashboards to generate insight beyond the data. Pilot in 3 services.</p> <p>Continue to strengthen the relationship with University of Southampton and commission further areas of research and evaluation aligned with corporate priorities.</p>	<p>Approach designed by September 2025 roll out to follow</p> <p>Pilot launch July 2025 launch – testing through to October 2025</p> <p>Ongoing</p>