

LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE NOVEMBER 2024: COUNCIL RESPONSE/ACTION PLAN

No	CPC Recommendation	Activity	SLT Lead	Timeline
1.	<p>Strengthen planning to address the council's financial challenges, including proactive dialogue on the potential implications of issuing a Section 114 notice. Activity should involve engagement with political groups to assess borough-wide impacts and adopting an emergency budget approach to manage the in-year overspend. Key actions should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular financial reporting - Strict adherence to the budget framework - Challenging growth assumptions - Reducing non-essential expenditure - Making additional in-year decisions. <p>This integrated strategy will help mitigate the need for a Section 114 notice, reduce reliance on exceptional financial support, and demonstrate the council's commitment to addressing its financial situation responsibly.</p>	<p>The Financial Recovery Plan will be taken to P&R in March. This will set out a comprehensive approach to financial assurance and activities to ensure Council delivers within budget and improves financial resilience over the short to medium term.</p>	<p>Director of Finance s151 Officer</p>	<p>By 19 March 2025</p>
2.	<p>Progress from a shared awareness of the council's finances to shared ownership and actions through a clear financial improvement plan. This Plan, containing both immediate and medium-term actions should report regularly to the councils' Senior Leadership Team, Budget Working Group and Audit to co-ordinate activity and provide a single view on financial issues. This will be central to the Council's culture and will support a transparent framework for engagement on these issues.</p>	<p>See above. The financial recovery plan will set out arrangements to monitor in-year progress in respect of capital and revenue monitoring, savings delivery and longer-term business change implementation.</p>	<p>Director of Finance s151 Officer</p>	<p>By 19 March 2025</p> <p>Monthly monitoring from June 2025.</p>
3.	<p>Refine the new Council Plan and performance management framework to support prioritisation. These documents should be considered to ensure that they are aligned to the Council's</p>	<p>Complete mid-term review of the Council Plan.</p>	<p>Director of Law and Corporate Services</p>	<p>March – September 2025</p>

	Financial Improvement Plan (recommendation two) and support the prioritisation of Committee work programmes and officer capacity. Any such prioritisation must reflect the capacity of the organisation.			
4.	Ensure there is an appropriate political agreement to provide stability of decisions and direction: There will be a need for difficult decisions to be made to address the council's finances. In the context of no-overall control, there will need to be a "Wirral first" approach across groups in order to provide clarity to officers as well as assurance to residents and external stakeholders.	Through Member support, meeting arrangement and documents such as the Council's constitution, political agreement is promoted and encouraged. Since November political engagement has been facilitated through the Policy & Resources Committee Finance Working Group and Budget Oversight Panels for each of the Policy Committees. The unanimous approval of the 2025/26 budget on 3 March demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach. The Financial Recovery Plan details the arrangements for continued Member engagement and oversight of financial performance throughout 2025/26.	Director of Law and Corporate Services	Ongoing
5.	Bring together Committee Chairs with the Leadership of the council on a regular basis to support strategic decision making: Recognising the dispersed nature of decisions in the Committee System, a dedicated forum that supports joining up approaches on strategic issues will support the council's progress.	To be implemented as part of review of political leadership briefing arrangements.	Director of Law and Corporate Services	From May 2025
6.	Promote the importance of the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) within the council's wider Policy framework: The new Council Plan is clearly aligned to supporting strategies; however, the council needs to ensure that the MTFS has primacy in this wider context.	Review training arrangements in respect of financial management. Review and refine the Council's Strategy Framework.	Director of Finance	March – June 2025 By July 2025

			Director of Law and Corporate Services	Policy Council
7.	<p>Develop a Wirral narrative that brings together the Council's progress, current challenges, and ambition for the future.</p> <p>When describing the current context of the Council, it is challenging to balance the improvements to-date, the remaining challenges, and the organisation's future ambitions. Therefore, a clear structure and narrative will provide a clearer framework for future difficult decisions.</p>	<p>Develop a vision and refreshed operating model for the Council which aligns with the Financial Recovery Plan and refreshed Council Plan.</p>	Director of Law and Corporate Services	April – September 2025
8.	<p>Develop a shared corporate vision for regeneration at a borough wide level: Bring together your wider programmes and projects under a single banner and narrative to support engagement with partners, promote your ambitions, and communicate your progress, and discontinue those which are not achievable in the short-term.</p>	<p>The Regeneration Directorate commissioned Whistlejacket to progress place branding in October 2024; this work is due to conclude in June 2025 and will be reported to the ERH Committee at its June meeting.</p> <p>Alongside this, the final cohort of masterplans that support the local plan are due to go to ERH committee on 12th March 2025 with recommendations for adoption. We are anticipating feedback on our brownfield only local plan in March 2025.</p>	Director of Regeneration and Place/ Director of Neighbourhood Services	March – June 2025
9.	<p>Refine and develop the council's partnership forums to support public service reform at a borough level. There is opportunity for the council to get further benefits from strategic partnership working, including joint work with public, community & voluntary sectors, to enable more joined-up approaches to cross-cutting issues.</p>	<p>Review and refresh Wirral Strategic Partnership arrangements</p>	Director of Law and Corporate Services	Quarterly meetings from May 2025.

10	<p>Increase the political interface with the Cheshire and Merseyside ICB. The council should explore how they could maximise the strategic contributions of elected members to support health and social care at a Cheshire and Merseyside level.</p>	<p>The council has established strong support for the LCR Health and Inequalities Portfolio and in turn been able to influence regular attendance and focus on the NHS ICB. The Leader of Wirral Council Chairs this Board. The Deputy Leader is also nominated representative on the C&M Integrated Care Partnership Chaired by Cllr Louise Gittens. The Leader of the Council met the new Regional Director for NHSE in the NW with Mayor Rotherham. Better political interface was one of the asks. A new CEO, Cathy Elliott has been appointed, and this offers a new opportunity to meet with the ICB Chair Raj Jain and Cathy to establish a meaningful way of supporting Member interface.</p> <p>Wirral Council's influence has significantly increased through Executive officer representation on key boards and groups. Through the People Directors co-ordinated by the DASS regular reporting and briefing of Members has created a for more effective interface with the NHS ICB at Place level.</p>	Director of Adults Care and Health	On going
11	<p>Maximise the contribution through Youth Participation and Engagement. There is potential for further joint work and progress to be made through senior leadership sponsorship of this group, including senior political and managerial engagement.</p>	<p>Review and refresh the Young People's Action Group (YPAG).</p> <p>Deliver the We Are Wirral Youth Engagement programme, and We Are Wirral Corporate Parents programme.</p>	Director of Children, Family and Education	On going