

Appendix 2 – Corporate Peer Challenge 2026 Recommendations

Ref	Level	Recommendation
Local Priorities and Outcomes		
PR26/01	Key	Maintain a laser like focus on tackling health inequalities and deprivation, improving outcomes and building a culture of aspiration: challenge every activity to ensure it is evidence-based and data-driven, including being rigorously evaluated for impact in the short, medium and longer term.
PR26/02	Key	Housing must be a priority and should be given sufficient prominence in the current organisational structure and transformation. The Housing Improvement Board is vital, should be led from the top, and involve independent expert membership that will help the Council drive improvement.
	Additional	Consider the sequencing and holistic resourcing of all projects across the council and ensure that there is a clear sense of focus – otherwise attention can be reactive, and capacity can be thinly stretched
	Additional	Strengthen the approach for horizon scanning, and considering the next 10-15 years for the borough and what that means for the council's focus, and the capacity and expertise required to lead and co-ordinate this work;
	Additional	Develop a systemic approach to learning and adoption of AI across council, and as part of the approach to continuous improvement this could be further expanded.
Organisational and Place Leadership		
PR26/04	Key	Examine the Council's economic growth strategy for its level of ambition, ability to make opportunities, have the capacity to deliver and be an active contributor and leader in the region. Ensure the Council has sufficient resources in this area.
PR26/06	Key	Build on the strength of the 'Sandwell Story', transitioning the narrative from an organisational/partner identity to one that resonates with all members and most importantly residents.
	Additional	There is now an opportunity to amplify the vision and accelerate pace with greater visibility of the whole senior team, internally and with partners
	Additional	There is scope for cabinet members' strategic role to be clearer. Members are committed but there can be overlap with their roles as ward members with cabinet and organisational responsibilities;

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	Additional	The SLT and cabinet needs to be effective for the next phase. This should include considering how meetings can create the time for deeper thinking.
Governance and Culture		
PR26/07	Key	Deepen the organisation's commitment to EDI, internally and with communities. Recognise the challenging environment, be bold and vocal in your leadership, maximise the expertise and lived experience of staff, the VCFSE and communities.
	Additional	Consider extending the forward plan period and ensuring cabinet members appear regularly at scrutiny, to reinforce accountability
	Additional	Continue to consider the support needs of members. Training needs to be offered at different times of the day and should cover both the role of councillors within the wider community and the leadership of the council.
Financial Planning and Management		
PR26/05	Key	Expedite the development and implementation of the corporate transformation programme with a focus on devising a clear operating model and what will have the greatest impact in the MTFs period. Ensure improvement priorities are delivered
	Additional	It is critical the issues relating to the outstanding financial accounts are addressed as quickly as possible to ensure robust financial reporting and related governance is in place
	Additional	There appear to be potential opportunities to reduce service expenditure and the peer team consider that it would be useful to undertake appropriate benchmarking and analysis
	Additional	Review the council's capital strategy to ensure it aligns with and enables future ambitions of the council. Aligning capital investment to long-term financial sustainability is now essential
	Additional	The council should develop a clear asset management strategy that is data driven and needs led.
Capacity for Improvement		
PR26/03	Key	Continue to develop and implement the neighbourhood model to better meet the needs of communities, be understood by the organisation and engage in the wider partner development of neighbourhoods, including the VCFSE.

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PR26/08	Key	Decide what "outstanding" means for Sandwell and continue to build a Council which will deliver for the people of the borough irrespective of political or officer leadership.
	Additional	The council has put in place, or is putting in place, several new systems including Oracle ERP that have the potential to support transformation. Further work is required to ensure these systems are embedded, understood and utilised to full effect
	Additional	In considering the council's capacity for improvement (HR, legal, procurement, strategy/policy/insight) ensure that enabling services have the capability and capacity to support the scale of change required
	Additional	A more disciplined approach to prioritisation and programme management will help ensure that resources are deployed to greatest effect
	Additional	Evaluate the purpose, use and impact of the council's locally retained asset base to ensure continued investment is clearly aligned to improving outcomes