Appendix A

Horsham District Council – Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

Action	Officer and Member Leads	Other help	By When
RECOMMENDATION 1: SOCIAL VALUE			
Embed a strong and consistent understanding of social, economic and environmental value obligations across the organisation, particularly within financial planning and decision-making. Consider applying the Five Case Model or similar systematically to ensure that environmental, social and economic value are all fully considered in business cases.			
Review the suitability of the Five Case Model and build this, or a similar model, into the standard project management template and other corporate documentation, where necessary.	Director of Place	Corporate Project Manager Head of Legal & Democratic Services	31 October 2026
Review the corporate reporting template to see if any changes are needed to better show environmental, social and economic value in the corporate report templates	Head of Legal and Democratic Services	Corporate Project Manager	31 October 2026

Action	Officer and Member Leads	Other help	By When
RECOMMENDATION 2: CAPITAL PROGRAMME			
To deliver an ambitious capital programme, prioritise projects that are realistically deliverable and identify where external partners or outsourcing may provide a better or quicker outcome. Where projects are delivered internally, review capacity and expertise to ensure timely progress.			
Investigate using external resources on all property-based projects	Director of Place	Head of Property & Facilities	All project work from 1 April 2026
Ensure corporate oversight of the Capital Programme through an officer capital programme board. The purpose of the Board is to: • Work as a corporate group to deliver the Capital Programme • Agree timescales for delivery of each item, focussing on an efficient and proactive approach • Prompt the capital budget holders to engage earlier with procurement to help identify the procurement strategy for each project, agreeing solutions for identified problems • Prompt the capital budget holders to engage earlier with legal and identify the legal support required, including any capacity issues and how they will be tolerated/mitigated • Report into the Senior Leadership Team as appropriate with issues	Director of Resources	Directors of Communities & Place Head of Procurement Head of Legal & Democratic Services Head of Finance & Performance Head of Property & Facilities Corporate Projects Manager	From 1 April 2026

Action	Officer and Member Leads	Other help	By When
RECOMMENDATION 3: ASSET TRANSFERS			
Build on the current approach to asset transfers, taking account of the capacity and ambition of the parishes and newly established town council			
Update parishes on learning to date in the delivery of the policy, the timescales for decisions and the capacity at Horsham District Council. Guide them with their work in producing business cases and at parish liaison meetings.	Director of Communities	Cabinet Senior Leadership Team	Ongoing
RECOMMENDATION 4: LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION			
Continue to build on the Council's strong approach to LGR, with particular emphasis on maintaining the high-value internal communications that staff appreciate.			
Continue to hold all member briefings at all key change or decision points	Leader of the Council Chief Executive	Director of Communities	Ongoing
Continue to hold staff briefings at all key change or decision points including depot visits			
Continue to issue formal project communications and less formal local communications to staff and councillors			

Action	Officer and Member Leads	Other help	By When
RECOMMENDATION 5: RISK APPETITE			
Develop a common understanding around senior officer and political leadership approaches to risk to enable the administration to deliver on their key priorities, within the context of appropriate governance.			
At the Cabinet and Senior Leadership Team away day on 29 June hold a facilitated discussion including risk and attitudes to risk to help understanding	Leader of the Council Chief Executive	Cabinet Senior Leadership Team Facilitator	30 June 2026
RECOMMENDATION 6: COMMUNICATIONS			
Continue implementing the recommendations from the LGA communications health check. Adopt a more proactive, outward-facing approach by actively seeking opportunities to promote positive stories.			
Design and implement a graded campaigns plan	Cabinet lead for Performance, Customer Service & Communications Communications Manager	Communications team	1 April 2026

Action	Officer and Member Leads	Other help	By When
RECOMMENDATION 7: SCRUTINY			
Although scrutiny has strengthened significantly since the 2024 governance review, the Council should continue aligning its approach with Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) best practice. This includes shifting focus from scrutiny of officers to effective scrutiny of the administration and its decision-making.			
Cabinet leads to attend Policy & Scrutiny Committees with Cabinet reports	Leader and Chairs of Policy & Scrutiny Committees	Cabinet Scrutiny Officer	Start of the 2026/27 municipal year
Review the Centre for Governance & Scrutiny best practice guidance including Task and Finish Groups			31 October 2026
RECOMMENDATION 8: MEMBER AND OFFICER RELATIONSHIPS			
Strengthen officer and member development by reviewing the training offer and formal processes for addressing member/officer relations with regards to planning decisions. Ensure feedback loops are completed so that everyone has confidence in the system. Explore adopting the LGA Debate Not Hate standard. Consider providing refresher training on operating within a political environment particularly within statutory service areas to help reset member-officer relationships.			
Review councillor training in Planning and other statutory service decisions and processes	Cabinet lead for Performance, Customer Service and Communications Director of Place Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development	Head of Legal and Democratic Services Head of Development Management and Building Control	Review completed by 31 August 2026 and extra training completed by 31 October 2026
Review officer training for staff in understanding of the councillor role			

Action	Officer and Member Leads	Other help	By When
RECOMMENDATION 9: EQUALITIES, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI)			
Establish explicit corporate leadership and governance for EDI, moving from a data heavy compliance model to a narrative and outcome focused approach to ensure that EDI is seen as a cultural and placed based agenda, not solely a governance or reporting exercise.			
Amend the Cabinet roles in the Constitution to allocate corporate leadership of EDI to the Cabinet Lead for Housing and Communities	Head of Legal & Democratic Services		31 July 2026
Undertake a mapping exercise to identify outcomes for people from minority groups.	Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities Chief Executive	Graduate Trainee Communications Manager	31 October 2026
Establish officer groups for equalities matters they identify with	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development		30 June 2026

Action	Officer and Member Leads	Other help	By When
LOCAL PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES			
• **Consider publishing an annual 'Priorities to Projects Map':** to tie annual plan commitments to intended success measures, capacity assumptions and funding source, including social and environmental value to ensure projects are linked to corporate priorities. • **Explore the opportunity to work with external partners to help deliver capital projects.** • **Consider establishing a VCS forum:** with clear thematic leads and feedback loops to Cabinet and SLT ensuring engagement includes equalities led, health, youth and vulnerability focused organisations. • **Designate senior ownership for population health and health inequalities**: Ensuring health outcomes and metrics are regularly reported to senior officers and councillors.			
On receipt of a "Priorities to Projects" map from the peers consider using to develop the 2026/27 Annual Plan	Head of Finance & Performance	Performance Management Officer	28 February 2027
Investigate with Saxon Weald and other partners the possibilities of project delivery	Director of Place	Head of Property & Facilities	30 September 2026 and ongoing
Review the possibility of setting up a VCS forum and the value that would be added.	Cabinet Lead for Housing and Communities Director of Communities	Cabinet Lead for Wellbeing, Culture and Greenspaces Community Services Manager	30 September 2026
Designate the Head of Leisure, Culture & Wellbeing as the senior officer lead for health and introduce quarterly briefings for the Senior Leadership Team, Managers' Forum and informally to Cabinet	Director of Communities	Head of Leisure, Culture and Wellbeing	31 May 2026

Action	Officer and Member Leads	Other help	By When
ORGANISATIONAL AND PLACE LEADERSHIP			
• **Publish a concise 'Story of Place'** that integrates the town-and-rural offer, clarifies growth, health and climate ambitions, and anchors external engagement and partnership working. • **Create a 'single front door' for partners** engaging on cross-cutting issues (e.g., town centre, health, community safety), supported by clear service leads and escalation routes. • **Use local government reorganisation structures to refresh joint priorities with the county**, strengthening collective influence and access to external investment.			
Prepare and communicate a story of Place	Head of Enterprise	Communications Manager Heads of Service	31 October 2026
Introduce a single officer contact for all parishes	Leader Director of Communities	Cabinet Lead for Housing and Communities PA to the Leader and Cabinet	30 April 2026
Attend UK REIIF with County and other District and Borough partners	Head of Enterprise	Enterprise Officer	30 June 2026
Established regular meetings between Planning and County to discuss infrastructure provision	Head of Strategic Planning and Head of Building Control and Development Management		31 March 2026

Action	Officer and Member Leads	Other help	By When
GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE			
• **Adopt a concise Scrutiny Protocol** that clarifies roles, focuses scrutiny on Cabinet, and sets clear evidence standards for call-in and review. • **Run a member–officer 'ways of working' reset in planning**, covering roles, respectful challenge, appropriate escalation, and reinforcing zero tolerance for poor behaviour. • **Designate visible corporate EDI leadership** and embed equality insights within cabinet reports, business cases and programme governance. • **Encourage an enabling, solution-focused approach to risk advice**, setting out practical options and mitigations while still meeting compliance and assurance requirements. • **Strengthen member development**, with targeted training on scrutiny practice, behaviours, decision-making, and risk.			
Prepare and agree a scrutiny protocol	Chairs of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees Head of Legal & Democratic Services	Scrutiny Officer	31 October 2026
Councillor and officer training understanding each other's roles especially in planning	See recommendation 8		
Designate corporate EDI leadership	See recommendation 9		
Enabling solution focussed approach to risk advice	See recommendation 5		
Revisit member development framework with a focus on scrutiny skills development	Cabinet Member for Performance, Customer Service & Communications Director of Resources	Policy & Scrutiny Chairs	31 October 2026

Action	Officer and Member Leads	Other help	By When
FINANCIAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT			
• **Review the purpose and deployment of earmarked reserves**: review whether ear marked reserves need consolidating. Ensure reserves are used transparently and strategically, considering external advice where appropriate, and maintain clear links to risk, capacity and organisational priorities. • **Enhance business case discipline**: apply the Five Case Model or similar more consistently to major schemes, ensuring financial, commercial, social and environmental value are fully assessed before decisions are made. • **Strengthen capital programme deliverability**: prioritise deliverable projects, consider external delivery partners where internal capacity is constrained, and ensure programme governance reflects the scale of the capital ambition. • **Develop scrutiny capability around finance and risk**: provide targeted development for Members of the finance and assets, performance and scrutiny committees, focusing on financial scrutiny, understanding of reserves and risk, capital programme oversight and pre-decision scrutiny of major schemes.			
Carry out the annual review of earmarked reserves as part of closing the 2025/26 financial year	Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources Director of Resources	All earmarked reserve budget holders Head of Finance & Performance	30 June 2026
Enhance business case discipline	See recommendations 1 and 2		
Strengthen capital programme delivery	See recommendation 2		
Develop scrutiny capability around finance and risk	Include in review of member development framework (Governance & Culture above)		

Action	Officer and Member Leads	Other help	By When
CAPACITY FOR IMPROVEMENT			
• **Ensure workforce strategy recognises key risks and potential single points of failure that would result in non-delivery of key projects.** • **Broaden targeted recruitment approaches** and market supplements for hard to fill roles and establish rapid commissioning routes for external partners where recruitment rounds are unsuccessful. • **Scale leadership development** through coaching, communities of practice or similar, and cross-council project leadership training, ensuring consistent delivery capability across services. • **Communications**: There is also the opportunity for the council to have a follow up to the LGA communications health check with a new head of communications having recently joined.			
Include key risks and single points of failure in 2026 review of the Workforce Plan	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development	All other Heads of Service HR Business Partners	31 December 2026
Report to the Senior Leadership Team on new ideas on recruitment approaches, market supplements and rapid commissioning routes	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development	Procurement Manager	31 December 2026 for a broad review and as needed for any earlier issues
Report to Senior Leadership Team on new training priorities addressing the points in the recommendation above	Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development	OD Business Partner	31 October 2026
Consider the usefulness of a follow up LGA Communications health check and arrange if beneficial	Cabinet Member for Performance, Customer Service & Communications Communications Manager		Decide by 30 September 2026 Arranged by, if needed, 30 November 2026