

Key Peer Review Recommendation	Response / Action	Owner	Target Date for Implementation
1. Further develop the MTFS linking it to other strategies and plans including sensitivity analysis as soon as reasonably practical	<p>Agreed. MTFS will be updated with refreshed assumptions and further sensitivity analysis will be carried out.</p> <p>Links to the commercial strategy and other strategies e.g. capital strategy and asset management strategy (under development) will be made more explicit.</p>	<p>CFO</p> <p>CFO</p>	<p>July 2023</p> <p>Autumn 2023</p>
2. Arrange a Top team away day for officers and members post-election to agree priorities and to ensure financial stability	<p>Agreed to be held in August– to be facilitated by LGA</p>	<p>CLT</p>	<p>August 2023</p>
3. Provide mentoring support to senior leaders – members and officers	<p>Leader of the Council will have assigned mentor via LGA</p> <p>Wider Member mentoring opportunities to be discussed with Member Training and Development group – LGA support package available if required</p> <p>Officer coaching will be offered to Assistant Directors and Head of Service as a focussed learning and development approach</p> <p>Officer mentoring may be an option later in the financial year, recognising that coaching will be the focus in the more immediate term, and ensuring the appropriate focus can be given to mentoring once the coaching programme is concluded.</p>	<p>CLT</p>	<p>Autumn 2023</p> <p>Autumn 2023</p>

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<p>4. Clarification of roles for members and officers</p>	<p>See response to Action 12</p> <p>Finance training will be offered to Members to ensure they understand their roles and responsibilities with regards to the budget process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Officer led Member finance training planned in Sep/Oct, subject to the Member Training and Development group agreement</i> • <i>Consideration to also be given to LGA external finance training offer for Members</i> <p>S151 to consider the structure, capacity and technical skills within the finance team going forward, as part of the review of Strategy, Governance and Resources directorate later in the year, so that S151 can delegate appropriately within the team</p>	<p>CLT</p> <p>CFO</p> <p>CFO</p>	<p>Autumn 2023</p> <p>Autumn 2023</p> <p>December 2023</p>
<p>5. Establish a corporate finance board which will own the corporate plan and finance for authority</p>	<p>The Council already has a Finance Member Working Group which is able to make recommendations to Strategy and Resources Committee and this group should be driving decisions around the Corporate Plan and Savings Strategy to be made by that Committee.</p> <p>It is proposed that the Finance Member Working Group is renamed to the 'Finance Member Group'</p> <p>It is proposed to update the Terms of Reference for this group to ensure its remit is clear and reflects its responsibilities to steer the Corporate Plan and Savings Strategy, as set out at Appendix 3 to the Council report</p>	<p>CLT/Full Council</p>	<p>Autumn 2023</p>

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	<p>The membership of the group is also proposed to be altered to reflect the Peer Review recommendations, as set out at Appendix 4 to the Council report</p> <p>Further training and support will be considered for members of this group to ensure they are clear on their role</p>		
<p>6. All staff and members to acknowledge the urgency of the financial position. Urgent action to be taken to develop a realistic and robust plan to deliver the required efficiencies and savings to ensure ongoing financial sustainability</p>	<p>A Savings Strategy will be developed, led by the Finance Member Group to inform the MTFS</p> <p>The work to be develop this plan will be undertaken urgently, so that choices can be presented to the Strategy and Resources Committee to consider ahead of budget setting</p> <p>This will be communicated to officers and members to ensure they are aware of the urgency of the financial position and the decisions that are taken</p>	CLT/CFO	<p>Autumn 2023</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
<p>Other Peer Review Recommendations</p>			
<p>4.1 Financial Leadership</p>			
<p>7. A detailed communications plan, both internal and external to support development of the savings plan and overall financial position</p>	<p>Communications plan to be drafted setting out how the rest of the organisation understand the urgency of the financial situation and how they can help input into/ shape the savings strategy</p>	GB/CFO	<p>To be developed following 'top team' away day and then throughout year</p>

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8. Financial / budget training for both those with budget responsibility and those operating within the services who were managing the day to day details.	Budget training refresh for officers to be rolled out across the Council	CFO	Autumn 2023
9. Risk assessing the budgets to enable focus to be placed on those at higher risk of variation and time spent on those of lower risk to be reduced accordingly.	This already happens informally, with greater resource targeted at high risk areas. However the finance team to consider formally RAG rating budgets in conjunction with budget holders and adjusting frequency/extent of monitoring to reflect this	CFO	Autumn 2023
4.2 Financial strategy, planning & forecasting			
10. Further work needs to be carried out quickly to ensure that stakeholders fully understand the corporate plan and the vision for the district, key priorities and how they will be delivered.	<p>All strategic delivery partners and Leaders and Chief Execs have received the Corporate Plan. It has been shared with the Parish and Town councils Engagement Forum and One Maldon District. Members received an online and an in person presentation of the Corporate Plan. It was also presented by ELT and CLT to all Staff at the March CLT Connects meeting.</p> <p>The Council has also carried out a series of Staff Corporate Plan Priority Parties, these were well received and helped staff set SMART objectives setting out how they deliver the priorities in the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>Reporting from Quarter 2 will link back to and refer to the priorities in the Corporate Plan. All Service Managers now have Service Plans and produce Monthly highlight reports that show how the corporate</p>	GB	Autumn 2023

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	plan is being delivered. Further communications will be delivered via the newly appointed Leader, in the coming months, via media articles and social media.		
4.3 Decision making			
11. The peer team recommend that the Scrutiny Committee is more involved in the budget process to provide an appropriate level of challenge and rigour.	<p>Scrutiny and challenge of MTFS proposals should be undertaken by the Strategy and Resources Committee under MDC's constitution</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny could review previous budgetary decisions made by S&R, and feed this back to inform future work on the MTFS</p>	CFO	Autumn 2023
12. The peer team considered the councils governance arrangements and thought that a review of constitution and committees would provide an opportunity to simplify, streamline and make the decision-making process more accessible.	<p>If the Council agrees, this work could be instructed to the PGA working group for review and report back to PGA Committee.</p> <p>Rather than a Constitutional update this could also be addressed short term by mapping the decision making process. This could be activity covered by O&S Committee that does not overlap with S&R Committee</p>	CH	<p>Dec 23 if full review required</p> <p>Nov 23</p>
13. Limited financial data in some areas to support decision making, including benchmarking and capabilities of the current finance system needs to be reviewed and considered to aid the decision-making process	<p>Benchmarking data to be considered, where available, as part of budget setting for 2024/25</p> <p>Review of current finance system to be considered but noting this will involve significant human and financial resources to change.</p>	<p>Budget holders in conjunction with finance</p> <p>CFO</p>	

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<p>14. The peer team did find evidence of a project management framework but that further work needed to be done to embed the approach across the council and utilise it to support and track delivery. The role of finance within this process needed to be clearer and adds to the recommendation that strategy and finance need to work closer together.</p>	<p>Finance are involved at project sign off stage (CLT board) and project review stage (ELT board)</p> <p>However, many of our projects could be more robust around costs and the officers need to challenge more in these boards.</p> <p>The Council has a 'lessons learned' log that can be reported to help target further review and challenge.</p>	CH/CFO	Sep 2023
<p>15. The council should consider appointing an independent person to the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee</p>	<p>Agreed in principle, will need a report to PGA Committee and recommendation for agreement at Full Council</p>	CFO/CH	End of financial year
<p>4.4 Financial outcomes</p>			
<p>16. Whilst the Performance, Governance and Audit committee is working well there has been no independently reviewed self-assessment of the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee recently. This needs to happen every 5 years and is something the council has to</p>	<p>Whilst there is no statutory requirement to carry out an independent self-assessment it is accepted that it is best practice to carry this at regular intervals. Given the PGA Committee has only recently been appointed following the elections in May 2023, it is felt a self-assessment would best be carried out during 2024/25 once Members have been inducted and understand their role within the Committee more fully.</p>	CFO	End of 2024/25

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consider organising soonest to provide extra reassurance.			
4.5 Partnership & Innovation			
17. Further work needed to be carried out the commercial strategy to ensure that opportunities are understood and supported across the council and the contributions that might be made towards the budget gap.	To be considered by the Finance Member Group as part of the Savings Strategy and recommendations made as appropriate to Strategy & Resources Committee.	CFO	Autumn 2023
18. Shared Services – an investigation into the feasibility of the different shared services needed to be carried out so relationships could be developed, and options explored further. The council needed to establish some clarity on whether it was looking for savings or to provide resilience and be realistic about what each opportunity could provide.	To be considered by the Finance Member Group as part of the Savings Strategy and recommendations made as appropriate to Strategy & Resources Committee.	CLT	December 2023

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19. Consider empowering Parish and Town Councils to take on more responsibility for example delegating appropriate powers, including asset transfers e.g. parks and toilets.	To be considered by the Finance Member Group as part of the Savings Strategy and recommendations made as appropriate to Strategy & Resources Committee.	Finance Member Group	December 2023
20. Carry out a review of grant payments and outcomes to partners - imperative that the grant payments link to the Corporate Objectives and that the right and proportionate outcomes are linked to these payments.	To be considered by the Finance Member Group as part of the Savings Strategy and recommendations made as appropriate to Strategy & Resources Committee.	Finance Member Group	December 2023
21. Revisit if there is an opportunity for greater partnership working through ICP/ICB and health funding	To be considered by the Finance Member Group as part of the Savings Strategy and recommendations made as appropriate to Strategy & Resources Committee.	Finance Member Group	December 2023
22. Explore opportunities linked to its asset holdings.	To be considered within the Commercial and Asset Management Strategies	Head of Assets, Coast and Countryside	End of financial year
23. Review the council's contracts to see if there are any opportunities to create efficiencies or savings or join with other councils where contracts were due to be relet.	Procurement to review in conjunction with Services and recommend to the Finance Member Group any opportunities for consideration	Lead Specialist Procurement	

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24. Review of section 106 money to see if it is currently supporting innovation and if not, what scope could there be going forward to support innovation and the council's capital activity.	Section 106 project manager to be appointed (subject to S&R approval) to lead on this work	Head of Assets, Coast and Countryside	Autumn 2023
25. Explore use of the council building – is there greater scope to share with partners	To be considered within the Commercial and Asset Management Strategies	CLT	End of financial year
Budget setting process			
26. A review should be carried out to ensure the budget is based on actual need and priorities for the current year and past items that are no longer needed were not included.	Line by line review of existing budgets to be carried out by budget holders in conjunction with finance ahead of 2024/25 budget setting	CFO	Autumn 2023
27. The budget setting process should be developed to enable greater budget manager ownership.	See response to action 8 and action 26		
28. The level and depth of budget monitoring should be linked to a risk assessment of budgets so resources are targeted in the right area.	See response to action 9		

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29. A clear transparent process on the rationale and prioritisation of growth bids is needed.	Growth to only be considered in exceptional circumstances e.g. unavoidable pressures	CLT	Autumn 2023
30. A Corporate Finance board should be established whose focus is on the budget to give greater focus and accountability to delivering on services, project and programmes and managing the budget gap.	See response to action 5		
31. The council needs to have a conversation, potentially as part of the top team away day, to discuss what type of council they wanted to be and what service standards were appropriate for the district and within the budget constraints that were being faced	See response to action 2		
A check that the strategic financial processes are robust			
32. Enough capacity to enable training and continuing professional development for the finance team.	See response to action 4		

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33. Finance training available for budget holders and other staff so that they could understand the financial processes within the council, the financial challenges and context and their role in supporting and providing a solution.	See response to action 8		
34. work needed to be carried to ensure that any new members and existing members were supported and confident in their roles. This included training for chairs as well as understanding financial governance.	See response to action 4		
35. mentoring be offered to senior officers and members within the council to ensure that they felt supported, had an opportunity to test and challenge their ideas and decisions for the future.	See response to action 3		
36. A self-assessment against the CIPFA Financial Management code would help identify areas where further improvements could be made	An initial review of compliance against the code was carried out by BDO in 2020. A follow up review needs to be completed during 2023 to identify where further improvements could be made	CFO	End of financial year

KEY:

CFO Chief Finance Officer
CH Programmes, Performance and Governance Manager
CIPFA The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CLT Corporate Leadership Team
ELT Extended Leadership Team
GB Strategy, Policy and Communications Manager
LGA Local Government Association
MDC Maldon District Council
MTFS Medium Term Financial Strategy
O&S Overview and Scrutiny
PGA Performance, Governance and Audit
RAG Responsible Authorities Group
S151 Section 151
SMART Strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely
S&R Strategy and Resources