

Audit and Governance Sub-Committee - Armada Way Independent Learning Review Action Plan

Thursday 30 October 2025

PRESENT:

Councillor Allen, in the Chair.

Councillors Blight (substitute for Councillor Raynsford), Cuddihee, P. Nicholson and Sproston.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Finn and Raynsford.

Also in attendance: Liz Bryant (Service Director for Legal Services), Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth), Hannah Chandler-Whiting (Democratic Advisor), Glenda Favor-Ankersen (Head of Electoral Services), Elinor Firth (Head of Public and Partner Relations) (via Microsoft Teams), Peter Honeywell (Transformation Architecture Manager), Alison Mills (Head of HR) and Jamie Sheldon (Senior Governance Advisor).

The meeting started at 12.00 pm and finished at 12.59pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the Panel will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

1. Appointment of the Chair

Councillor Cuddihee proposed Councillor Allen as Chair for the Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Sproston.

The Committee agreed to:

- I. Elect Councillor Allen as Chair for the Audit and Governance Sub-Committee – Armada Way Independent Learning Review Action Plan.

2. Co-option of members

The Committee agreed to:

- I. Note the co-option of Councillor McLay to the Committee.

3. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4. Action Plan progress update

Liz Bryant (Service Director for Legal Services) explained that an update would be provided on each of the themes within the action plan, stressing that the focus would be on b, c and d:

- a) Governance;
- b) Project Management;
- c) Consultation and Engagement;
- d) Environmental Regulations;
- e) Employee Wellbeing;
- f) Training and Development Plan.

Complex actions would be marked complete where a delivery plan had been agreed.

4a. Governance

In relation to the governance actions, Liz Bryant (Service Director for Legal Services) highlighted the following points:

- a) Regular meetings had been held since March 2024 on a monthly to six-weekly basis between the three statutory officers: S151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and Chief Executive;
- b) A review had been undertaken with regards to an extension for the forward plan for decision making, including benchmarking, the decision was to remain at 28 days, but encourage decisions to be put onto the forward plan sooner for larger projects;
- c) As a consequence of the review, a full health check of the constitution was being undertaken, but in the interim, focus has been directed on key themes such as urgent decision making and key decisions, including thresholds for key decisions and how urgent decisions were taken, ensuring that urgent decisions are only taken in very extreme circumstances and are limited as far as possible;
- d) A review was being undertaken for all key boards that are within the constitution and non-constitutional boards that are set-up for project management, to ensure consistent and clear terms of reference;
- e) In terms of governance, the Council was reviewing approach to scrutiny and how this fed into Cabinet and to ensure effective pre-decision scrutiny;

- f) A review is being undertaken of the approach to the pre-election period, and was awaiting legal advice on the approach;
- g) Governance training was underway for officers that bring decisions forward, including an extended leadership session with an external expert governance lawyer.

In response to questions, the following was discussed:

- h) A request was made that as part of the review of the constitution, Councillors would be invited to give their comments on potential changes **ACTION**.

4b. Project Management

In relation to the project management actions, Peter Honeywell (Transformation Architecture Manager) introduced the section and highlighted the following points;

- a) Baseline standards would be introduced across all capital projects and transformation work;
- b) This would include ensuring that every project had an oversight board whose composition would include stakeholders and relevant asset audience/staff impacted by change;
- c) The board would communicate through a mechanism of escalation that resulted ultimately with the corporate management team, in terms of officers, and Cabinet, in terms of Councillors;
- d) This standard governance framework would be applied to all projects going forward as a baseline;
- e) Baseline standards were being communicated to all officers within all project and programme management teams within the Council;
- f) The minimum characteristics that must be recorded against any risk had been identified and a process had been created where risks had to be reviewed on a routine basis, and reviews included all stakeholders;
- g) The way project work was commissioned was also being reviewed with specific requirements being implemented into business cases such that the design, change or asset was properly reviewed so that whole-life costings were reflected, for example through a maintenance schedule;

- h) The current focus was on ensuring the new processes and fundamental standards were in place, as well as relevant training;
- i) The introduction of a corporate program management office whose responsibilities would include the review and support of new standards, recognising that teams with smaller scale work, may require more support as they would have less experience in project and programme management;
- j) Assurance would mean that when issues or risks arose on projects, there would be capability around the organisation to explore in detail and report back on these, as well as how the project was being managed;
- k) This worked interlinked with other areas of recommendations;
- l) Formal framework would be introduced to assess maturity moving forward.

In response to questions, with support from Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth), the following was discussed:

- m) Even when even the Council was contracting out large pieces of work, there was an expectation in the standards that there would be a risk log within the Council that showed PCC's responsibilities and accountabilities to manage those risks;
- n) Approach to scrutiny would be reviewed as part of the governance actions;
- o) Part II discussions were available for meetings to allow Councillors to discuss commercially sensitive, and other sensitive information;
- p) Rather than employing a risk management officer, a community of experts from across the Council were being brought together;
- q) Recognition that the capital program needed to be affordable;
- r) Capacity had not been addressed directly, but the capital program would be reviewed, and when commissioning new work, the affordability of having capacity to deliver, or needing additional capacity to deliver, would be considered;
- s) Where projects were being delivered by existing staff, there would be visibility of that cost, but it would not be included as an outflow for the Council, as those staff were already employed in those roles.

4c. Consultation and Engagement

In relation to consultation and engagement actions, Elinor Firth (Head of Public and Partner Relations) introduced the item and provided the following update:

- a) Significant progress had been made in delivering the consultation and engagement framework, having been launched internally to all staff with an easy-to-read guide and there was a dedicated hub to view the framework;
- b) Within the hub were templates, guides, links to external support, evidence of case studies, examples of different types of good engagement and consultation that had been carried out within the organisation;
- c) The resource would grow in the future;
- d) In relation to training, staff were working with colleagues in HR to design a comprehensive training offer to include an e-learning module which will be launched before the end of 2025;
- e) A dedicated session for senior managers would be at the next extended leadership team meeting;
- f) The community of practice, staff across the organisation involved in engagement and consultation activities (which was referenced within the framework) had been refreshed, in terms of its membership;
- g) The current members of the community of practice were working to design a series of lunch and learn sessions, which covered key aspects of the framework such as: survey design, a session on good stakeholder mapping, a session on trauma informed approaches;
- h) The sessions would showcase best practice from within the organisation but would be led by practitioners with specialist expertise. For example, there will be colleagues from the community empowerment team who were trainers on trauma informed approaches for engagement and consultation;
- i) Many of the actions within the framework required a dedicated and skilled resource which the organisation did not have, so a role profile for that dedicated resource had been developed, and was currently going through the grading process.

Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth) added the following regarding creating a compelling and collaborative narrative for the City's vision:

- j) A master plan for the City Centre (City Living Framework);
- k) There were notable challenges concerning viability and markets in the City Centre;
- l) There would be a joint partnership with Homes England;
- m) Public and stakeholder consultation was being built into tender specification.

In response to questions, the following was discussed:

- n) The masterplanning would comply with the consultation and engagement strategy, with consultation points built in with residents and stakeholders, as well as regular Councillor updates.

4d. Environmental Regulations

Glenn Caplin-Grey (Strategic Director for Growth) provided an update with regards to the environmental regulations section and highlighted:

- a) Training surrounding an environmental impact assessment and regulation, particularly for planning officers, had been reviewed;
- b) A new session was carried out with an external training provider, who had expertise in the area and all senior planners and managers had attended the session;
- c) The materials produced from the training, were still available and were being used across the organisation;
- d) The training would be reviewed in due course, at regular intervals, to ensure that it remained appropriate;
- e) Planning officers would be kept up to date with new legislation when it took effect;
- f) In relation to tree management principles, there was an internal process underway to create a document which would be shared with the Plan for Trees steering group before going to the next Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel in December 2025 and Cabinet in early 2026.

4e. Employee Wellbeing

Alison Mills (Head of HR) introduced the employee wellbeing section and highlighted the following points:

- a) There had been a complete review of the People Strategy, led by Chris Squire (Service Director for HR & OD);
- b) In doing the review and development, there had been a huge amount of employee engagement with forums taking place, listening to the concerns and thoughts of employees;
- c) There would be development of managers;
- d) Wanted employees to be able to raise concerns through various existing policies, as well as through new policies being delivered, such as 'dignity at work';
- e) Within the health and safety performance standards, there were violence and aggression standards, which incorporated the unacceptable behaviour policy;
- f) In terms of the safety of employees, a procurement process for personal alert devices for employees in higher risk areas was underway;
- g) Within the health and safety management system, a dangerous sites database was being incorporated.

In response to questions, the following was discussed:

- h) A Council-wide survey had been undertaken in previous years to understand employee satisfaction, but the new approach was to do shorter, more frequent pulse surveys. One on wellbeing had already been undertaken, another of leadership was being developed;
- i) Policy launches were managed through the staff intranet, and training videos were also being considered for more;
- j) The new HR system would track if employees had seen and understood policies at induction;
- k) Councillors asked that the policy relating to unacceptable behaviour be circulated to Committee members for information.

4f. Training and Development Plan

Moving onto the Training and Development Plan element of the

action plan, Alison Mills (Head of HR) introduced this and highlighted the following points:

- a) An overarching element to training and development was the People Strategy which was due to be approved at Cabinet on 10 November 2025;
- b) The launch of new management and development training level 5 for managers and aspiring managers (100 people had completed this training, with a further 100 spaces available in the next cohort for January 2026);
- c) There was also a Level 3 training program launched, for a team leader/supervisory roles with 65 currently on the program;
- d) Additional modules would be added following identification of training as necessary;
- e) There would be a review of mandatory training for all staff;
- f) Staff with long tenure, would also undergo refresher training;
- g) Governance training took place with the extended leadership team in September 2025, with an external trainer;
- h) The design of e-learning was being reviewed;
- i) LGA (Local Government Association) training would be conducted, which would be joint manager and Councillor training;
- j) Chief officer induction and management induction was being reviewed.

In response to a discussion on the report as a whole the following was discussed:

- k) The Armada Way Independent Learning Review Action Plan was limited in terms of content due to the topics covered within the recommendations of the Armada Way Independent Learning Review;
- l) Local businesses would be consulted on future projects through the engagement and consultation framework.

The Committee agreed to note the progress of the report.

5. **Work Programme**

The Committee noted the next meeting was due to take place on 11 December 2025.

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