



# Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

September 2025



# Our action plan

As a Council the Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames welcomes the opportunity for external assurance, improvement and learning.

The Council invited a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) in June 2025. The Peer Team spent 3.5 days in Kingston meeting with councillors, staff, partners and residents, sharing their knowledge, skills and learning.

The findings from the review were overwhelmingly positive and highlighted a number of key areas of strength. The reviewers recognised that Kingston is a high-performing local authority that is delivering strong outcomes for residents. They also identified opportunities to develop our work further, building on the solid foundations we have in place already. The LGA Peer Team produced a report with 8 recommendations for the Council to take forward.

The Council has produced an action plan setting out how the recommendations will be progressed. The plan details a number of actions to deliver under each recommendation, indicative timescales and the lead officer for the work.

Many of the actions are cross-cutting in nature and whilst there is a single officer named, many require the whole organisation working together and with partners to support delivery. This is in line with our 'Stronger Together' approach that seeks to have collaboration at the heart of how we do things.

The Peer Team will return again in April 2026 to check in on progress against the action plan. The plan highlights what the peer team can expect to see when they return.



## Prioritisation: Prioritise the priorities – recognise the capacity restraints across the organisation

RBK is proud of our Council Plan, and the strategies and plans that support the delivery of services to our residents and communities. Our 2024 staff survey showed that 85% of staff understand how their role contributes to Council priorities. The Council does however have finite resources which it must focus on its core priorities, many of which are statutory duties. This recommendation will guide members and officers to clearly align our limited resources to priorities that meet essential community outcomes.

Action	Lead officer	Target
Implement a refreshed Corporate and Service Planning framework to support prioritisation and resource planning, aligned with the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Transformation Programme, supporting the development of a new Corporate Plan in 2026	Director of Transformation & Insight	June 2026
Deliver improved internal communications to staff about our key strategic priorities, particularly highlighting alignment between our corporate plan and transformation programme to improve understanding of how corporate priorities have shaped transformation objectives	Director of Transformation & Insight	June 2026
Deliver a new Member induction and development plan supporting a broader and more sustained development offer, incorporating opportunities for member feedback, that also enables the organisation to prioritise in the context of finite resources	Director of Governance & Law	April 2026

### What the peer team will see when they return in April:

- New Corporate Planning framework will be finalised in preparation for developing Kingston's new Council Plan
- A new member induction and development plan in place

### Our medium and long-term ambitions:

- An embedded Framework, with a Council Plan that is supporting the delivery of our Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Staff are able to clearly articulate the council's priorities and their role in delivering the Council Plan and Transformation Plans



**Collaboration:** Collaborative behaviours need to be modelled by SLT, WLT and all managers, to break down silos. The council needs to foster greater strategic collaboration across all departments.

Our Stronger Together organisational culture programme was launched in 2025 and is the mechanism through which the Council's vision, culture and leadership aspirations are embedded across the organisation. Fundamental to this is empowering staff at every level and promoting joined up working and collaboration, we will continue to inspire staff to live these values as part of the Kingston Family.

Action	Lead officer	Target
Deliver our Stronger Together programme, including our corporate staff survey action plan and a programme of two way staff engagement that emphasises Stronger Together and celebrates collaboration, to embed collaborative behaviours across the organisation	Director HR & OD	First review of outcomes July 2026
Develop and deliver a refreshed People & OD Strategy including a focus on our approach to performance management that supports our desired organisational culture	Director HR & OD	September 2026
Embed the leadership and management frameworks by collaboratively working with all managers across the organisation, ensuring they feel empowered to make change happen. This will include development work with our Corporate Leadership Group (Heads of Service and above) as a key network to lead collaboration across the organisation	Director HR & OD	March 2026

**What the peer team will see when they return in April:**

- Stronger Together roadshows will have taken place across the borough, staff nominated for the new 'collaboration award' will have been celebrated at the Staff Awards, and a new annual staff conference will be in planning

**Our medium and long-term ambitions:**

- Collaboration will underpin how we operate at all levels of the organisation and staff will be empowered as leaders to drive positive change for our communities, with future Staff Surveys and Pulse Surveys reflecting an increase in collaboration across the organisation



## Shared Services: Strengthen the enabling shared services – review, refresh, build in feedback on performance from customers (staff)

There is an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between our enabling services and the organisation. In the delivery of this recommendation, we will continue to strive to set the balance between our 'self-serve' ethos whilst ensuring that the organisation has the support and resources to transform effectively and maintain efficiency.

Action	Lead officer	Target
Strengthen the relationships between enabling services and the organisation through the accelerated delivery of the process and practice review (see next page) and through service specific action plans which will aim to improve quality, responsiveness and efficiency. This will ensure the deployment of appropriate tools and training to support officers in managing their services and achieving a greater balance of self service and support	Executive Director of Corporate Services (S151)	Actions Plans in place and initial delivery by March 2026
Establish additional mechanisms for regular monitoring and ongoing dialogue between enabling services and the organisation to share feedback, review performance and to drive corporate change and improvement. For example through Head of Service level collaboration meetings that are now in place and through wider mechanisms for staff to provide feedback	Executive Director of Corporate Services (S151)	Spring 2026

### What the peer team will see when they return in April:

- A clear articulation of the relationships and responsibilities between enabling services and the wider organisation

### Our medium and long-term ambitions:

- A collaborative, embedded and understood model of challenge and support, driving efficiency and performance across the organisation



**Process and practice:** Accelerate the current review of processes and practice. Clearly communicate with staff how they can get involved and keep staff informed about the benefits of the changes made, as and when they are realised

The Council has an established programme in place reviewing enabling services’ processes and practice, to identify ‘quick wins’ for creating efficiency and plan the delivery of longer-term actions. To support this recommendation, we will ensure that staff join us on our improvement journey, contributing where this will add value to future approaches.

Action	Lead officer	Target
Accelerate the delivery of the existing process and practice review which is looking at modernisation, increasing efficiency, streamlining processes, improving systems and making full use of digital and AI technologies where appropriate	Executive Director of Corporate Services (S151)	Quick wins - March 26
Strengthen key internal corporate processes to ensure improved collaboration across the organisation with a shared understanding of internal governance arrangements, increasing visibility on how decisions are made and improving oversight and efficiency on how the council operates internally. This will aim to ensure staff are enabled and empowered to make changes and improvements to service delivery within appropriate governance routes	Executive Director of Corporate Services (S151)	Full delivery - Summer 26
Deliver a communications and engagement plan that clearly communicates what the programme is delivering, shares progress, celebrates milestones, and provides opportunities for staff to get involved and continue to share feedback	Executive Director of Corporate Services (S151)	November 2025

**What the peer team will see when they return in April:**

- Communications updating staff on the Process and Practice review, alongside information on the detailed action plan of delivery

**Our medium and long-term ambitions:**

- Delivery of the initial action plan is complete, with activities considered and prioritised through the annual service planning cycle



**Engagement:** Develop a mechanism which draws from ongoing engagement, so that Kingston has an overall sense of how the community feels about the council and it's services

RBK engages widely through a variety of routes with our residents, colleagues and partners. We welcome the recommendation to expand how we use and share this insight, to give the council a better picture of the borough and shape service provision to meet the needs of our residents and communities according to their lived experience.

Action	Lead officer	Target
Develop and share regular thematic updates with key headlines from ongoing engagement activities across the organisation to embed feedback from our residents and communities into how we monitor performance and to inform service planning and improvements. This will make use of the central repository of engagement activities from across the organisation; engagement reports; insight from customer contact and resident interactions to provide an overall sense of how the community feels about the council and it's services	Corporate Head of Strategy, Communication & Engagement	April 2026
Deliver and embed Kingston's new Community Engagement framework, with a focus on feeding back to residents, partners and colleagues who contribute their ideas to demonstrate how their feedback has impacted. This will include more use and further development of the Let's Talk Kingston Resident's Panel as part of our engagement activity	Corporate Head of Strategy, Communication & Engagement	September 2026

**What the peer team will see when they return in April:**

- The first thematic update has been shared across the organisation

**Our medium and long-term ambitions:**

- The Engagement Framework is embedded across the organisation, with the core ambition to feed back to engagement participants about how they have made a difference consistently delivered across the organisation



## **Partnership:** Strengthen the Kingston Partnership around the Place agenda to capitalise on the energy of partners

As noted by the Peer Team, the Council has strong relationships with partners and the Kingston Partnership focuses on the delivery of key resident outcomes. We welcome the recommendation to review the structure of the partnership, ensuring it is ready for emerging changes in how we deliver services and support residents and national legislative and policy changes, such as the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and the 10 Year Health Plan for England, which will impact the governance models underpinning our partnership arrangements. We will work to galvanise our partners' enthusiasm and energy and strengthen the partnership even more to deliver for our residents and communities.

Action	Lead officer	Target
Develop and implement new partnership infrastructure jointly with our strategic statutory and community partners in light of national changes and shared local requirements to ensure the partnership is best placed to deliver place-based outcomes for our residents and communities	Chief Executive	September 2026
Utilise our strong relationships with partners through the Large Employers Forum, South London Partnership, Employment and Skills Partnership and others to develop and secure our common ambitions on growth/investment, infrastructure (especially transport), visitor economy and skills/talent development for the benefit of our residents and communities across the whole of the borough	Executive Director of Place	December 2026

### **What the peer team will see when they return in April:**

- Kingston visitor economy workstream underway
- Established schedule of partnership priorities for Kingston Town Centre

### **Our medium and long-term ambitions:**

- A new partnership structure in place to deliver on Kingston's priorities that capitalises on the energy of partners



## Climate Change: Climate change needs a whole systems approach – wider policy creation and appropriate resource is needed to achieve this.

RBK's central Climate Team is responsible for shaping, co-ordinating and reporting on Kingston's Climate Strategy, while delivery of the action plan sits across the organisation. Underneath the Strategy is an adopted road map for delivery against the Council's target of achieving net zero in our operations by 2030. Ambitions for the climate change response at a borough level are more challenging and we welcome the recommendation of a whole systems approach – focussing on applying our resources on actions that will deliver outcomes for our local communities.

Action	Lead officer	Target
Refocus the Climate Steering Group, with representation from all teams, to ensure clear and effective oversight of the delivery against the Council's 2030 and 2038 targets	Director of Climate, Environment and Registrations	December 2025
Working through the Kingston Partnership Structure, deliver against agreed priorities within our ambitions for the wider borough (2038) targets, focusing on retrofit of homes; low carbon transport; local renewable energy generation supported by development of green skills and employment locally	Director of Climate, Environment and Registrations	April 2026

### What the peer team will see when they return in April:

- Refocused internal governance and a greater understanding and commitment across the organisation of programme priorities and how all teams will deliver against these
- A costed delivery plan that is working to achieve our 2030 target

### Our medium and long-term ambitions:

- Clear reporting against the Council's Net Zero target for 2030
- A shared understanding of priorities and requirements from all Council directorates and relevant external partners in the boroughs response to climate change impact



**Housing:** Given the corporate importance of housing, ensure the senior leadership of the council continues to focus on the oversight of the housing service, including the development of the new housing strategy beyond 2025 and compliance with regulatory requirements.

The Council is proud that, despite the significant economic headwinds, we continue to deliver new affordable homes through the Cambridge Road Estate regeneration, standalone developments and our acquisition programmes; responding to increased and increasingly complex housing needs among our residents. Our transformation programmes echo this commitment with the Transforming Places to Live programme focused on responding to our responsibilities across Housing, Adults and Children's services. We are strongly focused on managing temporary accommodation demand and responding to the financial pressure it generates whilst also ensuring we are ready for inspection from the Housing Regulator.

Action	Lead officer	Target
Develop a new Council wide Housing Strategy to support the transition from the existing interim strategy ending 2025/26 and ensure appropriate strategic focus in this high demand area	Director of Housing	October 2026
Deliver our Community Housing transformation programme to halve the number of households in temporary accommodation within 3 years	Director of Housing	September 2028
Implement the recommendations from our completed Housing Regulator Self-Assessment to ensure regulatory compliance, with quarterly reporting to the Strategic Leadership Team	Director of Housing	September 2027

**What the peer team will see when they return in April:**

- More than 100 households in their new homes on the Cambridge Road Estate together with tangible progress on Acre Road and Small Sites 2

**Our medium and long-term ambitions:**

- A new 10 year Housing Strategy ready for adoption
- A halving of the number of households in Temporary Accommodation by 2027/28

