

BRIEFING REPORT

Armada Way Independent Learning Review Action Plan Update Report



I. BACKGROUND

The Armada Way Independent Learning Review (AWILR) report was presented to full Council on 2 June 2025, alongside the council's Action Plan for the delivery of the proposed actions arising from the recommendations contained within the report. These recommendations come under five broad themes as follows:

- i. Governance
- ii. Project Management and the Capital Programme
- iii. Consultation and Engagement
- iv. Environmental Regulations
- v. Employee Wellbeing

Within each theme, there are a number of recommendations, each of which carries an action for the Council to make improvements going forward. Sitting alongside these topics is a Training and Development Plan which aims to embed the learning obtained from the AWILR across the organisation.

At the first meeting of the sub-committee on 30 October 2025, an update was provided on the actions that were due to be completed by the end of October 2025. The sub-committee considered and discussed the progress of the governance review and was satisfied with the progress made at that point. The sub-committee also considered the implementation of the Council's consultation and engagement strategy, project and capital programme management, including engagement in relation to the City Centre Master Plan, and the Council's training and development plan which would address the issues arising from the AWILR.

This report provides a final update to the sub-committee in terms of delivery of the actions required by AWILR. It should be noted that where reviews have been undertaken and new ways of working agreed, implementation will be required over the longer term. However, the reviews undertaken to date are considered to be the point at which the required action has been completed. For example, a full review of the Council's constitution has been agreed, however, this is a six month project which will require input from the Constitution and Civic sub-group of the Audit and Governance Committee. These meetings will be scheduled to review recommendations for changes to the

constitution which have been identified to date as a result of the AWILR and those which are still to be identified from the full constitutional health check being undertaken by external consultants.

2. PROGRESS UPDATES

2.1 Governance

The table attached to this report as Appendix A.1 provides a final update on the Governance review which was undertaken by an external consultant as a result of the AWILR and resulted in a number of recommendations. The constitution will now undergo a full health check by external lawyers to incorporate some of the changes required arising from the recommendations, but also to ensure that the Constitution as a whole is a consistent document reflective of best practice. Any necessary changes to the constitution will need to be considered by the Constitution and Civic sub-group of Audit and Governance Committee so that recommendations can be made for full Council approval. This is likely to take in the region of 6 months to reach completion. As part of that review, and as raised at the last sub-committee, the elected members will be consulted as to the current format of the constitution and how it operates.

The sub-committee will note that, whilst the full review of the constitution has yet to be completed, the review that has already been undertaken in accordance with the attached Appendix provides assurance that the Council's governance arrangements are now operating within legal requirements and any forthcoming changes will focus on best practice and efficiency of processes.

The Pre-election Period Guidance review has been undertaken by an external lawyer and will be reported verbally to the sub-committee, with a full report being presented to Audit and Governance Committee thereafter.

The Governance recommendations are therefore being reported to the sub-committee as being complete subject to the full review of the Constitution.

2.2 Project Management and Capital Programme

a. Project Management

A proposal for the establishment of a new Corporate Programme Management Office (CPMO) designed to strengthen the Council's capability to deliver its growing and complex portfolio of projects and programmes has now been created. Its purpose is to provide

improved management controls, benefits realisation, financial oversight, risk management, stakeholder engagement, governance, and resource planning.

The scale and ambition of the projects and programmes across PCC and the range of services offered by the CPMO mean that an incremental approach to implementation is necessary.

Over the course of the first half of 2026 the CPMO will expand to cover all projects and programmes across Transformation and the Capital Programme. The CPMO will assist with the following:

- Management control of projects and programmes – tracking progress and ensuring alignment against strategic objectives
- Benefits management – identifying, managing and realising the benefits that projects, programmes and portfolios are intended to deliver
- Financial management – budgeting, tracking and controlling the financial resources invested in the delivery of projects, programmes and the portfolio
- Risk management – identifying, assessing and managing risks that could otherwise impact the outcomes to be delivered
- Stakeholder engagement – identifying stakeholders, understanding needs and expectations and managing engagement with them through the project lifecycle
- Governance – ensuring control of projects and decisions are made in line with organisational permissions and responsibilities
- Resource management – planning, recruiting, training and managing the resources required for successful delivery of projects, programmes and portfolios

The introduction of a CPMO is not changing the responsibility and accountability for project delivery within the Council. Project, programme and portfolio SROs will remain accountable for the work they are leading, whilst responsibility for delivery will continue to rest on the project and programme managers. The CPMO will provide support to the project and programme teams with tools, templates and methods, and it will provide assurance to CMT and Members through analysis and the provision of a single version of the truth describing delivery.

An implementation plan has now been developed, with full roll out anticipated by the end of May 2026, however, in terms of the actions required arising from the AWILR the following parts of the implementation plan have already been completed:

- Update of the Capital Programme Handbook (see below)
- Standards for project boards defined and teams using these to manage and oversee projects
- Briefings on all baseline standards required of projects across PCC to each team of project managers in Growth and across the rest of the organisation.
- Teams site set up for all project resources across PCC providing access to the knowledge base, tools and templates, including business cases.
- Risk management standards set out in briefings to all project management staff, with specific discussion around the approach needing to take account of the location of the work and stakeholder communities that might be impacted.
- Cross organisation project resources invited to new Teams site providing access to:
 - Body of Knowledge
 - Tools and Templates
 - Training materials Skills and expertise available across the community

b. Capital Programme

Since the last report to the sub-committee, a comprehensive review and redraft of the Capital Handbook has been completed under the leadership of the former Section 151 Officer. This work was initiated following an independent assessment by the Devon Assurance Partnership Internal Audit team, which provided key recommendations for improvement, taking into account (where possible) points raised previously by the external governance consultant. As the Capital Programme Management Office (CPMO) is still the in the process of being implemented, the focus of this stage was to strengthen the existing framework by introducing clearer requirements for governance, monitoring, and risk management. Further updates will follow once the CPMO is fully established.

The redraft also includes updated Terms of Reference for both the Capital Programme Officer Group (CPOG) and the Capital Programme Board, now incorporated as appendices to the handbook.

The enhanced document was reviewed by the Capital Programme Officer Group on 11 December 2025 which resulted in some further recommended changes. Those changes are currently being drafted and will be considered at the February meeting of CPOG, after which the amended Capital Handbook will be submitted to the Audit & Governance Committee in

for formal endorsement. The timing of this submission will depend on CPMO delivery and any additional revisions required.

The Capital Programme and Project Management recommendations are being reported to the sub-committee as being complete.

2.3 Consultation and Engagement

Consultation and Engagement Framework

As reported at the last committee, the Consultation and Engagement Framework has been launched and is now operational. The recruitment of new Engagement and Consultation Advisor is yet to be completed. The training plan is under development and will be launched shortly.

City Centre Master Planning

An external consultant has now been appointed to undertake the City Centre Master Planning Consultation.

The Consultation and Engagement recommendations are being reported to the sub-committee as complete.

2.4 Environmental Regulations

As reported to the last committee the tree management principles document has been drafted and was shared with the Tree Steering Group, after which it was presented to the Natural Infrastructure and Growth Scrutiny Panel on 3 December 2025. Final comments from scrutiny committee alongside that of the steering group will be incorporated in the final review of the document.

The Environmental Regulation recommendations are being reported to the sub-committee as complete.

2.5 Employee Wellbeing

The Employee Wellbeing actions and the Training and Development Plan was reported to the last committee and this marks the completion of the actions required by the AWILR. The staff wellbeing survey has been completed, and the results have been analysed and reported to the Corporate Management Team to consider actions arising from the result.

The implementation of the employee wellbeing recommendations are complete but subject to continuing review over time to embed them fully within the organisation.

2.6 Training and Development Plan

The Training and Development Plan as reported to the last sub-committee has been developed for roll out in the coming months, including governance training as part of the Leadership Development Programme and a training module providing basic governance training for all employees which will be available shortly as an e-learning module shortly. Project Management training is now being offered to relevant employees across the organisation.

The final session of Governance training for elected members will be scheduled shortly.

The training and development of staff and members is an ongoing process, however, for the purposes of the AWILR recommendations the actions are being reported as complete.