


LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Salford City Council

7th – 10th December 2021

Feedback report





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1. Executive summary


Salford is clearly a high performing Council. The Council has achieved a great amount over recent years in a number of service areas. There are many examples of this, not least economic growth, housing and children's services - the leadership of which is well recognised by neighbouring councils across Greater Manchester (GM). The Council also demonstrates a confidence and capability to innovate with the approach to digitisation and digital inclusion here being just one example of this. This approach is truly impressive and provides much learning for others across the sector.

Both within and beyond the above achievements, this Council is clearly the 'leader of place' for Salford and does so with a style of leadership that is collaborative by nature. The Council actively embraces working with others – a mindset of "*Spirit of Salford is very much the people of Salford*" being consistently demonstrated. This Council is values led and these values are consistently seen in practice by partners inside Salford and across Greater Manchester.

The Elected Mayor has played a major role over a number of years in collaboratively setting this direction of travel, as well as living those values and expectations. Whilst this leadership has built upon and worked with the efforts of others, the impact of the Mayor's leadership must be recognised as integral to so much of what the Council has been able to achieve.

At all levels, staff are consistently proud to work for Salford City Council. They report feeling well supported and empowered in their roles. There is a constant sense of ambition for the City and the Council. But working here is also seen as very demanding, with a broad agenda and many report feeling particularly stretched. The staff the team spoke with are clearly bought into '[The Great Eight](#)', which are the overarching priorities for the City and can show how this links to their roles.

Whilst the priorities are well known, it is not yet however as clear how they are being used to actively prioritise. Further prioritisation in terms of identifying, resourcing and performance managing the specific actions, objectives, milestones and metrics that



are of most crucial value to the City at this stage and the next is an important step. Ensuring the right alignment of resource, both financial and workforce to these can increase and sustain the pace of delivery and the realisation of outcomes for the people of Salford. This includes being candid about how much the Council can take on and be confident of delivering.

The Council clearly wants to make further progress in ensuring more residents experience all the benefits available from the opportunities created from local growth. This commitment to a new lifelong approach to learning is set out in the ‘Learning City’ priority which the Council have backed with investment of £1.5m per annum to make this a reality. This is a complex, long term challenge. Making significant and sustained progress requires a Council and City wide, collective effort. The Council is encouraged to ensure this is the case internally as much as externally and should establish a corporate governance board to help achieve this. There are many who bring perspectives to both the design and delivery of the strategy required to realise this ambition. None more so than the lived experience of local communities. The Council has experience of working with local communities as part of the Poverty Truth Commission which brought new insight and influence that has resulted in real change. This is an approach that could be of great benefit to the City against many priority areas, not least the ‘Learning City’ – examples of which are detailed throughout this report.


The Council has a long history of health and social care integration and in recent years, the proactive steps the Council has taken to extensively integrate health and social care has seen many locally specific benefits to the City. This has also created opportunities which the local Health and Social Care system can continue to capitalise on moving forwards.

As the Health and Social Care landscape shifts into Integrated Care Systems from April 2022 (at time of writing), the Council are encouraged to lead now the co-design of a refreshed vision for the Salford Health and Care System. This is to ensure that the health and social needs of the local communities of Salford can be met and that the local influence on health services can be sustained. This refresh should build on and add to the many strengths in the existing system and also lead to adaptations when it is in the best interests of the communities of Salford.

2. Key recommendations

There are a number of observations and suggestions within the main section of the report. The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council:

- 2.1. Focus in on the objectives and actions which are most key at this stage and the next to the realisation of The Great Eight, prioritising their delivery.** Ensuring there is a clear alignment of corporate resource (finance and people) to these will help to sustain the pace of delivery.
- 2.2. Lead now the co-design of a refreshed vision for the Health and Social Care (H&SC) system in Salford in light of the changes to the H&SC landscape regionally and nationally.** Act with both pace and care to build on the strengths the Council has established, add to this where needed and adapt where necessary to achieving the outcomes required from your communities.
- 2.3. Embed on a more consistent, corporate basis the methods used as part of the Poverty Truth Commission – to listen, learn, develop and deliver strategy based on the direct lived experience of local residents.**
- 2.4. Make the work around the 'Learning City' a shared corporate priority which is collectively owned.** Consider establishing a corporate governance board to lead the shared delivery of this which retains strong links to schools and the C&YP inclusion agenda. This is also a specific example of where the Council can capitalise on ensuring that all of the opportunities, from all of its spend are being used to realise the outcomes you seek for Salford.
- 2.5. Give the newly established Senior Leadership Team (SLT) a clear, collective purpose and set of expectations based on the delivery of the Great Eight.** Making this a key part of the roles at this level may require further support for team development but is a key step in further realising the sum total of the corporate potential here.
- 2.6. Carefully consider officer and member succession planning.** Many staff are highly experienced, skilled and committed. There will be challenges in retaining or replacing them within a highly competitive environment.

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- 2.7. Refresh the member development programme so that it supports all members (including the newer members of the Mayoral Team) to reach their full potential, in a constantly and rapidly evolving operating environment.**
- 2.8. Decide on and commit to a set of shared actions that will see all of the potential benefits of the Overview and Scrutiny function realised.** This will have requirements of both members and officers and more clearly support the realisation of the Great Eight. It will also mean supporting all members to understand how the role of scrutiny fits into the wider Health and Social Care landscape from April 2022 onwards.
- 2.9. Measure and manage what matters. Refine the performance metrics used to monitor the delivery of the Great Eight so they more closely align to the Council's strategic intent.** The Council has capabilities in data interrogation that could be used to enable more specific and timely corporate accountability.
- 2.10. Review the approach to the capital programme. This includes ensuring that the capital programme is closely shaped by the corporate priorities but also that the programme is optimally planned, managed and delivered, reducing the level of slippage seen previously.** Further grip on the performance of the capital programme will be required. Routinely reporting in more detail both revenue and capital budget performance to Cabinet alongside the performance report will help to achieve this.
- 2.11. Building on the prudent use of reserves to date, take the opportunity to revise the reserves strategy, communicating this out to all members –** doing so can demonstrate full transparency behind the level and purpose of all reserves.

3. Summary of the peer challenge approach

3.1. The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected the focus of the peer challenge and peers were selected on the basis of their relevant expertise. The peers were:

- **Carolyn Downs** - Chief Executive – London Borough of Brent.
- **Mayor Philip Glanville** – London Borough of Hackney
- **Helen Isaacs** – Assistant Chief Executive – North East Lincolnshire
- **Steve Mawson** – Deputy Chief Executive / Executive Director of Corporate Resources – Gloucestershire County Council
- **Sarah Messenger** - Workforce Consultant - Local Government Association.
- **Helen Hirst** - Chief Officer - Bradford District and Craven Clinical Commissioning Group
- **LGA Peer Challenge Manager** – Dan Archer – Programme Manager – Local Government Association.

3.2. Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following five themes which form the core components of all Corporate Peer Challenges. These areas are critical to councils' performance and improvement.

1. **Local priorities and outcomes** - Are the Council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities?
2. **Organisational and place leadership** - Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?
3. **Governance and culture** - Are there clear and robust governance

- arrangements? Is there a culture of challenge and scrutiny?
4. **Financial planning and management** - Does the council have a grip on its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a plan to address its financial challenges?
 5. **Capacity for improvement** - Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

In addition to these questions, you asked the peer team to provide feedback on:

- Do we have a golden thread linking our vision, priorities, leadership and organisational resources?
- On Health and Social Care, how do we ensure continued strong collaborative locality leadership in Salford and influence the wider GM system?
- Do we have the right approach in place to shape the next 3-5 years transformation programme?

3.3. The peer challenge process

Peer challenges are improvement focused; it is important to stress that this was not an inspection. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent four days onsite at Salford City Council and:

- gathered information and views from more than 45 meetings, in addition to further research and reading.
- spoke to more than 120 people including a range of council staff together with members and external stakeholders.

The team collectively, in total spent over 270 hours to arrive at these findings, the equivalent of one person spending over 7 weeks in Salford. This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. In presenting feedback, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members.

4. Feedback


4.1. Local priorities and outcomes

Located within the centre of Greater Manchester, Salford is a city of contrasts. Salford is both one of the world's first industrial cities as well as a modern-day UK economic growth hotspot with over 12,500 businesses. Salford has some of the most prosperous wards in the country sitting alongside some of the most deprived.

Within the above context, the Council has set a strategic vision to build a '*Better, Fairer, Healthier and Greener Salford*'. This vision is underpinned by a series of cross cutting priorities named 'The Great Eight'. These are shared with the key anchor institutions across Salford including the NHS, university, housing providers and VCSE sector.

Salford is a high performing Council which has racked up a number of achievements linked to The Great Eight, just a few examples of which include:

- *Rough sleeping* – which has reduced by 80% since 2017
- *Housing* – establishing a wholly owned housing company in 2017 which now accounts for 20% of all affordable home delivery in the City up to 2023.
- *Employment* – 22,000 new jobs have been created in the last five years.
- *Children's services* – a 'Good' OFSTED rating with a Family Partnership model which is shaped by a commitment to prevention and early help. Children's services in particular in Salford are frequently cited as a thought leader by colleagues across GM.



However, many more examples feature throughout this report. This is because the Council is able to demonstrate strong performance across most service areas, including those core service areas which are often especially visible to local residents, such as recycling and road maintenance.

The Council has also demonstrated an eagerness to look for answers and new ways of improving and was the first council in GM to establish a Poverty Truth Commission. The Commission worked with local residents to understand their experience of life in poverty in Salford and then worked with those people to design and deliver the changes required. This led to the publication of the *'Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategy No-One Left Behind'*, which has resulted in the following changes:

- Increasing the number of Salford businesses who pay the real living wage, which has reduced the percentage of residents earning less than this from 16.5% to 14.5% - now the lowest rate in GM.
- Transforming the way that Council Tax is collected from low-income households which is fairer to local people and has led to an increase in the amount collected.
- Investments into the Salford Credit Union (£170k) and additional cash injected into the local welfare assistance scheme (£300k) to provide local people with more support when needed.

The Poverty Truth Commission is an immensely powerful approach which has proven to be very successful and a second poverty truth commission is now taking place. It is a model that has been utilised elsewhere since and whilst it requires a significant investment of time and effort, is a model we encourage the Council to replicate the methodology behind, more widely when developing other strategy responses.

Using the lived experience in this way more widely can ensure that the voice of people who experience the type of inequalities the Council are looking to address are not only directly listened to but are driving real change through co-design and co-production. The forthcoming work on employment and skills, provides another opportunity for this.

In the Executive Summary of this report, the visibility of The Great Eight is recognised.

This comes with a recommendation to focus in on more specific and crucial objectives and actions underpinning The Great Eight, which can support a sustained pace of delivery. Against The Great Eight, the Council has a range of performance reporting in place which is similar to most councils. This Council however has the potential to take this a step further by getting more impact from corporate performance discussions.

Refining the list of metrics to more closely mirror the actual, specific outcomes members sought in communities when setting out The Great Eight can support more targeted, earlier accountability and learning. Suitably reflecting the Learning City in the performance metrics provides one such opportunity. This means reflecting in the metrics, that everyone is on an ongoing learning and skills journey and the difference this represents from more traditional approaches to employment and skills.

The Council has a capability to automate the combination and interrogation of large, live data sets which is currently being put to particular use through the 'BetterOff' programme (as well as elsewhere). Test the potential of applying this capability to corporate performance management – which could lead to a much higher definition version of corporate performance management than is found in most other councils. The process of doing this can assist with the work around further prioritisation.

One area where the above question is especially true is in relation to employment and skills. This is a priority of the Mayor, members and officers and is key to the future successes of the communities of Salford. The Council has demonstrated its commitment to this with £1.5m per annum of Council funding (from April 2022) and has committed to funding on a multi-year basis from its annual budget, in place of an unsuccessful bid to the Community Renewal Fund.

The commitment to lifelong learning for everyone is especially relevant locally. Whilst Salford is a UK hotspot for economic start-up growth, it is also the area with the highest rate of unemployment in Greater Manchester. The physical regeneration of Salford over the past decade however has been unquestionably substantial and has included new infrastructure, housing, commercial space as well as cultural, health and educational facilities. Just some recent, ongoing and forthcoming examples of which in a rapidly changing City include:


- *RHS Bridgewater* – opened in May 2021 and becoming a key visitor attraction in Greater Manchester.
- *Media City and the Quays* – one of the UK’s most significant regeneration projects and a leading digital, creative and technology cluster which includes being the northern home to the BBC and ITV.
- *Port Salford* – the UK’s first tri-modal port facility which aims to create up to 10,000 new jobs, further capitalising on being home to Britain’s largest inland waterway.
- *Salford Innovation Triangle (including Salford Crescent)* – which aims to build on further opportunities to connect the Salford Royal Hospital, Salford University and Media City, growing into and creating future opportunities in digital and health innovation.

All of which generate a range of unique and exciting opportunities which can be used to improve the life chances of current and future generations of Salford residents across the different localities if approached in a ‘Salford Way’. The Learning City priority is key to that and this also sits alongside a drive to further support the regeneration of neighbourhood centres.

4.2. Organisational and place leadership

Salford City Council has 20 electoral wards and 60 elected councillors. New ward boundaries were brought into effect in May 2021, meaning a set of all out elections for 60 councillor positions as well as the elected Mayor before returning to elections by thirds following this. The Elected Mayor was returned to office in May 2021, after being first elected in 2016.

Many of the team spoke with shared that the Council has established a consistent identity which was reflected as a values led, community focussed and collaborative approach. The Council’s ambition to increase community wealth across the City is just one example of this. This includes the drive to increase the amount of spend from anchor



institutions within Salford, as well as a push to prioritise public contracts for businesses who are committed to recruiting locally, using local supply chains with decent pay and conditions. The Council also encourages organisations to give something back to the local community. All of which have led to real world benefits for local people. This includes the adoption of the real living wage for the social care workforce, and the use of facilities such as the HOST centre at Media City and the opening up of RHS Bridgwater - giving local residents access each week at no cost.

The Council continues to encourage the application of and sign-up to these values, which is an approach which can bring many opportunities to how the Council progresses against the priority of the Learning City (for example) as well as how the Council might be able to continue to innovate in other areas.

The leadership of the Elected Mayor who has been in this role since May 2016 has been particularly key to furthering this set of values. The Elected Mayor is recognised both inside the Council, across Salford and within GM as a dynamic, driving force for the Council's ongoing improvement. This community focus is mirrored across the member and officer cohort, at all levels in Salford and is a real asset to the Council.

The Council recently appointed a new CEX who began working at the Council in early February 2021. A positive and well balanced relationship can be seen between the Elected Mayor and CEX. The CEX's approach has been welcomed within the Council, with partners in the City and in GM. Internally the CEX has taken steps since taking up this role to bring the CMT closer together. This will continue to be important. The CEX has also taken the step to bring together a Senior Leadership Team which was previously not in place which involves Assistant Directors from across the Council meeting on a routine basis. This has also been welcomed as a positive step forward by those Assistant Directors, although the frequency of attendance at those meetings in recent months has reduced. Bringing the Senior Leadership Team together, as a corporate collective is important to the Council and should be further progressed. This can be key to fostering closer, cross-council, corporate working. This is essential if the Council is to progress key parts of The Great Eight – particularly around the climate agenda, which is an essential corporate and place wide priority, as well as employment and skills (the Learning City).

The Council are encouraged to give the SLT a clear, collective corporate role, purpose and expectations. This should not be seen as a burden to those in these roles but a

key collective function of the Council (which may involve for example, oversight and peer challenge / support of progress on key programmes and projects). The Council should continue to progress with approaches which aim to act corporately at all times – keeping in mind , *the potential of the whole is very much greater than the sum of its parts*. Top team support and development can be of value to the Council in further establishing this group as a key collective force for the Council.

This Council benefits from a number of high performing officers who are highly regarded within GM and in some cases nationally. This includes those officers who bring key strengths in terms of strategic management, as well as those who act as a real engine room for change and service delivery. Staff here are highly committed, proud and loyal to Salford, however knowing how competitive the market can be for officers of this calibre, it will be important for the Council to consider this matter carefully. . These officers most typically lead high performing services, are fully bought into ‘The Salford Way’ and have also established good quality, collaborative relationships with relevant partners. In light of this, carefully consider the Council’s approach to retention and succession planning.

The Council has seen the election of 13 new members to the Council since the all-out elections in May. Those members received an induction programme following this and a number have proactively sought their own development opportunities (such as mentoring). Similarly to the recommendation to look at succession planning for senior officers, the Council should equally look at ongoing succession planning within the member cohort. This is particularly the case, given the pace of change in Salford and how the operating environment of the Council is shifting. Prioritising a high quality member development programme is always important, doing so in this context has additional strategic value – to support ongoing improvement and to help safeguard against a strategic deficit opening up between members in future. It is clear from many members the team spoke with that there is a real eagerness to develop further as members and learn, which is a great asset to the Council. If the Council is able to capitalise on this appetite, the communities of Salford will see the sustained benefits of it.

Given the potential of so many members here, the Council may wish to think about what the member development programme that helps all members (including the newer members of the Mayoral Team) realise their full potential would look like. This can act as a guiding principle for the development of this programme, a programme

which might include further internal support, external development and mentoring. It might also include support for those wider roles within the community which cut across The Great Eight – for example, the support for positions like being a School Governor.

Partners locally are overwhelmingly positive about the Council and see the commitment to partnership working as embedded for the long term. Relationships with partners and the voluntary, community and faith sector were seen as a real strength at the time of the last LGA Corporate Peer Challenge here in January 2018. These relationships appear to have improved further since this, in particular over the last 18 months building on the Covid-19 response and 'Spirit of Salford Network'. Partners would in fact continue to welcome the Council being more proactive in seeking their support. Many partners feel they can add further value and take a stronger leadership role. As an example, there is an opportunity for the Council to look at further roles for the local voluntary, community and faith sector in delivering on the ambitions for Salford around Health and Social Care as well as Employment and Skills.

4.3. Governance and culture

As part of this Corporate Peer Challenge, the Council were particularly keen to understand the culture of the organisation overall. This follows a previous LGA report to the Council around the organisational culture within the place directorate.

This peer team found that staff corporately are overwhelmingly positive about working for Salford City Council. They speak of their pride at working for the Council, of feeling both empowered and supported. They see their work as both rewarding and challenging. They are motivated and enthused to do as much as they can, as reflected by one member of staff – *“I’m so proud to work for my local community and the Council”*.

But working here is demanding and people do report feeling particularly stretched. Many the team spoke with echoed the quote *“we can have a far bigger impact by focussing more on the key current priorities”*.

Focussing in, means sequencing the objectives and actions required of the Council in terms of impact and place stewardship, when working in well-timed tandem with the

efforts of others. If the level of officer – officer delegations were increased here (in both financial and recruitment delegations for example) this could also increase empowerment and further accelerate the pace of delivery. The team encountered some frustrations with the existing level of officer – officer delegations, which were typically set at a lower level than is seen in any of the councils represented on this peer team – or from what members of the team can recall from the councils they have represented previously.

At Salford, the role of members and officers are clear. These roles are well established and worked to consistently. As a result, member and officer relations are seen as being very positive. The systems and processes within the governance framework generally work well and no significant concerns are raised from external / independent bodies in regards to governance.

In November 2021, the Council launched the ‘Workforce Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Strategy’. This was in recognition of the need for greater action to strengthen the workplace for existing and future staff. The Council has Equality, Diversity and Inclusion networks in place, representatives from which are very positive about the Council’s commitment in this regard. The networks are highly committed to this work and would be happy to take on more of a role in influencing policy development, helping to further clarify their role in this regard would therefore be beneficial.

The Council has strengthened workforce engagement over the course of the last five years, to provide different opportunities to interact with staff across its workforce of around 3,000. This has included an Exchange Network, Virtual Managers Network and the Salford 100. Staff speak positively about the efforts to engage and involve – “*we have very regular communication between senior leaders, managers and staff. Not emails- actual conversations!*”. The Council clearly recognises that public service delivery is about people and the relationships between people. Real effort is therefore made to meaningfully recognise and celebrate effort and achievement – examples of which include the Salford ‘Big Thank You’ event recently, the Virtual Long Service Awards and annual staff awards.

The Council operates four scrutiny panels and an Overview and Scrutiny Board, with each of those panels and the board meeting very frequently at around 10 times per year (per panel/Board).

Whilst scrutiny is undertaking some valuable work, it is not universally seen by those the team spoke with that the Council was seeing the full impact of the time spent on this. The Council's previous Corporate Peer Challenge report from January 2018 identified 'the potential to develop a more strategic focus to Overview and Scrutiny'. This potential remains as yet, relatively untapped. To achieve a more strategic focus, Overview and Scrutiny may benefit from more closely aligning its work to the established Great Eight. Equally realising all of the benefits that Scrutiny can bring, will require the shared efforts and commitment of both members and officers.

The role of health scrutiny in the new health and social care / ICS landscape is not yet clear. How health scrutiny fits with the GM health scrutiny arrangements as well as decision making more widely will require further exploration. This is to ensure that wherever scrutiny is undertaken, the needs of the communities in Salford who experience significant health inequalities are suitably reflected.

4.4. Financial planning and management

Since 2010, to the end of the existing 2021/22 financial year, Salford City Council has had to manage the delivery of £222m of financial savings, central to which has been a 53% reduction in core funding provided to the Council from central Government.

Like all councils, Salford has been forced to find efficiencies, savings and to transform to deal with this position. It is a credit not only to those with direct responsibility for financial management, but to the wider team that the Council finds itself in a relatively healthy financial position, in which the Council appears to have been able to deliver a break even budget by the end of 2021/22.

The need for further efficiencies and savings remains and the current planning assumptions identify budget gaps in each of the next three years totalling £26m by the end of 2024/25. The Council is in the process of developing the 'Innovate Salford' approach to respond to this challenge, although this is currently at a very early stage. The Council has a deficit in place against the Dedicated Schools Grant of around £20m with an action plan in place aimed at resolving this position.

In dealing with this funding position, the Council has benefited – and will continue to

benefit - significantly from the increase in business rates from the pace of economic growth seen locally, as well as a growth in Council Tax income, from the increased number of homes in the City. This growth has made a significant contribution to the current and future financial prospects of the Council.

Put simply, it is hard to envisage how many of the strengths and achievements identified throughout this report would have been possible without this. This also includes the proven capability the Council has for attracting the level of additional external investment into the City from national and regional partnerships. Whilst Salford was a Tier 2 area for the recent Levelling Up Fund, the Council was successful in its application. This was helped by the Council having a well-developed pipeline of investment requirements, flowing from the vision for Salford.

Over the course of the peer challenge, the Council announced an additional £1.5m per annum of funding from April 2022 to support the Learning City priority. In some ways the growth of the City as seen through the increase in business rates and Council Tax is being used again, to directly support the Council's priority of ensuring more local residents benefit from this local growth. This action demonstrates the Council's commitment to this local priority, that the Council has prioritised its spend in this way. Whilst the Council were hoping to utilise the national Community Renewal Fund for this, the application proved unsuccessful and, in this case, the Council was able to resource this locally, given its importance to the City. Ensuring maximum impact from this investment is now crucially important.

The Council has in place a robust approach to financial management. The Council has general reserves of £13.2m which are in place to protect the Council as a reserve of last resort against unforeseen and otherwise unmanageable financial pressures. The Council expects to sustain the general reserve at this level over the course of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and is slightly above the current minimum level identified by the chief finance officer of £12.6m.

In addition to general reserves, the Council has a sufficient level of earmarked reserves at approximately c£246m. These reserves have been prudently earmarked to help the Council and City, where possible to get through any short-term crises – including the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, as well as manage existing demands on the Council. It is important for all councils to continually reflect and refresh the approach to reserves and the Council are encouraged, on the back of this peer challenge to

revise its reserves strategy. Doing and communicating this work can help ensure the position and purpose of all reserves is fully transparent to all members, officers and residents.

The Capital programme for 2021/22 of £150.8m is significantly more than 2020/21 and had spent £13.7m at Q1. There was £11.1m of slippage in the Capital Programme from 2020/21 which was carried forward into 2021/22. Whilst slippage in the delivery of capital programmes has been seen in many councils over the last 18 months, linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is recognition that slippage of the capital programme has been seen quite consistently in Salford prior to this.

The Council, prudently, operates a £20m ceiling on unsupported borrowing to fund non invest to save schemes for the capital programme each year, with capital receipts used to reduce the level of debt incurred in previous years. Having this ceiling in place forces prioritisation over schemes. The Council should put in place greater grip on the delivery of the capital programme to avoid slippage wherever possible. This will help the Council to ensure that capital spend is realising the timely, desired outcomes for the City and benefits (as appropriate) to the Council.

Capital programme development and monitoring is as important as revenue and in this regard, the Council should look at reporting both capital and revenue budget performance to Cabinet alongside wider performance information. Whilst there is reporting of progress of the capital programme, this is quite high level and does not show as clearly whether individual schemes are on track, not yet started or completed and what the material impacts of this may be. Keeping abreast of any recurring internal causes of slippage in the capital programme can help to support improvement in this regard moving forwards.

4.5. Capacity for improvement

There is a genuine 'can do' attitude in Salford which cuts across the Council but also the partners we spoke to across the City. This mindset can be seen in how the Council adapts – which the team saw this in action over the course of this Corporate Peer Challenge as the Omicron variant of COVID-19 begun to take hold in the UK and those


the team worked with adapted to the circumstances swiftly and proactively.

More widely over the course of the last 18 months the Council has led the local response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The workforce of the Council operated tirelessly throughout this period to support local communities and businesses often in roles outside of their norm. Examples of which have included setting up the ‘Spirit of Salford’ helpline and website to support the most vulnerable – which has involved responding to over 30,000 requests for food, medicine, financial support payments, vaccination appointments and test and trace. However, this was just one measure amongst many the Council put in place, working with others throughout the pandemic.

As well as being adaptable, the Council is also keen to innovate. In Salford, there is a real commitment to becoming the first 100% digitally inclusive city – which means supporting residents and businesses with the hardware, connectivity and skills required for everyday access, examples of which include:

- *[Digital Everyone](#)* – a cross-sector collaboration that supports thousands of digitally excluded residents to get online. The Council has similarly worked with the Good Things Foundation to provide digital skills training to 8,000 residents since 2017.
- *Digital Providers Network* – a cross-sector partnership to purchase devices which are gifted to the most digitally excluded residents. The Council also supports the GM Tech Fund and a direct donation scheme of tech from local businesses.
- *HOST* – which is a five floor innovation hub in Media City, providing support to start-ups, SMEs and established businesses, capitalising on the opportunities of digital, tech and creative industry clustering at Media City.

In addition to the above, the Council is equally transforming the way in which council services operate, by embracing further digitisation. Digitisation is being used to increase the efficiency of the public pound as well as to support better and earlier outcomes through prevention and early intervention. Examples of which includes the approach to welfare support and Council Tax as well as the work to support the viability of local SMEs.




This drive towards digital inclusion and digitisation is moving forwards as the Council embraces new ideas from digital ‘disruption’ to previous ways of working. For example, the Council are further supporting the development of HOST, whilst looking at the use of robotics, gaming and cyber security. All of which are aimed at bringing the benefits of the digital sector to the residents of Salford.

The Council’s approach to improvement is also seen in core service performance, as recognised by many ward members and detailed elsewhere in this report. Ward members in particular are very complimentary about the response they get from environmental services around issues they raise from the ward – such as waste collection. These are crucially important and highly visible services, which, as the Council is continuing to develop its relationship with communities through the integrated neighbourhood approach, is part of sustaining credibility and building trust out in communities.

Ward members are very often ‘the face of the Council’ at a neighbourhood level. In line with this, the Council may find opportunities to support ward members further in this role, capitalising on the Council’s existing capabilities. An example might be establishing a suitable case management system as well as sharing where possible the forthcoming, planned communication activities of the Council – where it effects key issues or areas.

The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and has set a target for Carbon neutrality across the city of 2038. The Council has established with partners a Climate Action Board and is progressing a number of high profile schemes, for example:

- A Hydro Weir on the River Irwell which will generate enough power for 200 homes per year
- A 5,000 panel solar farm being built in Little Hulton which will generate enough power for 430 homes per year
- The adaptation of 11 buildings across the corporate estate to include 1,800 solar panels and heat pumps.




This will remain a significant challenge for all areas and the Council's approach to influence partners and anchor institutions across the City will be crucial. Within what is achievable, ensuring the delivery plan remains both ambitious and deliverable with suitable monitoring, challenge and communication can help to build and sustain the pace of change, as well as build further influence against this priority.

4.6. Health and Social Care

In Salford there is a long history of partnership working on health and social care. Partnership working with the NHS is a well-established and embedded feature here. Pooled budgets have been in place in Salford since 2001 and in 2016, the Council entered into a new partnership with the Salford Royal Foundation Trust for the delivery of the Council's Adult Social Care functions, with these functions now delivered by the Salford Care Organisation. This partnership with the Salford Royal Foundation Trust has helped protect £32m of investment in Adult Social Care over this period that would have otherwise been lost to the City.

In 2019, the majority of funding for children's services, adult social care, public health and primary care services (which includes almost the entirety of the CCG budget) was pooled into a £600m Integrated Fund for health and care across the City. Having this Integrated Fund in place has enabled investment in new ways of working – such as a programme called Route 29 – an integrated service for adolescents with complex needs and support for young people to stay within their existing care placements.

Over time, the level of integration the City has progressed has given the Council a stronger influence on health across the City. The location of senior officers with responsibility for the delivery of care services, working within multi-disciplinary teams alongside health colleagues has helped to accelerate the design of new ways of working across health and social care – being in at the design stage to identify obstacles and opportunities.




In Salford, over the medium term the number of admissions to A&E is reported to have stabilised, where they have been increasing in other, similar areas. This is despite the growth of the population in Salford and is indicative of a better balance being struck across the health and social care system locally which prevents these admissions from occurring in the first place.

The Council is now going through the next major stage in health and social care integration, brought about by the Health and Social Care Bill. This leads to the formation of the Greater Manchester Integrated Care System and an entirely new landscape for the governance of health and social care in Salford. This will lead to the removal of Clinical Commissioning Groups nationally from April (at time of writing) and mean that the Council becomes the only remaining statutory partner with responsibility, solely for the City of Salford.

In light of this change, the Council are recommended to lead now on the co-design and development/refresh of the vision for the Salford Health and Social Care System which responds to the new H&SC landscape and focuses on what is required to reduce health inequalities within local communities. Because of the history of partnership working that has built up here and the relationships that have formed there are so many strong partnership aspects already in place that serve the communities of Salford well. In doing this, the Council are encouraged to keep what is good and works well within the current context. The nature of the Council's partnership with the Northern Care Alliance for example has brought real benefits to influence the health and care system locally but it does also bring a greater complexity to Salford that the other GM authorities do not have. Make sure that Salford continues to influence and does not get left behind by *"Holding on to the quality relationships that exist and make them work in the new H&SC world"*.

It is important that the Council carries into this work its collaborative nature, acting with care, but with pace to set out this vision. This requires building on the established strengths of the local system and as appropriate adding to them. This may include retaining the benefits of integration of delivery, the opportunities for co-design and practice sharing.



It will however, given the scale of change being seen nationally, also require some adaptations to the system to ensure the City can deliver for the health and care needs of the local communities of Salford into this future. In terms of how the Salford system interfaces with Greater Manchester, Salford will need to identify a clear locality lead – who can both lead and challenge in Salford and at GM for Salford.

In refreshing this vision for the health and care system in Salford, the Council should consider whether there is now a requirement to bolster capacity in ASC and whether additional senior capacity in ASC and its integration with health would help in this regard. This can help to improve the line of sight members have with adult social care – including their role in setting the strategic direction and providing democratic accountability for the difference this is making in local neighbourhoods.

Rooting the Salford model further into neighbourhoods can be a key feature of this refreshed vision and is key to early intervention and prevention – reducing hospital admissions and/or DTOCs. There are opportunities to further benefit from the opportunities of working closely with preventative and early intervention services (both with the Council, wider partners and the voluntary, community and faith sector). In doing this, there may be benefits locally of more closely connecting ASC to the other corporate services of the Council and the opportunities this can present (e.g. closer working with place based services).

It is important in doing this to support all members to understand the new H&SC landscape and what the difference will mean in their ward. Members will need to be supported to become more familiar with their democratic accountability for health and social care and where the key points of decision making, influence and challenge reside. This sits alongside the points made earlier in this report about the role of health scrutiny and presents an opportunity to look at the governance required around this, to streamline or simplify wherever possible to help ensure this approach to governance is able to represent the best interests of Salford and the needs of your local communities.

5. Next steps

It is recognised that senior political and managerial leadership will want to consider, discuss and reflect on these findings.

Both the peer team and LGA are keen to build on the relationships formed through the peer challenge. The CPC process includes a six-month check-in meeting. This will be a short, facilitated session which creates space for the council's senior leadership to update peers on its progress against the action plan and discuss next steps. In the meantime, Claire Hogan (LGA Principal Adviser) is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association. Claire is available to discuss any further support the council requires and can be contacted via claire.hogan@lancashire.gov.uk