

APPENDIX B

Recommendation	Additional detail from report	Actions
<p>Respond to the need partners see for a step-change in the council's attitude and approach to engagement on a wider regional level and for it to have a much stronger and more strategic focus on economic development</p>	<p><i>However, partners see the need for a step-change in the council's attitude and approach to engagement on a wider regional level. They also see a need for the council to have a stronger and much more strategic focus on economic development.</i></p>	<p>A new Economic Development Plan for the next four years (2025-2029) has been developed and approved at Cabinet. Progress against priorities will be monitored by the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>It has nine priorities, addressing the key issues facing the district and focuses on engagement with local businesses and organisations. However, the Plan also sets out how the council engages with regional bodies such as the North Essex Economic Board and the Digital Innovation Zone, ensuring the district has a voice at these wider forums.</p> <p>The council is a partner in the production of the North Essex Growth Plan which is being developed by councils to support a regional and joined up approach to growth in housing and jobs across north Essex. The Plan will also act as a prospectus for external investment into the sub-region. The Plan will be published in April 2025.</p> <p>The work of both these Plans is linked directly to the Corporate Priority 'Encouraging Economic Growth'. It was developed with direct engagement with Cabinet Members through a focused workshop. Both demonstrate the much stronger strategic focus on economic development recommended.</p> <p>The plan priorities also link directly with the Local Plan to ensure a joined-up approach to business and commercial needs.</p>

<p>Develop the Corporate Management Team so that it “leads the way more”, models the way more in relation to corporate and collaborative working, is more ‘fleet of foot’ and has information flowing more readily from it</p>	<p><i>The council’s Corporate Management Team is felt to need to “lead the way more” and model more in the way of corporate and collaborative working and staff are keen to see information flow more readily from it. The Senior Management Team have a strong desire to be more empowered and more informed and involved on strategic issues.</i></p>	<p>Since the Peer Challenge took place, Local Government Reorganisation has been announced which has fundamentally changed the communication and engagement requirements for the council.</p> <p>Local Government Reorganisation will dominate the council’s work for the coming years and as a result will completely redirect its focus.</p> <p>Any improvements in collaborative working and information flow must be viewed through the lens of reorganisation. Until the future shape of local government in Essex is clearer, it is difficult to progress some work in this area. That said, there are actions planned that will help address this and other recommendations in the Peer Challenge report.</p> <p>A group of officers from the Senior Management Team has volunteered to review current arrangements for meetings and make recommendations to refocus the purpose and objectives of this group, including how it can best play its part on strategic issues. This piece of work is expected to conclude in April 2025, with improvements put in place in the following weeks and months.</p> <p>It is expected that a broader range of Senior Managers will become heavily involved in Local Government Reorganisation as the programme progresses and services are designed for the future. As noted above, it is difficult to make progress on this until the future shape of local government in Essex is known.</p> <p>The Corporate Management Team continues to support open communication with the rest of the organisation, supporting staff on navigating Local Government Reorganisation and as more information becomes available this will become more focused support. The Corporate Management Team is committed to openness and transparency and supporting staff through this change process. For</p>
--	---	---

		<p>example, an all staff briefing with the opportunity to anonymously submit questions was organised just days after the White Paper was published. Mechanisms are in place for staff to continue to obtain the information they need, including an open email route straight to the Chief Executive and comprehensive information on the intranet, including a Q and A document which is updated as new information comes to light. Members of the Corporate Management Team have briefed individual teams and will continue to engage in this way as reorganisation moves forward.</p>
<p>Empower the Senior Management Team and ensure they are more informed and involved on strategic issues Undertake a re-think around the approach to 'Blueprint Uttlesford', focusing on driving genuine 'transformation' through investment in technology and necessary expert capacity</p>	<p><i>there is a strong and widespread appetite for a re-think of the council's approach, entailing a shift to focusing on driving genuine 'transformation' through investment in technology and necessary expert capacity. This is in a context of 'Blueprint Uttlesford' being seen by many people we spoke to as more of a traditional savings programme than a 'transformational' agenda.</i></p> <p><i>It is important for there to be acknowledgement that capacity is limited and this needs to be factored in when managing expectations in a context of the</i></p>	<p>Greater empowerment of the Senior Management Team will be an inevitable feature of the work around Local Government Reorganisation.</p> <p>Local Government Reorganisation has had a fundamental impact on the whole Blueprint Uttlesford programme. An extensive triage process has been completed, looking at all areas of work to try to identify capacity in the council to deal with the heavy demands reorganisation will present. This, and the acknowledgement that council mergers will require the alignment of systems and processes, means that a pause has been put on many areas of transformation work until the future shape of local government in Essex is clearer.</p> <p>The review and revamp of the Senior Management Team, as described in the previous recommendation response, will bring service managers into strategic work and decision-making.</p>

	<p><i>range of demands and priorities facing them.</i></p>	
<p>Ensure the key risks for the council's financial position related to the borrowing and the asset portfolio are effectively managed and very closely monitored, with regular updates to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy</p>	<p><i>Whilst the overall value of the council's asset portfolio has increased, the arrangement now represents a net cost to the revenue budget. The council is taking a proactive approach to reducing the impact of these arrangements on the revenue account, seeking to rationalise the asset portfolio. We see a strategic approach to this as being crucial. This area is flagged as a key risk for the council in its risk register, with the need for a prudent approach to managing the impact in 2025/26 and beyond. Progress on this will need to be very closely monitored.</i></p>	<p>The Peer Challenge report acknowledges that the council already has the arrangements being recommended in place. Close monitoring is indeed very important and the council already does this.</p> <p>The performance of the investment portfolio is reported to the Investment Board on a quarterly basis. The valuation for each asset is provided by CBRE, a respected and leading property valuation company. CBRE are independent of the Council and do no other work for it. In addition to the quarterly report there is, in line with CIPFA recommendations, an annual review of all assets, with any that are identified as having a positive sale value, recommended on to Cabinet and Council for marketing. This is the process that led to the Council agreeing to market its 50% share in Chesterford Research Park.</p> <p>All borrowing is undertaken in accordance with the annually approved Treasury Management Strategy. The current borrowing ratio is 60:40 in favour of long-term borrowing, which significantly removes interest rate risk.</p> <p>The MTFS is updated annually, with significant changes reflected in mid-year updates, an example of which would be the sale of the 50% share of Chesterford Research Park.</p>

		<p>Cabinet also receives quarterly updates on the portfolio at the informal Cabinet briefings, and the Finance Portfolio Holder gets updates at his monthly catch-up with the Strategic Director.</p> <p>The risk relating to income from the commercial portfolio is separately identified (CR-16) on the corporate risk register, which is reviewed monthly by the Strategic Directors and quarterly by Corporate Management Team and Cabinet.</p>
<p>Reassure yourselves that the 'Blueprint Uttlesford' plans will deliver the level of savings and income required to meet the projected medium-term financial gap</p>		<p>Local Government Reorganisation has fundamentally changed the requirements of the Blueprint Uttlesford programme. As a result, the Corporate Management Team will be reviewing the whole programme to ensure the council remains financially viable over the coming years while the Local Government Reorganisation programme is delivered.</p> <p>Ambitious transformation plans may need to be scaled back or amended once the council's merger partners are decided.</p> <p>Blueprint Uttlesford as a change programme will persevere, as it is an essential requirement to deliver MTFs savings requirements; it will however shift to a more tactical phase of savings identification whilst longer-term more holistic opportunities are scoped with the authorities Uttlesford will be merging with into a new unitary – just as soon as we know which those other authorities are.</p>
<p>Respond to the desire from staff for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staff conferences to have a 'refresh' through 		<p>The group from the Senior Management Team referenced earlier in this document will be considering improvements to the staff conferences as part of their work. They will be encouraged to engage with staff from across the council understand views and preferences.</p>

<p>which they enable more engagement and participation and what is shared becomes more meaningful to people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much greater communication with those whose services and functions have been subject to review under 'Blueprint Uttlesford' 		<p>A fresh approach to the staff conference (including use of anonymous online instant question submission) was taken in January 2025, on the subject of Local Government Reorganisation, and this received very positive feedback from staff attending.</p> <p>Blueprint Uttlesford is being reset as noted above, and the Corporate Management Team will consider issues around communications as part of this.</p> <p>With regard to Blueprint Uttlesford, there is already evidence of how the council is keeping teams better informed where decisions have already been made – for example where a particular Blueprint Uttlesford review is being stopped, this has been clearly communicated to that team.</p> <p>Wider decisions around Blueprint Uttlesford are being made during Spring 2025 and the outcome of those discussions will be clearly communicated to teams and to the workforce as a whole.</p>
<p>Regularly communicate to staff the progress being made in response to the findings from the staff survey, on a basis of 'you said, we did'</p>		<p>This is part of the staff engagement workstream in the council's Workforce Plan. Local Government Reorganisation means this workstream will need to be rethought and repurposed. However, on this specific method of communication, a staff session is planned to look at some specific matters coming from the staff survey and from communication requirements for Local Government Reorganisation and the practical ways to deliver a "you say, we did" campaign will form part of that session.</p>