

Forest of Dean District Council - Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan; 1-3 October 2024

Recommendations	Lead	Timescale*	Outputs/actions	Notes and Progress
Prioritise delivery	NKB	FY 25/26	<i>Forest of Dean District Council should prioritise actions within the council plan delivery plan 2024 – 2028 so that they can be appropriately resourced and delivered well to meet the ambitions of the council.</i>	The Delivery plan is being reviewed in March 25 for implementation in the financial year 25/26 in line with the recently approved budget.
Build on strong partner relationships	CELT	Ongoing	<i>Forest of Dean District Council has strong relationships with partners locally and building on these along with the leadership of the council becoming more visible will raise the profile of the council outside of the district providing further opportunities for partnership working.</i>	Renewed efforts have been made to meet with all key district partners with all members of Cabinet and the Senior Management Team encouraged to raise profile of the district within their stakeholder groups.
Communications and engagement plan	JB	Completed but with ongoing quarterly reviews.	<i>The council should develop a fit for purpose communications and engagement plan to improve internal communication. It should also improve external communication using consistent application of Asset Based Community Development principles, using residents' surveys and a citizen's panel for example.</i>	The internal comms team has now been formed and is fully staffed, a comms plan has been developed and will be updated on a regular basis with the portfolio holder.
Improve programme, project and business case management	AK	01/07/25	<i>The Council should improve programme, project and business case management to provide complete and thorough information to enable strengthened decision making.</i>	A new team is being formed as part of the phase 2 insourcing this will build on the existing organizational infrastructure that is available but also mean that we will have a locally dedicated resource.

Recommendations	Lead	Timescale*	Outputs/actions	Notes and Progress
Focus on finance	AK	Immediate	<i>Forest of Dean District Council finances are well managed but to ensure financial sustainability a greater focus on the impact of key decisions is needed along with a more detailed risk register and a plan to meet the future budgetary gap.</i>	Future Cabinet reports are being strengthened in this respect to accommodate the challenge of future financial stability.

Recommendations	Lead	Timescale*	Outputs/actions	Notes and Progress
<p>Develop a workforce plan</p>	<p>CJ</p>	<p>01/09/25 Already commenced but will conclude after Q2 of 24/25.</p>	<p><i>A workforce plan is required as the council moves from commissioning to direct delivery to strengthen governance so that the organisation is ready to support staff, develop staff for the future, manage risk and take decisions. Include creation of a strategy and action plan around equality and diversity and link to performance management data on staff.</i></p>	<p>All areas of new council workforce are under review to identify improvement to staff development and build resilience for the future. Identifying and acknowledging current skill sets and succession planning to support staff not only in the short and medium term but long term with LGR/Devo on the horizon.</p> <p>All teams from both Forest of District Council and Publica staff delivering services for the Council have been invited to workshops to support the development of a people strategy and action plan around equality and diversity, which will feed directly into the development of 1-2-1's and appraisals to inform performance management, as well as the development of management data reports to improve performance and governance.</p> <p>A review of resource to support the facilitation and implementation.</p>

Recommendations	Lead	Timescale*	Outputs/actions	Notes and Progress
<p>Establish a Strategic Board and ensure capacity through transition</p>	<p>NKB</p>	<p>Completed</p>	<p><i>The peer team recommend the council establish a strategic board to oversee the transition of staff and services to ensure corporate oversight and understanding – both for phase 1 and 2 of the programme of change. The transition of services needs capacity to make sure there is no interruption in delivery; take time to engage and involve staff. Learning the lessons from Phase 1 will be key.</i></p>	<p>The weekly meetings (Officer Transition Boards) have been strengthened to include a wider membership and there are now Forest of Dean District Council briefings scheduled ahead of them. Lessons learned exercises have been undertaken at Officer Transition Boards following phase 1 and implemented as part of Phase 2 to date. An exercise with transferred staff was also undertaken at the Scrutiny Panel.</p>
<p>Focus on people</p>	<p>CJ</p>	<p>Completed for phase 1 but otherwise ongoing</p>	<p><i>Deliver an effective Induction Plan for staff to welcome them to the 'Forest Family', listen and engage with them to ensure they feel valued.</i></p>	<p>Induction plan developed and successfully implemented for Phase 1, including staff briefings, interactive workshops and lunches including all transferred, newly employed Forest of Dean District Council staff, as well as Publica staff delivering services on behalf of the Council, to develop staff and organisation values and behaviours that support the Councils values as a start to development of the People Strategy as well as raise concerns or questions</p> <p>The continuing reconfiguration of the office space is supporting the recreation of the 'Forest Family' feel, bring teams together and more collaboration across teams</p>

Recommendations	Lead	Timescale*	Outputs/actions	Notes and Progress
Member Development Programme	JJ	Completed	<i>Develop a robust member development programme that incorporates an understanding of roles, responsibilities and acceptable behaviour.</i>	A comprehensive programme of member development is published weekly alongside the fortnightly diary. The meetings are held at a consistent time and location, they are hybrid meetings and are recorded for those unable to attend. The Member Development Group meet on a quarterly basis and review member development needs and schedule a forward plan for member training.