

Corporate Strategy 2022–2026





Foreword

As anyone who lives or works in Lewisham knows, our borough is a unique and special place. We have a proud shared history of standing up for equalities, of being pioneering, creative and ambitious and we are driven by our sense of community.

These qualities were heightened during the pandemic, as the Council, our partners and residents across the borough worked together to help and support each other, with kindness and like never before. Over the coming months and years, we know that we will again face steep challenges. The cost of living and housing crises as well as ongoing cuts and increasing demand for our services mean that we must again pool our resources and work together to adapt, respond and support our community during this unsettling time.

Our Corporate Strategy explains how the Council will do this by working with residents and partners to deliver excellent public services alongside the ambitious manifesto I, and 54 Labour councillors, were elected on in May 2022.

In the short months between the election and writing this foreword, much has happened in both national and international politics that will have a profound impact on our community. The resilience and dedication of our staff and partners has never been more critical.

So far, we have managed some of the highest cuts in the country, but sadly we know there is more to come, making it vital that we maintain a balanced



and robust budget in the face of financial uncertainty in the public sector.

However, as our Corporate Strategy sets out, it's also important that we remain ambitious for Lewisham and compassionate for the people we serve.

We must not lose focus on delivering high quality services that make life better for people; of the benefits and importance of attracting investment, jobs and opportunities into the borough; of building new social homes; of making our borough cleaner, greener and safer and of continuing to fight for equalities.

To do this we must continue to work together - with our partners, including our brilliant local community groups, businesses and other organisations - with renewed energy and focus, and we must live by our Council's values: putting service to the public first; respecting all people and communities; investing in our employees and being honest, open and fair in everything we do.

In delivering our corporate strategy, we are committed to involving, listening to and working with local residents, staff, partners and businesses and we will keep you involved and updated on our progress. In Lewisham, our people are our greatest asset, and they are at the heart of this strategy.



Damien Egan
Mayor of Lewisham



Introduction

Our corporate strategy sets out the Council's ambitions for Lewisham and how we will achieve them.

It explains our values, priorities and focus for the next four years, our learning from how the borough worked together in response to the pandemic, and how we plan to continue improving our services for our residents, businesses and partners in an ever more challenging environment.

Above all, this strategy outlines the principles that showcase who we are as an organisation; our focus on equality, putting our residents at the centre of everything we do and ensuring transparency and sound financial management are embedded within all key decisions the council makes.

It is informed by several other key strategies and plans that guide how we work, alongside detailed service plans.

Our values

Our values will shape and guide our priorities and decision making; they will underpin how we work and what we do.



We put service to the public first

We exist to serve and support the residents of Lewisham, and everything we do must always have residents' interests first and foremost.



We respect all people and communities

We have a proud history of actively working to tackle inequalities, both across the borough and within the Council, and we will continue to build on this in everything we do.



We invest in our employees

We want to be considered a top employer in local government. We will always ensure we provide opportunities for staff at all levels to learn new skills and progress their career.



We are open, honest and fair in everything that we do

We will be transparent in the decisions that we take, both with each other and with the residents of Lewisham. Robust governance procedures will ensure that our decisions are honest and fair.



Our challenges

BUDGET CUT



HOUSE PRICES



AVERAGE EMPLOYMENT RATE



Like all public sector bodies – particularly local authorities – we face ongoing challenges to make sure we can deliver the services our residents expect and deserve. Increasing demand for vital services like social care and social housing, alongside ever decreasing funding from central government, means we all face unprecedented challenges to deliver what our residents need and balance the books.

However, Lewisham also faces some more specific local challenges and, alongside ensuring we meet our statutory duties, our priorities aim to tackle these as well.

Financial challenges

After over a decade of austerity, the financial challenge to local government remains acute. Over the last 12 years, the Government has cut Lewisham Council's budget by £137 million. This is equivalent to £1,055 less per household per year. This has happened whilst demand for our services has continued to increase.

We must be realistic about the scale of the challenge we face and acknowledge that the current ways of providing services may not be sustainable over the next four years.

Over the next four years we will need to balance delivery of our exciting and ambitious agenda against the wide range of services, many of them statutory, which residents and businesses expect on a day-to-day basis. Some of these services will need to stop, change and reduce in the context of the vastly reduced resources available. There will be tough decisions for us to make, and we want to make them transparently, in consultation with residents and based on the best possible evidence available to us.

Inequalities

Lewisham is one of the country's most diverse boroughs, but systemic issues faced by our diverse communities create inequality. We need to work with the borough's businesses, ensuring they have the tools and support they need to succeed, and remove the barriers faced by the two thirds of our independent businesses which are owned by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic entrepreneurs.

Lewisham schools have a diverse population, with Black Caribbean heritage pupils making up 19% of primary pupils and 25% of secondary pupils – compared to 3% nationally (2019 data). As a result of the structural discrimination faced by this group, we need to work specifically to tackle the inequality within education, remove the barriers children face and create an environment where they can reach their full potential.

We also know that the health system does not take enough notice of the needs and issues affecting Black African and Black Caribbean people as communities of identity in the UK. As a Council, we must work with health partners to deliver those needs; including fairness, inclusion and respect, trust and transparency, better data, early interventions, health checks and campaigns, and healthier behaviours. It is only through doing this that we can recognise, identify, address and mitigate structural racism and discrimination as a driver of health inequalities.

As a Council, we will adopt the social model of disability, working to make our services accessible to all our residents.

Climate emergency

No one local authority can tackle the climate emergency alone, but we have a duty to do everything we can to make a difference, support regional, national and international efforts and to support our residents, local businesses and partners to make a difference too. In 2019 we declared a Climate Emergency, producing a Climate Emergency Action Plan that sets out our priorities in this area.

Air pollution threatens the health of our residents. 50% of Lewisham residents don't own a car, and we will continue to encourage greater use of public transport and sustainable travel.

We continue to strive towards being a net zero borough by 2030, and will continue to lobby the government and work with our partners to achieve this.

We will lead by example, by using 100% renewable energy, retrofitting public buildings where possible to make them more energy efficient, and supporting residents to make their homes warmer and more efficient.

Our parks and green spaces are a lifeline to the health and wellbeing of our residents, and provide important resilience against the climate emergency. We will continue to invest in them, and continue to plant more trees – adding to the 25,000 we've planted since 2018.

The progress of our Climate Emergency Action Plan will be reviewed annually by our Executive Management Team and through our scrutiny committee process, including reporting annually to the Mayor and Cabinet. We will publish a public update once a year setting out what has been done in that year and updating our set of actions going forward.

Cost of living

At the time of writing, the Cost of Living Crisis is beginning to be felt across the country. Rising energy and food costs, spiralling interest rates and the subsequent increase in rents and mortgages, are affecting everyone. The impact is felt particularly hard in Lewisham, where the new pressures are combining with existing inequalities, including the housing crisis, to create a significant risk to the wellbeing of some of our residents.

This is something we know we have to address over the next four years. Given the financial challenges outlined within this strategy, we know we cannot simply expand the support services we already provide – we need to do things differently.



In the last four years:



25,000
TREES PLANTED



100%
CORPORATE ELECTRICITY
CONTRACTS COME FROM
**RENEWABLE
SOURCES**



24
GREEN FLAG AWARDS
FOR OUR PARKS



What do we want to achieve?

As we look ahead to the next four years, we set out below what we want to achieve, as we take Lewisham forward together.

Place

We want Lewisham to be a place for everyone. This will mean creating visible improvements in our parks and high streets, and providing the space and opportunities for local businesses and people to thrive.

Over the last four years we've planted 25,000 trees, switched the Council's energy usage to 100% renewable and been recognised for delivering the best parks in London. Over the coming years we will support biodiversity across the borough, and advise and support residents to help make Lewisham's streets cleaner. We'll continue to invest in our much-loved parks, utilising our new Play Strategy to create exciting, healthy environments for children, and we'll introduce new walking paths, connecting our borough and enhancing the spaces within it, making it easier and more pleasant to get about Lewisham by foot or bike.

We'll maintain our status as a Borough of Sanctuary and a leader for local authorities across the country in our approach to refugee resettlement. By focusing on building good quality social homes, regulating private landlords and supporting our homeless residents, we'll work to ensure that everyone has a place to stay in Lewisham.

We'll create the space for local businesses to succeed, pedestrianising more of our high streets where possible and offering practical support to help make Lewisham the best place in London to start or grow a business. We will work with investors to make sure that developments are right for our borough and sensitive to our history, and that residents feel the benefits via jobs and investment in local amenities.



Community

In Lewisham, community is about safer neighbourhoods, good schools, thriving businesses, active community groups, responsible stewardship of the environment and services that are designed for the convenience of those who use them. We want to ensure that everyone who lives, studies and works in the borough feels empowered to contribute and have their say about the things they care about.

We want to work more closely with community groups and others with reach and influence in the local area; using learning from the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Council's wide-ranging Resident Experience programme to change the way we do things and improve outcomes for all those who use services in the borough.

Across Lewisham, we recognise that there are communities whose voices are seldom heard and others who may feel as if they are not heard at all. We will develop an approach to engage our community that is fairer, accessible and even more inclusive, acting as a listening organisation and working in tandem with our residents to improve the services we deliver for them.

We all have a part in Lewisham's future, and by creating the spaces and opportunities for residents and businesses to engage with us and each other, we will deliver more for the borough together than we could alone.

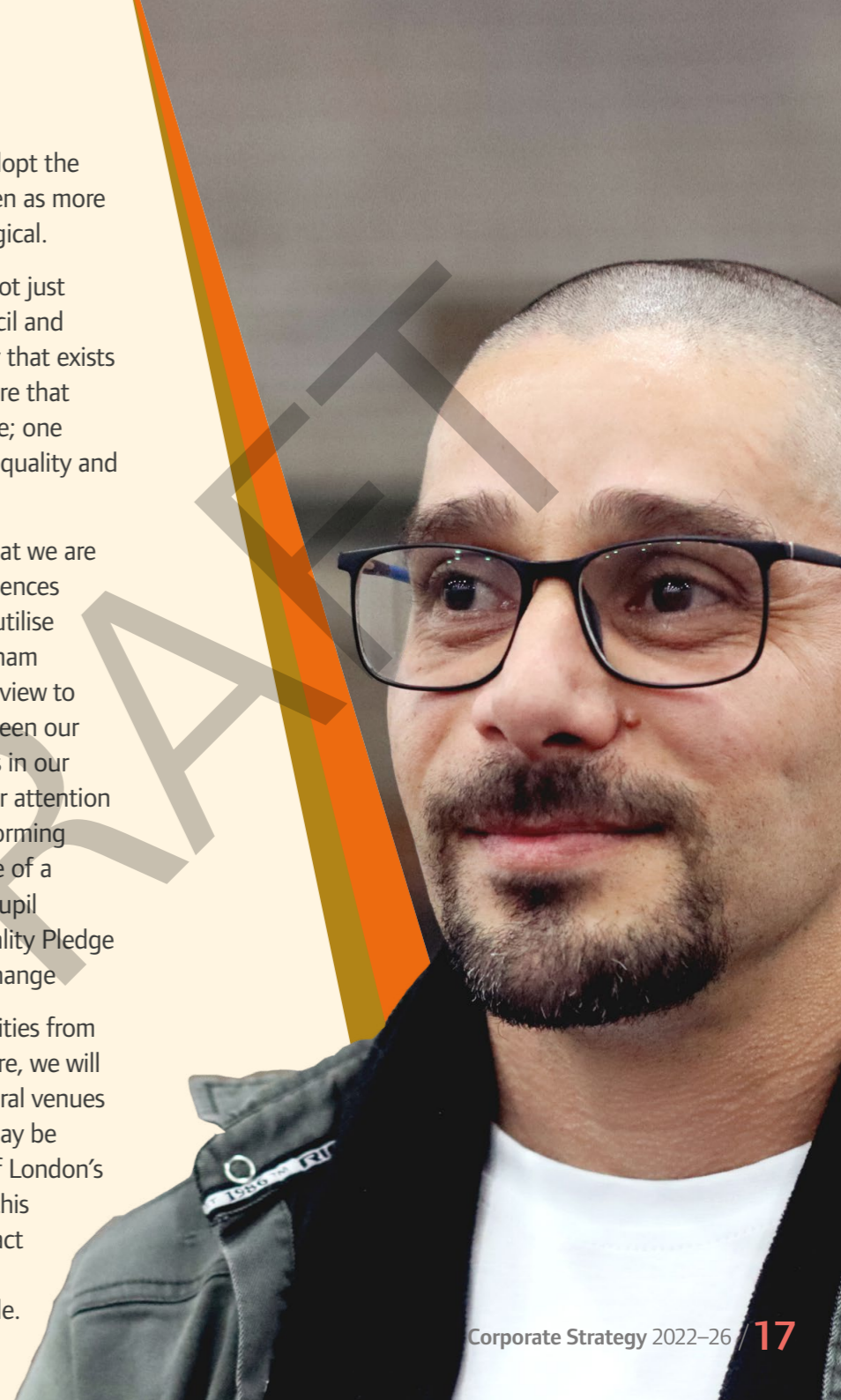
Diversity

We will celebrate Lewisham's diversity and adopt the social model of race; ensuring that race is seen as more culturally and socially determined than biological.

Our focus on diversity as an organisation is not just about ensuring we are a representative council and workforce, it's about celebrating the diversity that exists within Lewisham. We are determined to ensure that Lewisham is an inclusive and welcoming place; one where the council takes action to address inequality and unfairness in all its forms.

For Lewisham, celebrating diversity means that we are constantly mindful of the different life experiences of those who reside in the borough. We will utilise our ground-breaking Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review to tackle some of the disparities that exist between our communities. In schools, we will be relentless in our focus on pupil achievement, paying particular attention to raising the attainment levels of underperforming pupils. We will continue to promote the value of a curriculum that reflects the diversity of our pupil population as well as focus on our Race Equality Pledge for schools, to bring about real and lasting change.

Building on the significant learning opportunities from Lewisham's year as London Borough of Culture, we will support the growth of existing and new cultural venues and organisations and identify where there may be further scope to promote Lewisham as one of London's most pre-eminent cultural hubs. We will use this collective momentum to explore ways to attract new investment into the borough that can provide jobs and opportunities for local people.





Inward investment and opportunity

We cannot bring about these ambitious pledges alone. The financial challenges we face mean we must work to attract inward investment.

Our year as London Borough of Culture has been one of the most exciting in Lewisham's history, and we don't want it to end when the year comes to a close. We'll be looking to cultivate a lasting legacy that promotes our borough's rich history, culture and community spirit, bringing in more economic opportunities and inviting both private partners and visitors to see what Lewisham has to offer. By the end of this administration, we'll be able to showcase our newly renovated Broadway Theatre, have developed a live music strategy and expanded our apprenticeship programme into the arts sector, cementing Lewisham's place as a cultural hub within London.

We will build relationships across the capital and work with business leaders to create more opportunities in growth sectors for Lewisham's young people.

We want the rest of London to take notice of what Lewisham has to offer and that means showcasing more of our achievements and making it clear that over the next four years, our borough is going to be the place to be for starting a business or investing in one.

Innovation and new ideas

Our shared experience of living through the COVID-19 pandemic has given us a unique insight into what is possible when we work together with partners towards a shared goal.

Over the next four years, we want to unlock that same spirit of innovation as we prepare to seize new opportunities and break new ground. Our experience has shown us that the energy for innovation exists within our workforce, across the multi-agency partnership, within the local community and beyond borough boundaries. Now more than ever, we need to harness this knowledge and put it to the most effective use on the big challenges and difficult issues that we need to confront together.

We will actively seek out the insights of those who are experts by experience such as disabled residents, older people, young people and those able to offer a unique first-person perspective on how to improve the services we provide. We are also committed to providing our staff with the capacity and resources they need to innovate. This also means encouraging people to utilise funding bids, take risks and bring forward bold ideas – allowing staff from across the organisation the opportunities to put their suggestions to senior managers.



Our priorities

Cleaner and greener

We will do everything we can to ensure that over the next four years we make the borough cleaner and greener for our residents. Working to tackle the climate crisis through every area of council policy, we will ensure Lewisham is rated as a 'top tier' council for our work on climate action.

We will continue the excellent work we have done over the last four years on tree planting. By 2026 we will have planted more street trees, tiny forests and community orchards across our borough.

We will strive to maintain our status as having the best parks in London. Continuing to invest in our much-loved parks and using our upcoming Play Strategy to create exciting environments for children within them.

We will enable more active travel, and aim to reduce reliance on cars, introducing new walking paths to connect our borough, making it easier and more pleasant to get about Lewisham by foot or bike.

We will keep our high streets cleaner by supporting residents to do what they can, and increasing our prosecutions for fly-tipping and street littering.



A strong local economy

We will continue to expand our apprenticeship programme into new areas of work, building on the 260 apprentices that we placed during the 2018–2022 administration.

We will invest in our high streets and create more pedestrianised spaces, doing what we can do ensure our borough is the best place in London for entrepreneurs to start their businesses.

We will continue to promote Lewisham's Shop Local Campaign, providing support for our independent businesses as well as protecting and improving our local street markets.

We will actively work to attract jobs and businesses to Lewisham, building on the success of Lewisham Works and creating more spaces for pop-up stores and markets in shops that are temporarily empty.

We will continue to work with businesses across the borough, encouraging them to become London Living Wage employers.



Our priorities

Quality Housing

We will deliver more social homes for Lewisham residents, working to provide as many people as possible with safe, comfortable accommodation that they can be proud of and happy living in.

We will aim to improve the conditions in the borough's housing stock, working with all housing providers in the borough to develop a Lewisham Repairs Charter.

We will provide more support to renters through further landlord licensing and enforcement of poorly managed homes, holding landlords to account and giving a voice to renters across the borough.

We will safeguard our heritage by preserving and restoring our historic buildings and landmarks, ensuring Lewisham's history is preserved and maintained for future generations.



Children and Young People

We will continue the fantastic work of the last four years, supporting our schools to improve and increasing the prospects of young people in Lewisham.

We will relentlessly focus on pupil achievement, working with our schools and communities to build on our inclusive and high-achieving system of local comprehensive schools.

We will ensure the most vulnerable children are protected from harm, driving improvement in children's social care and aiming to reduce the number of children coming into care through earlier targeted support for families in crisis.

We will help to create new breakfast clubs at schools and continue to lobby the government to expand their free school meals programme.



Our priorities

Safer Communities

We will work with the police to implement our new Violence Against Women and Girls strategy. This will include developing a new reporting tool that allows residents to map areas where they don't feel safe, and feed that back to the Council and police.

We will continue to support the Mayor of London's Have a Word campaign, which encourages men to reflect on their own behaviour and the way they see, treat and talk about women.

We will reduce the number of young people who enter the criminal justice system, focusing on prevention and expanding our trauma-informed approach, championed by our Youth Offending Service.

We will continue to focus and develop our successful public health approach to youth violence, aiming to tackle knife crime and reduce sexual exploitation across the borough.



Open Lewisham

We will celebrate Lewisham's diversity, ensuring we are a representative and inclusive council and workforce.

We will maintain our status as a Borough of Sanctuary and London's leading borough for refugee resettlement.

We will develop plans to build on our legacy as London's Borough of Culture, celebrating the diverse and creative communities within Lewisham. This will include creating a new Live Music Strategy and bringing artists, community groups and businesses together to launch a Black Arts Festival.

We will maintain and strengthen the Lewisham Way of working in collaboration with our voluntary and community sectors and seek new areas where we can partner together. We will actively listen to our residents, being responsive to their concerns and communicative in our approach.

We will co-design services with those affected by them and ensure strong consultation processes that reach out to people whose voices are seldom heard.



Our priorities

Health and Wellbeing

We will partner with local food banks, food growing groups, schools and communities, through our joint Lewisham Food Action Plan. Together, we will ensure that everyone can access food and other essentials.

We will learn from our Birmingham and Lewisham African and Caribbean Health Inequalities Review, aiming to mitigate and ultimately end, structural racism and discrimination as a driver of health inequalities.

We will progress towards a fairer social care system, improving conditions for care workers to ensure they feel valued and that Lewisham is known as an exemplary employer.

We will work with the local NHS to deliver the services Lewisham residents need.

We will collaborate with other organisations to deliver the places, activities and programmes our residents need to feel empowered to live a physically active lifestyle.

Lewisham in numbers



LEWISHAM'S POPULATION
300,600
(CENSUS 2021)



HOUSEHOLDS
122,400



RESIDENTS SATISFIED
LIVING IN LEWISHAM
79%

18%
POPULATION
UNDER 15



9.5%
POPULATION
OVER 64

How will we achieve our ambitions?

Our Finances

Effective management of finance

Our finances are managed to comply with regulations, to support the delivery of a wide range of statutory obligations and to provide value for money for our residents and businesses. Sound financial management is not only about ensuring our spending remains within budget. It is our responsibility to ensure good decision making, as set out in the Constitution, and appropriate risk taking, based on professional requirements and advice.

As well as first and foremost maintaining a balanced budget, we will develop our financial monitoring to better inform risk-based decision making, improve debt collection, enhance the considerations of social value and cost with partners, progress commercial opportunities, and seek inward investment to the borough. This will enable and enhance service outcomes by maximising the value of the resources applied for the benefit of Lewisham residents and businesses.

Our staff

A flexible workforce we invest in

To achieve everything that we want to in Lewisham, we need to have the right workforce in place. This means recruiting, retaining, and developing talented and committed staff to provide the best services for residents. In the challenging environment we face, we need to ensure we get the best out of our most valuable asset, our employees.

In order to remain an attractive employer, we've placed an emphasis on hybrid working as part of our Future Working programme. The days of always working 9-5 at the office may be gone, but it is important to retain a connection between our staff and the communities they serve. Our staff will continue to come into Lewisham to work on a regular basis. We'll utilise other buildings and spaces within the community, not just at Laurence House, ensuring staff can work in the way that best suits them, whilst staying connected to each other and the borough. Rolling out hybrid technology, improving our digital infrastructure and supplying staff with the right equipment means we can support staff to do their best for our residents.

Developing our existing workforce is as important as recruiting new staff, and as such we'll be focused on ensuring staff at all levels of the organisation get the training and development they need to help them progress in their career. Building on the success of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Leadership Programme, we'll continue to develop the next generation of senior staff from our diverse and talented workforce.

How we work

Our Organisational Development Strategy sets out how we will change our ways of working to meet our ambitions for the Council.

Collaborative working, including in partnerships

Every project we take on will begin with a focus on what we can achieve alone, and what we can achieve working with others. Over the last four years, partnerships such as the Civic University Agreement and The Lewisham Deal saw us come together with key public sector partners to support growth in the borough and work with others to tackle the big issues we face. Building on the success we've had with these partnerships, we are determined to go further in what we achieve through collaboration over the next four years.

Utilising the influence of our elected Mayor within the borough, we will convene a Local Strategic Partnership, focused on tackling the issues that matter most to our residents. This partnership will bring together key organisations from across the borough to work with one another, sharing a single strategic vision to improve outcomes for our residents.

Our focus on partnerships won't just stop at organisations. We want to create a culture of working collaboratively with our residents, acting as a facilitator to ensure that the fantastic community spirit we saw during the pandemic can continue, and people can support one another when they need to.

Evidence-based decision making

Given some of the difficult choices that we will inevitably have to make during this administration, we want to ensure that we have access to the best possible data to base our decisions on. We will be expanding both the capability and functionality of our Knowledge Observatory, adding our newly created Ward Profiles (LINK) to allow staff and councillors to assess the needs of their ward and ensure that we're targeting our resources on the people who need them most.

We will be utilising new Census data, our Residents' Survey results and staff surveys to make sure we have the capacity and insight to achieve our aims. Our

newly created Data Team will work with staff across the organisation and with our partners to ensure that residents in Lewisham get the best service they can from us, and from institutions across the local area.

Strong and effective governance

Our recent LGA Corporate Peer Challenge provided us with a clear recommendation to *“Review the constitution to align it to the ambition of the Mayor and his Administration”*. We’ve taken this feedback on board and have commissioned a full review of our Constitution, ensuring our governance processes reflect the modern council we want to be.

Since the publication of our last corporate strategy, we have also reviewed our approach to managing risk. We know that in order to achieve what we want to, whilst operating under tight financial controls, we will need to take some managed and measured risks. We want staff to feel empowered to do this, and create a culture where big ideas, no matter where they come from, can be heard and acted on.

How we stay on track and measure success

Over the course of the next four years, we will entirely revamp the way we measure and manage our performance as an organisation.

Our priorities in this Corporate Strategy will form our top objectives. For each objective, we will identify key results and take measurements quarterly, or as appropriate, feeding into directorate service plans and quarterly performance monitoring, which we will make publicly available.

All our performance monitoring will culminate in an annual report to Full Council, where our progress as an organisation against our external and internal priorities will be reported on. Through the use of data and insight, as well as transparent, public reporting against our objectives, we will provide ourselves with the best possible tools to continue to improve year-on-year, and to help us focus on the areas that need it most.





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