LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

London Borough of Redbridge

Friday 5th June 2026

Feedback



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1. Introduction

The council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) during 15 – 18 July 2025 and promptly published the full report with an action plan.

The Progress Review is an integral part of the CPC process. Taking place approximately ten months after the CPC, it is designed to provide space for the council's senior leadership to:

- Receive feedback from peers on the early progress made by the council against the CPC recommendations and the council's RAG rated CPC Action Plan.
- Consider peers' reflections on any new opportunities or challenges that may have arisen since the peer team were 'on-site' including any further support needs
- Discuss any early impact or learning from the progress made to date

The LGA would like to thank the London Borough of Redbridge for their commitment to sector led improvement. This Progress Review was the next step in an ongoing, open and close relationship that the council has with LGA sector support.

2. Summary of the approach

The Progress Review at the London Borough of Redbridge took place (onsite) on Friday 5th June 2026.

The Progress Review focussed on each of the recommendations from the CPC, under the following theme headings:

1. **Local priorities and outcomes**
    a. Recommendation 1 - Vision for Redbridge
    b. Recommendation 3 – Prioritisation
    c. Recommendation 10 - Communications and promoting Redbridge
2. **Place leadership**
    a. Recommendation 2 – Rebuild the Borough Partnership

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b. Recommendation 5 – Regeneration

3. **Financial planning and management**

    a. Recommendation 4 - Financial sustainability and organisational grip

4. **Capacity for improvement / Modernisation**

    a. Recommendation 6 - Modernisation Programme

    b. Recommendation 7 - Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

    c. Recommendation 8 – HR, OD and appraisals

    d. Recommendation 9 – Member development

For this Progress Review, the following members of the original CPC team were involved:

- Will Tuckley, Managing Director Commissioner, Slough Borough Council
- Cllr Shantanu Rajawat, Leader, London Borough of Hounslow
- Phil Watts, Chief Operating Officer (S151 Officer), Medway Council
- Sam Dennis, Interim Chief Executive, Derby City Council
- Nohaila Alavi, Director of Strategy, Transformation, Equalities and Performance, London Borough of Lewisham
- Harry Parker, LGA Peer Challenge Manager

3. Progress Review - Feedback

It was evident to the peer team that the council has taken the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC), and subsequent reviews and inspections seriously. This includes the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) review, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment of Adult Social Care and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Area Inspection. The findings from some of these reviews have been significantly challenging for the council. However, the peer team heard and saw evidence of a clear commitment to respond constructively and to make the improvements required.

Since the CPC, there has been a notable focus on strengthening the council's

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organisational foundations. This includes increasing senior capacity, improving financial oversight and resetting the governance of the Modernisation Programme.

The return of the administration following the May 2026 elections provides political stability for the organisation. As does the significant recruitment activity, with more than 50 permanent Heads of Service, Directors and Executive Directors recruited since July 2025. This has strengthened capacity and helped provide a more stable platform for delivery.

However, while the peer team saw good intent, positive direction and many of the right foundations being put in place, much of the council's improvement activity remains in development, draft, initiation or early implementation. Less is yet complete and demonstrating sustained impact. At the same time, the council's financial position has become more challenging, and some external inspections have resulted in particularly difficult findings. The challenges facing the council are considerable.

Strong relationships between the members and senior officers are the fundamental foundation for the council to deliver the required improvements. These relationships require continued attention, particularly given the scale of change, the financial context and the difficult decisions ahead.

The peer team heard recognition that Cabinet and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) would benefit from spending more time together. The peer team would encourage the council to invest in these relationships and create dedicated time to strengthen shared understanding, build trust and support collective ownership of the council's priorities.

There remains a need to ensure clarity and consistency around the respective roles of members and officers. Strong member-officer relationships are a feature of effective councils and should be actively developed and supported through both formal and informal opportunities.

3.1. Local priorities and outcomes

No.	Original CPC Recommendation – Vision for Redbridge
1	Co-develop a clear and ambitious vision that captures the borough's unique strengths, ambitions and future direction, acting as a consistent reference

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	point for the organisation and its partners. This vision should guide decision-making, align priorities, and be widely recognised by residents, businesses, and stakeholders as *"the language of Redbridge."* The council should: a) Co-design the vision – Engage members, staff and partners to shape this vision. b) Align with strategic plans – Ensure the vision directly informs new Redbridge Plan (2026-2030) and is embedded as the "golden thread" through service plans, team objectives and individual appraisals. c) Communicate the vision - Develop and implement a communications and engagement plan to promote the vision consistently and widely. d) Basis for external engagement - Use the vision to frame external messaging, partnership working, and investment strategies, demonstrating a clear, confident and unified direction for the borough.

Progress has been made in developing a clearer vision for Redbridge and the new Corporate Plan. The emerging Borough Vision is intended to set out a longer-term, outward-facing shared ambition for Redbridge as a place, while the Corporate Plan will translate this into a four-year delivery framework for the council, supported by organisational priorities and performance measures. The Corporate Plan is currently in development and is expected to be considered by Cabinet in September 2026.

The peer team was encouraged by the council's focus on creating a clearer long-term strategic narrative for Redbridge, based around a smaller number of outcome-led themes. This provides an opportunity to articulate more confidently what makes Redbridge distinctive, what the borough wants to achieve over the medium to long term and how the council and its partners will contribute to that ambition.

The peer team heard about the engagement activity that has informed the development of the Borough Vision and Corporate Plan. This included the Residents' Survey, an online Borough Vision survey and targeted engagement and focus groups with underrepresented groups. This engagement was described as more deliberate and inclusive than previously.

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The council should be encouraged by the findings from the Residents' Survey. Local area satisfaction stands at 89 per cent, council satisfaction at 75 per cent and trust in the council at 84 per cent. These measures have improved since the 2021 survey and compare positively against London and national benchmarks.

However, the survey also highlights important areas for continued focus. In particular, only 49 per cent of residents said they feel safe after dark, which is below both London and national comparators. The peer team heard how this is informing work on Ilford regeneration, public realm, wayfinding and violence against women and girls.

Positively, the development of the Corporate Plan has been undertaken in parallel with the Borough Vision. This is important in establishing a clear "golden thread" between long-term ambition, corporate priorities and service-level delivery. The next step will be to ensure this is consistently embedded through team plans, appraisals and performance reporting.

Once agreed, the council should give careful attention to how the Borough Vision is communicated and used. It should become the shared language of Redbridge: guiding decision-making, shaping partnership conversations, informing external promotion and providing a consistent reference point for Redbridge.

No.	Original CPC Recommendation – Prioritisation
3	Adopt a more disciplined and deliberate approach to prioritisation, ensuring that resources and organisational capacity are concentrated on a smaller number of clearly defined, achievable priorities. This approach should guide both the remainder of the current Redbridge Plan and the development of the next plan (2026-2030). The council should: a) Focus on agreed core priorities - Deliver the refined set of corporate priorities through to 2026, avoiding the addition of new priorities unless lower-priority activity is stopped or scaled back. b) Align resources to priorities - Review current programmes and projects, reducing or ceasing lower-priority activities to free up capacity and funding for the most critical objectives.

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	c) Test future priorities for deliverability - As part of preparing the Redbridge Plan 2026-2030, assess all proposed priorities against available financial and organisational capacity to ensure they are realistic and achievable.

Prioritisation remains critical for Redbridge given the scale of the council's financial challenge, the breadth of organisational change underway and the level of ambition for the borough. This has become more important as the council has entered a period of Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) and works towards reducing reliance on this within three years.

The development of the new Corporate Plan provides an important opportunity to embed a disciplined approach to prioritisation. The council shared with the peer team that a more strategic approach has been adopted for the development of the new Corporate Plan, ensuring it is ambitious while also reflecting the central importance of financial sustainability. Ambition for Redbridge remains important as this can be the unifying cause for the organisation, but it must be matched by clear choices about what is deliverable within available financial and organisational capacity constraints.

Service planning will be a key mechanism for translating this into practice. Alongside the Corporate Plan, service plans should be used to test deliverability, align resources and identify where lower-priority or unsustainable activity needs to be reduced or stopped.

It will also be fundamental to ensure clear alignment between the Corporate Plan, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and the Modernisation Programme. This will be essential in ensuring that the council's priorities are realistic, resourced and capable of supporting long-term financial sustainability.

No.	Original CPC Recommendation – Communications and promoting Redbridge
10	Develop an overarching Communications and Engagement Strategy to clearly articulate the council's vision, ambitions and priorities - both internally and externally. Use this strategy to raise the borough's profile as a place to invest.

Work is underway to develop the council's overarching Communications and

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Engagement Strategy. This will be important in supporting the launch of the new Corporate Plan and Borough Vision. The communications function will have an important role in explaining the council's priorities and promoting Redbridge as a place.

Although the strategy is still in development, the peer team heard and saw evidence of positive progress in the council's external communications. The *Redbridge in Action* campaign, which ran between December 2025 and March 2026, achieved good engagement and helped strengthen the visibility of council services and delivery.

The campaign reflected a notable shift in the council's communications style, with greater use of narrative-led video, stronger branding and a clearer emphasis on storytelling. This is helping the council present its work in a more accessible and engaging way.

The peer team was pleased to hear that communications has become more visible and prominent within the organisation. The Leader has featured positively in front-facing communications, and the council is making stronger use of social media and targeted campaigns to reach residents.

The council has also undertaken social media benchmarking against comparable councils, which is a positive step. This has helped assess the impact of the council's move towards a more video-led approach and indicates stronger performance across social media platforms.

The council should build on this momentum. A proactive communications approach will require consistent engagement from all service areas and should not be seen solely as the responsibility of the communications team. The peer team heard that engagement with the communications team can be inconsistent, and that with some services it can be difficult to identify communications opportunities. As the Communications and Engagement Strategy is developed, the council should adopt an increasingly corporate, whole-council approach to communications.

3.2. Place leadership

No.	Original CPC Recommendation – Rebuild the Borough Partnership

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2	Rebuild the Redbridge Borough Partnership around a shared long-term ambition for the borough, with co-owned thematic priorities and outcomes for all partners: a) Co-produce a refreshed Borough Plan. Use this as the basis for deeper collaboration with health, education, business and the Community and Voluntary Sector (CVS). b) Health and social care - Bring the health and care system partners together to agree a bold Redbridge systems strategy and model of integrated working and the benefits this will enable for residents and partners. c) Education – More proactively engage with the 16+ and adult education sector on skills pathways and ensure a continued focus on SEND recovery.

The Redbridge Borough Partnership has not yet been formally re-established. The peer team recognises that the council has been waiting for the development of the new Borough Vision and Corporate Plan to progress before resetting the partnership arrangements. This is understandable, as the partnership should be shaped around a clear shared ambition for Redbridge as a place.

However, the peer team continues to see the Borough Partnership as an important mechanism for strategic place leadership. Once the Borough Vision and Corporate Plan are agreed, there will be an important opportunity to bring partners together around a shared set of priorities and intended outcomes for the borough.

The council is uniquely positioned to convene this partnership. Following the May 2026 elections, the return of the administration provides a democratic mandate and a point of stability from which to bring public sector partners, the community and voluntary sector (CVS), business and other stakeholders together.

The peer team would encourage the council to prioritise the re-establishment of the Borough Partnership. It should provide a forum for collective leadership, shared accountability and practical delivery of the Vision for Redbridge. It should also support deeper collaboration on the issues that no single organisation can address

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alone.

The CVS is a key partner in the Borough Partnership, and strengthening this relationship remains an important area of ongoing work. The peer team heard that the council has taken a positive step by holding a cross-service workshop focused on its strategic relationship with the sector, including current partnership arrangements, shared objectives and opportunities for improvement.

The council has also set out an intention to move away from funding discrete activities in isolation towards a more strategic approach, aligned to corporate priorities and shared outcomes for residents. This shift will be particularly important given the council's financial context, the scale of savings required through the MTFS and Modernisation Programme, and the need to consider different models of service delivery.

The peer team would encourage the council to deepen its engagement with the sector as both a strategic and delivery partner. As the council considers future service models and its route out of EFS, there is an opportunity to work with the sector to design more preventative and sustainable approaches, rather than relying on reductions to existing provision.

The council's Adult Social Care services were inspected by the CQC in 2025 and rated as 'Requires Improvement'. Safeguarding and governance, management and sustainability were assessed as 'Inadequate'. The council has acknowledged the seriousness of these findings and the scale of improvement required.

Following the inspection outcome and subsequent Section 50 notification from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), the council submitted its improvement plan to DHSC in April 2026. The plan sets out a substantial programme of work, now underway, to address the areas identified for improvement and strengthen arrangements across adult social care and health.

The peer team also heard that there is an accepted need to reset and strengthen relationships with health partners, including the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and North-East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT). The review and refresh of the Section 75 agreement has been paused while the new social care and NELFT leadership teams focus on rebuilding relationships and strengthening the partnership

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foundations. The council has recently commissioned a review of the Section 75 arrangements, and completing this review and implementing agreed recommendations will be an important operational priority for 2026/27.

Children's social care continues to be a significant strength for Redbridge. The peer team heard positive reflections on the continued strength of children's services, including the council's role as a Family First for Children Pathfinder and the strong external recognition this area of work has received.

However, the contrast between the strength of children's social care and the findings from the SEND Area Inspection is stark. The council and partners have recognised that this is not acceptable and that SEND improvement is one of the most significant challenges facing the council and the wider local area partnership.

The Redbridge SEND and Alternative Provision Priority Action Plan was developed in response to the May 2025 local area inspection, which identified widespread and systemic failings across education, health and care services for children and young people with SEND. The peer team heard that a comprehensive improvement programme is now in place, with shared delivery across partners and external scrutiny from regulators and parent representatives.

The Redbridge SEND and Alternative Provision Priority Action Plan was developed in response to the May 2025 local area inspection, which identified widespread and systemic failings across education, health and care services for children and young people with SEND.

The peer team also noted the Memorandum of Understanding between the council, the ICB and Empowering Parents Together. This is a positive and important step. It is notable for its candid acknowledgement of the breakdown in trust, power imbalance, emotional impact on families and previous weaknesses in co-production.

There is evidence of serious intent to rebuild trust with families, strengthen co-production and improve partnership working. However, the scale of improvement required is considerable, and progress will need to be visible to children, young people and families.

SEND recovery should remain a principal priority for the council and the wider

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partnership. The peer team would encourage the council to continue looking outward, make use of available external support and consider whether targeted additional investment is required for a focused period to deliver the pace and impact needed.

No.	Original CPC Recommendation – Regeneration
5	Develop an inward investment strategy, aligned with the council's vision and regeneration plans. Create a clear masterplan for Ilford and use council assets and partnerships to attract developers, businesses and investors. Promote Redbridge with greater confidence at a pan-London level with Local London, London Councils and the Greater London Authority (GLA), target investment forums and national level conversations with bodies such as Homes England.

The peer team was encouraged to hear that regeneration and placemaking are expected to feature prominently in the emerging Borough Vision and Corporate Plan, helping to position growth as a core priority for Redbridge.

The council has developed an inward investment strategy, and Redbridge, particularly Ilford, has featured prominently in the Local London Investment Prospectus. These are positive steps in building a clearer investment proposition and raising the borough's profile. The planned establishment of an Investment and Developer Forum, with the first meeting intended for the autumn, is also a welcome development. The peer team would encourage the council to ensure this takes place and is used as a practical mechanism to build relationships with developers, investors and strategic partners.

The council recognises that Redbridge has previously been perceived by some as a difficult place to do business, and that it needs to present a clearer and more confident message to the market. The peer team heard a clear commitment to change this narrative and to position Redbridge as a place that is *"open for business".*

Progress has also been made in developing a clearer masterplanning framework for Ilford town centre. The Ilford Opportunity Area Planning Framework (OAPF) is

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helping to move the council from ambition towards delivery readiness, providing an updated spatial framework to guide the regeneration. The OAPF establishes a framework for accommodating significant growth in Ilford and identifies capacity for approximately 5,950 new homes.

In parallel, progress on the new Local Plan is an important foundation for Redbridge's wider regeneration ambitions. The council is about to set out plans for the development of a new Local Plan, which should provide greater certainty for residents, developers and partners about the borough's long-term approach to growth. This will be an important milestone to give the council a strong basis to shape growth proactively, rather than respond defensively to speculative development. The peer team recognises that this will be a complex and potentially contentious process, but it will be critical to delivering the council's regeneration ambitions successfully.

A key recommendation from the CPC was for the council to be more ambitious and outward facing in promoting Redbridge as a place to invest. Positive progress has been made through the development of the Invest Redbridge brand and prospectus, which sets out a clearer investment offer for the borough. Redbridge has also been actively promoted through the Local London Investment Prospectus, and the council's attendance at UKREiiF provided an opportunity to showcase the borough's investment pipeline and strengthen relationships with strategic partners.

Strong external relationships will be critical to realising Redbridge's regeneration ambitions. The council should continue to strengthen its influence with regional and national partners, such as the GLA and Homes England. The peer team also sees a significant opportunity for the council to make fuller use of Redbridge's role in Local London, particularly given that the partnership is hosted by the council and both the Leader and Chief Executive hold leadership roles. The council should look to move beyond simply hosting Local London to actively driving the sub-regional partnership and harness it for the benefit of Redbridge.

3.3. Financial planning and management

No.	Original CPC Recommendation – Financial sustainability and organisational

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	grip
4	Address the immediate and systemic financial pressures through decisive action, stronger organisational grip and improved financial discipline. This should be underpinned by robust demand management, improved commissioning and procurement and strengthened budget ownership. The council should: a) Savings and income generation - Ensure all savings, income generation, and service delivery model options are considered. Be prepared to deprioritise or stop unaffordable activities, supported by a clear rationale and impact assessments. b) Demand management - Develop and implement targeted strategies in high-pressure areas, particularly temporary accommodation, adult social care and Children's services. This should include regular unit cost and care package reviews. c) Budget ownership and literacy - Improve financial awareness and accountability across members and officers, supported by organisational development, better budget visibility and the successful implementation of the new finance system. d) Commissioning, procurement and contract management - Act promptly on the corporate commissioning review, finalise and maintain a centralised contracts register and ensure robust business case discipline for all major projects. e) Independent reviews and audit - Take the advice and recommendations from the CIPFA resilience review very seriously. And improve the implementation of accepted internal and external audit recommendations within agreed timescales. f) Capital programme - Undertake a comprehensive review of the capital programme to ensure it is both affordable and deliverable, with realistic timelines and robust governance.

The council's financial position has deteriorated further since the July 2025 CPC. The

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council reported an overspend of £27.1m for 2025/26, with total service overspends of £51.6m. The consistency and scale of overspending in recent years has placed considerable pressure on the council's reserves and is not sustainable.

The reserves position has also weakened considerably, General Fund balances were forecast to be just £3.5m at 31 March 2026, which the Section 151 Officer has described as *"wholly insufficient for an organisation of Redbridge's scale and complexity".* The council's stated ambition is therefore to rebuild reserves over time towards a level equivalent to around 20 per cent of net expenditure (c. £70m), comprising a 10 per cent General Fund balance and a 10 per cent Business Risk Reserve.

Redbridge's financial position has reached a point where the council was unable to balance its budget without EFS. The council has applied for, and received in-principle agreement to, £70m of EFS for 2026/27, as part of a wider request for £126m over three years.

The council is approaching EFS as short-term flexibility to right-size the revenue budget, replenish reserves and provide funding to enable the Modernisation Programme. Redbridge is assuming that EFS will be financed through external borrowing, which will add further revenue pressure through increased capital financing costs over the medium to long term. It is therefore essential that the council grasps the window of opportunity provided by EFS to address the causes of overspending, strengthen demand management and deliver recurrent savings.

Despite the seriousness of the financial position, the peer team saw evidence that the council has developed a stronger understanding of the scale of the challenge and has put improved arrangements in place to provide greater organisational grip. The establishment of the Redbridge Recovery Board and the internal Financial Strategy Board are positive steps in strengthening oversight and assurance of the council's financial position.

The MTFS remains highly challenging and is not balanced beyond 2026/27. Over the five-year period to 2030/31, the council is forecasting a cumulative funding gap of £96.4m, even after assumed maximum council tax increases. The scale of this challenge should not be underestimated and reinforces the need for difficult

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decisions to be taken at pace.

The peer team would encourage the council to use the start of the electoral term to take the difficult decisions required to put the organisation on a more sustainable footing. This should include a clear assessment of statutory requirements, minimum viable service levels and the relative cost and impact of discretionary activity. The council should make full use of benchmarking information to understand how Redbridge's service offer compares with similar councils. All savings and income opportunities will need to be considered, including areas that may be politically difficult, such as parking income, green waste charging, waste collection frequency and the future shape of the library service. These choices will require clear rationale and careful assessment of impact, but they should not be deferred if the council is to reduce reliance on EFS and rebuild financial resilience.

Delivering savings and maximising income will be critical to meeting the council's financial challenge. Savings delivery remains an area of risk. In 2025/26, the council delivered 67 per cent (£14.5m) of budgeted savings. For 2026/27, it must deliver approximately £17m of savings and mitigations. It will be important that the council strengthens delivery against agreed savings targets, particularly as the savings requirement becomes considerably greater in later years of the MTFS.

The peer team was encouraged to hear that the council has recruited a Commercial Director and is seeking to take a more proactive and ambitious approach to income generation. Equally important will be ensuring that commercial considerations are embedded in commissioning and procurement activity, so that value for money is consistently secured.

The council has also made progress through Project STRIVE, which forms part of the Modernisation Programme and has introduced spending controls and refreshed processes for commissioning, procurement and contract management. This is a positive response to the need for stronger financial grip and commercial capability across the organisation. The programme is targeting cumulative savings of between £15.5m and £21m over three years.

The council commissioned a council-wide diagnostic review of procurement, commissioning and contract management. The review found that while Redbridge

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has the foundations of a compliant procurement system, there were significant weaknesses in how arrangements operated in practice. These included a lack of a single corporate view of spend and contracts, weaknesses in contract management capacity and issues with the quality of the contracts register.

However, progress has been made on establishing a community of practice and on work to improve the quality of contract information. The council recognises that considerable further work is needed, particularly on contract management and the development of a clear forward plan of contracts. It will be particularly important that the council establishes and maintains a single corporate contracts register, embeds clear and consistently understood procurement processes, and continues to develop a culture in which contract management is seen not simply as a compliance function, but as a direct mechanism for delivering savings and securing value for money.

A fundamental element of achieving financial sustainability will be managing demand and suppressing budget growth wherever possible. This is particularly important in high-demand areas, with planned growth across the MTFS totalling £114m, largely reflecting pressures in adult social care and temporary accommodation. While some growth will be unavoidable, the council will need to demonstrate clear processes, controls and interventions to reduce demand, manage unit costs and challenge assumptions about future growth.

The council's external auditors again issued a disclaimed opinion for the 2024/25 accounts. This means the council has now received disclaimed opinions for four consecutive years. The peer team heard clear recognition that this is unacceptable and that urgent improvement is required in the timeliness and quality of financial reporting, including the evidence and working papers provided to auditors.

Internal audit also continues to provide an opinion of Limited Assurance. The council will need to respond promptly and fully to recommendations from internal audit, external audit and the CIPFA resilience review. The peer team was assured that these recommendations have been incorporated into the Recovery Plan, where they are subject to Recovery Board oversight and routine progress tracking.

During the CPC, the peer team recommended that the council undertake a comprehensive review of the capital programme to ensure it is affordable and

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deliverable, with realistic timelines and robust governance. Positively, the council has begun this review and has been seeking to remove or reprofile schemes that are unrealistic or undeliverable.

Capital programme slippage, however, remains significant and persistent. In 2025/26, total slippage was £243.2m (£186.4m in the General Fund and £56.8m in the HRA). While non-delivery has enabled the provision for capital financing costs to be reduced, the substantial year on year level of slippage highlights the need for strengthened programme governance and improved delivery oversight.

The establishment of the Capital Programmes Board is a positive step. This provides a single corporate forum with strategic oversight of the council's capital programme and should help establish clearer governance pathways for capital projects.

Despite some revisions, the forecast capital programme and associated borrowing remain very considerable over the MTFS period. Gross external debt is expected to increase from £562m at March 2026 to £980m by March 2031, reflecting borrowing to finance the capital programme as well as borrowing associated with EFS. The council recognises that borrowing requirements may vary depending on the level of capital receipts achieved. Debt servicing costs will place increasing pressure on revenue budgets, and the council should continue to test whether the scale of its capital ambition remains affordable.

The council should also ensure that weaknesses in capital delivery are not repeated in the delivery of savings or the Modernisation Programme. Improving capital programme delivery is an important operational priority for 2026/27.

During the CPC, the peer team recommended that the council take steps to improve financial awareness and accountability across the organisation. The peer team heard that there remains further work to do in this area. CIPFA identified mixed financial management maturity across the organisation, describing a culture lacking *"financial curiosity"* and a need to strengthen understanding of cost drivers and value for money.

The organisational development offer around financial training is due to be considered as part of the new People Strategy. This provides an important opportunity to strengthen financial literacy and embed a wider culture of

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accountability, in which budget holders are expected to manage spend within budget and take ownership of savings delivery.

3.4. Capacity for improvement / Modernisation

No.	Original CPC Recommendation – Modernisation Programme
6	Ensure the modernisation programme has clear objectives, robust governance, defined delivery milestones and strong staff engagement. Build confidence that modernisation is not purely structural but is equally focused on cultural and service improvements. The council should: a) Define the destination – Set out and communicate a high-level vision and desired future state for the modernisation programme, ensuring alignment with the refreshed vision and the new Redbridge Plan. b) Prioritise and phase delivery – Develop a clear roadmap that sequences delivery across the programme's workstreams. c) Develop and establish a robust benefits framework – Quantify expected financial and non-financial outcomes, link them to the MTFS, and ensure they are tracked, reported and reviewed regularly. d) Strengthen accountability - Ensure the programme is a genuinely cross-council initiative, with collective ownership at ELT, Operational Directors and Head of Service level, supported by clear roles, decision-making protocols and escalation routes. e) Embed communication and engagement – Implement a structured communications and engagement plan so staff, members and partners understand the programme's purpose, progress and their role in delivery. f) Build enabling capacity – Ensure enabling functions (Digital/IT, HR, Finance) are fit for purpose and sufficiently resourced to support delivery at pace and scale. Invest in upgrades or replacements where necessary. g) Learn from past change – Incorporate lessons from previous

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	transformation programmes, fostering a culture of openness and psychological safety so staff feel confident to contribute ideas and challenge constructively.

The Modernisation Programme continues to be positioned as a central vehicle for the council's financial recovery and wider organisational transformation. Since the CPC, new organisational leadership for the programme has been put in place and has sought to reset the programme and governance arrangements.

The objectives of the Modernisation Programme are ambitious. The peer team noted that the programme portfolio demonstrates a good balance between financial savings initiatives and service improvement projects, with a clear rationale for the inclusion and prioritisation of each. The programme is expected to support the delivery of £70m savings while also improving the resident experience. Positively, the council is clear that modernisation is not solely a savings programme, but a means of improving how the organisation works and how services are delivered.

The programme remains at an early stage of mobilisation, with a number of projects moving through scoping and initiation. The next phase will be critical. The council now needs to move from programme design into delivery at pace, with clear milestones and tangible outcomes.

The peer team continues to see the development of a clear programme roadmap as important. This should set out sequencing and delivery milestones. The peer team did, however, observe evidence of thoughtful prioritisation and sequencing within the programme. For example, foundational work on establishment data has been prioritised early, recognising that it will support delivery across several subsequent workstreams. The next step is to translate this thinking into a comprehensive programme roadmap. A robust benefits framework will also be essential. The peer team agrees with CIPFA's assessment that the programme is highly ambitious and not yet sufficiently robust. Programme management maturity is improving, but benefits realisation remains an area requiring further development.

The peer team noted the work underway to integrate programme performance and financial savings tracking. This should provide earlier visibility of delivery risks and enable timely corrective action. It will be important that this work is linked clearly to

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the MTFS.

Ownership and accountability will be fundamental to the success of the Modernisation Programme. The peer team heard that a good level of buy-in has been achieved at Head of Service, Director and ELT level, reflecting the current stage of the programme. This is positive and provides an important platform for delivery. The next phase will require this ownership to continue to cascade and embed across the wider organisation, so that modernisation is understood not as the responsibility of a central programme team, but as a core responsibility for the whole organisation.

The significant recruitment of senior leaders since the CPC represents an important opportunity. New leaders joining the organisation can be clear from the outset about the council's expectations and their role in delivering modernisation.

The peer team was encouraged to hear that a dedicated Modernisation Hub has been developed, providing a single platform for staff to access programme news, updates and resources.

A key strand of the programme is *"getting the basics right"*, including strengthening enabling functions so that they have the skills and capacity needed to support transformation. Positively, the council has recruited permanent senior leadership across key enabling functions.

Optimising the council's assets and estate is an important workstream within the Modernisation Programme. The council has commissioned a Strategic Asset Review of Redbridge's substantial property portfolio, which comprises over 600 property interests with an estimated book value of over £800m.

Positively, this review should provide the council with a clearer baseline understanding of what it owns, how assets are currently performing and how the estate could better support service delivery and financial sustainability. The review also opens up significant opportunities for disposals and rationalisation, which could help offset, at least in part, the need to borrow for EFS. However, the council should ensure that asset decisions are not driven solely by short-term capital receipts but are considered alongside long-term service needs and regeneration opportunities.

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The next stage will be critical. The review has provided an evidence base, but the council now needs to determine what it wants to do with its assets through a formal strategic asset strategy. This should be a whole-council endeavour, with the Place Board providing an important forum for considering the estate and assets holistically. The peer team would encourage the council to prioritise the development of this strategic asset strategy.

No.	Original CPC Recommendation – Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
7	Strengthen and elevate the council's EDI approach. Key actions should include: a) Strengthening the EDI Board by ensuring representation from the very top of the organisation. b) Empowering and raising the profile of staff networks with ELT/Director level sponsorship and protected time for staff to participate in network activity from all parts of the council. c) Introducing targeted training and development programmes such as a diverse leaders programme. d) Integrating EDI outcomes into the corporate scorecard and business planning.

The council is developing a workforce EDI strategy alongside the new People Strategy. The associated delivery plan will be important in ensuring that the council's positive intentions on EDI are translated into clear actions.

The council has also made changes to the EDI Board, which is now chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive. Redbridge has also appointed a dedicated EDI Manager to provide capacity and co-ordinate the council's work on EDI.

The peer team continued to see real strength in the council's staff networks. These operate with a degree of autonomy, have an allocated budget and have supported a range of events, celebrations and awareness-raising activity. The peer team was particularly impressed by the collaborative working between networks, which is a real asset to the organisation.

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The incorporation of an EDI-specific category for EDI Champions within the Recognising Redbridge Staff Awards scheme is a positive step in raising the profile of this work and recognising the contribution of staff who participate in the networks.

The council has an aspiration for its workforce and senior leadership to reflect the diversity of the borough. The peer team would again encourage the council to explore targeted initiatives to support this, including a diverse leaders programme and reverse mentoring for senior leaders.

No.	Original CPC Recommendation – HR, OD and appraisals
8	Ensure the HR service is fit for purpose, able to meet organisational needs and aligned to strategic priorities. This should include modern systems, clear processes and the capability to provide high-quality advice and support to managers. As immediate priorities: a) Strengthen organisational development by investing in staff learning, leadership and progression. Develop a dedicated Organisational Development Strategy, aligned to an overarching People Strategy. b) Prioritise improving appraisal completion rates by setting clear corporate expectations and holding managers accountable for delivery. Implement a digital system to record, manage and monitor appraisal objectives, ensuring they are consistently linked to organisational priorities and used to drive performance.

The council is developing a new People Strategy, which is an important step in establishing a stronger framework for workforce planning, culture and organisational development.

Positively, the council has responded to the CPC recommendation to refresh its organisational values and engage staff in the process. Redbridge has held staff workshops, including a dedicated managers' conference, to support the identification of emerging values. A formal behavioural framework is also being developed alongside the new values.

This work is taking place during a period of significant organisational change. The peer team recognises that embedding refreshed values across the organisation will

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take time. During the Progress Review, the peer team heard that the values are still being embedded and have not yet fully resonated across the organisation. Continued communication and visible leadership will be important in ensuring the values become embedded and meaningful to staff.

There remains an opportunity to strengthen the council's approach to organisational development. In line with the new People Strategy, a refreshed approach to staff development and progression would be welcomed. The peer team would encourage the council to explore coaching and mentoring opportunities, including how internal talent can be better nurtured and supported.

Appraisal completion and recording rates remain an area requiring improvement. Positively, HR is leading work to refresh the appraisal framework so that individual objectives are more clearly aligned to Corporate Plan priorities and relevant service plan outcomes. The process now requires managers to confirm completion through iTrent, enabling completion rates and objectives to be more accurately monitored.

The peer team was encouraged by the close alignment between the HR function and the wider Modernisation Programme. HR is well positioned to act as a strategic enabler of organisational change rather than solely as a transactional support service. The Establishment Control project provides a good example of HR acting as an enabling function, strengthening workforce planning, improving establishment data and supporting financial sustainability. Looking ahead, HR will also play a critical role in supporting organisational redesign, ensuring that change management and workforce transition arrangements effectively support future service redesign.

No.	Original CPC Recommendation – Member development
9	Refresh the council's member development offer ahead of the 2026 elections. Reflect on feedback from members and officers. This refreshed programme should include a robust induction programme, tailored training for key roles (e.g. Cabinet members, committee chairs), with senior members encouraged to take up external peer mentoring and other leadership opportunities, such as the LGA's leadership programmes. The council should also consider establishing a cross-party member development working group to oversee

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	and champion ongoing personal development.

Following the May 2026 local elections, the council delivered an induction programme for new and returning members, alongside more tailored development for key roles, including Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs.

The establishment of a cross-party Member Development Working Group is also a positive step. This should provide oversight of the member development programme and help shape improvements. The peer team would encourage the council to build on the induction programme by developing a forward plan of member development activity throughout the year, co-designed with members through the working group.

The peer team would also continue to encourage senior members to take up the offer of external peer mentoring and other development opportunities, such as the LGA's leadership programmes.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank the London Borough of Redbridge for undertaking an LGA CPC Progress Review.

We appreciate that senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

Under the umbrella of LGA sector-led improvement, there is an on-going offer of support to councils. The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas identified for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this.

Mona Sehgal, London Principal Adviser, is the main point of contact between the authority and the LGA and their e-mail address is mona.sehgal@local.gov.uk.

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