

Date of meeting: 02 June 2025
Title of Report: **Armada Way Independent Learning Review Report**
Lead Strategic Director: Tracey Lee (Chief Executive)
Author: Liz Bryant, Monitoring Officer
Contact Email: Liz.bryant@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:
Key Decision: No
Confidentiality: Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

To present to Full Council the Armada Way Independent Learning Review (AWILR) Report prepared by David Williams, Sue Foster OBE and Jeannette McGary, alongside the Council's action plan prepared in response to the recommendations contained in the report.

Recommendations and Reasons

That Council:

1. notes the content of the AWILR report including the recommendations for the Council

Reason: The presentation of report to Full Council was a requirement of the Court Order dated 25 March 2024.

2. notes the Council's response to the recommendations of the ILR and the proposed Action Plan for the implementation of the recommendations.
3. requests Audit and Governance Committee to oversee the implementation of the action plan, reporting back to Full Council on progress as required.
4. thanks the Panel for the hard work and commitment in undertaking the review and completing the report.

Alternative options considered and rejected

Reject the findings and recommendations from the ILR

The Council wishes to work towards making improvements to ensure that it has robust and sustainable processes in place for governance, project management and engagement and communication to ensure that future major projects are delivered without similar issues arising as was the case with the original Armada Way decision. The ILR and recommendations arising from it provide an objective assessment of the issues from three experienced Local Government experts. Rejecting the findings from the report is therefore discounted as a viable course of action.

Background

During a Cabinet meeting on 20 July 2023, the Leader announced his commitment to conduct an independent learning review into the Armada Way decision taken on 14 March 2023 by the Leader at the time (the Decision). In tasking officers with preparing draft Terms of Reference (ToR) for review by Cabinet the Leader stated that:

- i. The review would be truly independent, and would have an independent and senior chair;
- ii. It would look in detail at the decision-making process that took place, both in terms of legality and governance;
- iii. It would examine how well the Council engaged with stakeholders throughout the process and the extent to which feedback was incorporated into the plan;
- iv. It would examine the impact of the project on the local environment;
- v. It would set out the financial implications of what had happened, including the costs directly to the Council;
- vi. It would commence before the end of the year, and it would be presented to Council on its completion;

This commitment was formalised by the court order which dismissed the Judicial Review proceedings as being academic (the Court Order). As part of the Court Order, the Council provided an undertaking as follows:

- to conduct an independent learning review (ILR);
- to approve the ToR for review at the Cabinet meeting on 20 May 2024;
- that the ToR should reflect matters i – vi listed above;
- to commence the review immediately upon the completion of the extant court proceedings, or the finalisation of the ToR (whichever is the soonest);
- to complete the review within 3 months of commencement;
- to present the findings to full Council once complete;
- to publish the details of the Chair on PCC's website; and
- to appoint the Monitoring Officer as the commissioning officer for the review.

The ToR for the ILR were agreed at a Cabinet meeting on 20 May 2024 and these can be viewed at Annex I of the Independent Learning Review Report (the ILR Report).

The completion of all Court proceedings took place in November 2024 following which an independent panel of three experts was commissioned through SOLACE by the Monitoring Officer to undertake the review. The panel members are:

Independent Chair:	David Williams
Independent Planning and Regeneration Advisor:	Sue Foster
Independent Legal and Governance Advisor:	Jeannette McGarry

The review was commenced as soon as reasonably practicable following the completion of the Court proceedings and continued over the subsequent three months by the Panel. The Panel's profiles and their methodology for undertaking the review are set out in the ILR Report.

The Panel have now finalised the ILR Report and in accordance with the commitment to the Court this is the first available opportunity for it to be presented to Full Council for noting and to review the Council's action plan that sits alongside it. The Action Plan includes the Council's response to the recommendations and the actions it proposes to take to implement the recommendations of the Panel.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

Conducting the ILR supports the Council's mission to make Plymouth a fairer city and its beliefs in democracy, responsibility, fairness and co-operation. It will provide an opportunity for the Council to hear what others have to say and demonstrate an understanding of the impact of its decisions and actions.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

An initial sum for the cost of the ILR itself has been factored into the MTFP, the figure for which is set out in the AWILR report, however, the final cost will be determined following the completion of the process, to include presenting the report to Full Council. There will be additional resource requirements to support the implementation of the recommendations, in particular implementing a corporate approach to Project Management.

Financial Risks

The cost of implementing the action plan based on the recommendations is anticipated to require additional financial resources to ensure that the processes and procedures required are implemented correctly, for example additional staffing resources, including training may be required. This risk will be mitigated through the process of planning and forecasting for any additional resources required so that existing budgets can be adjusted accordingly. Where possible existing staffing resources will be deployed so as to prioritise the implementation of the recommendations and existing training resources used for any training requirements.

Legal Implications

(Provided by Liz Bryant)

The completion of the ILR and the presentation of the AWILR to Full Council fulfils the Council's legal obligations in relation to the Court Order dated 25 March 2025. There are direct legal implications arising from the Action Plan itself as the Council already fulfils its legal obligations in relation to the matters contained within the Action Plan. The actions committed to are in relation to ensuring best practice in those areas.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

Implementation of the recommendations set out in the report will support the Council's ability to deliver environmentally sustainable regeneration.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

Implementing the recommendations set out in the AWILR report will assist the Council to comply with its equality duties by providing enhanced engagement and consultation, project management and corporate governance.

Appendices

*Add rows as required to box below

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Armada Way Independent Learning Review Report							
B	Armada Way Independent Learning Review Action Plan							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

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Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Liz Bryant, Monitoring Officer											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes											
Date agreed: 21/05/2025											

