

# Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan

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## Recommendation 1

**Undertake a ‘root and branch’ process to redesign Bassetlaw District Council’s operating model, structures and plans to achieve Vision 2040.**

Detail: This ambitious vision will not deliver the same council services as today. You, therefore, need to make fundamental decisions about which of your services will need to stop, start, change and continue. You will also need to plan such changes corporately and at service level. This includes clarifying where you currently are, where you want to be, by when and how to get there.

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Benchmark service performance against Office for Local Government metrics, Association of Public Sector Excellence indicators and Tenant Satisfaction measures (through IFF for April and nationally after June 2024)	September 2024	Heads of Corporate Services / Housing
Undertake a detailed review (covered in detail in Recommendation 3) of service provision and budgets aligned to corporate priorities to identify options for savings or investment, linking to actions 5 and 6 below	September 2024	Corporate Management Team
Produce a transformation strategy and associated action plan to implement service area change projects, explore new operating models and realignment of resources following the ‘save to invest’ priority-based budgeting review	September 2024	Corporate Leadership Team
Undertake an independent ‘friendly’ inspection of the housing service against the new consumer standards regulations to clarify priority actions to integrate into the Housing Service Delivery Plan	September 2024	Head of Housing
Redesign service area staffing resources in planning, growth and economic prosperity, finance, housing and waste collection	February 2024 onwards	Director of Regen. and Neighbourhoods
Review and revise organisational reporting structures and interrelationships with Cabinet portfolio remits	September 2024	Corporate Leadership Team
Review and update the organisational position and responsibilities of the Policy & Communications teams so that they become more proactive, strategic functions rather than responsive ones	September 2024	Chief Executive / Head of Corporate Services

<b>Actions</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Review and republish Cabinet roles and responsibilities following the 2024/25 AGM	June 2024	Leader / Head of Corporate Services
Produce options for providing more day-to-day support to the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council as the organisation transitions to being a more strategic organisation as noted in recommendations 4 and 5	December 2024	Corporate Leadership Team

## Recommendation 2

**Commission independent expertise and support to produce corporate transformation / change and workforce plans, focusing most immediately on lifting barriers to recruitment – to address capacity issues.**

Detail: You do not currently have such plans but they would help in various ways, particularly to drive your work to deliver Vision 2040. With limited internal capacity to produce these plans, the peer team recommends you use external, independent support to do so. Many staff are working to their limit to deliver the council's current work programme, so they do not believe they have the capacity to deliver Vision 2040. Long-term sickness, vacancy and recruitment issues are putting further pressure on remaining staff. You must, therefore, urgently produce and deliver these plans to rectify these issues.

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Establish a new 'Transformation Team' to support change and embed an improvement focussed culture	March 2024	Head of People & Culture
Complete a review of recruitment practices, barriers to recruitment and best practice and implement changes	September 2024	Head of People & Culture
Refresh the appraisal process to incorporate career development more explicitly, leading into the creation of a succession plan for each service	May 2024 (appraisal process)	Head of People & Culture

Action	Timescale	Lead
	December 2024 (succession plan)	
Review the impact of the updated sickness policy after 12 months of operation and identify whether any changes are required	January 2025	Head of People & Culture
Arrange a personality study of managers and above at BDC to understand more about the existing organisational culture. Use this to update procedures and reduce risks of “recruiting in our own image”	December 2024	Head of People & Culture

### Recommendation 3

**Tackle your budget gap now; sharpen financial controls and embed budget ownership across the council, articulate at granular level options to close the gap, set targets, resource, implement, monitor and manage this work. This includes prioritising and clearly planning your commercial strategy, its work streams - including your S80 Partnership Limited - and implementing and monitoring these plans with SMART objectives and clear risk mitigation.**

Detail: Your immediate budgets are currently balanced and sufficiently planned for, but you face increasing budget pressures and a growing reliance on reserves. If you do not tackle your budget gap now and there is a full Business Rates Reset and/or Funding Review in 2026-27, there may only be sufficient reserves for two years beyond that potential funding reduction. The ruling political administration is prepared to adopt and expand commercial approaches accompanied by appropriate focus on risk mitigation, which could help address your forthcoming budget gap and generate extra income for the council. You should grasp these opportunities responsibly to ensure they truly benefit rather than possibly harm the council’s finances. This includes developing commercial skills internally or bringing them in, with a clear plan of how to do so.

Action	Timescale	Lead
Progress the priority-based budgeting initiative (‘Save to Invest’) to prioritise services, eliminate unnecessary spend and question and challenge ongoing expenditure (links to R1)	First proposals by September 2024	Director of Corporate Resources, Head of Finance & Property Services (F&PS)

Action	Timescale	Lead
Implement the Commercial Strategy (approved at Council) and explore the feasibility of appropriate commercial opportunities via the Council's trading company, S80 Partnership	Ongoing	Director of Corporate Resources, Financial & Commercial Consultant
Undertake an asset rationalisation programme, reduce holding costs and progress a five-year forecast for capital receipts to finance transformation costs (taking advantage of the flexibilities in using receipts to fund transformation and service reviews) and fund the capital programme.	September 2024	Director of Corporate Resources, Property Manager
Identify and implement appropriate recharges of staff to regeneration funded capital projects/schemes and other charges to key initiatives (grant funding, trading company, HRA) to generate savings to the General Fund	December 2024	Head of F&PS, Financial & Commercial Consultant
Develop contract management arrangements and procurement efficiencies	March 2025	Head of F&PS
Review the Council's Charging Policy (due by November 2024), review and challenge fees and charges to increase income generation within the legal framework (implement part year 2024/25 and then annually thereafter)	November 2024	Director of Corporate Resources, Head of F&PS
Continue the use of digital technologies to transform the finance function and improve the use of systems to create efficiencies	March 2025	Head of F&PS
Redesign service area staffing resources in finance and property including a new 'transformation / major projects' post	March 2024	Director of Corporate Resources
Undertake treasury management and other financial training for members to ensure they have a clear understanding of budgetary issues.	November 2024	Director of Corporate Resources
Align Council budgets to portfolio holders to give members better insight into (and accountability for) Council spend.	September 2024	Head of F&PS
Formalise budget holder attendance at Finance meetings, recording attendance and raising non-attendance to the Chief Executive's office. Invite portfolio holders to these meetings as standard	December 2024	Head of F&PS

## Recommendation 4

**Become a strategic council. This includes you producing and agreeing internally a clear set of offers and asks, as key propositions to your partners, which outline the scale, scope and impact of each proposal as relevant to the future growth of Bassetlaw, quality of life and opportunities of its residents.**

Detail: You need to be fully strategic across the whole council to best deliver Vision 2040. Undertaking this work within the council will consolidate your internal thinking and offer particularly sub-regional partners clear, confident, persuasive reasons to work with you more.

Action	Timescale	Lead
Build relationships and engage with the shadow EMMCCA and other partners throughout the transitional phase and beyond so that the needs and opportunities for Bassetlaw are fully understood and articulated	Ongoing	Chief Executive, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods,
Commission in partnership a high-level positioning document to support early engagement on infrastructure & inward investment opportunities in relation to three former power station sites (STEP – West Burton, Cottam and High Marnham). The outputs will include a vision prospectus and illustrative masterplans which consider each site AND the wider area i.e. the interrelationship between sites and infrastructure opportunities presented by the collective. The positioning document will detail the strategic alignment, including the Midlands Nuclear Strategy, Government’s Towards Fusion Energy Strategy, Investment Zones and other relevant national/sub-regional strategies especially the Midlands Net Zero Hub production of a Local Area Energy Plan.	September 2024	Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods / Head of Planning & Place
Commission in partnership an Economic Impact Assessment of STEP to inform business cases being prepared by the UKAEA for submission to Central Government and use by Bassetlaw District Council along with other parties to inform future plans and policies	July 2024	Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods

Action	Timescale	Lead
in terms of local investment to support and benefit from the STEP project.		
Active partner in LGA Special Interest Groups: 'Internal Drainage Board Funding Mechanism' and 'New Nuclear Local Authority Group'	Ongoing	Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods

## Recommendation 5

### **Strengthen the council's internal capacity and capability specifically linked to sub-regional collaborations and partnerships.**

Detail: Working at sub-regional level at pace is a relatively new area for you, but you are up to the challenge because the opportunities are vast. Vision 2040 is not yet driving sub-regional partners' buy-in and activity but developing such capacity and capability internally will help you best engage in and influence this arena. The more skilled you are to work in the sub-regional space, the more you can use your influence and leverage with local and sub-regional partners and communities to best co-design and co-develop strategic plans, delivery systems and new delivery models to help deliver Vision 2040.

Action	Timescale	Lead
Produce a Communications plan to further engage with partners to promote our priorities and projects (more details within recommendation 8 actions).	September 2024	Head of Corporate Services / Policy & Communications Manager
Play an active role shaping and understanding a new relationship and operating model with the EMCCA for economic development and business investment through a series of workshops - disseminate outcomes across BDC	March 2024 onwards	Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods / Head Growth & Economic Prosperity
Lead a regional consortium of education providers (FE & HE), councils and LEP's/shadow combined authorities through the UKAEA procurement process for delivery of a £20M technical training programme for the STEP programme	September 2024	Chief Executive

Action	Timescale	Lead
Play an active role in the Investment Zone steering group and future operational board to influence the IZ proposal and ensure that funding mechanism opportunities for Bassetlaw are fully understood and maximised	January 2024 onwards	Director of Corporate Resources, Head of Planning & Place
Undertake an annual review of partnerships and outcomes reporting into Audit and Governance	November 2024	Director of Corporate Services
Develop effective partnerships and collaboration to push for meaningful change in the funding framework governing the Environment Agency to enable deliverable flood alleviation schemes to be progressed for Retford and Worksop	Ongoing	Director of Regen. & Neighbourhoods
Reconvene the Independent Remuneration Panel to consider the time requirement from Cabinet members in particular to develop sub-regional collaborations and partnerships, in light of the recent decision of the LGBCE to stick at 48 councillors in the authority	March 2025	Monitoring Officer, Director of Corporate Resources

## Recommendation 6

**Establish clear, shared leadership to drive the design, development and delivery of regeneration and growth plans, linked to the £60million + of national funds.**

Detail: There are differing views and understanding within the Council of what Vision 2040 and STEP are, and your role in delivering them. As a result, partners are not always clear either – including what their roles are. You should, therefore, clarify these initiatives and their related plans, which will help you drive further related plans with your partners. Layering these funds and their related projects into a single plan linked to the vision could also bring wider benefits, efficiencies and value for money.

Action	Timescale	Lead
Establish a revised governance structure at both officer and member levels to provide shared leadership, co-ordination,	March 2024	Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods



Action	Timescale	Lead
oversight and scrutiny across the portfolio of regeneration programmes		
Establish a new Town Board for Worksop consisting of senior representatives of key stakeholders	April 2024	Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Preparation of a detailed town centre study to consider market and economic trends, spending patterns, demands and capacity for development such as retail, commercial leisure and food/drink in the three town centres of Worksop, Retford and Harworth & Bircotes to inform opportunities for regeneration. This will also include a health check to assess the performance of each town centre against national indicators, including a household survey to determine residents' usage of town centres.	September 2024	Heads of Growth & Economic Prosperity / Planning & Place
Develop a 10-year vision for Worksop which clearly identifies the longer-term priorities, along with a 3-year investment plan	August 2024	Head of Growth & Economic Prosperity
Establish a Retford Town Centre Stakeholder Partnership to produce an action plan to build on the ongoing work through the High Street Task Force Programme and town centre study referenced in action 3 above. The partnership will deliver town centre improvements that will raise the profile of the town, increase footfall and introduce new business enterprise opportunities.	March 2024 onwards	Head of Growth & Economic Prosperity
Ensure the Bassetlaw Managers Forum work programme includes regular updates on Regeneration Projects, Town Centre plans and the EM Mayoral Combined Authority	April 2024 onwards	Corporate Leadership Team
Develop a draft economic growth strategy which incorporates inward investment and skills	December 2024	Head of Growth & Economic Prosperity
Adopt the local plan at full Council	June 2024	Head of Planning and Place

## Recommendation 7

**Clearly set out your milestones for change on a range of day-to-day issues that are equally as important to your communities and stakeholders in the here and now.**

Detail: Vision 2040 is ambitious and exciting but many local residents and communities are currently struggling with day-to-day issues, such as increased cost-of-living, energy and inflation. You, therefore, need to continue supporting them through these challenging times before they can best engage with Vision 2040.

Action	Timescale	Lead
Produce a Customer Experience Plan 2024-2027 and a new suite of Customer Standards	February 2024	Head of Corporate Services
Adopt a new Corporate Consultation and Engagement Policy to ensure a consistent approach is followed	March 2024	Head of Corporate Services
Deliver the Bassetlaw Conversations programme of community consultations and engagement, building a picture of residents and customers issues and priorities across the district. Ensure this data is available via a central corporate repository so all Departments can consider this feedback when designing service improvements.	May 2024 onwards	Head of Corporate Services / Policy & Communications Manager
Evaluate the effectiveness of Council actions to mitigate the impacts of the cost of living pressures on local residents through the Bassetlaw Managers Forum	June 2024	Head of Corporate Services
Host a partnership summit to shape the programme of Cost of Living initiatives for winter 2024/25	September 2024	Head of Corporate Services
Housing Delivery Plan KPI's align with the requirements in the new customer standards regulations	April 2024	Head of Housing
Introduce additional measures for analysing complaints data, focusing on lessons learned and service improvements to align with the changes associated with the new Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman Service	August 2024 onwards	Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods / Head of Corporate Services

Action	Timescale	Lead
Complaint Handling codes with a view to strengthening a positive complaints culture to improve services to customers		
Undertake a rolling programme of satisfaction surveys for housing tenants, share the results widely and focus action on any low performing areas	Ongoing	Head of Housing
Delivery of the Housing Tenant Engagement Strategy, including set up of a new tenant group to provide oversight and input into action planning	February 2024 onwards	Head of Housing

## Recommendation 8

**Communicate Vision 2040 clearly, consistently and in a disciplined way to all the audiences you need to, to continue to build on the support you have already generated.**

Detail: The clearer these communications and engagement mechanisms are to all your internal and external stakeholders, the more they can influence, shape and deliver the vision with you.

Action	Timescale	Lead
Produce a communications and engagement plan (informed by internal/external stakeholder mapping) to provide clarity of key messages for different audiences for Vision2040 that frames its key priorities whilst articulating separately the benefits of STEP to the district	July 2024 onwards	Chief Executive / Policy & Communications Manager
Incorporate Vision 2040 into service plans and the appraisal process ensuring individual contributions are considered and articulated as objectives.	September 2024	Head of People & Culture
Update the Vision 2040 creative to reflect visions and the concept of STEP, LU Funds and the EMIZ being enablers	March 2025	Chief Executive / Policy & Communications Manager

## Recommendation 9

### Update your internal strategy and business planning approach.

Detail: As part of becoming a strategic organisation via the recommendations above, you need to compile, review, align and plan the introduction of many imminent internal strategies, plans and policies. Strengthening service planning across the council will also help ensure that your staff have a clear plan of what they need to deliver and how those related strategies and policies will help.

Action	Timescale	Lead
Develop a consistent understanding of good practice in strategy writing and a standardised approach for new strategies	July 2024	Head of People and Culture
Establish a new 'Transformation Team' to support service delivery and embed change and improvement	March 2024	Head of People and Culture
Embed a positive performance management culture and improve user understanding of the Ideagen system and a consistent approach to narrative reporting through a programme of officer performance clinics	March 2025	Corporate Leadership Team
Ensure corrective actions are identified for consistently underperforming corporate performance indicators	March 2025	Corporate Management Team
Ensure a consistent approach to Service Delivery Planning, with clear articulation of actions aligned to delivery of Vision2040	June 2024	Corporate Management Team
Undertake an exercise to map all adopted corporate strategies and establish a programme of review and refresh	June 2024	Policy and Communications Manager / CMT
Establish a consistent approach to project management across the organisation	October 2024	Head of People & Culture
Create a central data repository and policy library hosted on the new SharePoint platform	November 2024	Head of Corporate Services / Policy & Communications Manager

Action	Timescale	Lead
Review the member officer protocol to define expectations for how officers should engage with all members and introduce Job Descriptions for all Cabinet Members	December 2024	Monitoring Officer / Chief Executive
Clearly define the overlaps and distinctions between the Leader and Chief Executive roles	December 2024	Chief Executive

## Recommendation 10

**Embed a new values programme and refresh people performance management, coupled with a keen focus on turning Vision 2040 into a well understood and owned delivery programme that highlights any capacity gaps that need resolving.**

Detail: As mentioned above, many of your staff are working to their limit. You, therefore, need to develop a new values programme and make the most of your appraisal system to genuinely help staff deliver your work programmes. Producing and exercising a comprehensive delivery programme that addresses capacity issues with your staff and councillors will give the council clear direction to work towards.

Action	Timescale	Lead
Formally adopt the Council's values and work to embed them across the Council (including through infographics)	February 2024 and ongoing	Head of People & Culture
Develop a behaviours framework that supports the values and provides clarity on expectations of employees and managers	May 2024	Head of People & Culture
Refresh the appraisal process to refocus on delivery of work programmes and ensure clear direction aligned with the Vision and strategic priorities	December 2024	Head of People & Culture
Embed consistent supervision and support across the Council in accordance with the new one to one policy	March 2025	Corporate Management Team

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Lead</b>
Implement a framework for effective team meetings, which keeps staff informed and supports two-way communications, with delivery of key service objectives a standard agenda item for discussion	May 2024	Head of People & Culture
Undertake review of Housing staff qualifications in order to demonstrate where the service meets / needs to provide additional training to ensure that it meets the new Competency Standard and develop an associated training plan to meet this Standard where necessary	September 2024	Head of Housing