



St. Helens
Council

Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

Recommendation I) considered first in this action plan as this action will deliver aspects of modernisation required to achieve various other actions:

I) Develop clear priorities for modernisation to realise the adaptive innovator model, followed by a roadmap for delivery with sufficient resources to ensure success

To be agreed by Cabinet summer 2019

A 'One Council' programme has been under development since the CPC to modernise the Council and to provide a road-map for its delivery. The One Council programme will be agreed by Cabinet but the proposed outline elements are:

- **One Resident** - a renewed focus on putting the resident as a customer at the heart of service delivery
- **One People** - a focus on organisational development including communications within the Council
- **One Practice** - ensuring Governance is modern and fit for purpose for the model of Council St Helens intends to be
- **One Budget** - the production of a post 2017/18 to 2019/20 budget for the Council based on delivery of priorities identified in the Corporate Plan
- **One Outcome** - work-stream on improving performance management and information informing decision making by officers and members
- **One Space** - this relates to ensuring the Council has the right estate and asset base for the delivery of services in the Borough and to support staff in the delivery of services
- **One Message** - work on improving communications
- **One Digital** - a work-stream for renewal of ICT and to ensure that the renewed focus on putting residents at the heart of service delivery

Other recommendations in order included in CPC

a) Arrange an urgent all member briefing on Children's Services, highlighting the challenges facing the Council and how it needs to respond, and ensure that improving Children's Services remains a clear corporate priority

February with additional actions over subsequent months

Actions Taken:

Outline presentation by CEX was done for each Political Group following the focussed visit in July

- Labour Group on October 15th 2018
- Opposition Groups on October 30th 2018

Corporate Parenting training was already scheduled for throughout February 2019 and these included a broader briefing on the position in Children's services. Additional sessions have been arranged for June for new members who have joined the Council since the local elections

In addition to increase the shared Corporate awareness of the position in children's services the following has been done:

- Cabinet on February 20th received a paper on the current context impacting on the service providing a single position statement for members, staff and partners
- All Senior Staff (AD level upwards) received Corporate Parenting training and a briefing on the Children's service position (done in February)
- Over 1,000 staff attended CEX all staff briefings which included specific content on children's services (also February)
- The Strategic Director Peoples Services has done a variety of sessions with People's service teams (ongoing from before CPC)
- Corporate services and Place services are represented on the Children's Improvement Board (since February)

Other recommendations in order included in CPC

<p>b) Enhance senior capacity at Assistant Chief Executive (ACE) level to support the change programme and improve co-ordination of political and managerial decision making</p>	<p>March</p>	<p>Options for fulfilling the immediate capacity need were considered in February. Creation of a new post and recruitment would likely be a 6 month exercise and hence it was decided this be considered after the local election. An interim appointment was taken forward for initially 4 months beginning April 1st</p>
<p>c) The Chief Executive should work with other senior officers to develop a more distributed leadership model which empowers Strategic Directors and senior managers (within a framework of clear accountability) and decreases the current over reliance on the Chief Executive</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>A broader set of actions on modernising accountability arrangements within the Council is to be included within the 'One Council' programme which will include accountability arrangements of senior officers and the linkages of that to corporate planning and member led policy setting and member led decision making</p>
<p>d) Provide a development programme for both members and officers to improve joint working, better understanding of their respective roles and reset the Council's culture to drive positive change and ensure it addresses the issue of poor member behaviour as referred to in the report</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>A development programme supported by the LGA was already being delivered to the majority Group at the time of the CPC which remains ongoing</p> <p>An external and independent culture review has been undertaken involving members of all political priorities and a set of recommendations have been made to be taken forward by the Council. Elements will be included within the One Council programme while other actions are already being implemented. For example the reintroduction of regular 'Policy Cabinet' meetings between Cabinet Members and Senior Officers is seen as critical</p> <p>A revised member/officer protocol was agreed at the Standards Committee on April 2 and is intended to be adopted at Full Council</p> <p>Senior Council officers have also had a training session on operating in a political environment</p>

Other recommendations in order included in CPC

<p>e) Overhaul performance and financial reporting arrangements to provide clearer information to support better informed decision making and performance monitoring</p>	<p>Initial work from March and inclusion in One Council programme</p>	<p>An LGA review of performance management arrangements has been undertaken and initial findings presented to officers and relevant Cabinet members. A new reporting approach is being implemented</p>
<p>f) Ensure constructive performance challenge and robust performance management across the organisation</p>		<p>The Corporate Performance Report has had the number of indicators reduced to assist providing clarity as an initial step in implementing findings. Full implementation of a new approach will form part of the 'One Council' programme</p> <p>Additionally, performance reporting in Children's Services has been considerably modified in recent months and an assurance approach has been agreed via the Children's Improvement Board</p>
<p>g) Ensure that the review of the Council's strategy for the refresh of the Council Plan engages with members, officers, partners and residents and leads to an expression of its vision and priorities for the Borough that is widely owned and clearly understood</p>	<p>Process agreed summer 2019 for Council Plan 2020 onwards</p>	<p>The Council does have an agreed Council Plan but it is recognised that this has not been engaged with previously. Under the proposed One Council Strategy a new Corporate Plan process has been developed with the intention this be approved at the Cabinet meeting on 17th July 2019. This seeks approval to create a new Council Plan reflecting the priorities, approve 3 themes within the Plan and present to Cabinet by end of 2019 to allow for a Council Plan to be in place for the start of the 2020/21 Council year</p>
<p>h) As part of the regeneration strategy, develop a programme to support adults in work to develop their skills to progress their careers and earnings, enabling them to take advantage of the full range of opportunities presented by jobs growth in St Helens</p>	<p>Autumn 2019</p>	<p>A dedicated adults into work plan will be developed and brought to cabinet in 2019</p>

Other recommendations in order included in CPC

<p>i) Develop a capital and investment funding strategy that takes account of the Council's priorities, including its regeneration and economic investment goals, and ensure this is linked to the Medium Term Financial Strategy</p>	<p>Development into summer 2019 for agreement autumn 2019</p>	<p>St Helens Council has significant economic growth, regeneration and capital investment requirements and opportunities. A number of pieces of work inform this and is being brought together to produce a single medium term capital investment plan for the Council which would need agreement by Cabinet most likely in the Autumn of 2019</p>
<p>j) Develop and invest in a more proactive external communications strategy - to promote good news, mitigate and manage bad news and reinforce the St Helens narrative - to be owned and delivered across all service areas</p>	<p>From March 2019</p>	<p>Cross-portfolio and cross-department sessions with the communications team were implemented from March 2019 to inform communication planning. New posts were recruited to at a similar time period to the CPC being undertaken</p> <p>Training on communication for officers across the Council and also for Members is to be undertaken</p> <p>Further investment into the service function would require agreement through budget setting processes for 2020/21 onwards</p>
<p>k) Develop and invest in a comprehensive approach to organisational development, including strengthening internal communications and engagement</p>	<p>To be included in One Council Programme</p>	<p>A dedicated strand of the 'One Council' programme will be focussed on delivering a more comprehensive approach to organisational development including internal communications and engagement</p>