



Corporate Peer Challenge

JOINT ACTION PLAN

June 2022

Overview of Corporate Peer Challenge key recommendations and the links to existing work across the Alliance

Summary Recommendations	Links to existing activity
1. Partnership development of aspirational visions for each place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Partnerships review concluded at High Peak and already planned for SMDC ✓ Influencing Actions already identified within Corporate Plans ✓ Shared priorities around mental health, loneliness and fuel poverty in corporate plan ✓ Joint working already well establish across both county areas with Joint Committees established to support County Deals ✓ Stakeholder training completed for officers
2. Regular residents' and staff surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Customer satisfaction surveys ✓ Project-related resident and business surveys are used to feed into policy and strategy development ✓ Staff survey undertaken in last two years
3. Leadership Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Member development groups ✓ Leadership development programme with external expertise
4. Take forward the findings from the Scrutiny review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Centre for Governance and Scrutiny reviews completed at both councils and response to recommendations discussed at scrutiny
5. Climate change ambitions and delivery is owned through both organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Councillor and officer training completed on a number of climate related topics including carbon literacy ✓ Working group established to oversee delivery of ambitions with multi-disciplinary membership ✓ Implementation of Parts 1 and 2 of the climate action plans already underway
6. Effectively address the pay progression issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ongoing discussions with Trade Unions over new pay grades ✓ Staff are kept updated through updates in Team Talk
7. Determine a set of key priorities and develop a 'road map' to deliver them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 4-year Corporate Plans with Priority Actions ✓ Annual Service Plans which feed into personal objectives through PEPs ✓ MTFP resources the Corporate Plan ✓ Programme management is undertaken by the Transformation Board
8. Communication & Engagement Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Well established internal and external communications practices ✓ AMT discussion around content of planned communication strategy
9. Capacity planning and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mini service reviews completed
10. Financial pressures from emerging plans reflected in MTFP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Balanced budget over life of the MTFP ✓ Positive external audit opinion

Recommendation 1: Partnership development of aspirational visions for each place with a clearer focus on outcomes

Linked non-key recommendations: a) develop approaches and systems that provide for a more sophisticated and detailed understanding across and within the geographies in order to inform policy and service design b) extension of partnerships review to consider sub-regional and regional engagement

Context of recommendation	Actions already planned	Timeline	Lead
<p>“This would provide the opportunity to demonstrate further the uniqueness of each place and enable effort and resource from across partner organisations to coalesce around shared priorities”.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ‘High Peak Together’ brings together all community-based partners and meets on a quarterly basis. There will be a focus on mental health issues at the September meeting 2. ‘Staffs Moorlands Together’ is reviewing its operating model and will meet in September to agree shared priorities 3. Conduct a partnership review (including role of voluntary sector) to meet community-based aspirations at Staffs Moorlands 4. Carry out a desktop review of place-related data across the Alliance, talk to the County Observatories around lower tier profiles and conduct annual reviews of this information to inform policy and service design 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sept 2022 2. Sept 2022 3. Mar 2023 4. Mar 2023 	<p>Head of Communities and Climate Change</p>
	New Actions	Timeline	Lead
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a mapping exercise of sub regional and regional bodies for purposes of engagement around shared priorities 2. Carry out training for members on partnership working / influencing skills as relevant 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. March 2023 2. Dec 2022 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Head of Communities and Climate Change 2. Head of Democratic Services

Recommendation 2: Undertake regular residents' and staff surveys				
Context of recommendation	Actions already planned	Timeline	Lead	
<p>“We see benefit in undertaking engagement on more generic issues and would encourage the introduction of a residents’ survey on a regular basis as part of this”.</p> <p>“Whilst a staff survey has taken place relating to the impact of the pandemic on people’s well-being and working circumstances, undertaking a regular and comprehensive staff survey would offer significant benefit”.</p>	<p>A planned annual Staff Climate Survey was put on hold due to significant change programmes but is now ready to commence.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a survey based on the drivers of employee engagement – training opportunities, performance objectives, wellbeing, management, PEPs 2. The use of standard questions will enable the Councils to track trends over time using an annual survey 3. ALT approval 4. New survey approved and ready to launch 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. July 2022 2. Annually 3. August 2022 4. September 2022 	Head of OD & Transformation	
	<p>A planned biennial Place Survey which informs the corporate plan setting process will now be implemented.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree a tender specification for a programme of biennial place surveys 2. Procure consultation partner 3. Complete first survey ahead of purdah for the 2023 elections. This will be predominantly online but will also target hard to reach groups and will incorporate the national questions used by the LGA to facilitate benchmarking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sept 2022 2. Nov 2022 3. Feb 2023 	Head of Democratic Services	
	New Actions		Timeline	Lead
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a firm timetable of OD related activity around appraisals, business planning and staff surveys 		May 2022	Head of OD & Transformation

Recommendation 3: Top team development across political and managerial leadership in different formats

Context of recommendation	Actions already planned	Timeline	Lead
<p>“We see some ‘top team’ development activity, constructed in a range of different ways, being helpful to build on and explore key elements of what we have outlined here and elsewhere in this report. These different constructions might, for example, comprise each Cabinet/Executive, ALT, both the Cabinet and Executive together, and ALT with each Cabinet/Executive”.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A comprehensive Leadership Development Programme is almost complete and has been attended by the whole of ALT and AMT 2. Final training planned on report writing and the democratic process 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Underway 2. Complete by end of May 2022 	<p>Head of OD & Transformation</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote the LGA’s Leadership Academy course to both political top teams 2. Continue to share relevant LGA courses including the online and residential offer 3. Continue the use of top team away days to establish further training needs 4. Continue to publish an annual report to standards committee which provides details on councillor training undertaken 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. May 2022 2. Ongoing 3. Annual 4. Annual 	<p>Head of Democratic Services</p>
	New Actions	Timeline	Lead
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification of further training and development needs for ALT / AMT 2. Document the approach to identifying development needs of the senior political leadership team 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. June 2022 2. July 2022 onwards 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Head of OD & Transformation 2. Head of Democratic Services

Recommendation 4: Taking forward the findings from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny reports

Linked non-key recommendations: a) the timeliness of committee papers being made available to elected members – along with issues of reports not always being as easy to read as they might be b) Extending opportunities for elected member engagement in budget development and doing so earlier c) focusing scrutiny effort and attention more on what represent the corporate priorities for each council

Context of recommendation	Actions already planned	Timeline	Lead
<p>“Both councils undertook a review of their Overview and Scrutiny arrangements in the last year or so, with both pieces of work being delivered by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. This has highlighted the issues, with the reports being clear on what needs to be undertaken. The findings are at the outset of being responded to now. In both councils, there are examples of good engagement by scrutiny members and a meaningful difference being made”.</p>	<p>Staffs Moorlands: the report findings were presented to Council in Dec 2021 together with a suggested way forward for each recommendation and were fully accepted by the authority. Since then a newly created programming group has met several times and is making recommendations to annual council about the structure of scrutiny panels going forward.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make recommendations to full council for the panel structure to change from four to three panels with the creation of standing sub committees beneath each parent panel. 2. Commence a new scrutiny training programme and introduce annual workshops to develop the work programme based on a scored evaluation of priorities (including involvement in budget setting). <p>At High Peak a subcommittee of full council met and agreed the responses to the centre’s recommendations. Members wish to retain the current three committee structure. A report went to corporate select on the recommendations from the review in March 2022.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Establish a programming group 4. Commence a new scrutiny training programme and introduce annual workshops to develop the work programme based on a scored evaluation of priorities (including involvement in budget setting) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. May 2022 2. July 2022 3. June 2022 4. July 2022 	<p>Head of Democratic Services</p>

	New Actions	Timeline	Lead
	1. Deliver training on report writing and increase awareness of the decision-making process amongst officers	Sept 2022	Head of Democratic Services
Recommendation 5: Ensuring climate change ambitions and delivery is owned right through both organisations			
Context of recommendation	Actions already planned	Timeline	Lead
<p>“Investment is being made in the climate change agenda, particularly in the form of recruitment to a shared Climate Change Officer post and further recruitment planned to take place for a Biodiversity Officer. The imminent arrival of this additional and expert capacity is being viewed positively across the councils. However, there is a sense of people waiting for the injection of this capacity when the reality of what is required is ownership right through both organisations of the climate change ambitions and related delivery. To deliver on the commitments and expectations, climate change and sustainability need to be corporately owned and driven”.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refresh previously nominated Climate Change Champions within each service area 2. We have already achieved Bronze accreditation for Carbon Literacy. Training programme to be implemented in order to reach Silver accreditation with cascade training to service areas 3. Further member training on carbon literacy 4. Already integrated into service plans and perf framework. July reports to Communities Panel and HP Wkg Group 5. Monthly Climate Change and Bio-Diversity Group with reps from each service 6. Review of internal comms and engagement plan for Climate Change 7. 6-month and 12-month progress updates 8. Hold a Climate Change Summit (High Peak) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sept 2022 2. Sept 2022 for training. Dec 2022 for Silver accreditation 3. Aug 2022 4. July 5. Ongoing 6. July 2022 7. July 2022 8. End of 2022 	Head of Communities & Climate Change
	New Actions	Timeline	Lead

Recommendation 6: Effectively addressing the pay progression issue			
Context of recommendation	Actions already planned	Timeline	Lead
<p>“More and more people are reaching the top of their grade and therefore cannot progress further in terms of remuneration”.</p> <p>“There is also a consideration emanating from the pandemic, around changed ways of working for organisations, with current council employees having increased opportunities to work elsewhere without needing to give up the quality of life they have living in or around High Peak and Staffordshire Moorlands”.</p>	<p>The Alliance has been working with national Trade Unions for the last 18 months on a new pay grade structure, with portfolio holders present quarterly.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reach agreement with Trade Unions 2. Communicate outcomes to AMT 3. TU to consult membership 4. Present solution for approval to Exec / Cabinet 5. Implement new structure and communicate to all staff 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Early June 2022 2. June 2022 3. June 2022 4. July 2022 5. End of July 2022 	Head of OD & Transformation
	New Actions	Timeline	Lead
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a comprehensive Benefits Package for all staff including staff discounts scheme, salary sacrifice, rewards, to support staff retention and for use in recruitment campaigns 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. End of July 2022 	Head of OD & Transformation
Recommendation 7: Jointly determining a clear set of key priorities to make things more manageable – and developing a ‘road map’ to deliver them			
<p>Linked non-key recommendation: There is also the need for a clear change management policy and approach in order to ensure inclusivity, shared understanding and consistency</p>			
Context of recommendation	Actions already planned	Timeline	Lead
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue with political and managerial leadership annual away days to confirm priorities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Annually 2. Monthly 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ALT 2. Chief Executive

<p>“This reinforces the issue regarding prioritisation, with a need to ensure a sequencing of changes and improvements – breaking things down into ‘bite sized chunks’ so that expected progress can be seen and understood”.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Oversee implementation of priority projects through Transformation Board 3. IT & Digital / OD / Access strategies – develop a combined roadmap for delivery of a 3-year action plan, including any additional resources needed and present for scrutiny 4. Strengthen the advice provided to change managers (PMOs) through the project management methodology to ensure communication and stakeholder engagement are paramount. This approach will be monitored through the Transformation Board. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. June 2022 4. Sept 2022 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Head of OD & Transformation / Head of Customer Services
	New Actions	Timeline	Lead
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. During the development of the next Corporate Plan (2023-27) the Alliance will look at introducing a ‘top priority’ within each aim and setting start-date targets for its priority actions to ensure a more even spread of its ambitions 	<p>Summer 2023</p>	<p>Chief Executive / Executive / Cabinet</p>
<p>Recommendation 8: <i>Bringing forward the communications and engagement strategy (covering both internal and external)</i></p>			
Context of recommendation	Actions already planned	Timeline	Lead

<p>“A new communications and engagement strategy is emerging, which needs to cover both internal and external aspects. This presents an opportunity to enhance approaches to external communications, including developing a greater focus on the use of social media and extending community engagement and consultation activities beyond largely specific projects or initiatives”.</p> <p>“There is also the potential to develop more two-way engagement for staff, whether face to face or virtually, that would give them greater exposure to the Chief Executive and the wider ALT”.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information Digest report to be presented to scrutiny in order to engage with members on the planned content of a new Communications and Engagement Strategy 2. Executive and Cabinet approval of new Communications and Engagement Strategy 3. Implement Action Plan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aug 2022 2. Nov 2022 3. Dec 2022 	Head of OD & Transformation
	New Actions	Timeline	Lead
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Addition of engagement to the already planned Comms Strategy 2. Annual visit by Chief Executive to all team meetings 3. Annual Executive Director visits to relevant team meetings 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. June 2022 2. Sept 2022 3. By March each year 	Head of OD & Transformation
<p>Recommendation 9: <i>The councils reassuring themselves that the work that has taken place to map needs around capacity will address the issues – following this by translating them into a clear delivery plan</i></p> <p>Linked non-key recommendation: an increased focus on ‘soft skills’ development – relating to the changing roles of councils and what this then demands of the people working within them</p>			
Context of recommendation	Actions already planned	Timeline	Lead
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working on priority service reviews – emerging from management restructure and demands from covid on 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. End of June 2022 	Head of OD & Transformation

<p>“There is also a case for further modernisation of the organisations, including changing cultures and skills sets and developing a stronger corporate core”.</p> <p>“The councils will wish to reassure themselves that they are thinking sufficiently early about where additional expertise could usefully play a role; are mitigating against inadvertent ‘mission creep’ with some providers; and that there aren’t thresholds being reached where the councils might be better positioned if they established their own permanent capacity”.</p>	<p>service areas. Current proposals are beyond budget and are to be reviewed again</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Internal approval by ALT 3. Commence recruitment post approval which will increase capacity (new principal posts in Regeneration already approved) 4. Continue to utilise external expertise when needed to fill in skills gap on a short term basis e.g. Socitm and Camburg. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. July 2022 3. August onwards 4. Ongoing 	
	New Actions	Timeline	Lead
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a gap analysis of soft skills and identify any training needed through the annual PEP process 	Aug 2022 after PEPs completed	Head of OD & Transformation
<p>Recommendation 10: Reflecting the financial pressures from emerging plans into the MTFP</p> <p>Linked non-key recommendation: There is also something to reflect in the MTFPs regarding the councils’ respective risk appetites in relation to borrowing going forward – with a key set of discussions needing to be held across the political and managerial leadership around this first</p>			
Context of recommendation	Actions already planned	Timeline	Lead
<p>“It would be good to see the MTFPs reflecting best and worst-case scenarios in relation to government funding”.</p>	<p>We have already included interest rate scenarios in previous iterations of the MTFPs and will continue to do so</p>	Ongoing	Head of Finance

	New Actions	Timeline	Lead
<p>“We also urge the inclusion in them, and within the capital strategies where relevant, of the forward forecasting of the costs of emerging plans, including potential IT investment; what is required to fulfil climate change ambitions; what emerges from an assets conditions survey that has been commissioned; and the key areas requiring greater capacity across the organisations”.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Best and worst case funding scenarios will be included in both MTFPs going forward 2. We will include some cost consideration of emerging plans based on a set of assumptions around the variables in the next iteration of the MTFPs 3. Discussion at risk management group on appetite for borrowing risk 4. Member approval for the appetite through the MTFP 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feb 2023 final version – Nov 2022 for draft 2. Ditto 3. May RMG 4. Approval alongside the budget Feb 2023 	<p>Head of Finance</p>