



Bristol City Council

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge 2026

Action Plan 2026-27



Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	5
Our Priorities and Plan: Corporate Strategy 2025-2030	6
Action Plan (2026-27)	7
Recommendation 1: Committee System	7
Recommendation 2: Council Narrative	8
Recommendation 3: Prioritisation to Deliver Equitable Outcomes	9
Recommendation 4: Culture Change and Distributed Leadership	10
Recommendation 5: Effective Partnerships	11
Recommendation 6: Core City Leader	12
Recommendation 7: Financial Transparency	13
Recommendation 8: Data and Intelligence	14

Foreword

Bristol City Council has experienced significant change including shifts in governance, political and corporate leadership, a rapidly evolving policy and devolution landscape, and growing interest from citizens, partners and government in how places lead collaboratively and deliver impact. This has taken place alongside a challenging financial and operating environment.

In response to this scale of change and challenge, we commissioned the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) to help us reflect on our journey so far and guide our next steps. Over four days a team of senior councillors and officers from local authorities across the country undertook a review of the council to assess Bristol's performance, governance and financial resilience. They conducted nearly 60 meetings and met more than 240 people including council colleagues, councillors, external partners and citizens. The peer review allowed us to see ourselves through the eyes of our partners and staff and to understand, with honesty and clarity, where our collaborative strengths lie and where we must continue to evolve to meet the expectations of a more complex, devolved and interconnected operating environment.

The CPC review recognised our greatest strength, partnership. We are a city shaped by activism, diversity and civic participation. From the Bristol One City approach and our statutory partnerships in health and care, to our strong relationships with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, our universities and businesses, and the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority, we have a culture that has given rise to a mature partnership landscape. This reflects many years of investing in relationships, shared governance and a genuine

commitment to co-production. Looking forward we want to extend this approach to service delivery, working in co-design with people who use services and recognising them as active partners, not just recipients.

The transition from a mayoral to a committee model of governance prompted concerns that decision-making would slow or that leadership would be weakened. The peer challenge decisively refuted this narrative. It found that the new governance arrangements have already improved collaboration and transparency across service areas, reinforcing confidence in the strength and effectiveness of local democracy in Bristol.

The peer challenge underscored the need for us to be more consistently driven by data and insight - using better evidence to target investment, measure impact and reduce inequalities across neighbourhoods. This calls for discipline and focus. What this means in practice is a clearer, more prioritised agenda which is focused on equity of outcomes; skills and lifelong learning; neighbourhood health; climate action; transport; and inclusive growth and regeneration.

It also means stepping more confidently into a regional leadership role and deepening co-production, ensuring lived experience continues to shape how policies and services are designed and delivered. Bristol

needs to be bolder in our narrative as the only core city in the West of England and the South West. We need to be stronger, clearer and more confident about our role in the city and wider region. We need to give partners and stakeholders clarity on our inclusive economic leadership, our innovation and our growth sectors, so that effort, investment and policy can align around shared priorities.

Ultimately, the peer challenge reaffirmed that our greatest strength lies in our people and our relationships. Our willingness to share power - within the organisation and with partners and communities - is not a weakness, but a critical leadership asset.

We would like to thank the Local Government Association, the peer team, colleagues, citizens and city partners who took part in this Corporate Peer Challenge. With clarity of purpose, confidence in leadership and disciplined prioritisation, we give ourselves the best chance to unlock investment, accelerate innovation, build resilience and deliver outcomes that no single organisation could achieve alone.



Councillor Tony Dyer



Nick Hibberd
Chief Executive

Introduction

A team of local government peers, led by the Local Government Association (LGA), delivered a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) of Bristol City Council between 13 and 16 January 2026. The peer team comprised highly experienced and knowledgeable senior councillor and officer peers from across local government. They considered the five core areas that underpin all Corporate Peer Challenges: local priorities and outcomes; organisational and place leadership; governance and culture; financial planning and management; and capacity for improvement.

Following their visit, the peer team shared the [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Final Report](#), including eight key recommendations for the council to consider. While these recommendations are presented as discrete areas of focus, they are closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Progress in one area will support and enable progress in others - for example, effective governance, strong financial management, mature partnerships, and the use of data and intelligence are all essential enablers of improved outcomes, cultural change, and confident place leadership. We have also mapped the recommendations to our corporate strategy priorities to ensure that the actions we take work towards our strategic vision for the Council and wider City.

This action plan sets out the council's response to each recommendation and the actions it will take to address them. Delivering these actions in a coordinated way will be critical to achieving sustainable improvement and maximising impact for Bristol and its communities.

The overarching responsibility for delivery of this action plan sits with the Strategy and Resources (S&R) Committee. While individual actions may primarily sit with other committees, and some actions are cross-cutting so the responsible committee will need to involve other committees as required, progress on all the actions will be reported to S&R Committee.

Progress against this action plan will be reviewed by the LGA peer team through a formal progress review, which is due to be completed and published by March 2027.

Our Priorities and Plan: Corporate Strategy 2025-2030

Working together for a sustainable and equitable Bristol that enables everyone to be safe, well and thrive.

Working together

The organisation we want to be:



One Council

Working together as One Council to deliver good services that run smoothly and effectively



One City

Working well with partners across Bristol and beyond








Many Communities

We work alongside citizens and communities to make progress on our shared priorities and find ways to let communities lead on local initiatives



Prevention Focused

A focus on early action that achieves longer-term positive outcomes

Priorities	Objectives
What we are focused on achieving	What we need to do
 <h3>Improving equity of outcomes in education and employment</h3>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve equity in educational outcomes and break the link between deprivation and poorer results • Build a fair, green and thriving city economy • Deliver regeneration which brings direct benefits to communities
 <h3>Supporting children's, families' and adults' health and wellbeing</h3>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve our population's health by tackling health inequalities • Deliver early help which empowers people and prevents problems from worsening • Provide stability and promote independence for those who draw on care and support
 <h3>Creating safe, healthy neighbourhoods, and affordable, safe and good quality homes</h3>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the safety and quality of our existing council homes • Work with partners to deliver new affordable housing which meets a range of needs • Ensure all parts of Bristol have high quality and safe public spaces that meet the needs of their communities
 <h3>Making it easier, greener and safer to travel into and around Bristol</h3>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to improve accessible, reliable, affordable and sustainable transport choices • Focus on areas with less reliable transport options to connect people and opportunities within and beyond the city • Maintain essential city infrastructure for safety, longevity and accessibility
 <h3>Accelerating climate action and nature recovery</h3>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce carbon emissions and drive progress towards Bristol becoming a carbon neutral city • Improve the resilience of Bristol's people and places to the impacts of climate change • Improve the management of land, water and buildings in the city for nature

Action Plan (2026-27)

Recommendation 1: Committee System

Ensure the new committee system continues to mature, supported by sufficient capacity so that it functions well for both officers and members

The peer team’s feedback report highlights the importance of continuing to embed and mature the committee governance system, ensuring it is supported by sufficient capacity to enable timely, consistent and effective decision making. This aligns with our Working Together principle to work as One Council, committed to fostering collaboration, taking responsibility and delivering outcomes for residents. The actions below are designed to consolidate progress to date by strengthening how we work, improving consistency across committees, and ensuring members and officers have the support, skills and structures needed to operate confidently and effectively.

ID	Action	Corporate Strategy	Indicative Start	Indicative End	Responsible Officer	Responsible Committee	Dependencies
LGA 1.1	Develop training, guidance and support for members and officers to enable consistent and effective work across Policy and Regulatory Committees including targeted guidance and training for senior officers, Chairs, Vice-Chairs and other members.	Working Together: One Council	Q1 26/27	Q4 26/27	Head of Democratic Engagement	Strategy and Resources	
LGA 1.2	Build on and enhance existing forums and structures for cross policy committee collaboration.	Working Together: One Council, One City	Q1 26/27	Q4 26/27	Head of Democratic Engagement	Strategy and Resources	

Recommendation 2: Council Narrative

Sharpen your narrative about the council’s role in the city, region and beyond to address different audiences

The report emphasises the importance of articulating a clear, consistent and confident story about the council’s role in Bristol and beyond, tailored to different audiences. This aligns with our commitment to open, transparent communication that builds trust, strengthens relationships, and sets out Bristol’s ambitions with clarity and purpose. The actions below will strengthen how we tell our story, build communications capacity, and ensure a more coordinated and impactful approach to how we engage and influence. This recommendation is closely linked to Recommendation 6, particularly in how we adapt our narrative to position Bristol within the regional context. Delivering these actions effectively will also depend on progress against Recommendation 7 and Recommendation 8, ensuring we have the capacity, data and insight needed to support strong and informed communication.

ID	Action	Corporate Strategy	Indicative Start	Indicative End	Responsible Officer	Responsible Committee	Dependencies
LGA 2.1	Develop a clear, confident core narrative and associated communications products for different audiences, which tell Bristol’s story and the role that the council plays in shaping the future of the city and wider region.	Working Together: One City, Many Communities	Q1 26/27	Q3 26/27	Head of Policy, Strategy and Communications	Strategy and Resources	
LGA 2.2	Develop and deploy a compelling investment narrative alongside WECA which articulates the council’s long term vision, offer, strategic priorities and investable propositions.	Working Together: One City	Q1 26/27	Q4 26/27	Director of Economy of Place	Economy and Skills	LGA 2.1 LGA 6.2
LGA 2.3	Undertake a review of the city’s existing Brand Tool kit, updating and relaunching it.	Working Together: One City	Q1 26/27	Q1 27/28	Head of Policy, Strategy and Communications	Strategy and Resources	LGA 2.1 LGA 2.2

Recommendation 3: Prioritisation to Deliver Equitable Outcomes

Prioritise action to deliver equitable outcomes where impact will be greatest

While the feedback report recognises the council’s ambition to improve equity of outcomes across the city, it highlights the need to sharpen prioritisation and enhance whole-council alignment on actions that will deliver the greatest medium term impact, tackling deprivation and inequalities at the required pace of change. This process should be supported by strong data, meaningful engagement, and a clear understanding of Bristol’s diverse communities. Delivering this recommendation will depend on progress against Recommendation 5 and Recommendation 8, ensuring our work is grounded in strong partnerships, lived experience and high-quality data and insight.

ID	Action	Corporate Strategy	Indicative Start	Indicative End	Responsible Officer	Responsible Committee	Dependencies
LGA 3.1	Review the Transformation Board and our transformation programmes to make sure they are clearly focused on whole council transformation activity which tackles poverty and inequalities and will have the greatest impact for the city and residents.	All Areas	Q1 26/27	Q2 26/27	Head of Portfolios, Programmes and Projects	Strategy and Resources	LGA 4.2
LGA 3.2	Jointly develop a ‘Prevention in Neighbourhoods’ model and framework to prioritise early intervention and prevention before problems escalate to crisis.	Working Together: Prevention Focused	Q1 26/27	Q1 27/28	Director of Strategic Improvement and Collaboration	Strategy and Resources	LGA 8.2
LGA 3.3	Work with schools and others within the education system to deliver Bristol Future, a city-wide approach to breaking the link between deprivation and poorer educational results, focusing on scaling up best practice and supporting the schools with the biggest challenges.	Priority 1	Q1 26/27	Q1 28/29	Bristol Future Strategic Project lead	Children and Young People	
LGA 3.4	Work with the combined authority, schools, colleges and the VCS to set out which all-age learning and skills interventions we are backing to make sure all young people and adults can access a place in learning or work which enables them to live fulfilling lives socially, economically and in the community.	Priority 1	Q1 26/27	Q1 27/28	Head of Employment, Skills & Life-long Learning	Economy and Skills	

Recommendation 4: Culture Change and Distributed Leadership

Continue to drive cultural and transformational change with distributed leadership

The report highlights the need to sustain organisational development, culture change and transformation at pace, ensuring leadership is more widely distributed across the organisation to enable further strategic capacity. This aligns with our ambition to work as One Council, where teams collaborate, take ownership and deliver joined-up services that meet residents' needs. The actions below focus on strengthening a consistent, high-performing culture and supporting leaders at all levels to drive improvement and deliver better outcomes for the city. Delivering this recommendation will depend on progress against Recommendation 3 and a sharpened whole-council alignment behind our key transformation priorities that will deliver the greatest impact in our city.

ID	Action	Corporate Strategy	Indicative Start	Indicative End	Responsible Officer	Responsible Committee	Dependencies
LGA 4.1	Drive culture change through delivering the Workforce Strategy; driving an inclusive, high performing culture which focuses on outcomes for citizens and the city.	Working Together: One Council	Q1 26/27	Q4 27/28	Director of Workforce and Change	Strategy and Resources	
LGA 4.2	Redesign how leadership meetings and Boards operate, setting clear purpose, prioritising strategic decision making, clarifying accountabilities, and ensuring effective dissemination of information.	Working Together: One Council	Q1 26/27	Q2 26/27	Head of Democratic Engagement	Strategy and Resources	
LGA 4.3	Review the Performance Management and KPIs Framework to ensure it supports effective delivery and aligns with the latest Local Outcomes Framework.	Working Together: One Council	Q1 26/27	Q1 27/28	Head of Equity, Data and Performance	Strategy and Resources	

Recommendation 5: Effective Partnerships

Nurture and sustain effective partnerships, ensuring parity of esteem

The peer team’s feedback highlights the importance of sustaining strong, trusted partnerships where partners feel valued and able to contribute towards shared outcomes for Bristol. This reflects our One City approach, working collaboratively with our Many Communities, underpinned by mutual respect and shared responsibility. By strengthening relationship management and ensuring lived experience shapes how we design and deliver services we can achieve better outcomes for residents. Delivery will depend on progress against Recommendation 2 and 8, ensuring we have a clear and consistent narrative that supports shared understanding across partners and communities, underpinned by clear evidence and data.

ID	Action	Corporate Strategy	Indicative Start	Indicative End	Responsible Officer	Responsible Committee	Dependencies
LGA 5.1	Establish a clearer relationship management model with named single officer owners for strategic stakeholders and appropriate organisational capacity to coordinate and support this model.	Working Together: One City	Q1 26/27	Q4 26/27	Director of Policy, Strategy and Digital	Strategy and Resources	
LGA 5.2	Establish a set of principles on engagement, participation and learning from lived experience to develop a consistent, council-wide approach to effective resident and community participation.	Working Together: One City, Many Communities	Q2 26/27	Q4 26/27	Head of Policy, Strategy and Communications	Public Health and Communities	

Recommendation 6: Core City Leader

Position the council as the core city leader within the region

The feedback report highlights the need for the council to take a strong and confident leadership role across the region, shaping priorities that benefit Bristol and beyond. This aligns with our commitment to work closely with partners, including through the West of England Combined Authority and Core Cities network, to drive change at local, regional and national levels. The actions below focus on strengthening our regional influence, coordination and leadership to achieve better outcomes for residents. Delivery will depend on Recommendation 2, 5 and 7, ensuring we are prioritising the work that will deliver the greatest impact locally and regionally, supported by a clear and consistent narrative that supports our role and amplifies our voice across the region.

ID	Action	Corporate Strategy	Indicative Start	Indicative End	Responsible Officer	Responsible Committee	Dependencies
LGA 6.1	Deliver a Public Affairs Strategy that proactively positions Bristol as a leading core city, shaping regional and national conversations and strengthening the council's influence with government, partners and investors.	Working Together: One Council, One City	Q1 26/27	Q3 26/27	Deputy Head of Policy and Public Affairs	Strategy and Resources	LGA 2.1 LGA 2.2
LGA 6.2	Coordinate strong engagement with WECA and the expanding devolution programme, ensuring both capacity and capability to work effectively with the region.	Working Together: One City	Q1 26/27	Q4 26/27	Chief Executive	Strategy and Resources	LGA 5.1 LGA 6.1
LGA 6.3	Review the capacity and capability required to deliver the city's major regeneration and infrastructure projects, such as Bristol Temple Quarter and City Centre.	Priority 3	Q1 26/27	Q3 26/27	Director of Economy of Place	Economy and Skills	

Recommendation 7: Financial Transparency

Maintain corporate focus on financial transparency and the budget challenge

The report highlights the need to maintain strong financial discipline, with clear ownership and transparency, to meet ongoing budget pressures. This aligns with our commitment to working as One Council, where we take responsibility, use resources wisely and collaborate to deliver effective services for residents. By improving how we plan and manage spending, we can better support our priorities and outcomes and the delivery of all recommendations.

ID	Action	Corporate Strategy	Indicative Start	Indicative End	Responsible Officer	Responsible Committee	Dependencies
LGA 7.1	Undertake a review of internal arrangements where some council teams charge others for work, known as internal recharging. This will address inefficiencies, reduce bureaucracy and improve clarity, consistency and user experience for services and budget managers.	All Areas	Q1 26/27	Q4 26/27	Director of Finance	Strategy and Resources	LGA 7.3
LGA 7.2	Review business systems and reports to improve management information and decision-making, with clear guidance and training for budget managers.	All Areas	Q1 26/27	Q4 26/27	Director of Workforce and Change	Strategy and Resources	
LGA 7.3	Develop the budget setting framework and supporting principles to ensure political oversight and ownership, aligning the council's available funding with its delivery priorities for revenue and capital investment across the city.	All Areas	Q1 26/27	Q1 26/27	Director of Finance	Strategy and Resources	

Recommendation 8: Data and Intelligence

Accelerate progress towards becoming a fully data and intelligence driven council

The report highlights the need to accelerate progress towards becoming a more data and intelligence driven organisation, ensuring decisions are informed, consistent and evidence-based. This aligns with our commitment to using data, insight and digital capability to improve services and outcomes for residents. Building confidence, capability and consistency in data use across directorates will support the delivery of all recommendations by strengthening decision-making and processes across the organisation.

ID	Action	Corporate Strategy	Indicative Start	Indicative End	Responsible Officer	Responsible Committee	Dependencies
LGA 8.1	Deliver the council’s Data Maturity Project and Digital, Data and Technology Capability Project, including implementing a refreshed data and analytics platform and delivering a targeted engagement and training programme to support staff and members. As part of this programme, review the corporate support model in place to provide enhanced information and support for officers across the council to help them to better understand and manage performance data and make evidence-based decisions.	Working Together: One Council	Q2 26/27	Q3 28/29	Head of Equity, Data and Performance	Strategy and Resources	
LGA 8.2	Work with partners to explore the use of safe and ethical predictive analytics to support prevention work in specific council services, capturing learning to inform our longer-term plans for data analytics and resourcing.	Working Together: One Council	Q1 26/27	Q1 27/28	Director of Policy, Strategy and Public Affairs	Strategy and Resources	LGA 8.1

