

Warrington Borough Council - Improvement and Recovery Plan



January 2026



WARRINGTON
Borough Council

Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction.....	4
Warrington the place	4
Warrington the council.....	5
What led to the best value notice?	6
The best value inspection outcome	7
Ministerial directions – a summary	7
The appointment of our Ministerial Envoys.....	8
Our Improvement and Recovery Plan	9
Our Improvement and Recovery Plan: priorities on a page	10
Our Improvement and Recovery Plan programmes	11
Our commitments	21



Foreword

“Our Improvement and Recovery Plan is the guiding document that will support us to deliver the big changes we need to make.

“This plan will help us to address the issues raised and the Directions set by the Minister of state for Local Government and English Devolution, following the Best Value Inspection and the publication of the Best Value Report 2025. The Best Value Report was clear that significant improvements are needed in a range of areas, and particularly in relation to governance and financial management.

“We’re committed to ensuring continuous improvement in everything we do. We are embarking on a truly transformative period of change, where we certainly aren’t responding to the Ministerial Directions to merely ‘tick boxes’. We know that transforming our services will bring sustained and long-lasting benefits to our residents and communities.

“Our Improvement and Recovery Plan, therefore, is a key opportunity for us to be able to demonstrate that we’re listening, that we accept the best value inspection findings, and that we’re completely committed to putting things right.

“As Council Leader, I know that there is a lot for the Council to be proud of. Our Children’s Services for example are Ofsted “Good” with outstanding features, and we are playing an important role in supporting Warrington’s strong local economy.

“But we also need to work relentlessly to drive continuous improvements across the Council. Delivering on our Improvement and Recovery Plan and developing our transformation programme will require a significant, collective effort from both officers and councillors, with the support of our envoys. I have every confidence that together, we will deliver the organisational changes needed and ensure that Warrington has a bright future.”

Cllr Hans Mundy

Leader of Warrington Borough Council



Introduction

Warrington the place

Warrington has a proud past and an ambitious future. It stands out as one of the UK's most dynamic and forward-looking places, consistently punching above its weight.

Economically, Warrington is a powerhouse. Centre for Cities ranks Warrington among the top UK towns for employment rate, business density, and innovation. It's also one of just a handful of places outside London and the South East where average salaries exceed the national average.

Connectivity is another of Warrington's standout strengths. Perfectly positioned between Manchester and Liverpool, it's served by three motorways and two major rail lines, making it one of the most accessible places in the UK.

Warrington's town centre has come alive in recent years. Time Square – Warrington's new beating heart – has helped to galvanise this change. Warrington's communities have also helped to drive these improvements, with several outstanding local events and celebrations – not least Warrington's MELA – proving that Warrington is a community-centred, cultural melting pot.

Warrington also has a strong education profile and a reputation for overall good quality of life. This provides a positive backdrop upon which to build the council's improvement.



Warrington the council

The Council is entering a period of significant transformation, following the publication of a Best Value notice and the subsequent appointment of four ministerial envoys in July 2025.

We recognise that we need to improve our financial management, governance and culture, addressing the concerns raised in the Best Value report and delivering against the Directions from the Minister.

The Council needs to deliver significant organisational and cultural change. It has a very high level of borrowing compared to other councils, it has invested in some schemes that haven't delivered, and there are several governance improvements required. We also need to reset our culture to one that is more open, transparent and which is truly member led and is more in line with other councils.

At its peak, Warrington's level of borrowing was around £1.9 billion – it is now at around £1.4billion, but we know we have further to go. As part of our overall borrowing figure, we made a number of commercial investments to support the local economy and generate income. However, some of our investments didn't go to plan, and while our overall approach generated significant income, a significant change in approach is now needed. Ultimately, our reliance on income from

investments has meant that we have not always made the decisions that many other councils have, in responses to reduced funding levels.

Equally, scrutiny into the Council's commercial activity, level of borrowing and governance arrangements ultimately culminated in the Government issuing a best value notice in May 2024.

Despite the current intervention, the Council has much to be proud of. The Council has led Warrington's town centre renaissance, has continued to develop a number of strong relationships with partners, provides Ofsted-rated "good" (with outstanding features) children's services, and has a workforce that is proud, motivated and highly-skilled.

We're also working positively with the two other Cheshire councils on the establishment of the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority, with an order now laid before Parliament to create the Authority in early 2026 which will bring in more than £650 million of funding over the next 30 years across the area.



What led to the best value notice?

In June 2023, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (now known as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government – MHCLG) commissioned the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to undertake an in-depth capital assurance review of the Council.

This was largely driven by our comparably high level of borrowing. As at March 2023, our levelling of borrowing was the second highest compared to all other unitary councils.

CIPFA's review found that our portfolio of investments, funded by our borrowing, was too large and too complex. The review also highlighted decision-making, governance and oversight concerns.

In March 2024, the Council was also subject to a Local Government Association (LGA) corporate peer challenge. This four-day review, led by other external council directors, chief executives and a council leader, found a number of areas of concern when the report was published in July 2024.

Among other key findings, the peer review concluded that we need to review our governance and democratic processes, ensure the council

becomes more member-led, and establish clarity over our overall risk threshold in relation to our borrowing. The review report also highlighted concerns about our approach to scrutiny, accountability and transparency.

Considering the CIPFA review, the LGA corporate peer challenge report, and other information and assessments, ministers determined that the Council is exposed to significant financial risks which, if they materialise, could negatively impact our residents and communities.

In May 2024, government announced that there would be a best value inspection into the council.

Further information:

- [CIPFA Review report](#) (GOV.UK)
- [LGA Peer Review report](#) (warrington.gov.uk)
- [Warrington's best value notice](#) (GOV.UK)



The best value inspection outcome

Following the conclusion of the best value inspection, the former Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, Jim McMahon MP, confirmed that Ministerial Envoys would be appointed to support the Council to drive widespread improvements. These improvements are summarised in the Directions from the Minister, [which were published on 9 July 2025](#) (GOV.UK).

Ministerial directions – a summary

The Directions from the Minister stated a need to prepare and agree an Improvement and Recovery Plan, with approval from our Ministerial Envoys, and with resource allocated accordingly. Specifically, we need to deliver:

- An action plan to achieve financial sustainability and to identify and close any short and long-term budget gaps across the period of its medium-term financial strategy (MTFS), including a robust multi-year savings plan
- An action plan to ensure our capital, investment and treasury management strategies are sustainable and affordable.
- A comprehensive debt reduction plan, including a strategy for asset disposals and a review of commercial investments, demonstrating how overall capital financing requirement and external borrowing will be reduced over a realistic but expedient timescale, reducing debt servicing costs.
- An action plan to ensure we are complying with all relevant rules and guidelines relating to our financial management, including PWLB lending criteria and an updated minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy.
- An action plan to reconfigure our services, commensurate with our available financial resources.
- Actions to secure continuous improvement in all services.
- An action plan to strengthen our financial and commercial functions, and to secure improvements in risk management, internal audit and governance, including a suitable scheme of delegations.
- An action plan to strengthen our governance function, to secure improvements in transparency and formal decision-making. This includes measures to improve our scrutiny function, including the taking and recording of formal decisions and the appointment of an independent chair of the audit and corporate governance committee.
- A corporate plan that aligns with our revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and reflects the actions that are needed to strengthen the finance, commercial, property management and governance functions.
- To devise and implement a plan for a programme of training and cultural change which ensures both members and officers understand their respective roles and the way in which the council and its activities are regulated and governed.
- An action plan to resolve the significant external audit backlog including providing sufficient resources to do so.



The appointment of our Ministerial Envoys

Four Ministerial Envoys have been appointed to support us to deliver against the Directions from the Minister and our wider Improvement and Recovery Plan. They are:



Harry Catherall (lead envoy)

Harry was most recently interim Chief Executive at Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council. Before that, Harry was Chief Executive at Oldham Council and was also previously interim Chief Executive at St Helens Council from October 2019 to March 2020.

Harry was also Chief Executive at Blackburn with Darwen Unitary Council from September 2012 to 2019, having previously been the Deputy Chief Executive for 10 years prior to this.



Carolyn Williamson

Carolyn became Chief Executive of Hampshire County Council in July 2021 and retired in July 2025. Prior to this she was Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Resources and Chief Financial Officer at Hampshire County Council since 2010. Carolyn was President of CIPFA in 2019/20 and was a Member of CIPFA Council between 2013 and 2021.

She has held Chairmanship roles on the Audit Committee and Student & Members Board, as well as attending and latterly Chairing CIPFA Council and CIPFA Board.



Phil Brookes

Phil worked in the private sector for over 30 years in the construction and utility sectors and held Board positions with major contractors in the UK and overseas. He is Crown Representative at the Cabinet Office with responsibility for oversight of four Strategic Suppliers to Central Government. He has just concluded a Commercial Lead role on the London Borough of Croydon Improvement and Assurance Panel which has been in place since 2021.



Sir Stephen Houghton

Sir Stephen has been an elected member of Barnsley MBC since 1988 and Leader since 1996. He is active in regional governance, serving on the Barnsley Place Committee and Partnership Board, and South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority. He's been on the Local Government Association Executive since 2010 and chairs Migration Yorkshire.

Sir Stephen is a member of the UK Municipal Bonds Agency, and has been an LGA Labour Regional Improvement Peer since 2006, and a National Peer since 2016. He was awarded a CBE for Services to Local Government in 2004 and received a knighthood for Parliamentary Services in 2013.



Our Improvement and Recovery Plan

“Our Improvement and Recovery Plan, is a key opportunity for us to be able to demonstrate that we’re listening, that we accept the best value inspection findings, and that we’re completely committed to putting things right.”

Leader of the Council, Cllr Hans Mundy

In line with the Directions from the Minister, this is our Improvement and Recovery Plan. The Plan will be regularly reviewed and updated. We are required to report on its development and delivery at regular intervals to our Ministerial Envoys. We will also ensure that there are regular updates to the public, all Elected Members, our staff and our partners.

Indeed, our Elected Members have been critical in shaping this first Improvement and Recovery Plan. There have been a series of member workshops to seek views from members, alongside the Plan being scrutinised in public at Cabinet and Full Council meetings.

Our Improvement and Recovery Plan, at this stage, is structured around eight themes which have a number of actions that we need to deliver against.

To ensure we have effective, strong governance in place to monitor the delivery of the improvement activity and the development of a council-wide transformation programme, we have also established an Improvement and Recovery Board.

Board membership includes the Ministerial Envoys, members of the Cabinet including the Council Leader, Leader of the Opposition, trade union representation, the Chair of our Scrutiny Committee (who is a member of the opposition), and senior officers including the Chief Executive and the newly appointed Executive Director of Transformation and Improvement (on secondment for the LGA).

The Improvement and Recovery Board meets every two months, and at the same time as the Board meets, we will also ensure that we provide public updates.

At its meeting on Monday 15 December, the Improvement and Recovery Board considered and scrutinised the final draft of our first Improvement and Recovery Plan.



Our Improvement and Recovery Plan: priorities



Governance and scrutiny

We will strengthen our governance functions, ensuring more transparency, clearer decision-making and enhanced scrutiny.



Financial sustainability, debt reduction and audit

We will focus efforts to reduce our level of borrowing in a measured way, reviewing our commercial portfolio and taking all necessary steps to ensure our financial sustainability.



Organisational capacity, culture and development

We'll drive improved organisational culture, ensuring we are member-led and have sufficient skills, capacity and capability to deliver our improvement work.



Strategy

We will revise and refine our strategy to ensure it reflects the actions needed to strengthen our finance, property management and governance functions.

Service standards

We will drive improvements within our services, deliver on our CQC "requires improvement" adult services assessment, and ensure that we can demonstrate how service transformation supports our overall improvement approach.



Partnership working (including devolution)

We will play a leading role in securing a devolution agreement for Cheshire and Warrington, and will work alongside Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East councils, to establish a Mayoral Combined Authority.



Programme delivery

We will ensure that our Improvement and Recovery Plan is well-managed, and delivered using the necessary resources and staffing. We will continue to welcome scrutiny and challenge as we deliver our programme.



Continuous improvement

We will use our Improvement and Recovery Plan to set the foundations for taking forward other important areas of work that demonstrate continuous improvement.



Our improvement and recovery plan programme

Theme – Governance and Scrutiny

We will strengthen our governance functions, ensuring more transparency, clearer decision making and enhanced scrutiny.

Some of the inner-workings and decision-making processes at the Council need fixing, and it is a priority for us to show that we are a well-run, efficient organisation. We will conduct a full governance review of our committee structures to ensure they are as effective as possible. The Improvement and Recovery Board has approved a comprehensive governance review supported by the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny. Alongside this, a thorough review of each of our investments is currently underway.

We've already taken steps to be more open to scrutiny, including the appointment of an opposition councillor as chair of scrutiny, (which is good practice across the local government sector) and welcoming representation from our opposition group as members of our Improvement and Recovery Board. We will also be setting up a shareholder committee to make sure we have a structured and clear approach to scrutinising companies we have involvement with, alongside our investments.

Key actions	Lead Officer/ Lead Member	Timescale
Review structure and reporting lines of Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and Scrutiny Committee.	Paul Clisby Chair of Audit and Corporate Governance Committee	31/05/2026
Review the skills and competency base of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee	Paul Clisby Cllr N Sudworth	31/04/2026
Undertake a governance review supported by the LGA and Centre for Governance and Scrutiny	Adam Simpson Cllr N Sudworth	I&R Board approval December 2025 Scoping – January 2026
Review the governance of commercial investments	Paul Clisby Cllr N Sudworth	31/01/2027



Our improvement and recovery plan programme

Theme – Financial Sustainability, Debt Reduction and Audit

We will focus efforts to reduce our level of borrowing in a measured way, review our commercial portfolio, resolve our audit backlog and take all necessary steps to ensure our financial sustainability.

Financial sustainability is the cornerstone of any well-run council. We need to fundamentally change how we work, to make sure we can live within our means. Our budget issues are driven by national demand pressures across people services, as well as a number of local issues we need to correct. We need to keep reducing our level of borrowing and ensure we reach true financial sustainability. Regarding our commercial portfolio, at its peak, our borrowing stood at over £1.9 billion. It now stands at £1.4 billion, but we have much further to go, and we will continue to work with our envoys to reduce our level of borrowing in a managed way. We are clear that, unlike in the past, we can't have an approach that relies on commercial investments to fund services and that we need to develop a more sustainable approach.

Our medium term financial plan (MTFP)

i Our MTFP is the Council's four-year finance plan, from 2026/27 through to 2029/30, which shows at a high level the funding we will receive and the money we will spend on providing services.

We face a huge financial challenge both now and in the coming years. Our MTFP report to Cabinet in December highlights a circa £90 million budget gap. Alongside our MTFP budget gap, our currently projected 2025/26 outturn gap stands at £39m and we also need to address our

Commercial and Treasury Management Investment Portfolio risks and backlog of the auditing of our accounts.

Exceptional financial support (EFS)

i EFS is a short-term mechanism that allows councils facing severe financial pressures to borrow alternative funding to temporarily cover budget shortfalls. It is essentially a loan that the council will pay back to government over 20 years.

Given the seriousness of our financial position, we will need to make difficult decisions about what services we are able to provide. While work in the latter part of 2025 identified a provisional set of savings proposals across the MTFP period to 2029/30 (up to £41 million as at December 2025), we have requested exceptional financial support (EFS) from government, to allow the Council the time to identify further savings and make the organisation-wide changes required, to become truly financially sustainable.

The magnitude of savings required will mean that as a council we need to make difficult decisions about what and how services and facilities will be provided in future. This will mean we ultimately end up a smaller organisation – but one that is well run and efficient and looks to offer the best outcomes for residents and communities that



we can. This doesn't mean that we're going to stop spending money altogether. We will still need to spend money on providing essential services. We will also be able to spend money we receive through specific grants, for example.

An additional priority for the council is to address the multi-year backlog of accounts that need to be signed off by auditors. While national audit sector issues are affecting many councils, it is unusual that we have many years of unaudited accounts. We have a plan to address this and will be working with auditors to sign off previous years of accounts, so that we can move forward with clarity and certainty.

Key actions	Lead Officer/ Lead Member	Timescale
Produce an action plan to resolve the significant external audit backlog including providing sufficient resources to do so.	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	31/12/2025
Produce an action plan to ensure the Authority's capital, investment and treasury management strategies are sustainable and affordable.	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	31/03/2026
Produce a comprehensive and strict debt reduction plan, including a strategy for asset disposals and a review of commercial investments, demonstrating how overall capital financing requirement and external borrowing will be reduced over a realistic but expedient timescale, reducing debt servicing costs.	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	31/03/2026
Produce an action plan to strengthen the Authority's financial and commercial functions, and to secure improvements in risk management, internal audit and governance, including a suitable scheme of delegations.	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews Cllr N Sudworth	31/03/2026
Produced an action plan to ensure the Authority is complying with all relevant rules and guidelines relating to the financial management of the Authority including PWLB lending criteria and an updated minimum revenue provision (MRP) policy.	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	31/05/2026
Review, in the first 24 months (in line with the ministerial Directions but aiming to do so in a much shorter period), the roles and case for continuing with each subsidiary company and investment of the Authority. For the companies that it is agreed to continue, ensuring that the Directors appointed by the Authority are appropriately skilled in either technical or company governance matters to ensure each Board functions	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	31/01/2027



effectively under the terms of an explicit shareholder agreement and a nominated shareholder representative.		
Produce an action plan to reconfigure the Authority's services commensurate with the Authority's available financial resources.	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	31/03/2026
Design an appropriate asset disposal strategy.	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	31/07/2027
Ensure an auditor for missing years of unaudited accounts is appointed.	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	Completed
Develop a comprehensive commercial strategy	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	30/04/2026
Design process for achieving prudent level of debt.	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	08/07/2026
Undertake regular reviews of the council's MRP position	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	Ongoing
Produce a detailed analysis of the impact of the council's commercial activities	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	28/02/2026
Undertake focused scenario planning work to inform the council of positive and negative impacts on the MFTP including their overall indebtedness and the effect on income streams from their investments in future years, using skills and experience drawn from external third-party organisations to maximise objectivity	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	Completed
Create a single dashboard for all key commercial interests.	Danny Mather Cllr D Matthews	Dashboard created. Recommended improvements being made 31/04/2026



Our improvement and recovery plan programme

Theme – Organisational culture, capacity and development

We'll drive improved organisational culture, ensuring we are member-led and have sufficient skills, capacity and capability to deliver our improvement work.

In the past we have been too resistant to change, and not open enough to scrutiny. Through our improvement and recovery work, we will look to demonstrate that our culture has significantly changed and is one where openness, transparency, and respectful challenge are integral to the way we operate. While we remain proud of our workforce and of the commitment of our colleagues across the Council, we need to ensure that we have a positive, open and respectful culture which is modelled at the top of the organisation, by both members and officers, and that this culture permeates through every tier of the organisation.

To that end, we will show that we are an organisation where our elected councillors lead from the front and set the direction and strategy with clarity about roles and responsibilities. We will also show we are an organisation where at all levels, people across the Council are working together to support the delivery of priorities.

Key actions	Lead Officer/ Lead Member	Timescale
Devise and implement a plan for a programme of training and cultural change which ensures both members and officers understand their respective roles and the way in which the Authority and its activities are regulated and governed.	Gareth Hopkins Cllr H Mundry	31/03/2026
Develop a plan to ensure that the Authority has sufficient skills, capabilities and capacity to deliver the Improvement and Recovery Plan, within a robust officer structure, including appropriate commercial expertise and capacity.	Gareth Hopkins Cllr H Mundry	31/03/2026
Objectively review the council's capacity, skills, competencies required to run core business and a complex commercial portfolio	Gareth Hopkins Cllr H Mundry	31/03/2026



Our improvement and recovery plan programme

Theme – Strategy

We will revise and refine our Corporate Strategy to ensure it reflects the actions needed to strengthen our finance, property management and governance functions.

Any effective organisation needs to be guided by its overarching strategy. We need to make sure that our Corporate Strategy and other strategic plans are realistic, affordable and deliverable and reflect the improvement journey we're on.

We will be working to refine and refocus our corporate strategy as a council, while also looking to work alongside our partners and residents in developing a shared and collectively owned vision – a plan for all of Warrington – that can help guide our shared ambitions for our town and communities.

Key actions	Lead Officer/ Lead Member	Timescale
Produce a corporate plan that aligns with the Authority's revised MTFS and reflects the actions that are needed to strengthen the finance, commercial, property management and governance functions.	Claire Hogan Cllr N Sudworth	31/04/2026
Focus on the number of priorities in the current corporate plan	Claire Hogan Cllr N Sudworth	31/04/2026



Our improvement and recovery plan programme

Theme – Service Standards

We will drive improvements within our services, deliver on our CQC “requires improvement” adult services assessment, and ensure that we can demonstrate how service transformation supports our overall improvement approach.

We know that not all of our services are operating to the levels we want with our Adult Social Care inspection stating that we require improvement. Maintaining good levels of service is a constant challenge against a backdrop of increasing funding shortfalls and increasing demand, and this means that we need to think differently about what services we provide, and how. Ultimately, we want to drive widespread transformation and improvement across the services we provide, even if that means taking radically different approaches.

Our improvement and recovery work will support us to make big changes and improvements to services that need to perform more highly – such as our adult services following a “requires improvement” rating in 2024. But our work will also ensure that the good services that we provide, remain at that positive level.

Key actions	Lead Officer/ Lead Member	Timescale
All services reviewed, to determine with Members, priorities and savings options for future service delivery in line with EFS.	Gareth Hopkins Cllr N Sudworth	31/01/2027
Produce and continue to update an action plan to ensure continuous improvement across all services	Gareth Hopkins Cllr N Sudworth	30/09/2026
Deliver the actions required to respond to the Council’s ‘Requires Improvement’ CQC Inspection, and its ‘Inadequate’ rating in respect of Safeguarding	Caroline Williams Cllr M McLaughlin	30/09/2026
Continue to maintain the Council’s positive Children’s Services, ensure at least a ‘Good rating’	Sharon Cooper Cllr M Smith	Ongoing



Our improvement and recovery plan programme

Theme – Programme Delivery

We will ensure that our Improvement and Recovery Plan is well-managed, and delivered using the necessary resources and staffing. We will continue to welcome scrutiny and challenge as we deliver our programme.

Our improvement and recovery work will be underpinned by good management. We'll make sure we have the right staff in the right roles to work alongside our elected members in driving the improvements needed. We'll also make sure we hit each milestone expected of us as part of our progress reporting to government, which includes six-monthly reports to government which will detail our improvement work. We want to be an organisation more open to challenge and new ideas, so as part of delivering our improvement and recovery plan, we'll be inviting more routine scrutiny of our work and approach. This includes creating more opportunities for councillors, staff and residents to see and respond to our improvement and transformation activity.

Key actions	Lead Officer/ Lead Member	Timescale
Prepare and agree an Improvement and Recovery Plan to the satisfaction of the Ministerial Envoys, within 6 months, with resource allocated accordingly. This should integrate relevant contents and recommendations of the Best Value Inspection report, published on 8 May 2025, and the July 2023 CIPFA Capital assurance review, published on 8 May 2024. The plan should set out measures to be undertaken, together with milestones and delivery targets against which to measure performance, to deliver rapid and sustainable improvements in finance, commercial, property management and governance functions, securing compliance with the Best Value Duty.	Gareth Hopkins Cllr H Mundry	09/01/2026
Report to the Ministerial Envoys on the development and delivery of the Improvement and Recovery Plan after the first three months, and six months and thereafter at six-monthly intervals, or at such intervals as the Ministerial Envoys may direct.	Gareth Hopkins Cllr H Mundry	October 2025 January 2026 Six monthly
Initiate a full and open recruitment exercise for a suitable permanent appointment to lead the improvement work in the Authority	Gareth Hopkins Cllr H Mundry Cllr N Sudworth	Completed
Agree a date for a full corporate peer challenge with the LGA.	Gareth Hopkins Cllr H Mundry Cllr N Sudworth	March 2027



Our improvement and recovery plan programme

Theme – Partnership working (including Devolution)

We will ensure that we form stronger and more meaningful relationships with our communities, and will play a leading role in establishing a Mayoral Combined Authority for Cheshire and Warrington.

Our improvement work will help to us really refocus our work with residents and partners. We want to rebuild and restore trust with our communities, listen more, act on feedback, and fundamentally reset the relationship that we have with you.

Equally, delivering on devolution for Cheshire and Warrington is a must. With at least £650 million of funding coming to our area over the next 30 years, and with the area's first elected Mayor to be decided in May 2027, we need to work alongside Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester Councils to make sure that our residents and communities feel the benefits of devolution.

Key actions	Lead Officer/ Lead Member	Timescale
Ensure the Authority can play an effective role with partners, including in the Devolution Priority Programme.	Eleanor Blackburn Cllr H Munday	31/05/2027
Develop a plan for neighbourhood working	Gareth Hopkins Cllr H Munday	31/01/2027



Our improvement and recovery plan programme

Theme – Continuous Improvement

We will use our Improvement and Recovery Plan to set the foundations for taking forward other important areas of work that demonstrate continuous improvement.

Our improvement and recovery isn't just about simply satisfying our ministerial directions. We want to put in place the right foundations and approach for the long-term. Continuous improvement is important to us, because it means that after we have made the changes necessary to meet government expectations, we will have the right culture, governance and approach in place to maintain sustained, positive improvement into the future.

To us, continuous improvement also means a commitment to keep listening and learning. We want our residents to feel like their voices have been heard – and we commit to keep listening to the feedback we get, and acting on it wherever possible.

Ultimately, being able to show that we're a council that can continuously improve, is going to be fundamental if we are to successfully restore trust with our communities.

Key actions	Lead Officer/ Lead Member	Timescale
Continually review and action Member competence and skills.	Gareth Hopkins Cllr N Sudworth	Ongoing
Work with partners to develop a borough strategy.	Gareth Hopkins Cllr N Sudworth	31/03/2027
Develop a transformation programme with clear workstreams that ensures delivery, explores income maximisation, establishes new ways of working, supports neighbourhood involvement and co-design, builds community capacity and ensures financial sustainability.	Claire Hogan Cllr H Munday Cllr N Sudworth	31/03/2026



Our commitments

Our Improvement and Recovery Plan provides assurance to government and our appointed envoys that we are committed to delivering the significant changes needed, to both satisfy our ministerial directions and demonstrate we are already making good progress in implementing the changes that are needed.

Through the delivery of our Improvement and Recovery Plan, we make a series of commitments. We will:

Take total accountability: We entirely accept our need to improve, at pace, and our Improvement and Recovery Plan will demonstrate the actions we are going to take. Our Plan, and the delivery against it, will be reviewed by our Improvement and Recovery Board with open and transparent reporting, to show the progress we are making, and we welcome enhanced scrutiny of our improvement approach.

Be member-led: Through the delivery of our plan, we will demonstrate how we have become a truly member-led organisation.

Be transparent: We are committed to being as open and transparent as possible through our Improvement and Recovery process. Delivering on our ministerial directions and ensuring our future financial sustainability will require difficult decisions, but we will be open with our residents and communities about what this means as part of our improvement and recovery journey.

Be well-managed: Our Improvement and Recovery Plan will be well-managed, with the right staffing resource, in order to effectively deliver what is needed.

Clearly communicate and engage: Through our Improvement and Recovery work, we have the opportunity to tell an effective story about what sort of a Council we want to be into the future. It is important we set out this vision, but also listen to our residents and communities as we transform our services. Only by being a responsive council can we truly ensure we are meeting the needs and priorities of our people.

Continuously improve: Delivering against our Improvement and Recovery Plan is not a 'tick box' exercise. Nor does it sit in isolation. It will be aligned with, but separate to, our Corporate Plan. We will use both to ensure we deliver the key priorities for residents of Warrington, whilst also bringing about sustained change and improvement within the organisation – so that even after we satisfy our ministerial directions, we can clearly demonstrate how we are able to continuously improve into the future, for the benefit of Warrington.

