



St. Helens
Council

Culture Review Action Plan

Recommendations responded to through introduction of a new Corporate Planning process

a)	Members and Officers need to work in partnership, to deliver strategic priorities and services for the people of St Helens	<p>A report is due at Cabinet on July 17 2019 to approve the development of a new Corporate Plan by the end of 2019 which will incorporate within a cascade of objectives from the Corporate Plan itself, to business planning for individual directorates, and then service and ultimately team or individual level objective setting</p> <p>The process of producing this new Corporate Plan will enable the meeting of a number of the recommendations set out within the Culture Review which will include the setting of high level objectives at the political level enabling delivery by the operational level of the Council</p> <p>In the short-term, report templates to Cabinet will more clearly show the relevance of reports to the delivery of the existing Corporate Plan</p>
b)	The current and any revised Corporate Plan needs to be the focus of reports to enable Members and officers alike to understand how decisions being taken reinforce the golden thread from strategic priorities to day to day decision making	
f)	Political priorities from the Leader’s Annual Council speech should be incorporated into the next version of the Corporate Plan or be added to the work programme for Officers to work on delivery	
t)	The Officer Management Team have identified a need to work more closely together to deliver the Council’s political priorities and it is recommended that the work of Directors demonstrates links back to the Corporate Plan and political priorities being delivered, wherever possible	
u)	The Directors need to ensure that operationally there is clear vision for each service and that corporate systems are developed to support the Corporate Plan, political priorities and operational delivery	

Recommendation on modernisation of the Council

s)	We support the Peer Review recommendations that the Council needs to modernise the way it operates for the benefit of St Helens. Senior Managers should prioritise at least two areas of the Council’s business where they would like the Adaptive Innovator model to be applied, together with a statement of the indicative desired end goal resulting from the change	<p>A detailed paper on modernisation of the Council - called ‘One Council’ - is due at Cabinet on July 17 2019</p> <p>This includes a focus on communications which will also be enhanced by regular informal policy cabinet meetings, which will also be attended by the Communications Manager, allowing forward planning and new ways of working to be properly developed</p>
z)	Communications needs to be improved in terms of reputational management and getting ahead of the news agenda rather than reacting to it. The Directors need to take ownership of this. Communication needs to be focused at different activities including the delivery of the Corporate Plan and political priorities, celebrating successes and being adept at managing news events. A programme of activities should be developed to recognise and celebrate successes which involves both Officers and Members of the Council	

Recommendations responded to through introduction of a new Ways of Working

c)	Policy Cabinets are a welcome development. They can and should be developed further to share things coming up in the long term programme and discuss the more complex issues especially those that might need several airings before any decisions can be reached	Policy Cabinet or an equivalent meeting between Cabinet Members and senior officers as a collective to determine the forward programme of joint work are common in Councils and were re-introduced in January 2019 in St Helens. These meetings allow for closer working between Cabinet and senior officers
d)	Quality time off site for joint Cabinet and Officer away days to discuss strategy and big topics such as budget formulation should also be considered	Since May this has also included a number of themed sessions, held off-site in some cases and some facilitated, on matters such as
g)	A joint session for Members and Officers should be held to define clearly the complementary but different roles of Members and Officers. It is for the ruling Group to determine policies and political priorities for the Officers to carry them out. (We found no evidence that Officers dispute this.) Once defined, the distinct roles should become the normal way of operating within the Council. An open discussion on why a number of Members feel that officers have lost respect for the political decision making process, should be part of this learning session	processes of decision making to ensure all are working to a common process. This will contribute to a Ways of Working Accord to support decision making processes and communication of decision making downstream including communication of decision making by Cabinet members to their political colleagues (noting that officers are not responsible for within Group political communication)
h)	Members and Officers should attend a further, separate, joint session to discuss their respective roles in the planning and development work of the Council and the legal position of the Council in this work	This ways of working includes greater forward planning of decision making processes to allow for better communication to occur which will result in better policy formulation and clearer decisions
l)	Members and Officers need to be mindful and actively work towards creating a sense of trust for each other	All necessary decisions are already transparently available with Council. Cabinet, Delegated Executive
m)	We recommend a joint development programme for Elected Members and Senior Officers, externally facilitated, to develop a new Ways of Working Accord	Decisions and Admin Decisions are published as appropriate. The Ways of Working Accord and implementation of the new Policy Cabinet approach will aid the communication of such decision making
p)	Cabinet need to work with Officers to develop enhanced ways of communicating between Cabinet and the rest of the ruling Group, consistent with good practice	Internal political Group communication is a matter for the political Group in question but greater clarity if wider ways of working will support within Group communication
e)	The process of governance needs to be as transparent as possible to ensure every Members in the ruling Group (and opposition Members) have access to decisions made	
o)	The ruling Group would benefit from developing more open ways of communicating by sharing more in Group and less communication by emails	
x)	Officers should feel confident in sharing information openly and not be concerned about possible repercussions of this. Members need to use the information appropriately	

Recommendations being responded to through operational changes

j)	We endorse the recommendation of the Peer Challenge Team (which has been carried out) to appoint an Assistant Chief Executive to the Senior Management Team	An Interim Appointment was made in April 2019 in response to the Peer Review with the longer-term requirement considered in the report - Modernising the Council - approved at Cabinet on July 17th, 2019
k)	New senior Managers, where they are new to operating in a politically led organisation, should receive training as part of their induction about how to be successful in this environment. This training should be from an external provider and should be extended to existing managers, as appropriate	A session for senior officers on operating in a political environment has already been delivered by an external facilitator
n)	Consideration should be given to creating a closer link between officers and Ward Members perhaps by allocating officers to work with a small group of Members on issues specific to their Ward	This was a suggestion of the Chief Executive and will be considered in due course and will likely be introduced in the Autumn of 2019
q)	The Council should provide induction and support for new Members of all Parties following an election	An induction is provided to all new members of Council but future induction programmes will need to reflect on any new processes or priorities that are in place. Examples include: Corporate Parenting Forum, Childrens and Adults Safeguarding, Ethical Framework and Code of Conduct Training, Scrutiny Function Overview etc.
v)	Regular reports on progress with savings within the 3-year budget strategy should be submitted to Cabinet to ensure openness and transparency with the savings programme	Regular financial reporting to Cabinet was already in place but a clearer and easier to read format has now been put in place and implemented
w)	The Council needs to address the performance management deficit and develop better ways to provide data to Members and officers to ensure that the risk registers and audit reports are effective for delivery of the required improvements	A review, supported by the LGA has been undertaken and a new approach to performance reporting will be introduced
y)	The Peer Challenge report identified that performance reports would also benefit from including a more holistic view of performance, including delivery against major projects and political priorities, the performance of contactors, and the extent to which risks are being managed	
r)	All Members should engage more with training programmes on a variety of topics to enhance their skills and understand better what normal is within a Council context	The Council has a Member Training Group who will be tasked with encouraging Councillors to attend more regular training programmes and in particular, external programmes, such as those provided by the LGA