

Issue	Key improvement area	Actions to be taken (responsibility and date of implementation)	Update on implementation of actions as at 30 November 2017
1	<p><b>Children’s Trust</b></p> <p>The council received a Government Statutory Direction (under section 479A of the Education Act 1996) to set up a new arrangement in the form of a children’s trust to deliver children’s social care services for a period of time.</p>	<p>A project is in progress to establish the trust. The governance arrangements in place will provide assurance on the progress of the project.</p> <p><b>Chief Executive</b></p> <p><b>Date to be agreed with the Department for Education</b></p>	<p>In the most recent quarterly update to the Department for Education, the Children’s Services Commissioner has reported on the continued good progress and excellent council support on the Sandwell Children’s Trust project.</p> <p>Actions that have been taken include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointments of the Chair; Chief Executive; Council non-executives and two other non-executives, to the Trust Board have been completed. The remaining vacant non-executive director position is being re advertised.</li> <li>• Work on the Trust’s Head Office and office accommodation at the Metsec and Wellman buildings has commenced with a view to completion in March 2018.</li> <li>• Arrangements to develop the vision and the strategic direction of the Trust have been put in place and involve engagement of staff and stakeholders.</li> <li>• Good progress on constructing the budget and the scoping of the services to transfer to the Trust has been made.</li> <li>• Progress continues to be made on drafting the Articles of Association and the Service Delivery Contract with a view to these being presented to Cabinet by March 2018.</li> <li>• TUPE consultation commenced on 7 December 2017.</li> <li>• Further progress continues to be made on the service level agreements for the corporate services that will be provided to the Trust by the council for at least the first 12 months of operation.</li> </ul>

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2	<p><b>Children's Services</b></p> <p>The Secretary of State appointed a Children's Services Commissioner and the council has continued to work with them to improve children's social care services. The improvement agenda focused on seven key priorities set by the Commissioner that required addressing as a matter of urgency, before the wider improvement agenda could be progressed.</p>	<p>To continue to address the issues identified in the improvement agenda.</p> <p><b>Director of Children's Services</b></p> <p><b>March 2018</b></p>	<p>In the most recent quarterly update to the Department for Education, the Children's Services Commissioner has reported positive progress in a number of areas, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front door arrangements and improved capacity resulting in timely assessments being made</li> <li>• Changes to the senior leadership reported previously and excellent corporate communications building a more inclusive culture and morale</li> <li>• Infrastructure including IT facilities</li> <li>• Improved resources (both financial and social care workforce capacity) to address caseload, recruitment, retention and placement cost issues</li> </ul> <p>Despite the above however, further improvement work is still required in some key areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The quality of assessments and quality assurance</li> <li>• Governance of the improvement programme,</li> <li>• The progress on establishing a regional adoption agency</li> <li>• Looked after children and permanence planning.</li> </ul>
3	<p><b>Resilience of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)</b></p> <p>The council approved a balanced budget for 2017/18, but savings of £10m for 2018/19 and £17m for 2019/20 are needed. A Cabinet Summit was held in June 2017, where ideas for savings to cover most this shortfall were identified and were to be broken down into</p>	<p>To continue the implementation of the vision for the council for 2030.</p> <p>To establish projects to deliver the savings required.</p> <p>To develop a new Performance Management Framework to replace the scorecard, that will measure progress against the</p>	<p>Following the decision to refresh the council's vision, the council consulted residents across the six towns, businesses, voluntary community sector and staff and key strategic partners across the borough to discuss Sandwell's long-term direction. Vision 2030 was approved by full council on 18 July 2017.</p> <p>Following this approval, Vision 2030 was launched with staff engagement events taking place in September whereby staff had the opportunity to discuss the Vision face to face with directors and members and provided feedback, comments and ideas about how services could contribute to the delivery of the</p>

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	<p>projects with definite timelines for delivery. This would complement the work in progress as part of the Facing the Future programme.</p>	<p>vision and outcomes achieved.</p> <p>To utilise the revised format of the council business planning framework for the 2018/19 business plans.</p> <p><b>Executive Director - Resources</b></p> <p><b>March 2018</b></p>	<p>Vision.</p> <p>The feedback and ideas collated have been fed into business planning workshops that took place in October, and a corporate (and directorate) business plan(s) is now being developed to align the business and financial planning framework to Vision 2030. Following this, Cabinet will agree the new plans in February 2018.</p> <p>Alongside this, work has commenced on developing an outcome based performance framework which will look at key borough wide performance measures. An ongoing review of council policies is also being undertaken and as part of this will consider whether these policies lend themselves to contributing to the partner Vision 2030, and to ensure that they do not conflict with the aims of Vision 2030.</p> <p>The recommendations from the corporate peer review that is scheduled to take place in January 2018, will also contribute to informing the development of the performance management framework.</p>
4	<p><b>Land Sales and Other Matters</b></p> <p>The Gowling WLG's report and QC's advice identified a number of issues. These related to the council's risk, governance, internal control environment and member and officer conduct.</p>	<p>The risk, governance and internal control matters were to be considered by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, to enable the committee to seek and gain assurance that the issues identified were being comprehensively and promptly addressed.</p> <p>The member and officer conduct matters were to be dealt with separately by the</p>	<p>The issues raised around the Gowling WLG report continue to be reported, where appropriate, through the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.</p> <p>The member conduct matters are being dealt with separately, by the Standards Committee.</p> <p>The council introduced a new Land Sales and Building Protocol in 2016 to strengthen the steps that are to be carried out in all land and building sales undertaken by the council. Audit Services is currently assessing how well this is being embedded into the council's processes.</p>

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		<p>Standards Committee and the council's Human Resources department respectively.</p> <p><b>Chief Executive</b> <b>March 2018</b></p>	
5	<p><b>Compliance with Contract Procedure Rules and Allocation of Grants</b></p> <p>Three limited assurance internal audit reports were issued on Grants within Neighbourhood Services, Grot Spot Funding and Off Contract Spend within Grounds Maintenance and Parks and Green Spaces. A comprehensive review of Neighbourhood Services, taking into account the findings of the audit reports, was completed by the Interim Director of Neighbourhood Services and a report including a wide range of recommendations was presented to Cabinet on 22 February 2017.</p>	<p>The implementation of the recommendations will be followed up by Internal Audit and progress reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.</p> <p><b>Executive Director - Neighbourhoods</b> <b>March 2018</b></p>	<p>Audit Services will be undertaking a series of follow up reviews in 2018, and where appropriate, findings will be reported back to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.</p> <p>Off contract spend has been subject to monthly audit checks in the Housing and Communities Directorate with reports provided to the Director and Service Managers. This has also been a standard agenda item on management team meetings. This has delivered a significant reduction in off contract spend within all areas, but particularly Grounds Maintenance and Parks and Green Spaces. To provide the Director with continued assurance, audit checks will continue to be completed on a quarterly basis and discussed at management team meetings.</p> <p>A new grants process has been introduced and this is now a formal ISO procedure. The process will now be managed and resourced by the Business Excellence service area and will be subject to quality and performance rigour from 2018.</p>
6	<p><b>Business Continuity</b></p> <p>To ensure that the council has in place a framework for its business continuity planning arrangements, to</p>	<p>There are service areas throughout the council which need to establish action plans, with milestones developed to</p>	<p>The preparation of business continuity plans continues to be progressed through engagement by directorates. As at the end of November, most priority one and priority two services have completed plans or draft versions in place. Plans are refined</p>

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	<p>ensure that it is able to maintain the delivery of critical services in the event of an emergency.</p>	<p>complete plans and to establish a strategy for testing, maintaining and reviewing them.</p> <p><b>Director of Housing and Communities</b></p> <p><b>March 2018</b></p>	<p>and updated to reflect any lessons learned whenever an unplanned incident occurs.</p> <p>The Neighbourhoods plans have been tested and a plan will be developed to test other plans in due course.</p>