

Agenda

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday, 1 March 2023 at 6.00 pm
At Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
- 2 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

Members to declare any interests and party whip matters in relation to the agenda.
- 3 Minutes** 7 - 12

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2023.
- 4 Additional Items of Business**

To determine whether there are any additional items of business to be considered as a matter of urgency.
- 5 Improvement Plan Progress, Phase 2 Refresh and External Follow-up Reviews** 13 - 364

To consider and comments upon the progress of the Improvement Plan up to 2 February 2023.
- 6 Q3 Budget Monitoring** 365 - 378



To consider and comment on the 2022/23 Budget Monitoring Q3 report and identify any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet.

7 **Cabinet Forward Plan** 379 - 394

To consider items on the Cabinet Forward Plan.

8 **Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Work Programme** 395 - 398

To consider the Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board's work programme for 2022/23.

Shokat Lal
Chief Executive
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution
Councillor Moore (Chair)
Councillors Anandou, Fenton, E M Giles, Simms, Trumpeter, Akhtar,
H Bhullar, Hinchliff, Taylor and Chidley

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Minutes of, Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Thursday, 2 February 2023 at 6.00 pm
In Council Chamber at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Moore (Chair);
Councillors Anandou, Bhullar, Chidley, Fenton, Hinchliff,
Simms and Trumpeter.

In attendance: Kate Ashley (Strategic Lead - Service Improvement), Sarah Sprung (Senior Lead Officer – Service Improvement), Victoria Lee (Head of Human Resources), Debbie Sant (Assistant HR Business Partner), Anthony Lloyd (Democratic Services Officer), Surjit Tour (Director of Legal Services, Monitoring Officer), Suky Suthi-Nagra (Democratic Services Manager) and Ant Lloyd (Democratic Services Officer).

11/23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors E M Giles and Taylor.

12/23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.



13/23

Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2023 be approved as a correct record.

14/23

Additional Items of Business

There were no additional items of business to consider as a matter of urgency.

15/23

Organisational culture, values and behaviours

Following a recent report to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board on 6 December 2022, a progress update was provided detailing the proposed actions and direction of travel for organisational culture, values and behaviours.

It was reported that the Leadership Team received feedback from culture listening sessions in November 2022; this meeting considered the initial proposals from the external partner for new aspirational behaviours that could be applied to all staff members. At this meeting, it was agreed that the development of a behaviour framework called the “One Team Framework” would be the best approach and would form an integral part of the Council’s workforce strategy.

The purpose of the approach was to establish the desired culture, values and behaviours into everyday practice across the organisation by articulating what those values were. Separate behavioural indications would be created for staff identified as “everyone” or “managers/leaders”. A culture working group had been created to drive the work with regular feedback provided to the Leadership Team. The creation and implementation of “Culture Champions”, regular staff panel sessions as well as a staff survey in October 2022 also assisted in establishing the framework. Trade Unions were also consulted and would be subject to a separate consultation process around the review of employee appraisals.

Using feedback via the external partner and following further consultation with stakeholders, the following behaviours were proposed:-

- **We are one team** - united and working together with the shared purpose of achieving great results.
- **We care** – about providing the best possible public service. (This was to be reworded to “**We are customer focused**”)
- **We are inclusive** – treating each other with respect and knowing our diversity is our strength.
- **We are ambitious** – striving for excellence, always looking to get better and making sure everyone can take pride in our borough.
- **We are accountable** – delivering what we say we will.

The next steps in the process were highlighted to the board. The finalisation of the One Team Framework would take place, which would then enable officers to seek endorsement from Cabinet in March 2023. A plan would be developed to help promote and communicate the values and behaviours which would then embed the framework into HR practices, appraisals, employee inductions and management development programmes.

Following questions from members, the following points were made:-

- The Chief Executive Officer would encourage the use and implementation of the framework.
- All staff briefings, team talks, posters and screen savers would ensure that conversations around the framework continue to help embed the new values.
- HR practices would be introduced to help promote the framework.
- Results from the next staff survey, as a result of the implementation of the framework, would hopefully be encouraging.
- LGA recommendations had been taken on board and reviewed and benchmarking against other authorities had taken place.
- It was confirmed that a similar system could be introduced for Councillors.

Members thanked officers for their work and requested an update on progress made in embedding the new culture and values within the organisation.

16/23

Resident Engagement

Officers highlighted that regular engagement and communication with residents was a cornerstone of the Council's role and was a key driver of producing better local outcomes. Improved engagement with residents' forms part of the recommendations that emerged from Sandwell MBC's recent inspections. The intelligence gathered from these surveys was a critical element of an effective performance management framework.

The Council did not have a co-ordinated process in carrying out public consultation however, after considerations by Leadership Team, proposals were approved for a corporate approach to consultation and engagement, ensuring a consistency in approach to activity across the Council and maximising opportunities to share collective intelligence.

The agreed framework would see an annual residents' wellbeing and perception survey followed by several focus groups. Additionally, an annual residents' budget consultation by a single follow up group would also take place. Citizenspace, a platform that offered the ability to consult consistently and visibly, would also be utilised. The use of Citizenspace would enable a fully holistic view of all activity across the borough, especially with the mapping/spatial capabilities of the software. The risk of duplication would be lowered due to frequent quality checks and monitoring by Scrutiny.

Sample sizes would be representative of the borough at both ward and town level which would assist the Council in making the right decisions.

The next steps were discussed with the following highlights:-

- A further 2-year contract would undergo procurement to carry out the resident's survey.
- A contract would be awarded to Citizenspace for use of the survey software.
- A corporate standard for consultation and engagement would be developed

- Funding for the initiatives would be included into the Budget.

After requests from members, it was agreed that a demonstration of the software would be presented to elected members in order to better understand its abilities.

17/23

Cabinet Forward Plan

After consideration by members of the Board, no items within the forward plan were considered for pre-decision scrutiny.

18/23

Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board Work Programme

The work programme for the year 2022/23 was noted.

Meeting ended at 7.25pm.

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Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

1 March 2023

Subject:	Improvement Plan Progress, Phase 2 Refresh and External Follow-up Reviews
Director:	Chief Executive Shokat Lal
Contact Officer:	Strategic Lead – Service Improvement Kate Ashley Kate1_ashley@sandwell.gov.uk Senior Lead Officer – Service Improvement Rebecca Jenkins Rebecca_jenkins@sandwell.gov.uk Democratic and Member Services Manager Suky Suthi-Nagra Suky_Suthinagra@sandwell.gov.uk

1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That the Board considers and comments upon the progress of the Improvement Plan up to 2 February 2023.
- 1.2. That the Board considers Grant Thornton’s reissued Value for Money Governance Review Report, the Grant Thornton Follow Up Review Report, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review and the CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Report.
- 1.3. That any recommendations or comments in relation to 1.1 or 1.2 above are reported to Cabinet at their meeting on 15 March 2023 for their consideration.



1.4. That the Board considers any additional areas of focus for its work plan.







2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 This report provides a quarterly update on progress against the Improvement Plan agreed by Council on 7 June 2022. The Improvement Plan incorporates all recommendations from the Grant Thornton Governance Review, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and the CIPFA Financial Management Review, as well as the Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
- 2.2 On 22 September 2022, Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board received the Improvement Plan and requested regular updates on progress. This report is the third quarterly progress report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.
- 2.3 As part of the governance and assurance arrangements for the Improvement Plan, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board review progress of the Improvement Plan and utilise the plan for work programming purposes. Both Committees are due to consider progress at their meetings in March and any recommendations or comments will be presented for Cabinet's consideration.
- 2.4 As part of the council's assurance framework for the Improvement Plan, the LGA, Grant Thornton and CIPFA conducted follow-up reviews in Autumn 2022 to evaluate the council's progress on implementing the specific recommendations from those individual reviews.
- 2.5 The findings from the follow-up visits from Grant Thornton and LGA are incorporated into a refresh of the Improvement Plan which has been managed through the established change control process. The actions to respond to the CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Report will be incorporated in the next update to the Improvement Plan.
- 2.6 Scrutiny's consideration of progress of the Improvement Plan and scrutiny of specific areas within the plan contributes to creating an effective scrutiny function.



3. How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

3.1 Sandwell Council's Improvement Plan focuses on the governance arrangements of the council and areas of improvement across the organisation. The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure that the council is able to deliver on the aims and priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. The deliverables set out in this Improvement Plan will achieve long-term sustainable improvements in how the council operates and is able to make effective decisions focused on improving outcomes for residents and experiences of service users. Therefore, this impacts on the council's ability to deliver all the objectives in the Corporate Plan.

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Background

4.1.1 A single Improvement Plan was agreed by Council on 7 June 2022 to address recommendations from a Value for Money Review into the council's governance arrangements, a CIPFA financial management review, an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, and Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The single Improvement Plan replaced the Governance Review Improvement Plan which was approved in January 2022.



4.1.2 To ensure that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery against the Improvement Plan, Council approved that progress will be monitored by Leadership Team monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly. This will continue until all actions have been completed, or changes have been embedded into business as usual.

4.1.3 This report is the third quarterly update to Scrutiny on progress of the Improvement Plan.

4.2 Improvement Plan Progress

4.2.1 Over this quarter, significant progress has continued to be made to deliver the actions within the Improvement Plan. This includes the completion of the Phase 1 Governance Review with changes to the Constitution agreed, preparations for the new Chief Executive taking up post on 6 February, approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the completion of the reviews of the Serco and Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) contracts.

4.2.2 A comprehensive monitoring tool has been developed to include both a risk rating for each main action within the Improvement Plan and a progress status rating for all actions. The monitoring tool provides quick reference around which actions are on track for delivery, as well as highlighting areas that may require remedial action or additional levels of assurance. The Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool is included at Appendix 1.

4.2.3 Progress against each theme of Improvement Plan is contained within Appendix 2. This includes a description of workstream progress including progress against milestones and achievements, and any progress issues. A summary by theme is provided below.

4.2.4 Organisational Culture Theme

4.2.4.1 Achievements this quarter:

- Regular meetings of Commissioners, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, and Chief Whips has commenced
- Mentoring Programme with LGA in place and ongoing
- Initial data gathering has taken place to identify the options for an employee recognition scheme.



- Preparations for the new Chief Executive taking up post on 6 February

4.2.4.2 Organisational Culture Progress Issues:

- **Workforce Strategy**
 - Slippage from original delivery date of March 2023 to May 2023 due to slippage in the One Team Framework. The One Team Framework will be approved in March.
 - Scope and drafting have commenced. Many priority workstreams are already in progress. Working towards Cabinet sign off in May
- **Effective Decision-Making Training** (also reported in the Decision Making theme)
 - Slippage from original date due to a revised approach to training delivery.
 - The revised programme will involve roll out through to the end of this Municipal Year.
 - The impact of the training delivered to date is evidenced by feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running.

4.2.5 Corporate Oversight Theme

4.2.5.1 Achievements this quarter

- Q2 Performance Management report considered by Cabinet and Scrutiny. Preparations underway for Q3 Performance Management Report to Cabinet
- External training provided to corporate finance staff Realignment to create Corporate Transformation PMO has commenced

4.2.5.2 Corporate Oversight Progress Issues:

- **Customer Journey Programme Board in place and regular meetings scheduled**
 - Slippage against original timescales due to resources.



- Board members are being confirmed, and future board dates will be scheduled commencing in Feb 2023. Project Manager will be confirmed prior to February board.
- **Performance Management Framework (PMF) - Review of KPIs**
 - Slippage against original timescales due to need for alignment with workforce strategy approval, alignment with customer journey programme and resources.
 - KPIs for organisational health need to be updated to reflect workforce strategy. The Workforce Strategy is in development and is due for approval in May.
 - KPIs for customer experience need to be updated to reflect the customer journey programme.
 - Review of the KPIs will commence from March 2023
- **Programme and Project Management System Implementation**
 - Slippage occurred due to resources
 - Implementation is now underway supported by Corporate Transformation Team. Implementation end date to be confirmed.

4.2.6 Strategic Direction Theme

4.2.6.1 Achievements this quarter

- Approval of the Corporate Asset Management Strategy, Equality Policy, Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Strategy
- Progress of the Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline reported
- Phase 1 of the new Asset Database implemented
- EDI Workforce action plan review complete
- Review of Council EDI decision making process complete
- Proposal approved for the next phase of resident consultation and engagement and budget consultation.

4.2.6.2 Strategic Direction Progress Issues

- **Commercial Strategy: Business Cases**
 - Slippage against original timescale of January 2023 due to work taking longer than expected
 - Strategic Business Cases have been prepared and are being reviewed by Leadership Team



- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion**

- Issues being encountered due to resources focusing on responding to reporting of historic EDI issues, and these issues having an impact of the effectiveness of staff networks.
- Revised plan for EDI strand is in place with re-profiled timescales, and a proposal around staff networks is being prepared

- **Customer Journey Strategy**

- Slippage against original timescale of August 2023 due to resources
- Work is underway to develop the strategy with Cabinet holding priority focus sessions in December 2022 and February 2023.
- Next steps are for engagement sessions to be held to capture Customer/Resident feedback to shape the strategy.

4.2.7 Decision Making Theme

4.2.7.1 Achievements this quarter

- All major milestones in this theme have been achieved
- Phase 1 of the Governance Review complete with agreement this quarter to the revised Council Procedure rules and revised Scheme of Delegations agreed

4.2.7.2 Decision Making Progress Issues

- **Effective Decision-Making Training** (as reported in the Organisational Culture Theme)

- Slippage from original date due to a revised approach to training delivery.
- The revised programme will involve training being delivered over a longer period and through to the end of this Municipal Year.
- The impact of the training delivered to date is evidenced by feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running.

4.2.8 Procurement and Commercial Theme



4.2.8.1 Achievements this quarter

- Implementation of Phase 1 of Asset Management System
- Review of Serco Contract Complete
- Street Cleansing revised plan approved at Waste Board.
- Lion Farm statement of facts agreed
- Chief Officer for Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) has started, and a clear project plan is in place.
- SEND lessons learnt capture reported to Leadership Team

4.2.8.2 Procurement and Commercial Progress Issues:

- **Lion Farm Options Agreement**
 - Issues encountered
 - Delivery timescales for the Expert Determination process are being decided by a third party.
 - The anticipated date for resolution is 24 March 2023

4.2.9 Partnerships and Relationships Theme

4.2.9.1 Achievements this quarter

- Delivery of the Early Help and Corporate Parenting Strategies has continued across partners.
- KPI suite for Sandwell Children's Trust reviewed.
- SCT Review of contract has concluded.
- Attendance and participation with key regional and sub-regional groups (including WMCA, ABCA, and BCLEP) has continued
- VCS Strategy Development has commenced, and engagement sessions have been held. This work builds on positive relationships fostered between the council and VCS around the Warm Spaces programme.

4.2.9.2 Partnerships and Relationships Progress Issues

- **Partnership structures in relation to transition from children's to adults' services**
 - Slippage in timescales due to recruitment difficulties for this project
 - Two unsuccessful attempts at recruitment for a project manager. The approach will be reviewed.



- Work is progressing without this capacity being in place. Draft PID is in place, agreement has been reached to engage with key external stakeholders and the Trust's sign-off process has been incorporated into the project governance structure.
- Next steps are for PID to be completed and approved and monthly project meetings established.

4.3 Statutory Recommendations

4.3.1 The Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review, 2021 included three statutory recommendations that the council has a legal obligation to respond to. These recommendations are incorporated into the single Improvement Plan and are embedded across each of the six themes.

4.3.2 In their follow up review 2022, Grant Thornton recognised progress against all three statutory recommendations.

4.3.3 To provide an overview of progress against these three specific recommendations, Appendix 3 extracts the key actions that respond to each of the recommendations and they are summarised below.

4.3.4 **Statutory Recommendation 1** - It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified and embed the solutions into the Council.

Progress update:

- Continuing to implement strategies to address the service issues highlighted in the Grant Thornton report.
- SLT – progressing the approach agreed by Cabinet in June 2022 to transfer services to a Local Authority Trading Company.
- SCT – Governance arrangements remain in place. Joint work in place with SCT in relation to corporate parenting and early help. Revised contract will commence in April 2023
- Waste Contract – Contract Monitoring framework progressing well and embedded in PMF reporting. Review of the Contract is complete.



- ERP (Oracle Fusion) – support provider in place and implementation commenced. Project Management and Governance arrangements are in place.
- Lion Farm – expert determination process has commenced, anticipated date for resolution of 24 March 2023. Formal document detailing the respective roles and responsibilities of Council and the developer complete.
- Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline to underpin significant regeneration in Sandwell approved by Cabinet 23 March 2022. First monitoring provided to Cabinet in November.

4.3.5 Statutory Recommendation 2 - The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation.

Progress Update

- The first phase of the Governance Review has completed with approval granted to the revised Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, thresholds for decisions, Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol, Scheme of delegations and refresh
- Corporate Governance Training - Programme of training and development commenced in September 2022 on effective decision-making, good governance, and revised contract procedure rules. Next phase of Corporate Governance Development is being planned for roll out during 2023-2024.
- Commercial Strategy in draft and due to be considered by Cabinet in March 2023.
- Corporate Asset Management Strategy approved by Cabinet in November 2023.

4.3.6 Statutory Recommendation 3 - Senior leadership, both officers and members, must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively, that they operate in line with the Council's values, codes, policies and procedures, and that there is zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality.



Progress Update

- Member Development – New Member induction complete and Member Development Programme is being delivered and regularly reviewed by Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee. Next update to the Member Development Programme is due to be agreed in March which will incorporate analysis of Members' Personal Development Plans.
- Officer Development – A consolidated programme of fundamental training for managers on Corporate Governance matters has commenced. A broader Management Development Programme will be rolled out in 2023 following the approval of the Workforce Strategy.
- Organisational Culture – Extensive engagement held and in final stages of developing the One Team Framework (Values and Behaviours). Due for approval in March 2023.
- Meeting structures to facilitate Cabinet Member and Leadership Team cross-working in place and meeting needs.

4.4 Specific Recommendations from External Reviews relating to Scrutiny

4.4.1 The Statutory Directions set out that the Council must secure improvement in relation to the proper functioning of the scrutiny and associated audit functions.

4.4.2 In the original Value for Money Governance Review (2021) Grant Thornton set out 3 recommendations that relate to scrutiny. In their follow up review in Autumn 2022, Grant Thornton commented that *'positive progress has been made to improve the culture and professionalism of key Council committees, with the scrutiny function making particular progress.'* The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Follow up review also found that scrutiny is *'going from strength to strength'*.

4.4.3 No further improvement recommendations relating to the role and function of scrutiny were made by CIPFA, Grant Thornton or the LGA in their follow-up reviews of Autumn 2022. Further details around the external review follow up findings is provided at section 4.6 of this report.



4.4.4 Appendix 4 provides an overview of progress against the original recommendations relating to scrutiny, along with related findings from the Grant Thornton and LGA follow-up visits.

4.5 Scrutiny Work Programme

4.5.1 Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board have included regular reports on overall progress of the Improvement Plan on their work programme.

4.5.2 Scrutiny’s consideration of overall progress of the Improvement Plan and of specific areas within the plan contributes to creating an effective scrutiny function. This will also assist scrutiny to identify any additional work planning items linked to the Improvement Plan. Several elements of the Improvement Plan feature on the work programmes of scrutiny boards.

4.5.3 Following consideration of the first quarterly progress report on the Improvement Plan, further reports were requested by Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board. An update on these is provided below.

Work Programme Item Requested	Update
Council Culture and how we engage with hard to reach staff	Discussion held on 6 December 2022. Further consideration at Scrutiny on 12 January 2023. The Board are keen that conversations around the One Team Framework continue to help embed the new values.
Combined Authority	To be scheduled
Procurement Processes followed to achieve goals	SEND Transport Update to Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board to be considered on 29 March. Regular updates provided through scrutiny action tracker
Customer Journey and public engagement	Scrutiny review currently being conducted by a working group and its findings and recommendations to be fed back to the Board and Cabinet.



4.6 External Reviews - Follow up reports

4.6.1 External assurance continues to play a part in our improvement journey. The council invited Grant Thornton, LGA and CIPFA in Autumn 2022 to monitor our progress in addressing the recommendations in their previous reviews.

4.6.2 An outline of the context for each of these reviews and the findings is set out in appendix 5 with the review reports included at appendix 5a-5d. A summary of their findings is set out below.

4.6.3 **Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review Follow-up Report 2022:** The Grant Thornton follow-up review found that the council had continued to build on the initial improvements recognised by Grant Thornton in their original report and has made significant progress on a number of their recommendations.

4.6.4 Grant Thornton recognise that challenges remain for the council on its improvement journey, and that building on the foundations laid over the last 12 months will be vital. Grant Thornton raised a further four Key Recommendations and a series of improvement recommendations.

4.6.5 **LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report February 2022:** The feedback report from the LGA, recognises the significant progress that has been made in a number of key areas to the good governance and management of the council. The LGA also stressed that the council is on a journey that will take time and there is still a long way to go to embed the improvements required. The LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report included a series of improvement points for the council's consideration.

4.6.6 **CIPFA Financial Management Model Re-assessment Review:** The CIPFA Financial Management Model Re-assessment Report sets out that Sandwell has improved from a progressive two star rating to a three star rating. CIPFA commented that positive progress was evident and represents a step change in under a year, which is to be commended. CIPFA raised a series of areas for the council to continue to focus on



4.6.7 Responses to Follow up Reviews from Grant Thornton and the LGA

4.6.7.1 Grant Thornton and the LGA raised a series of recommendations and improvement points which have been considered. Responses to the recommendations are set out in Appendix 6.

4.6.7.2 Grant Thornton did not issue any new statutory recommendations in their follow-up review. They issued 4 new key recommendations. A summary of the response to these is outlined below:

- **Key Recommendation 1** - The Council must conclude the design of Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan, which will focus on organisational culture, values and behaviours required to deliver change, and introduce a “golden thread” aligning corporate KPIs to individual’s performance objectives, so that planned improvements and changes become embedded across the organisation. The Council must also use the improvement building blocks now in place to bring a greater focus on service user responsiveness and outcomes.

Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan will include milestones around organisational culture and the actions to embed a golden thread including refreshing Vision 2030 and finalising Directorate level business plans. The response also sets out that a greater focus on outcomes for residents is being reflected in the One Team Framework and Workforce Strategy. These are reflected through the January changes to the Improvement Plan.

- **Key Recommendation 2** - The Council needs to ensure that the new corporate PMO remains appropriately resourced, integrates all transformation and change activity being undertaken across the Council, and has access to appropriate data sources to be able to effectively monitor the delivery.

The establishment of the Corporate PMO is being progressed with support from Local Partnerships to ensure that we draw on best practice. The Corporate Transformation Office has been established and there is an agreed framework to integrate all transformation and change activity.

- **Key Recommendation 3** - The Council should progress and finalise outstanding actions relating to our previous recommendations, in particular introducing a commercial strategy and an asset



management strategy and conclude the service based actions arising from our previous recommendations including finalising the outstanding Service Delivery Contract with Serco, and the creation of the new leisure services company. The Leadership Team needs to ensure there is appropriate corporate focus on medium term financial planning and financial statement production.

The council continues to have oversight of the progress against the service issues raised in the 2021 Grant Thornton review. The commercial strategy is in its final stages of preparation, the asset management strategy has been approved, good progress is being made in relation to the contract with SERCO and the establishment of the LATC. Leadership Team retains a robust corporate focus on medium term financial planning.

- **Key Recommendation 4** - Once all the planned revisions to the Constitution have been agreed, the Council will need to embed these changes and demonstrate sustainable improvements in governance and scrutiny of decision making.

Work has already commenced to embed the revisions to the Constitution in working practice. Phase 2 of the Governance Review focuses on embedding changes and the next milestone is to agree the project plans.

- 4.6.7.3 The responses to all the recommendations from Grant Thornton and the LGA are incorporated into a refresh of the Improvement Plan which has been managed through the established change control process. The changes are referenced in appendix 6 and included within section 4.8 of this report. Due to the date of receiving the CIPFA report, the actions to respond to the CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Report will be incorporated in the next update to the Improvement Plan.

4.7 Risk Management

- 4.7.1 The Improvement Plan Risk Register underpins the council's strategic risk relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22) and is currently rated as an overall Amber risk. The risk register is reported monthly to Leadership Team and quarterly to Cabinet and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.



4.7.2 The current risk register is attached as Appendix 7. The main risks are associated with:

- **Resources** – for delivery of key components of the plan including the performance management framework, asset management system implementation and culture change programme. The financial resources required have been identified and were approved by Council in June.
- **Organisational Culture** – If the organisational culture doesn't change, this will limit the improvements that can be made. A theme within the Improvement Plan focuses on organisational culture. A comprehensive engagement programme with staff has taken place and the resulting One Team Framework is due for approval in March. External reviews have provided assurance around the positive changes to the Member and Officer relationship.
- **Communication** – to ensure everyone is aware of their respective roles and responsibilities. Communication is taking place through a range of methods including briefings, live events, and regular messages.
- **Performance Management Framework** – to ensure that we can effectively monitor progress and evidence improvement. Each theme includes an outline of how success will be evidenced. Processes for monitoring progress are in place
- **Investment and Financial Resources** – to ensure financial resources are made available resource gaps/ pressures associated with the Improvement Plan have been identified
- **Programme Management Arrangements**- to ensure appropriate programme management arrangements are in place existing experienced resource is being used. Governance arrangements in place for the Improvement Plan
- **Constitutional Changes (new risk)**- If key governance changes (agreed during 2022) are not embedded throughout the organisation then opportunities will be missed. First round of training has been delivered along with revised templates and guidance. Phase 2 of the Corporate Governance Review is underway and this will focus on embedding the constitutional changes

4.8 Changes to the Improvement Plan and Monitoring Method – Phase 2 Refresh



- 4.8.1 The Improvement Plan is intended to be a live document updated to take account of progress and relevant changes.
- 4.8.2 The Improvement Plan report to Council in June 2022 set out that changes (which may include the addition of new workstreams or objectives, or the amendment of timescales for delivery of actions) will be tracked through programme management mechanisms and that Cabinet will retain oversight of changes through regular formal reporting.
- 4.8.3 This refresh to the Improvement Plan includes the responses to the Grant Thornton and LGA follow up reviews. The refresh reflects that the majority of key milestones outlined in June 2022 have been delivered and an increasing focus is being taken on embedding and sustaining changes. As such, the refresh is referred to as the Phase 2 Improvement Plan.
- 4.8.4 The list of all changes is provided in Appendix 8. Where new actions have been added to the Improvement Plan, these are displayed within the monitoring tool with red font colour. Changes as a result of the Grant Thornton and LGA follow up reviews are also referenced within Appendix 6.
- 4.8.5 The changes made are summarised below.
- 4 new workstreams have been added/amended
 - 5 main actions, 26 sub-actions, and 1 assurance action have been added
 - 32 changes made to action delivery timescales, and milestones (4 of which are of more than 3 months)
 - 16 changes to replace/move actions/milestones
 - 6 changes made to descriptions of actions
 - 1 change to delivery lead throughout the plan (from Director – Business Strategy and Change to relevant Director/lead)
 - 11 actions have been closed as the activity is complete
- 4.8.6 The monitoring method that provides an overview of the progress of the Improvement Plan has been in place since June 2022. It has involved actions being attributed with a risk rating and a ‘progress against plan’ status rating. These ratings have been combined to form an overall theme status rating to provide Leadership Team with oversight of progress and delivery issues.



4.8.7 As part of this Phase 2 refresh to the Improvement Plan, the monitoring method has been reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The review included consideration of some queries raised around the theme status ratings and the approach to attribute all actions a risk rating due to duplication with Directorate Risk Registers, Strategic Risk Register, and project risk registers

4.8.8 Following the review, the changes made to the monitoring method are for action risk ratings to be replaced by a focus rating (to express areas of the plan that are a current delivery focus for leadership team), and for theme status ratings to no longer be used within the monitoring method.

4.9 Reporting Framework and Governance

4.9.1 To ensure that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery, Council approved the reporting mechanism for the Improvement Plan in June 2022. This set out that progress will be monitored by Leadership Team monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly until all actions have been completed, or changes have been embedded into business as usual. The diagram included at Appendix 9 sets out the governance framework.

4.9.2 The Government Directions require reporting on the delivery of the Improvement Plan at six monthly intervals to the Secretary of State from the council and the Commissioners. The last report was made in December 2022. The next report is due June 2023

4.9.3 Member-led committees, such as the Governance & Constitution Review Committee, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Scrutiny Committees, are used for providing a steer and maintaining oversight of the actions and implementation of the Improvement Plan.

4.9.4 The Governance & Constitution Review Committee and cross-party Working Group have been integral to the development and review of the governance documents, ahead of decisions taken by Council last year.

4.9.5 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee receive quarterly updates on the Improvement Plan and the Improvement Plan Risk Register and they received the external follow up reviews in January 2023. The Committee are due to consider this quarterly progress update on 16 March 2023.



4.9.6 Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board has included several elements of the Improvement Plan on their work programme as well as regular reports on overall progress. This has included a ‘deep dive’ focus on the work under the Organisational Culture theme and engagement with the workforce. This report is the third quarterly update to scrutiny.

4.9.7 Any recommendations or comments from Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board will be reported to Cabinet.

5 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>The monitoring of the Improvement Plan is being carried out within existing resources. Council’s approval of the single Improvement Plan included allocation of resources to ensure delivery of the Improvement Plan. These resources are monitored regularly by the Programme Management Office and Leadership Team.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>On 22 March 2022, The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities issued Directions under Section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999 (the 1999 Act) in order to ensure that the council can comply with the requirements of Part 1 of the 1999 Act. Failure to comply with these Directions may lead to further intervention measures for the council.</p> <p>The delivery of actions within the Plan agreed by Council in June 2022, as well as any subsequently identified actions, will support the council to achieve sustainable improvement. This will support the end of government intervention.</p> <p>Ultimately, the changes made through the Improvement Plan will enable the council to effectively</p>



	deliver its strategic priorities and ensure it is delivering value for money for Sandwell.
Risk:	<p>If the Council fails to take appropriate action to meet the requirements set out in the government Direction, or the Commissioners appointed by the Secretary of State do not have sufficient confidence that appropriate actions are being taken to implement and sustain the required improvements, then the council risks not having appropriate arrangements in place to comply with its best value duty under Part 1 of the 1999 Act. This could lead to further government intervention, increased costs and damage to reputation.</p> <p>A risk register is in place and will be maintained for the duration of the Improvement Plan which will underpin the council's strategic risk relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22). This will be reported monthly to Leadership Team, quarterly to Cabinet and will be regularly reported to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.</p>
Equality:	The successful delivery of this Improvement Plan will require the development and review of many of the council's policies and procedures. These changes will build in consideration of the impact on equalities throughout the development and will include an Equality Impact Assessment where appropriate.
Health and Wellbeing:	The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. These priorities focus on improving the health and wellbeing of our residents and tackling health inequalities in a



	multi-faceted way. Therefore, any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to deliver services that will improve the health and wellbeing of Sandwell.
Social Value	Within the Improvement Plan, the council is committed to developing the Social Value Policy in conjunction with the refresh of the Procurement & Contract Procedure Rules. Through strengthening our asks of contractors through this Social Value Policy and linking them to the Corporate Plan objectives, the council will be able to maximise its social value return.
Climate Change	The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. Green in everything we do is one of the Fairer Sandwell principles running throughout the Corporate Plan. Any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to embed this principle and further the climate change agenda.

6 Appendices

1. Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool January 2023
2. Improvement Plan Theme Progress Summary January 2023
3. Statutory Recommendations Reporting January 2023
4. Scrutiny Recommendations Reporting January 2023
5. Summary of External Review Reports
 - a. Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review December 2021 – reissued October 2022
 - b. Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review Follow-Up Report December 2022
 - c. LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review November 2022
 - d. CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Report January 2023
6. Responses to External Review Reports
7. Improvement Plan Risk Register January 2023
8. Changes to the Improvement Plan January 2023
9. Improvement Plan Governance Diagram



7 Background Papers

- [Sandwell Council Improvement Plan](#)
- Approval of Sandwell Council Improvement Plan [Report to Council 7 June 2022](#)
- Improvement Plan Progress Reports:
 - To Council: [13 December 2022](#)
 - To Cabinet:
 - 7 [December 2022](#) including LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report Nov 2022
 - [September 2022](#)
 - To Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
 - [January 2023 \(External Review Reports\)](#)
 - [November 2022](#)
 - [September 2022](#)
 - [June 2022](#)
 - To Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board
 - [November 2022](#)
 - [September 2022](#)

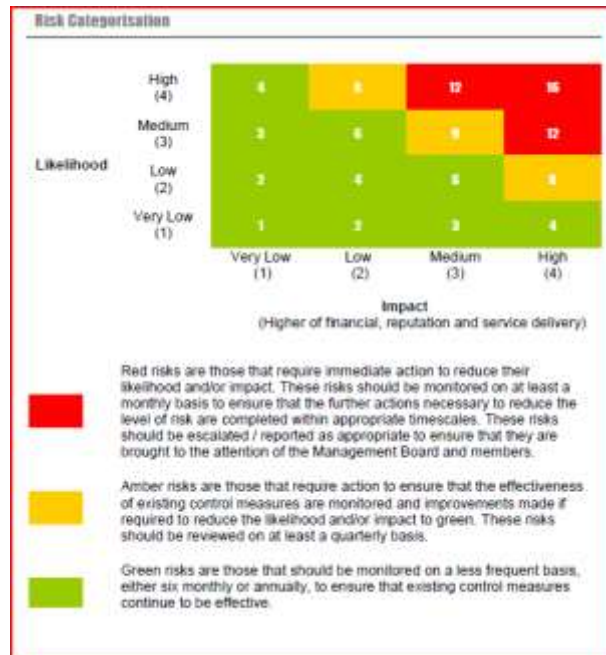


IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Progress against Plan Status Rating	Definition	Leadership Team Action as a result
On Track	Progress against the action is in line with the delivery date with no or minor (of less than a month) actual/projected slippage that does not impact on any dependencies	Leadership Team note progress and seek assurance that on track
Medium progress	Progress on the action is being made but there is actual/projected slippage of between 1-2 months, or any minor slippage presents a risk to dependencies	Leadership Team watching brief and review impact on dependencies
Significant issues / slippage	Progress on the action is or projected to be behind schedule by more than 2 months, or any slippage (actual or projected) presents a risk to critical milestones	Leadership Team review and remedy
Not due to start	Work on the action is not due to start	N/a
Complete	Action is complete	N/a
Closed	Action is complete and there is evidence that the measures of success have been fulfilled	Evidence to be provided
N/A	Update not required at this time	N/a
On hold	Action placed on hold due to different approach being considered	

Action Risk Score (Use Corporate Risk Matrix)

Score	Higher of			Likelihood (the proximity of the risk at the time of assessment)
	Financial	Reputation	Service Delivery	
4 (High)	>20% of budget	National media coverage – permanent impact on reputation	>50% Serious service or programme failure directly affecting vulnerable groups, requiring intervention by Members.	Almost certain It is reasonable to expect that the event will undoubtedly happen or recur, possibly frequently or at least within the next six months. A more than 50% chance of the risk occurring.
3 (Medium)	11% to 20% of budget	Local media and TV coverage- long term local reputation affected.	50%-60% Significant service or project disruption requiring intervention by Corporate Directors / Management Board	Probably / likely The event is more than likely to occur, it will probably happen in the next year but is not a persisting issue. The chance of the event occurring is between a 25% to 50% likelihood.
2 (Low)	5% to 10% budget	Local newspaper coverage – reputation affected temporarily	25%-40% Noticeable disruption to outputs requiring intervention by a relevant Director / Service Manager	Possible Little likelihood of the event occurring, it might happen in the next 18 months or recur occasionally. The chance of the event occurring is between a 10% to 24% likelihood.
1 (Very Low)	<5% of budget	Local gossip/ reputation affected internally	<25% Short term service disruption requiring intervention by a unit or project manager or equivalent.	Unlikely The event is not expected, there is no expectation that the event will occur, but it is possible that it might do so. The chance of the event occurring is less than 10%.



Theme 1 -Organisational Culture

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)	
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A1.0	Establish the desired organisational culture for Sandwell Council	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	May 2022	Dec 2022	Low Risk	Failure to agree desired organisational culture	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A1.2	Phase 2 Engagement: Determining Desired Culture	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	Aug 2022	Dec 2022	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Outcome of listening exercise agreed by Leadership Team November and framework approach agreed December. Now in final stages of engagement and approval	
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A1.3	Approval of document setting out the desired organisational culture	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	Autumn 2022	23-Jan	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Framework agreed with Leadership Team and engagement has been undertaken and continues with wider stakeholders. Due for Cabinet sign off 15 March	
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.0	Create the right environment for that organisational culture to thrive	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader					Medium Risk	Lack of engagement to embed desired culture	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.1	Workforce Strategy approved	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	22-Dec	23-Mar	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Scope and drafting has commenced. Many priority workstreams are already in progress. Working towards Cabinet sign off in May.	
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.2	Other actions as a result of engagement phases	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	TBC	TBC	N/A	N/A	Not due to start	not due to start	Not due to start	not due to start	
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A2.3	New action: Roll out of One Team framework	Chief Exec	Deputy Leader		Head of HR	TBC	TBC	N/A	N/A	New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action	
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B1.0	(close/Move) Design and deliver Corporate Governance Training for Officers	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance				Low Risk	Failure to deliver required training within agreed timescales	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B1.2	(close/move)Revision of Corporate Induction	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance	Head of HR	Autumn 2022	Feb-23	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Draft report completed outlining current induction process and induction resources and recommendations to make improvements to induction and onboarding experience.	
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B1.3	(close/move) Effective decision-making training	Director - Law & Governance	Deputy Leader	Director – Business Strategy and Change		Jul-22	Dec-22	N/A	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Guidance delivered. Following constitutional approvals there is a need for a series of developmental work and training with Officers through the operational lens e.g. report writing. Training and development currently being scoped and intention to commence ahead of the Christmas break and will be delivered through to the end of the Municipal Year. Will require a change of due date to reflect programme delivery to end of Municipal Year.	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Action Plan being developed detailing all requisite actions to embed the Constitutional changes. Plan will be completed by 31 Jan 2023. This includes changes to executive decision making and delegated decision making.	
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B1.5	(close/ move)Delivery of Corporate Governance Training	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance		Autumn 2022	Dec-22	N/A	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Sessions with Officers are being arranged for after Christmas. Focus has been on Member training.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Corporate Governance Training: Member and Officer training delivered by LGA. Next phase of training programme to be scoped by Law & Governance & Finance and agree support required by L&D.	
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B1.6	(close/move) Annual Refresher of Corporate Governance Training	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance		TBC 2023	TBC 2023	N/A	N/A	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B1.7	(close/move)Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training	Director - Law & Governance	Deputy Leader	Director – Business Strategy and Change		Nov-22	Dec-22	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Training for members has been undertaken. Further training is being arranged for officers. Training will again be delivered after Annual Council to members who are appointed to Outside Bodies as Directors/Trustees.
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.0	Develop a clear programme of management development	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance				Low Risk	Lack of engagement from managers with the programme	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.1	Management and Development Programme Scope, Content and Budget Agreed	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance	Head of HR HR Team Manager AD/OD	Oct-22	April 23	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Management Development: Management Development in scoping phase which will include; Manager Fundamentals.
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.4	Management Development Programme Delivery	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance		23-Apr	tbc	N/A	N/A	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B3.0	Officer Learning and Development	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance				Low Risk	Failure to deliver required training within agreed timescales				
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B3.1	New action: Revision of Corporate Induction	Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance	Head of HR	Autumn 2022	Feb-23	N/A		New Action Added		New Action Added	
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C1.0	Continue regular weekly meetings between Cabinet Members and Leadership Team	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director- Law & Governance Chief Executive Leader Cabinet Members Leadership Team				Low Risk	if formalised meeting structures aren't in place, opportunities may be missed for issues to be discussed. Other regular meetings are taking place.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C1.1	Regular meetings of Commissioners, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer and Chief Whips commence	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director- Law & Governance Chief Executive Leader Cabinet Members Leadership Team		May 2022	22-Nov	N/A	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Finding time in diaries an issue – meeting will take place in Jan 2023	Complete	Meetings with Group Leaders/Chief Whips and Statutory Officers have commenced and regular meetings diarised.
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C3.0	Engage LGA to support Officers and Members to develop the relationship going forward including continuation of LGA Cabinet Member mentoring programme	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			May 2022	Dec 2022	Medium Risk	If cultural and behavioural historic issues that have affected the Council's ability to deliver could return if the relationship between Officers and Members is not addressed.		Do not update this month	Complete	Complete. Mentoring Programme is ongoing
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.0	New action: Assurance Activity to sustain positive Officer and Member Relationship	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23		Low Risk	if insight is not collated/ regularly review around the health of the Officer and Member Relationship then opportunities will be missed to address issues and continuously improve			New Action Added	new action
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.1	Identify mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance around the Officer and Member Relationship	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23		N/A				New Action Added	new action
Member Learning and Development	OC.D2.0	Design and deliver Corporate Governance Training for Members	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director- Finance				Medium Risk	if there is insufficient understanding of corporate governance arrangements, this will leave the Council open to reputational and potential legal challenge.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Member Learning and Development	OC.D2.2	Effective decision-making training	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director- Finance		Jul-22	Dec-22	N/A	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	2 sessions held 22/11 focusing on code of corporate governance. Training around constitutional changes approved in November will be scoped and arranged as part of continuous improvement and delivered as part of Member Development Programme. Impact of training to date is evidenced by feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running and their improvement in effectiveness. (Will require a change of date to reflect programme delivery to end of Municipal Year.)	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	As per last month's update. Training will be rolled out through to end of Municipal Year. Change required to reflect delivery to end of Municipal Year. Impact of training delivered so far is evidenced by feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running.

Static data			Owners			Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due		
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Evidence of status rating Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Member Learning and Development	OC.D2.4	Delivery of Corporate Governance Training	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director- Finance		Autumn 22	Dec-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Member Learning and Development	OC.D2.5	Annual Refresher and inclusion in new Member induction	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director- Finance		Mar-23	summer 23	N/A	N/A	Not due to start	due mar 23	Not due to start	due mar 23
Member Learning and Development	OC.D3.0	Continue forward plan for all Member briefings based on themes of work / areas for development	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council					Low Risk	Risk relates to insufficient forward planning leading to missed opportunities	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Member Learning and Development	OC.D3.2	Leadership Team Review of All Member Briefings to ensure they are meeting needs	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Mar-22	Ongoing	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month		Briefing note to be scheduled as a closure report for .
Member Learning and Development	OC.D4.0	Induction training for Leader and Cabinet Members on appropriate processes relating to the employment of Chief Officers, and in particular Statutory Officers	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jun-22	Jul-22	Low Risk	if there is insufficient knowledge and training for Chief Officers Terms and Conditions Committee, then recruitment and selection may result in an unsuitable appointment.	On Track- little or no slippage	Training delivered ahead of interviews for CEx. Discussion have taken place with HR and it has been agreed that training will form part of the induction training programme for Committees at the start of the Municipal Year	On Track- little or no slippage	Training delivered ahead of interviews for CEx. Discussion have taken place with HR and it has been agreed that training will form part of the induction training programme for Committees at the start of the Municipal Year
Member Learning and Development	OC.D5.0	Main action: Member development programme	Director - Law & Governance								New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action added
Member Learning and Development	OC.D5.1	New sub action: Approval of next iteration of MDP that includes actions as a result of Member PDP analysis	Director - Law & Governance	Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee			Mar-23	23-Mar	N/A		New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action added
Internal Communications	OC.E2.0	Deliver the communications strategy to assist with more effective internal communications	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	Leader of the Council			Feb-22	Ongoing	Low Risk	Failure to deliver against strategy	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Internal Communications	OC.E2.1	Internal comms channels used to deliver comms messages on an ongoing basis including: - All staff briefing - Team Talk Leadership Updates - Member bulletin - Director live events - Bostin People e-bulletin (New)	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	Leader of the Council			Ongoing	Monthly updates through IP	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Internal comms activity is including Team Talk, Weekly comms and director live events . Preparations underway for final all staff briefing from KBD and preparations for first briefing from SL.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.2	Chief Executive's Comms Plan launch	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	Leader of the Council			Spring 2023 TBC	TBC	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Draft comms approach prepared outlining roles and responsibilities to aid understanding around the handover from KBD to SL. Wider discussion to follow re internal/external comms approach around handover.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.3	Develop proposal for all staff conference	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	Leader of the Council			TBC Aligned to CEX 100 day plan	TBC	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Preparations underway for SL first live event. Plans for a staff conference will be discussed with SL.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.4	Formal Employee Recognition Scheme - approach and resources identified	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	Leader of the Council			TBC Aligned to CEX 100 day plan	TBC	N/A	N/A	Not due to start	Not due to start	On Track- little or no slippage	Initial data gathering has taken place to identify the options for Formal employee recognition Scheme. A questionnaire will be developed and shared with council employees to gather feedback to steer the package development.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.5	Continuous feedback on effectiveness of internal comms	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	Leader of the Council			Ongoing	Quarterly Reporting Jan, Apr, July, Oct	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Discussion takes place monthly with Directors at IPRM. Kept under ongoing review by comms team.
Internal Communications	OC.E2.6	New sub action : Regular comms activity around the scale of financial activities and how the organisation is addressing them.	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	Leader of the Council			Jan-23	ongoing	N/A	N/A			New Action Added	new action added
Internal Communications	OC.E2.7	New sub action: Review social media policy and create guidance/ protocol for working with MPs	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	Leader of the Council			Jan-23	23-Aug	N/A	N/A			New Action Added	new action added
Internal Communications	OC.E2.8	New sub action: regular comms activity around the golden thread	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	Leader of the Council			Jan-23	ongoing	N/A	N/A			New Action Added	new action added
Chief Executive Recruitment	OC.F2.0	Recruitment of Chief Executive	Commissioner	Leader of the Council				By Sept 2023	Medium Risk	Failure to recruit a suitable candidate leading to prolonged intervention	N/A		N/A	
Chief Executive Recruitment	OC.F2.2	Recruitment process takes place	Commissioner	Leader of the Council		Head of HR	Dates TBC following Autumn decision	Dates TBC following Autumn decision	N/A	N/A	Complete	complete	Complete	complete
Embedding Constitutional Changes	OC.G1.0	New main action: Governance review Phase 2	Director - Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jan-23	TBC			N/A	N/A	New Action Added	new action added

Theme 2- Corporate Oversight

Static data		Owners					Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating		January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)	
ERP	CO.A1.0	Implement Oracle Fusion	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director- Business Strategy & Change Director- Law			Apr-24	Medium Risk	Implementation date depends on Support Implementor contract and mobilisation. Likely to be at least 12 month implementation from mobilisation of new SI contract. 22/11 Risk needs to be updated	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
ERP	CO.A1.8	New sub action: Completion of discovery phase	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader Deputy Leader Deputy Leader			Jan-23	Feb-23	N/A				New Action Added	on track for completion. formal programme board for sign off is due 14 feb 23.	
	CO.A1.9	New sub action: completion of the modelling phase	Director- Finance				Feb-23	Jun-23							
ERP	CO.A1.10	New sub action: Go live	Director- Finance				Apr-24	Apr-24	N/A					New Action Added	
ERP	CO.A1.11	New assurance action: Programme benefits will be defined during the duration of the programme and agreed with the programme board -a process will be agreed for monitoring and reporting the benefits -benefit realisation will take place post go live.	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Feb-23	quarterly	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	Assurance Action		
Performance Management	CO.C2.0	Budget Monitoring	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Mar-22	Ongoing	Low Risk	Risk of untimely monitoring or lack of corporate oversight of the budget position impacting on effective decision making	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Performance Management	CO.C2.4	Assurance action: Quarterly Budget Monitoring Reports made to Leadership Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Ongoing action- start date required	Quarterly monitoring to ensure approach embedded	N/A		Assurance Action	quarterly monitoring	Assurance Action	Budget Monitoring reported monthly to LT and quarterly to Cabinet and Scrutiny. This process is now embedded.	
Performance Management	CO.C2.5	Assurance action: Where budget pressures identified, assurance provided that action has/is being taken (monthly summary comment from S151 Officer / raise issues)	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Ongoing action	Monthly monitoring	N/A		Assurance Action		Assurance Action	Leadership Team continue to receive monthly budget monitoring reports. Spending controls have been in place since October and will continue to the end of the financial year. Further savings identified in treasury management which will bring the 23/24 to a balanced position.	
Performance Management	CO.C2.6	New sub action: Embed financial benchmarking in budget planning	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			tbc	tbc	N/A		New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D.2.0	Embedding Finance Business Partner role	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	Aug-22	Low Risk	Risk relating to missed opportunities and inefficiency	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.3	Workforce development plan implemented for financial services section	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Finance Improvement Manager	Finance Improvement Manager		Nov-22	N/A	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Cr 16.12.22 See previous comments around specific external training already identified and either undertaken or scheduled for January 2023. Staff survey of current skills / experience now completed mid December. Results to be shared with Team Heads for review / sense check before Christmas to enable incorporation into individual / team plans for development in January	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	External training provided to a number of corporate finance staff at the start of January. Review of Staff Survey development needs taken place by Interim Finance Heads Dec/Jan. First draft of key training needs for each team planned for completion by end of January	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.5	Assurance Action: Performance against KPIs for financial services section	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Finance Improvement Manager	Finance Improvement Manager	Ongoing- start date required	Quarterly	N/A	N/A	Assurance Action	quarterly monitoring	Assurance Action	First review of KPI performance will be undertaken at the end of January 2023	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.0	Reduction of financial transactional activity	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	Mar-23	Low Risk	risk relating to missed opportunities and inefficiency	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.3	Review of corporate debt recovery processes completed	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader				Dec-22	N/A	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	This has not progressed as business analyst support is working on customer journey full time, Sonia from C.co will now support the review and meeting taking place on 16.12.22	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Review underway but significant slippage due to resources being directed to the Customer Journey programme. Review due to be complete by end of February but recommendations will then need to be implemented.	
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.4	Programme of end to end process reviews	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			May-22	Mar-23	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Project Plan in place and milestones being met.	

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
													Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.5	Implementation of Recommendations from CIPFa in relation to internal charges	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Oct-22	TBC (once Date is know this can be added to the IP monitoring tool)	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Review making significant progress with external support. Workshop held 18th Jan to consider recommendations and next steps. Completion date 31st March 2023 so new process is in place for 2023/24 financial year.
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.0	Resolve issues relating to the completion and sign off of final accounts.	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	May-22	Medium Risk	Some progress made	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.4	Assurance Action: GT sign-off of 2020/21 Accounts (assurance that previous issues raised have been resolved)	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			TBC one-off monitoring	TBC	N/A	N/A	Assurance Action	update same as November- accounts still not signed - aim is to sign off in January.	Assurance Action	Outstanding issues are being resolved and draft Audit Committee date set for 28th February for approval of 2020/21 accounts.
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.5	Assurance Action: Preparation of Draft Accounts for 2021/2022 (assurance that approach to completion and sign-off of final accounts is becoming embedded)	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			TBC one-off monitoring	TBC	N/A	N/A	Assurance Action	update same as November- accounts still not signed - aim is to sign off in January.	Assurance Action	Aiming for completion of draft accounts by end of March 2023, subject to above.

Theme 4 - Decision Making

Theme 4 - Decision Making														
Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
4 Yearly Election Cycle	DM.A1.0	Implement 4-yearly election cycle	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			May-22	Sep-23	Medium Risk	If we don't reach a decision in October, then there will be a reputational risk associated with delaying making a decision	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4 Yearly Election Cycle	DM.A1.1	Options Paper to Leadership Team	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council				Jun-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
4 Yearly Election Cycle	DM.A1.2	Council Decision to implement	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council				Nov-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B1.0	In-depth review and revision to Corporate Governance Documents	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Dec-21	Oct-22	Medium Risk	If Corporate Governance Documents are not updated, then other improvement work with Members and Officers will be adversely impacted.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B1.1	(close/ move)Effective Decision Making Training	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jul-22	Dec-22	N/A	N/A	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	Repeat of OC.b1.3 Guidance delivered. Following constitutional approvals there is a need for a programme of developmental work and training with Officers through the operational lens e.g. report writing. Scoping for training and development currently being scoped and intention to commence ahead of the Christmas break and will be delivered through to the end of the Municipal Year.	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	As per last month's update. Training will be rolled out through to end of Municipal Year. Change required to reflect delivery to end of Municipal Year. Impact of training delivered so far is evidenced by feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running.
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B1.3	Revised Financial Regs agreed	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council				Dec-22	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	Completed	Complete
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B1.4	Revised Council Procedure Rules	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council				Nov-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete

Static data		Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due		
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date){December 22}	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
													Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date){January 23}
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B1.6	Revised Scheme of Delegations agreed	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council				Nov-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C1.0	Refresh decision making-arrangements including the role of Scrutiny	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Dec-21	Jul-22	Medium Risk	If there isn't an effective overview and scrutiny function in place, then the Council decision-making will not be as effective as it can be.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C1.1	Review of scrutiny arrangements	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council				Nov-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C1.2	Scrutiny Work Planning event	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council				Jun-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C1.3	Approval of any changes to scrutiny (if required following review)	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Oct-22		N/A	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C.2.0	Implementation of Scrutiny Recommendations relating to key issues	Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader			Dec-21	Sep-22	Medium Risk	If we don't implement scrutiny recommendations, this undermines the Council's decision making and leaves the Council open to risk and challenge	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C2.1	SEND Transport recommendations relating to procurement concluded	Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader	Director- Children & Education Scrutiny		Early 2022	Sep-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	Complete	Complete	Complete
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C2.2	Recommendations relating to Waste Contract concluded	Director- Borough Economy	Deputy Leader	Director- Law and Governance			Dec-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	Cabinet Member Briefing on final recommendation update 13/12/22. Update provided to Chair of Scrutiny (Environment) also	Complete	Complete
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C3.0	Manage position on historic issues through work with ARAC chair	Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader			Dec-21	Ongoing	Low Risk	Risk of historic issues resurfacing through ARAC		Do not update this month	Medium Progress- actual/projected slippage of 1-2 months	Draft response is being prepared for the Leader [likely to be able to update as closed ahead of IPRM on 2nd Feb]

Theme 3 -Strategic Direction

Theme 3 -Strategic Direction														
Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.0	Regen Pipeline Development and Delivery	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Autumn 2021	Apr-27	Low Risk	Clear progress on key Pipeline projects; governance arrangements being finalised.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.2	Pipeline projects monitored on a 6-monthly basis	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth				Ongoing	N/A	N/A	Complete	closed	Complete	closed
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.2b	Assurance Action- Pipeline projects updated to IPRM on a 6-monthly basis	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			22-Dec	6 monthly update	N/A	N/A	Assurance Action	Due December 22	Assurance Action	November 22 cabinet covering (April to sept). Showing progress over the 6 month period covering the 66 projects in the pipeline
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.3	Internal infrastructure established for delivery:	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Mar-22	Mar-23	N/A	N/A	Medium Progress-actual/projected slippage of 1-2 months	The options for procuring a strategic delivery partner are being actively explored. Discussions are being held with Shropshire and Bristol City Council. Financial scoping yet to be completed.	Medium Progress-actual/projected slippage of 1-2 months	The options for procuring a strategic delivery partner are being actively explored. Waiting for information from Shropshire.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.3b	o Programme Management Software Procurement	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth				Apr-23	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	Complete	Implementation phase has started, now that procurement has been complete. Pilot involving ASC and BSC alongside R&G.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.0	Corporate Asset Management Strategy Development	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager-Strategic Asset & Land	Autumn 2021	Sep-22	Medium Risk	if timescales are not met, there will be a period	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.3	Transforming Local Services	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager-Strategic Asset & Land		x	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.6	Asset Review	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager-Strategic Asset & Land		x	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.8	Implementation of new Asset Database	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager-Strategic Asset & Land	May-22	Dec-22	N/A	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Phase 1 of the new Asset Database Go Live was 16 December . The TF project has reached an important milestone in its plan, which means Atrium data is now no longer live or usable and links to our current finance system tests have gone well. Those that required new user names and passwords for the system have been contacted. Resourcing has been an issue for this project due to short term contracts meaning recruitment was a problem. To meet the deadline this project has been prioritised. Phase 2 will start in January 2023	Complete	phase 1 -16th Dec- complete- data has been taken out of atrium and transferred into the new system or in protected spreadsheets. Phase 2 - kick off meeting Thursday - agree workstreams, leads and timescales- end of march. Involving modules e.g. asbestos module implementation, room booking, capital accounting, fixed asset register, help desk.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.9	Surplus Assets & commercial estate	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager-Strategic Asset & Land			N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.11	Corporate Asset Management Strategy Approved	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager-Strategic Asset & Land		Nov-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	complete	Complete	complete
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A3.0	Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy Development and Delivery	Director - Business Strategy and Change	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Low Risk	Failure to deliver against strategy		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Strategy development is ongoing with a focus on the core narrative. Aiming to bring in external support to assist with the core narrative development. Next step is to put external support in place.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.0	Refresh and embed the Corporate Procurement Strategy	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Interim Procurement Strategy Manager	Autumn 2021	Jul-22	Low Risk		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.3	Training delivered	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Interim Procurement Strategy Manager	Autumn 22	Dec-22	N/A	N/A	Complete		Closed	
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.4	New actions to be added	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader					N/A					

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
													Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.0	Develop and Implement the Commercial Strategy	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Autumn 2021	Jul-22	Medium Risk	Strategy has been drafted but limited opportunities for business streams have emerged. Training to be undertaken as next step to give relevant officers the appropriate skills and knowledge to review opportunities	N/A	N/a	N/A	N/a
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.1	Commercial Strategy Approved	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader				Jan-23	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Strategy approved by LT but still awaiting Cabinet approval - planned for March.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A5.2	Business Cases Presented for commercial workstreams	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			TBC	Jan-23	N/A	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Strategic Business Cases to be completed by Christmas but this is dependent on engagement from service areas.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Strategic Business Cases prepared and awaiting review by D of F and LT.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.0	HRA 30 year Business Plan	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	Assistant Directors - Housing Management and Asset Management		Autumn 2021	Apr-23	Low Risk	Plan is necessary for long term planning but delivery of asset improvements still continues without the plan	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.2	HRA Business Plan developed	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	ADs		May-22	Mar-23	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	HRA Business Plan was taken to Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities (SNAC) Scrutiny Board on 10th Jan and is on the forward plan to seek approval at Cabinet on 15th February.
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.3	HRA Business Plan approved (in line with budget approval 2023-24)	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing				Apr-23	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	as above
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.4	Procurement of stock condition surveys	Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing				Jun-23	N/A	Medium Progress-actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months		Aiming for a go live on procurement Jan 23.	Medium Progress-actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A7.0	Refresh the Early Help Strategy	Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Mar-22	Low Risk	The strategy has been refreshed ahead of the launch in March 2022.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A7.2	Early Help Strategy to be reviewed annually at the early help partnership board	Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Apr-23	Annually	N/A		Assurance Action	Due April 23	Assurance Action	Due April 23
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A8.0	Refresh Corporate Parenting Strategy	Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Jan-22	Sep-22	Medium Risk	The Corporate Parenting Strategy Board are considering the refresh of the current strategy ahead of the implementation in September 2022.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A8.3	Corporate Parenting Strategy - yearly assurances provided to the Corporate Parenting Board	Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Sep-23	Annually	N/A		Assurance Action	Due September 23	Assurance Action	Due September 23
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.0	Equality and Diversity	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Medium Risk	If the Council does not comply with the Equality	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.1	(close/move) Continue to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) staff networks	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Ongoing	Ongoing	N/A	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Work ongoing to identify underlying issues. Issues being raised is a positive. Report to be taken to Leadership Team once analysis completed. Consultancy support being sought to help support the roll out of the LGA Equalities Framework	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Report to be considered by Leadership Team on 31 Jan 2023 on moving Staff Networks forward
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.2	(close/move) Establish Women's network and Faith & Belief staff network	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jun-22	Dec-22	N/A	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Linked to above	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Linked to SD.B1.1 above
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.3	(close/move) Continue to deliver on Equalities Commission Board priorities	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Ongoing	Ongoing	N/A	N/A	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	LINKED to SD.B1.1 – Additional consultancy support is being sought.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Consultant anticipated to be appointed by end of Feb 2023. Matter is being reported to LT on 31 Jan 2023
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.5	Equality Policy approved	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jul-22	Oct-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	complete	Complete	complete
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.6	EDI Workforce action plan review	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Jun-22	Dec-22	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	Complete	Review has been completed . HR are taking forward the next workforce strategy iteration.
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.7	(close/move) Approval of EDI Workforce plan	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Mar-23	Mar-23	N/A	N/A	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.9	Review of Council EDI decision making process	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Summer 2022	Autumn 2023	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	Complete	This work will form part of the decision-making refresh. The EIA Guidance and template has been updated.

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.10	(close/move) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy approved	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022	Autumn 2023	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	EDI project strategy timeline has been developed and work has started on the consultation with other council to benchmark working with EDI consultants.
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.11	Embed equalities, diversity and inclusion within Member and Officer Development Programmes	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council			Early 2023	Mar-24	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	Complete	EDI eLearning module released in august 22 as part of MDP.
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.12	New sub action- Refresh staff network- -Package of Corporate commitment -Identify network chairs -Established United Networks meeting	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Feb-23	Jul-23	N/A				New Action Added	new action
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.13	New sub action- Refresh Equalities Commission Board Renew terms of reference	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Feb-23	Apr-23	N/A				New Action Added	new action
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.14	New sub action-Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy developed	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Feb-23	Jun-24	N/A				Not due to start	new action
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.15	New sub action-Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy approved and publication	Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		Manager, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team	Jun-24	Sep-24	N/A				New Action Added	new action
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.0	Fundamental review of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Capital Strategy	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Jan-22	Autumn 2022	Low Risk	Risk of missed opportunities and inefficiencies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.2	Approval of MTFP and Capital Strategy	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader				Nov-22	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	Complete	
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.3	New Assurance Action (strategy implemented through budget plans): Budget Report to Cabinet (2023-2026) reflects funding gaps identified in MTFP	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			Feb-23	and annually thereafter	N/A		Assurance Action	Due Feb 2023	Assurance Action	Due Feb 2023
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.4	New Assurance Action (embedding the approach): MTFP and Capital Strategy refreshed and approved in October each year	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			October 2023	and annually thereafter	N/A		Assurance Action	Due October 2023	Assurance Action	Due October 2023
Performance Management	SD.D1.5	New sub action: Approval of updated MTFS	Director- Finance	Deputy Leader			23-Jan	Feb-23	N/A		New Action Added		New Action Added	new action

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
													Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E1.0	Public Consultation to be carried out as part of budget process for 2023/24	Director - Finance	Deputy Leader	Director Business Strategy and Change		Jan-22	Autumn 2022	Low Risk	Risk that budget decisions do not give consideration to residents views and priorities	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E1.3	Public Consultation outcomes inform budget setting	Director - Finance	Deputy Leader	Director Business Strategy and Change			Feb-22	N/A	N/A	Complete	complete	Complete	complete
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.0	Incorporate Public Consultation Results into Performance Management Framework	Director - Business Strategy and Change (Chief Exec)	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022	May-23	Medium Risk	Unable to secure representative sample of residents	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.3	Survey results embedded within PMF and used to inform insight into how the Council is performing	Director - Business Strategy and Change (Chief Exec)	Leader of the Council			Autumn 2022	May-23	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Resident's Survey report was included in Q2 Performance Report and outcomes shared at all staff briefing 02/11. Intelligence has been incorporated within business planning process for 2023 onwards and being used to shape budget.
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.4	Proposal approved for the next phase of resident consultation and engagement and budget consultation	Director - Business Strategy and Change (Chief Exec)				Strategic Lead Service Improvement	October 2022	November 2022	N/A	N/A	Do not update this month	Complete	LT agreement to consultation framework including regular budget and residents consultation and creation of Citizens' space platform. Currently in procurement phase.
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.5	Focus Groups held to explore responses to key areas raised in Residents Survey, Shape survey and budget consultation.	Director - Business Strategy and Change (Chief Exec)				Strategic Lead Service Improvement	Autumn 2022	Dec-22	N/A	N/A	Do not update this month	Complete	Focus groups held and feedback report being used to shape next stages of customer journey work; and work around social isolation and loneliness (including scrutiny review).
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.6	New sub action: Procurement of Consultant to deliver regular residents' survey, but	Director - Business Strategy and Change (Chief Exec)				Strategic Lead Service Improvement			N/A			New Action Added	new action
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.7	New sub action: Consultation and Engagement Framework produced	Director - Business Strategy and Change (Chief Exec)				Strategic Lead Service Improvement			N/A			New Action Added	new action

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
													Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Customer Journey	SD.F1.0	New Main Action: Customer Journey Strategy	Director - Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director Business Strategy	Strategic Lead - Customer	Oct-22	Aug-23	Medium Risk	Reputational damage if Customer Experience isn't improved and the Council fails to meet Customer need & demand		Do not update this month	Medium Progress- actual/projected slippage of 1-2 months	Cabinet Priority Focus Session re: CJ in December 2022, next one due 7/2/23 and Cabinet have been surveyed re: feedback on Constituent experience, draft Commitments & Objectives. Next steps is for engagement sessions to be organised to ensure we capture Customer/Resident feedback to help us shape the Strategy.

Theme 5- Procurement & Commercial

Theme 5- Procurement & Commercial														January Update Due	
Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)	
Waste Contract	PC.A1.0	Introduction of a more focused framework for contract monitoring	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Aug-22	Medium Risk	Risk of service delivery being of a poor quality for waste collection / street cleansing. Risk that contract monitoring does not drive service performance	Complete	assurance actions in place	Complete	assurance actions in place	
Waste Contract	PC.A1.3	Assurance Action- Report provided to Officer Leadership on a quarterly basis. Regular reporting through PMF	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Feb-23	quarterly	N/A	N/a	Assurance Action	Due feb 23	Assurance Action	Due feb 23	
Waste Contract	PC.A1.4	Assurance Action- Annual report on leisure and waste contracts going through to cabinet member	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Nov-22	annually	N/A	N/a	Assurance Action	Report made Nov 22	Assurance Action	Due Nov 23	
Waste Contract	PC.A1.5	Assurance Action- The large contracts in BE for waste/street cleansing, and both leisure providers will be added to the Intend contract management module.	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services				monthly	N/A	N/a	Assurance Action	Do not update this month	Assurance Action	Work has started and is procured with Intend colleagues to complete full upload.	
Waste Contract	PC.A2.0	Review of the contract to refocus our communications and contract monitoring in areas of poor performance and to ensure the council receives the full provisions within the contract from Serco	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Jan-23	Low Risk	Service capacity to procure and manage contract review. Mitigated by appointment of interim waste manager from 11th July 2022	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Waste Contract	PC.A2.3	Recommendations reviewed	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services				Oct-22	N/A	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Ongoing contract analysis being undertaken by Friths	Complete	Final report received from Friths. LT briefing date tbc. Completed the review of recommendations	
Waste Contract	PC.A2.4	Recommendations adopted, as appropriate	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services				Jan-23	N/A	N/A	Not due to start	Not due to start	On Track- little or no slippage	Report received and LT briefing date due by mid Feb.	
Waste Contract	PC.A2.5	Delivery of recommendations – as appropriate	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services				TBC	N/A	N/A	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	
Waste Contract	PC.A3.0	Waste and Recycling Recovery Plan – completion and implementation	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services					Low Risk	Risk that Serco did not improve	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Waste Contract	PC.A4.0	Street Cleansing Recovery Plan – completion and implementation	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Mar-23	Medium Risk	Although an increase in complaints would be likely if performance for street cleansing is not improved, this would not have further more serious impact.	N/A		N/A		
Waste Contract	PC.A4.2	Recovery plan implemented	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			22-Oct	Mar-23	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	In progress. No issues to report and on track for March completion	
Waste Contract	PC.A4.3	Assurance Action- Senior management meeting - annual plans requested- service delivery plan from SERCO is contractually compliant and includes elements of street cleansing.	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			22-Nov	quarterly (from Nov) Nov Feb May Aug	N/A	n/a	Assurance Action	Due feb 23	Assurance Action	Due feb 23	
Waste Contract	PC.A5.0	Manage the delayed Serco Fleet replacement programme in line with the requirements of the contract	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			Autumn 2021	Mid 2023	Medium Risk	May lead to some loss of service due to fleet unavailability	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Waste Contract	PC.A5.2	Fleet replacement complete	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services				Mid 2023	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Fleet replacement plan in place. Next 42 street cleanings vehicles are due in following EV charging infrastructure. 10 RCV	

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Waste Contract	PC.A5.3	Assurance Action- Monthly fleet steering group taking place where the documentation considered by the group is contractually compliant.	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services			22-Nov	quarterly	N/A	N/A	Assurance Action	Next update February 2023	Assurance Action	Next update February 2023
SEND Transport	PC.B1.0	Plan in place to ensure new contract commences prior to expiry of current arrangements and appropriate records in place	Director- Finance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education		Jan-22	Sep-22	Low Risk	Contracts commenced. Residual risk relates to contract monitoring arrangements.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SEND Transport	PC.B1.6	Contract Monitoring Arrangements in Place	Director- Finance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education			Jan-23	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	Medium Progress-actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Resources being identified for contract management support pending the creation of a corporate CM team.
SEND Transport	PC.B3.0	Procurement of 2024 SEND Transport Contract	Director - Children and Education				Nov-22	Sep-24	Low Risk	If SEND 2024 procurement does not adopt continuous improvement and apply learning from SEND 2 then there may be reputational damage and failure to maximise improvement opportunities	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SEND Transport	PC.B3.1	Leadership review of lessons learnt from SEND 2	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education Dept Leader	Director - Law & Governance Director - Finance	Group Head - Education	Sep-22	Nov-22	N/A		On Track- little or no slippage	A lessons learnt review meeting took place 6.12.22, the capture and report will be tabled at the Leadership Team in January 2023.	Complete	Lessons learnt review has been completed and will be presented to IPRM 2nd Feb 2023
SEND Transport	PC.B3.2	Mobilise project team and establish project governance	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education Dept Leader	Director - Law & Governance Director - Finance	Group Head - Education	Feb 2023	April 2023	N/A		Not due to start	not due to start	Not due to start	not due to start
SEND Transport	PC.B3.3	Commence Procurement	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education Dept Leader	Director - Law & Governance Director - Finance	Group Head - Education	Spring 2023	Sep 2024	N/A		Not due to start	not due to start	Not due to start	not due to start
SEND Transport	PC.B3.4	new sub action: Contract Monitoring Arrangements in Place	Director- Finance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education				N/A		New Action Added	new action	New Action Added	new action
New System Procurement	PC.C1.0	Explore implementation of a corporate performance management system	Director- Business Strategy & Change (Chief Exec)	Deputy Leader			Jun-21		Low Risk	Not having the appropriate resource, both financial and employees, to support the implementation of new system	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
New System Procurement	PC.C1.1	Options Appraisal	Director- Business Strategy & Change (Chief Exec)	Deputy Leader				Mar-23	N/A	N/A	Medium Progress-actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Demonstration with a further provider took place in November. Verto capabilities are also being explored. Project to be scoped and specification drawn up.	Medium Progress-actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Additional capacity being secured to draw up project scope and specification from February 2023. This will build on soft market testing and exploration of Verto
New System Procurement	PC.C1.2	Business Case and Implementation Plan Considered	Director- Business Strategy & Change (Chief Exec)	Deputy Leader				TBC based on selected option	N/A	N/A	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start	Not due to start
New System Procurement	PC.C2.0	Procurement of new asset management system	Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Autumn 2021	Dec-22	Low Risk	Procurement is on track but timetable is tight	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

January Update Due

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
New System Procurement	PC.C2.3	Implementation	Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth				Mar-23	N/A	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Phase 1 of the new Asset Database Go Live was 16 December . The TF project has reached an important milestone in its plan, which means Atrium data is now no longer live or usable and links to our current finance system tests have gone well. Those that required new user names and passwords for the system have been contacted. Resourcing has been an issue for this project due to short term contracts meaning recruitment was a problem. To meet the deadline this project has been prioritised. Phase 2 will start in January 2023	On Track- little or no slippage	Phase 2 tech Forge will look at the development of modules such as capital accounting, asbestos, fixed asset register etc. Kick off meeting to be held Thursday 19 January 2023 to identify workstreams, leads and timescales. Current completion date is 31 March 2023
Lion farm	PC.D1.0	Action plan to agree way forward and resolve matter	Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Dec-21	Dec-23	Medium Risk	Medium Risk as the issues are subject to an external Expert Determination Process on the Lion Farm Option Agreement	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lion farm	PC.D1.4	Implement approved way forward	Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Feb-22	In progress	N/A	N/A	Medium Progress-actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Work is still being carried out by the Independent Expert, that has been appointed under the terms of the agreement. Directions have been issued, and in accordance with those directions, the anticipated date for resolution is 24th March 2023. The council is preparing for a number of different scenarios dependant on outcome of the Expert determination process.	Medium Progress-actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	Statement of facts were agreed 19 December. Each parties secondary option agreement due 27 January 23. The anticipated date for resolution is 24th March 2023.
Leisure Contract	PC.E1.0	Governance arrangements to manage, develop and support the current and future delivery of leisure services across the borough, including the new Aquatic Centre	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism			Autumn 2021	May-23	Medium Risk	Some risks remain pending the fully established new LATC to manage the leisure facilities. Financial risks remain in relation to utilities in particular	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Leisure Contract	PC.E1.5	Arrangement in place for future delivery of leisure facilities	Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism				May-23	N/A	N/A		Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Chief Officer has started. Clear project plan in place. Next milestone is Cabinet report due March 2023. Risk remains over utility contracts. Counsel advice received and being progressed with options for Members to consider.
Leisure Contract	PC.E1.6	Add new action: Aquatic Centre Handover	Director - Borough Economy					Jul-23	N/A				New Action Added	new action
Asset Management	PC.F1.0	New main action: Asset Management	Director – Regeneration & Growth				23-Jan				N/A		New Action Added	
Asset Management	PC.F1.1	New sub action: Implementation of Phase 2 Tech Forge	Director – Regeneration & Growth					May-23	N/A	N/a		new action	New Action Added	new action
Strategy development and refresh	PC.F1.2	New sub action: Corporate Asset Management Strategy delivery plan in place	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			23-Jan	ongoing	N/A	N/A	New Action Added		New Action Added	new action

Theme 6-Partnerships & Relationships

Theme 6-Partnerships & Relationships														
Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Evidence of status rating (January 23)
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.0	Continue with robust governance arrangements in place ensuring the accountability of SCT to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people in Sandwell in line with the contract	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Medium Risk	This is identified as a Corporate Risk - the contract between SCT and the Council is subject to review, the Council are embarking on a mid-point contract review with the Trust and the DIE - this will include revision on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in line with approved government arrangements	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.2	KPI Suite reviewed	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Mar-22	Dec-22	N/A	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	As November update	Complete	KPI suite reviewed.
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.3	Revised KPI suite agreed	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Summer 2022	Dec-22	N/A	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	As November update	On Track- little or no slippage	14 of the 15 KPIs are agreed and the final KPI will be confirmed by the end of January 2023
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.4	Review of Contract concludes	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education				Dec-22	N/A	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	As November update	Complete	Completed and submitted to the DIE.
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.5	Contract Review with DIE	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director - Finance			Spring 23	N/A	N/A	Do not update this month	Do not update this month	On Track- little or no slippage	Review scheduled for 17 January 2023
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.6	Contract commences	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Apr-23	Apr-23	N/A		Not due to start	due April 23	Not due to start	due April 23
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.7	New KPIs reported through PMF	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Aug-23	Sep-23	N/A		Not due to start	due Sept 23	Not due to start	due Sept 23
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A2.0	Establish and maintain positive relationship between SMBC and SCT at senior officer and member level	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Low Risk	The introduction of monthly 4 way meetings with the CE of the Trust, the Chair of the Trust, the Lead Cabinet Member and the DCS - this is supporting the further strengthening of the relationship between the Council and the Trust.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A2.3	Assurance action: Feedback provided on a 6 monthly basis on the continuation of regular cross - SMBC/SCT leadership team meetings.	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Jan	6 monthly Jan July	N/A		Assurance Action	Next update due January 2023.	Assurance Action	These meetings are scheduled in calendars and operate against a previously devised Terms of Reference

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A3.0	Establish corporate approach to working with SCT on shared issues, such as corporate parenting and delivery of Early Help service	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Medium Risk	The realignment of the new Children & Families Strategic Partnership (CaFSP) has enabled shared priorities to be developed and integrated across the wider children's partnership - this has led to an improved understanding of strategic planning including, though not limited to, the launch of the Early Help and Corporate Parenting Strategies.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A3.3	Assurance action- Twice yearly performance reports tabled at Children and Education Scrutiny Board	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education			Apr-23	6 monthly	N/A		Assurance Action	Due Apr 23	Assurance Action	Due Apr 23
Regional and Sub-Regional presence	PR.B1.0	Continue to develop the relationship with and actively participate in regional and sub-regional bodies (e.g. WM Combined Authority, Black Country LEP) to maximise opportunities for Sandwell	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth	Cabinet Chief Executive		Jan-22		Medium Risk	Member input into key WMCA meetings needs to increase which is expected to with new Cabinet Member.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Regional and Sub-Regional presence	PR.B1.6	Assurance Action: Update provided on a 6 monthly basis by Director of Regen and Growth to confirm representation at key meetings continues and brings benefit to the council. Key meetings for Members to attend at sub regional and regional level are: ABCA Leaders; WMCA Board; WMCA Economic Growth Board; WMCA Housing and Land Board.	Director-Regeneration & Growth	Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth			Mar-23	6 monthly update	N/A	N/A	New Action Added	Due Mar 23	Assurance Action	Due Mar 23
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.0	Review partnership structures within the 'People's sphere'	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health	Director-Adult Social Care	Director- Public Health			Medium Risk	Work is underway to review the governance arrangements. The children's safeguarding arrangements have been refreshed and discussions are underway in relation to aligning children and adults safeguarding arrangements. Further consideration is being given to the strategic connection across the 5 Board governance arrangements.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.1	Partnership structures in relation to transition from children's to adults in place New action wording: Initiation of Project to review and remodel the pathway between children's and adults' services	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health	Director-Adult Social Care	Director- Public Health			N/A	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	The next planning meeting is scheduled in the spring - the group meets quarterly.	Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	RB: Initial meeting went ahead in December. PID reviewed and amendments being captured. Agreement reached to engage with key external stakeholders. The Trust's sign-off process incorporated into the Project Governance Structure. The project manager appointment was delayed and the post re-advertised. Closing date 6 Jan.
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.2 b	To broaden scope of partnership structures to explore the integration of adult services where appropriate	Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health			Feb-23	TBC	N/A		Not due to start	Due Feb 23	Not due to start	Due Feb 23

Static data			Owners				Dates		Main Action Risk		Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating	January Update Due	
Workstream	Ref	Action	Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)	Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description	Status (December 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(December 22)	Status (January 2023)	Update (Initial and Date)(January 23)
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.5	Assurance action: link to PC.C1.4 Receive a quarterly update from DPH and DAS to provide assurance that governance remains in place to test adequacy of partnerships through system-wide thematic deep dives and that any issues are being addressed by the partnership.	Director - Public Health		Director - Adult Social Care		Quarterly	Jan 23 Apr 23 July 23 Oct 23	N/A	N/a	Assurance Action	Due Jan 23	Assurance Action	Update required
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.0	Relationship with Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) and Funding to Voluntary & Community Sector.	Leadership Team	Cabinet Member for Communities			Mar-22	Jul-23	Medium Risk	Missed opportunities around partnership and value for money: If the future relationship and the funding	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.2	VCS Strategy formation commences	Leadership Team	Cabinet Member for Communities		Director - Housing	2023	2023	N/A	N/A	On Track- little or no slippage	Paper to VCS Strategy group being presented 16/12/22. Focus groups have been held and preparation of draft strategy has started.		Update required

Look up page- do not

RAG- action risk	RAG- progress against plan		Change Control input required	Status	
Low Risk	On Track- little or no slippage		Yes	Open	
Medium Risk	Medium Progress- actual/ projected		No	Closed	
High Risk	Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months				
Complete	Complete				
Not due to start	Not due to start				
Closed	Closed				
N/A	N/A				

- New Action Added
- Assurance Action
- Change to action description
- Duplicate/ link to another action
- Action on Hold

use

Theme	decision	Type of change
Organisational Culture	Approve	Change of Delivery Lead(s)
Corporate Oversight	Reject	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)
Strategic Decision	Defer	Change to resource / extra resource
Decision Making		Changes to objectives and deliverables
Procurement & Commercial		Add - New Sub Actions
Partnership & Relationships		Add- New Assurance Action
		Add- New Main Action
		Change to action description
		Mistake on Document



Static data		
Workstream	Ref	Action
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A1.0	Establish the desired organisational culture for Sandwell Council
Establishing Organisational Culture	OC.A1.1	Phase 1 Engagement: Starting the Conversation
Officer Learning and Development	OC. B1.0	Design and deliver Corporate Governance Training for Officers
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B1.1	Scope of Corporate Governance Training for Officers approved (including comprehensive finance and governance training tailored to those with different levels of financial responsibility)
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B1.4	Procurement of Delivery Partner (corporate governance training)
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.0	Develop a clear programme of management development

Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.2	Budget Holder Role Profile Approved
Officer Learning and Development	OC.B2.3	Incorporate training on company roles and responsibilities in senior officer development plan
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C1.0	Continue regular weekly meetings between Cabinet Members and Leadership Team
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C1.2	Meeting structures to support regular dialogue between Senior Leadership (Officer and Member) confirmed for new Municipal Year
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C2.0	Continue to adopt star chamber approach for Cabinet Members and Chief Officers as part of budget setting approach
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.0	Ward and Casework Management
Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.1	Process and approach review –completed as part of customer feedback review

Officer and Member Relationship	OC.C4.2	Leadership Team conversation to identify mechanisms to embed and sustain the required approach and process forward and casework (linked to desired organisational culture)
Member Learning and Development	OC.D1.0	Deliver Member Development Programme including Finance Training Programme
Member Learning and Development	OC.D1.1	Service Showcase
Member Learning and Development	OC.D1.2	New Member Induction
Member Learning and Development	OC.D1.3	Approval of Member Development Programme
Member Learning and Development	OC.D1.4	Deliver Member Development Programme
Member Learning and Development	OC.D2.0	Design and deliver Corporate Governance Training for Members
Member Learning and Development	OC.D2.1	Scope of Corporate Governance Training for Members approved
Member Learning and Development	OC.D2.3	Procurement of delivery partner (for Corporate Governance Training)
Member Learning and Development	OC.D3.0	Continue forward plan for all Member briefings based on themes of work / areas for development

Member Learning and Development	OC.D3.1	Forward Plan for All Member Briefings in place for new Municipal Year
Internal Communications	OC.E1.0	A clear and joint message from Chief Executive and Leader regarding Officer and Elected Member relationship delivered
Employee Engagement	OC.F1.0	Actions to respond to employee survey outcomes to be identified and embedded in improvement plan
Chief Executive Recruitment	OC.F2.0	Recruitment of Chief Executive
Chief Executive Recruitment	OC.F2.1	Decision on the timescale to go out for advert for the permanent Chief Executive



Static data		
Workstream	Ref	Action

ERP	CO.A1.0	Implement Oracle Fusion Simone - Harvinder is providing some high level milestones for inclusion in this section.
ERP	CO.A1.1	Cabinet approval for action plan to continue implementation of Oracle Fusion
ERP	CO.A1.2	Terminate implementation partner contract with InoApps
ERP	CO.A1.3	Implement robust project management arrangements
ERP	CO.A1.4	Review operational team to ensure there are appropriate resources in place during implementation phase
ERP	CO.A1.5	Project management training for all of project team, including Project Sponsors
ERP	CO.A1.6	Procure new support provider to deliver Oracle Fusion
ERP	CO.A1.7	Support provider in place and delivery commences
Improvement Planning	CO.B1.0	Single Improvement Plan Phase 1
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.1	Council approval of Improvement Plan

Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.2	Commissioners Report prepared
Improvement Planning, Monitoring and Learning	CO.B1.3	Commissioners Report to Secretary of State
Performance Management	CO.C1.0	Performance Management Framework (PMF)
Performance Management	CO.C1.1	Council approval of PMF
Performance Management	CO.C1.2	Q1 performance report
Performance Management	CO.C2.0	Budget Monitoring
Performance Management	CO.C2.1	Report format agreed by Leadership Team
Performance Management	CO.C2.2	Q1 budget report to Leadership Team, Cabinet and Sc
Performance Management	CO.C2.3	Monthly Budget monitoring
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D.2.0	Embedding Finance Business Partner role
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.1	Restructure of financial services section to provide a greater focus on business partnering completed
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.2	Expectations on financial services section established

Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D2.4	KPIs and standards developed for financial services section
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.0	Reduction of financial transactional activity
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.1	Business process re-engineering resources approved
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D3.2	Review of internal charges
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.0	Resolve issues relating to the completion and sign off of final accounts.
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D.4.1	External review of 2020/21 Statement of Accounts
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.2	New suite of working papers to support the 2021/22 year-end process agreed
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D.4.2	Additional resources in place for 2021/22 year-end process
Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core	CO.D4.3	Training for key members of the Finance Team completed
Programme and Project Management	CO.E1.0	Programme and Project Management
Programme and Project Management	CO.E1.1	Agree a Corporate approach to Project Management,
Programme and Project Management	CO.E1.2	Suite of Programme and Project Documentation Agreed

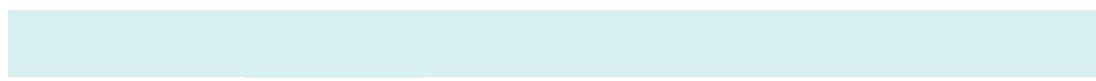
Customer Journey	CO.F5.0	Customer Journey Programme
Customer Journey	CO.F5.1	Structure and Governance for Customer Experience Programme approved

Static data		
Workstream	Ref	Action
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.0	Regen Pipeline Development and Delivery
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.1	Cabinet Approval of Regen Strategy and Pipeline 2022-27
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.2	Pipeline projects monitored on a 6-monthly basis
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.3a	o Programme and Project Management Structures in place
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.3c	o Project Management Software procurement
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A1.3d	o Microsite creation for information around priority projects for stakeholders
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.0	Corporate Asset Management Strategy Development
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.1	<i>Work Place Vision</i>
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.2	Confirmation of funding for remaining Workplace Vision components
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.3	<i>Transforming Local Services</i>

Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.4	Cabinet Workshop to provide steer
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.5	Options for hub locations identified
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.6	Asset Review
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.7	Procurement of asset database
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.9	Surplus Assets & commercial estate
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A2.10	Maximising Value out of surplus assets portfolio – Cabinet report
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A3.0	Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy Development and Delivery
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A3.1	Corporate Communications Strategy approved
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A3.2	Communications Team restructure concluded to focus resources on key workstreams of Communications Strategy
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.0	Refresh and embed the Corporate Procurement Strategy
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.1	Procurement & Contract Procedure Rules approved
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A4.2	Training developed

Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.0	HRA 30 year Business Plan
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A6.1	Review of compliance and stock data
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A8.0	Refresh Corporate Parenting Strategy
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A8.1	Re-focusing of strategic priorities
Strategy development and refresh	SD.A8.2	Corporate Parenting Strategy approved
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.0	Equality and Diversity
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.4	Equality Policy reviewed
Equality and Diversity	SD.B1.8	Review approach to Equality Impact Assessments
Locality Working	SD.C1.0	Developing a model for locality working
Locality Working	SD.C1.1	Cabinet Workshop to provide steer on community hub
Locality Working	SD.C1.2	Pilot of Town Co-ordinator role commences

Locality Working	SD.C1.3	Customer Access Strategy Development Commences Action to become main action SD.F1.0 within Customer Journey Workstream 'Customer Journey Strategy Approved'
Locality Working	SD.C1.4	Business Cases for hub locations progressed, as appro
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.0	Fundamental review of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and Capital Strategy
MTFP & Capital Strategy	SD.D1.1	Review concluded
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E1.0	Public Consultation to be carried out as part of budget process for 2023/24
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E1.1	Procurement concluded to provide capacity for a regular Resident's Survey
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E1.2	Public Consultation undertaken
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.0	Incorporate Public Consultation Results into Performance Management Framework
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.1	First Resident's Survey conducted
Consultation and Engagement	SD.E2.2	First report from Resident's Survey



Static data		
Workstream	Ref	Action

4 Yearly Election Cycle	DM.A1.0	Implement 4-yearly election cycle
4 Yearly Election Cycle	DM.A1.1	Options Paper to Leadership Team
4 Yearly Election Cycle	DM.A1.2	Council Decision to implement
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B1.0	In-depth review and revision to Corporate Governance Documents
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B1.2	Revised Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules agreed
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B1.4	Revised Council Procedure Rules
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B1.5	Revised Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B1.6	Revised Scheme of Delegations agreed
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B2.0	Refresh existing arrangements for arms-length companies
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B2.1	Identify existing arms-length companies, company directors and company administration

Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B2.2	Conduct review to ensure appropriate resources are allocated to these organisations
Constitution and Governance Framework	DM.B2.3	Implement annual reporting arrangements
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C1.0	Refresh decision making-arrangements including the role of Scrutiny
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C1.1	Review of scrutiny arrangements
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C1.2	Scrutiny Work Planning event
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C1.3	Approval of any changes to scrutiny (if required following review)
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C.2.0	Implementation of Scrutiny Recommendations relating to key issues
Role and Function of Scrutiny and Audit	DM.C2.1	SEND Transport recommendations relating to procurement concluded

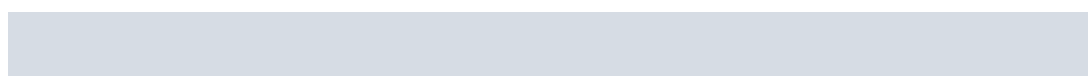


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Workstream	Ref	Action

Waste Contract	PC.A1.0	Introduction of a more focused framework for contract monitoring
Waste Contract	PC.A1.1	Contract Monitoring Framework agreed
Waste Contract	PC.A1.2	Contract Management framework in place and embedded in PMF reporting – (in line with Q1)
Waste Contract	PC.A2.0	Review of the contract to refocus our communications and contract monitoring in areas of poor performance and to ensure the council receives the full provisions within the contract from Serco
Waste Contract	PC.A2.1	Procurement of support to review contract
Waste Contract	PC.A2.2	Review of contract completed
Waste Contract	PC.A3.0	Waste and Recycling Recovery Plan – completion and implementation
Waste Contract	PC.A3.1	Implementation Complete
Waste Contract	PC.A4.0	Street Cleansing Recovery Plan – completion and implementation
Waste Contract	PC.A4.1	Recovery Plan approved by Waste Management Board
Waste Contract	PC.A5.0	Manage the delayed Serco Fleet replacement programme in line with the requirements of the contract
Waste Contract	PC.A5.1	Fleet replacement schedule in place
SEND Transport	PC.B1.0	Plan in place to ensure new contract commences prior to expiry of current arrangements and appropriate records in place
SEND Transport	PC.B1.1	Cabinet approval

SEND Transport	PC.B1.2	Procurement commenced
SEND Transport	PC.B1.3	Procurement published for framework
SEND Transport	PC.B1.4	Expiry of current arrangements – end of 2021-22 Acad
SEND Transport	PC.B1.5	New contract in place
SEND Transport	PC.B2.0	Implementation of recommendations from Audit and Scrutiny in relation to SEND Transport
SEND Transport	PC.B2.1	Scrutiny Recommendations embedded in plans for new arrangements
SEND Transport	PC.B2.2	Update to Education Scrutiny
SEND Transport	PC.B2.3	Recommendations related to procurement embedded in procurement process
SEND Transport	PC.B2.4	ARAC recommendations implemented
New System Procurement	PC.C2.0	Procurement of new asset management system
New System Procurement	PC.C2.1	Market Research

New System Procurement	PC.C2.2	Procurement Concluded
Lion farm	PC.D1.0	Action plan to agree way forward and resolve matter
Lion farm	PC.D1.1	Brief Cabinet on options
Lion farm	PC.D1.2	Presentation of proposal by developer to Cabinet
Lion farm	PC.D1.3	Options appraisal report to Cabinet for approval of wa
Lion farm	PC.D1.5	Responsibilities of both council and developer clarified within action plan
Leisure Contract	PC.E1.0	Governance arrangements to manage, develop and support the current and future delivery of leisure services across the borough, including the new Aquatic Centre
Leisure Contract	PC.E1.1	Governance arrangements in place
Leisure Contract	PC.E1.2	Termination of existing Contract
Leisure Contract	PC.E1.3	Step-in provider in place
Leisure Contract	PC.E1.4	Option appraisal for future facility management options– Cabinet report



Static data		
Workstream	Ref	Action
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.0	Continue with robust governance arrangements in place ensuring the accountability of SCT to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people in Sandwell in line with the contract

Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A1.1	Performance reporting embedded within Council PMF
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A2.0	Establish and maintain positive relationship between SMBC and SCT at senior officer and member level
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A2.1	Continuation of regular cross- SMBC/SCT Leadership meetings in place (including Chair of Trust Board, Lead Member, CEO of the Trust and DCS)
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A2.2	Confirm Member participation in Governance Arrangements for new Municipal Year
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A3.0	Establish corporate approach to working with SCT on shared issues, such as corporate parenting and delivery of Early Help service
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A3.1	Continuation of arrangements for strategic priorities to be shared across the partnership and include a series of joint work. Initial focus areas are corporate parenting and early help.
Sandwell Children's Trust	PR.A3.2	Assurance that approach to working together is effective through regular programme of performance reports
Regional and Sub-Regional presence	PR.B1.0	Continue to develop the relationship with and actively participate in regional and sub-regional bodies (e.g. WM Combined Authority, Black Country LEP) to maximise opportunities for Sandwell

Regional and Sub-Regional presence	PR.B1.1	Officer representation agreed to attend key meetings and a clear agenda set for each forum
Regional and Sub-Regional presence	PR.B1.2	Sandwell asks of trailblazer devolution deal agreed
Regional and Sub-Regional presence	PR.B1.3	Participation in Investor Conference
Regional and Sub-Regional presence	PR.B1.4	CRSTS allocation (transport) approved by CA Board
Regional and Sub-Regional presence	PR.B1.5	Member representation to attend key meetings agreed and agenda for each forum shared
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.0	Review partnership structures within the 'People's sphere'
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.2	Initial scoping of work with partners around partnership structures in the children's sphere
Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.3	Develop Health & Wellbeing Strategy that builds on existing whole system approach to addressing health inequalities

Effective Local Structures	PR.C1.4	Test adequacy of partnerships and integration through Health Outcomes Framework and system-wide thematic deep dives
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.0	Relationship with Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) and Funding to Voluntary & Community Sector.
VCS Relationships	PR.D1.1	Corporate review of grant funding



Owners			
Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)
Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader		Head of HR
Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader		Head of HR
Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance	
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader	Director – Business Strategy and Change Director - Finance	
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader	Director – Business Strategy and Change	
Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance	

Director - Finance	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance	Finance Improvement Manager
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		Head of HR HR Team Manager L&D/OD
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director- Law & Governance Chief Executive Leader Cabinet Members Leadership Team	
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director- Law & Governance Chief Executive Leader Cabinet Members Leadership Team	
Director - Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader	Director- Law & Governance	
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader	Director- Business Strategy & Change	

Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader	Director- Business Strategy & Change	
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director- Finance	
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director- Finance	
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Director- Finance	
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		

Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council	Head of Communications	
Director – Business Strategy and Change	Deputy Leader		
Commissioner	Leader of the Council		
Commissioner	Leader of the Council		Head of HR



Owners			
Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)

Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director- Business Strategy & Change Director- Law	
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director- Business Strategy & Change Director- Law	
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director- Business Strategy & Change Director- Law	
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director- Business Strategy & Change Director- Law	
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director- Business Strategy & Change Director- Law	
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director- Business Strategy & Change Director- Law	
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director- Business Strategy & Change Director- Law	
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director- Business Strategy & Change Director- Law	
Leadership Team	Leader of the Council		
Leadership team	Leader of the Council		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement

Commissioners	Leader of the Council		Chief Of Staff- Commissioner Team
Commissioners	Leader of the Council		Chief Of Staff- Commissioner Team
Director- Business Strategy & Change	Deputy Leader		
Director- Business Strategy & Change	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement
Director- Business Strategy & Change	Deputy Leader		Strategic Lead: Service Improvement
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		

Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Finance Improvement Manager	Finance Improvement Manager
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Business Strategy & Change	Deputy Leader		
Director- Business Strategy & Change	Deputy Leader		
Director- Business Strategy & Change	Deputy Leader		

Director- Business Strategy & Change	Deputy Leader		Transformation Programme Manager
Director- Business Strategy & Change	Deputy Leader		Transformation Programme Manager

Owners			
Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager- Strategic Asset & Land
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager- Strategic Asset & Land
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager- Strategic Asset & Land
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager- Strategic Asset & Land

Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager- Strategic Asset & Land
Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth	Director - Housing (update required from both directors)	Service Manager- Strategic Asset & Land
Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager- Strategic Asset & Land
Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager- Strategic Asset & Land
Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager- Strategic Asset & Land
Director-Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		Service Manager- Strategic Asset & Land
Director - Business Strategy and Change	Leader of the Council		
Director - Business Strategy and Change	Leader of the Council		
Director - Business Strategy and Change	Leader of the Council		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Interim Procurement Strategy Manager
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Interim Procurement Strategy Manager
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		Interim Procurement Strategy Manager

Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	Assistant Directors - Housing Management and Asset Management	
Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	AD, Asset Management and Improvement	
Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education		
Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education		
Director- Children & Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	Director – Business Strategy and Change	
Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	Director – Business Strategy and Change	
Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	Director – Business Strategy and Change	

Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	Director – Business Strategy and Change	
Director- Housing	Cabinet Member for Housing	Director – Business Strategy and Change	
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director Business Strategy and Change	
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director Business Strategy and Change	
Director- Finance	Deputy Leader	Director Business Strategy and Change	
Director - Business Strategy and Change	Leader of the Council		
Director - Business Strategy and Change	Leader of the Council		
Director - Business Strategy and Change	Leader of the Council		



Owners			
Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)

Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Leader of the Council		Service Manager- Strategic Asset & Land
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		Governance and Business Support Principal Lead & Solicitor
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		

Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Leader of the Council		
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader		
Director- Law & Governance	Deputy Leader	Director-Children & Education Scrutiny	

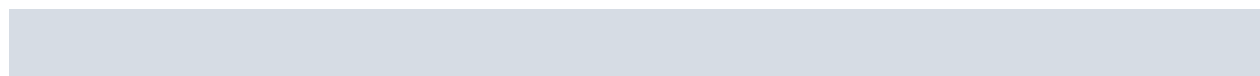


Owners			
Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)

Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
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Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Environment Services		
Director - Finance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education	
Director - Finance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education	

Director- Finance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education	
Director- Finance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education	
Director- Finance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education	
Director- Finance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education	
Director- Law & Governance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Scrutiny Director – Children & Education	
Director- Law & Governance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Scrutiny Director – Children & Education	
Director- Law & Governance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Scrutiny Director – Children & Education	
Director- Law & Governance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Scrutiny Director – Children & Education	
Director- Law & Governance	Dept Leader / Cabinet Member for Children and Education	Director – Children & Education ARAC	
Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		

Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director – Regeneration & Growth	Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism		
Director - Borough Economy	Cabinet Member for Leisure and Tourism		



Owners			
Director Lead	Cabinet Member	Other Leads	Update Owner (if different)
Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education		

Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education		
Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education		
Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education		
Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education		
Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education		
Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education		
Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education		
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth	Cabinet Chief Executive	

Director- Regeneration & Growth	Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth	Cabinet Chief Executive	
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth	Cabinet Chief Executive	
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth	Cabinet Chief Executive	
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth	Cabinet Chief Executive	
Director- Regeneration & Growth	Leader of the Council / Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Growth	Cabinet Chief Executive	
Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health	Director-Adult Social Care Director- Public Health	
Director - Children and Education	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health	Director-Adult Social Care Director- Public Health	
Director-Adult Social Care	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health	Director- Public Health	

Director-Adult Social Care	Cabinet Member for Children and Education / Cabinet Member for Adults, Social Care and Health	Director- Public Health	
Leadership Team	Cabinet Member for Communities		
Director - Housing	Cabinet Member for Communities		

Theme 1 -Organisational Culture

Dates		Main Action Risk	
Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description
May 2022	Dec 2022	Low Risk	Failure to agree desired organisational culture
Jun 2022	Jul 2022	N/A	N/A
		Low Risk	Failure to deliver required training within agreed timescales
May-22	Jun-22	N/A	N/A
Jun-22	Aug-22	N/A	N/A
		Low Risk	Lack of engagement from managers with the programme

	May-22	N/A	N/A
Aug-22	Dec-22	N/A	N/A
		Low Risk	If formalised meeting structures aren't in place, opportunities may be missed for issues to be discussed. Other regular meetings are taking place.
May 2022	Jun 2022	N/A	N/A
2021	Summer 2022	Low Risk	On track
	May 2022	Oct 2022	Medium Risk Risk relates to reputational harm where Members are unable to have their case work addressed in a timely manner
	Complete	N/A	N/A

		N/A	N/A
		Medium Risk	If we do not ensure Members have the required knowledge and skills to undertake their roles, the Council is at risk of not delivering its priorities and is at risk of challenge around decision
	18-May-22	N/A	N/A
May-22	Jun-22	N/A	N/A
Jul-22	Jul-22	N/A	N/A
Jul-22	Mar-23	N/A	N/A
		Medium Risk	If there is insufficient understanding of corporate governance arrangements, this will leave the Council open to reputational and potential legal challenge.
Mar-22	Jun-22	N/A	N/A
Jul-22	Sep-22	N/A	N/A
		Low Risk	Risk relates to insufficient forward planning leading to missed opportunities

May-22	Jun-22	N/A	N/A
Dec-22	Dec-22	Low Risk	Failure to successfully complete the action.
May-22	Aug-22	Medium Risk	Lack of engagement from individual directorates in identifying required actions
	By Sept 2023	Medium Risk	Failure to recruit a suitable candidate leading to prolonged intervention
	Autumn 2022	N/A	N/A

Theme 2- Corporate Over

Dates		Main Action Risk	
Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description

Dec-21	TBC (once Date is know this can be added to the IP monitoring tool)	Medium Risk	Implementation date depends on Support Implementor contract and mobilisation. Likely to be at least 12 month implementation from mobilisation of new SI contract.
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Jul-22	N/A	N/A
	Aug-22	N/A	N/A
Jul-22	TBC (once Date is know this can be added to the IP monitoring tool)	N/A	N/A
Mar-22	Jun-22	Low Risk	IP approved by Council in June. Remaining risks relate to effective
	Jun-22	N/A	N/A

	by 22 June 2022	N/A	N/A
	by 22 June 2022	N/A	N/A
Sep-22	Ongoing	High Risk	Risks relate to capacity to embed PMF. Council approval of resources in June. Recruitment underway.
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Aug-22	N/A	N/A
Mar-22	Ongoing	Low Risk	Risk of untimely monitoring or lack of corporate oversight of the budget position impacting on effective decision making
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Aug-22	N/A	N/A
	Ongoing	N/A	N/A
Jan-22	Aug-22	Low Risk	Risk relating to missed opportunities and inefficiency
	Jun-22	N/A	N/A
	Jun-22	N/A	N/A

	Oct-22	N/A	N/A
Jan-22	Mar-23	Low Risk	risk relating to missed opportunities and inefficiency
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Oct-22	N/A	N/A
Jan-22	May-22	Medium Risk	Some progress made
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
Dec-21	Late 2022	Medium Risk	Failure to embed consistent approach which provides appropriate oversight of all key projects and consistent approach to their management
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	May-22	N/A	N/A

			Neil: could you please provide a risk rating and description for this new workstream
22-Sep	Oct-22	N/A	

Theme 3 -Strategic Direc

Dates		Main Action Risk	
Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description
Autumn 2021	Apr-27	Low Risk	Clear progress on key Pipeline projects; governance arrangements being finalised.
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Ongoing	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Nov-22	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2021	Sep-22	Medium Risk	If timescales are not met, there will be a period during which the Council will not have a fit-for-purpose asset database
	x	N/A	N/A
	Autumn 22 linked to MTFP	N/A	N/A
	x	N/A	N/A

Mar-22	Complete	N/A	N/A
Jun-22	Sep-22	N/A	N/A
	x	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
		N/A	N/A
	Sep-22	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Low Risk	Failure to deliver against strategy
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	May-22	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2021	Jul-22	Low Risk	
	May-22	N/A	N/A
Aug-22	Oct-22	N/A	N/A

Autumn 2021	Apr-23	Low Risk	Plan is necessary for long term planning but delivery of asset improvements still continues without the plan
	May-22	N/A	N/A
Jan-22	Sep-22	Medium Risk	The Corporate Parenting Strategy Board are considering the refresh of the current strategy ahead of the implementation in September 2022.
	Sep-22	N/A	N/A
	Sep-22	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Medium Risk	If the Council does not comply with the Equality Act 2010 there is a risk of reputational damage.
May-22	Oct-22	N/A	N/A
Summer 2022	Autumn 2022	N/A	N/A
Mar-22	TBC	Medium Risk	Locality working model is linked to community hubs being progressed.
Complete	Complete	N/A	N/A
Summer 2022	Summer 2022	N/A	N/A

Sep-22	Sep-22	N/A	N/A
Sep-22	Spring 2023	N/A	N/A
Jan-22	Autumn 2022	Low Risk	Risk of missed opportunities and inefficiencies
	Sep-22	N/A	N/A
Jan-22	Autumn 2022	Low Risk	Risk that budget decisions do not give consideration to residents views and priorities
	May-22	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2022	Autumn 2022	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2022	May-23	Medium Risk	Unable to secure representative sample of residents to respond to consultations and survey
Autumn 2022	Autumn 2022	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2022	Autumn 2022	N/A	N/A

Theme 4 - Decision Making

Dates		Main Action Risk	
Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description

May-22	Sep-23	Medium Risk	If we don't reach a decision in October, then there will be a reputational risk associated with delaying making a decision
	Jun-22	N/A	N/A
	Nov-22	N/A	N/A
Dec-21	Oct-22	Medium Risk	If Corporate Governance Documents are not updated, then other improvement work with Members and Officers will be adversely impacted.
	Jul-22	N/A	N/A
	Nov-22	N/A	N/A
	Aug-22	N/A	N/A
	Nov-22	N/A	N/A
Jan-22	Jul-22	Low Risk	If we don't ensure that there is sufficient governance and oversight, it can lead to significant and/or unintended consequences for the organisation e.g. reputational issues, Council not discharging legal obligations.
Apr-22	Apr-22	N/A	N/A

May-22	Jul-22	N/A	N/A
	Jul-22	N/A	N/A
Dec-21	Jul-22	Medium Risk	If there isn't an effective overview and scrutiny function in place, then the Council decision-making will not be as effective as it can be.
	Nov-22	N/A	N/A
	Jun-22	N/A	N/A
Oct-22	2023 (specific timescale for implementation will be determined once review concluded)	N/A	N/A
Dec-21	Sep-22	Medium Risk	If we don't implement scrutiny recommendations, this undermines the Council's decision making and leaves the Council open to risk and challenge
Early 2022	Sep-22	N/A	N/A

Theme 5- Procurement & Co

Dates		Main Action Risk	
Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description

Autumn 2021	Aug-22	Medium Risk	Risk of service delivery being of a poor quality for waste collection / street cleansing. Risk that contract monitoring does not drive service performance
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Aug-22	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2021	Jan-23	Low Risk	Service capacity to procure and manage contract review. Mitigated by appointment of interim waste manager from 11th July 2022
	May-22	N/A	N/A
	Sep-22	N/A	N/A
		Low Risk	Risk that Serco did not improve
	Jun-22	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2021	Mar-23	Medium Risk	Although an increase in complaints would be likely if performance for street cleansing is not improved, this would not have further more serious impact.
	Oct-22	Low Risk	Risk of service delivery being of a poor quality for waste collection / street cleansing. Risk that contract monitoring does not drive service performance
Autumn 2021	Mid 2023	Medium Risk	May lead to some loss of service due to fleet unavailability
	Complete	N/A	N/A
Jan-22	Sep-22	Low Risk	MJ to review: Contracts commenced. (Prev risk drafted as follows: On track. Tender offer letters have been issued (10 day standstill period).
	Complete	N/A	N/A

	Complete	N/A	N/A
	May-22	N/A	N/A
	Jul-22	N/A	N/A
	Sep-22	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2021	Sep-22	Medium Risk	If we don't implement scrutiny and ARAC recommendations, this undermines the Council's decision making and leaves the Council open to risk and challenge
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Sep-22	N/A	N/A
	Oct-22	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2021	Dec-22	Low Risk	Procurement is on track but timetable is tight
	Complete	N/A	N/A

	Complete	N/A	N/A
Dec-21	Dec-23	Medium Risk	Medium Risk as the issues are subject to an external Expert Determination Process on the Lion Farm Option Agreement
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Est. Dec 2022	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2021	May-23	Medium Risk	Some risks remain pending the fully established new LATC to manage the leisure facilities
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Summer 2022	N/A	N/A

Theme 6-Partnerships & Rela

Dates		Main Action Risk	
Start date	Due date	Main Action Risk	Description
Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Medium Risk	This is identified as a Corporate Risk - the contract between SCT and the Council is subject to review, the Council are embarking on a mid-point contract review with the Trust and the DfE - this will include revision on Key Performance indicators (KPIs) in line with approved government arrangements

Jan-22	Aug 2022 and then quarterly	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Low Risk	The introduction of monthly 4 way meetings with the CE of the Trust, the Chair of the Trust, the Lead Cabinet Member and the DCS - this is supporting the further strengthening of the relationship between the Council and the Trust.
	Ongoing	N/A	N/A
	Jun-22	N/A	N/A
Autumn 2021	Ongoing	Medium Risk	The realignment of the new Children & Families Strategic Partnership (CaFSP) has enabled shared priorities to be developed and integrated across the wider children's partnership - this has led to an improved understanding of strategic planning including, though not limited to, the launch of the Early Help and Corporate Parenting Strategies.
	Ongoing	N/A	N/A
	Aug 2022 and then ongoing	N/A	N/A
Jan-22		Medium Risk	Member input into key WMCA meetings needs to increase which is expected to with new Cabinet Member.

	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Complete	N/A	N/A
	Jun-22	N/A	N/A
		Medium Risk	Work is underway to review the governance arrangements. The children's safeguarding arrangements have been refreshed and discussions are underway in relation to aligning children and adults safeguarding arrangements. Further consideration is being given to the strategic connection across the 5 Board governance arrangements.
Mar-22	Sep-22	N/A	N/A
Apr-22	Jul-22	N/A	N/A

Apr-22	Jul-22	N/A	N/A
Mar-22	Jul-05	Medium Risk	Missed opportunities around partnership and value for money: If the future relationship and the funding approach between the Council and the VCS is not determined, there will be missed opportunities to harness the strengths of the VCS in support of Council priorities and/or missed opportunities to deliver value for money and a consistent approach through grants/commissioned VCS services
Mar-22	Sep-22	N/A	N/A



Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Status (October 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 22)
N/A	N/A
Complete	Phase 1 marked as complete. Phase 1 included the initial scoping of the approach to be taken to determining the desired organisational culture and initial communication and engagement with staff ahead of Phase 2 (detailed engagement). Phase 2 commenced with the listening group exercises.
N/A	N/A
Complete	Scope of training agreed and being delivered as an ongoing programme linked to constitutional approvals.
Complete	Beth Evans Consulting will be delivering training Nov/Dec. Date to be confirmed. PMO comment: Action marked as complete as procurement took place within timescale. New action proposed to reflect the delivery of training (see OC.B1.7)
N/A	N/a

Complete	complete
Complete	Due diligence work carried out between L&D and Democratic Services/External legal provider to identify current Directors with company roles - none currently are in scope as Company directors. the training is currently for Members only (DS 17.10.22) In future, in the event that any officers are appointed, training will be offered at this point.
N/A	N/A
Complete	In place for Municipal Year and no issues arising.
Complete	Star Chambers all completed by 28th September. PMO note: proposed closure of main action. Added to Change control
N/a	Main action around ward and casework management to be incorporated within new workstream focusing on customer experience- noted on change control
Complete	Complete

Complete	This sub-action is to be closed. Main action around ward and casework management to be incorporated within new workstream focusing on customer journey
N/a	N/A
Complete	Complete
Complete	complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	This has moved into regular business of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee. They review the MDP. Immediate requirements have been met for the purposes of the IP. ES&MDC review on a regular basis. Evidence base is the minutes of the committee.
N/A	N/A
Complete	complete
Complete	Centre for Governance and Scrutiny are providing training in Nov.
N/A	N/A

Complete	Latest briefing took place 18/10. Forward plan in place. No issues arising.
Complete	Comms messages have taken place and training sessions held have reinforced the messages around the relationship. Approach to action has been different to how drafted. Attendance records and engagement with training help demonstrate that
Complete	Leadership Team considered action plan in response to Employee Engagement Survey 18/10. Series of actions to respond already included within Organisational Culture Theme. EES specific action plan in place containing corporate actions and Directorate-specific actions. Actions around staff conference and formal employee recognition scheme have been added to OC.E2 above. EES Action plan will be monitored twice a year. New action added (Corporate Oversight: CO.B3) to ensure monitoring is taking place.
N/A	
Complete	Roll out to advert. Closing date 12 September. Applications received

rsight

Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Status (October 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 22)

N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete

Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Complete	RJ 17.10.22: Q1 report considered by Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board 13/10/22. All Member briefing on Q1 report held 18/10/22. Preparations underway for Q2 report to Cabinet in December. New action required to capture ongoing quarterly reporting.
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete

Complete	Agreed timetable for distribution of monitoring reports, new standard format for reports to budget holders from month 7 as per AD Finance email to leadership team on 20.10.22
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete

N/A	
New Action Added	Action added retrospectively and is complete. Governance and Structure agreed by Leadership Team 18/10

Action

Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Status (October 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 22)
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
On Track- little or no slippage	April- September update due. First update report across the 63 projects in the pipeline. Aiming for scrutiny and Cabinet in November/December
Complete	complete
Complete	complete
Complete	Website launched on 31 October after by-election ad featured in the Message to All Council Staff as an item.
N/A	N/A
N/A	N/A
Complete	Workplace vision has been closed. New corporate asset management strategy sets out the priorities.
N/A	N/A

Complete	Complete
Duplicate/ link to another action	The locations have been identified and agreed as per the Cabinet Workshop; report setting out this detail will formally be approved at 16 November Cabinet when this action can then be closed off. Action has now been incorporated within the Customer Journey Workstream and will be progressed through that programme (CO.D5)
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
N/A	
Closed	The surplus assets report is incorporated within the Corporate Asset Management Strategy. (Action below)
On Track- little or no slippage	Proposals from LT paper 20/09 progressing. Milestones around internal comms added to OCE.2
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	complete
Complete	

N/A	N/A
closed	closed
N/A	N/A
Complete	The strategy has been circulated and agreed by corporate parenting board members
Complete	The strategy has been circulated and agreed by corporate parenting board members- assurance action to be added to the Improvement plan
N/A	N/A
Complete	complete
Complete	Review completed. Guidance on EIAs has been updated on the intranet.
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Action on Hold	Pilot of town co-ordinator role was unsuccessful. Approach to locality working is now being considered by Cabinet and Leadership Team in conjunction with the Customer First priority. A set of new actions has been included within the new customer journey workstream within corporate oversight theme

On Track- little or no slippage	The development of the customer journey strategy has commenced and is incorporated within the customer journey programme (within Corporate Oversight theme). This action to be amended to become a main action 'Customer Journey Strategy'. Milestones tbc.
Duplicate/ link to another action	Not going to Cabinet in November as more work needs to be done as part of the customer journey programme. PMO comment: Incorporated within Customer Journey Workstream in Corporate Oversight Theme
N/A	N/A
Complete	On track to go to November Cabinet - LT reviewed draft today - review complete.
N/A	N/A
Complete	complete
Complete	
N/A	N/A
Complete	
Complete	complete

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Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Status (October 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 22)

N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
On Track- little or no slippage	On track for Nov Council.
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Significant issues / actual/projected slippage- more than 2 months	<p>On track for Nov Council.</p> <p>Note: July commentary and update was not correct (incorrectly stated that council procedure rules were approved at Council in July). Should have been included in August Change Control as a change from July to October. NB Action will therefore flag as red progress due to July date. Further impacted by by-election</p>
Complete	complete
Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	On track for Nov Council.
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete

Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
N/A	N/A
Medium Progress- actual/ projected slippage of 1-2 months	On track for Nov Council.
Complete	Complete
On Track- little or no slippage	Will follow DM.C1.1
N/A	N/A
On Track- little or no slippage	The recommendations from C&E Scrutiny Board are being monitored and will be updated at the next Scrutiny Board 14 November 2022.

Commercial

Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Status (October 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 22)

Complete	complete
Complete	complete
Complete	complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	complete
Complete	Initial review report received end sept 22
N/A	N/A
Complete	complete
N/A	
Complete	Revised plan following SMBC feedback to be presented to Waste Board 19 Oct 2022
N/A	
Complete	Complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete

Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	All new contracts issued and accepted by operators new framework commenced 1.9.22
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	The recommendations from C&E Scrutiny Board are being monitored and will be updated at the next Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board meeting.
Complete	Procurement concluded. When subsequent internal audit report into SEND Transport Procurement is conducted (March 2023), this will be reported to ARAC as part of BAU reporting on audit work programme.
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete

Complete	Complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete

Relationships

Progress against plan	Evidence of status rating
Status (October 2022)	Update (Initial and Date)(October 22)
N/A	N/A

Complete	Completed - included in the PMF.
N/A	N/A
Complete	Meetings scheduled with Trust, SMBC and Councillor Hackett - Lead Member. Assurance action to be added to Improvement plan
Complete	Complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	All strategic priorities agreed and monitored through Children and Families strategic partnership
Complete	This assurance is in place as part of the governance arrangements (as part of the contract) and include the Operational Partnership Board, Strategic Partnership Board, SCT Improvement Board and twice yearly updates to Children and Education Scrutiny Board.
N/A	N/A

Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
Complete	Complete
N/A	N/A
Complete	Initial discussions with partnership has been completed. Now looking to extend discussion to include adults. - new action to be added- PR.C1.5
Complete	Corporate Plan Monitoring within PMF is providing progress updates and is tracking outcomes achieved relating to health inequalities.

Improvement Plan Theme Progress Summary January 2023

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
Organisational Culture	<p>Summary Statement:</p> <p>Slippage is being experienced in two area that are classed as medium risk. 1 sub action is rated medium slippage and the other sub action is rated significant slippage.</p> <p>Of the 12 main action areas, there are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • zero main actions with a red risk rating, • 7 main actions with an amber risk rating, • 4 main actions with a green risk rating. <p>Of the 5 actions with an amber risk rating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 live sub-actions to deliver the action ison track • 1 sub-action has or will experience medium slippage or issues. This relates to: <p>Workforce Strategy approved (dates to be re-profiled to May).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scope and drafting have commenced. Many priority workstreams are already in progress. Working towards Cabinet sign off in May 	<p>January</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings of Commissioners, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, and Chief Whips commence • Mentoring Programme with LGA is ongoing <p>November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Chief Exec recruited- start date 6th February 2023 • Corporate parenting training held- November 2022 <p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2 engagement to determine desired culture – in final stages • Corporate Governance Training Delivery - Autumn 2022 - Commenced • Approval of document / statement setting out desired organisational culture – Due at Cabinet in March 2023 • Workforce Strategy – due May 2023 <p>Complete:</p>

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 sub-actions have or will experience significant slippage or issues <p>Design and Deliver Corporate Governance Training: Effective Decision Making Training (due to a revised approach to training delivery). <i>Nb. Also reported in Decision Making</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As per last month's update. Training will be rolled out through to end of Municipal Year. Change required to reflect delivery to end of Municipal Year. Impact of training delivered so far is evidenced by feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running. All other sub actions have been completed. <p>Completed Actions: 2 sub-actions have been marked completed this month. These actions relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage LGA to support Officers and Members to develop the relationship going forward including continuation of LGA Cabinet Member mentoring programme -mentoring programme with LGA is ongoing. <p>2 sub-actions are not yet due to commence</p> <p>Assurance Action(s)</p>	<p>programme part of BAU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final interview for CEx taken place <p>September:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEx long-list interviews undertaken 4 sessions between Members and Officers with LGA have taken place <p>August:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CEx recruitment out to advert Training provider in place for Directorship and Trusteeship Training Organisational Culture Champion training commenced Listening groups scheduled and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointment of Permanent Chief Executive Budget Holder Role Profile Approved Employee Engagement Survey Report New Member Induction Employee Engagement Survey Results Meeting structures to support regular dialogue between Senior Leadership (Officer and Member) confirmed for new Municipal Year- Part 1 Engagement – Starting the Conversation Scope of Corporate Governance Training approved

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	Zero assurance actions to report this month.	invites to 460 employees issued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member Development Programme approved • Corporate Governance Training – Procurement for delivery partner
	<p>Organisational Culture Workstream Updates</p> <p>Establishing Organisational Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2 engagement to determine desired culture- listening exercise agreed by Leadership Team November and framework approach agreed December. Now in final stages of engagement and approval • Framework agreed with Leadership Team and engagement had been undertaken and continues with wider stakeholders. Approval of document setting out the desired organisational culture due to cabinet sign off 15 March 23. • Scope and drafting have commenced for Workforce Strategy. Many priority workstreams are already in progress. Working towards Cabinet sign off in May. <p>Officer Learning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft report of Corporate Induction has been completed, outlining current induction process and induction resources and recommendations to make improvements to induction and onboarding experience. 		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan being developed for decision-making training, detailing all requisite actions to embed the Constitutional changes. Plan will be completed by 31 Jan 2023. This includes changes to executive decision making and delegated decision making. • Corporate Governance Training: Member and Officer training delivered by LGA. Next phase of training programme to be scoped by Law & Governance & Finance and agree support required by L&D. • Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training for members has been undertaken. Further training is being arranged for officers. Training will again be delivered after Annual Council to members who are appointed to Outside Bodies as Directors/Trustees. • Management Development in scoping phase which will include; Manager Fundamentals, Compulsory learning, and manager skills development <p>Officer and Member Relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with Group Leaders/Chief Whips and Statutory Officers have commenced, and regular meetings diarised. • Mentoring Programme with LGA is ongoing. • Training will be rolled out through to end of Municipal Year. Change required to reflect delivery to end of Municipal Year. Impact of training delivered so far is evidenced by feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running. <p>Member Learning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training delivered ahead of interviews for CEx. Discussion have taken place with HR and it has been agreed that training will form part of the induction training programme for Committees at the start of the Municipal Year • Leadership Team Review of All Member Briefings - Briefing note to be scheduled as a closure report <p>Internal Communications-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comms approach outlining Chief executive handover has been drafted. 		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial data gathering has taken place to identify the options for Formal employee recognition Scheme. A questionnaire will be developed and shared with council employees to gather feedback to steer the package development. <p>Recruitment of Chief Executive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Chief executive appointed with a start date of 6 February 2023. 		
Corporate Oversight	<p>Summary Statement: Progress is being made across all workstreams. 1 main action rated red risk has 1 sub action rated amber progress. 2 main actions have 3 sub actions rated amber progress. 1 green rated risk has 1 sub action rated red progress.</p> <p>Of the 13 main actions there is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 main action with a red risk rating (customer journey) 5 main actions with an amber risk rating 7 actions with a green risk rating. <p>Of the 1 main action with a red risk rating - Customer Journey Programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 sub action has or will experience medium slippage. This relates to: Customer Journey Programme <p>Board in place and regular meetings scheduled: Board members to be confirmed, future board dates to be scheduled (commencing Feb 2023) and circulated. PM to be confirmed prior to Feb board.</p>	<p>December</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 monthly report to Secretary of State submitted. Q2 Performance Management Report made to Cabinet <p>November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTO and Governance Framework agreed Structure and Governance for Customer Experience Programme approved <p>October:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Q1 Performance Management Report made to Scrutiny and at an All Member Briefing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Directorate-level restructuring completed- On hold pending arrival of new Chief Executive. Oracle Fusion Implemented- In progress Complete: Establish Performance Management Framework Improvement Plan approved Procure new support provider

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p>Of the 5 main actions with an amber risk rating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 sub-actions to deliver the action are on track • 3 sub-actions have or will experience medium slippage or issues. These relate to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management Framework (PMF) - Timescales need to be re-aligned. • Review Corporate KPIs for organisational health to reflect workforce strategy: Workforce Strategy in development. Need to ensure timescales for this action align with development of Workforce Strategy • Review Corporate KPIs for customer experience to reflect customer experience programme- Aligned to Customer Journey Programme. Will be focus of new Corporate Performance Manager to build into the PMF when they start end Feb 2023 • Programme and Project Management System Implementation – slippage due to resources Due to capacity within the CT PMO initial design and build was delayed, this is now underway. • 1 sub action has been placed on hold • Restructuring – activity on hold pending arrival of new Chief Exec: • Directorate Level restructuring- Transfer of Directorate project support to Transformation team is complete. 	<p>September:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q1 Performance Management Report made to Cabinet • ERP Contract signing and mobilisation • Project Management training rolled out to key project members for Oracle Fusion <p>August:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ERP Contract Awarded • Financial Services new structure in place <p>July:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business process re-engineering resources have been approved. 	<p>to deliver Oracle Fusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Performance Management Report

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p>Further Directorate restructuring now on hold following departure of the Director of BSC, pending arrival of the new Chief Executive</p> <p>Assurance Action(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management Framework (PMF): Preparations in place for Q3 Report to Cabinet in March. Q2 report considered by Cabinet in December and Scrutiny in January. • Budget Monitoring & Budget Pressures: Quarterly reporting has taken place and process is now embedded. Where budget pressures identified, LT continue to receive monthly budget monitoring reports. Spending controls have been in place since October and will continue to the end of the financial year. Further savings identified in treasury management which will bring the 23/24 to a balanced position. • Embedding Finance Business Partner role: Performance against KPIs for financial services section- First review of KPI performance will be undertaken at the end of January 2023 • Resolve issues relating to the completion and sign off of final accounts: Outstanding issues are being resolved and draft Audit Committee date set for 28th February for approval of 2020/21 accounts. Aiming to complete draft accounts for 2021/22 by end March 2023. 		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p>Corporate Oversight Workstream Updates</p> <p>ERP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed planning has taken place with System Integration Partner to outline high level milestones ahead of the April 2024 Go Live date. Approach to Benefits realisation in place <p>Improvement Planning, Monitoring, and Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular reporting on IP in place. Next quarterly report being prepared for Cabinet, ARAC and Scrutiny in March including response to external review follow-up reports. Report to Secretary of State- December report submitted. Next report due June 2022. Refresh of Improvement Plan underway following receipt of external review follow up reports and conclusion of listening exercise with staff. Changes to the IP to be reported to Cabinet in March 2023. Initial scoping of Continuous Improvement Plan is taking place <p>Performance Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparations in place for Q3 Report to Cabinet in March. Q2 report considered by Cabinet in December and Scrutiny in January. KPI review – need to ensure timescales align with Workforce Strategy development and Customer Journey Programme. Will be focus of new Corporate Performance Manager to build into the PMF when they start end Feb 2023 Budget Monitoring reported monthly to LT and quarterly to Cabinet and Scrutiny. This process is now embedded. 		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p>Organisational Structure and Enabling Corporate Core</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> External training provided to a number of corporate finance staff at the start of January and first draft of key training needs for each team planned for completion by end of January First review of KPI performance for financial services section will be undertaken at the end of January 2023 Review underway around corporate debt recovery processes but significant slippage due to resources being directed to the Customer Journey programme. Review due to be complete by end of February but recommendations will then need to be implemented. Internal charges review making significant progress with external support. Workshop held 18th Jan to consider recommendations and next steps. Completion date 31st March 2023 so new process is in place for 2023/24 financial year. Completion of 2020/21 accounts: outstanding issues are being resolved and draft Audit Committee date set for 28th February for approval of 2020/21 accounts. Aiming for completion of 2021/22 draft accounts by end of March 2023, subject to above. <p>Programme and Project management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realignment to create Corporate Transformation PMO underway and next step is a skills gap analysis. Corporate Transformation Board - TOR to be finalised, membership to be confirmed and board dates to be circulated in Feb 2023 for the 1st board in March 2023 (This action has been re-opened) Programme & Project Management System - Due to capacity within the CT PMO initial design and build was delayed, this is now underway. Localised templates with agreed methodologies in accordance with P3M framework are currently being built into Verto. <p>Customer Journey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workstream plans to be agreed at February Board meeting Programme Board membership to be confirmed, and future board dates to be scheduled (commencing Feb). PM to be confirmed prior to Feb board. 		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
Strategic Direction	<p>Summary Statement: Progress is being made; however, 3 areas are experiencing medium levels of slippage and issues.</p> <p>Of the 13 main action areas, there are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • zero actions with a red risk rating, • 6 actions with an amber risk rating, • 7 actions with a green risk rating. <p>Of the 6 main actions with an amber risk rating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 live sub-actions to deliver the action are on track • 3 sub-actions are encountering areas of medium slippage or issues. These relate to: <p>Develop and Implement the Commercial Strategy (timescale slippage)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Cases Presented for commercial workstreams - Strategic Business Cases prepared and awaiting review by DoF and LT.- change control required. <p>Equality and Diversity (impact on resources and timescales due to reporting of EDI issues):</p>	<p>January</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MTFP and Capital Strategy approved • Implemented new Asset Database-phase 1 complete • EDI Workforce action plan review complete • Review of Council EDI decision making process complete • Programme management software procured <p>November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Asset Management Strategy Approved • Equality Policy approved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Procurement Strategy – Commenced • Commercial Strategy – Approval due March 2023 • Regular Resident Survey in place- Approach agreed - In procurement phase • Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy approved- Due early 2024 • HRA 30 Year Business Plan approved- On track for Spring 2023 <p>Complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of Medium-Term

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting of historic EDI issues is continuing to impact on timescales for EDI work due to resources and effectiveness of staff network. Report due at LT in January around staff networks. <p>Customer Journey Strategy (new delivery date required)-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress being made with Cabinet Priority Focus Session held in December 2022 with the next one to follow in Feb. Cabinet have provided feedback on Constituent experience, draft Commitments & Objectives. Next steps are for engagement sessions to be organised to ensure we capture Customer/Resident feedback to help us shape the Strategy. Zero sub-actions have or will experience significant slippage or issues. <p>5 sub-actions have been marked complete this month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Asset Management Strategy Development: Implementation of new Asset Database Equality and Diversity: EDI Workforce action plan review, Review of Council EDI decision making process (EqIA guidance and templates published) and Embed equalities, diversity and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Council EDI decision making process <p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Parenting Strategy Approved Review of MTFP concluded Microsite creation for information around priority projects for stakeholders launched <p>September:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equality policy review complete First Resident's Survey completed Budget Consultation Completed <p>July:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Procurement Strategy approved 	<p>Financial Plan and Capital Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equalities Policy approved Corporate Asset Management Strategy Approved Approval of Communications and Corporate Affairs Strategy Approval of Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline- Early Help Strategy approved and launched Public Consultation to be carried out as part of budget process Corporate Parenting Strategy Refresh Approved

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p>inclusion within Member and Officer Development Programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incorporate Public Consultation Results into Performance Management Framework: Proposal approved for the next phase of resident consultation and engagement and budget consultation, and Focus Groups held . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 sub-action is not yet due to commence <p>Assurance Action(s) 1 assurance action due this month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regen Pipeline Development and Delivery: Pipeline projects updated to IPRM on a 6-monthly basis- Report taken to Cabinet in November 22 covering (April to Sept). Showing progress over the 6-month period covering the 66 projects in the pipeline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Consultation Launched 	
	<p>Strategic Direction Workstream Updates</p> <p>Strategy Development and Refresh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regen Strategy and Pipeline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ First update report across the 63 projects in the pipeline taken to scrutiny and Cabinet in November 2022 ○ The options for procuring a strategic delivery partner are being actively explored. Awaiting information from Shropshire. 		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programme Management Software Procurement- Implementation phase has started now that procurement has been complete. The pilot involves Adult Social Care, Business Strategy & Change and Regeneration & Growth. ● Corporate Asset Management Strategy: Phase 1 of the Asset database has been complete in Dec 22. Phase 2 timelines are being scoped. ● Commercial Strategy: Strategy approved by LT and Cabinet approval planned for March 23. Strategic Business Cases prepared and awaiting review by DofF and LT. ● Corporate Parenting: yearly assurances provided to the Corporate Parenting Board due September 23. ● HRA Business Plan: Plan considered by Scrutiny Board 1/11/22. Consultation with key stakeholders is underway. Procurement of stock condition surveys due to go to tender January 23. <p>Equality and Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Report to be considered by Leadership Team on 31 Jan 2023 on moving Staff Networks forward ● Consultant anticipated to be appointed by end of Feb 2023. ● EDI Workforce Action Plan Review has been completed. HR are taking forward through the workforce strategy ● Review of EDI decision making has taken place and new EqIA Guidance and template has been issued. <p>Medium Term Financial Plan & Capital Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MTFP and Capital Strategy approved <p>Consultation and Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resident's Survey reported within Q2 Performance Report and outcomes shared at all staff briefing 02/11. Intelligence is being incorporated within business planning process for 2023 onwards and being used to shape budget. ● Focus groups now completed. 		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval to consultation framework including regular budget and residents' consultation and creation of Citizens' space platform. Currently in procurement phase. <p>Customer Journey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabinet Priority Focus Session held re: Customer Journey in December 2022, the next one is due 7/2/23 and Cabinet have been surveyed re: feedback on Constituent experience, draft Commitments & Objectives. Next steps are for engagement sessions to be organised to ensure we capture Customer/Resident feedback to help us shape the Strategy. 		
Decision Making	<p>Summary Statement: Progress is being made across all workstreams. All key milestones within this theme have now been delivered.</p> <p>Of the 5 main actions there are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> zero main actions with a red risk rating, 4 main actions with an amber risk rating, 1 main actions with a green risk rating. <p>Of the 4 main actions with an amber risk rating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 sub-actions have or will experience significant slippage or issues. (Also reported in organisational culture). <p>In-depth review and revision to Corporate Governance Documents: Effective Decision Making Training (due to a revised approach to training delivery). <i>Nb. Also reported in Organisational Culture</i></p>	<p>December</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised financial regs agreed <p>November</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council decision on 4 yearly election cycle made Revised Council Procedure rules Revised Scheme of Delegations agreed Review of scrutiny arrangements complete Council approved changes to scrutiny <p>October:</p>	<p>All key milestones in this theme complete</p> <p>Complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised Financial Regulations agreed Review of scrutiny arrangements Revised scheme of Delegations agreed Approval of any changes to scrutiny (if required following review) Council Decision on options for alternative election cycle

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per last month's update. Training will be rolled out through to end of Municipal Year. Change required to reflect delivery to end of Municipal Year. • Impact of training delivered so far is evidenced by feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running. • All other sub actions have been completed. <p>Completed actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 sub-action has been marked complete this month. • In-depth review and revision to Corporate Governance Documents: Revised Financial Regs agreed <p>Assurance Action(s) No Assurance actions due this month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completion of report and recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • zero sub-actions are not yet due to commence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARAC recommendations and report into SEND transport complete <p>September:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEND procurement exercise undertaken in line with contract procurement rules • Contracts now live <p>August:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation launched re 4-yearly election cycle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options Paper to Leadership Team for 4 yearly election cycle • Scrutiny work planning event • Revised Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules agreed • Revised Council Procedure Rules • Revised Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol • Implementation of Scrutiny Recommendations for SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Transport and Waste • Completion of ARAC report and recommendations in relation to

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p>Decision Making Workstream Summary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>4 Yearly Election Cycle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All actions complete <p>Constitution and Governance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective decision-making training will be rolled out through to the end of the Municipal year. Impact of training delivered so far is evidenced by feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running. • Revised financial regulations agreed. <p>Role and function of Scrutiny and Audit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member Briefing on final recommendation in relation to Waste Contract update 13/12/22. Update provided to Chair of Scrutiny (Environment) also. • Quarterly report on Scrutiny and Audit survey presented January 23 to IPRM and shared with Democratic Services for action. • Next step is to embed mechanisms for continuous improvement which will include the survey. 		governance issues raised (SEND Transport, Waste Contract)

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
Procurement & Commercial	<p>Summary Statement: Progress is being made across all workstreams.</p> <p>Of the 11 main actions there are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • zero actions with a red risk rating, • 5 actions with an amber risk rating, • 6 actions with a green risk rating <p>Of the actions with an amber risk rating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 live sub actions are on track • 1 sub-actions have or will experience medium slippage or issues: <p>Lion Farm- Action plan to agree way forward and resolve matter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of facts were agreed 19 December. • Each parties secondary option agreement due 27 January 23. • The anticipated date for resolution is 24th March 2023. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero sub actions have been completed this month. • Zero sub actions are not due to start <p>Assurance action(s) The large contracts in BE for waste/street cleansing, and both leisure providers will be added to the Intend contract management module: Work has started and is procured with Intend colleagues to complete full upload.</p>	<p>December</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Phase 1 of Asset Management System <p>October:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Serco Contract Complete • Street Cleansing revised plan approved at Waste Board. • LATC Chief Officer recruitment underway <p>September:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lion Farm: Responsibilities of both council and developer clarified within formal documentation • SEND Transport Contract has gone live 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEND Transport Contract Monitoring arrangements in place- Due in January • Arrangement in place for future delivery of leisure services- May 2023 • Fleet replacement complete- Mid 2023 • Lion Farm report to Cabinet on determination of position of developer- date tbc as part of the ED process <p>Complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Asset Management System • Termination notice for SLT contract approved by Cabinet

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
		<p>July:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEND contract awarded• Cabinet decision on future delivery of leisure services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revised contract governance arrangements in place for Serco contract• Asset Management System Procured• SEND Transport procurement published• Waste and Recycling recovery plan implementation• Option appraisal for future leisure management options• Street Cleansing Recovery Plan Approved• Serco contract performance reporting embedded in PMF• Review of Serco contract completed

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<p>Procurement and Commercial Workstream Summary</p> <p>Waste Contract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work has started and is being procured with Intend colleagues to complete full upload to the Intend contract management module • Re review of the contract - report has been received from Frith and LT briefing date due by mid Feb. • Street cleansing recovery plan implemented and on track for March completion • Fleet replacement programme is in delivery phase with dates into 2023. <p>SEND Transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons learnt Capture for SEND procurement has been completed and presentation is due at IPRM February 2023. <p>New System Procurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re Performance Management: Additional capacity being secured to draw up project scope and specification from February 2023. This will build on soft market testing and exploration of Verto • Phase 1 Asset Management was implemented in December 2023. Phase 2 tech Forge will look at the development of modules such as capital accounting, asbestos, fixed asset register etc. Kick off meeting to be held Thursday 19 January 2023 to identify workstreams, leads and timescales. <p>Lion Farm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of facts were agreed 19 December. • Each parties secondary option agreement due 27 January 23. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New SEND Transport contract in place

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The anticipated date for resolution is 24th March 2023. <p>Leisure Contract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Officer has started. Clear project plan in place. Next milestone is Cabinet report due March 2023. Risk remains over utility contracts. Counsel advice received and being progressed with options for Members to consider. 		
Partnerships & Relationships	<p>Summary Statement: Progress is being made across workstreams with no exception reports to raise.</p> <p>6 sub actions have been closed this month</p> <p>Of the 6 main action areas, there are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> zero actions with a red risk rating, 5 actions with an amber risk rating, 1 action with a green risk rating. <p>Of the 5 actions with an amber risk rating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 live sub-actions to deliver the action are on track 1 sub-actions have or will experience medium slippage or issues: <p>Review partnership structures within the ‘People’s sphere’: Partnership structures in relation to transition from children’s to adults in place</p>	<p>January</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCT KPI suite reviewed Review of contract (SCT) concluded <p>October</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCT contract performance embedded within PMF <p>September:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Priorities form part of the Children & Families Strategic Partnership (CaFSP) work programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VCS Strategy Approved – date tbc <p>Complete:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of SCT Contract concludes Regular cross-SMBC/SCT Leadership meetings City Region Sustainable Transport Scheme approved by CA Board Sandwell asks of trailblazer devolution deal agreed Officer & Member representation

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial meeting went ahead in December. PID reviewed and amendments being captured. Agreement reached to engage with key external stakeholders. The Trust's sign-off process incorporated into the Project Governance Structure. • The project manager appointment was delayed, and the post re-advertised. Closing date 6 Jan. • Next steps are for PID to be completed and approved and monthly project meetings established. • 2 sub-actions have been completed this month <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue with robust governance arrangements in place ensuring the accountability of SCT to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people in Sandwell in line with the contract: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ KPI Suite reviewed ▪ Review of Contract concludes • 3 sub-actions are not yet due to commence • 1 sub-action is not rated this month <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relationship with Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) and Funding to Voluntary & Community Sector: VCS Strategy formation commences. Assumption made that update and status are as per last month. <p>Assurance Action(s):</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Wellbeing Strategy approved • Review of Grants completed 	<p>agreed to key regional and sub-regional meetings and clear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VCS Grants review update report to Leadership Team • Health and Wellbeing Strategy • SCT Contract performance reporting embedded within Council PMF- • Quarterly system-wide deep dives conducted for health inequality • VCS Strategy formation commences

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assurance action due and update required: • Receive a quarterly update from DPH and DAS to provide assurance that governance remains in place to test adequacy of partnerships through system-wide thematic deep dives and that any issues are being addressed by the partnership. <p>Partnerships and Relationships Workstream Summary</p> <p>Sandwell Children’s Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPI Suite reviewed. 14 of the 15 KPIs are agreed and the final KPI will be confirmed by the end of January 2023. • Review of contract complete and submitted to DfE. <p>Regional and Sub Regional Presence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance at and engagement within agenda issues at WMCA, ABCA and BCLEP is much improved and ongoing. • Assurance action in place to provide an update on a 6 monthly basis. Next update to IPRM due in March <p>Effective Local Structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition from children’s to adults: Initial meeting went ahead in December. PID reviewed and amendments being captured. Agreement reached to engage with key external stakeholders. The Trust's sign-off process incorporated into the Project Governance Structure. • The project manager appointment was delayed, and the post re-advertised. Closing date 6 Jan. • Next steps are for PID to be completed and approved and monthly project meetings established. <p>VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) Relationship</p>		

Theme	Summary	Achievements this period	Key Milestones
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SCVO and the council have facilitated a series of face to face focus groups with cross sections of Sandwell's VCS to explore a series of key themes. These will be used to draft the main elements of the strategy.• Focus group pilot approach was held in September.• Focus Groups due to take place from October onwards• January progress update pending		

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Appendix 3 – Statutory Recommendation Status Summary December 2022 & January 2023

Statutory Recommendation	Summary	Achievements this month	Milestones
<p>Page 157</p> <p>S1 - It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified and embed the solutions into the Council</p>	<p><u>Organisational Culture</u> No actions in this theme</p> <p><u>Corporate Oversight</u> ERP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed planning has taken place with System Integration Partner to outline high level milestones ahead of the April 2024 Go Live date. <p><u>Strategic Direction</u> Strategy Development and Refresh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regen Strategy and Pipeline: Update report across all the projects covering April- September was presented at November Cabinet. The options for procuring a strategic delivery partner are being actively explored. Waiting for information from Shropshire. VERTO- Procurement complete and implementation phase has commenced. A pilot project is being run with Adult Social Care, Business, Strategy and Change alongside Regeneration and Growth. <p><u>Decision Making</u> Role and function of Scrutiny and Audit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey to Scrutiny and Audit Members, and Officers attending Committees is being carried out on an ongoing basis. Findings were reported to IPRM in January 2023. The information has also been shared with Democratic Services and Members. Cabinet Member briefing on final recommendations relating to Waste Contract updated December 2022. Update provided to Chair of Scrutiny as well. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pipeline update report presented to Cabinet. Verto procurement complete Frith report (Serco contract) finalised Lessons Learnt from SEND 2 complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oracle Fusion Implemented- In progress <p>Completed milestones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of SCT Contract concludes- Complete ready for commencement from April 2023. Review of scrutiny arrangements- Complete. Approval of any changes to scrutiny (if required following review)- Complete Termination notice for SLT contract approved by Cabinet- complete Revised contract governance arrangements in place for Serco contract- complete

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next step is to embed mechanisms for continuous improvement which will include the survey. <p><u>Procurement & Commercial</u></p> <p>Waste Contract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Contract -final report received from Friths. Leadership team to be briefed by mid-February 23. • Street cleansing recovery plan in progress. No issues to report and on track for March completion. • Fleet replacement plan in place. Next 42 street cleanings vehicles are due following EV charging infrastructure. 10 RCV vehicles to be confirmed for chassis build and being progressed as a priority. <p>SEND Transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts are being monitored. Resources being identified for contract management support pending the creation of a corporate CM team. • Lessons Learnt from SEND Transport procurement 2 have been captured and shared at IPRM in February 23. <p>New System Procurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management System- Additional capacity being secured to draw up project scope and specification from February 2023. This will build on soft market testing and exploration of Verto. • Asset Management System phase 1 has been implemented in December. Phase 2 project (Tech Forge) will look at the development of modules such as capital accounting, asbestos, fixed asset register etc. Kick off meeting to be held Thursday 19 January 2023 to identify workstreams, leads and timescales. <p>Lion Farm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of facts were agreed 19 December. • Each party's secondary option agreement due 27 January 23. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste and Recycling Recovery Plan Implementation - Complete • Street Cleansing Recovery Plan approval – Resubmission to Waste Management Board in - Complete • SERCO contract performance reporting embedded in Performance Management Framework - Complete • Option appraisal for future leisure management options – Complete • Scrutiny work Planning event - Complete • Procure new support provider to deliver Oracle Fusion- complete • Approval of Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline- Complete
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The anticipated date for resolution is 24th March 2023. <p>Leisure Contract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chief Officer has started and there is a clear project plan in place. Next milestone is Cabinet report due March 2023. Risk remains over utility contracts. Counsel advice received and being progressed with options for Members to consider. <p>Partnerships & Relationships</p> <p>Sandwell Children’s Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The KPI suite has been reviewed and 14 of the 15 KPIs are agreed. The final KPI will be confirmed by the end of January 2023. The review of the contract has been completed and submitted to the DfE. The contract review with DfE is scheduled for 17 January 2023. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Help Strategy approved and launched- Complete Corporate Parenting Strategy Refresh Approved- Complete SEND Transport procurement published- complete SMBC/SCT Leadership meetings - Complete SCT Contract performance reporting embedded within Council PMF- Complete
S2 - The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation	<p>Organisational Culture</p> <p>Officer Learning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Induction: Draft report completed outlining current induction process and induction resources and recommendations to make improvements to induction and onboarding experience. Constitutional Changes: Action Plan being developed detailing all requisite actions to embed the Constitutional changes. Plan will be completed by 31 Jan 2023. This includes changes to executive decision making and delegated decision making. Member and Officer training delivered by LGA. Next phase of training programme to be scoped by Law & Governance & Finance and agree support required by L&D. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 Asset database implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Resident Survey in place – in procurement Commercial Strategy approved – Due March Corporate Governance Training Delivery -Commenced HRA 30 Year Business Plan approved- On track for Spring 2023

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorship and Trusteeship: Training for members has been undertaken. Further training is being arranged for officers. Training will again be delivered after Annual Council to members who are appointed to Outside Bodies as Directors/Trustees. • Management Development: Management Development in scoping phase which will include; Manager Fundamentals Compulsory learning and manager skills development. <p>Member Learning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with Group Leaders/Chief Whips and Statutory Officers have commenced, and regular meetings diarised. • LGA Mentoring Programme is ongoing <p><u>Corporate Oversight</u></p> <p>Performance Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparations in place for Q3 Report to Cabinet in March. Q2 report considered by Cabinet in December and Scrutiny in January. • Review of KPIs relating to customer and organisational health - will be focus of new Corporate Performance Manager to build into the PMF when they start end Feb 2023 • Budget Monitoring reported monthly to LT and quarterly to Cabinet and Scrutiny. This process is now embedded. • Leadership Team continue to receive monthly budget monitoring reports. Spending controls have been in place since October and will continue to the end of the financial year. Further savings identified in treasury management which will bring the 23/24 to a balanced position 		<p>Completed milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised Financial Regs - approved • Implementation of Asset Management System -phase 1 complete • Revised Scheme of Delegation – approved • Corporate Asset Management Strategy Approved- Approved • Budget Holder Role Profile agreed - Complete • Establish Performance Management Framework – Complete • First Performance Management Report - - Complete • Revised PCR, and Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol – Complete • New Member Induction- Complete • Member Development Programme - Complete and BAU
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	<p><u>Strategic Direction</u></p> <p>Strategy Development and Refresh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Asset Management Strategy: New asset database (Tech Forge) implemented December 23. Phase 2 tech Forge will look at the development of modules such as capital accounting, asbestos, fixed asset register etc. Kick off meeting to be held Thursday 19 January 2023 to identify workstreams, leads and timescales. • Commercial Strategy: Commercial Strategy approved by LT but still awaiting Cabinet approval - planned for March. • Strategic Business Cases prepared and awaiting review. • HRA Business Plan: HRA Business Plan was taken to Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities (SNAC) Scrutiny Board on 10th Jan and is on the forward plan to seek approval at Cabinet on 15th February. <p><u>Decision Making</u></p> <p>Constitution and Governance Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision Making Training will be rolled out through to end of Municipal Year. • Financial regulations agreed at Council in December. <p><u>Procurement & Commercial</u></p> <p>New System Procurement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New asset database (Tech Forge) implemented December 23. Phase 2 tech Forge will look at the development of modules such as capital accounting, asbestos, fixed asset register etc. Kick off meeting to be held Thursday 19 January 2023 to identify workstreams, leads and timescales. <p><u>Partnerships & Relationships</u></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset Management System Procured- complete
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	No actions in this theme		
<p>S3 - Senior leadership, both officers and members, must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively, that they operate in line with the Council's values, codes, policies, and procedures, and that there is zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality.</p>	<p>Organisational Culture Establishing Organisational Culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome of listening exercise agreed by Leadership Team November and framework approach agreed December. Now in final stages of engagement and approval of One Team Framework (values and behaviours). Due for Cabinet sign off 15 March 23. <p>Officer Learning and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction: Draft report completed outlining current induction process and induction resources and recommendations to make improvements to induction and onboarding. • Constitutional Changes: Action Plan being developed detailing all requisite actions to embed the Constitutional changes. Plan will be completed by 31 Jan 2023. This includes changes to executive decision making and delegated decision making. • Member and Officer training delivered by LGA. Next phase of training programme to be scoped by Law & Governance & Finance and agree support required by L&D. <p>Officer and Member Relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with Group Leaders/Chief Whips and Statutory Officers have commenced, and regular meetings diarised. • LGA mentoring programme ongoing to support Cabinet Members. <p>Member Learning and Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Leaders/Chief Whips and Statutory Officers meetings have commenced • Member and Officer training delivered by LGA • Ongoing LGA mentoring programme started 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational Culture - Part 2 engagement – determining desired culture - Commenced • Approval of document / statement setting out desired organisational culture – ‘Our Values: Our Behaviours’- On track for Jan 2023 • Organisational Development Strategy and Plan Approved – On track for March 2023 <p>Completed milestones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational Culture - Part 1 Engagement – Starting the Conversation- Complete • New Member Induction - Complete

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Governance training will be rolled out through to end of Municipal Year. Change required to reflect delivery to end of Municipal Year. • Impact of training delivered so far is evidenced by feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running. • Statutory Officers: Training delivered ahead of interviews for CEx. Will form part of the induction training programme for Committees at the start of the Municipal Year. • Leadership Team Review of All Member Briefings - Briefing note to be scheduled as a closure report for January <p><u>Corporate Oversight</u> No Actions in Theme</p> <p><u>Strategic Direction</u> No actions in Theme</p> <p><u>Decision Making</u> No actions in Theme</p> <p><u>Procurement & Commercial</u> No actions in Theme</p> <p><u>Partnerships & Relationships</u> No actions in Theme</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting structures to support Senior Leadership (Officer and Member) – Complete • Member Development Programme approved- Complete
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Appendix – Scrutiny Recommendation Status Summary January 2023

<p>Grant Thornton Key Recommendation 7 (2021): Members in key statutory roles, in particular in relation to Cabinet, scrutiny, standards and audit, need to be provided with effective development training and support. The Member Development Programme should be reviewed to ensure corporate governance forms part of the training for members with governance roles</p>	
<p>External Follow-up Reviews 2022 Findings</p>	<p>Grant Thornton acknowledged the progress of the Member Development Programme and noted that it has been augmented with additional training sessions delivered by the LGA focusing on the Member and Officer Relationships, and in delivering a development programme for Cabinet.</p> <p>In their follow-up review, Grant Thornton made a further recommendation in relation to the Member Development Programme as a whole, but did not make any points around learning and development in relation to scrutiny specifically, as they acknowledged the improvements made.</p> <p>The recommendation made by Grant Thornton relating to the MDP was: Improvement Rec 19 (2022): The Council needs to build on the progress being made on member development and conclude the 2022/23 programme including the review of member PDPs and take further steps to finalise arrangements on succession planning for members in SRA roles.</p> <p>The LGA commented on the council’s commitment to review the member development programme at regular intervals and set out that it is important to ensure that the pace of delivery is made to feel sustainable. The LGA follow-up review acknowledged that the improvements to scrutiny have been supplemented with a range of training.</p>
<p>Summary of activity and next steps</p>	<p>Within the current MDP, clear pathways have been included for succession planning. The Improvement Plan contains a milestone around the reporting of the next iteration of the MDP to Ethical Standards and Development Committee in March and this will contain the response to the Member Personal Development Plan analysis.</p> <p>Scrutiny Members’ learning needs remain under review by the Chairs of Scrutiny Boards together with supporting Officers. Scrutiny Chairs are also receiving coaching and mentoring training from external providers. In addition, the regular survey to Audit and Scrutiny Members and Officers attending includes</p>

	questions around Learning and Development received and any new needs arising to help ensure that the Member Development Programme is flexible to meet emerging needs.
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Grant Thornton Improvement Recommendation 14 (2021): Officer and Member Relationships – the forward plan of the Cabinet should be shared with the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Board to help structure their agenda planning	
External Follow-up Reviews 2022 Findings	Grant Thornton acknowledged that the ‘forward plan of Cabinet business has been made available to all members to improve awareness and transparency
Summary of activity and next steps	The forward plan is shared with all scrutiny boards (in so far as it relates to that respective scrutiny board) at every meeting to assist with the Committee’s work planning. This will continue.

Grant Thornton Improvement Recommendation 12 (2021): Officer and Member Relationships – There is a need to ensure that members of scrutiny and audit committees are aware of their governance roles including how to interrogate reports and ask the right questions	
External Follow-up Reviews 2022 Findings	<p>Positive feedback was received about scrutiny in the follow up reviews.</p> <p>In their follow up review Autumn 2022, Grant Thornton set out that ‘There is a more mature engagement between the Leader, Cabinet, Committee Chairs and senior officers, supporting good planning and work programming across the different committees across different Council committees and a greater level of professionalism in how business is conducted by these committees.’... and ‘Overall, positive progress has been made to improve the culture and professionalism of key Council committees, with the scrutiny function making particular progress.’</p> <p>The LGA commented that ‘it is clear from the people we spoke to that this key strand of the council’s governance arrangements [scrutiny] is going from strength to strength’. And commented on scrutiny’s ‘renewed sense of energy and drive’.</p> <p>Grant Thornton did not make any further recommendations around the role of scrutiny.</p>

Summary of activity and next steps	<p>Ongoing activity is in place to ensure that scrutiny continues to make an effective contribution to the Council's governance arrangements.</p> <p>This includes the regular meetings to develop and nurture strong, healthy working relationships with members and officers. Chairs of scrutiny boards have regular agenda setting meetings with Directors and officers to be clear what the expectation is on reports coming to Scrutiny to enable a debate and not just information sharing. Scrutiny Board chairs collectively are meeting regularly, whether it is a pre-meeting or prior to Cabinet to agree lines of questioning in advance. Audit are also now having pre meetings and work is ongoing to ensure shared learning and cross cutting areas are discussed at regular meetings between the overarching Chair of Scrutiny and the Audit Chair as well as regular meetings with the Chair of Audit and the Section 151 Officer.</p> <p>The regular survey of Officers and Members attending scrutiny and audit is in place and it continues to provide insight into scrutiny's and audit's development and learning to enable continuous improvement.</p> <p>Job roles and a framework to guide the way scrutiny works has been agreed and is in place. A learning and development plan for audit members is currently being drafted to ensure that key skills needed for the role is clear.</p> <p>These arrangements will continue into the next Municipal Year. To ensure that the effective contribution of scrutiny and audit is sustained, the refreshed Improvement Plan includes an action to confirm the mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance.</p>

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Appendix – Summary of External Review Follow up Reports

Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board 1 March 2023

1. Context

1.1 In Autumn 2022, Grant Thornton, the LGA and CIPFA conducted follow up reviews. This paper sets out the context for each review and the key findings.

2. Grant Thornton Governance Review – Background and Scope

2.1 Grant Thornton's Value for Money Governance Review was conducted in the Autumn of 2021. The scope of the review covered seventeen key lines of enquiry, split into two categories:

- Services and Management; and
- Meetings, Complaints and Relationships.

2.2 In their original report, Grant Thornton made a series of 45 recommendations, made up of:

- 3 Statutory Recommendations
- 5 Key Recommendations
- 37 Improvement Recommendations

2.3 These recommendations, along with those from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge and CIPFA's Financial Management Review, were incorporated into the council's single overarching Improvement Plan.

2.4 At the time of publishing the original report in late November 2021, Grant Thornton had not completed their investigation into the line of enquiry relating to the 'Governance and Legal Support to Director of Public Health'. This line of enquiry was concluded in Autumn 2022, and Grant



Thornton have reissued their full report to include their findings, conclusions and recommendations for the council.

2.5 Grant Thornton have conducted a follow-up review in Autumn 2022 to understand how the council has improved its governance arrangements that were the focus of their 2021 review. Particular focus was on progress made against the recommendations that had been incorporated into the council's Improvement Plan. Grant Thornton also considered how the council uses community engagement to inform its strategic planning and decision-making processes. The follow-up review did not include that key line of enquiry referred to in paragraph 2.4 as it had not concluded at the time.

2.6 Governance Review - Key Findings and recommendations

2.7 In the reissued full report (Appendix 1), Grant Thornton set out their findings, conclusions and recommendations with regards to the 'governance and legal support to the Director of Public Health'. These have not made an impact on the overarching findings of the original report or on the statutory recommendations made to the council in December 2021. Grant Thornton have made four additional improvement recommendations to the council in response to their findings on this matter.

2.8 The follow-up review (Appendix 2) found that the council had continued to build on the initial improvements recognised by Grant Thornton in their original report, and has made significant progress on a number of their recommendations:

- Statutory Recommendation 1 - It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified and embed the solutions into the Council.:
 - The Council has greater corporate grip over improvement, performance and decision making
 - Cabinet is demonstrating a commitment to making tough decisions
 - Skills and capacity gaps in relation to key priorities have been recognised and steps taken to manage them
 - Evidence of greater senior officer involvement in key service challenges



- Statutory Recommendation 2 - The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation.:
 - Clear evidence that the council is making better procurement and commercial decisions
 - Significant progress made on the ERP systems replacement
 - Review of key elements of the Constitution completed
 - Evidence of improved corporate ownership and working relationships between the council and key partners, along with focus on service quality and improved outcomes.

- Statutory Recommendation 3 - Senior leadership, both officers and members, must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively, that they operate in line with the Council's values, codes, policies and procedures, and that there is zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality:
 - Greater stability at political and senior officer level, with positive working relationships between Cabinet and Leadership Team
 - Mature engagement between Leader, Cabinet, Committees and senior officers leading to good planning and work programming across committees, and commitment to the council's improvement journey
 - Evidence of improved focus and engagement with regional and national bodies

2.9 Grant Thornton recognise that challenges remain for the council on its improvement journey, and that building on the foundations laid over the last 12 months will be vital. The refresh of the Improvement Plan to incorporate the findings of this review and the results of the organisational culture values and behaviours work will be key to ensuring sustainable improvement.

2.10 A further four Key Recommendations have been identified from the Follow-up Review. Along with the new Improvement Recommendations from the reissued original report, these will be incorporated into the refresh of the Improvement Plan and will provide further direction for the next stage of the council's improvement journey.



3. LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Background and Scope

- 3.1 The LGA's Corporate Peer Challenge was conducted in late January/early February 2022 and focused around five areas which are recognised as critical to councils' performance and improvement:
- Local priorities and outcomes
 - Organisational and place leadership
 - Governance and culture
 - Financial planning and management; and
 - Capacity for improvement
- 3.2 The Peer Challenge Team also took an in-depth look at children's services and the place agenda.
- 3.3 The Peer Challenge report included nine recommendations, and a raised a series of improvement points for longer term consideration. As with the recommendations of the other reviews, these have been incorporated into the development of the Improvement Plan.
- 3.4 The LGA conducted a follow-up review in October 2022 with particular focus on the progress against their recommendations.

3.5 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Key Findings

- 3.6 The feedback report from the LGA, recognises the significant progress that has been made in a number of key areas to the good governance and management of the council. The LGA also stressed that the council is on a journey that will take time and there is still a long way to go to embed the improvements required.
- 3.7 The LGA have not made any new recommendations, but have raised a series of improvement actions which will be incorporated into the refresh of the Improvement Plan.
- 3.8 The main points raised by the LGA are aligned to the Improvement Plan themes and are summarised below:
- 3.9 Key points raised by the LGA in relation to Corporate Oversight and Strategic Direction were that:
- Much greater stability can now be seen both politically and managerially



- Cabinet and Leadership Team are working increasingly well together
- Praise for the Leaders' and Chief Executives' styles and approaches
- Staff feel much better communicated with from the corporate level
- There is an absence of a whole organisation view of the scale of the financial challenge facing the council
- External partners are seeing the council now being much better engaged
- Cabinet is building a track record of taking difficult decisions and are showing a commitment and willingness to face the further tough decisions
- The injection of additional capacity in key areas has helped to drive improvement
- There needs to be a stocktake around the level of available resource, pace and capacity going forward.

3.10 Key points raised by the LGA in relation to Governance and Decision-Making were that:

- An inclusive process has taken place to develop the changes to the Constitution
- One of the most noticeable changes in recent months is a much-improved set of relationships between officers and elected Members.
- There is an emerging risk around the organisational responsiveness to the customer and to casework issues brought forward by Elected Members
- Members have valued the training offered through the Member Development Programme
- Scrutiny is going from strength to strength
- Mature engagement between the Leader, Cabinet, Committee Chairs and officers is providing for good planning and work programming across the different committees
- There is a sense of a 'maturing politics' within the council

3.11 Key points raised by the LGA in relation to Customer Journey and Organisational Culture were that:

- There is a long way to go in the work on the customer journey and organisational culture
- The customer journey, Equalities Diversity and Inclusion, and organisational culture are major pieces of inter-related work that are



fundamental to future success. They require a clear plan and sense of deliverability.

4. **CIPFA Review – Background and Scope**

- 4.1 CIPFA were commissioned by the council to undertake a review of the financial management and governance arrangements using the Financial Management Model to contribute to the development of the council's financial management operation and arrangements. It assessed the council's financial management capability, its internal processes, and operations. It also examined how the council plans its future financial management.
- 4.2 The report from CIPFA received in January 2022 set out that the council was financially stable and in recent years has been able to contribute towards reserves through achieving a balanced budget or an underspend, but that the authority has previously lacked ambition and innovation and has a very traditional approach to financial management.
- 4.3 The scoring process generated an overall star rating between one and five, five being the highest. Sandwell achieved an overall rating of two stars and was considered to be a progressive two-star authority with an encouraging direction of travel. CIPFA made 14 recommendations which were incorporated into the single Improvement Plan.
- 4.4 CIPFA completed a Financial Management Model Re-assessment Review in December 2022. The report is included at Appendix 4.
- 4.5 **CIPFA Financial Management Model Re-assessment Review – Key findings**
- 4.6 The CIPFA Financial Management Model Re-assessment Report sets out that Sandwell has improved from a progressive 2* rating to a 3* rating.
- 4.7 Findings are arranged within the report according to CIPFA's model topic headings: Leadership, People, Processes and Stakeholders. All of these topic headings received increased individual scores.



4.8 Key points raised were that:

- Positive progress was evident and represents a step change in under a year, which is to be commended
- Finance is seen as a key function and priority and there is a positive commitment to the finance improvement programme
- The Director of Finance is well-respected
- The MTFs is now much stronger
- The budgetary process has improved
- The emphasis on business partnering has been broadly welcomed
- There is a coherent agenda and programme of financial reform
- There is clearer evidence of strategic and operational awareness

4.9 CIPFA raised a series of areas for the council to continue to focus on. These will be incorporated into a subsequent refresh of the Improvement Plan.



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Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council: Value for Money Governance Review

Year ended 31 March 2021

17 October 2022

This report was originally published on 3 December 2021. It has been updated to include the findings relating to KLOE A8.



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Your key Grant Thornton
team members are:

Mark Stocks
Audit Partner

T: 0121 232 5437

E: mark.c.stocks@uk.gt.com

Guy Clifton
Director

020 7728 2903

E: guy.clifton@uk.gt.com

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The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed for the purpose of completing our work under the NAO Code and related guidance. Our audit is not designed to test all arrangements in respect of value for money. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify significant weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose all irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in arrangements that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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Introduction

Context, background and scope of the review

Context to our VfM approach

Sections 20 and 21 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the Act) require auditors to be satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the Value for Money (VfM) conclusion.

Our VfM work is carried out in line with the Code of Audit Practice (the Code) which is prepared by the National Audit Office (NAO) under the Act, and its supporting statutory guidance: Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03).

A revised Code came into force on 1 April 2020, after being approved by Parliament. The Code requires auditors to structure their VfM commentary on arrangements under three specified reporting criteria:

- Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services;
- Governance: how the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- Financial sustainability: how the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services.

Background to this review

In our 2019/20 Audit Findings Report we noted that a number of governance issues had come to our attention during 2021. We considered that there was insufficient evidence to confirm that these matters impacted 2019/20 and as such noted that they will be dealt with as part of the 2020/21 audit.

We have continued to monitor Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council's (the Council) ongoing governance arrangements, including member-officer relationships and have become increasingly concerned at the Council's ability to look forward and manage the challenges and opportunities that all local authorities currently face.

There is an increasing perception of poor progress in resolving service and governance issues, a lack of trust between key individuals charged with governance, of a significant amount of time being spent responding to allegations and complaints, and of reviews being reopened, such as the reopening of previous standards reviews. We feel that until these significant issues are resolved that the Council is at risk of not having adequate governance arrangements in place to ensure that it can effectively discharge its statutory responsibilities and maintain its financial sustainability.

Under the NAO Code, we are required to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The auditor is no longer required to give a binary qualified / unqualified VfM conclusion. Instead, auditors report in more detail on the Council's overall arrangements, as well as key recommendations on any significant weaknesses in arrangements identified during the audit.

The purpose of this work has been to draw conclusions on the key lines of enquiry (KLOEs) identified as part of our scope, and if necessary determine the extent to which further action is required by the Council. This review, along with other VfM related activity, has been undertaken in order for us to consider whether there are any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements.

As already noted, our work is undertaken in accordance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, sections 20 and 24 and may result in Statutory Recommendations or a Public Interest Report.

Overview of the scope

Determining how much work to undertake on arrangements to secure VfM is a matter of auditor judgement. The focus of our review has been on the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements and how they are impacted by the matters detailed above.

We have identified seventeen KLOEs to assess the Council's governance arrangements, which are set out in the table below.

Whilst the focus of this review is on governance arrangements, where appropriate we will highlight findings in relation to the two other reporting areas set out in the Code.

	SERVICES & MANAGEMENT
A1	The Children's Trust
A2	Sandwell Leisure Trust
A3	Providence Place
A4	Special Educational Needs Transport
A5	Sandwell Land and Property Company
A6	MADE festival
A7	Waste service
A8	Governance and legal support re DPH
A9	Lion Farm
A10	Introduction of new ERP system (Oracle)

Our approach

Overview of the scope (cont'd)

	MEETINGS, COMPLAINTS & RELATIONSHIPS
B1	Chief Officers
B2	Senior Leadership
B3	Complaints
B4	Officers and members relationships
B5	Standards Committee
B6	Audit Committee
B7	Financial Reporting

Our approach

Our work in relation to this review was undertaken between August and October 2021.

Stage 1 – Review of key documents

We submitted an information request for key documents and then undertook a desk top review to reach an initial conclusion on the nature of further work required.

Stage 2 – Further Analysis and Clarifications

We then undertook interviews with key stakeholders in relation to each KLOE to clarify issues identified during stage one and to undertake more detailed analysis in relation to specific KLOEs. A total of 75 stakeholder interviews have been undertaken, representing a total of 122 discussions on individual KLOEs.

Our approach is designed to assess:

- Governance arrangements in place in relation to our scope;
- Council performance against these arrangements; and
- Identify any significant weaknesses and risks.

CfGS Governance Risk and Resilience Framework

We have drawn on the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's (CfGS) Governance Risk and Resilience Framework, published in March 2021, to structure our work in relation to KLOE B4 - officer and member relationships. This Framework includes seven characteristics of good governance that have a particular focus on behaviours.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the assistance provided by council officers, council members, and external stakeholders with whom we have engaged during the course of our review.

Additional VfM Code Work

As already noted, we have identified governance arrangements as an audit risk. This requires additional work to inform our auditor's judgement on VfM. The work has been undertaken in line with the requirements of the Code and associated auditor guidance. This review helps us discharge our responsibilities under the Code and will include the reporting of any significant weaknesses in arrangements and other points for improvement identified during the review. Any fee variation is subject to approval from Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) which is responsible for appointing auditors and setting audit fees for relevant authorities that have chosen to opt into its national scheme of auditor appointments.



Key Findings

Overview

Overview

The Council has seen deteriorating senior officer and senior member relationships over a number of years. This has resulted in a breakdown in trust, respect and confidence between those holding governance roles. This has limited the Council's ability to look forward and manage the challenges and opportunities it faces. This breakdown in relationships between senior officers and senior members is central to the governance issues identified by this review.

There has been poor progress in resolving service and governance issues, with a significant amount of time being spent responding to internal allegations and complaints. There is evidence of reviews and issues being reopened. This has impacted on the Council's ability to focus on service improvement.

The Council has been insular and siloed. Its focus has been on responding to external service-based challenges as well as managing the fallout from previous decisions or investigations. Senior officers and senior members have historically been unable to make the changes required to move away from this organisational culture and focus.

We note that since the appointment of the interim Chief Executive in August 2021, working with the then new Leader of the Council, that many of these matters are being resolved. The Council's senior leadership team, the majority of whom are recent external appointments, recognise the challenges and issues set out in this report and are supporting the interim Chief Executive on an improvement journey.

These 'green shoots' are positive and we have tried to reflect the improvements in this report. Without these changes we would have had concerns with regard to the Council's ability to manage and govern itself, and intervention by the Government may have been necessary.

Inevitably these changes are not yet embedded, and the Council will need to manage the transition to a permanent Chief Executive well, alongside maintaining continuity and stability of the wider leadership team, so that the new Chief Executive, working with the leadership team, continues to support the service and cultural changes that are being put in place and that momentum is maintained.

Due to the issues identified we have determined that it is appropriate to raise the following statutory recommendations under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act:

Statutory recommendations

We have made a number of statutory and key recommendations which are set out page 12. Other improvement recommendations are made throughout the detailed findings of this report and are summarised in the Appendix.

Our statutory recommendations are:

- **It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified, and embed the solutions into the Council.**
- **The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation.**
- **Senior leadership, both officers and members, must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively, that they operate in line with the Council's values, codes, policies and procedures, and that there is zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality.**

Key findings

KEY FINDINGS

Corporate grip

Understandably COVID-19 has significantly impacted the leadership and organisational focus of all local authorities over the past eighteen months. Even taking account of this impact we consider that until recently the Council has failed to take an effective corporate grip on key issues facing the Council.

We note that it is hindered in taking a corporate grip by the lack of a clear performance management framework and agreed key corporate indicators, although we note recent progress has been made on this. This has impacted on the ability of the Leadership Team and Cabinet to have a single line of sight and single version of the truth. This has contributed to a culture of silo working, resulting in a lack of corporate ownership and accountability. This has, in turn, resulted in a lack of ownership and grip on key challenges and issues and an absence of intervention and decision making.

In failing to take ownership and seeking resolution, lessons have not been learned. This has resulted in a number of instances whereby the Council has repeated actions leading to similar outcomes. For example, the Wragge report continues to be an area of mistrust between members and between officers and members.

Procurement and commercial decision making

Our review has identified repeated instances where commercial decisions or procurement decisions have contributed to a number of key legacy challenges facing the Council, which have not been resolved.

These included legacy property related decisions such as those relating to Lion Farm, Providence Place and Sandwell Land and Property Company where there was either a lack of appropriate expertise and advice or failure to consider all appropriate options.

There are also more recent examples of poor procurement decisions relating to waste management and recycling, the Council's enterprise and resource planning (ERP) system and SEND Transport. In each case the procurements have either been poorly specified, did not provide adequate timescales, or those responsible for decision making have not been fully aware of the context and detail.

These property transactions and procurement decisions have created future service or delivery challenges. In some cases, they have impacted negatively on the Council's reputation. In each instance, until recently, the decisions have not had effective corporate ownership to allow appropriate management or resolution.

Contract management

Our review identified a number of key contracts having been impacted by either poor specification during procurement, a lack of clear contract management responsibility, or poorly defined approaches to contract management. These related to Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) , Serco, Inoapps and Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) and we note that the interim Chief Executive has recently commenced more effective engagement with these key suppliers and partners.

At varying times relationships between the Council and these key partners have been fraught with the lack of senior leadership grip significantly contributing to a deterioration of these relationships. A lack of clear corporate ownership has meant that issues with these contracts have not been resolved in a timely manner. This is particularly the case for SLT, Serco and Inoapps.

We also note that some key contracts such as SLT and SCT, have not previously had key performance indicators reviewed since the contracts were let, whilst others have not had appropriate focus on service quality (such as SEND Transport) or outcomes (such as SLT and Serco).

OTHER THEMES

Lack of longer-term planning

The insularity and short-term focus previously noted has meant that the Council has not had the necessary time and space to consider the long-term. Recent changes to the Council's leadership have seen a re-emphasis on longer-term planning, with time invested in a refresh of the Corporate Plan, which has now been approved by full Council.

However, as mentioned earlier, the lack of a corporate performance framework has meant that the Council has not received management information on key corporate indicators. We also note that the Leadership Team had not been receiving regular monthly budget monitoring reports and have not been effectively engaged in the budget setting process or medium-term financial planning. We understand that processes are being put in place to resolve these issues.

Key findings (cont'd)

Officer empowerment and decision making

The scheme of delegation and the involvement of senior members in key decision making has resulted in a lack of empowerment of officers in decision making and the agility of the Council to make, where necessary, prompt decisions. An example of which is the delay to taking a decision in relation to the rescheduled MADE Festival, which had been due to take place in August 2021. We consider that this reflects the lack of trust between senior members and senior officers at the time.

Capacity, experience and skills

The prevalence of interim and acting up arrangements in senior officer roles has in some places not seen effective back-fill arrangements put in place, resulting in capacity challenges for some key officers and teams such as Finance. These temporary arrangements have contributed to confusion over some key roles and responsibilities, such as those in relation to SLT and Oracle Fusion, impacting on effective contract management.

More generally, the lack of corporate ownership, again already discussed, has left some officers exposed in managing key service challenges and relationships without appropriate senior officer support and direction.

The impact of changes to senior officers and members

The Council has been through a period of significant change to its leadership, both in terms of senior officers and senior members. Following the local elections in May 2021 a new Leader was elected, who appointed a new Cabinet with effect from June 2021. Many of these Cabinet members had not previously held a Cabinet role, and some were fairly new to the role of councillor. There was a further change to the Council Leader in late November 2021, as we were finalising this report.

An interim Chief Executive has been in role since August 2021 and there has been significant changes to chief officers over the past year, with vacancies being filled by either external interims, or Council officers in acting up roles. These changes were driven in large part by a senior management review which concluded in October 2020, although we note that some chief officer departures were caused by unrelated circumstances.

Other than the Chief Executive there are currently ten chief officer roles, of these four are recent external appointments, and two other external appointments have been made with these officers starting in November 2021. Three officers remain from the previous leadership team, two in the same role and one appointed to one of the new roles created by the review.

Two roles remain vacant: the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive, with the recruitment of the former recently initiated. The Council has decided to not recruit the Deputy Chief Executive and to review the need for this role. In addition there is a Director of HR, which is not a permanent role and is being held by an external interim.

The impact of this recent period of change has been instability and uncertainty for the organisation. Whilst external interims are recognised positively for the experience they bring from working with other councils and having a “fresh pair of eyes” on some of the service challenges being faced, the wider organisation considers the use of interims as maintaining a holding pattern before permanent chief officers join. The Council will reach the position of having all roles filled by a permanent officers during November 2021, other than the two vacancies noted above.

The changes to key senior roles have led to a loss of corporate knowledge and history among senior officers and senior members. This has contributed to historic issues resurfacing and senior members making the initial decision to progress a major project or initiative not being the same group of members taking further decisions during the project's implementation, such as the SEND Transport procurement.

The current position

The themes set out in this section illustrate how the Council's recent behaviours and legacy issues impact on good governance and decision making.

The recent widespread changes at chief officer level and the election a new Leader and appointment of a new Cabinet, provide a significant opportunity for the Council to move away from this position. Indeed, there is a consensus that senior officers and members are in a much stronger, more effective and constructive position than in the recent past. There is also a clear desire to make the improvements required, and a greater understanding of roles and responsibilities.

The current Leader and interim Chief Executive have a positive working relationship and between them have introduced changes to manage some of the legacy issues noted above. These include the Leadership Team attending informal Cabinet, the introduction of “star chambers” as part of the budget setting process, enhancing the training programme for members, and a review of the Council's constitution including the scheme of delegation. Other changes are planned.

Key findings (cont'd)

Page 18

The current position (cont'd)

Many of these changes took place during the course of this review so it is too soon to judge if they are yet embedded. Key stakeholders we met during this review recognised that the Council is at the start of a necessary improvement journey. Failure to maintain and embed current and planned changes will have a significant impact on the Council being able to realise its strategic ambitions and provide effective governance.

Whilst we recognise that recent changes have been positive, we remain concerned about the lack of trust across the wider organisation and continuing poor behaviours, for example, the leaking of the review into the Wragge report to local media in October 2021. It will take time for the wider organisation to regain trust in the senior leadership, see the stability required, and believe in the changes that have begun.

There was a change to the Council's Leader as we were finalising this report. This has highlighted the need for stability and continuity. The new Leader must use the platform for improvement which has been created to ensure a strong and positive working relationship both with the current Interim Chief Executive and the subsequent permanent Chief Executive.

The direction of travel is a necessary and positive one, but there is no quick fix for the challenges facing the Council. For these "green shoots" to deliver the widespread transformation and changes required, the Council's leadership needs to be relentless in its focus in delivering and embedding sustainable change, and use its past history as a reference point when focusing on improvement.

Recommendations and detailed findings

We now set out our statutory and key recommendations, followed by the detailed findings in relation to each individual KLOE.

We consider that these matters represent significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks. We have also identified several improvement recommendations, which are summarised at Appendix A. Further details on the types of recommendations we make are set out at Appendix B.



Statutory and key recommendations

Statutory and key recommendations

Improvement recommendations are made throughout this report and these are summarised in the Appendix. Our statutory and key recommendations are summarised below.

#	Recommendation
Statutory recommendations	
1.	It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report: (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified, and embed the solutions into the Council.
2.	The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation.
3.	Senior leadership, both officers and members, must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively, that they operate in line with the Council's values, codes, policies and procedures, and that there is zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality.
Key recommendations	
4.	The Council's leadership needs be relentless in its focus in delivering and embedding sustainable change, and use its past history as a reference point when focusing on improvement.
5.	Critical to embedding the transformation and change required will be the appointment of the right permanent Chief Executive. The Council must ensure an effective recruitment process, including attracting a pool of appropriate candidates.
6.	The Council should ensure that a corporate performance framework is agreed so that the implementation of the Corporate Plan can be effectively monitored, and there is collective corporate responsibility rather than silo working.
7.	Members in key statutory roles, in particular in relation to Cabinet, scrutiny, standards and audit, need to be provided with effective induction and ongoing development, training and support. The member development programme should be reviewed to ensure corporate governance forms part of the training for members with governance roles.
8.	The Council should develop and agree an action plan in relation to the statutory, key and improvement recommendations included in this report, ensuring that they are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound.

Management responses to these and the improvement recommendations are included in a separate Council report.

Detailed Findings

KLOE B4: Officer and member relationships

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider whether relationships between senior officers and senior members are appropriate in supporting good governance.

Introduction

We have set out our findings in relation to this KLOE before any of the other KLOEs due to the overarching importance of senior officer and senior member relationships for the discharging of effective governance and decision making.

We have drawn on the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's (CfGS) Governance Risk and Resilience Framework, published in March 2021. The framework is designed to promote good governance practice and:

- recognises good governance is everyone's responsibility, and whatever their role, officers and councillors are likely to carry out work that intersects with the Council's governance framework every day;
- considers roles and responsibilities including those of the Council's statutory officers and political leadership
- includes a focus on behaviours;
- sets out seven characteristics for considering governance risk and management, designed to reflect and supplement the broader CIPFA/SOLACE: "Delivering good governance in local government" framework (2016).

We have structured our findings by the seven characteristics, which are:

- The extent of recognition of individual and collective responsibility for good governance;
- Awareness of political dynamics;
- How the council looks to the future to set its decision-making priorities;
- Officer and councillor roles;
- How the Council's real situation compares to its sense of itself;
- Quality of local / external relationships; and
- The state of member oversight through scrutiny and audit.

Twenty-five meetings were held with individual senior officers and senior members of the Council in relation to this KLOE, and our findings are based on our judgement of these key stakeholders' observations.

The extent of recognition of individual and collective responsibility for good governance

The Council is coming out of a period where there has been a breakdown in the trust, confidence and respect between senior officers and senior members, which has been characterised by:

- a perceived blame culture contributing to the siloed approach to directorates, with senior officers protecting their areas of responsibility and a lack of peer challenge within the Leadership Team and a risk of not giving bad news to members.
- a lack of collective responsibility and accountability in the absence of a corporate focus on key performance indicators and risks, weak corporate involvement in strategic financial planning, budget monitoring, and transparency.
- a lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities between officers and members.
- an inconsistent approach to the Council's scheme of delegation, including relatively low spending thresholds, and an overly bureaucratic approach to decision making, leading to unnecessary delays.

The characteristics set out above are a significant risk to good governance. However, we note that there have been recent improvements. We discuss these below.

The recent widespread changes at chief officer level and the election of a new Leader and appointment of a new Cabinet, provide a significant opportunity for the Council to move away from this position. Indeed, there is consensus that senior officers and members are in a much stronger, more effective and constructive position than in the recent past. There is a clear desire to make the improvements required, and greater understanding of roles and responsibilities.

The current officer and member leadership team have introduced changes to manage the legacy issues noted above, including the Leadership Team attending informal Cabinet, the introduction of "star chambers" as part of the budget setting process, enhancing the training programme for members, and a review of the Council's constitution including the scheme of delegation. All of these are positive actions.

Embedding the changes that have been made and that are planned will be critical if the Council is to realise its strategic ambition and provide effective governance. Whilst early indications are positive, the test of whether these changes become effectively embedded will be how the council's senior leadership manage legacy issues should they surface, and that they continue the work of the interim Chief Executive through the appointment of a high quality permanent Chief Executive.

An enhancement of the induction programme to new members of Cabinet, including on local government finance and their governance roles is recommended.

KLOE B4: Officer and member relationships (cont'd)

Part 4

Awareness of political dynamics

The Council has recently updated its Code of Member Conduct, incorporating updates to the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Code of Conduct. A member development programme is ongoing in relation to the Code and related areas such as gifts and hospitality, and arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Code. The Council has also commissioned the LGA to provide a mentoring programme for senior members.

There was consensus from our interviews that senior officers fully understood the need to act with neutrality when operating in a political environment. However, the recent history of the Council means that some senior officers remain impacted by the blame culture which was perceived to be in place. This, for example, has manifested itself in senior officers taking personally criticism of their service area, impacting on behaviours in meetings.

Whilst having in place effective codes, policies and procedures is good practice, it will be behaviours that determine whether the Council is able to successfully move away from its recent history. However, as already noted, the senior officers and members of the Council believe that there has been significant progress made in relation to how they operate and work together.

These changes in behaviour are recent and will need to be sustained to become embedded, so that the wider organisation - and external stakeholders - see and have confidence in this change.

The Council should consider how it provides appropriate support to those Chief Officers who were in role prior to the recent changes to senior officers, Leader and Cabinet. The Council should also ensure that corporate governance training is provided to members of the Cabinet and other members in governance related roles.

How the council looks to the future to set its decision-making priorities

There was consensus that the Council has not provided appropriate time and space to think clearly about the long-term, to horizon scan and undertake the strategic thinking required.

It was recognised that this was because the Council has spent recent years “fire-fighting” both in terms of managing day-to-day operational issues, as well as having an insular focus responding to internal allegations and complaints. There is also evidence of reviews and issues being reopened.

A Corporate Plan (Vision 2030) has been in place but there has been a lack of clarity about how the Plan’s ambitions, priorities and outcomes should be delivered. This has been recognised, and the Council has recently invested significant leadership time in a refresh of the Corporate Plan, including external consultation. More work needs to be done including the establishment of Directorate Plans and Service Plans which will set out how corporate priorities will be delivered, including KPIs. The Leader has recently restructured Cabinet portfolios to better reflect the updated Corporate Plan.

The Council should ensure that corporate KPIs are agreed so that the implementation of the Corporate Plan can be effectively monitored.

The forward plan of the Cabinet should be shared with the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Board to help structure their agenda planning.

There has been an ineffective approach to budget monitoring and budget setting with:

- monthly budget reports not being reported to the Cabinet or the Leadership Team, and
- Directors and Portfolio Holders not being effectively engaged in budget setting discussions.

This has been recognised and star chambers for Cabinet members and chief officers have been introduced to support the budget setting process. The Director of Finance has also introduced regular Cabinet briefings and monthly budget reporting to Cabinet.

The Leadership Team should agree key medium-term financial objectives and principles. There should be effective ownership of the principles that underpin the budget setting process, for example the Council’s approach to reserves, contingency and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

KLOE B4: Officer and member relationships (cont'd)

Officer and councillor roles

As already noted there has been a breakdown in trust and mutual respect between senior officers and members in recent years, which is recognised by those in senior officer and senior member roles. However, in general, those in these roles felt that working relationships, including trust and respect, had improved in recent months and were currently no cause for concern. Nonetheless it was also recognised that a cultural shift needs to become firmly embedded, and that stability and continuity is required from those in these roles.

The Council has agreed the following values to define how people do things and are reflected in the way people behave:

- Trust – show respect, make personal impact, being open and honest.
- Unity – focusing on customers, working with a team, communicating effectively.
- Progress – being open to change, focusing on performance, getting team results.

Senior officers and senior members must lead by example to ensure that the “tone from the top” consistently reflects these values and behaviours. This is critical in ensuring that the wider organisation recognises that changes have been made and that all people are confident in adopting these values and behaviours. This should build on recently introduced staff briefings to include a programme of staff engagement including “pulse” checks to benchmark and monitor progress on the organisation’s wellbeing.

As with all councils, it was recognised that members come from different backgrounds, bringing different skills and capabilities. A member development programme is in place, with the Council being supported by the Local Government Association (LGA) in its update and delivery, and member personal development plans have been introduced, which is good practice.

The Council should ensure that the review of the member development programme is appropriate. In particular, thought should be given to how members with special responsibility roles are developed and supported. This should include succession planning for these roles.

How the council’s real situation compares to its sense of self

It was felt that Members have a good understanding of their communities’ needs and what outcomes are required to meet these needs, particularly in relation to their wards. However, it was recognised – as already mentioned – that the Council needs to ensure that these needs and outcomes are reflected in corporate priorities and outcomes and delivery is effectively monitored. Similarly, while improvements are being made in relation to public consultation on the Corporate Plan there remains no visible consultation on the Council’s budget setting priorities.

A key area of weakness is the lack of a performance management framework to manage corporate progress against key performance indicators. More also needs to be done to change the siloed approach to managing service delivery. We note that there has not been a structured or effective “early warning” system in place for the Council’s Leadership Team to identify key risks and issues.

This has been recognised and arrangements are being put in place so that the Leadership Team reviews strategic risks, budget monitoring and other performance data. **However, further work is required to establish a formal performance management framework and agree a set of key corporate indicators for the Leadership Team to collectively manage, receive appropriate management information to monitor progress, and set out clear lines of accountability, responsibility, and delegated authority.**

The Council has not had a consistent approach to financial benchmarking and so has had an absence of unit costs and financial trend data. The new Director of Finance has recently introduced financial benchmarking, which is good practice. **This will need to be sustained to create a culture of curiosity in services in how nearest statistical neighbours are performing, to support savings identification and to drive improvements.**

The recent restructuring of Council departments has resulted in a lack of clarity as to which department some services sit in, with the architects of the restructuring no longer working for the Council. Finance and services are currently working through such service allocations, but until this work is completed, financial reporting will not be fully aligned to departmental structures.

More generally there is good evidence that many senior officers are engaged in their respective professional bodies, which includes sharing learning, and that the Council is corporately engaged with the LGA.

KLOE B4: Officer and member relationships (cont'd)

Quality of local / external relationships

The quality of local / external relationships is mixed. The Council works with a variety of local public, private and third sector bodies, and these relationships vary by service. It is recognised that the pandemic has enhanced relationships with some local public sector organisations, such as the NHS and police, and with local voluntary and community organisations, and that the Council should ensure that these gains are maintained.

However, the Council has had an insularity in recent years, which in particular has impacted its engagement with businesses, and sub-regional bodies such as the LEP and the West Midlands Combined Authority. This is recognised by the current political leadership of the Council and there are signs of a move to more active participation in key sub-regional bodies. Rebuilding these key strategic relationships will take time for the Council to realise any benefits and “punch at its weight” as the 34th largest council in England. **It will be important that this more outward looking approach is sustained.**

The insularity of the Council has also meant that its communications to external organisations has been weak, for example resulting in a lack of external clarity on the Council's key strategic priorities. This is also reflected in a passive approach to communicating to local residents and businesses. This too has been recognised and the Council is investing in its central communications team and aims to be more proactive in managing the narrative on the Council, including greater communication of positive news stories.

When investing in the communications team, the Council should also use this as an opportunity to ensure more effective internal communications, including with back-bench members.

The Council has a number of key external partners for the delivery of services such as waste and recycling, children's social care, and leisure. These relationships are covered in separate KLOEs.

The state of member oversight through scrutiny and audit

The role that scrutiny and audit should play in holding a council's decision-makers to account makes these roles fundamentally important to the successful functioning of local democracy and good governance. Effective scrutiny helps secure the efficient delivery of public services and can drive improvements within the Council. Conversely, poor scrutiny can be indicative of wider governance, leadership and service failure.

The effectiveness of the Scrutiny Boards and the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee were viewed as needing improvement by those interviewed and, in particular, by senior officers.

The Labour Party has been in control of the Council since 1979 and for many years had not had an official opposition. The position changed at the May 2021 local elections when the Conservative Party gained nine seats (having previously held no seats). From a governance perspective this was welcomed by both the senior officers and senior members who we met during the course of our review.

However, whilst areas of effective activity were recognised, the long period of having no opposition has meant that the audit and scrutiny functions have not always effectively held key decision makers to account. This was a widely held view amongst officers we interviewed.

There is a need to ensure that members of scrutiny and audit committees are aware of their governance roles including how to interrogate reports and ask the right questions. This is recognised by the Council who are working with the LGA to develop and provide a member training programme for members with scrutiny and audit roles.

KLOE A1: Sandwell Children's Trust

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider actions undertaken by the Council to secure improvement in children's social care outcomes.

Background

Following an inadequate / requires improvement Ofsted inspection in June 2015, at its meeting on 19 October 2016, Cabinet was advised of the Government's 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. As a result, Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) started operating on 1 April 2018. Any alternative to the current arrangement must be agreed by the Secretary of State for Education.

A 10-year service delivery contract (SDC) between the Council and SCT commenced 1 April 2018, setting out the requirements for the provision of children's social care. The SDC obligation was to reach an Ofsted judgement of 'Requires Improvement' by 2020 and to secure an Ofsted judgement of 'Good' by 2022. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 and the cessation of full inspections by Ofsted in 2020, a full Ofsted inspection may not take place in 2021 but is more likely to be in early 2022.

The Ofsted Inspection carried out in November 2017 and reported in January 2018 noted that most of the recommendations from the Ofsted 2015 inspection had not been fully met and some services have declined in effectiveness.

Our Audit Findings Report for 2019/20 noted that we had completed a risk-based review of the Council's value for money arrangements and concluded that the Council had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources except for its arrangements around children's services which have been rated as 'inadequate' by Ofsted.

We concluded that there were weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for delivering services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. These matters were considered evidence of weaknesses in proper arrangements for understanding and using appropriate and reliable financial and performance information to support informed decision making and performance management. This led to a qualified 'except for' value for money conclusion for 2019/20.

KEY FINDINGS

Governance arrangements

There is a robust governance framework in place for the Council and other stakeholders to monitor the performance of SCT.

The contract requires that the Director of Children's Services, together with Council senior officers from finance and legal services, and the Chief Executive of the Trust meet on at least a monthly basis to consider performance and operational matters at an Operational Partnership Board (OPB). The Council's Lead Member for Children's Services and the Chief Executive meet quarterly with the Chair of the Trust Board and the Chief Executive of the Trust, at a Strategic Partnership Board (SPB).

The contract also requires the Trust to provide a comprehensive annual review for consideration by the OPB and the SPB and then by the Cabinet. Progress against the performance indicators for the period 1 April to 31 March is set out in an Annual Review, together with information about financial, workforce, and other performance areas.

On behalf of the Council, the Trust has developed an Improvement Plan in response to the Ofsted inspection findings published in January 2018. This plan was presented to Cabinet in September 2018 and covered a three-year period. The Trust has undertaken a refresh of the Improvement Plan. The delivery of the improvement plan is overseen by an Improvement Board, which is independently chaired, with representatives from the Council, Trust and Department for Education attending.

DfE appoint the Chair of the SCT Board, carry out six-monthly monitoring visits, are invited to attend OPB and meet regularly with the Chair and CEO of the Trust. They also attend the Improvement Board and have provided approximately £7m of improvement funding to the Trust over the past three years, to address specific improvement areas.

The Trust is required to report to the Council's Scrutiny Board twice each year as part of the obligations set out in the SDC. At the meeting of 23 August 2021, reports in respect of the annual review, the improvement plan, the pandemic response and the adoption service were presented to the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board. The Council's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Cabinet also received reports on the Trust, and the Cabinet approves the Trust's business plan.

KLOE A1: Sandwell Children's Trust (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider actions undertaken by the Council to secure improvement in children's social care outcomes.

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Governance arrangements (cont'd)

In addition to the above, SCT activity also features in wider children's services governance arrangements, the Children's Safeguarding Partnership and the Children and Young People Commissioning Partnership.

In summary, there are comprehensive governance arrangements in place relating to SCT. Given the complexity of these governance arrangements we recommend a review to ensure that officers and members with roles on the various governance bodies are clear on their responsibilities, to avoid duplication and ensure effective communication between those holding governance roles and that there is a collective understanding of the performance of SCT and how risks and issues are being managed.

Contract management

The SDC includes a set of 15 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are monitored by the Council. We have been advised that when the SDC initially went live that this KPIs were not agreed, rather they were agreed during the first quarter of the Trust's operation. They have not been revised subsequently.

An officer with formal responsibility for managing the SDC was not appointed until Spring 2021, previously this role was spread across a number of different officers.

As part of contract management arrangements there is provision to negotiate the Council's annual funding with SCT (the contract sum) which feeds into Council's annual budget setting process.

The SDC sets out the steps and timing of the negotiation of the contract sum, which includes reviews by OPB, SPB, and the Council's Cabinet and Scrutiny Board.

The following contract sums have been agreed:

- 2018/19: £58,229,695
- 2019/20: £64,043,000
- 2020/21: £65,828,000
- 2021/22: £68,028,000

A request for additional £500,000 has been made by SCT during this financial year, which the Cabinet has approved and is being funded via a COVID-19 reserve. This will form a contract variation to the 2021/22 contract sum.

The Council has sought to reduce the contract sum since the creation of the Trust, seeking improvement and transformation from SCT. This has not happened and has negatively impacted on relationships during some annual contract sum negotiations. This was particularly the case during 2020 when the Council and SCT were unable to agree the contract sum. As a result, DfE became involved and the then Children's Minister supported mediation. DfE funded specialist financial support to provide assurances to the Council that SCT's contract sum request was reasonable. This led to the Council approving the contract sum. Such an impasse has not happened subsequently.

SCT financial performance

SCT has a track record of annual overspends and not achieving planned savings targets. The overspend in 2020/21 was approximately £2m, however one-off government COVID-19 funding resulted in the final outturn being an underspend. The Council has worked with SCT to re-profile the Trust's underlying overspend over the three years of the Council's current Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

Children's social care has significant demand pressures nationally, which have been exacerbated by COVID-19, and SCT has seen increased costs such as for placements for looked after children.

SCT did not deliver £250k of their planned savings target in 2020/21. SCT has a savings target of £1.8m in 2021/22. We have been advised that £1.3m of the planned £1.8m savings are on target to be achieved, with plans in place to deliver the remaining £500k. The savings primarily relate to staffing and placement costs, with the latter sensitive to increased demand.

SCT has Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to buy back services from the Council for specified back-office services. These SLAs total £2.1m for 2021/22 and represent an income to the Council.

KLOE A1: Sandwell Children's Trust

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider actions undertaken by the Council to secure improvement in children's social care outcomes.

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Council management of financial risks

The Council's main source of monitoring the financial performance of SCT is via SCT reports to monthly meetings of OPB and quarterly meetings of SPB. SCT provides updates on forecast overspends and mitigations.

Given the financial pressures on SCT, the Council has set aside the following reserves and contingencies:

- High-cost placements reserve of £1m (£500k for 2022/23 and £500k for 2023/24) with SCT having to submit evidence should they claim for an additional contract sum.
- Earmarked COVID-19 reserve of £1.9m for 2020/21 which SCT claims against on a quarterly basis by demonstrating need. The additional £500k contract sum already mentioned was funded via this reserve.
- General contingency of £1.6m for 2021/22

Leadership and relationships

The CEO of SCT and the Council's Director of Children's Services (DCS) are key roles and their working relationship is critical to the effectiveness of SCT delivery. There had been stability in both roles until this year, with the Council's DCS leaving in August and a change to the SCT CEO in March. Since the DCS left the Council in August, an officer is acting up in the role of DCS, supported by an external interim. A new, permanent DCS is due to start in November 2021. The working relationship of the CEO of SCT and the Council's new permanent DCS will be critical going forward

This is particularly the case as the Council did not transfer all children's services to SCT, retaining direct provision of services such as education, SEND transport and children's centres. The Council is also responsible for other services such as housing and has a key role in supporting SCT in relation to early intervention and prevention, and in reducing demand for children's social care. This includes how the Council and SCT work with children and families and other local agencies such as the police. We note that the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership has not yet agreed an early help plan and associated performance framework. The role of the DCS will be critical in collaborating with partner organisations to reach agreement on this plan.

SCT workforce

There have been a number of changes to SCT senior management including the Finance Director role and a restructure which reduced the number of Directors from three to two. However, the key workforce issue for SCT relates to operational roles with significant recruitment and retention challenges with social workers. SCT has invested in a recruitment campaign called 12 reasons to work in Sandwell but this has not been effective in resolving recruitment and retention issues, which we note is an issue for the West Midlands and children's social care nationally. The workforce are also initiative weary, which reflects the actions resulting from repeated Ofsted reviews.

Nonetheless, the use of agency staff to cover vacant roles, and staff sickness levels, pose a significant risk to the continuity and quality of service delivery, along with increasing costs for the Trust, which in turn is likely to impact on Council budgets.

Risk management

The Council has SCT on its strategic risk register, and updates on this are provided to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. SCT is also included in the Children's Services departmental risk register.

SCT have adopted a risk management framework and maintain a risk register which is reviewed quarterly and is reported to the Trust's Audit Committee. SCT management report to OPB on key risks facing the trust such as those relating to financial, performance and quality risks. SCT management discuss key risks with Council management outside the monthly OPB meetings. However, SCT does not share its full risk register with the Council.

KLOE A1: Sandwell Children's Trust (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider actions undertaken by the Council to secure improvement in children's social care outcomes.

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Outcomes for children

Ofsted inspections were suspended during COVID-19. The most recent focused visit was undertaken by Ofsted in March 2021 which was reported in May 2021, which noted:

- Both the Council and SCT have risen to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The impact of the third lockdown and rising COVID-19 rates have had a significant impact on staffing, with increased staff turnover and sickness.
- The Trust continues to have serious weaknesses in some areas identified in previous inspections. Decisions that help to secure the living arrangements of children on a long-term basis are not timely, and placements are not always well matched. There is a lack of effective oversight and challenge to poor practice from team managers and independent reviewing officers. Support services to meet the mental health needs of care leavers are still not routinely in place.
- In some practice areas, not all managers have fully understood the full breadth of the issues, and this has impacted on the progress and pace of improvement. Many of the identified areas of weakness are longstanding and pre-date the pandemic. An understanding of practice deficits has not led to timely improvements and solutions for many children. The leadership team has plans in place to drive the required changes but has been slow to implement these successfully, and there is little evidence of impact.

During our review, in August 2021, Ofsted reviewed the fostering service which was rated Good. This was the first Good rating received by SCT and indicates positive progress is being made in relation to this service area. It also provides SCT with an opportunity of moving the narrative on its improvement trajectory, for example in relation to recruitment and retention issues.

Conclusion and recommendations

Whilst the recent Ofsted rating of fostering services demonstrates some positive progress, it is clear from the March 2021 Ofsted focus visit that some areas of significant improvement are still required. Staff turnover and quality of practice remain a risk to safeguarding children and the quality of their outcomes.

It is positive that Ofsted have reported the success of SCT and the Council's response to COVID-19, and we note that demand led pressures and recruitment and retention challenges are not unique to Sandwell.

However, during its time of operation SCT has struggled to move away from day-to-day firefighting and has not been able to invest in early intervention and prevention, or improve and transform to the extent required by the Council. Looked after children numbers and social worker caseloads, whilst both are reducing, remain high.

The statutory responsibility for children's social care sits with the Council via the role of the DCS. As such there is joint accountability for the successful delivery of services and outcomes for children. Relationships between the Council and SCT have on occasion been an "us and them" culture with a lack of collaborative approach and joint accountability.

The Council's senior leadership – both officer and member – should prioritise corporate effort and develop a clear strategy for working with SCT to ensure it remains on its improvement trajectory. This should include:

- **working with SCT to progress a multi-agency early intervention and prevention strategy.**
- **ensuring SCT has an appropriately resourced and skilled placements team in place to effectively manage the care market.**
- **conducting a review of KPIs to ensure they are effective for current circumstances.**
- **undertaking financial benchmarking in relation to children's social care, and take a realistic and pragmatic view on the level of funding required.**
- **reviewing the governance roles of officers and members in relation to SCT so that they are clear on their responsibilities, avoid duplication, ensure effective communication and that there is a collective understanding of the performance of SCT and how risks and issues are being managed.**

KLOE A2: Sandwell Leisure Trust

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's management of the contract with SLT and to understand the impact of recent industrial action.

Background

Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) was formed by the Council in 2004 due to underperformance of the in-house leisure service. SLT was contracted via a Management and Funding Agreement (MFA) for a 30-year period: 2004 to 2034, and SLT is currently in the 18th contract year (1 April 2021 – 30 March 2022). SLT manage all Council leisure facilities apart from one site, for which the Council has contracted with Places Leisure.

Funding for SLT was agreed for the first five years of the contract, which was extended in 2009 and 2011. Thereafter the annual management fee paid to SLT has been based on the approval of a rolling three-year business plan. The Council remains responsible for maintaining and investing in the leisure assets managed by SLT.

When SLT was created Council staff transferred to the Trust under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE). A deed of variation was agreed in 2013 which permitted SLT to implement a separate single status agreement and move their staff from council terms and conditions of employment.

A deed of variation was agreed in 2016 that in the event of a new leisure facility being built in Smethwick to replace existing Smethwick facilities, SLT would be the operator. To that end SLT have been working with the Council as the assumed operator of the forthcoming Sandwell Aquatics Centre, which is being constructed as a venue for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

OUR FINDINGS

Contract management

The MFA requires SLT to provide quarterly monitoring reports to the Council which is followed by a contract review meeting. The MFA sets out the KPIs for monitoring the contract. There have been attempts by the Council to update the KPIs during the delivery of the contract, for example to include outcomes such as contribution to the health outcomes in the borough, which has largely been unsuccessful. The key performance indicators are based on throughputs, such as the total number of visits, with a target to increase visits by 1% each year of the contract.

The contract with SLT stipulates an authorised officer from the Council should manage the contract and make decisions relating to the delivery of the contract. The long-standing officer in this role was seconded in January 2018 and a more junior officer was seconded to the authorised officer role. This has led to confusion within the Council and with SLT as to who is in the authorised officer role, due to more senior officers supporting the officer in the authorised role. This in turn has impacted on the agility of decision making by the Council and its effective working relationship with SLT.

SLT Business Plan

The MFA sets out that SLT should have at any one time a business plan agreed for a three-year period, which the Council agrees on a rolling annual basis. The business plan for 2021/22 has been agreed, but the Council has not yet agreed the business plan covering 2022/23 to 2023/24, which should have been approved by end of March 2021.

If the Council and SLT fail to agree a business plan the contract resolution approach is instigated. The Council is currently seeking external legal advice to clarify the resolution process. If resolution can't be reached either party can terminate the contract.

The current impasse has resulted from the Council wanting, over a number of years, to significantly reduce the management fee for the contract, in the context of ongoing funding reductions to the Council, and the Trust demonstrating progress towards achieving financial sustainability and less reliance on Council funding. The Council and SLT have not been able to agree the level of funding for 2022/23 and 2023/24.

As part of this process the Council has sought various clarifications on the draft business plan submitted by SLT and has engaged, via Sport England, a consultant to review the Trust's financial position. A feature of recent business plan discussions has been the Council seeking details and clarifications from SLT relating to its financial position, such as the Trust's financial and management accounts, and the Trust's approach membership data and marketing plans. Both the Council and SLT feel there have been delays in the responsiveness from the other party during this period.

On 2 August 2021 SLT sent the Council an early warning letter highlighting financial concerns and a £750k worse than expected financial position for 2021/22 and 2022/23. SLT suggested that the impact of any changes were likely to increase the management fee requested for 2021/22.

The Council management met SLT management on 11 August 2021 and the Council confirmed areas of outstanding information and clarification. The Trust advised that their audited 2020/21 accounts would be presented to the SLT Board on 14 September 2021, and thereafter be shared with the Council. SLT management also advised that by reprofiling their budgets the £750k was no longer being sought.

At the time of concluding this review the business plan and funding agreement for 2022/23 and 2023/24 had not been approved. Typically, the process for negotiating the 2024/25 business plan would have recently started, to conclude by the end of March 2022.

KLOE A2: Sandwell Leisure Trust (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's management of the contract with SLT and to understand the impact of recent industrial action.

Industrial relations

SLT, in line with the 2013 deed of variation with the Council, went through a process of withdrawal from the National Joint Council (NJC) staff pay and conditions, which are those used by the Council, and which had transferred with staff when they TUPEd to SLT from the Council in 2014.

This decision was taken in November 2020, with staff needing to agree to the new terms and conditions. Council management have reported they felt they were not involved in this decision, whilst SLT management have advised the decision was taken to reduce costs, an issue which formed part of business plan negotiations.

SLT management negotiated with trade unions and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) were brought in by SLT to help mediate. The trade unions sought industrial action to reverse the decision, which has led to two episodes of strike action during 2021.

GMB have ceased industrial action, whilst Unison have continued. 16 Unison members have taken strike action out of a total SLT workforce of over 400, and the most recent Unison ballot for strike action was due to conclude on 13 October 2021.

We understand that all SLT staff have now agreed to the new terms and conditions, which SLT management have confirmed will not be reviewed until April 2022.

The strike action has seen one leisure facility close on one occasion, with some services impacted at other leisure facilities.

Conclusion and recommendation

The Council has sought over many years, via the annual business planning and funding agreement process, for SLT to become more commercially innovative in its operations, and to reduce its reliance on Council funding. This has not been successful, and relationships between the Council and SLT have now broken down, reflected in the significant delays in approving the 2022/23 to 2023/34 business plan and associated funding agreement.

The ultimate responsibility for the operation of leisure services sits with the Council as the commissioner of SLT and, as with SCT, the Council has at times appeared to lose sight of this joint responsibility and an "us and them" culture has been in evidence.

At the time of finalising our report the Council has triggered the contract escalation procedure and written to SLT management for the Leader of the Council and the CEO of SLT to meet and agree a definitive timescale for resolution.

The Senior Leadership - both officer and member - must take ownership of this issue, prioritise corporate effort and take urgent steps to either resolve the current position with SLT or consider the options for alternative provision should either party decide to terminate the current contract, to ensure the continuity of future leisure service provision and associated reputational impacts.



KLOE A3: Providence Place

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the potential loss to the Council arising from the proposed sale of Providence Place.

Background

In 2007 the Council signed a 15-year Strategic Partnership Agreement with BT for the provision of various support services. As part of this arrangement BT agreed a pre-let from a company called Stofords, the long-leaseholders of 1 Providence Place (Providence Place) for a term of 15 years at a rent of £1.2m per annum. Following the demise of this Strategic Partner Agreement the Council decided to take an assignment of this lease, thereby becoming tenants and inheriting the lease obligations. Simultaneously the Council sub-let part ground, first and fourth floors to BT on flexible terms (with breaks) at a rent starting at £605k per annum (with uplifts).

In July 2014, Cabinet subsequently approved the purchase of the long leasehold interest in Providence Place at a cost of £23.558m. This purchase price was supported by an open-market valuation by DTZ of the long leasehold interest. The valuation reflected the guaranteed income stream.

In June 2019, the Department for Education (DfE) approved the provision of a new, 750 place secondary free school in West Bromwich, to be delivered in partnership with Shireland Academy and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO). It was proposed that the Council sell the freehold interest of Providence Place with vacant possession, along with a development plot to the DfE. DfE would invest up to £17m in converting the building into a school, with a provisional completion date of September 2023. The Council considered that the building of the Academy and the basing of the CBSO in the area would have significant economic and cultural benefits.

The Council undertook an assessment of its property needs, reviewing its office estate and space requirement for office workers. It was decided that the Council no longer required the capacity offered by Providence Place and on 22 July 2020, the Cabinet approved that Providence Place was surplus to the Council's office accommodation requirements.

A receipt of £8.46m was generated from the sale of Providence Place to DfE, which was significantly below the acquisition price of £23.558m in 2014. This is because the building is being sold with vacant possession, without the benefit of a secure income stream. The sale price is based on a valuation report by Lambert Smith Hampton dated 17th March 2020. It is possible that the Council could have achieved the acquisition price if it had sold with a long-term tenant. The Council is still committed to making the loan and interest payments related to the initial purchase. The total remaining loan and interest (for the period 2021 to 2055) are £31.69m.

As part of our 2019/20 financial statements audit we considered the actions taken by the Council in both 2014 and 2020. When viewed separately the actions do not appear unreasonable. The 2014 decision to purchase the asset with a long leasehold interest was based on external valuations at market value. Similarly, the sale to DfE was at the current market value based on there being no long leasehold in place.

However, when viewed together it is clear that the Council made a significant loss on the basis of these decisions. We estimated that the direct loss against the 2014 purchase price of Providence Place was c. £15m (Purchase price £23m, sale price £8.46m). We also noted that future loan and interest payments of £31m need to be made (against which only the capital receipt arising from the sale of £8.46m can be set). In effect the total loss to the Council is c£22.5m. This is a significant loss. We note that the Council has received rents from BT totalling £5.386m and it has also had beneficial occupation of part ground, second and third floors since 2014. However, it would also have incurred maintenance and running costs for the building.

Our 2019/20 audit findings report (AFR) considered the reasons for such a significant loss. Whilst difficult to determine we considered that:

- greater challenge should have been applied to the original purchase price, especially as the price paid appears to reflect a long leasehold period but break clauses existed in the leases.
- the original purchase was intended to support the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy. It was envisaged that by 2017, the Council's workforce would reduce by 20-30% and the premises could then be used to accommodate more staff from less efficient buildings, thereby rationalising the use of council assets. The later change in the estates strategy with Providence Place being considered to be surplus has significantly undermined the original basis on which it was purchased.

We noted that, as Providence Place was being sold at its current market value and the decision to purchase it was made in 2014 we do not consider that the sale impacts on our 2019/20 VfM conclusion. However, due to the significance of the loss we have raised this matter with the Chief Executive to ensure that future purchases or sales of land and property are clearly aligned with a long-term estate strategy. Our AFR recommended that management should ensure that all purchases and sales of assets are clearly aligned with the Council's accommodation strategy.

KLOE A3: Providence Place (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the potential loss to the Council arising from the proposed sale of Providence Place.

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KLOE FINDINGS

The purchase and disposal of Providence Place went through the Council's governance and decision-making processes in place at these times, drawing on external property consultants and valuations advice.

Following the approach by DfE, and the Council determining there was no longer a use for Providence Place for office accommodation, an options appraisal was undertaken which was reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny. This options appraisal considered options in relation to Providence Place such as disposing of the site on the open market, retaining and leasing the property, and the Council funding the school instead of DfE.

The Council has a statutory duty to provide appropriate levels of school places, but the options appraisal did not consider alternative options for the location of the Academy outside of West Bromwich. Similarly, the options appraisal also did not represent a formal cost-benefit-analysis between alternate sites outside of West Bromwich. We note that other sites suggested by the DfE within West Bromwich would have impacted the highway network and / or led to financial loss by the Council.

We note that if an alternative site was approved, the Council could have continued to utilise the building or alternatively may have been able to lease the building on a long-term basis thereby reducing the loss incurred.

The Council's post pandemic workplace vision and strategy supported the Council's decision that it no longer had a use for Providence Place for office accommodation. Providence Place would then become solely a commercial property investment, and it is not clear how the decision taken to dispose of Providence Place formed part of the Council's property strategy including an asset disposal strategy.

British Telecom Lease

The Council agreed to dispose of Providence Place in August 2020 and contracts were exchanged with DfE provided that the Council agreed to the surrender of BT's lease by 30 June 2021 in order to vacate the building. BT held the lease until 2026 and had no contractual obligation to move. On 6 June 2021 Cabinet agreed to the terms of BT surrendering their lease at Providence Place.

These terms included the Council having no obligation to provide BT with alternative accommodation, the Council would pay BT a surrender premium equivalent to one year's rent of £446.4k + VAT, BT would be waived liability for dilapidation and decommissioning works and the Council would be liable for BT's legal costs for surrender. Contracts would be exchanged by the end of June 2021 and BT's surrender date be 31 December 2021 to satisfy the Council's obligations with DfE. The costs to the Council would be funded via a sinking fund for Providence Place to cover unforeseen costs.

Conclusions and recommendations

As stated as part of our 2019/20 financial statements audit we considered the action taken by the Council in both 2014 and 2020. Viewed separately the actions do not appear unreasonable. The 2014 decision to purchase the asset with a long leasehold interest was based on external valuations at market value. Similarly, the sale to DfE was at the current market value based on there being no long leasehold in place. However, when viewed together it is clear that the Council made a significant loss on the basis of these decisions.

Property transactions such as those relating to Providence Place are complex. **Where the Council considers similar transactions in future, those charged with making decisions must satisfy themselves that they fully understand the detail of the options being proposed. Council officers and their advisors have a responsibility to ensure that members making decisions do so having fully understood these complexities and risks.**

The Council should ensure that all future property or land acquisitions and disposals are clearly aligned with relevant Council property related strategies.

KLOE A4: SEND Transport

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the circumstances relating to the recent procurement of SEND Transport and the Council's current approach to concluding the procurement.

Background

The Council's Special Education Needs and Disabilities Passenger Transport (SEND Transport) contract expired at the end of August 2021. Currently 19 operators deliver 122 contracts which are in place to meet the Council's statutory duty under Section 508B and Schedule 35B of the Education Act 1996, whereby local authorities are under a statutory duty to provide free school transport to eligible children.

The Council's budget for the provision of SEND Transport was significantly under pressure with a forecast spend of £6.1m in 2020/21 against a budget of £2.5m. This was caused by a combination of factors, in particular increasing demand.

The Council undertook a procurement exercise, pursuant to its Procurement and Contract Procurement Procedure Rules in relation to a new SEND Transport Contract for 2021-25 (the new Contract) to award a new contract – at a potential total cost of £22m over four years. The Council sought to achieve greater economies of scale and value for money alongside addressing new and emerging issues within the sector including the risk of modern-day slavery, and improving the overall delivery of the service.

In August 2020, the Council's Cabinet approved the establishing of a new Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) for the new Contract. A DPS was used for the existing SEND Transport contract. Following stage one of the new DPS, a closed bidder tender process was undertaken as stage 2 in March and April 2021. An evaluation of the proposals took place and a Cabinet Report was prepared setting out the conclusion of the evaluation, and the recommended awarding passenger transport related contracts via the new DPS effective as from 1 September 2021.

The Council's Cabinet, at its meeting on 16 June 2021, considered the award of four lots as the outcome of the procurement, which would have provided a £300k saving on the previous contract as well as improving service quality. The Cabinet deferred the matter following various concerns being raised over the process which had been raised following the publication of Cabinet papers prior to the meeting taking place.

An internal audit fact finding exercise regarding the proposed award of the SEND Transport Contracts for 2021-25 was then undertaken.

The Council took external legal advice on the options available, and an emergency Cabinet meeting took place on 21 July 2021 which agreed to continue to use the existing contracts with providers for the continued provision of SEND transport until 23rd February 2022, in order that the Council meets its statutory duties.

KEY FINDINGS

Internal Audit review

Internal Audit undertook a review, reporting in June 2021, which examined the background to and decision making relating to the 2021-25 contracts, compliance with the Council's procurement and contract rules, the approach adopted to supplier inclusion to DPS and the associated tender, how the outcome of the tender evaluation was reported to Members, and considered if any inappropriate or fraudulent activity had taken place. This report noted:

- Some of the concerns raised related to the identity of the owner of the two companies initially selected as the successful bidders, and the fact he was a former employee of the Council and the son of a former Deputy Leader, who was investigated into a series of land sales involving the Council (known as the Wragge report). As neither individual had any known current role or association with the Council they did not form part of the scope of the review.
- Many of the concerns were raised by current suppliers of this service to the Council that have not been successful in the latest procurement exercise, so there would be an element of potential disappointment and disgruntlement behind parts of them. However, each of the concerns were dealt with objectively, and in certain cases they were found not to be fully accurate in their interpretation. For example, a number of officers from both procurement and the service area were involved in the assessment process.

The internal audit report concluded:

- The procurement was undertaken with the correct intentions.
- Some concerns and issues raised have an element of substance.
- A number of issues regarding the quality of certain information provided by bidders in support of their applications
- A number of key Council processes were not followed. In particular the need for officers involved in the exercise to formally declare if they have any potential conflict of interests, the completion of a Starting a Procurement form which captures key information from the outset, and to respond to bidder's applications within agreed timescales. However, while internal procedures within service areas had not always been followed, none of these were in themselves a direct breach of the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules.

KLOE A4: SEND Transport (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the circumstances relating to the recent procurement of SEND Transport and the Council's current approach to concluding the procurement.

KEY FINDINGS (cont'd)

- Sufficient documented consideration does not appear to have been given to both financial modelling and the risks, particularly around resilience, associated with the potential placing of all four large contracts with just two companies, who in themselves come under the ownership of one individual.
- None of the officers interviewed indicated that they had been placed under any pressure by any other officer or elected member as part of the procurement exercise.
- While the significant reduction in lots would see a subsequent reduction in the number of companies the Council would be contracting with, from the evidence available to them, Internal Audit found nothing to suggest that the reduction of competition was undertaken with the sole aim of benefitting two particular companies. Similarly, they came across no evidence to suggest that any inappropriate or fraudulent activity had taken place.

The Internal Audit report concluded that the issues identified in the review in all likelihood will necessitate a need to revisit the procurement exercise. In particular the way in which use was made of the DPS including restricting the number of lots available, how initial decision making was considered, agreed and recorded, and how information and the lack of detail thereof, was relayed back to the Cabinet in order for them, and later Scrutiny, to make an informed decision, on what is in effect a £20m contract award.

Other reviews

The Council's Corporate and Budget Scrutiny Board and the Children's Services and Education Board have agreed to jointly examine existing and proposed arrangements for SEND transport provision. The Council's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Chair is undertaking a fact-finding exercise into the original procurement exercise. Both activities had not been concluded during the course of our review.

The Council sought to commission an independent review of the original procurement. This review planned to assess the compliance and probity of the original procurement, including re-running the evaluation stage. This did not proceed due there being only one bidder, and the cost being deemed not best value.

Financial management

Since 2018 the overall cost of providing travel assistance including parent mileage, travel passes and more recently the offer of personal travel budgets has increased by 45% from £3m in 2018/19 to a projected cost of £6.4m for 2021/22. Over the same period SEND pupils requiring travel assistance has increased from 680 to 850 with the average cost per pupil increasing from £5.1k pa to £7.6k pa. This situation is not unique to the Council.

The pressure on the SEND Transport budget has been managed over recent years by using carried forward underspends in the Education Directorate budget or using one off contributions from reserves. These were fully utilised by the end of March 2021 and the Council agreed additional funding for 2021/22 with the budget increased to £5.6m. A projected budget pressure of £800k remains, which excludes the impact of continuing with the existing DPS framework from September 2021 to February 2022.

The Council's approach to managing the overspends prior to 2021/22 mean that the base budget for SEND Transport did not reflect the true cost of providing the service. This led to some of the criticisms in relation to the value of the planned procurement award.

The extension of the original DPS contract by six months has seen an increase in forecast costs for the service

Delegation and communication

Cabinet approved the procurement approach at its meeting in August 2020, delegating the detailed design, including lot structure, to the Travel Assistance Service team, working with the procurement and legal teams, with the procurement team managing the overall procurement process

A key change to the existing DPS framework, which focused on costs, was to introduce a greater focus on quality in the new DPS framework, in relation to children's safeguarding, and employment practices.

KLOE A4: SEND Transport (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the circumstances relating to the recent procurement of SEND Transport and the Council's current approach to concluding the procurement.

Delegation and communication (cont'd)

Whilst the teams involved in developing the new contract design were aware of the planned service quality benefits, such as improved safety standards, reliability and quality of the service, more could have been done to ensure key decision makers were aware of the reasons for the change and the planned benefits when the new procurement approach was discussed and agreed in August 2020, and prior to the planned approval in June 2021, noting the significant changes to members of the Cabinet between these two dates.

A comparison between providers used on the current contract with those who were being proposed to be awarded contracts via the new DBS framework may have also helped managed a more effective contract award discussion.

The publication of the proposed award

The Council chose to include the recommendations for the award of the new DPS contracts on the public part of the agenda papers for the Cabinet meeting on 16 June 2021, including the results of the evaluation. This was the direct cause of challenges being made to members of Cabinet prior to the meeting taking place. It is unusual for such potentially commercially sensitive information being made public in advance of a decision being made on the award of a major contract.

The outcome of the June Cabinet meeting has significantly impacted on the Council's reputation, including the matter being raised in Parliament, and has further impacted on the relationship between officers and members including levels of trust. The pausing of the procurement has also increased the level of expenditure on the services placing further pressure on the Council's budget, and creates risks for the Council such as accusations of suppliers canvassing members during the intervening period.

Conclusion of the procurement

The procurement of the contract was initially paused, pending the outcome of the various reviews being undertaken. However, in order to not have to further extend the current DPS contract, work has been undertaken, including obtaining external legal advice, to review the structuring of the lots, and to consider whether the new DPS framework will be used. A report is planned to be presented to Cabinet on 3 November 2021 to agree how to proceed.

Conclusions and recommendations

The focus of service quality in the new DPS framework represents important and positive progress for the Council in managing a major contract of this type. However, weaknesses have been identified by Internal Audit in some aspects of the procurement approach, although these did not represent a breach of the Council's Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules.

The manner of the pausing of the procurement has damaged the Council's reputation, put further strain on officer and member relationships, and created uncertainty and risks over how the conclusion of the procurement will be viewed and opened the Council up to potential legal challenges.

The Council already uses a DPS for commissioning travel assistance services, so has familiarity with the approach, as do providers. Whilst not the only procurement option, DPS is considered an appropriate procurement approach for a public sector organisation procuring services of this type. Operators can bid to be appointed to lots on the framework, and if unsuccessful continue to try do so by meeting the Council's service standards. When the Council requires a service, operators on the DPS framework are asked to tender for the work.

This was a major and complex procurement. An Invitation to Tender was advertised on 12 March 2021, with a closing date of 2 April 2021, for the contract to go live on 1 September 2021. This time frame was inadequate for such a large and complex contract.

The Council's senior leadership – both officers and members – must place priority on agreeing the outcome of the SEND Transport procurement exercise to ensure a further contract extension is not required. This should include:

- **Not losing the significant progress made on the contract specification's focus on service quality.**
- **Greater support, involvement, dialogue and oversight with the officer teams with responsibility for progressing the procurement.**
- **Ensuring the contract provides the Council with effective management and oversight of the personal transport market.**

KLOE A4: SEND Transport (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the circumstances relating to the recent procurement of SEND Transport and the Council's current approach to concluding the procurement.

Recommendations (cont'd)

From the conclusion of the SEND Transport procurement and for all future major procurements, the Council should ensure that:

- **Record keeping and declarations of interest are undertaken in line with Council policies and procedures.**
- **Decision making does not create real or perceived risks in relation to inappropriate procurement decisions.**
- **Procurement timescales provide adequate time for both suppliers to submit high quality bids, and the Council to undertake appropriate evaluation, scrutiny and decision making. This timescale should include appropriate time in advance of the procurement for the council to undertake the necessary strategic thinking and planning required, and mitigate the risk of not making an award in the planned timescale**



KLOE A5: Sandwell Land and Property

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the background to the establishment of the company, actions undertaken by the Council to ensure the company complies with legislation, and delays to winding down the company.

Background

Sandwell Land and Property (SLaP) was incorporated on 14 January 2011 as a limited company. SLaP was established by the Council as a vehicle for protecting the freehold of the Council's schools and related sites. SLaP is a non trading company and has no employees.

The Council is the sole shareholder of the company. SLaP is the freeholder of 99 education assets and leases them to the Council for a nominal sum of £1 per year in the form of ground rent, with the Council responsible for the maintenance of the assets as a condition of the lease.

Our 2019/20 Audit Findings Report noted that we have had extensive discussions with officers around the accounting for SLaP property and around the history and purpose of the company.

We agreed with management's view that the company should be wound up as soon as possible and that Council representatives should discuss with the Directors of the company the ongoing purpose of the company and whether it could continue in its current form. We requested additional assurances around the security of schools' assets should the company be wound up before a decision is made on the future of the company, with the company expected to be wound up during 2021/22.

KEY FINDINGS

Reason for creating the company

At the time of establishing SLaP, the Council understood that new legislation relating to academy schools created a risk that schools converting to academy status could take over the freehold of the Council's education assets. On taking external legal advice after establishing SLaP it was confirmed the freehold of education assets would not pass to academies.

Given the cost and additional complexity of managing an arm's length company arrangement, it is unclear why the Council has not sought to take education assets back in house sooner.

KEY FINDINGS

Compliance with legislation

The company and its Directors are governed by Company Acts law. There is evidence that the Directors of the company were not familiar with their legal responsibilities in relation to proper record keeping and failing to meet statutory deadlines for example submitting company accounts.

A number of Council members and officers have been appointed to company Director roles during the period of the company's operation, with one Director in place at the time of this review.

SLaP has never formally appointed a company secretary. A former Council Chief Executive, when a Director of the company, undertook the company secretary role informally. When they left their Director role in January 2019 it has been unclear who has subsequently delivered this role.

The administration of the company's business has been undertaken by officers of the Council, such as legal and finance, supporting members in company director roles, including an understanding of their company roles and obligations. We have not been able to confirm if formal guidance and training has ever been provided to company Directors. This has created a risk that Directors have not fully understood their legal responsibilities, including the distinction between the Council as shareholder and leaseholder, and SLaP as freeholder of the education assets.

The company was created without secretary of state consent, the Council has subsequently sought counsel advice that broadly indicated that if no government challenge had arisen, it was not likely to occur.

The company's accounts have been qualified in relation to asset valuations and ownership. We note that shares in the company were not issued in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Council's governance arrangements

SLaP is a risk on the Education Service risk register, but has not had a profile with the Council's senior leadership, and nor has there been a senior individual, since the former Chief Executive left the Council, with effective understanding and organisational oversight of the company.

KLOE A5: Sandwell Land and Property (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the background to the establishment of the company, actions undertaken by the Council to ensure the company complies with legislation, and delays to winding down the company.

Current position

The Council has appointed external legal advisors to advise on the winding up of the company. The legal advisors are advising both the Council as shareholder and leaseholder, and the company in the form of the company director.

In October 2021 the Cabinet acting as shareholder of the company approved instruction to the SLaP director to pursue voluntary liquidation. An insolvency practitioner has been engaged to administer the winding up of the company. The insolvency practitioner has appointed a tax advisor to advise on any tax implications and has advised the Council that due to the nature of the company and the company's assets, they are able to transfer the assets to the Council on the basis of their indemnity as liquidator, ensuring they are not responsible for any liabilities identified during the winding up process.

The Council's legal team is reviewing the legal title and beneficial interests of each asset to ensure the Council will have legal title when transferred from SLaP, and whether beneficial interests sit with the Council or, for example if this should be transferred to another body such a governing body of a school. Should such examples be identified, the beneficial interests should have been transferred prior to the asset being transferred to SLaP.

The winding up process had not concluded at the time of our review.

Conclusions and recommendation

The Council has incurred additional costs to set up, administer and wind up SLaP when the purpose of establishing the company proved to be unnecessary.

There has been significant weaknesses in the understanding of roles and responsibilities, between those acting on behalf of the Council and those acting on behalf of the company. There has been a lack of consistent senior leadership oversight of the company, highlighted by delays in progressing its winding up. There are a number of instances where the relevant legislation has not been followed, such as the issue of shares.

The Council should ensure that when considering establishing an arm's length company in the future there is a clear purpose for doing so and that those officers / members of the Council in company director roles are clear of their role and responsibilities in relation to that company.

Where arms length companies already exist the Council should gain assurances that company directors fully understand their company roles and responsibilities, that the company administration is properly resourced and appropriate training is provided to company directors. The purpose of the company should be revisited on a regular basis to determine whether the company continues to be of benefit to the Council.



KLOE A6: MADE Festival

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the governance arrangements and decision making relating to the Council hosting this festival.

Background

The Council was approached by the organisers of the MADE music festival, for the potential to use Sandwell Valley, a Council owned site, as the venue for the festival, to be held in August 2020. MADE festival was established in 2014 with aims of celebrating West Midlands contemporary music, creative arts and street food.

The Council agreed to host the event, recognising its alignment to the Council's ambition to strengthen Sandwell Valley's identity as a 'destination gateway' into the Sandwell / West Midlands region, and as part of the wider proposals for establishing Sandwell Valley as future major festival site. The event would generate income for the Council of £18,000-£20,000 for hosting the festival.

Due to the subsequent outbreak of COVID-19 the festival was postponed in 2020, to take place on 31 July and 1 August 2021. The ongoing pandemic during 2021 and uncertainty regarding the timing of changes to government guidelines led to a late decision not to allow the festival to take place on the rescheduled dates. This led to a breakdown in relationship with the festival promoter, who considered legal action against the Council, a situation which was resolved with the festival ultimately taking place on 18 and 19 September 2021.

KEY FINDINGS

The original decision to host the festival was made by the then Leader of the Council on 15 January 2020. The Council's events team managed the planning for the event, including liaising with other relevant statutory bodies such as the police, via the Council's Statutory Advisory Group (SAG). SAG also had a role to ensure the Council's statutory responsibilities were met in relation to issues such as safety, traffic management and licencing permissions.

In the months and weeks prior to the rescheduled 2021 event taking place SAG received updates on all events due to take place in the borough, those hosted by the Council and those hosted by other bodies. During this period there remained uncertainty over the timing and nature of the government's four stage road map for easing COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, and because of this there were delays in formally approving that the MADE festival could take place as planned, with government delaying until 19 July when all legal limits on social contact in England would be removed.

The Council's Strategic Incident Management Team (SIMT) which was set up to consider various COVID-19 related activities, considered the viability of the rescheduled 2021 event. This included infection rates and vaccine take up in the borough, and the risks associated with the high level of visitor numbers expected to attend the event. SIMT comprised the majority of Directors on the Council's Leadership Team and relevant Heads of Service.

SIMT raised concerns about the viability of holding the event on 31 July and 1 August which were shared with event organisers and promoter at a meeting on 23 June 2021.

The event promoter advised the Council that should restrictions lift on 19 July 2021 and the event was not permitted to go ahead it would have serious consequences on the future sustainability of the event.

On 30 June at a further meeting the Council advised the organisers that the Council was not able to grant permission for the event to proceed as scheduled, until the Council had seen and interpreted the revised government regulations and guidance after 19 July 2021 and assess the COVID-19 safety of the event. The Council advised the organisers that these timescales meant it would be unwise for them to advance their current plans and a later date should be considered for the event.

The Council received a COVID-19 risk assessment from the organisers on 6 July which was reviewed by the Director of Public Health and discussed with the portfolio holder for Strong and Resilient Communities. Both raised concerns about holding the event on the planned days. The organisers requested the opportunity to submit a revised proposal for the event to take place on 18 and 19 September 2021.

On 13 July the Council became aware that tickets were being advertised by the promoter for the event on the planned event days and queried with the organisers why the event was being promoted. The Council then received a letter from the promoter's solicitors seeking Council justification for the decision to postpone, believing the Council had approved the event booking. The Council sought counsel advice, as the event booking form had a disclaimer in relation to COVID-19 and, in its view, the organisers had not provided all relevant documentation, for example, in relation to road closures.

The organisers also undertook negotiations with an alternative site outside of the borough which proved unsuccessful. The promoter advised the Council that the financial impact of not holding the event as planned could result in bankruptcy and he would consider taking legal action against the Council seeking recovery of costs.

The Council met the organisers on 22 July to discuss alternate September dates and the promoter announced the postponement of the event the following day.

KLOE A6: MADE Festival (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the governance arrangements and decision making relating to the Council hosting this festival.

KEY FINDINGS (cont'd)

SA met on 26 July to consider the alternate September dates and confirmed with the organisers on 29 July approval for the new dates, subject to satisfactory finalisation of all relevant plans and compliance with terms and conditions of booking.

The event took place on 18 and 19 September 2021.

Conclusions and recommendations

There was uncertainty on the timing and detail of government regulations relating to the staged removal of lockdown restrictions being faced by all organisations and individuals during this period. However, the Council demonstrated a lack of decisiveness and clarity of decision making with the organisers of the event, with the governance around this decision making unclear.

The strategic reason for originally making the decision to host what was planned to be an annual event was its alignment to the Council's ambition to strengthen Sandwell Valley's identity as a 'destination gateway' into the Sandwell / West Midlands region, and as part of the wider proposals for establishing Sandwell Valley as future major festival site. We note that the Council's relationship with the organisers has been negatively impacted by how the decision making process was managed. There is a risk that the organisers may not seek the borough as a venue for future events.

As part of the planned review of the scheme of delegation the Council should ensure that there is clarity of decision making on hosting events, and that the governance arrangements relating to such decisions are effective and clearly communicated.



KLOE A7: Waste service

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the performance of the waste service, the Council's management of the contract with Serco, and understand the impact of recent industrial relations issues.

Background

The Council chose to outsource its waste and recycling service and in November 2010, following a procurement exercise, the Council confirmed the appointment of a consortium led by Serco to deliver a 25 year, £650m integrated waste and recycling services contract. Council staff were transferred to Serco under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE).

Serco are responsible for the collection of household food and garden waste and recycling, street cleansing, the associated vehicle fleet, and the household recycling centre (HRC).

During the course of COVID-19 the Council has become increasingly concerned about the performance of a number of aspects relating to the delivery of the contract.

Service delivery has also been impacted by industrial action from some of the Serco workforce.

KEY FINDINGS

Contract management

The contract includes 34 Key Output Targets (KOTs) which are the basis for contract performance management. The contract is self-monitoring and Serco provide the Council with monthly performance data. Penalty points are accrued for failure to meet KOTs and these are reviewed each month by the Council, with financial penalties based on penalty points accrued each month. Failure to regularly meet KOTs over a twelve-month period can trigger a contractual default. There have been no defaults during the contract to date.

There had been formal contract monitoring meetings every six months between the Council and Serco in the form of a Waste Management Board. The Council Leader and relevant portfolio holder attend these board meetings and the Board is the formal decision making body. The Board meetings were suspended as a result of the onset of COVID-19 but have been subsequently re-introduced on a three-monthly basis.

The KOT in relation to recycling rates sets out a sliding scale of annual improved rates, with 60% being the target for 2021 and the actual rate being 32%. This is calculated on the tonnage of recycling against refuse collected. Serco have failed to meet these annual targets and may incur financial penalties of up to £1.2m per year. The reasons for under achievement of the target are considered to be household behaviour and weekly collections, the latter forming part of the original contract specification. The Council has provided Serco with a letter of comfort reducing this target and reducing the annual financial penalty.

The Serco contract was the first major outsourcing of its type undertaken by the Council. There is a perception that the approach to managing the contract did not adequately change from the way these services were managed when the Council operated a direct labour organisation model. Over the past ten years of the contract there have been a limited number of contract variations and requests made for additional services were not effectively specified.

The KOTs are considered well defined, but they are generally based on annual quantity rather than frequency and service quality. The Council is intending to engage an external consultant to review the KOTs to determine whether these contract specifications can be amended.

The vehicle workshop is operated by the Council and the Council maintains the vehicles through a separate maintenance contract with Serco. The contract terms meant that Serco were to replace fleet vehicles after 8 years of the contract (five years for smaller vehicles) which did not happen. This was identified during 2018 and discussions were held between the Council and Serco on whether the Council would borrow to fund the capital expenditure. The Council took external legal advice which confirmed such an action would represent state aid. A Fleet Board was introduced in May 2021 for Serco and the Council to progress a fleet replacement programme and Serco have committed to replace 18 refuse collection vehicles with delivery due in December 2021, as well as investing in mixed domestic recycling trucks. Serco have also hired newer sweeper vehicles, pending their replacement.

Financial management

Serco submit a monthly bill in line with the contract payment mechanism.

In recent years the Council's budgets for waste management has underspent and an underspend is forecast for 2021/22. The underspend is a result of financial penalties incurred by Serco, and income the Council receives from recycle sales. The prices for the latter are dependent on market fluctuations. The underspend is used to maintain a reserve, currently £3.5m, which is used to manage fluctuations in disposal market rates and contract fees.

KLOE A7: Waste service (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the performance of the waste service, the Council's management of the contract with Serco, and understand the impact of recent industrial relations issues.

Service performance

COVID-19 impacted on service delivery – which was common across the sector – as the workforce were impacted by absences, for example due to self-isolation via shielding or because of other COVID-19 regulations, as well as social distancing measures introduced for those who were at work. Garden and food waste collection were suspended during the first lockdown and the HRC was closed. Serco is still not operating a full service in particular food waste collection.

The pandemic has impacted on both waste collection and street cleansing, with street cleansing staff backfilling waste collection roles. Vehicle reliability has also contributed to service performance.

The pandemic shone a light on working practices and performance at Serco, contributing to service performance issues. During 2021 Council management have taken action to work with Serco to ensure necessary improvements are introduced. We understand, that as a result Serco's performance management of poor performing crews has improved, which has led to suspension of some staff and others leaving. This has contributed to industrial relations issues.

In early October the 100% in-day completion of waste collection rounds was achieved for the first time in approximately 9 months.

Serco have developed a waste and recycling recovery plan, and a recovery plan for street cleansing. At the time of this review they were being appraised by Council officers and were to be approved by the Waste Management Board.

Industrial relations

Council staff were TUPE'd to Serco on the council's terms and conditions for the first ten years of the contract. Industrial relations issues arose in May 2021 when trade unions (Unite, Unison and GMB) raised issues with Serco management in relation to staff grievances, salary benchmarking, health and safety concerns and staff complaints relating to bullying.

We understand that Serco management have investigated the complaints and have concluded that the staff complaints related to management seeking to improve working practices and did not represent bullying. Serco management have also investigated staff grievances and health safety concerns and believe these to be resolved. Unite and Unison agree, but GMB believe they remain unresolved.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) are involved in arbitration with GMB. At the time of this review strike action was planned and GMB introduced a 2-month overtime ban for their members. 120 of the 300 workforce are GMB members. Serco's senior management continue to engage GMB to try to bring resolution to the dispute.

Leadership and staff continuity

There have been changes to the senior officers at the Council with the relevant Executive Director and Director leaving in the past twelve months. An interim Director has been in role since May 2021 with a permanent Director due to start in November 2021. Until the interim Director was in role there was inadequate senior officer involvement in relation to the contract at time when this was needed to manage Serco's contract performance during the pandemic. The interim Director has brought focus to the situation including engaging with senior management of Serco.

The Council's contract manager has been in role for seven years. There had been similar stability in this role at Serco until there were changes in early 2020. More generally there have been a high number of management changes at Serco over the past year including the regional manager, regional managing director, operations manager and the senior contract manager. These changes have led to a lack of continuity in relationships with the Council and impacted on effective partnership working. In August 2021 a new senior contract manager and operations manager started but both left in September. The Serco managing director has introduced a new structure responding to concerns raised by the Council, and has instigated a programme of staff engagement. Serco are also taking steps to better manage poor performing staff, which is also leading to some further staff changes.

As noted elsewhere in this report, the Council's Leadership Team has not received effective corporate monitoring information on key council service indicators, which includes the Serco contract. This has been recognised and changes are being made to address the situation.

KLOE A7: Waste service (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the performance of the waste service, the Council's management of the contract with Serco, and understand the impact of recent industrial relations issues.

Other findings

The performance issues associated with the Serco contract have seen an increase in complaints from residents, and increased enquiries to the Council's contact centre. Fly tipping has increased in the borough and the closure of, and then waiting time delays at, the household recycling centre are considered a contributory factor.

There is a need to review enforcement of public realm issues so the Council is clearer if the ownership sits with Serco or Council services such as parks, housing and grounds maintenance.

On 22 July 2021 the Council's Economy Skills Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board agreed to carry out a review of Waste Services and the Cleanliness of the Borough. The working group undertaking the review had not reported at the time of producing this report

Conclusions and recommendations

Serco have not brought the innovation and investment expected by the Council, and the culture of the workforce has impacted on Serco's ability to deliver the contract. Whilst there are issues relating to Serco management, it is only recently that Council management have taken a robust approach to managing poor contract performance, which has led to some performance improvement. Serco remains on an improvement journey.

The Council should prioritise corporate effort to ensure that the recovery plans are approved and appropriate senior management oversight is given to monitoring their effective delivery.

The Council should ensure robust contract management arrangements are in place, and review the Key Output Targets (KOTs) and work with Serco to ensure they are line with Council expectations and the data is available to allow effective monitoring of contract outcomes.

The Council should ensure that the investments specified in the contract with Serco are made, such as a new vehicle fleet.



KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to the DPH

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's governance and decision making arrangements relating to the alleged harassment of the Director of Public Health by an external blogger, and the governance arrangements relating to the introduction of a local contact tracing service and changes to shielding arrangement during Summer 2020.

Introduction

Unlike the other KLOEs, KLOE A8 has a particular focus on the governance arrangements relating to one director of the Council, and it is important to first set out the background to this director role. We note that senior and statutory officers can expect a greater degree of scrutiny than other officers, which relates to the role rather than the individual.

The Role of the Director of Public Health

The Director of Public Health (DPH) is employed solely by the Council, but is a joint appointment by the Council and the Secretary of State of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) or a representative from a relevant departmental Arm's Length Body (ALB). During the timescale covered by this review the relevant ALB was Public Health England (PHE).

The DPH is a chief statutory officer of the council, a status defined by section 2(6)(zb) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, inserted by Schedule 5 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

"Directors of Public Health in Local Government – Roles, Responsibilities and Context" was published by DHSC and PHE in January 2020 under section 73A(7) of the NHS Act 2006 and of which local authorities must have regard. This guidance document set out the role of a DPH which includes:

- Being an independent advocate for the health of the local population and provide leadership for its improvement and protection.
- Being the person who elected members and senior officers look to for expertise and advice on a range of public health issues, from outbreaks of disease and emergency preparedness through to improving local people's health and access to health services;
- Improving population health by understanding the factors that determine health and ill health, how to change behaviour and promote both health and wellbeing in ways that also reduce inequalities in health;
- Providing the public with expert, objective advice on health matters.

With their local council and statutory partners (such as NHS, police and fire bodies) the DPH needs to be able to take responsibility for the oversight of their council's public health services, with professional responsibility and accountability for their effectiveness, availability and value for money.

The DPH at Sandwell, as has been the case for DPHs in other localities, has had an increased profile during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included interviews with national and regional media

The DPH, in their role to promote the Council's public health response to the pandemic, also used social media to provide updates and to engage with the local community. In addition, the Council's central social media accounts and website also provided key public health messaging relating to the pandemic during the period relevant to our review.

Politically Restricted Roles

Senior local government officers, such as the DPH, are employed in what are termed politically restricted roles.

This relates to the Local Government Officers (Political Restrictions) Regulations 1990, a Statutory Instrument created under the powers of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Officers in a politically restricted role should not, for example, canvass on behalf of a political party, nor "speak to the public at large or to a section of the public with the apparent intention of affecting public support for a political party".

These restrictions take the form of terms and conditions that are deemed to be incorporated into relevant officers' terms of appointment and conditions of employment.



KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to the DPH

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Media and Social Media Policies

Due to aspects of this KLOE relating to media and social media coverage it is helpful to set out the Council's policies and arrangements in place at the time period covered by this review.

The Council introduced a Social Media Policy for officers in March 2017, and the policy related to both personal and professional / business social media accounts, and for usage whether during working hours or otherwise. The policy included the following:

- Social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of Sandwell Council's other policies, procedures or guidance, including but not limited to: officer code of conduct, disciplinary procedure.
- Inappropriate use of social media can pose legal risks as well as reputational risks. Every employee therefore has a responsibility to maintain high professional standards of online behaviour.
- Great care should be taken when making a comment, post or blog, or 'liking' a post as it has the potential to be widely read / seen and re-distributed. Communications can be misinterpreted, taken out of context and are open to abuse. Any sensitive, emotive or political content could damage reputation whether it was intentional or otherwise.
- Sandwell Council employees are encouraged, where relevant, to use social media via established council accounts, as a means to inform the public and foster openness and engagement with local communities, as well as to promote council activities or inform the public of service disruptions
- If employees see any inappropriate content about Sandwell Council, its staff, partners or customers, or content that could bring the Council into disrepute, it is their duty in the first instance to bring this to the attention of their line manager or contact human resources front line for assistance.
- Never post anything which may be considered as unlawful, libellous or defamatory, threatening, harassing or abusive, racially offensive, harmful, obscene or of a sexual nature.
- Employees who fail to observe the standards of conduct set out in this policy may be subject to disciplinary action.
- If an employee becomes a victim of cyberbullying in relation to their employment they should bring this to the attention of their line manager...for further advice.

The Council did not have a formal policy in relation to senior officers providing interviews or otherwise engaging with regional or national media. From the interviews we have undertaken there appears to have been an expectation that any such requests would be discussed with the Council's communications team and where appropriate the Chief Executive and other relevant senior officers.

The Council at the time offered training for senior officers who engaged with regional or national media.



KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to the DPH

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The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's governance and decision making arrangements relating to the alleged harassment of the Director of Public Health by an external blogger, and the governance arrangements relating to the introduction of a local contact tracing service and shielding arrangement during Summer 2020.

Alleged Harassment Case: Background

In June 2020 the Council's DPH contributed a video to support Mental Health Awareness Week, speaking out about their personal mental health history, as part of a wider Council campaign to reduce the stigma around mental health. The video was used on the Council's internal intranet, and the Council also broadcast the video on their You Tube channel and posted it on the Council Facebook page. The DPH posted the video on their personal Facebook page.

The video led to a local blogger posting a series of blogs and comments on social media over an extended period relating to the DPH, which the DPH considered were abusive, constituted harassment, and had a negative impact on their mental health. Other individuals also contributed similar posts on social media.

In January 2021 the DPH raised the issue with their line manager, the then Chief Executive, and asked for the Council's support. Advice was taken from a QC who advised that the threshold for legal action was met and was confident an injunction could be achieved.

The Council had previously taken external legal advice, in October 2018, confirming the Council could indemnify individual employees under the Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order 2004 for costs of proceedings they may bring in connection to their roles as officers excluding defamation claims.

On 24 February 2021 the then Deputy Leader approved that the Council would support the DPH in taking legal action on the basis that the Council had a duty of care to their employee. Under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Council could not be a claimant, only an individual could claim. The then Deputy Leader also agreed to indemnify the DPH against legal costs.

A claim was served on the blogger for the harassment of the DPH on 3 March 2021. The blogger did not agree to the consent order for the Council to cease legal action. On 9 April 2021 the blogger made an application to have the claim struck out.

On 16 July 2021 the judge struck out the claim.

Alleged Harassment Case: Key Findings

The 2004 Order allowed for the Council's Executive to make the decision in relation to indemnifying an officer. The Council has a "strong leader" governance model which means that the executive powers are vested in the Leader of the Council. At the time the decision was made the then Leader was suspended by their political party, and in their absence, the then Deputy Leader had the full powers of the Leader to make the decisions in relation to supporting a legal case and indemnifying the DPH.

The Council had spent significant time in 2018 understanding the legal framework and 2004 Order in relation to a similar case, including obtaining counsel opinion. In February 2021 key Council officers concerned felt that the 2018 advice and associated legal framework could be applied to the situation of the DPH and the legal framework had not materially changed. Following the decision being made, the Council sought retrospective counsel advice, which was received on 25 May 2021, following receipt of initial advice on 27 April 2021, stating that the decision to indemnify the DPH was legally robust.

The outcome of the judgment was based on the judge's view that the blogger's right of freedom of expression (including the protection of journalistic expression) outweighed the DPH's interests, including circumstances where the DPH had spoken publicly about their mental health, and that the blogger was deemed to have not been aware that their actions constituted harassment.

The judge noted that the judgement did not imply that criticisms made of the DPH by the blogger were justified, nor did it cast doubt on the impact of the comments on the DPH.

The Council officers involved were surprised at the outcome of the case based on the legal advice received and management have written to the barrister expressing disappointment. Mental health charities and commentary in the local government media has expressed concern around the judgment and that the bar for demonstrating harassment is too high for high profile public figures.

The total legal costs incurred by the Council relating to this action were £96,332 + VAT. This includes the legal costs of the defendant / blogger which represent over 40% of the total costs. The Council challenged the blogger's initial cost submission which was significantly reduced.

KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to the DPH

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The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's governance and decision making arrangements relating to the alleged harassment of the Director of Public Health by an external blogger, and the governance arrangements relating to the introduction of a local contact tracing service and shielding arrangement during Summer 2020.

Alleged Harassment Case: Key Findings (Cont'd)

The blogger removed blogs and social media postings when the claim was served. Following the claim being struck out social media postings restarted, being made by the blogger and others.

The blogger entered into correspondence with Grant Thornton in July 2021 stating that the Council should not pay for the legal costs of the DPH, and that the indemnity was unlawful. Grant Thornton asked the blogger to clarify why the Council's actions were not lawful and that Grant Thornton had been provided with no evidence that the 2004 order does not apply to the actions undertaken by the Council. Grant Thornton has not received a reply from the blogger.

Grant Thornton has engaged Bates Wells to provide independent legal advice on the actions taken by the Council in indemnifying the DPH. Bates Wells did not identify any obvious grounds on which the granting of the indemnity could be said to be unlawful and noted that the reasons given for granting the indemnity appear to be rational, and take into account relevant factors.

Whilst the DPH is a joint appointment between the Council and Secretary of State for DHSC, the DPH is an employee of the Council, and we are content that it was the Council's decision to make in relation to the indemnity.

Alleged Harassment Case: Conclusions and Recommendations

The issues relating to the DPH occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic when the DPH had a critical and high-profile role locally. Given the legal advice received by the Council and senior officer recommendations it is unsurprising that the Deputy Leader agreed to support the DPH in taking forward legal action.

We are satisfied that the Council had the legal powers to indemnify the DPH, and that the Deputy Leader had delegated powers to make this decision.

Should the Council find itself in a similar scenario in the future, it would be prudent to obtain external legal advice on the specific circumstances under consideration, before any final decision on an indemnity is made.



KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to the DPH

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's governance and decision making arrangements relating to the alleged harassment of the Director of Public Health by an external blogger, and the governance arrangements relating to the introduction of a local contact tracing service and changes to holding arrangement during Summer 2020.

Local Contact Tracing Service: Background

The national NHS Test and Trace service was launched on 28 May 2020 to form a central part of the government's COVID-19 recovery strategy. The service was established to test anyone with symptoms of the virus. Anyone who tested positive would then be contacted to share information on recent interactions. The service would then contact these individuals to make them aware that they had to isolate for the then requirement of 14 days due to having had close contact with someone who tested positive. The service's aim was to help control the rate of reproduction and reduce the spread of the virus.

In late July 2020 the national service was successfully reaching approximately 65% of contacts in Sandwell. This was considered to be too low by the Council, with the reason due to particular demographic and socio-economic characteristics of Sandwell such as cultural diversity (including the level of English of some residents) and employment situations for some residents for example working in processing industries, factories and warehouses who were at greater risk of being exposed to the virus.

The purpose for introducing the local service was to utilise public health and other employees of the council, in particular those employees who were able to speak languages other than English, to:

- increase the successful number of contacts with people who had tested positive to reiterate public health advice to the individuals concerned, and
- to ascertain other persons that they had been in contact with so that they too could be also be contacted and given advice.

The local service was piloted on 29 July 2020 and went live the following day.

Sandwell was one of the first councils to set up a local contract tracing service and received regional and national media interest as a result, including requests for interviews with the DPH.

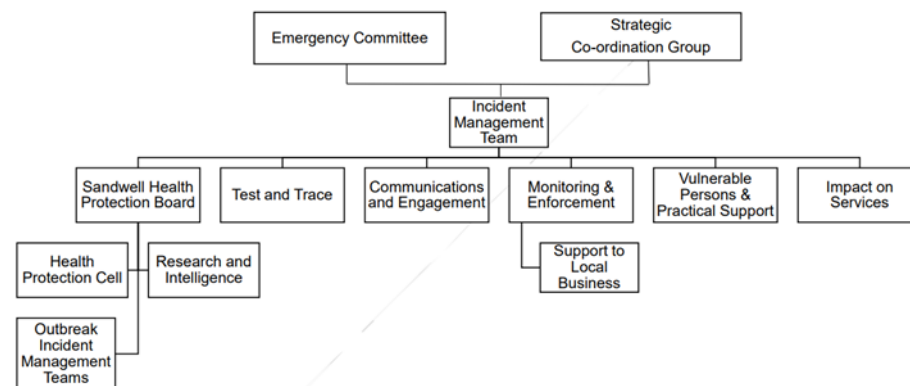
The media focus led to some individuals making criticisms of the council and the DPH relating to the introduction of the service. These criticisms were covered by local media and featured on some social media platforms.

Local Contact Tracing Service: Governance Arrangements

"Sandwell COVID-19 Stay Safe in Sandwell" is the Council's COVID-19 emergency plan (the Plan). The Plan notes that in response to the continuing community transmission of COVID-19 both local and central government are able to enforce local restrictions on an area in the country if it is considered that the number of daily new cases, or local outbreaks, is too high. These restrictions are decided by DHSC based on advice from PHE and the Joint Biosecurity Centre.

The Plan, which was endorsed by the Council's Emergency Committee on 31 July 2020, notes that the COVID-19 Framework, produced by DHSC, set out how national and local partners would work with the public at a local level to prevent, contain and manage outbreaks. "Successful management of local outbreaks is key to breaking the chains of COVID-19 transmission to enable people to return to and maintain a more normal way of life". The Council published its COVID-19 Local Outbreak Plan in line with the DHSC framework.

The Plan provided an overview of the interim governance arrangements established in relation to pandemic management:



KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to the DPH

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Local Contact Tracing Service: Governance Arrangements (Cont'd)

The Plan recognised that good communication and engagement with communities and businesses would be key throughout the management of COVID-19 in the borough; both to support prevention of outbreaks, but also during any outbreak or additional measures put in place by central government. The Council's communications team would take a key role in co-ordinating communications, working with PHE and the Council's Public Health team.

Local Contact Tracing Service Governance Arrangements: Key Findings

The roles undertaken by PHE were replaced by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities following a review by the then Secretary of State in August 2020. Health protection responsibilities transferred from PHE to UKHSA on 1 October 2021, with PHE formally ceasing to exist on 1 April 2022. The Emergency Plan still refers to PHE and the Council should review the Plan to ensure that changes following the demise of PHE are reflected.

We have been unable to locate a document setting out formal membership of the Incident Management Team (IMT) which received updates on 27 and 28 July 2020 on progress in setting up the local contract tracing service and an update was presented to the Emergency Committee on 31 July 2020 to endorse the decision to introduce the service. The decision to proceed with the local service was the responsibility of IMT, however the minutes of IMT on 27 and 28 July 2020 do not make reference to approval to proceed with the local service. However, on the basis of our interviews we are satisfied that the decision to proceed with track and trace had the full support of the leadership team.

Local Contact Tracing Service: other key findings

On 31 July PHE named Sandwell as an area of concern on its watchlist following a rise in the number of COVID-19 cases. Sandwell's rate of infection rose to 28.1 per 100,000 people in the week up to 27 July 2020, up from 26.9 the previous week. The PHE watchlist was based on the weekly rate of COVID-19 cases in local areas, as well as the trend of whether infections were rising or falling. There were three categories into which local council areas could be placed on the watchlist at that time: areas of concern, areas for enhanced support, and areas of intervention. An area of concern was one of those areas with the highest prevalence of COVID-19 but where local officials were taking targeted actions to reduce the number of infections.

PHE actively encouraged councils to find solutions to manage their response to the pandemic, based on a council's understanding of their locality. Senior regional representatives of PHE and DHSC were aware and supportive of the Council's plans to establish a local contact tracing service, recognising that at the time, it was imperative to break the chain of transmission with more rapid contact tracing.

The Council worked directly with national NHS Test and Trace when establishing Sandwell's local service. This included being provided with access to the Contact Tracing and Advisory Service (CTAS) database. This database was created by NHS Test and Trace to record information about people who had been in contact with someone who had tested positive for COVID-19.

The local contract tracing service successfully managed to reach local residents identified by NHS Test and Trace to encourage them to self-isolate. As at 21 February 2022, 96% of contacts were being made in Sandwell, which according to UK Health Security Agency (UK HSA) data, was the highest rate of relevant local authority areas in the West Midlands.

When looking at the number of average confirmed COVID-19 infections during the week immediately prior to the local service, and the same UK HSA data for a month later, infections increased by 10.1% compared to an increase of 88.1% for the West Midlands, and an increase of 78.4% for England.

The Council was one of the first in the country to establish a local contract tracing service and was therefore one of the forerunners of what became the model on which many other councils introduced their own local contact tracing service.

The Council's local contact tracing service was recognised by the Local Government Association (LGA) in October 2020 as one of a number of examples of good practice.

KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to the DPH

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's governance and decision making arrangements relating to the alleged harassment of the Director of Public Health by an external blogger, and the governance arrangements relating to the introduction of a local contact tracing service and changes to shielding arrangement during Summer 2020.

Local Contact Tracing Service: Media Coverage

In late July 2020 the Council received coverage in local media (radio and newspapers) and from a national news broadcaster relating to the introduction of the Council's local contact tracing service. In early August a number of criticisms from local politicians (not elected members of the Council) were made that were covered by local media and appeared on social media platforms. Individuals were reported in local media on 1 August 2020 as having said:

- The Council's contact tracing service was a "publicity stunt".
- If "officers stopped playing at being politicians and concentrated on their day jobs Sandwell's results would have been better and complaining about [national] track and trace".
- "Saying that the Government's track and trace system is not working and that we have to set up our own, is I'm afraid, scaremongering."

One local MP, referring to the 1 August 2020 article, posted on social media the following day:

- The Council is "backtracking from" claims that they have set up a local track and trace system, and the claims are "simply not true."

We understand that the context for this last comment was made because the DPH had made a public statement that the local service "was dovetailing with the government's service" (ie national NHS Test and Trace).

The Council's then Chief Executive initiated a lessons learned review which included a fact finding exercise in relation to the above. This review included obtaining the view of the Association of Directors of Public Health (ADPH) as to whether the DPH's comments were political in nature. The ADPH, which is the professional body of DPHs, concluded that the DPH's comments were not a criticism of the government and that they did not make a political statement, and that their actions were in line with the role of a DPH.

As part of the Grant Thornton review we have sought our own evidence in relation to the above comments and are satisfied that the local contract tracing service was in place at the time the above comments were made, although it had recently commenced. We have found no evidence that the DPH or Council were scaremongering about the reason to introduce a local service, nor that the DPH was making party political comments.

However we do note that the DPH's comments were robust where they felt they needed to correct inaccuracies, and recognise that some individuals may have perceived them as being critical of the government, even though this was not the intent.

The Council had in place a social media policy that was good practice and set out clearly the responsibilities of officers. We note that, as per the findings in KLOE B6, that the Council has a separate social media policy in place for elected Members which was reviewed and updated during 2021 with associated training being offered.

The Council acknowledges that directors in public facing roles have a role to play in delivering key messages and engaging with the public / local community.

We note that the DPH did not always discuss with the then Chief Executive or the communications team the messaging in advance of having a media interview. The DPH had received media training but under the Council's policies and guidance at the time there was no requirement to consult with senior colleagues or the communication team. We consider that such consultations would have been helpful, but acknowledge that they may not have led to a different outcome in terms of the media perception of the DPH and the Council. We consider that the Council should make clear in its policies and guidance when consultation is necessary.

The DPH used their personal social media accounts (Facebook and Twitter) to promote public health messages and engage with the community. There is evidence that such a personal approach leads to better community engagement than via a corporate (ie the Council's own) social media account. Use of a personal social media account can create the risk of cyberbullying, which is recognised in the Council's social media policy.

The then Chief Executive sought to rebut the statements made in the media by local politicians, but rightly wanted assurances on the facts before doing so. The fact finding exercise that took place at the time was not able to access call logs to fully validate the data provided, which caused some delays in the finalisation of the report. Once finalised we understand that effective rebuttals never took place. We note that this exercise was undertaken in the context of Council resource being focussed on pandemic response and management, but consider that a formal comment by the Council could have removed any misunderstanding between the Council and external parties.

We note that the fact finding exercise also incorporated a lessons learned review in relation to the local contact tracing service and issues relating to shielding covered separately in this report. This review was concluded without the draft or final report being shared with the DPH, and the current interim Chief Executive has issued an apology to the DPH on behalf of the Council, noting that the approach taken was not appropriate and should have been more collaborative and transparent.

KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to the DPH

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's governance and decision making arrangements relating to the alleged harassment of the Director of Public Health by an external blogger, and the governance arrangements relating to the introduction of a local contact tracing service and holding arrangement during Summer 2020.

Engagement with MPs

The Council's then Leader and then Chief Executive met weekly with local MPs during the timescale relating to this review, to provide updates on and respond to clarifications relating to the pandemic.

Given the context of the pandemic at least two local MPs requested on a number of occasions between April and July 2020 that the DPH and Director of Adult Social Care attended these meetings. However, the then Leader and then Chief Executive took an approach that council directors would not attend meetings with local MPs. Rather than the Leader and Chief Executive would obtain clarifications from directors, as required, to report back to local MPs.

One local MP was quoted in local media on 1 August 2020 expressing their frustration at not being able to meet Sandwell public health officials. We are aware that this frustration was compounded by the DPH making themselves available for media interviews, whilst the then Leader and Chief Executive of the Council were not permitting direct contact between the DPH and local MPs.

On or around the 3 August 2020 the same local MP used Facebook to message the DPH to mention they had been trying to request a meeting with them via the Leader and Chief Executive since the start of the pandemic, requests which had been refused. The MP also noted that two weeks previously the DPH had told the MP they were "too busy" to meet, and further noting they had a meeting with the DPH the following day.

The DPH used Facebook to reply that it was not true that they told the MP they were too busy, referred to an email dated 29 July 2020 which would be produced as evidence, that this was the first email received, and that the DPH would seek legal advice on "these public allegations."

The DPH has confirmed that she consulted with the then Chief Executive prior to responding to the Facebook posting by the MP. We have sought to confirm this, but have been unable to obtain a record of this meeting, and the then Chief Executive was unable to respond to our query due to the lack of access to his notes. We have accepted the DPH's statement.

The MP had their first meeting with the DPH on 4 August 2020. The DPH has subsequently been involved in meetings with local MPs

Reviewing this Facebook exchange, we are satisfied that the office of the local MP contacted the DPH by email on 23 July 2020 to request a meeting, and sent a chase email on 29 July 2020. It is the latter email that the DPH referred to in the Facebook exchange, and the former which was referred to by the MP in the Facebook exchange. The DPH replied by email to the MP on 29 July 2020 stating "Sorry – just seen this. We are absolutely flat out right now on our acute response. Have you put this request in through the CEO and Dept Leader? I haven't heard from them about it?". It was this response that the MP summarised as being "too busy" in the Facebook posting.

This exchange led the MP to contact the then Chief Executive on 4 August 2020 to clarify if the DPH was planning to take legal action. The MP chased the then Chief Executive on 6 October 2020 after having not received a response. We are not aware that a response was made.

The ADPH has also provided comment on this Facebook exchange. Their view is that DPH comments "are entirely consistent with the prevailing interpretation of good practice by a DPH" and that "correcting such a statement...is an act to maintain public trust, remain compliant with the role of the DPH and as such...retain confidence of the public." Further that it is "established custom and practice as well as clearly implied in guidance" that a DPH has "the right to provide a corrective response to a mistaken or erroneous statement as publicly as the statement was made".

We accept the ADPH's comments regarding the exchange but question whether making the public comment on taking legal advice in public was an appropriate action.

We are aware that the MP concerned contacted the Special Advisor for the then Secretary of State for DHSC in early August 2020 with concerns about the DPH's conduct. We understand that the then Secretary of State contacted the NHS National Test and Trace Director who was due to call the Council's then Chief Executive on this issue, as the Secretary of State was "exercised" over the DPH's comments on the national system and lack of engagement with local MPs. We have not been able to clarify if the then Chief Executive received this contact.

KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to the DPH

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's governance and decision making arrangements relating to the alleged harassment of the Director of Public Health by an external blogger, and the governance arrangements relating to the introduction of a local contact tracing service and shielding arrangement during Summer 2020.

Conclusions and recommendations

From our work we consider that:

- A local contact tracing service was established and that this added to the national system and improved contact tracing
- The service was not established for a political purpose. While we have not been able to locate a record in the minutes of IMT approving the establishment of the service our interviews indicate that the decision to establish the service had the support of the leadership team.
- The DPH complied with the Council's social media policy. We note that the use of personal social media led to cyber bullying and that this has had a significant impact on the DPH's well being
- The DPH's comments in the media and social media were largely appropriate. We do not consider that the comment regarding taking legal advice should have been made in public.
- The Council's decision that the DPH should not meet with local MPs resulted in an inaccurate perception that the DPH's comments were political. This is aligned to other comments in this report about the insularity of the Council at this time. We consider that this significantly contributed to the negative comments made with regard to the Council and the DPH.

We consider that the Council should make the following changes to its management arrangements. The Council should:

- **Ensure that senior Council officers in public roles who use social media for their public role are aware of the risks of using social media and their responsibilities in relation to the Council's social media policy. We recommend that these senior officers liaise with and seek advice from the Council's communications team in relation to their social media activity.**
- **Engage the Council's communications team in a review of the social media policy to consider if any updates are required, for example, to reflect the changed circumstances brought about by increased home working, and whether the social media policy should stipulate that social media accounts being used by officers clearly state that these accounts relate to their Council role.**
- **Ensure that where the Council identifies use of social media that could be contentious or considered by others as inappropriate, that this is reviewed by management and appropriate action is taken.**

- **Ensure the decision to attend media interviews should be made jointly by the Chief Executive, Senior Officers, and Communications Team.**
- **When establishing and implementing high profile and / or significant project or initiatives, ensure a better record of the decision-making and supporting information and evidence must be kept.**
- **Establish a clear policy for working with local MPs to ensure that they are appropriately informed.**
- **Ensure that all relevant COVID-19 communications from local MPs and DHSC should be promptly forwarded to the DPH should it be evident that the DPH has not received them directly.**
- **Review the Emergency Plan to ensure that changes following the demise of PHE are reflected.**
- **Ensure that decisions made to introduce new services, or materially changing existing services, are properly reflected in the minutes of the body responsible for making such decisions.**
- **Any future lessons learned reviews undertaken by the Council should be undertaken in a collaborative and transparent way with the key stakeholders concerned.**



KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to the DPH

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's governance and decision making arrangements relating to the alleged harassment of the Director of Public Health by an external blogger, and the governance arrangements relating to the introduction of a local contact tracing service and changes to shielding arrangement during Summer 2020.

Shielding arrangements: background

As part of the initial emergency response to COVID-19 the government introduced a policy of shielding for individuals considered to be clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) and at high risk of infection. On 22 June 2020 the Secretary of State for DHSC announced that shielding for CEV individuals would end on 1 August 2020 as part of a wider series of changes being made as rules were relaxed in England as the country came out of the first national lockdown. The Council's emergency planning and response to the pandemic was a corporate responsibility, with the DPH having a key role alongside other senior officers including the then Chief Executive and the then Director for Adult Social Care.

A letter dated 30 July from the Deputy Chief Medical Officer was sent to councils setting out that the decision to end shielding for CEV individuals rested with government Ministers on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) and that the reintroduction of shielding in a local area is a decision that must be taken by Ministers on the advice of the CMO.

The council did not update its shielding advice on its website until 7 August 2020 after being approached by DHSC who raised the issue of the council's website advice on shielding appearing to contradict national guidance.

Shielding arrangements: key findings

A number of councils, including Sandwell, made the assessment that people who were shielding were still very vulnerable to serious illness and death due to high COVID-19 case rates locally. The Council, with approval from the COVID-19 Emergency Committee, issued communication to this effect via its webpage on 31 July 2020 including a downloadable letter.

On 3 August 2020, the Council's then Director for Adult Social Care received an email from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) which had followed a conversation about Sandwell's appearance on PHE's COVID-19 watch list and the risk of local lockdown. The email included the letter from the Deputy Chief Medical Officer on behalf of the Department of Health & Social Care, dated 30 July 2020. The letter outlined the process of re-introducing shielding and the fact that such a decision was for Ministers on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer. The letter also identified the implications of re-introducing shielding, both from a medical/wellbeing perspective and the funding implications, such as Statutory Sick Pay paid by employers. The letter was shared with the DPH by the then Chief Executive on 4 August 2020.

Discussions took place during 4 August between various senior Council officers, including the DPH, about updating shielding guidance on the Council's website. The same day the then Director for Adult Social Care received a further email from MHCLG asking if the Council's website had been updated.

On 5 August the DPH met with representatives from DHSC including the Deputy Chief Medical Officer, and received an email from DHSC following the meeting, highlighting the aspects of the Council's website guidance on shielding which appeared to contradict national guidance. On 6 August the DPH asked Council public health team to update the Council's guidance and the website was updated the following day.

During this period the Council received calls and emails from members of the public seeking clarification on the advice being given.

Conclusions and recommendations

The shielding advice being given by the Council was provided in good faith, but for a period of several days was in some respects inconsistent with the change in government guidance. This led to some confusion with members of the public and with some Council officers, which led to time being spent resolving clarifications at a time when officers were working considerably long days managing the pandemic response.

We have found no evidence that senior Council officers became aware of the Deputy Chief Medical Officer's letter dated 30 July 2020 prior to 3 August 2020. It is regrettable that the Council's shielding guidance was not updated sooner, but we note that once senior officers including the DPH became aware of the updated guidance, the error was corrected.

We recommend that the Council should review its processes and decision making arrangements following a change in government guidance or policy to ensure that local updates are made in a timely manner.

KLOE A9: Lion Farm

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's governance arrangements and decision making in relation to the Lion Farm development.

Background

Following approval of the Asset Management Land Disposal Cabinet Committee (AMLDC) at its meeting on 19 December 2012, the Council entered into an option agreement with a local developer in respect of the proposed development of Lion Farm Playing Fields in Oldbury (Lion Farm). The proposed development related to a premium designer outlet centre, which could support significant economic, environmental and social benefits to the borough and wider region. The minutes of the AMLDC were received by Cabinet on 9 January 2013 and full Council on 5 March 2013.

An option agreement is a legally binding agreement that gives a potential developer a period within which to investigate the development of a site and the owner of the site agrees to sell the land to the developer at a future point. Any costs incurred by the developer during the option period are at the developer's risk.

The option agreement was dated 21 May 2013 and the developer paid the Council an option fee of £245k plus a contribution to the Council's legal costs. The option agreement gave the developer the option to acquire the freehold of the Lion Farm site should planning permission be granted.

The agreement gave the developer 12 months to undertake pre-development activity with an option to extend for a further 12 months. The agreement also provided for a secondary option agreement to be entered into by the Council and the developer.

After the initial 12-month period in 2014 the Council approved the request to extend the agreement by a further 12 months. In 2015, before the second 12-month period had concluded the Council confirmed that the developer had complied with their obligations and the parties began discussing the secondary option agreement.

In 2017 the developer was made aware of a rival premium designer outlet scheme in Cannock that had received full planning permission. The developer approached the Council for approval to progress the development. On 15 November 2017 the Cabinet approved variation to the existing option agreement with conditions including resident consultation, re-provision of current football pitches, undertake an economic impact assessment, submit a full planning application, and the site should be developed as a premier retail/leisure development which will attract high-end outlets.

In 2018 the Council sought counsel advice on whether the options agreement was legal with the QC confirming in August 2018 that the options agreement was a legally binding decision.

Governance relating to the original decision

A review by the Council in 2018 identified governance weaknesses in relation to the original decision to grant the option agreement and made the following recommendations:

- Enhanced member training to improve awareness on declaration of interests.
- The need to ensure resolutions are enacted in a timely way – the original AMLDC decision requested a follow up report on progress which was not progressed until 2017 with a report to Cabinet.
- A clearer record of the decision-making process to support recommendations being made to members
- A new protocol for the disposal of Council owned land and buildings is developed.

External review

The Council engaged a consultancy firm to review the governance and decision making in relation to Lion Farm and three unrelated property transactions. They reported in January 2020. The report was not made available to us until we commenced this review.

We have reviewed the findings of the report but under the terms of its agreement with the Council we are unable to quote from this report. We are considering the powers available to us under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 to require the release of the report. However, to ensure the timely release of our report we have set out our overall conclusions below.

Current position

The Council's procurement regulations do not apply to property transactions, and so there is no legal requirement to publicly advertise the granting of an option to purchase a piece of land.

The principal senior officers and senior members involved in the initial agreement are no longer Council employees or a member of the Council. We note that there were weaknesses in record keeping, which means the current senior officers do not have access to all the information relating to the original decision.

KLOE A9: Lion Farm (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's governance arrangements and decision making in relation to the Lion Farm development.

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Current position (cont'd)

The secondary options agreement has not concluded and the developer has not yet submitted a planning application.

As a result of the 2013 options agreement, the asset will be valued following planning approval, before its disposal.

Conclusions and recommendations

The original sale of the option to develop Lion Farm with a limit of 12 months to put a development forward appears reasonable. Subsequent decisions to extend the secondary option negotiations without an end date were ill-judged. It has meant that the Council has little recourse with the developer.

There has been a lack of recent engagement with the developer and the situation has been allowed to drift with the senior leadership of the Council not placing priority on seeking to agree resolution and a way forward. We understand that the Interim Chief Executive has recently re-started dialogue with the developer and is placing priority on resolving the impasse, and an options appraisal is being prepared for the Cabinet to consider.

The Council must ensure that the recent re-engagement with the developer results in agreeing a clear way forward, including an action plan and timescale so there is clarity on the responsibilities for the Council and developer in order to progress the finalisation of the secondary option agreement, or to be clear on the legal process for both parties extricating themselves from the agreement and the associated terms.

The Council must ensure that it has taken all necessary steps to ensure that arrangements are in place so that issues identified in the external review are appropriately mitigated and managed.

The Council should review its procurement regulations and consider updating them to include land sales, including options agreements, to ensure that best value can be achieved.



KLOE A10: Introduction of new ERP System

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's management of the introduction of Oracle Fusion and understanding implementation delays and their impact.

Background

The main Enterprise and Resource Planning (ERP) business system currently used by the Council is Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS), which provides a range of key functions that support various service areas, including Finance, Human Resources, Payroll, and Procurement. The Council's EBS is also used by maintained schools in the borough, Sandwell Children's Trust and the West Midlands Fire Service. It has been in place since 2003.

The current version of EBS used by the Council will become unsupported from 31 December 2021. Remaining on unsupported software is considered an unacceptable risk to the Council due to the loss of support patches from Oracle. The Council agreed to replace EBS in 2019. This decision followed an options appraisal, which concluded that a new cloud-based ERP system would be the preferred option.

The Council decided that Oracle Corporation UK Ltd were the only suitable available provider – their Oracle Fusion product. An exemption from conducting a formal tender process, to allow negotiation with Oracle for purchase of the appropriate licences, was considered permissible under the provision of the Public Contracts Regulation 2015. The Council published a voluntary ex-ante notice to inform the market of its intention to conclude these negotiations with Oracle and meet its obligations for compliance with the 2015 Regulation.

The Council also agreed to engage an implementation partner on the basis that the Council did not have capacity or relevant expertise to transition to the new system. The Crown Commercial Services framework was used to identify suitable implementation providers and it was determined that only Inoapps could meet all requirements for implementation partner services. The Council contracted with Inoapps for this role for £1.2m. Inoapps had provided managed services to the Council since July 2016 and were a platinum Oracle partner. The appointments of Oracle and Inoapps were approved by Cabinet on 9 October 2019.

The contract with Oracle was for five years, with an option to extend to seven years at £700k per annum. The overall cost of the project, for the duration of the five-year contract with Oracle, including implementation partner costs, was estimated to be £5.64m.

There have been repeated delays to the implementation with changes to the go live date for the new system, which will not now go live before EBS becomes unsupported at the end of 2021.

KEY FINDINGS

Business case for change

An options appraisal and financial appraisal were used to make the decision on the future of the Council's ERP system. Whilst these would form part of a business case, no outline or full business case for change was developed and approved. We would have expected a business case to have been developed for a project of such strategic importance and cost. Failure to do so has impacted on the implementation stage of the project.

Transformation potential

The introduction of a new ERP system is typically used to support wider organisational transformation, improvement, efficiencies and savings. Indeed, one of the reasons for replacing EBS was long-term user dissatisfaction with reference to inefficiencies, inadequate reporting functionality and prolonged processes to access necessary data, with inefficient "work around" solutions being applied.

The lack of a formal business case has meant that benefits relating to the transformation potential of the new system have not been clear and have not been at the forefront of the implementation. This has been compounded by a lack of corporate ownership of the project and engagement by services, with the project seen as Finance or HR related, and not an enabler for organisational transformation and improvement.

Instead a "lift and shift" approach has been adopted minimising the opportunities for change and improvement and the use of the functionality of the new system. Once the new system has gone live there is an intention to undertake "development sprints" to identify transformation opportunities. However, the system will have already been implemented by this time, limiting the potential for such improvements without incurring additional costs in enhancements to the system. The Council has also used funding set aside for these sprints to fund cost overruns during the implementation stage.

KLOE A10: Introduction of new ERP System (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's management of the introduction of Oracle Fusion and understanding implementation delays and their impact.

Project finances

The options appraisal set out the total costs as follows.

Description	Costs 2019/20 to 2023/24 £000
EXPENDITURE	
Implementaiton Costs	
Implementaton Suppprt	1,206
Development sprints	600
Internal project team	386
Ongoing Costs	
SaaS subscriptions	3,240
Managed service support partner	70
Archiving system	140
Total costs	5,642
FUNDING	
Earmarked reserve	2,625
Redirection of budgets for current system costs	2,458
Resources revenue budget	682
Total funding	5,765
Contingency	123

The earmarked reserve of £2.625m was to be used to cover implementation costs and included £600k for post go live activity (development sprints) and £363k as contingency, in addition to the £123k contingency identified via the original funding proposal.

An additional £605k was added to the reserve from COVID-19 emergency funding to fund additional costs incurred due to delays.

A breakdown of the planned allocation of the earmarked reserve is set out below.

Description	£
Oracle Subscriptions	438,000
Inoapps Implementation Contract	1,224,150
Development Sprints (4 x £150k)	600,000
Project Team/Contingency	362,850
Total funded by earmarked reserve	2,625,000
Covid Emergency Funding	605,000
Total Funding	3,230,000

The development sprint, project team / contingency and COVID-19 emergency funding are currently over committed by £7.8k. Additional costs have been incurred in relation to extension to EBS licences, use of additional support due to the delays to going live, and contract variations with Inoapps.

Governance Arrangements

There is a programme board which includes officers from the Council and representatives from Inoapps, and a programme team including representatives from both organisations. The Council has established a programme management office (PMO).

The Board reporting includes risk and issues logs and highlight reports. During the pandemic and when renegotiating the contract position with Inoapps and the subsequent focus securing clarity from Inoapps on their position, these have not always received appropriate focus.

Due to changes in the Council's senior officers there has not been stability with those attending the project board. This includes the chair of the Board, which was originally the then Executive Director of Resources, followed by the then Chief Executive, and is currently chaired by the Director for Strategy and Change.

The contract includes a statement of works which defines key project roles. Whilst the Council has a defined programme lead and programme manger for the project, the changes to senior officers involved in the project have created confusion over who is in the Senior Responsible Officer role, both within the Council and within Inoapps. It is a position which remains unclear.

KLOE A10: Introduction of new ERP System (cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's management of the introduction of Oracle Fusion and understanding implementation delays and their impact.

Governance arrangements (cont'd)

The Cabinet approved the decision to progress the new ERP system and appoint Oracle and Inoapps. There have been limited subsequent updates to Cabinet, with the portfolio holder receiving updates via director briefings.

Contract management

The programme manager and PMO, supported by the programme lead, are responsible for managing the contract with Inoapps. Where a contract variation is proposed by Inoapps the PMO discusses with relevant Council stakeholders and is then passed to the Programme Board for approval. The programme lead then completes the change request which becomes an addendum to the original contract.

The impact of COVID-19 led to a review of the implementation timetable during Summer 2020, given its impact on for example system testing and training activity. At the same time Inoapps identified the need for significant contract variations, believing they had under-scoped the resources requisite to implement the project. The original contract was awarded on a time and materials basis. The Council, in negotiating revised contract terms with Inoapps moved to fixed price terms with payment based on Inoapps meeting specified milestones, which was agreed in November 2020.

The role of Oracle

Inoapps are a platinum implementation partner to Oracle, and Oracle are the provider of the new system being implemented. Having purchased Oracle Fusion the Council has not been able to effectively escalate the implementation issues with Oracle, in order for Oracle to support a resolution.

Organisational involvement

During the majority of the implementation stage of Oracle Fusion there has been ineffective engagement from across directorates and services. This has started to change, with greater Director ownership, but as already noted, there remains a need for greater senior leadership oversight.

The current position

Since the fixed price contract was agreed, with Inoapps taking a greater commercial risk on implementation, and having under-scoped their original bid, there has been increasing tensions between the Council and their implementation partner and frustrations from the Council at the level of support being provided by Inoapps.

This has led to an "us and them" culture rather than a joint implementation focus. At the time of this review relationships between the Council and Inoapps had broken down, further impacting on the progress of the implementation stage.

The go live date for the new system was deferred from October 2019 to April 2019, and subsequently deferred to October 2020. There is currently no go live date pending the Council agreeing a way forward with Inoapps.

Because the go live date will not take place prior to 31 December 2021 when EBS, the current system, becomes unsupported, the Council has approached Oracle, who also provide the EBS, to negotiate temporary support from January 2022. Oracle are seeking a 12-month extension to EBS which the Council would like to reduce due to the impact on unplanned costs, but the lack of a firm go live date is not helpful to these negotiations.

We understand that a report is being prepared for Cabinet on 24 November which will set out the Council's options and include a cost benefit analysis of these options.

Conclusions and recommendations

The risk to the Council of having no ERP system available from the 1 January 2022 is significant.

The Council must prioritise corporate effort to:

- ensure that temporary support is agreed with Oracle for EBS continuity.
- have an honest and frank discussion with Inoapps and urgently agree a clear resolution on the way forward.
- review governance arrangements so that good practice (such as Managing Successful Programmes) is in place and embedded, including clarity on the SRO role and approach to risk management.
- review the resourcing and scope of the implementation to ensure that it is realistic, given current circumstances, focuses on outcomes as well as costs, and there is organisation wide engagement and ownership of the programme.
- confirm a realistic and achievable go live date.
- ensure for future major projects a full business case is developed and approved.

KLOE B1: Chief Officers

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's compliance with JNC guidance in relation to the recent departure of certain chief officers.

Background

The Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Chief Executives of Local Authorities is the national negotiating body for the pay and conditions of service of chief executives in England and Wales.

The JNC sets out the national conditions of service for chief officers of local authorities, which include model procedures in relation to performance management, capability, disciplinary and redundancy.

There is a different negotiating body for pay and conditions for other local government workers, the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services.

KEY FINDINGS

The Council's former Executive Director of Resources received a complaint in relation to certain actions that were believed to be outside Council policies and procedures. The actions related to matters over 5 years old and appear to have been precipitated by a change in control of the labour group. The then Chief Executive, after undertaking a fact-finding exercise and reviewing the position, invoked the model JNC disciplinary procedure. The Executive Director was suspended in March 2020 and the Council engaged the LGA to undertake an independent investigation. Prior to the conclusion of this investigation the Council finalised its senior management review which created a new structure for the Council's leadership team, resulting in the deletion of all Executive Director roles and the creation of new Director roles. The Executive Director chose not to apply for a new Director role, which led to the officer being made redundant by the Council before the investigation by the LGA was completed.

The Council's former Chief Executive departed the Council very quickly in July 2021 as a result of the breakdown in their working relationship with the new Leader of the Council. A decision was made by the two individuals concerned that the Chief Executive would leave the Council by mutual agreement, before the JNC model procedure could be invoked.

Following the decision being made the Council took external legal advice on employment law and sought advice from the LGA and various options were retrospectively considered, including the Chief Executive remaining in post, the Chief Executive claiming constructive dismissal, early retirement and mutual agreement, with the latter being considered the best value for money option.

The prior to previous Chief Executive also left before the JNC model procedure was invoked. The context was a Standards investigation, and the officer chose to resign rather than progressing to the formal procedure

Conclusions and recommendations

The Chief Executive and Leader are key roles in any Council, and their working relationship is critical to the effective running of the organisation. There are many examples in the local government sector where Chief Executives have left councils by mutual consent and not followed model procedures, for example, when there is a change in Leader.

However, given the context at the Council, the departure of the two previous Chief Executives in a similar manner will have contributed to the lack of trust and uncertainty in the organisation which is highlighted elsewhere in this report. This has been exacerbated by the departure of the Executive Director of Finance through a restructure

We also note that the speed of the decision for the former Chief Executive to leave, and the lack of other senior officer involvement (such as from the Monitoring Officer and Director of HR) and not taking legal advice prior to the decision being made created a risk that each party may have had a different interpretation of the outcome of the discussion and the decision being made.

The Council needs to consider how it can restore trust between officers and members. **The Council should ensure that at the very least, appropriate internal and external advice is sought should the departure of a chief officer by mutual consent is agreed.**

KLOE B2: Senior leadership

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the background to senior leadership changes and the impact of interim officers in place.

Background

The Council has been through a period of significant change to its leadership, both in terms of senior officers and senior members. Following the local elections in May 2021 a new Leader was elected, who appointed a new Cabinet with effect from June 2021. Many of these Cabinet members had not previously held a Cabinet role, and some were fairly new to the role of councillor.

An interim Chief Executive has been in role since August 2021 and there has been significant changes to chief officers over the past year, with vacancies being filled by either external interims, or Council officers in acting up roles. These changes were driven in large part by a senior management review which concluded in October 2020, although we note that some chief officer departures were caused by unrelated circumstances. The changes are summarised in the table below.

Posts Prior to Senior Management Review	Leaving Date	Posts following Senior Management Review	Interim Status	Interim Start Date	Permanent status	Permanent start date
Chief Executive	Jul-21	Chief Executive	External interim	Aug-21	Vacant	n/a
Deputy Chief Executive	n/a	Deputy Chief Executive	Vacant	n/a	Vacant	n/a
Executive Director - Adult Social Care, Health & Wellbeing	Jul-19					
Director - Adult Social Care	Dec-20	Director - Adult Social Care	External interim	Apr-21	In role	July 2021
Director - Public Health	n/a	Director - Public Health	n/a	n/a	No change	n/a
Director - Prevention & Protection	n/a					
Executive Director - Resources	Sep-20					
Director - Law & Governance / Monitoring Officer	n/a	Director - Law & Governance / Monitoring Officer	n/a	n/a	No change	n/a
Director - Finance	n/a	Director - Finance	Acting up	Mar-20	In role	Aug 2021
Director - Business Strategy and Change	n/a	Director - Business Strategy & Change	n/a	n/a	Internal appointment	Dec 2020
Executive Director - Neighbourhoods	Dec-20					
Director - Homes &	Mar-21					
Director - Housing	n/a	Director - Housing	External interim	Apr-21	In role	July 2021
Director - Borough Economy	n/a	Director - Borough Economy	External interim	Apr-21	Appointed	Nov 2021
Director - Regeneration & Growth	Mar-20	Director - Regeneration & Growth	Acting up	Mar-20	In role	Sept 2021
Executive Director - Children's Services	Aug-21					
Director - Education & Skills	Apr-21					
Director - Children's Services	n/a	Director - Children's Services	Acting up, supported by external interim	Aug-21	Appointed	Nov 2021

Post created
Post deleted

Key findings

Other than the Chief Executive there are currently ten chief officer roles, of these four are recent external appointments, and two other external appointments have been made with these officers starting in November 2021. Three officers remain from the previous leadership team, two in the same role and one appointed to one of the new roles created by the review.

Two roles remain vacant: the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive, with the recruitment of the former recently initiated. The Council has decided to not recruit the Deputy Chief Executive and to review the need for this role.

In addition there is a Director of HR, which is not a permanent role and is being held by an external interim.

The impact of this recent period of change has been instability and uncertainty for the organisation. Whilst external interims are recognised positively for the experience they bring from working with other councils and having a “fresh pair of eyes” on some of the service challenges being faced, the wider organisation considers the use of interims as maintaining a holding pattern before permanent chief officers join. The Council will reach the position of having all roles filled by a permanent officers during November 2021, other than the two vacancies noted above.

The leadership of senior members and senior officers is critical to good governance and decision making, and more generally for the ability for the Council to deliver its services effectively and to progress its medium-to-long-term priorities.

All key stakeholders met during the course of this review recognised that the changes to senior officer and members has led to some immediate and positive changes. However, it was further recognised that the Council is at the start of a necessary improvement journey, and for these “green shoots” to deliver the widespread changes required, the Council’s leadership needs be relentless in its focus in delivering and embedding sustainable change. We note that these 'green shoots' only occurred on appointment of the current interim chief executive and we do not consider that they are embedded in the Council.

Critical to this sustainable change will be the appointment of the right permanent Chief Executive, and the Council must ensure an effective recruitment process, including maximising the chances of attracting a pool of appropriate candidates. Should the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive not be successful the Council should seek to retain the current interim Chief Executive and move this to a full time contract.

KLOE B3: Complaints

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the appropriateness of complaints made against senior officers and the responses to these complaints.

Background

The Council has arrangements in place setting out how to make a complaint that an elected member has failed to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct. This is in line with the Localism Act 2011 (the Act). The Council's Monitoring Officer, or in their absence or where there is a conflict of interest, the Deputy Monitoring Officer, administers the system for dealing with complaints. The arrangements set out the stages of a complaint should be dealt with: no further action, local resolution or requires investigation.

The Act requires the Council to appoint at least one Independent Person whose views must be sought before it takes a decision on whether an investigation should proceed. The Council has agreed to there being three Independent Persons, who attend the Standards Committee as observers.

There are separate arrangements in place for complaints against senior officers which follow national JNC model procedures, with the Council's Chief Executive (unless conflicted) deciding if the thresholds are met to instigate an investigation.

There are separate procedures for whistleblowing complaints, which do not form part of the scope of this review.

KEY FINDINGS

The Council has had a history of complaints against members, many of which were not found to be circumstances that were in breach of the Code of Conduct. These complaints have been from other members, officers and members of the public.

We note that the Monitoring Officer has been subject to a number of complaints from members which have not met the threshold for investigation, and there is a perception that at least some of these complaints have been spurious and reflect a blame culture. We note that no complaint has been upheld against the monitoring officer. Similarly, in the case of other complaints against officers, rather than complaints relating to breaches of Council policies and procedures, they are based on the dislike of an individual or of an individual's response or actions during meetings.

This forms part of a wider culture and a deterioration in trust and respect between members, and between members and officers. This is arguably also reflected in a culture of written communications in relation to member enquiries. For example, in many instances officers want to have a written record of their response due to the culture of the organisation.

Again, due to the organisational culture, there is a perception that historically for some officer complaints, investigations have been undertaken due to concern of the consequences of deciding no further action was required.

The level complaints at the Council has been described as a "mini industry" which takes up valuable time and resource, should the complaints be spurious.

At its most recent meeting of the Standards Committee on 11 June 2021 an update was provided on live member complaints. There were twelve complaints, which had been received between July 2019 and May 2021, all alleging breaches of the Member Code of Conduct. Investigations had been invoked for all 12 and of these 7 had concluded there had been no breach, 2 had recommended local resolution, 2 could not be progressed (the member was no longer a councillor or the complainant did not engage in the process) with the outcome of one complaint outstanding.

There are signs that the new political administration has moved away from this culture, but this is not yet evident across the wider councillor group.

The Council's senior leadership – both officer and member – must act to change the culture and organisational ethos in relation to complaints, and to restore balance and proportionality.

KLOE B5: Standards Committee

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the appropriateness of the work undertaken by the Standards Committee.

Background

In 2018, the Committee on Standards in Public Life conducted a review of local government ethical standards and invited the submission of comments and recommendations from local authorities and representative bodies. The Committee published its final report in January 2019, which included a recommendation that the Local Government Association (LGA) should draft a Model Code of Conduct.

The LGA Model Code of Conduct was drafted in consultation with representative bodies of councillors and officers of the local government. The final Code was published in December 2020. The LGA published a supplementary guidance document to support the Code in April 2021.

During the 2020-21 municipal year, the Council's Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee (the Standards Committee) undertook a wide-ranging review of the Members Code of Conduct and associated arrangements. This included the creation of an Ethical Standards Working Group which was established to guide improvement in the Council's Ethical Framework. Engagement with members included five engagement sessions in December 2020. These sessions covered:

- A review of the Member Code of Conduct, and members were supportive of the adoption of the LGA Code of Conduct, subject to an amendment to the interests of family members and close associates.
- The Council's revised social media policy which included ensuring that issues with social media were addressed and appropriate support provided to members.
- Members Interests to ensure that members were confident and clear in understanding disclosure of interests, their obligations, and how to deal with issues if they emerge. Members suggested that greater clarity around the issue of lobbying should be provided. Separately and in line with the recommendations within the LGA Model Code of Conduct, the Council's Gift and Hospitality arrangements were revised, and the limit was lowered from £100 to £50.
- Review of the arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Code of Conduct – these were amended to include an assessment criteria and indicative timescales for monitoring and clarity purposes, including reporting on the progress of the complaint in the case of delays.
- Duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct, which focused on raising awareness of the role and work of the councillor and promoting high standards, particularly on the specifics relevant to individuals in their respective wards, towns and across the borough

For those members unable to attend these sessions a questionnaire was sent to ensure that all members could contribute. The feedback from the sessions was collated and presented to members at three further sessions held in February 2021.

KEY FINDINGS

March 2021 Standards Committee

At its meeting on 12 March 2021 the Standards Committee recommended the approval of :

- The revised Member Code of Conduct, and that these would be reviewed on an annual basis, alternating between a desk top review and a more detailed review.
- The revised arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Code
- The revised social media policy and that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make any revisions/updates to the guidance which accompanies the social media policy, in consultation with the Chair of Standards Committee.
- The revised gifts and hospitality guidance
- The protocol for meetings to take place on a regular basis between senior officers, political group leaders and chief whips to talk about standards issues.
- The retention policy for Members' Register of Interests be set for as long as a person remains a Councillor, plus three months which represents the relevant limitation period for disclosure of information.
- A review of the recruitment process for Independent Persons be undertaken, in consultation with the Standards Working Group, and a further report submitted to a future meeting of the Standards Committee.
- a further report be submitted to the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee/Standards Working Group in respect of DBS Basic Checks for elected Members.
- That a review of the composition of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee and operation be undertaken in the new municipal year

These were subsequently approved by full Council with effect from the 2021/22 municipal year

KLOE B5: Standards Committee

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the appropriateness of actions taken by the Standards Committee.

KEY FINDINGS (Cont'd)

The Standards Committee also agreed that the member development programme be updated to include training on:

- the Code of Conduct;
- members' interests;
- gifts and hospitality;
- lobbying;
- arrangements for dealing with complaints;
- use of social media;
- promoting high standards, and
- that the induction programme for new members to be updated to include the same training, and to incorporate in member Personal Development Plans (PDPs) for any issues on an individual basis.

Progress on actions

The new Code and associated guidance and arrangements have been in place since the start of the 2021/22 municipal year. The Monitoring Officer has not yet needed to update the social media policy.

The training on the Code of Conduct, lobbying, and gifts and hospitality has been completed. A working group of the Standards Committee is updating the member development programme and engaging members on their development needs, including those members who chair committees and are hold appointments to outside bodies.

The Standards Committee working group has completed its review of the recruitment of Independent Persons who attend the Standards Committee as observers. There are currently three Independent Person roles, with one currently vacant.

Changes to how complaints were reported were introduced at the 11 June 2021 meeting of the Standards Committee, to provide assurance that complaints are being dealt with in a timely way and to provide the Committee with updates on progress. Importantly, these updates are reported on the basis of anonymity, and allows the Committee to identify trends and issues based on the nature of complaints raised

A Standards Committee working group has been established to consider the need for DBS checks for members, which has not yet reported to its parent committee

Reopening of old complaints

At its meeting on 11 June 2021 a member of the Standards Committee put forward a resolution to review all previous cases of complaints, to ensure appropriate processes had been followed and to identify any lessons learned. This was not approved due to there being unclear reasons on justifiable cause, and no advice having been sought on the implications of reopening cases which had concluded in line with the Council's policies and procedures.

Conclusions and recommendations

The unsuccessful resolution to reopen closed complaints is an example of the challenge the Council has in moving on from the past, and as highlighted in relation to KLOE B4, in changing the culture and organisational ethos in relation to complaints, to restore balance and proportionality.

More generally, the recent actions being led by the Standards Committee are good practice and are important given the recent history of the Council. More critical than approving the updated Code and related arrangements will be member compliance, and the **member training and development programme must play a key role in ensuring members fully understand the expectations and standards relating to their role.** It will take time for the wider organisation to believe that change is happening and embedded, from observing consistency in member behaviour in line with the Code, and that are all respectful of those they work with and of the Council as a civic institution.

No meetings have yet taken place between senior officers, political group leaders and chief whips. **These meetings should take place to ensure that these stakeholders are able to discuss emerging issues and trends, recognise good behaviours and discuss how to manage behaviours not in line with the Code.**

KLOE B6: Audit Committee

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the actions undertaken by the Audit Committee during 2021 in relation to the review into the Wragge report.

Background

In Autumn 2014 allegations about the then Deputy Leader were made on social media, which led to police involvement, a standards complaint being made against the Deputy Leader, which in turn led to an internal audit investigation and senior officers commissioning an independent investigation by Wragge and Co Solicitors. During the course of this investigation a complaint was made in relation to the solicitor conducting the review, which led to the Council engaging a QC to review the investigation.

The report from Wragge and Co (the Wragge report) was eventually finalised in April 2016. Following publication further standards complaints, investigation and legal action took place, including a judicial review on behalf of the (by then) former Deputy Leader. A further internal review was undertaken at the request of the then Leader into the circumstances surrounding the Wragge report and issues which subsequently emerged, which reported in June 2020 (the Cox report).

On the 18 March 2021 the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (the Audit Committee) met to discuss the Cox report, based on a report from Audit and Governance Panel, which had been established by the Audit Committee Chair with the objective to provide a safe space to consider this long-standing governance matter and to make recommendations to the Audit Committee with a view to determine if the matter had been addressed sufficiently to enable closure, or whether there were further steps or actions necessary to enable the matter to be concluded.

The Audit and Governance Panel report recognised:

- that over recent years the Council has dealt with and continues to deal with a number of governance concerns and issues. Whilst some are historic in nature, a number have had a tendency to resurface periodically sometimes due to concerns over how they may have been addressed previously.
- in order to address these issues effectively and enable the council to move on and focus on its ambitious objectives as detailed within its corporate plan, considerable time and resources have been expended to examine the identified governance issues and related concerns.
- a number of matters have reached a point whereby the Council has to either been able to identify and address shortcomings, or despite its endeavours, it is unlikely that the council will be able to fully understand the history, chronology or be able to restore the council to its previous position. This can be for various reasons, such as key individuals no longer employed by the council.

- the Council needs to ensure that its conducts itself legally and consistently with recognised good governance principles and practices. The Council is required to consider serious allegations in respect of its conduct or behaviours which could give rise to action against it, reputational harm, or lost confidence. The Council is obliged to consider relevant arrangements in relation to which their legality or whether their ongoing continuance could expose the Council to harm or claims. However, the consideration of such allegations needs to be proportionate and in the public interest.

KEY FINDINGS

The meeting of the Audit Committee on 18 March 2021 lasted almost six hours and adjourned before considering the matter in its entirety. The meeting was contentious with members being concerned about the late provision of papers and a lack of consensus on decisions (with the Audit Committee Chair taking the casting vote on a number of decisions). Due to the length of the meeting a decision on the final matter under discussion about the Wragge report was deferred. Following the committee meeting a complaint was raised against the monitoring officer. This has not yet been resolved.

Due to the pre-election period relating to the May local elections, the Audit Committee did not reconvene until 24 May 2021, where discussions were able to conclude.

The Chair and a number of other members of the Audit Committee changed in June 2021 for the new municipal year. The Audit Committee met on 24 June of 2021 and the minutes of the March and May meetings were presented for approval. However, members of the Committee did not approve the minutes as a correct record and requested that they be submitted to a future meeting for further consideration, with a potential for a further review to be undertaken.

At the next meeting of the Audit Committee on 16 September 2021 the minutes of the March and May meetings were approved with the central action to arrange for appropriate apologies to be made where this had been agreed as appropriate to individuals involved in the original Wragge review, and that the Monitoring Officer update the Committee when these apologies have been made.

KLOE B6: Audit Committee

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the actions undertaken by the Audit Committee during 2021 in relation to the review into the Wragge report.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Wragge and Cox reports concerned significant governance related issues and, as the Audit and Governance Panel stated, the Council needs to ensure that it conducts itself legally and consistently with recognised good governance principles and practices.

However, we note that:

- The matters relate to events in 2014.
- The matters have been subject to significant scrutiny since 2014 including a judicial review.
- The review in 2020 and the Audit Panel and Committee in 2021 took place when there were significant service issues within the Council and used a significant amount of member and officer capacity.
- The matters continue to divide opinions and have resulted in a further lengthy process to agree a resolution.

Now that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee has agreed the actions to bring this long-standing matter to resolution, it will be important that – as the Audit and Governance Panel recognised - the Council manages its position so that the matter does not resurface, so that it can move on and focus on its corporate objectives.



KLOE B7: Financial reporting

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's response to recommendations raised in our 2019/20 audit findings report.

Background

Our 2019/20 Audit Findings Report (AFR) highlighted a number of concerns about the Council's financial reporting in relation to the 2019/20 financial statements, including late submission of the draft accounts, incorrect working papers, the basis for provisions, a material error between cash and creditors, a material error on the cashflow forecast, and the basis for some asset valuations in particular in relation to leisure centres and the Public sixth form centre, and the impact of this on the Council's group accounts.

Our 2019/20 AFR noted that at that time we did not consider that these were sufficient to warrant a qualification of the VfM conclusion. However, should these matters reoccur in relation to the 2020/21 financial statements audit, we will issue a qualified VfM conclusion on financial reporting and consider the use of our wider reporting powers.

KEY FINDINGS

Management created an AFR action plan in response to the recommendations made as part of our 2019/20 audit and an associated project team to take forward these actions. As some of the key recommendation related to asset valuations, interim resource has been allocated to the asset management and valuations teams to progress associated actions.

We have reviewed this action plan which includes an owner and finance lead relating to each recommendation. The plan also sets out the actions required, delivery timescale and updates on progress.

In total there were 22 recommendations of which 13 were high priority and 9 medium priority. The latest version of the action plan reviewed confirms that ten associated actions had been completed (five each for high and medium priority) with the remainder in progress, with some of these having an inter dependency with the introduction of the new Oracle Fusion ERP system. As such, the delays in implementing the Council's new ERP system have an impact on successfully completing some actions

Four of the recommendations did not include required actions in the action plan, and 5 had no target date for completion

The Council does not currently have a corporate asset management database, instead relying on spreadsheets. The Council is taking steps to procure an asset management system, with a report planned to the December Cabinet. This system will take 12 to 18 months to procure and implement.

Acting up arrangements due to the vacant Director of Finance role until August 2021 has contributed to capacity constraints in delivering financial reporting responsibilities.

RELATED FINDINGS

Whilst the focus of this KLOE concerned the Council's annual financial statements, we identified the following in relation to other aspects of financial planning and reporting in the Council:

- There is not a comprehensive understanding across services of the make up and profile of individual budgets.
- There has not been a culture of undertaking financial benchmarking to help an understanding of unit costs.
- Budget management has been based on service bottom line rather than individual budgets.
- The Leadership Team has not received regular budget monitoring reports.
- Director and service engagement in the annual budget setting process has been limited

The above has been recognised and changes introduced by the new Director of Finance and interim Chief Executive, such as the introduction of financial benchmarking, "star chambers" for budget setting, and more regular budget monitoring by the Leadership Team.

Recommendations

Management should ensure that the AFR action plan sets out actions and completion dates in relation to all recommendations. It should also identify where the new ERP system implementation and the planned asset management system could cause delays or impacts on planned actions.

Management should ensure that the changes in relation to budget setting and budget management recently introduced are sustained, and take steps to manage any weaknesses not yet addressed.

Management should ensure the Finance team has appropriate skills and capacity to manage the Council's financial reporting responsibilities.

Appendices

Appendix A: Improvement recommendations

This appendix summarises our improvement recommendations by KLOE.

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	Improvement recommendations	Page #
	KLOE B4: Officer and member relationships	
1.	Embedding the changes that have been made by the Leadership Team and those that are planned will be critical if the Council is to realise its strategic ambition and provide effective governance.	14
2.	Enhancement of the induction programme to new members of Cabinet, including on local government finance and their governance roles is recommended.	14
3.	The Council should ensure that corporate KPIs are agreed so that the implementation of the Corporate Plan can be effectively monitored.	15
4.	The forward plan of the Cabinet should be shared with the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Board to help structure their agenda planning.	15
5.	The Leadership Team should agree key medium-term financial objectives and principles. There should be effective ownership of the principles that underpin the budget setting process, for example the Council's approach to reserves, contingency and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).	15
6.	Senior officers and senior members must lead by example to ensure that the "tone from the top" consistently reflects these values and behaviours. This is critical in ensuring that the wider organisation recognises that changes have been made and that all people are confident in adopting these values and behaviours. This should build on recently introduced staff briefings to include a programme of staff engagement including "pulse" checks to benchmark and monitor progress on the organisation's wellbeing.	16
7.	The Council should ensure that the review of the member development programme is appropriate. In particular, thought should be given to how members with special responsibility roles are developed and supported. This should include succession planning for these roles.	16
8.	Further work is required to establish a formal performance management framework and agree a set of key corporate indicators for the Leadership Team to collectively manage, receive appropriate management information to monitor progress, and set out clear lines of accountability, responsibility, and delegated authority.	16
9.	The recent introduction of financial benchmarking will need to be sustained to create a culture of curiosity in services in how nearest statistical neighbours are performing, to support savings identification and to drive improvements	16

Appendix A: Improvement recommendations (cont'd)

This appendix summarises our improvement recommendations by KLOE.

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	KLOE B4: Officer and member relationships (cont'd)	
10.	The Council should continue its more outward looking approach is sustained and develop key local and sub-regional relationships.	17
11.	When investing in the communications team, the Council should also use this as an opportunity to ensure more effective internal communications, including with back-bench members.	17
12.	There is a need to ensure that members of scrutiny and audit committees are aware of their governance roles including how to interrogate reports and ask the right questions.	17
	KLOE A1: Sandwell Children's Trust	
13.	<p>The Council's senior leadership – both officer and member – should prioritise corporate effort and develop a clear strategy for working with SCT to ensure it remains on its improvement trajectory. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with SCT to progress a multi-agency early intervention and prevention strategy. • ensuring SCT has an appropriately resourced and skilled placements team in place to effectively manage the care market. • conducting a review of KPIs to ensure they are effective for current circumstances. • undertaking financial benchmarking in relation to children's social care, and take a realistic and pragmatic view on the level of funding required. • reviewing the governance roles of officers and members in relation to SCT so that they are clear on their responsibilities, avoid duplication, ensure effective communication and that there is a collective understanding of the performance of SCT and how risks and issues are being managed. 	21
	KLOE A2: Sandwell Leisure Trust	
14.	The Senior Leadership - both officer and member - must take ownership of this issue, prioritise corporate effort and take urgent steps to either resolve the current position with SLT or consider the options for alternative provision should either party decide to terminate the current contract, to ensure the continuity of future leisure service provision and associated reputational impacts.	23
	KLOE A3: Providence Place	
15.	Where the Council considers similar transactions in future, those charged with making decisions must satisfy themselves that they fully understand the detail of the options being proposed. Council officers and their advisors have a responsibility to ensure that members making decisions do so having fully understood these complexities and risks.	25
16.	The Council should ensure that all future property or land acquisitions and disposals are clearly aligned with relevant Council property related strategies.	25

Appendix A: Improvement recommendations (cont'd)

This appendix summarises our improvement recommendations by KLOE.

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	Improvement recommendations	Page #
	KLOE A4: SEND Transport	
17.	<p>The Council's senior leadership – both officers and members – must place priority on agreeing the outcome of the SEND Transport procurement exercise to ensure a further contract extension is not required. This should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not losing the significant progress made on the contract specification's focus on service quality. • Greater support, involvement, dialogue and oversight with the officer teams with responsibility for progressing the procurement. • Ensuring the contract provides the Council with effective management and oversight of the personal transport market. 	28
18.	<p>For the conclusion of the SEND Transport procurement and for all future major procurements, the Council should ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record keeping and declarations of interest are undertaken in line with Council policies and procedures. • Decision making does not create real or perceived risks in relation to inappropriate procurement decisions. • Procurement timescales provide adequate time for both suppliers to submit high quality bids, and the Council to undertake appropriate evaluation, scrutiny and decision making. This timescale should include appropriate time in advance of the procurement for the council to undertake the necessary strategic thinking and planning required, and mitigate the risk of not making an award in the planned timescale 	29
	KLOE A5: Sandwell Land and Property	
19.	The Council should ensure that when considering establishing an arm's length company in the future there is a clear purpose for doing so and that those officers / members of the Council in company director roles are clear of their role and responsibilities in relation to that company.	31
20.	Where arms length companies already exist the Council should gain assurances that company directors fully understand their company roles and responsibilities, that the company administration is properly resourced and appropriate training is provided to company directors. The purpose of the company should be revisited on a regular basis to determine whether the company continues to be of benefit to the Council.	31
	KLOE A6: MADE Festival	
21.	As part of the planned review of the scheme of delegation the Council should ensure that there is clarity of decision making on hosting events, and that the governance arrangements relating to such decisions are effective and clearly communicated.	32

Appendix A: Improvement recommendations (cont'd)

This appendix summarises our improvement recommendations by KLOE.

Page 240	Improvement recommendations	Page #
	KLOE A7: Waste Service	
22.	The Council should prioritise corporate effort to ensure that the recovery plans are approved and appropriate senior management oversight is given to monitoring their effective delivery.	35
23.	The Council should ensure robust contract management arrangements are in place, and review the Key Output Targets (KOTs) and work with Serco to ensure they are line with Council expectations and the data is available to allow effective monitoring of contract outcomes.	35
24.	The Council should ensure that the investments specified in the contract with Serco are made, such as a new vehicle fleet.	35
	KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to DPH	
25.	Should the Council find itself in a similar scenario in the future, it would be prudent to obtain external legal advice on the specific circumstances under consideration, before any final decision on an indemnity is made.	40
26.	<p>We consider that the Council should make the following changes to its management arrangements. The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that senior Council officers in public roles who use social media for their public role are aware of the risks of using social media and their responsibilities in relation to the Council's social media policy. We recommend that these senior officers liaise with and seek advice from the Council's communications team in relation to their social media activity. • Engage the Council's communications team in a review of the social media policy to consider if any updates are required, for example, to reflect the changed circumstances brought about by increased home working, and whether the social media policy should stipulate that social media accounts being used by officers clearly state that these accounts relate to their Council role. • Ensure that where the Council identifies use of social media that could be contentious or considered by others as inappropriate, that this is reviewed by management and appropriate action is taken. • The decision to attend media interviews should be made jointly by the Chief Executive, Senior Officers, and Communications Team • When establishing and implementing high profile and / or significant project or initiatives, a better record of the decision-making and supporting information and evidence must be kept. • Establish a clear policy for working with local MPs to ensure that they are appropriately informed. • Ensure that all relevant COVID-19 communications from local MPs and DHSC should be promptly forwarded to the DPH should it be evident that the DPH has not received them directly. • Review the Emergency Plan to ensure that changes following the demise of PHE are reflected. 	45

Appendix A: Improvement recommendations (cont'd)

This appendix summarises our improvement recommendations by KLOE.

Page 241	Improvement recommendations	Page #
	KLOE A8: Governance and Legal Support to DPH (Cont'd)	
26.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that decisions made to introduce new services, or materially changing existing services, are properly reflected in the minutes of the body responsible for making such decisions Any future lessons learned reviews undertaken by the Council should be undertaken in a collaborative and transparent way with the key stakeholders concerned. 	45
27.	The Council should review its processes and decision making arrangements following a change in government guidance or policy to ensure that local updates are made in a timely manner	46
	KLOE A9: Lion Farm	
28.	The Council must ensure that the recent re-engagement with the developer results in agreeing a clear way forward, including an action plan and timescale so there is clarity on the responsibilities for the Council and developer in order to progress the finalisation of the secondary option agreement, or to be clear on the legal process for both parties extricating themselves from the agreement and the associated terms.	48
29.	The Council must ensure that it has taken all necessary steps to ensure that arrangements are in place so that all the issues identified in the external review are appropriately mitigated and managed.	48
30.	The Council should review its procurement regulations and consider updating them to include land sales, including options agreements, to ensure that best value can be achieved.	48
	KLOE A10: Introduction of new ERP System	
31.	<p>The Council must prioritise corporate effort to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that temporary support is agreed with Oracle for EBS continuity. have an honest and frank discussion with Inoapps and urgently agree a clear resolution on the way forward. review governance arrangements so that good practice (such as Managing Successful Programmes) is in place and embedded, including clarity on the SRO role and approach to risk management. review the resourcing and scope of the implementation to ensure that it is realistic, given current circumstances, focuses on outcomes as well as costs, and there is organisation wide engagement and ownership of the programme. confirm a realistic and achievable go live date. ensure for future major projects a full business case is developed and approved. 	51

Appendix A: Improvement recommendations (cont'd)

This appendix summarises our improvement recommendations by KLOE.

Page 242	Improvement recommendations	Page #
	KLOE B1: Chief Officers	
32.	The Council should ensure that at the very least, appropriate internal and external advice is sought should the departure of a chief officer by mutual consent is agreed..	52
	KLOE B2: Senior Leadership	
33.	Critical to this sustainable change will be the appointment of the right permanent Chief Executive, and the Council must ensure an effective recruitment process, including maximising the chances of attracting a pool of appropriate candidates. Should the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive not be successful the Council should seek to retain the current interim Chief Executive and move this to a full time contract.	53
	KLOE B3: Complaints	
34.	The Council's senior leadership – both officer and member – must act to change the culture and organisational ethos in relation to complaints, and to restore balance and proportionality.	54
	KLOE B5: Standards Committee	
35.	Member training and development programme must play a key role in ensuring members fully understand the expectations and standards relating to their role	56
36.	Meetings between senior officers, political group leaders and chief whips should take place to ensure that these stakeholders are able to discuss emerging issues and trends, recognise good behaviours and discuss how to manage behaviours not in line with the Code	56
	KLOE B6: Audit Committee	
37.	Now that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee has agreed the actions to bring this long-standing matter to resolution, it will be important that – as the Audit and Governance Panel recognised - the Council manages its position so that the matter does not resurface, so that it can move on and focus on its corporate objectives.	58

Appendix A: Improvement recommendations (cont'd)

This appendix summarises our improvement recommendations by KLOE.

Page 243	Improvement recommendations	Page #
	KLOE B7: Financial Reporting	
35.	Management should ensure that the AFR action plan sets out actions and completion dates in relation to all recommendations. It should also identify where the new ERP system implementation and the planned asset management system could cause delays or impacts on planned actions	59
36.	Management should ensure that the changes in relation to budget setting and budget management recently introduced are sustained, and take steps to manage any weaknesses not yet addressed.	59
37.	Management should ensure the Finance team has appropriate skills and capacity to manage the Council's financial reporting responsibilities.	59

Appendix B: The scope of the auditor's work on value for money arrangements

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Revised approach to value for money work for 2020/21

- On 1 April 2020, the National Audit Office introduced a new Code of Audit Practice which comes into effect from audit year 2020/21. The Code introduced a revised approach to the audit of value for money.
- There are three main changes arising from the NAO's new approach:
 - A new set of key criteria, covering financial sustainability, governance and improvements in economy, efficiency and effectiveness
 - More extensive reporting, with a requirement on the auditor to produce a commentary on arrangements across all of the key criteria
 - Auditors undertaking sufficient analysis on the local authority's value for money arrangements to arrive at far more sophisticated judgements on performance, as well as key recommendations on any significant weaknesses in arrangements identified during the audit.
- The Code requires auditors to consider whether the body has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. When reporting on these arrangements, the Code requires auditors to structure their commentary on arrangements under the three specified reporting criteria.



Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Arrangements for improving the way the body delivers its services. This includes arrangements for understanding costs and delivering efficiencies and improving outcomes for service users.



Financial Sustainability

Arrangements for ensuring the body can continue to deliver services. This includes planning resources to ensure adequate finances and maintain sustainable levels of spending over the medium term (3-5 years)



Governance

Arrangements for ensuring that the body makes appropriate decisions in the right way. This includes arrangements for budget setting and management, risk management, and ensuring the body makes decisions based on appropriate information

Potential types of recommendations

A range of different recommendations could be made following the completion of work on the body's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, which are as follows:



Statutory recommendation

Written recommendations to the body under Section 24 (Schedule 7) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. A recommendation under schedule 7 requires the body to discuss and respond publicly to the report.



Key recommendation

The Code of Audit Practice requires that where auditors identify significant weaknesses in arrangements to secure value for money they should make recommendations setting out the actions that should be taken by the body. We have defined these recommendations as 'key recommendations'.



Improvement recommendation

These recommendations, if implemented should improve the arrangements in place at the body, but are not made as a result of identifying significant weaknesses in the body's arrangements



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Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council: Value for Money Governance Review – follow up

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Your key Grant Thornton
team members are:

Mark Stocks
Audit Partner

T: 0121 232 5437

E: mark.c.stocks@uk.gt.com

Guy Clifton
Director

020 7728 2903

E: guy.clifton@uk.gt.com

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A. The scope of the auditor's work on value for money arrangements	55
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The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed for the purpose of completing our work under the NAO Code and related guidance. Our audit is not designed to test all arrangements in respect of value for money. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify significant weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose all irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in arrangements that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

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Introduction

Context, background and scope of the review

Context to our VfM approach

Sections 20 and 21 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the Act) require auditors to be satisfied that the Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the Value for Money (VfM) conclusion.

Our VfM work is carried out in line with the Code of Audit Practice (the Code) which is prepared by the National Audit Office (NAO) under the Act, and its supporting statutory guidance: Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03).

A revised Code came into force on 1 April 2020, after being approved by Parliament. The Code requires auditors to structure their VfM commentary on arrangements under three specified reporting criteria:

- Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services;
- Governance: how the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- Financial sustainability: how the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services.

Background to this review

On the 3 December 2021 we published our report setting out the findings of our review of the Council's governance arrangements, which formed part of our 2020/21 VfM audit.

Our report set out significant weaknesses in the Council's governance arrangements, and was presented to full Council on 18 January 2022, along with the Council's Improvement Plan which set out the Council's response to our recommendations. The Grant Thornton report and the Improvement Plan were approved by the Council at this meeting. On the same day the then Local Government Minister at the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) announced the government was mindful to intervene in the Council because of the findings set out in our governance report.

The Council commissioned the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to undertake a review of the Council's financial management and governance arrangements using the CIPFA Financial Management Model. CIPFA reported their findings and recommendations in January 2022. In addition, the Local Government Association (LGA) undertook a Corporate Peer Challenge review for the Council, reporting its findings and recommendations in February 2022.

On 22 March 2022 the Secretary of State for DLUHC issued statutory directions under section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999. These directions appointed two Commissioners who will oversee all functions associated with the governance and scrutiny of strategic decision making by the Council. The directions will be in force until March 2024, unless the Secretary of State considers it appropriate to amend or revoke them at an earlier date. These directions are in addition to the ones that led to the creation of Sandwell Children's Trust.

The Council has expanded its Improvement Plan developed in response to our December 2021 governance report to incorporate its response to the findings of the CIPFA and LGA reviews. Both the Commissioners and the Council provide updates on progress on delivering the Implementation Plan to the Secretary of State for DLUHC every six months.

The purpose of our follow up review, which relates to our 2021/22 VfM audit, has been to draw conclusions on the progress made by the Council against the recommendations set out in our 3 December 2021 report. This does not represent a review of the Council's Improvement Plan which as already noted draws on a wider set of actions than those relating to the recommendations set out in our December 2021 report.

This review, along with other VfM related activity, has been undertaken in order for us to consider whether there are any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements. Our overall VfM conclusions for 2021/22 will be set out in a separate Annual Auditor's Report.

Our approach

Our work in relation to this review was undertaken between September and October 2022.

Stage 1 – Review of key documents

We submitted an information request for key documents and then undertook a desk top review to reach an initial conclusion on the nature of further work required.

Stage 2 – Further Analysis and Clarifications

We then undertook interviews with key stakeholders in relation to each recommendation to clarify issues identified during stage one and to undertake more detailed analysis. A total of 33 stakeholders have been met during this follow up review.

Context, background and scope of the review (Cont'd)

Our Approach (Cont'd)

Our approach is designed to assess:

- Governance arrangements in place in relation to our scope;
- Council performance against these arrangements; and
- Identify any significant weaknesses and risks.

Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the assistance provided by council officers, council members, and external stakeholders with whom we have engaged during the course of our review.

Additional VfM Code Work

We have identified governance arrangements as an audit risk. This requires additional work to inform our auditor's judgement on VfM.

The work has been undertaken in line with the requirements of the Code and associated auditor guidance. This review helps us discharge our responsibilities under the Code and will include the reporting of any significant weaknesses in arrangements and other points for improvement identified during the review.

Any fee variation is subject to approval from Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) which is responsible for appointing auditors and setting audit fees for relevant authorities that have chosen to opt into its national scheme of auditor appointments.



Key findings

Overview

Introduction

A range of different recommendations can be raised by a council's auditors as follows:

- **Statutory Recommendations:** written recommendations to the Council under Section 24 (Schedule 7) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. A recommendation under schedule 7 requires the Council to discuss and respond publicly to the report.
- **Key Recommendations:** the NAO Code of Audit Practice requires that where auditors identify significant weaknesses as part of their arrangements to secure value for money they should make recommendations setting out the actions that should be taken by the Council. We have defined these recommendations as 'key recommendations'.
- **Improvement Recommendations:** these recommendations, if implemented should improve the arrangements in place at the Council, but are not a result of identifying significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements.

Further detail on the scope of auditor's work on VfM arrangements can be found at Appendix A.

Our December 2021 report included the following:

- 3 statutory recommendations,
- 5 key recommendations, and
- 37 improvement recommendations.

In this section we summarise our key findings on the Council's progress.

Our detailed findings relating to each Key Line of Enquiry are set out in a separate section.

Key Lines of Enquiry

The scope of our original review covered 17 Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs):

	SERVICES & MANAGEMENT
A1	The Children's Trust
A2	Sandwell Leisure Trust
A3	Providence Place
A4	Special Educational Needs Transport
A5	Sandwell Land and Property Company
A6	MADE festival
A7	Waste service
A8	Governance and legal support re DPH
A9	Lion Farm
A10	Introduction of new ERP system (Oracle)

	MEETINGS, COMPLAINTS & RELATIONSHIPS
B1	Chief Officers
B2	Senior Leadership
B3	Complaints
B4	Officers and members relationships
B5	Standards Committee
B6	Audit Committee
B7	Financial Reporting

Our findings in relation to KLOE A8 were not included in our December 2021 report and have not formed part of this follow up review.

As part of this follow up review we have also considered how the Council engages with residents and community stakeholders (KLOE B8).

Key Findings

This section provides a summary update of the Council's progress in relation to the key findings and statutory and key recommendations in our December 2021 report.

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Statutory Recommendation 1: It is imperative that senior officers and senior members take effective corporate grip of long-standing service issues highlighted by the findings in this report: (including SLT, SCT, the waste service, the ERP system, and Lion Farm) and prioritise corporate effort in managing the issues identified, and embed the solutions into the Council.

Key Findings

The Council has a greater corporate grip over improvement, performance and decision making. It has demonstrated progress on a number of areas such as children's social care and leisure services. The Council's leadership has taken shared responsibility for the oversight of the delivery of the Improvement Plan, and for cascading the plan through the organisation.

The introduction of a Performance Management Framework (PMF) provides an opportunity to improve evidenced based decision making, and sets out accountabilities to drive the delivery of the Corporate Plan. The Council needs to continue to refine how data is used to support the monitoring of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Cabinet is demonstrating a commitment to making the tough decisions that are required, such as decisions made in relation to SLT, Lion Farm and SEND Transport. The Leadership Team has made good progress in its corporate approach to managing the operational issues and challenges raised in our previous report, with significant progress made in many areas. **There is more to do and this operational focus needs to continue, for example, on waste services, and also needs to expand into other areas, for example, medium-term financial planning and financial statement production.**

Skills and capacity gaps in relation to Serco and the ERP System implementation have been recognised and steps taken to manage them, including the use of interim and external resources. There has been a restructure of the Finance Team to better reflect the capacity and skill requirements needed to support the wider organisation. Work has been undertaken to better clarify roles and responsibilities, for example in relation to the ERP System implementation.

There is evidence of greater senior officer involvement in areas of key service challenges. A corporate Programme Management Office (PMO) has been created which will co-ordinate key change and transformation projects. These changes are welcome and necessary but it will take time to evidence their effectiveness. The Council needs to ensure there is a structured approach to knowledge transfer when using external specialists and that the capacity, skills and resourcing levels of the PMO and of key projects remain appropriate, that the PMO is able to effectively monitor the delivery of the Implementation Plan, and the PMO integrates all transformation and change activity being undertaken across the Council.

Statutory Recommendation 2: The Council must ensure that the learning in relation to commercial decisions, procurement and contract management highlighted in this report are understood through the organisation.

Key Findings

There is clear evidence that the Council is making better procurement and commercial decisions. The SEND Transport procurement approach was reviewed, revised and re-run and has been successfully concluded. SLaP has been dissolved, and Lion Farm and Providence Place are now being managed through to a resolution. Notice has been served on SLT with plans to create a new local authority trading company for leisure services. The most recent Ofsted inspection of children's services has seen the rating move from inadequate to requires improvement to be good. This represents significant improvement.

Significant progress has been made on the ERP systems replacement, including the procurement of a new implementation partner. Due to the poor way these had previously been managed the Council has faced delays and incurred unnecessary costs. For example, in relation to ERP the Council has incurred additional costs of at least £2.2m, however we acknowledge that the Council is seeking to mitigate this loss.

Key Findings (Cont'd)

This section provides a summary update of the Council's progress in relation to the key findings and statutory and key recommendations in our December 2021 report.

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Key Findings: Statutory Recommendation 2 (Cont'd)

The lessons learned from both poor past practice, and the improved practice put in place to expedite failings must continue to be used to ensure that future large scale procurements and decision making follow good practice. The Council has not yet developed and agreed a commercial strategy which remains a key action to resolved and ensure there is understanding of the strategy across the organisation.

The Council has reviewed and updated its Contract and Procurement Procedures, financial decision thresholds, and the Protocol for the Disposal of Council Owned Land and Buildings, which were approved in July 2022.

There is evidence of improved corporate ownership and working relationships between the Council and SCT and Serco, helped by greater levels of senior officer engagement. Service quality and outcomes have been a feature of improvements made in relation to the SEND Transport procurement and form part of ongoing discussions in relation to the waste management contract.

As already noted, there remain challenges to progress in some areas, in particular in relation to waste services.

Statutory Recommendation 3: Senior leadership, both officers and members, must demonstrate that they can continue to work together effectively, that they operate in line with the Council's values, codes, policies and procedures, and that there is zero tolerance to inappropriate behaviours. This includes changing the organisational culture in relation to complaints so that they restore balance and proportionality.

Key Findings

Much greater stability can now be seen, both politically and at a senior officer level, and the Cabinet and Leadership Team are working increasingly well both collectively and via their individual Director and Portfolio Lead roles. Hybrid working provides challenges for the Council's leadership, but there is evidence these changes are starting to be recognised across the wider organisation.

There is a more mature engagement between the Leader, Cabinet, Committee Chairs and senior officers, supporting good planning and work programming across different Council committees and a greater level of professionalism in how business is conducted by these committees. The Leader has an inclusive leadership style, and is working well with other Cabinet members and the chairs of key committees, who in turn recognise the need for change and are demonstrating their commitment to the Council's improvement journey.

By taking a grip of many long-standing operational challenges the leadership of the Council is starting to create time and space to better consider the long-term. There is evidence that the Council is moving away from its insularity with improved focus and engagement with regional and national bodies. Changes to financial decision thresholds provides an opportunity for Cabinet agendas to focus on issues of strategic priority.

The Performance Management Framework provides the Council leadership with the mechanism to monitor progress against Corporate Plan objectives. Further work is required for the Council to demonstrate the necessary organisational and cultural change, including the introduction of the Phase 2 Improvement Plan, and having in place appropriate data to monitor all KPIs.

Budget monitoring and financial benchmarking have been introduced, but further work is required before they are being used appropriately by all services.

The Council approved new financial decision thresholds in July 2022, with an updated scheme of delegation approved by the Council on 8 November 2022. These changes will need to become embedded so that officers are empowered and decision making becomes more agile.

The Current Position

The themes set out our December 2021 report illustrated how the Council's recent behaviours and legacy issues were impacting on good governance and decision making. Our previous report noted that the Council's leadership had started to make some necessary changes and that "green shoots" were in place to deliver the widespread transformation and changes required.

Key Findings (Cont'd)

This section provides a summary update of the Council's progress in relation to the key findings and statutory and key recommendations in our December 2021 report.

The Current Position (Cont'd)

The Council's Improvement Plan has been key for creating and maintaining a focus on the required improvements, and the Council has made significant progress on many of the recommendations made in our previous report, supported by the creation of additional capacity in some key areas. The Council has put in place the foundations to deliver the sustainable improvements that are needed, and significant improvements are already being made. Finalising and then delivering the phase 2 Implementation Plan, which will focus on organisational culture, values and behaviours required to deliver change, will be crucial for ensuring sustainable improvement.

The Council retains a challenging agenda of delivering business as usual alongside improvement and transformation and it must maintain the pace of change so that progress does not plateau or fall backwards. The Council must not become dependent on the Government intervention and the role of the Commissioners and be clear that the improvement journey is the responsibility of the Council leadership, both senior members and senior officers. In addition, the external environment for all councils remains highly uncertain, including the level of future Government funding and potential policy changes, alongside the impact of the cost of living crisis on businesses and communities and generationally significant levels of inflation.

The Council must ensure that it has taken all necessary steps to ensure that there is clarity on its medium-term financial position including how any funding gaps will be managed. The Council must also use the improvement building blocks now in place to bring a greater focus on service user responsiveness and outcomes. Once all the planned revisions to the Constitution have been agreed, the Council will need to embed these changes and demonstrate sustainable improvements in governance and scrutiny of decision making.

Improvement is also needed in the Council's financial processes and its processes for the production of its financial statements. At the date of this report the Council has not completed the audit of its 2020/21 financial statements. This needs addressing as a matter of urgency.

The interim Chief Executive has continued to be central to the improvements that have been made to date. The appointment of a new permanent Chief Executive was confirmed by the Council on 8 November 2022, with their start date confirmed as 6 February 2023. [The success of this appointment remains critical for the Council's improvement journey.](#)

Recommendations and detailed findings

We now set out the summary of our findings for each KLOE followed by our key recommendations.

The detailed findings in relation to each individual KLOE are set out in the following section. We have also identified various improvement recommendations, which are summarised at Appendix B.

We consider that these matters represent significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.

KLOEs: Summary Findings

This section provides a summary of the key findings on each KLOE.

KLOE	Summary Findings
A1: The Children's Trust	The Council has improved its relationships and contract management arrangements with SCT and the most recent Ofsted rating is evidence that positive steps have been taken on the Trust's improvement journey. The Council should continue to work with SCT to ensure there is sustainability of continued progress. In particular, it will need to support SCT to mitigate workforce challenges and will need to monitor SCT's ambitious financial plans, including efficiencies and demand management savings.
A2: Sandwell Leisure Trust	The Council has taken decisive steps to manage the contractual arrangements with SLT and is making changes to improve the provision of leisure services. The Council needs to successfully progress its plans for the local authority trading company.
A3: Providence Place	This matter has now been actioned and resolved with improved governance arrangements in place. We note that the Council's previous management of this issue incurred a significant loss
A4: SEND Transport	This matter has now been actioned and resolved with improved governance arrangements in place. The Council must ensure that the lessons learned are shared across other council services so that this learning becomes embedded across the organisation.
A5: SLaP	This matter has now been actioned and resolved with improved governance arrangements in place.
A6: MADE Festival	This matter has now been actioned and resolved with improved governance arrangements in place.
A7: Waste Service	The Council has made progress in its management of the Serco contract including improving the governance arrangements and introducing greater control to the management of the contract. The Council and Serco are moving from what was an adversarial contract management relationship towards a more constructive and collaborative partnership approach. There is greater engagement at most levels between the Council and Serco and relationships have improved to those being experienced during the time of our previous review. However, many changes now in train need to be completed and the more collaborative approach needs to become fully embedded and progress is still required including to finalise all associated plans and schedules, and formally agree the replacement timescales for the waste fleet and the financing of replacement costs and supplier lead in times with Serco. Clarity should be sought over the use of previous capital payments in relation to the Council's accounts.

KLOEs: Summary Findings (Cont'd)

This section provides a summary of the key findings on each KLOE.

KLOE	Summary Findings
A9: Lion Farm	The Council has taken all possible actions to resolve this matter and has a clear way forward, although we note that the process is by its nature slow. The Council has also improved arrangements with the updated protocol for the disposal of Council owned land and buildings.
A10: Introduction of new ERP System	The Council has taken significant steps to correct what was a floundering system implementation and undertaken a significant amount of work since our previous review. The Council has introduced more robust and appropriate governance arrangements, appointed a new implementation partner, scaled up the resources to implement the programme, introduced a programme management approach, engaged specialist external support and capacity, and corrected skills and experience gaps. The programme is now on a much more sound footing and the Council leadership now recognises that the introduction of a new ERP System is an enabler for transformation and has moved from a “lift and shift” approach to managing the implementation as a change programme. The increase in costs to manage the implementation more effectively should increase the chances of a successful implementation and for the Council to realise the planned benefits. However, the way the original implementation was managed has incurred significant and unnecessary costs and delays for the Council, which remains a key learning reference point for future large-scale change projects and programmes.
B1: Chief Officers	Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council’s arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.
B2: Senior Leadership	Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council’s arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks. The success of the appointment of the new permanent Chief Executive remains critical for the Council if it is to successfully continue on its improvement journey.
B3: Complaints	Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council’s arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.
B4: Office and Member Relationships	Much greater stability can now be seen, both politically and at a senior officer level, and the Cabinet and Leadership Team are working increasingly well both collectively and via their individual Director and Portfolio Lead roles. This is being recognised across the wider organisation. There is a more mature engagement between the Leader, Cabinet, Committee Chairs and senior officers, supporting good planning and work programming across different Council committees and a greater level of professionalism in how business is conducted by these committees. The introduction of a PMF is evidence of an improvement in consolidated reporting and provides the Council’s leadership with an opportunity for improved evidenced based decision making and monitoring the delivery of the Corporate Plan and Improvement Plan. The Council recognises that the PMF approach requires ongoing refinement to improve how key indicators can be effectively measured.

KLOEs: Summary Findings (Cont'd)

This section provides a summary of the key findings on each KLOE.

KLOE	Summary Findings
B5: Standards Committee	Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks. The Council must ensure that the new arrangements now in place are used effectively to monitor and take prompt action whenever inappropriate behaviour is identified.
B6: Audit Committee	Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks. A final decision needs to be made by the Leader before this matter can be considered formally closed.
B7: Financial Reporting	<p>The Council's procedures for the production of its financial statements require significant improvement. We note that there are a number of legacy issues from prior years, dating back to the previous accounts, that are undermining the quality of the financial statements. We consider that this needs to be an area of priority for the Council. Until these matters are resolved there will remain some uncertainty over the Council's financial position.</p> <p>The other improvements that are in train will take time to embed, and improvements are not likely to be seen until the production of the 2021/22 accounts. The Council must successfully implement the new corporate asset management system to timescale, ensure all key finance roles have permanent appointments, and prioritise the recruitment to, and the training and development of, the Finance Team so that the role and behaviour changes planned become embedded.</p>
B8: Engagement with Residents and Community Groups	Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks. The Council needs to ensure that it continues to engage with residents and that this engagement supports improved corporate focus on service quality and customer outcomes.

Key recommendations

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Improvement recommendations are made throughout this report and these are summarised in Appendix B. Our key recommendations are summarised below.

#	Key Recommendation
1.	The Council must conclude the design of Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan, which will focus on organisational culture, values and behaviours required to deliver change, and introduce a “golden thread” aligning corporate KPIs to individuals performance objectives, so that planned improvements and changes become embedded across the organisation. The Council must also use the improvement building blocks now in place to bring a greater focus on service user responsiveness and outcomes.
2.	The Council needs to ensure that the new corporate PMO remains appropriately resourced, integrates all transformation and change activity being undertaken across the Council, and has access to appropriate data sources to be able to effectively monitor the delivery.
3.	The Council should progress and finalise outstanding actions relating to our previous recommendations, in particular introducing a commercial strategy and an asset management strategy and conclude the service based actions arising from our previous recommendations, including improvements in the management of the waste contract and the creation of the new leisure services company. The Leadership Team needs to ensure there is appropriate corporate focus on medium term financial planning and financial statement production.
4.	Once all the planned revisions to the Constitution have been agreed, the Council will need to embed these changes and demonstrate sustainable improvements in governance and scrutiny of decision making.

Management responses to these and the improvement recommendations are included in a separate Council report.

Detailed Findings

Key Corporate Actions

Before setting out our findings on each KLOE we set out our findings on key corporate actions taken by the Council since our previous review.

Governance Review

The Council has instigated a review of its governance arrangements following issues identified by our original VfM governance review, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge review and the CIPFA Financial Management review. These reviews identified the need for the Council to address underlying constitutional and procedural deficiencies that directly and indirectly undermine or hinder the Council's governance arrangements, decision making ability and key working relationships.

The Governance Review has been established to refresh the Council's decision-making mechanisms and update constitutional arrangements to enable the achievement of the Council's strategic direction and ambition. In particular:

- efficient and effective decision-making;
- a more open, transparent and accountable Council;
- greater engagement with residents, communities and stakeholders in relation to democratic functions;
- more effective support to elected members to enable them to be confident and successful in their various roles;
- corporate governance documentation, policies and procedures to be updated and revised so that they are consistent with national guidance, align to best practice and are fit for purpose;
- strong and healthy relationships between elected members and officers.

An Officer Governance Project Team was established to help coordinate and oversee the delivery of the Governance Review. Support has also been provided by the LGA, the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), CIPFA, and the Government appointed Commissioners.

On 27 May 2022 the Governance and Constitution Review Committee established a cross-party Member Working Group to oversee the coordination of constitution revisions and proposals. The Working Group has considered a series of draft constitution proposals and worked with other committees, boards and groups to ensure proposed change are joined up, for example, any development and training needs are being fed into the Member Development Programme as training and development needs are identified.

The review has been designed to be delivered in three phases:

- Phase 1: Revisions to the Contract and Procurement Procedure, financial decision thresholds, and Protocol for the Disposal of Council Owned Land and Buildings. These were approved by the Council in July 2022.
- Phase 2: Revisions were agreed by full Council on 8 November 2022 in relation to: the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, Council Procedure Rules, Executive Procedure Rules, Access to Information Rules, Officer Employment Procedure Rules, Protocol Member and Employee Relations, and Officers' Code of Conduct.
- Phase 3: Proposed changes are due to be presented to full Council on 13 December 2022 in relation to: Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, Financial Regulations and Procedure Rules, Remaining Articles, and Responsibility for Functions.

An annual review of the Constitution has been agreed following the conclusion of the current review.

We refer, where appropriate, to this governance review during the detailed findings set out in this report.

Improvement Plan

The Council developed an improvement plan in response to our original VfM Governance review which, as already noted, has been expanded to incorporate the recommendations from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge review and the CIPFA Financial Management review. It has also been developed in line with the Secretary of State for DLUHC's Statutory Direction. This single Improvement Plan was agreed by full Council on 7 June 2022 and structured around the following six themes:

- Organisational Culture
- Corporate Oversight
- Strategic Direction
- Decision Making
- Procurement and Commercial
- Partnership and Relationships

Each theme has a clear set of deliverables, milestones and responsibilities which will be used to track our progress against expected timescales

Key Corporate Actions (Cont'd)

Before setting out our findings on each KLOE we set out our findings on key corporate actions taken by the Council since our previous review.

The Improvement Plan (Cont'd)

In developing the Improvement Plan staff and elected members were engaged including via a co-production staff network and a staff panel. The Plan was also discussed with local MPs.

The Council recognises that the June 2022 version of the Improvement Plan as phase 1, with an updated Improvement Plan to include any additional areas of improvement that are identified during phase 1 activity.

Further staff and member engagement is planned through June to December 2022 to help shape the development of phase 2, which is due to go to Cabinet in January 2023. This engagement is due to focus on organisational change and to determine the desired culture of the Council.

In his Directions to the Council, the Secretary of State for DLUHC appointed two Commissioners with powers to make sure that the Council "has made sufficient improvement within the next two years to be able to comply with its best value duty on a sustainable basis". These roles are:

- Managing Director Commissioner: whose responsibilities include giving direction and leadership to deliver improvements that the Council is required to take; and
- Assistant Commissioner: one of whose responsibilities is overseeing the cultural change necessary at the Council.

The Commissioners will be providing six-monthly reports to the Secretary of State on the Council's progress in addressing the matters highlighted by the external reviews. The first of these was made in June 2022 and at the time of our review there had not been a response from the Secretary of State. The next Commissioner report will be made in December 2022.

There are several factors that will inform any decision by the Secretary of State to end the period of Government intervention at the Council, and this decision will be based on reports received from the Commissioners. Some of these factors include:

- That the council can demonstrate sustainable improvements in governance and scrutiny of decision making.
- That a permanent Chief Executive has been successfully appointed.
- The Council has reached a decision on implementing a four-yearly election cycle.

Progress on the Implementation Plan is monitored by Leadership Team on a monthly basis using RAG ratings and exception reporting.

Terms of reference have been agreed and the Managing Director Commissioner will chair this meeting, with the Assistant Commissioner in attendance as an observer.

Members will have oversight of progress through monthly informal reporting and formal reporting to Cabinet quarterly. Progress is reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Corporate Scrutiny Management Board.

Monitoring will continue until all actions have been completed and Government intervention has been lifted. Member-led committees will be used for decision making and to maintain oversight of implementation of the actions within the Improvement Plan. These will include Governance and Constitution Review Committee, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Scrutiny Committees.

The Council already has in place an existing Statutory Direction from the Department for Education (DfE) in relation to Children's Social Care. This Statutory Direction included the establishment of an independently chaired Improvement Board and these arrangements will continue to run alongside the council-wide interventions. There will be scheduled updates between Sandwell Children's Trust and the Commissioners through quarterly meetings with the independently appointed Chair of the Trust Improvement Board.

A dedicated team has been established to manage the development and delivery of the Implementation Plan via a programme management office (PMO). The PMO will identify variances to the agreed deliverables and work with lead officers to ensure mitigating action is designed and implemented as appropriate. The PMO aims to draw on key skills and expertise available across the Council as necessary, such as communications, organisational development, employee engagement, risk management, democratic services, financial management and internal audit.

We refer, where appropriate, to the Improvement Plan during the detailed findings set out in this report.

Review of the Council's election cycle

At its meeting on 26 July 2022, the Council approved arrangements for a public consultation in connection with the possible change of the election cycle from the current system of 'election by thirds' to 'whole council elections' occurring once every four years. This followed Directions by the Secretary of State for DLUHC that the Council reviews its current elections cycle. The Council undertook public consultation during August and September 2022. Of the total number of consultation responses received, 69% voted to retain the current electoral cycle of electing "by thirds". At full Council on 8 November 2022 the decision was taken to maintain the current cycle of elections "by thirds".

Key Corporate Actions (Cont'd)

Before setting out our findings on each KLOE we set out our findings on key corporate actions taken by the Council since our previous review.

Performance Management Framework

The Council approved a refreshed Corporate Plan (Vision 2030) in October 2021 which did not include any corporate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Through the development of directorate business plans during Autumn and Winter 2021/22 key metrics were identified to track progress and measures the success of the Council's actions towards the delivery of the Corporate Plan.

On 12 April 2022 the Council approved a Corporate Performance Management Framework (PMF) to monitor delivery of the Corporate Plan. The PMF is designed to:

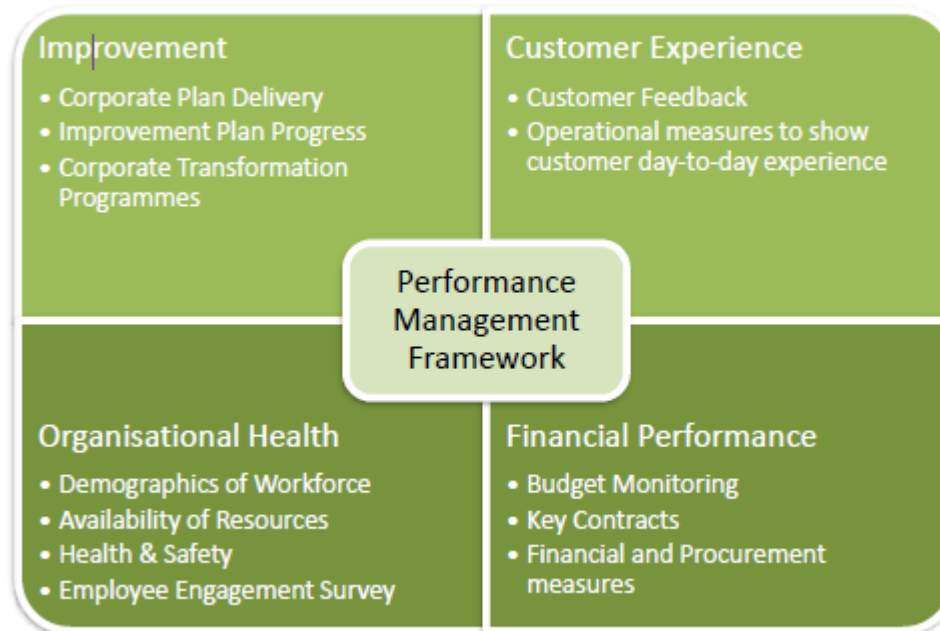
- Track progress on delivering strategic outcomes in the Corporate Plan.
- Develop collective responsibility for delivering the Corporate Plan, across elected members, the Leadership Team and Council staff.
- Help improve services and outcomes by identifying poor performance and sharing good practice.
- Motivate staff by having clear objectives and targets, and hold staff accountable for delivery whilst providing cross-council support to address issues and achieve priorities.
- Celebrate the achievements of the Council whilst also identifying risks to achieving strategic outcomes and enable the Leadership Team and elected members to put in place mitigations in a timely manner.
- Provide a strong evidence based for improved decision making and the efficient use of resources.

The PMF is structured across four components as set out in Figure 1 on the right. A series of KPIs have been agreed for each area of the framework. Performance information has been identified to support each KPI be used to monitor progress, including benchmarking information where available.

The Council has developed a service planning framework that seeks to understand the needs of communities, identified priorities and sets out actions to deliver and measure progress and impact. This sets out the purpose of and relationship between the following plans:

- The Corporate plan sets out the strategic priorities and ambition for the borough
- The Improvement Plan sets out actions to respond to the Grant Thornton Governance Review, the LGA Peer Review and the CIPFA FM Review.

Figure 1: Summary of the Performance Management Framework



- The Corporate Plan and Improvement Plan set the priorities for directorate and service level plans.
- The Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan and Directorate Plans feed into the development of the Corporate Transformation Plan.
- The Corporate Transformation Plan is to ensure service improvements and transformation projects are delivered in line with the Corporate Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

We refer, where appropriate, to the PMF as part of our detailed findings set out in this report.

KLOE A1: Sandwell Children's Trust

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider actions undertaken by the Council to secure improvement in children's social care outcomes.

Background

The Service Delivery Contract (SDC) between the Council and Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) went live on 1 April 2018. The total contract period was for 10 years with an option to exercise a break after 5 years of operation.

Our December 2021 report recommended the following:

The Council's senior leadership – both officer and member – should prioritise corporate effort and develop a clear strategy for working with SCT to ensure it remains on its improvement trajectory. This should include:

- working with SCT to progress a multi-agency early intervention and prevention strategy.
- ensuring SCT has an appropriately resourced and skilled placements team in place to effectively manage the care market.
- conducting a review of KPIs to ensure they are effective for current circumstances.
- undertaking financial benchmarking in relation to children's social care, and take a realistic and pragmatic view on the level of funding required.
- reviewing the governance roles of officers and members in relation to SCT so that they are clear on their responsibilities, avoid duplication, ensure effective communication and that there is a collective understanding of the performance of SCT and how risks and issues are being managed.

KEY FINDINGS

Ofsted inspection

In May 2022 Ofsted undertook their latest inspection of Children's Services at Sandwell. The report, which was published on 5 July 2022, rated services as 'require improvement to be good'. The previous inspection by Ofsted, conducted in November 2017, rated services as inadequate. This previous inspection led to the creation of SCT in April 2018.

Ofsted reported that the pace and trajectory of improvement had increased over the year preceding the inspection, underpinned by stronger strategic leadership and changes to service delivery such as the move to a locality model, the introduction of an early help strategy, a social work career pathway and high quality specialist services. Ofsted also noted effective collaboration by social workers with partners in other services.

However, Ofsted also reported that not all children experience effective social work practice due to staff turnover, workload pressures and variation in management oversight and support and effectiveness of partnership working.

Children's Services in Sandwell have been rated inadequate for over a decade, so this latest inspection reflects a positive direction of travel. However, Ofsted noted that COVID-19 had slowed the improvement journey and there is still much more to do for services to be consistently good.

When a service comes out of inadequate the Department for Education (DfE) will take a measured judgement on any changes to their terms of intervention. The current statutory direction will remain in place until DfE is assured on the long term trajectory of sustainable improvement. However, following the most recent Ofsted inspection results the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families acknowledged the improvements that Sandwell has made and advised that Sandwell will now enter a period of 'transition from intervention'. There will continue to be ongoing support and supervision from the DfE until it is clear there is a 'sustainability of continued progress'.

The Council will need to ensure that the SCT accelerates its progress on this improvement trajectory so that the position does not plateau, including sharing good practice on case work across the various SCT social work teams.

Multi-agency early intervention and prevention strategy

The Council, working with SCT and the voluntary and community sector, has developed a multi-agency early help strategy, which focuses on early intervention and prevention across the early help system. It was launched on 17 March 2022 and there have been a number of events with partner organisations, such as the police and schools, to promote the strategy. The strategy seeks to ensure that needs are identified at the earliest possible point and early interventions prevent needs from escalating, reducing the need for more costly service provision.

The Council has approved invest to save funding for a strategic lead to drive the implementation of the strategy. Whilst the strategy is now being implemented it will take time to embed across all the organisations involved, and will require cultural, behaviour and practice change from the organisations involved to be successful.

The SCT Improvement Board monitors progress on the implementation of the strategy and the Children and Families Strategic Partnership has refreshed its strategic priorities to include early help and this body along with the Safeguarding Board provides system-wide governance for the new strategy.

It is envisaged that the strategy will take 18 months to embed across the early help system, and the Council will need to continue to closely monitor the implementation of the early help strategy to ensure planned objectives and outcomes are realised.

KLOE A1: Sandwell Children's Trust (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider actions undertaken by the Council to secure improvement in children's social care outcomes.

Workforce challenges

Workforce challenges, relating to recruitment and retention remain a significant issue for SCT, with 25% of roles unfilled or covered by agency staff significantly impacting on capacity. The Council and SCT have a clear understanding of how this impacts on performance and SCT has developed a workforce strategy. There is a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) in place on social worker vacancy rates which is regularly monitored by the Operational Partnership Board (OPB), which has been in contract failure zone for last six months.

Social care is facing significant workforce pressures across the West Midlands, and indeed nationally, with the reputation of Sandwell considered a contributory factor to current challenges, alongside a number of councils in the region actively competing with each other for scarce resources. SCT has been using the recent improved Ofsted rating as part of recruitment messaging to try and address any labour market perceptions.

In 2018 SCT in consultation with the Council introduced a market supplement to be paid to social workers of £2.5k with a total value of £150k included in the 208/19 contract sum and to be retained for the following three years of the contract.

In March 2022 SCT's remuneration committee undertook a benchmarking exercise comparing the pay of children's social workers in Sandwell and the 13 West Midlands councils and identified that some roles at SCT provided competitive pay rates. However, a number of West Midlands councils have introduced financial incentives such as "golden handshakes" of between £2k and £10k.

When comparing SCT's social worker pay to the benchmarked group, SCT's pay bandings were generally lower than half the other councils. In March 2022 the Council's Cabinet agreed to continue the market supplement of £2.5k per annum which equates to £582k for 2022/23, of which £150k is already included in the contract sum. This is a maximum cost based on all 168 social worker posts being permanently employed. If this were the case the reduction in the cost of agency staff would offset the cost of the market supplement.

The Council have taken positive actions in supporting SCT manage its operational and financial challenges. The Council must continue to work with SCT to mitigate and reduce the level of vacancies and use of agency staff and take steps to ensure the associated KPI does not lead to contract failure.

Placement costs

The average cost of residential placements for Sandwell has been increasing since April 2018, with seven placements costing over £6k per week during 2021/22. The rise in placement costs is offset by the lower than average number of children in residential care (6% in Sandwell compared to the England average of 14%). This relatively low number of children in residential care suggests that SCT has been able to support children with high needs in foster placements. The children in care peaked at 56 in December 2018 and had reduced to 51 in February 2022.

The Head of Strategic Commissioning, an invest to save role, provides additional capacity and expertise to increase the potential for joint commissioning and ensure stronger strategic planning at an individual case level with key partners including the NHS and schools. The Head of Strategic Commissioning also provides challenge to children's placement activity including costs and the appropriateness of placements for the child, to support the drive for efficiencies. A saving of £87k has been reported during 2022/23 relating to complex placements. Nonetheless, the Council is forecasting an overspend during 2022/23 of £750k due to SCT needing to bring in managed social work teams to cover vacancies. The Council also has a £500k contingency for high cost replacements.

SCT has a board led by SCT's Director of Resources which monitors placements. At the time of our review a number of market events were planned with providers. The sufficiency of placements is discussed regularly at management and contract management meetings between the Council and SCT and by the SCT Improvement Board.

Invest to Save

The contract between the Council and SCT allows SCT to make invest to save proposals to increase the contract sum in the short term, to be paid back to the Council via a reduction in a future contract sum. SCT has submitted two invest to save proposals which the Council approved in September 2021.

These related to Early Help and Strategic Commissioning and total £287.5k investment in 2021/22 and 2022/23 with this amount being returned to the council by SCT in 2023/24 and 2024/25 by a reduction in the contract sum.

The Council should continue to monitor the progress of SCT against these invest to save activities to ensure that SCT is able to meet its financial plans and generate the ambitious savings and efficiencies required for the contract sum to be reduced.

KLOE A1: Sandwell Children's Trust (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider actions undertaken by the Council to secure improvement in children's social care outcomes.

Contract review

The SDC includes a requirement for SCT to produce an annual review and a contract review at the end of year four of operation. There is a joint requirement on the Council to also review the contract at the end of its first four contract years (April 2018 to March 2022). Unlike the annual review, the contract review is undertaken by both parties and the SDC sets out what this review should cover.

On the completion of the contract review process a recommendation must be made to the Secretary of State on whether a break notice should be served, and children's social care functions brought back under the direct management of the Council. The Secretary of State will make the final decision on the serving of the break notice, considering the recommendations of both the Council and SCT.

At its meeting on 28 September 2022 the Council's Cabinet agreed to not recommend to the Secretary of State that the break clause be invoked.

The funding provided by the Council to SCT during 2022/23 will be £71.7m and was determined by the contract sum negotiation process and change controls agreed by Cabinet. This amount is higher than the annual budget when the Trust was set up in 2018. There have been several financial pressures on the Trust linked to demand, the cost of placements and significant staff recruitment and retention issues that have underpinned the need for additional funding. SCT has detailed how it will reduce the total spend on service provision, through efficiencies and demand management, so that by 2024/25 the annual budget will be, after inflation and pay awards, over £2m a year lower than the 2021/22 budget.

The expectation when SCT was set up was that services would move from being 'inadequate' to 'good' within four years. The Council has accepted that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the delivery of children's services and Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 28 September 2022 to revise the timeline for achieving a judgement of 'Good' to March 2025, which also recognised that the next Ofsted inspection is likely to take place in three years.

SCT overspent their budget by £6.567m in 2018/19 and the Council allocated £5m towards this deficit from reserves. SCT overspent by £4.332m in 2019/20 but did not request additional funding, instead agreeing that this overspend would be recovered by the end of 2020/21. SCT had a cumulative deficit by the end of 2020/21 but is expected to recover their position by the end of 2023/24, based on information provided to the Council as part of the 2022/23 contract negotiations.

The service delivery contract between the Council and SCT sets out 15 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) agreed in July 2018. These were based on key areas of service improvement against areas identified by Ofsted, and are monitored by OPB and the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB). We note that the SCT Board uses a performance management framework that is broader than these 15 contractual KPIs.

The Council and SCT agreed to review the contractual KPIs to ensure they are appropriate for current circumstances, with the new set of KPIs to be used from 1 April 2023 contract period. This review of KPIs was ongoing at the time of our review.

Benchmarking

The Council commissioned LG Futures to undertake financial benchmarking including analysis of children's social care in Sandwell. Children's social care spend in Sandwell based on head of population was lower than the average spend of statistical nearest neighbours over the period 2018/19 to 2020/21. The Council's Cabinet is aware that SCT does not represent above average unit costs when compared to the benchmarking group, and the Council has taken this into account as part of their contract negotiations including savings options for 2022/23 and 2023/24. This benchmarking analysis indicates a challenging context for SCT to achieve the efficiencies and demand management savings that are planned for the contract sum to be reduced.

SCT's Director of Finance has regular dialogue with the Council's senior finance officers and DCS, and SCT's financial plan is scrutinised by the Trust's Board.

Review of governance roles

The Council appointed a new Lead Member for Children's Services in May 2022, who had been in this role at the time that SCT was established.

Formal governance arrangements between the Council and SCT have not been changed. The Director of Children's Services, together with Council senior officers from finance and legal services, and the Chief Executive of the Trust meet on at least a monthly basis to consider performance and operational matters OPB. The Council's Lead Member for Children and Education and Director of Children's Services meet quarterly with the Chair of the Trust Board and the Chief Executive of the Trust, at a Strategic Partnership Board (SPB). SPB is chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council and considers risks and issues escalated by OPB, such as workforce challenges. The Improvement Board of the Trust is chaired by an independent consultant appointed by DfE.

KLOE A1: Sandwell Children's Trust (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider actions undertaken by the Council to secure improvement in children's social care outcomes.

Review of governance arrangements (Cont'd)

The main governance related change since our previous review is that there is more regular informal meetings between senior representatives of the Council and SCT, including the Chair and Chief Executive of SCT and the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children and Education, as well as meetings including the Director of Finance of the Council. There are also regular meetings between the Chief Executive and Director of Finance of the Trust and the Director of Finance and Director of Children's Services of the Council.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Council has improved its relationships and contract management arrangements with SCT and the most recent Ofsted rating is evidence that positive steps have been taken on the Trust's improvement journey. We have identified the following improvement recommendations:

- The Council will need to ensure that the SCT accelerates its progress on this improvement trajectory so that the position does not plateau, including sharing good practice on case work across the various SCT social work teams.
- The Council will need to continue to closely monitor the implementation of the early help strategy to ensure planned objectives and outcomes are realised.
- The Council must continue to work with SCT to mitigate and reduce the level of vacancies and use of agency staff and take steps to ensure the associated KPI does not lead to contract failure.
- The Council should continue to monitor the progress of SCT against these invest to save activities to ensure that SCT is able to meet its financial plans and generate the ambitious savings and efficiencies required for the contract sum to be reduced



KLOE A2: Sandwell Leisure Trust

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's management of the contract with SLT and to understand the impact of recent industrial action.

Background

Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) was formed by the Council in 2004 due to underperformance of the in-house leisure service. SLT was contracted via a Management and Funding Agreement (MFA) for a 30-year period: 2004 to 2034.

Our December 2021 report recommended that the Senior Leadership of the Council - both officer and member - must take ownership and prioritise corporate effort and take urgent steps to either resolve the current position with SLT or consider the options for alternative provision should either party decide to terminate the current contract, to ensure the continuity of future leisure service provision and associated reputational impacts.

KEY FINDINGS

Contingency planning

As at 2022 there were 12 years left to run on the Council's leisure contract with SLT, under which the Council agrees a rolling three-year business plan with SLT each year. The Council continued to be unable to agree a business plan and management fee with SLT for the next three-year period (2021-2024). The key issues for the Council related to the sustainability and value for money of SLT's business plan including the legacy operation of the Sandwell Aquatics Centre from June 2023, and the sharing of financial and key performance information.

The Council undertook contingency planning to ensure continuity of service which included commissioning Continuum Leisure to undertake an options appraisal for the future management of leisure services. Eight options were considered and the results of the appraisal were reported to Cabinet on 9 February 2022. Two options were identified by the consultants should agreement with SLT on their business plan not be reached:

- the creation of a local authority controlled trading company (LATC) or
- the outsourcing of the services.

Both of these options are projected to generate management fee savings when compared to the projected costs of the SLT contract based on SLT's most recent business plan and also when compared to bringing the services back in house.

The Senior Leadership Team were asked to undertake further detailed appraisal of these two options plus in-house provision.

At the same February 2022 meeting Cabinet agreed to serve reasonable notice of termination of the contract with SLT due to the Council and SLT not being able to agree a business plan and payment for 2021-2024, with SLT ceasing to deliver services by 2 May 2023.

Local Authority Trading Company

Detailed consideration of the three options for the future management of SLT's portfolio of leisure facilities was undertaken, including the changes planned in 2023 with the opening of the Sandwell Aquatic Centre and associated closure of Smethwick and Langley facilities.

The findings from this options appraisal were set out in a report to Cabinet on 22 June 2022 which focussed on the delivery model for 9 of the Council's 10 leisure centres (one is operated by Places Leisure and was not part of the scope of the options appraisal). Cabinet agreed to progress the LATC option.

The Council tested the market for a step-in provider, should SLT have decided to not work to the Council's transition timescales, but a step-in provider has not been required, with SLT demonstrating that they want to work with the Council to support an appropriate handover to the new LATC. This includes SLT's Chair attending the Council's monthly operational meetings on the transition of the service and supporting the planned TUPE process of SLT staff to the new company.

The Council has no recent experience of setting up a LATC and have engaged various suppliers to support the process. The Council is managing the transition to the new delivery model and is being supported by Bevan Brittan providing legal advice on the structure of the LATC, Trowers and Hamlin advising on TUPE, Strategic Leisure -drafting the service specification, and Penna are being engaged to help recruit the Chief Operating Officer of the new company. The Council is drawing on Sport England models of performance management for leisure services, and researching good practice from the local government sector on leisure services LATCs, to utilise and adapt notable practice.

The Council plans to use this change in delivery model to improve service quality, such as opening hours and expanding the service offering with a greater focus on wellbeing. At the time of our review the LATC had not been incorporated and the governance arrangements had not been finalised, including whether Non Executive Directors (NEDs) will be recruited to sit on the new company board.

KLOE A2: Sandwell Leisure Trust (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's management of the contract with SLT and to understand the impact of recent industrial action.

Local Authority Trading Company (Cont'd)

Whatever the legal structure of the new LATC, it will be a subsidiary to the Council who will retain the trading and operating risks of the new company and the Council will need to:

- ensure a business case is produced for the new leisure LATC so that there is a clear financial case for the commercial viability of the new arms length company.
- be clear how it effectively discharges its role whilst allowing the company the freedoms and flexibilities to operate and to deliver the planned financial and service benefits.

Sandwell Aquatics Centre

Following the hosting of the Commonwealth Games during the Summer of 2022, the Council is responsible for adapting the Aquatics Centre before it is transferred to the new LATC in June 2023 when it will become open to public use. This forms part of the Commonwealth Games legacy arrangements.

The Council will need to effectively manage the transition of the Aquatics Centre so that it is operational to the planned timescale and that there is a clear business case which sets out how the centre will be managed to become commercially viable and provide financial returns to the Council as part of the leisure LATC arrangements.

The Council is in the process of developing a commercial strategy to set out how the Council will identify, manage, and maximise new commercial opportunities. The new LATC will seek to generate income and provide the Council as sole shareholder a dividend and as such will form part of the commercial strategy.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Council has taken decisive steps to manage the contractual arrangements with SLT and is making changes to improve the provision of leisure services. The Council needs to successfully progress its plans for alternate delivery arrangements and we have identified the following improvement recommendations:

- The Council will need ensure a business case is produced for the new leisure LATC so that there is a clear financial case for the commercial viability of the new arms length company

- The Council will need to be clear how it effectively discharges its shareholder role in relation to the planned leisure LATC whilst allowing the company the freedoms and flexibilities to operate and to deliver the planned financial and service benefits.
- The Council will need to effectively manage the transition of the Aquatics Centre so that it is operational to the planned timescale and that there is a clear business case which sets out how the centre will be managed to become commercially viable and provide financial returns to the Council as part of the leisure LATC arrangements.



KLOE A3: Providence Place

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the potential loss to the Council arising from the proposed sale of Providence Place.

Background

Our original review considered issues arising from the proposed sale of Providence Place. In our December 2021 report we recommended:

- Where the Council considers similar transactions (to Providence Place) in future, those charged with making decisions must satisfy themselves that they fully understand the detail of the options being proposed. Council officers and their advisors have a responsibility to ensure that members making decisions do so having fully understood these complexities and risks.
- The Council should ensure that all future property or land acquisitions and disposals are clearly aligned with relevant Council property related strategies.

KEY FINDINGS

Protocol for the Disposal of Land and Buildings

The Council has updated its protocol for the disposal of Council owned land and buildings which forms part of the Council's Financial Regulations. It applies to all property interests owned by the Council, and applies to every Member and officer of the Council and anyone acting on the Council's behalf.

The new protocol was approved by the Cabinet in July 2022 and clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of individuals and bodies within the Council, and the scheme of delegation for approving asset disposals.

The protocol also sets out the risks and mitigations in relation to options agreements (such as used for Lion Farm) where the Council chooses to encourage and promote property development in order to promote regeneration and renewal, or to contribute to strategic targets such as housing numbers.

The Council has been undertaking a review of its asset portfolio to identify any surplus assets. This work had not concluded at the time of our follow up review. Once concluded the new protocol will be applied should there be agreement on any asset disposals.

Whilst the Council has not seen the circumstances to yet apply the new protocol, we have been advised that it has been used to provide a framework in relation to the acquisition of a shopping centre in West Bromwich town centre.

Asset Management Strategy

The Council has been developing an asset management strategy with a report due to go to Cabinet in October 2022. This is expected to identify assets to rationalise and reduce asset related costs. The Council has also appointed Technology Forge to support the development of a new asset management database.

The Council will need to conclude the finalisation of its asset management strategy and asset management database to better manage its asset portfolio including asset disposals.

The Future of Providence Place

On 23 December 2021 the Council agreed to the disposal of the Providence Place site to the Department for Education.

The Council's Planning Committee on 10 January 2022 approved the change of use of the Providence Place site from an office block to education, with external alterations and the erection of an associated school sports building and hard surfaced sports court.

On 30 March 2022 the Council's Planning Committee approved planning permission for the creation of an 870 place secondary school with sixth form (Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust) on the site of Providence Place. The school will operate in partnership with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, with the school due to open in September 2023.

The Council signed a pre-emption agreement with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 8 July 2022. This agreement allows the Council to buy the property should DLUHC decide to dispose of it during the period of the agreement, with the pre-emption period ending on 8 July 2047.

Conclusion and recommendations

This matter has now been actioned and resolved with improved governance arrangements in place. We note that the Council's previous management of this issue incurred a significant loss. We have identified the following improvement recommendation:

- The Council will need to conclude the finalisation of its asset management strategy and asset management database to better manage its asset portfolio including asset disposals.

KLOE A4: SEND Transport

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the circumstances relating to the recent procurement of SEND Transport and the Council's current approach to concluding the procurement.

Background

The Council's Special Education Needs and Disabilities Passenger Transport (SEND Transport) contract expired at the end of August 2021 and the decision on the new contract award was deferred by the Council's Cabinet at its meeting on 16 June 2021.

Our December 2021 report recommended that the Council's senior leadership – both officers and members – must place priority on agreeing the outcome of the SEND Transport procurement exercise to ensure a further contract extension is not required. This should include:

- Not losing the significant progress made on the contract specification's focus on service quality.
- Greater support, involvement, dialogue and oversight with the officer teams with responsibility for progressing the procurement.
- Ensuring the contract provides the Council with effective management and oversight of the personal transport market.

For the conclusion of the SEND Transport procurement and for all future major procurements, the Council should ensure that:

- Record keeping and declarations of interest are undertaken in line with Council policies and procedures.
- Decision making does not create real or perceived risks in relation to inappropriate procurement decisions.
- Procurement timescales provide adequate time for both suppliers to submit high quality bids, and the Council to undertake appropriate evaluation, scrutiny and decision making. This timescale should include appropriate time in advance of the procurement for the council to undertake the necessary strategic thinking and planning required, and mitigate the risk of not making an award in the planned timescale.

KEY FINDINGS

SEND Transport procurement

Following the Cabinet's decision on 16 June 2021 to defer a decision on the outcome of the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) procurement, the Council extended the exiting SEND transport contract until the February 2022 half term.

At its meeting of 12 January 2022 the Cabinet agreed to abandon the DPS approach to procurement and extended existing contracts until 21 July 2022 to ensure continuity of service was maintained whilst an alternate procurement was undertaken, with the outcome of this new procurement to provide new SEND Transport provision from September 2022.

The Cabinet agreed that an alternate procurement approach be developed to reflect the findings and recommendations of the Internal audit review of the DPS procurement, the Grant Thornton governance review and the review undertaken by the Council's Childrens Services and Education Scrutiny Board. In particular an approach that increased the number of lots, improved the quality of provision, encouraged greater competition and provide resilience in service delivery.

A Programme Board was established comprising the Director of Children's Services, Monitoring Officer and Director of Finance, to provide Director oversight of the procurement. A separate Implementation Group was established to develop and manage the procurement process, with this group including representatives from procurement, finance, legal, internal audit and the education support team. The Council appointed Bevan Brittan to provide legal advice and brought in two interim procurement staff to provide additional capacity and experience.

A project plan was agreed which included key delivery milestones to ensure that the procurement timescale was clear and that there was adequate time for suppliers and for the Council to manage the procurement process for the new service to go live on 1 September 2022. Delivery against the plan was scrutinised by the Programme Board.

The new procurement framework was structured to encourage smaller operators to bid and to create resilience of supply. The framework consisted of 13 lots with operators limited to the award of 1 contract per lot. The evaluation approach for compliance, finance and quality were reviewed and enhanced as was the pricing structure for tender submissions.

The service specification for operators was also reviewed and updated to ensure service quality requirements were met. Steps were included in the procurement to mitigate the risk of operators colluding. We have been advised that a new procurement template was created which included a link to the Council's declarations of interest form, which had to be completed by all people involved in the procurement exercise.

KLOE A4: SEND Transport (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the circumstances relating to the recent procurement of SEND Transport and the Council's current approach to concluding the procurement.

SEND Transport procurement (Cont'd)

10 operators responded to the invitation to tender. Following evaluation 9 operators were appointed to the new framework, with others failing the technical or quality part of the evaluation. The Council then ran a mini competition for those operators appointed to the framework based on price. 6 operators were offered between 1 and 3 contracts each.

The budget for SEND Transport is £7.521m and contracts awarded total £7m resulting in an underspend in contract costs at the time of our review.

Post procurement activity

The new contracts went live on 1 September 2022. During the first week of the new contract an operator pulled out due to not having sufficient drivers available and were unable to meet the contract quality standards. The structure of the new framework meant that the Council was able to allocate an alternate operator – the next lowest priced tender - the same day to ensure continuity of service.

Contract monitoring arrangements for the new contracts include quarterly reviews with all operators to review their performance. These meetings are due to include senior officers of the Council. At the time of our review the Council was in the process of collecting performance information from operators.

Also at the time of our review the Council were undertaking a lessons learned review of the procurement, and exploring procurement approaches used by other councils, as part of a continuous improvement approach. The results of this work are due to be shared to support other similar Council procurement exercises, for example by providing a checklist of key considerations, including the next SEND Transport procurement. The procurement for SEND Transport contracts which will commence in September 2024 is due to start in Spring 2023. The lessons learned outcomes will be included in an update to the Scrutiny Board.

Conclusion and recommendations

This matter has now been actioned and resolved with improved governance arrangements in place,

The Council must ensure that the lessons learned from the SEND Transport procurement are shared across other council services so that this learning becomes embedded across the organisation.



KLOE A5: Sandwell Land and Property

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the background to the establishment of the company, actions undertaken by the Council to ensure the company complies with legislation, and delays to winding down the company.

Background

Sandwell Land and Property (SLaP) was incorporated on 14 January 2011 as a limited company, and was established by the Council as a vehicle for protecting the freehold of the Council's schools and related sites. The Council was in the process of winding up the company at the time of our previous review.

Our December 2021 report recommended:

- The Council should ensure that when considering establishing an arm's length company in the future there is a clear purpose for doing so and that those officers / members of the Council in company director roles are clear of their role and responsibilities in relation to that company.
- Where arms length companies already exist the Council should gain assurances that company directors fully understand their company roles and responsibilities, that the company administration is properly resourced and appropriate training is provided to company directors. The purpose of the company should be revisited on a regular basis to determine whether the company continues to be of benefit to the Council.

KEY FINDINGS

Sandwell Land and Property (SLaP) has been dissolved and no longer exists as a company.

A review of arms length companies has been undertaken, which reported to the Council's Leadership Team on 1 August 2022, concluding that only one body, Sandwell Children's Trust, met the relevant criteria for an arms length company (as defined by the Local Government Act 1989), due to being a subsidiary of the Council and the Council being the sole subscriber. Due to the Trust being well established with reporting and governance arrangements already in place, no changes were recommended.

This review considered the following bodies, concluding that they didn't meet the relevant criteria:

- SIPS Education: the Council does not have direct control over the society.
- Sandwell Leisure Trust: the Council has a contractual relationship with SLT.

As noted in section KLOE A2 of this report, a leisure services LATC is being created, and the Council is obtaining external legal advice on the appointment of the company directors, board members, and representatives of the planned shareholder committee, their roles and responsibilities and training requirements.

This will be informed by lessons learned in relation to SLaP and SCT.

Conclusion

This matter has now been actioned and resolved with improved governance arrangements in place,

We have made an improvement recommendation in relation to the planned leisure company in the section on KLOE A2 of this report.



KLOE A6: MADE Festival

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the governance arrangements and decision making relating to the Council hosting this festival.

Background

The original review considered the governance arrangements and decision making relating to hosting the MADE Festival.

The December 2021 report recommended:

- As part of the planned review of the scheme of delegation the Council should ensure that there is clarity of decision making on hosting events, and that the governance arrangements relating to such decisions are effective and clearly communicated.

KEY FINDINGS

Events Governance Framework

The Council has developed an Events Governance Framework, which was reported to the Leadership Team on 23 February 2022. This followed a review of how the Council manages events. The Framework includes:

- Defines events as activities that take place on Council owned land or property.
- Set out responsibilities for managing events and event decision making categories.
- Classification of event types and event organisers and associated fees to be charged by the Council.
- Event decision making process and decision making thresholds including delegated authorities
- Measures to ensure adequate consideration of resident impacts of an event.
- The purpose and role of the Safety Advisory Group in the events governance process
- A revised event booking process, decision making timescales and document requirements.
- Event marketing and promotion.
- Criteria for banned events.

The Event Governance Framework draws on what other local authorities are doing in relation to event governance and management, incorporating feedback received from the Local Authority Event Organising Group (LAEORG) the association of events organisers working for local authorities in the UK.

Following Cabinet Portfolio Holder approval the Framework went live on 28 February 2022 and will be reviewed annually by the Director of Borough Economy.

Other Findings

The new framework has been communicated internally to all Senior Managers and other relevant officers and an events page has been created on the Council's intranet.

The new framework has been communicated externally to event bookers to provide an update on changes made. The Council's external website has new content:

- Event Governance Framework
- Event Application Information for Event Providers and Organisers
- Event funding opportunities (to sign post event organisers to external funding for their events)
- 'What's on' list of approved events
- Resident Impact Assessment Form
- Resources and support (inc. FAQs) for event organisers / applications

In addition the Council has procured Event software that it is now using on the external website and is the channel for all internal and external event bookings to be made. An initial review has been undertaken of the app and content has been enhanced in relation to traffic management plans for public park venues.

Events management responsibility has been consolidated with the management of the Parks Service and a range of training has been provided to the events team.

New protocols have been created for the Council's work with friends of park groups, clarifying event booking arrangements, including holding a workshop with these groups on the new ways of working.

Quarterly reviews of event performance and lessons learned will be undertaken by the events manager, service manager, Director of Borough of Economy, and other internal stakeholders, depending on the nature of the event.

Events during 2022 have included those relating to the Platinum Jubilee and the Summer 2022 events programme including events relating to the Commonwealth Games such as the baton relay. The Council was undertaking a review of events managed by the Council at the time of this review.

Conclusion

This matter has been resolved and improved governance arrangements are now in place.

KLOE A7: Waste service

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the performance of the waste service, the Council's management of the contract with Serco, and understand the impact of recent industrial relations issues.

Background

The waste and street cleansing contract was awarded to Serco in November 2010 for a period of 25 years. The Council's current net expenditure on the contract is £29.5m per annum. Contract standards are performance based and measured against 34 Key Outcome Targets (KOTs).

Our December 2021 report recommended:

- The Council should prioritise corporate effort to ensure that the recovery plans are approved and appropriate senior management oversight is given to monitoring their effective delivery.
- The Council should ensure robust contract management arrangements are in place, and review the Key Output Targets (KOTs) and work with Serco to ensure they are line with Council expectations and the data is available to allow effective monitoring of contract outcomes
- The Council should ensure that the investments specified in the contract with Serco are made, such as a new vehicle fleet.

KEY FINDINGS

Annual plans

A review of the Serco contract was undertaken by the Council in December 2021, and a refreshed approach was developed to ensure contractual requirements are being met. Prior to January 2022 the Council had not been pro-active in requesting the delivery plans required within the contract with Serco. Arrangements have now been put in place to request these plans for the Council to review and adopt. Delivery against plans now forms part of the Council's monitoring approach. The 2022/23 Quarter 1 update on plans was as follows:

- Service Delivery Plan: not yet approved
- Communication Plan – approved in May 2022
- Education Plan – draft received June 2022
- Fleet Replacement Plan – approved in April 2022
- Street Cleansing Plan – being redrafted by Serco
- Weed Spraying Schedule – approved in May 2022
- Leaf Collection Schedule – Serco to provide in August 2022

In addition a waste and recycling recovery plan has been agreed.

A six-month street cleansing recovery plan was agreed between the Council and Serco which resulted in Serco investing in deep street cleansing activity across all wards. Serco have been redesigning street cleansing improvement plans, including a programme to replace aging street cleansing sweeper vehicles and equipment. At the time of our review the revised plan had not been finalised and agreed.

An annual review of Serco's Service Delivery Plan (SDP) forms part of the output specification of the contract between the Council and Serco. In March 2022 Serco submitted their draft SDP to the Council for the period April 2022 to March 2023.

The Council reviewed the SDP and other plans received and raised a number of issues with Serco focussing on the need for greater transformation and improvement in relation to street cleansing, waste collection and bin replacement, improvement of recycling and food waste collection rates, alignment of fleet replacement with the Council's green agenda, and improvements to the education plan. A revised deadline of the end of October 2022 was informally agreed to finalise the SDP, and the revised SDP was approved at the Waste Partnership Board on 19 October 2022.

The Council must work with Serco to finalise all associated plans and schedules.

Governance Arrangements

The governance arrangements for the monitoring of the Serco contract with the Council is managed by the following groups:

- **Waste Partnership Board.** Council representatives are the Leader, Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Director of Borough Economy and Head of Service for Waste, Street Cleansing and Fleet. Serco representatives are their Contract Manager, Operations Manager and Transformation Manager. The Board meets monthly and provides the principal level of oversight on contract performance and improvement plans.
- **Senior Contract Management Group.** This meeting is attended by the Director of Borough Economy and the Waste and Fleet Service Manager from the Council, and the Regional Director, Senior Contract and Contract Manager from Serco. The group oversee performance targets, health and safety, key projects, contract milestones, staff/union issues, finance, improvement areas, and any outstanding issues from the operational performance meeting. The group meets monthly.

KLOE A7: Waste service (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the performance of the waste service, the Council's management of the contract with Serco, and understand the impact of recent industrial relations issues.

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Governance Arrangements (cont'd)

Operational Management Group. This meeting is attended by the Waste Client Team from the Council and the Contract Manager, Street Cleaning Manager & Waste Collection Manager from Serco. The purpose of the group is to review customer complaints, street cleansing performance, waste collection performance, IT configurations and their applicability, KOT performance data and investigate detailed problem areas. It meets fortnightly.

- **Fleet Management Group.** This group is attended by the Assistant Director (Contracts, Strategy and Policy), the Fleet Manger and Fleet Officer from the Council. Serco attendees are the Director of Fleet, Regional Fleet Manager, Senior Contract Manager and Contract Manager. The purpose of this group is to ensure the fleet replacement programme is reviewed / considered / updated, replacement vehicles are ordered in a timely manner, vehicles are fit for purpose on the contract and there is oversight and review of the contractual maintenance requirements. It meets monthly.

Governance arrangements were reviewed during Spring 2022 which resulted in updates to the terms of reference of the Waste Board, updates of the data provided by Serco to the Waste Board, a refresh of standard agendas and action logs for all meetings.

Contract Monitoring

A review of the Performance and Management of the Waste Partnership Contract was undertaken by the Council's Economy, Skills, Transport and Environment Scrutiny Board which completed in December 2021, making 14 recommendations which were reported to Cabinet on 23rd February 2022.

The Council commissioned Frith Consulting to undertake an independent review of the waste and street cleaning contract to consider quality, performance and VfM. The final report was not available at the time of our review. At the time of our review Internal Audit were undertaking a review of the Council's contract monitoring arrangements of the Serco contract.

The Council has introduced the Intend module on contract management to improve the sharing of contract monitoring information between Serco and the Council.

A new framework for monitoring the Serco contract was introduced in April 2022 which set out the different Council bodies with a monitoring role, what each body should monitor, the frequency of monitoring and associated responsibilities. The Council has undertaken wider research into supplier relationship management and the monitoring of large contracts, including application of contract management tools such as those recommended by the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) contract management tools. The monitoring framework for the Serco contract may be further refined following the conclusion of this wider review.

A refreshed approach to the management of stakeholders has been developed including an associated communication plan.

Due to continued concerns and issues with the delivery and quality of street cleansing and recognised capacity challenges in the Council team, the Council has increased its monitoring of street cleansing to include three additional Performance Officers being retained on temporary fixed term contracts to ensure that there is daily monitoring and where the standard is short of what is required the issuing of rectification notices.

The Council's contract management role has seen changes in personnel during 2022, including an Interim Service Manager (Waste and Fleet) and a new Assistant Director joining in early October 2022 with responsibility for waste service contract management. The Council has reviewed the need for a contract manager role for the waste service, and has restructured the senior management team in Borough Economy to establish the role of Assistant Director Borough Economy (Contracts, strategy, policy) with responsibility for the waste contract.

The Council's Director for Borough Economy meets the Serco Managing Director responsible for Environmental Services and Serco Regional Director each quarter, providing an opportunity to discuss escalated performance issues relating to the contract.

The Council has reviewed the information used to monitor KOTs and other Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and ensure that contract rectification is improved so that it is more clearly aligned to the Council's service and contract requirements. New KPIs are being considered for contract monitoring to provide a focus to areas of concern, for example missed assisted bin collections and gully cleaning.

As part of the new corporate Performance Management Framework there is a quarterly report to the Councils Leadership Team and Cabinet on major contracts, including the Serco contract.

KLOE A7: Waste service (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the performance of the waste service, the Council's management of the contract with Serco, and understand the impact of recent industrial relations issues.

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Contract performance

The waste and recycling recover plan saw an improvement in the number of missed collections during 2022 until July and August, which saw an increase in late and missed collections. Reasons given by Serco included high levels of COVID-19 related absences, high turnover of agency staff, mismanagement of leave, impact of pay negotiations on employee engagement, high levels of emergency and annual leave, reduced desire to do overtime due to good weather. In addition the fleet suffered as a result of hot weather with two vehicle fires and case of vehicles overheating and parts failing with an average of 15 vehicles not available each day in July and 13 a day in August (out of 62 vehicles).

Recycling performance has been improving but is still significantly below the contract target of 60.5%. A re-invigorated drive to improve food waste participation (currently at 4.5%) is planned to improve Serco's recycling performance.

Contractual penalty points are accrued for failing to achieve the specific KOT and each KOT has a different weighted penalty point deduction. Some KOTs from the original contract with Serco appear unachievable, such as the recycling rate which specifies recycling of 60.5% per annum. However this rate has never been higher than the 45%, which has resulted in a financial penalty of between £500k and £1m per annum. This income to the Council is allocated to a waste reserve which totalled £3.8m as at March 2022. The financial penalty for 2021/22 was £974k.

There are 126,000 properties in Sandwell and only approximately 5,000 households have signed up to food waste collection, impacting on Serco's ability to meet the recycling target.

Due to Serco being unable to achieve the recycling rates they have been in default of the contract. In 2014 the Council provided a letter of comfort to Serco, which gave Serco indemnity against default for failing to achieve the recycling rates and discounts to the recycling rate to enable them to close the gap on the actual recycling rate. This letter expired in March 2021 and the Council had verbally agreed to extend the letter for a further year pending a joint review the contract conditions, but due to management changes on both sides and a continual performance issue the review did not take place in this timescale. A further letter of comfort was then provided by the Council to Serco dated 5 August 2022 and the Council concluded its review of Serco's recycling performance, confirming financial penalties in relation to 2020/21 and 2021/22 annual recycling targets on 15 September 2022.

Contractual Investments

The Fleet Management Group monitors progress on Serco's fleet replacement plan to improve the reliability of the fleet. The plan has been developed to provide oversight to the Council following delays by Serco in meeting contractual obligations to replace vehicles when over eight years old. Delays in replacement timescales have been compounded by disagreement between the Council and Serco on the financing of replacement costs and supplier lead in times to provide new vehicles, which need to be formally agreed. There is a lack of clarity as to whether previous capital payments have been used to replace the fleet and whether the Council is able to recover these payments (due to poor contract management in prior years).

The first 18 vehicles were replaced in January 2022, with a phased replacement plan during 2022 and for future years, with other new vehicles on order to replace the oldest vehicles in the fleet.

Following the reintroduced food waste collection, Serco are utilising food waste trucks. More generally the make up of the fleet needs to align to the Council's policy on collections. Serco has modelled potential changes and expressed the need for certainty on whether the Council will alter collection policy (for example introducing alternative weekly collection for waste and recycling) leading to delays in the progress to aspects of the fleet replacement plan. **The Council should confirm with Serco if there will be changes to the waste and recycling or garden waste collection policies.**

Serco are replacing diesel street tipper vans with electric vehicles and the Council have agreed to fund the provision of electric vehicle charging points at the Serco depot, to support the Council's carbon neutral agenda. Updates on Serco fleet replacement are made to the Council's Climate Change Programme Board.

The Council is responsible for the maintenance of the Serco fleet at its Waterfall Lane workshop, with Serco paying approximately £1.2m per annum to the Council for this service as part of contract arrangements. Serco would like greater transparency on the pricing approach used by the Council, **and the Council should take steps to demonstrate to Serco how the service provides value for money.**

KLOE A7: Waste service (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the performance of the waste service, the Council's management of the contract with Serco, and understand the impact of recent industrial relations issues.

Industrial Relations

From the period of the Commonwealth Games in the Summer of 2022 the Council contracted with a Ramora, via a separate tender process, to undertake street cleaning around the site of the Aquatics Centre to mitigate industrial relations risks at Serco and reflecting the additional street cleaning required during the period of the Games. Costs were met via the Games budget. In the eventuality there was no strike action called by the Serco workforce.

During 2022 Serco management have undertaken pay negotiations and reached agreement with their workforce. Serco changed bank holiday working arrangements as part of these pay negotiations and as already noted saw a high level of absences during July and August, but no strike action has taken place. The Council have sought assurances from Serco that bin collections will not be impacted in a similar way during the Christmas 2022 or Summer 2023 holiday periods.

Other findings

The Council is working with Serco to improve transparency and engagement with residents and businesses via improved investment in IT. This includes:

- Serco using their new software for gulley cleansing and obtaining a licence so that the gulley cleansing schedule can be viewed on-line by the public.
- Serco are making changes to their back-office system (White Space) and are considering moving introducing a texts service to residents, and are also considering the introduction of a residents app.
- Serco are introducing electronic monitoring of bin conditions via waste collection operative phones.

The Council has recently established an Enforcement Liaison Group, with officers represented from services including public protection, planning, highways, waste and housing. This group will develop waste related policies – that are not currently in place – to have clarity on what residents need to do such as managing bins left on streets. Once agreed the Council will communicate these policies to residents and community leaders. The Council is considering in-sourcing the waste enforcement officers currently employed via the Serco contract to enforce these new policies.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Council has made progress in its management of the Serco contract including improving the governance arrangements and introducing greater control to the management of the contract.

The Council and Serco are moving from what was an adversarial contract management relationship towards a more constructive and collaborative partnership approach. There is greater engagement at most levels between the Council and Serco and relationships have improved to those being experienced during the time of our previous review. However, many changes now in train need to be completed and the more collaborative approach needs to become fully embedded.

Progress is still required and we have the following improvement recommendations:

- The Council must work with Serco to all associated plans and schedules.
- The Council should confirm with Serco if there will be changes to the waste and recycling or garden waste collection policies.
- The Council should resolve the delays and formally agree replacement timescales for the waste fleet and the financing of replacement costs and supplier lead in times with Serco. Clarity should be sought over the use of previous capital payments in the relation to the Council's accounts.
- The Council should take steps to demonstrate to Serco how the fleet maintenance service provides value for money.

KLOE A9: Lion Farm

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's governance arrangements and decision making in relation to the Lion Farm development.

Background

Our original review considered the Council's governance arrangements and decision making in relation to the Lion Farm development.

Our December 2021 report recommended:

- The Council must ensure that the recent re-engagement with the developer results in agreeing a clear way forward, including an action plan and timescale so there is clarity on the responsibilities for the Council and developer in order to progress the finalisation of the secondary option agreement, or to be clear on the legal process for both parties extricating themselves from the agreement and the associated terms.
- The Council must ensure that it has taken all necessary steps to ensure that arrangements are in place so that all the issues identified in the external review are appropriately mitigated and managed.
- The Council should review its procurement regulations and consider updating them to include land sales, including options agreements, to ensure that best value can be achieved.

KEY FINDINGS

Developer secondary option

The Council was unable to reach agreement with the developer on a clear way forward in relation to the secondary option agreement. The Council's Cabinet agreed at its meeting on 11 January 2022 to give notice to the developer that the Council would refer the issue for determination by an expert, in line with the appropriate clause in the original options agreement between the Council and the developer dated 21 May 2013. Notice to the developer was made on 13 January 2022.

On 24 January 2022 the developer and Council agreed the expert to be a partner from CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP. The terms of the expert's appointment were then agreed by the Council and the developer, as well as agreeing the procedure to follow.

The Council has engaged a QC and Trowers and Hamlin to support them during the determination process.

The Council drafted a Statement of Agreed Facts in June 2022 and at the time of our review was seeking to agree this Statement with the developer. Once agreed the Statement will be shared with the expert for the expert to make their determination.

There have been some delays to the expected timescale including working through potential conflicts of interest of the proposed expert and in agreeing the Statement of Agreed Facts

The Council has taken external legal advice on unilaterally proceeding but the referral is preferable to be made jointly.

Once the Statement has been agreed and provided to the expert the Council will have no influence over the timescale but hopes that the determination on the secondary agreement will be confirmed by December 2022.

Once a determination has been made and should it release the Council from the developer agreement, the Council will need to consider the options for re-marketing the site and engaging with commercial developers.

Other findings

As already noted in the section of this report on KLOE A3, the Council has updated its protocol for the disposal of Council owned land and buildings and forms part of the Council's Financial Regulations. The new protocol was approved by Cabinet in July 2022. The protocol applies to all property interests owned by the Council and applies to every Member and officer of the Council and anyone acting on its behalf.

The protocol clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of individuals and bodies within the Council, and the scheme of delegation for approving asset disposals. It also introduces a requirement that the value of any asset being proposed for disposal or acquisition is set out in reports to members.

The protocol also sets out the approach in relation to complex contractual arrangements, which are defined as contracts which commit the Council to dispose of land but where the receipt of purchase monies is delayed and/or is conditional on a future event. Such arrangements include option agreements which give a developer the right to acquire land at a future date, either at a pre-agreed price, a price to be fixed by a formula (such as a development appraisal) or a price to be fixed by independent valuation.

The protocol sets out the circumstances in which options agreements or conditional contracts are appropriate, and sets out the risks the Council should avoid when entering into such contracts and how these should be mitigated.

The protocol seeks to manage any potential confusion that previously existed on the difference between the sale of a property and the purchase of services.

Conclusion

The Council has taken all possible actions to resolve this matter and has a clear way forward, although we note that the process is by its nature is slow. The Council has also improved arrangements with the updated protocol for the disposal of Council owned land and buildings.

KLOE A10: Introduction of new ERP System

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's management of the introduction of Oracle Fusion and understanding implementation delays and their impact.

Background

The Council is replacing its main Enterprise and Resource Planning (ERP) system. The current ERP is Oracle E-Business Suite (EBS) which is being replaced by Oracle Fusion. There have been significant delays to the implementation and go live date for the introduction of the new system.

Our December 2021 report recommended:

The Council must prioritise corporate effort to:

- ensure that temporary support is agreed with Oracle for EBS continuity.
- have an honest and frank discussion with Inoapps and urgently agree a clear resolution on the way forward.
- review governance arrangements so that good practice (such as Managing Successful Programmes) is in place and embedded, including clarity on the SRO role and approach to risk management.
- review the resourcing and scope of the implementation to ensure that it is realistic, given current circumstances, focuses on outcomes as well as costs, and there is organisation wide engagement and ownership of the programme.
- confirm a realistic and achievable go live date.
- ensure for future major projects a full business case is developed and approved.

KEY FINDINGS

EBS Continuity

The Council has agreed with Oracle to extend licences and associated support by twelve months for EBS due to the delays in implementing Oracle Fusion and to ensure business continuity. There are two separate licence agreements in place, one has been extended to December 2022 and another until April 2023. They will need to be extended again given the current Oracle Fusion implementation timescale.

Implementation Support

The Council's Leadership Team at its meeting held on 27 October 2021 reaffirmed the Council's commitment to migrate to Oracle Fusion confirming that all of the organisational benefits identified in the original report to Cabinet, 9 October 2019 were still valid.

The Council engaged Evosys and Version One to review the current status of the implementation of the new system.

On 15 December 2021 the Council's Cabinet considered an options appraisal in relation to the new ERP system including:

- The Council terminates the contract with Inoapps and revert to using EBS, the current system.
- The Council terminate the contract with Inoapps and look to use a new system (Oracle Fusion).
- The Council continues to implement the new system (Oracle Fusion) with Inoapps.
- The Council continues to implement the new system (Oracle Fusion) with an alternate implementation partner.

The Cabinet agreed to serve notice of termination of the implementation partner contract being delivered by Inoapps. Inoapps remain a support partner to the Council for the existing system.

The report to Cabinet on 9 October 2019 identified an ear-marked reserve to the value of £2.6m which at the time was deemed sufficient to fund all estimated costs of the implementation of the new system, and included more than 10% contingency. The additional costs incurred through extending the scope of the project and delays to the project has resulted in costs exceeding the ear-marked reserve.

These implementation costs included those relating to the implementation partner. The original contract sum with Inoapps to implement Oracle Fusion was £1.2m. Several change requests were agreed to incorporate work outside of the original scope of the project and to accommodate delays in the project, revising the contract sum to £1.6m.

At its meeting of 15 December 2021 Cabinet were advised that implementation costs needed to increase by £2.2m whether the Council remained with Inoapps or procured an alternative implementation partner.

KLOE A10: Introduction of new ERP System (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's management of the introduction of Oracle Fusion and understanding implementation delays and their impact.

Implementation support (Cont'd)

The additional costs incurred through extending the scope of the project and delays to the project exceed the ear-marked reserve.

The total budget for the new ERP was revised to £5m, reflecting the increase in resources required to implement the new system effectively, requiring the use of £4.3m from reserves.

At the time of our review the Council was engaged in steps to mitigate its loss.

On 12 August 2022 the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, agreed to the appointment of Infosys Limited as the Council's new Oracle Fusion implementation partner. This decision was taken under delegated authority agreed by the Cabinet at its meeting of 15 December 2021 following a competitive procurement process, via an appropriate Crown Commercial Service's Framework which was undertaken during May and June 2022.

The contract duration will be 18 months, with an option to extend up to a further 12 months. The maximum contract value over the full contract period will be £2.37 million. At the time of our review Infosys were mobilising to commence contract delivery.

Governance Arrangements

The Council commissioned the Society for Innovation, Technology and Modernisation (SOCITM) in March 2022 to support an assurance review of the governance and resource arrangements for the ERP system implementation. SOCITM were appointed due to their experience working with a number of other councils implementing Oracle Fusion.

There have been significant changes and improvements made to the governance arrangements:

- The Programme Board meets weekly to monitor progress, with the Director of Finance now being the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO).
- A Business Design group meets fortnightly to monitor the outcomes and benefits from the programme
- A Business Readiness Group meets fortnightly which has oversight on the implementation plan activity
- An Implementation Board meets weekly to monitor progress on delivery of programme workstreams

- Four work stream groups meet weekly focusing on HR and Payroll, Finance and Procurement, IT and Technical, and Commercial.
- A Programme Management Office has been established and is utilising good practice programme management approaches.
- There are also cross-cutting working groups on change management, reporting, data cleansing and migration, and implementation planning.

The membership and roles the Board and each group have been defined.

SOCITM have worked with the Council to produce key programme documents which were not previously in place, including a programme vision, programme scope, programme change management strategy, programme benefits framework and programme design principles. A change readiness assessment and review of benefits realisation was concluding at the time of our review. SOCITM have also provided the Council with advice on the procurement of the new implementation partner and implementation process.

A risk escalation process has been established, and at the time of our review work was ongoing to confirm key risk decision makers and risk tolerances, and defining and agreeing change control processes.

Also at the time of our review the corporate PMO was in the process of being established and a review of programme documentation and reporting tools was in progress.

The SRO provides regular updates to the Council's Leadership Team. There are weekly programme and project board meetings and a fortnightly business design board. Engagement sessions with wider Council stakeholders have also been introduced for example on the design principles of the new system.

Organisation engagement

A programme narrative has been created to share consistent messages across the Council to effectively communicate what is planned and the benefits to be realised. Services directly impacted by the change such as finance, HR and payroll have been engaged to better understand how the new system will create process efficiencies.

A programme communications manager role has been created and resourced.

The Council recognises that more work is required on organisational-wide engagement and is planning more engagement events for people who will be affected by the change

KLOE A10: Introduction of new ERP System (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's management of the introduction of Oracle Fusion and understanding implementation delays and their impact.

Resourcing and Implementation Timescale

SOCITM have provided the Council with a good practice resource planning approach. An organisation matrix has been developed that clearly sets out all internal and external resource involved in the implementation and governance of the programme. A resource model has been developed setting out inputs, roles and timescales for each individual role involved in the programme. Resource profiles have been developed that set out what is required from a capacity and capability perspective.

By moving to treat the system implementation as a change programme the Council has recognised the need for additional resource roles such as in relation to change management, business analysis and communication. The Council has recently appointed an interim Transformation Director who has recent experience of implementing Oracle Fusion at another council. In addition, SOCITM have provided the Council with interim pre-implementation programme management resource.

Infosys, the new implementation support partner, in their tender submission indicated a go live date of October 2023 for the new system, other than payroll which would go live in December 2023 or January 2024. These timescales are aligned to SOCITM's advice to the Council. The Council was in the process of confirming go live dates with Infosys at the time of our review.

In September 2022 the Council agreed to extend the contract with SOCITM to continue to provide support until the new system goes live. This includes involvement in programme management, change management and test management.

Benefits realisation

A programme benefits framework has been produced and the strategic priorities for benefits have been agreed.

The Council is revisiting the original "business case" and baselining existing and known future costs on business support staff across the Council as well as relevant third party spend. This baseline will then be used to identify cashable and non-cashable benefits that should be created by introducing the new system. This had not concluded at the time of our review. The Council has approached Oracle to determine if Oracle can provide a value proposition assessment to support the Council's benefits planning.

The Council has commissioned C.Co (a consulting company owned by CIPFA) to review business support functions to identify any areas of activity that can be consolidated alongside system implementation. DXE have been commissioned by the Council to review supplier spend.

Further consideration is required by the Council on how the new system can support the Council's performance appraisal process, leave booking, and reporting real time financial information.

The Council must ensure that all expected benefits are defined, and that governance arrangements, including assigning accountabilities, are in place to ensure benefits are realised.

Future Major projects

The introduction of Oracle Fusion will support improved management information including data that can be used to support the KPIs in the Performance Management Framework, such as vacancy levels and sickness absence.

The Capital Asset Management Board, which oversees projects which include capital expenditure, has adapted its programme templates and governance arrangements, learning from the ERP systems implementation.

The Council is procuring a corporate Programme and Project Management (PPM) System and at the time the specification for this new system had not been finalised, with the Council working through an understanding of the requirements of different services. Market testing had been initiated.

The ERP system implementation programme as reconstituted and resourced (a blend of council officers and external providers) provides an opportunity for the Council to develop its in-house transformation capacity. To do this there will need to be knowledge transfer from external providers such as SCOCITM which it can then use of wider transformation and change activity.

A new central team is being established to manage the Council's Corporate Transformation Plan, At the time of our review this new team was finalising governance arrangements and associated guidance, including requirements for business case approval for all new change projects. The Council should ensure that the central transformation team is appropriately resourced and integrates all transformation and change activity being undertaken across the Council.

Furthermore, the Council must ensure that the ERP System implementation programme becomes aligned to other improvement and change initiatives being undertaken or planned by the Council, so that synergies and economies in delivery can be identified and duplication removed.

KLOE A10: Introduction of new ERP System (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's management of the introduction of Oracle Fusion and understanding implementation delays and their impact.

Conclusion and recommendations

It is acknowledged by the Council that its governance of this project has been poor. We estimate that the minimum additional cost to the Council due to its poor oversight is £2.2m.

The Council has taken significant steps to correct what was a floundering system implementation and undertaken a significant amount of work since our previous review.

The Council has introduced more robust and appropriate governance arrangements, appointed a new implementation partner, scaled up the resources to implement the programme, introduced a programme management approach, engaged specialist external support and capacity, and corrected skills and experience gaps.

The programme is now on a much more sound footing and the Council leadership now recognises that the introduction of a new ERP System is an enabler for transformation and has moved from a "lift and shift" approach to managing the implementation as a change programme.

The increase in costs to manage the implementation more effectively should increase the chances of a successful implementation and for the Council to realise the planned benefits. However, the way the original implementation was managed has incurred significant and unnecessary costs and delays for the Council, which remains a key learning reference point for future large-scale change projects and programmes.

The Council must ensure that:

- all expected benefits are defined, and that governance arrangements, including assigning accountabilities, are in place to ensure benefits are realised.
- the central transformation team is appropriately resourced and integrates all transformation and change activity being undertaken across the Council
- the ERP System implementation programme becomes aligned to other improvement and change initiatives being undertaken or planned by the Council, so that synergies and economies in delivery can be identified and duplication removed.



KLOE B1: Chief Officers

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's compliance with JNC guidance in relation to the recent departure of certain chief officers.

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Background

Our original review considered the Council's compliance with JNC guidance in relation to the departure of certain chief officers. Our December 2021 report recommended:

- The Council should ensure that at the very least, appropriate internal and external advice is sought should the departure of a chief officer by mutual consent is agreed.

KEY FINDINGS

There have been no chief officer departures since our 2021 review.

Following our original review the Council engaged Eversheds to undertake a retrospective review of the most recent chief officer departures (the former Chief Executive and Director of Resources) which were the focus of our original review. This legal advice determined that the Council followed model statutory procedures.

As part of the Council's ongoing review of its constitution, the Council's legal and democratic services teams are reviewing employment procedure rules to ensure they appropriately reference statutory procedures relating to the dismissal of chief officers. At the time of our review updates were being drafted but had not been approved.

The Council's Chief Offer Terms and Conditions Committee will have a clearly defined role where statutory procedures are required to be followed in relation to the departure of a chief officer.

The Council has advised that they would take legal advice in advance of any future decision relating to unplanned departure of a chief officer.

Conclusion

Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.



KLOE B2: Senior leadership

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the background to senior leadership changes and the impact of interim officers in place.

Background

Our original review considered the background to senior leadership changes and the impact of interim officers in place.

Our December 2021 report recommended:

Critical to this sustainable change will be the appointment of the right permanent Chief Executive, and the Council must ensure an effective recruitment process, including maximising the chances of attracting a pool of appropriate candidates. Should the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive not be successful the Council should seek to retain the current interim Chief Executive and move this to a full-time contract

KEY FINDINGS

The Council's most recent restructure created ten senior leadership roles. The eight director roles all had a permanent appointment in role by November 2021. The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive roles remain vacant. In addition, a Director of HR role has been approved as a permanent role and was filled in March 2022.

The Council's Interim Chief Executive has agreed with the Council to continue in role until approximately six months after the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive.

The interim Chief Executive was appointed by the Secretary of State for DLUHC as the Managing Director Commissioner in March 2022, one of two Commissioners appointed to oversee the Council's Improvement Plan as part of the government's intervention in the Council. This dual role is uncommon in local government, with one current other example, until recently, at Slough Borough Council. We consider that in the circumstances the decision was appropriate.

At the time of our review the Council was in the process of recruiting to the permanent role of Chief Executive. The Council has appointed Penna, via a competitive tender process, to support this recruitment.

The Council's Chief Officer Terms and Conditions Committee have agreed the recruitment process and timescales for the new Chief Executive. The closing date for the advert was 12 September 2022, and 17 applications were received. The Chief Executive of the LGA has been supporting the candidate technical assessment process.

The Council approved the appointment of a new permanent Chief Executive on 8 November 2022, with their start date confirmed as 6 February 2023.

The new permanent Chief Executive will have nine Directors reporting to them, and as with many Chief Executives new to role may consider changes to the Council's organisational structure. It will be important that any changes made do not adversely impact on organisational stability, or on the pace and success of the Council's ongoing improvement journey.

Conclusion and recommendations

Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.

The success of the appointment of the new permanent Chief Executive remains critical for the Council if it is to successfully continue on its improvement journey.

KLOE B3: Complaints

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the appropriateness of complaints made against senior officers and the responses to these complaints.

Background

The original review considered the appropriateness of complaints made against senior officers and members and the responses to these complaints.

Our December 2021 report recommended:

The Council's senior leadership – both officer and member – must act to change the culture and organisational ethos in relation to complaints, and to restore balance and proportionality.

KEY FINDINGS

A new Chair was appointed to the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee in May 2022 and an agreed work programme is in place for the Committee's meetings in June, November and December 2022 and in March 2023. An update on complaints is programmed for each of these meetings.

The Committee received an update on complaints at its most meeting on 21 June 2022. Six complaints were reported, with these complaints having been received between 22 October 2021 and 12 April 2022. Three complaints were from members of the public, two from officers and one from an elected member. All alleged breaches of the member code of conduct.

Five of the complaints were reported as having been resolved: two via member training, one via a written apology and two were judged to have had insufficient evidence to be a breach of the member code of conduct. Of the six only one was referred for investigation, the conclusion of which had not been reported at the time of our review.

At the equivalent meeting of the Committee in June 2021 there were twelve complaints reported, indicating a reduction in the level of complaints received to a more manageable level. This can be seen as a proxy measure for wider improvements in the culture and governance of the Council.

The revised Member Code of Conduct, approved in March 2021, is still in place. The Code is reviewed via alternating annual light touch and in-depth reviews. A light touch review is planned for the end of 2022.

Arrangements for dealing with complaints, which forms part of the Council's ethical framework, is also reviewed annually, following the same approach as the Member Code of Conduct.

Conclusion

Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.



KLOE B4a: Officer and member relationships

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider whether relationships between senior officers and senior members are appropriate in supporting good governance.

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Background

Our original review considered the relationships between senior officers and senior members and whether they were appropriate in supporting good governance.

Our December 2021 report made a series of recommendations relating to senior officers and members and related recommended

- Embedding the changes that have been made by the Leadership Team and those that are planned will be critical if the Council is to realise its strategic ambition and provide effective governance.
- Enhancement of the induction programme to new members of Cabinet, including on local government finance and their governance roles is recommended.
- The Council should ensure that corporate KPIs are agreed so that the implementation of the Corporate Plan can be effectively monitored.
- The forward plan of the Cabinet should be shared with the Audit Committee and Scrutiny Board to help structure their agenda planning.
- The Leadership Team should agree key medium-term financial objectives and principles. There should be effective ownership of the principles that underpin the budget setting process, for example the Council's approach to reserves, contingency and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).
- Senior officers and senior members must lead by example to ensure that the "tone from the top" consistently reflects these values and behaviours. This is critical in ensuring that the wider organisation recognises that changes have been made and that all people are confident in adopting these values and behaviours. This should build on recently introduced staff briefings to include a programme of staff engagement including "pulse" checks to benchmark and monitor progress on the organisation's wellbeing.
- The Council should ensure that the review of the member development programme is appropriate. In particular, thought should be given to how members with special responsibility roles are developed and supported. This should include succession planning for these roles.
- Further work is required to establish a formal performance management framework and agree a set of key corporate indicators for the Leadership Team to collectively manage, receive appropriate management information to monitor progress, and set out clear lines of accountability, responsibility, and delegated authority.

- The recent introduction of financial benchmarking will need to be sustained to create a culture of curiosity in services in how nearest statistical neighbours are performing, to support savings identification and to drive improvements
- The Council should continue its more outward looking approach is sustained and develop key local and sub-regional relationships.
- When investing in the communications team, the Council should also use this as an opportunity to ensure more effective internal communications, including with back-bench members.
- There is a need to ensure that members of scrutiny and audit committees are aware of their governance roles including how to interrogate reports and ask the right questions.

Due to the nature of the recommendations arising from our original review we have structured the key findings from our follow up review as follows:

- KLOE 4a: Member and officer relationships
- KLOE Bb: Performance management and other matters.

KLOE B4a: Officer and member relationships

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider whether relationships between senior officers and senior members are appropriate in supporting good governance.

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Review of member development programme

The Member Development Programme (MDP) has been reviewed and introduced for 2022/23. The programme covers preparing candidates who may become newly elected members, new member induction and then a programme of development for all members. The programme includes planned monitoring, evaluation and review to ensure candidates, newly elected members and established members receive appropriate and targeted learning and support matched to their current and future needs.

This revised MDP will build on what has been learned over the past four years plans to develop members who are in positions of special responsibility or are aspiring to be. Personal Development Plans (PDPs) will be created for all members to ensure their development is bespoke to their individual needs. The development of PDPs commenced in July 2022 and are due to be reviewed at the end of the current municipal year.

The member development programme has been augmented with additional training sessions being delivered by the LGA, as already noted. An update on progress is due to be reported to the Standards Committee at its October 2022 meeting. The MDP was being delivered at the time of our review and includes training on public speaking and chairing meetings and has received positive feedback from participating members.

There have been a number of changes to the chairing arrangements of some committees and boards for the 2022/23 municipal year. Initial conversations have taken place with the Council Leader on succession planning and the criteria used to identify individual members for Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) roles, but this work has not yet concluded.

The Council needs to build on the progress being made on member development and conclude the 2022/23 programme including the review of member PDPs and take further steps to finalise arrangements on succession planning for members in SRA roles.

New training programmes

The Council has engaged the Local Government Association (LGA) to provide training on effective officer and member relationships. The training is designed to improve understanding of respective roles and what good relationships look like.

Two sessions have been planned for members and two for officers. The training programme was in the process of being delivered at the time of our review and we have been advised that there has been positive feedback from those who have so far participated. The LGA will provide the Council with a summary of their experiences of delivering the programme following the final session which is due in November 2022.

The Director of Finance is providing training for the Cabinet and members of the Opposition on budget setting and local government finance, to support the 2023/24 budget setting process.

Member induction

The LGA has also been engaged to deliver a development programme for new members of the Cabinet, as well as training for the Cabinet collectively. This programme was ongoing at the time of our review.

The Council also delivered a training programme during May and June 2022 for all newly elected members. This included the Code of Member Conduct, Internal Audit, Counter Fraud and Risk Management, the scrutiny function, local government finance, and planning.

Forward Plan

A forward plan of Cabinet business has been made available to all members to improve awareness and transparency. The changes to the Council's scheme of delegation, approved by Cabinet in July 2022, is expected to see a reduction in the number of reports to Cabinet making agenda planning more straightforward and allowing Cabinet a greater focus on strategic priorities and issues.

Work is underway to extend the forward plan from four to twelve months, and to work with Scrutiny Boards and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee to use the forward plan to inform their work programmes.

KLOE B4a: Officer and member relationships (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider whether relationships between senior officers and senior members are appropriate in supporting good governance.

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Scrutiny Board and Audit Committee Governance Roles

There is a more mature engagement between the Leader, Cabinet, Committee Chairs and senior officers, supporting good planning and work programming across the different committees.

In May 2022 new Chairs were appointed to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board. For both committees relationships have been reset and improvements made.

Scrutiny training and development for members and officers was introduced in June 2022, alongside improvements in relation to scrutiny work programming. A Scrutiny Improvement Plan has been developed which sets out a longer-term training plan for scrutiny members and greater clarity on roles and protocols for scrutiny committees and protocols on how scrutiny works with the Executive and Chief Officers, which were approved by full Council on 8 November 2022.

Improvements have already been introduced by the Scrutiny Board Chair including formal pre-meetings, forward plans have been reviewed to improve agenda setting, and Chairs and Vice Chairs have agenda setting meetings for all scrutiny committees.

The Scrutiny Improvement Plan includes further actions including: an annual report of the impact of scrutiny to full Council, peer support and mentoring from the LGA and Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, creation of job roles for scrutiny members, the introduction of a protocol clarifying the relationship between scrutiny and the Executive, and the introduction of feedback to support continuous improvement.

Training has been provided to members on the Audit Committee and more generally all members are participating in the MDP previously discussed.

The Council had its first scrutiny call-in for 13 years, which was in relation to the future of the Brandhall Golf Course site, which is an indication of the progress being made. Following the meeting the Chair has asked officers to consider examples of call-in approaches from other councils to identify any improvements that can be made by the Council.

Overall, positive progress has been made to improve the culture and professionalism of key Council committees, with the scrutiny function making particular progress. The Scrutiny Improvement Plan must be approved so that this positive direction of travel is maintained.

Improved outward looking approach

The Cabinet and senior officers, have been proactive in reconnecting with regional and national bodies, such as the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

The Leaders Office is being restructured to better support the Leader and Cabinet in attending external meetings and their associated external responsibilities.

The Council must continue its proactive approach in working with regional and national bodies, and obtain structured evidence of progress being made and identify where further engagement supports the Corporate Plan.

Tone from the top and internal communication

The Council has introduced a number of initiatives to try and improve communication between senior officers and the rest of the organisation, in the context of post pandemic hybrid working arrangements. These include:

- The trialling of video updates and sessions with the leadership team, alongside the staff briefings that had already been in place.
- Listening champions are being introduced so that senior officers can obtain a “bottom up” view from the organisation.
- A Co-Production Network of officers has been used to help develop the Improvement Plan.
- An employee engagement survey was undertaken in Spring 2022, which had a 61% response rate. This was the first such survey since 2018. The results have been widely shared, including via the listening champions. The results are being used to inform discussions and thinking at directorate and team levels. Regular “pulse” surveys are planned.

The LGA's Peer Review follow up visit in October 2022 reported that Council staff are feeling much better communicated with from the corporate level,

Member briefings take place approximately every three months where key issues and topics are discussed, based on members declared areas of interest. These sessions provide back bench members with an opportunity to ask senior officers questions.

A new Head of Communications has been appointed with the brief to increase the level of internal and external communications. A Communications Strategy was agreed by the Leadership Team on 20 September 2022.

KLOE B4b: Performance management and other matters

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider whether relationships between senior officers and senior members are appropriate in supporting good governance.

Performance Management Framework and Corporate KPIs

The Improvement Plan and MPF, alongside the refreshed Corporate Plan provides the Council with an opportunity to improve evidenced based decision making. Accountability has been improved with objectives aligned to Directors, Associate Directors and Service Managers, but not below this level.

At the time of our review Quarter 1 performance monitoring had been undertaken, and reported to Cabinet on 28 September 2022. The report included updates on:

- Budget monitoring
- KPIs for key contracts (SCT and Serco)
- Organisational health
- Workforce composition (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)
- Sickness absence
- Employee engagement
- Health and safety
- Corporate Plan delivery
- Improvement Plan delivery
- Strategic risk register
- Customer experience

This reporting framework represents a major step forward in providing the Leadership Team and Cabinet with a consolidated approach to performance and risk reporting. Due to the approach being recently introduced the Council plans to undertake reviews of the MPF and reporting approach, We note the following:

- KPIs selected for the PMF include data that is available quarterly, annually, biannually and in some cases termly. This provides a challenge for the quarter 1 report because not all data is available for this period. Quarter 1 reporting was therefore partial, with the expectation that additional data will be available for future quarterly reports.
- Organisational health indicators do not currently include targets.
- Data quality is expected to improve to support some indicators once Oracle Fusion has been implemented, in particular workforce data.
- Further work is required to ensure there are clearly defined customer outcomes to better measure data in relation to customer experience (channel shift, call centre performance and complaints).

The Council needs to ensure that the Corporate Plan, Improvement Plan and MPF and how they inter-relate are clearly communicated across the whole organisation to avoid potential confusion impacting on the delivery of these plans, and support the planned work on phase 2 of the Improvement Plan on organisational culture and behaviours. **The Council should consider aligning individual performance objectives of staff to these Plans to create a “golden thread” throughout the organisation, as part of the Council’s annual performance appraisal process.**

The quarter 2 performance report, covering the period July to September 2022, and due to be presented to Cabinet on 7 December 2022, summarised key Corporate Plan actions as follows:

- 258 on track (252 in quarter 1)
- 91 medium issues/risks/slippage (85 in quarter 1)
- 9 significant issues/risks/slippage (7 in quarter 1)
- 53 no data available (66 in quarter 1).

Significant issues reported were:

- Alignment of governance arrangements and budgets of the VCS grants programme to corporate objectives.
- Strategic Plan to feed into the Black Country Plan, review of the Black Country Plan policy base.
- Deliver 2022/23 capital programme of annual maintenance for highways
- Refresh the Council’s storage area network
- Development of the Corporate Data Strategy to define and deliver approach to business intelligence.
- Delivery of income generated from chargeable garden waste
- Replacing high energy street lighting.

It is positive that the Council is now able to monitor Corporate Plan progress, but we note that delays to the Corporate Data Strategy, due to organisational capacity. **The Council should ensure appropriate capacity is in place so that data gaps relating to KPIs can be resolved.**

KLOE B4b: Performance management and other matters (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider whether relationships between senior officers and senior members are appropriate in supporting good governance.

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Medium term financial objectives and principles

The Council's Leadership Team have more regular discussions on budget related issues including a dedicated leadership team session, led by the Director of Finance, on budget setting. The Leadership Team is seen to have greater corporate ownership of financial issues but there is further work to do before all Directors take a collegiate and strategic view at all times, rather than a departmental perspective. This will be supported by the Leadership Team agreeing key financial objectives and principles, which has not yet been concluded.

Star chambers continue to be used to support budget setting and more progress is required for this to generate innovative and transformational proposals. There is an absence of a whole organisation view of the scale of the financial challenge facing the Council for 2023/24 and in the medium-term, and how these challenges will be addressed

The Council's Leadership Team must agree medium-term financial objectives and principles to provide a framework for financial planning discussions and ensure that there is a whole organization view of the scale of the financial challenges facing the Council in the medium term and how these are going to be addressed.

Financial benchmarking

LG Futures have been commissioned by the Council to provide financial benchmarking data which is shared by Finance Team with Directorates.

Because there hadn't been a culture of using financial benchmarking in recent years, developing an understanding in services of factors such as unit costs and how they compare to statistical nearest neighbours remains a work in progress. The use of benchmarking has been variable across services.

It remains important for the Council to utilise financial benchmarking tools and data to support the service and financial planning process, in particular to help identify opportunities for efficiencies, savings and service improvements.



KLOE B4: Conclusions and recommendations

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider whether relationships between senior officers and senior members are appropriate in supporting good governance.

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Conclusions and recommendations

Each greater stability can now be seen, both politically and at a senior officer level, and the Cabinet and Leadership Team are working increasingly well both collectively and via their individual Director and Portfolio Lead roles. This is being recognised across the wider organisation.

There is a more mature engagement between the Leader, Cabinet, Committee Chairs and senior officers, supporting good planning and work programming across different Council committees and a greater level of professionalism in how business is conducted by these committees.

The introduction of a PMF is evidence of an improvement in consolidated reporting and provides the Council's leadership with an opportunity for improved evidenced based decision making and monitoring the delivery of the Corporate Plan and Improvement Plan. The Council recognises that the PMF approach requires ongoing refinement to improve how key indicators can be effectively measured and must ensure capacity is created to resolved KPI data gaps.

The Leadership Team has progressed in its corporate approach to managing key issues and challenges but on medium-term financial planning there remains work to do.

Whilst positive progress has been made, the Council remains on an improvement journey and we have identified the following improvement recommendations:

- The Council should consider creating a "golden thread" throughout the organisation, linking the Corporate Plan and other Plan objectives, through to the objectives set for each individual member of staff, as part of the Council's annual performance appraisal process.
- The Council should ensure that capacity is in place to resolve KPI data gaps..
- The Council's Leadership Team must agree medium-term financial objectives and principles to provide a framework for financial planning discussions and ensure that there is a whole organization view of the scale of the financial challenges facing the Council in the medium term and how these are going to be addressed.
- The Council needs to build on the progress being made on member development and conclude the 2022/23 programme including the review of member PDPs and take further steps to finalise arrangements on succession planning for members in SRA roles.

- It remains important for the Council to utilise financial benchmarking tools and data to support the service and financial planning process, in particular to help identify opportunities for efficiencies, savings and service improvements.



KLOE B5: Standards Committee

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the appropriateness of the work undertaken by the Standards Committee.

Background

Our original review considered the appropriateness of the work undertaken by the Ethical Standards and Development Committee. Our December 2021 report recommended:

- Member training and development programme must play a key role in ensuring members fully understand the expectations and standards relating to their role
- Meetings between senior officers, political group leaders and chief whips should take place to ensure that these stakeholders are able to discuss emerging issues and trends, recognise good behaviours and discuss how to manage behaviours not in line with the Code

KEY FINDINGS

An update on the review of the Member Development Programme (MDP) has been provided in our key findings in relation to KLOE B4.

The MDP which is being delivered during 2022 includes content relating to the role of members on committees and the role of these committees.

The Monitoring Officer, the interim Chief Executive and the Leader were introducing at the time of our review arrangements to meet the political group leaders and chief whips to create a safe space to discuss any behavioural issues that are not in line with the Code of Member Conduct that have been identified.

This arrangement is being put in place to identify emerging issues and trends and agree any actions required to manage inappropriate behaviours. These meetings are also seen as an opportunity to recognise positive examples of member behaviours.

Conclusion and recommendations

Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks.

The Council must ensure that the new arrangements now in place are used effectively to monitor and take prompt action whenever inappropriate behaviour is identified.



KLOE B6: Audit Committee

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the actions undertaken by the Audit Committee during 2021 in relation to the review into the Wragge report.

Background

Our original review considered the long-standing issues relating to the Wragge and Cox reports.

Our December 2021 report recommended:

Now that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee has agreed the actions to bring this long-standing matter to resolution, it will be important that – as the Audit and Governance Panel recognised - the Council manages its position so that the matter does not resurface, so that it can move on and focus on its corporate objectives.

KEY FINDINGS

The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee, at its March 2022 meeting, resolved to refer to the Council's Executive the decision on whether a further review was required into the Wragge report or Cox report. A new Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee was appointed in May 2022 at the start of the new municipal year. We understand that the new Chair of the Committee's position is that they do not seek to re-open the matter. At the meetings of the Committee in May and June the issue of the Wragge or Cox report did not get raised and is not the subject of further review by the Committee.

The Audit Committee has continued to operate throughout the year in an operate manner focussing on significant governance matters.

The Council's Improvement Plan includes actions, such as member training, which have been progressing during 2022, which include content on appropriate behaviour of elected members, their roles and responsibilities.

The Council's Leader will confirm the Executive's position on any further review by the end of December 2022.

Conclusion and recommendation

Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks

A final decision needs to be made by the Leader before this matter can be considered formally closed.



KLOE B7: Financial reporting

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's response to recommendations raised in our 2019/20 audit findings report.

Background

Our original review considered the Council's responses to recommendations raised in our 2019/20 Audit Findings Report (AFR) and further issues identified by our governance review.

Our December 2021 report recommended:

- Management should ensure that the AFR action plan sets out actions and completion dates in relation to all recommendations. It should also identify where the new ERP system implementation and the planned asset management system could cause delays or impacts on planned actions
- Management should ensure that the changes in relation to budget setting and budget management recently introduced are sustained, and take steps to manage any weaknesses not yet addressed.
- Management should ensure the Finance team has appropriate skills and capacity to manage the Council's financial reporting responsibilities.

KEY FINDINGS

Financial statement audit

The audit of the 2020/21 financial statements is still in progress as at November 2022. [The audit has been significantly delayed due to the quality of the financial statements and working papers presented for audit.](#) The audit is drawing to a conclusion and a draft report will be issued to the Council in December 2022. Issues include:

- material errors in the valuation of property plant and equipment and pension fund
- material errors in cash balances and other areas of the financial statements
- uncertainty with regard to credit loss allowances, recognition of payables, and assets and liabilities relating to the SERCO waste contract.

We have not been able to draw a conclusion on a number of these areas and it is uncertain whether they will impact on the reserves available to the Council. It is possible that we will issue a modified opinion on the 2020/21 financial statements.

We have been unable to commence the audit of the 2021/22 financial statements due to the delays in the 2020/21 audit.

Financial systems and finance team

The Council is introducing a new corporate asset management system which is expected to improve fixed asset accounting and therefore mitigate issues relating to the closure of accounts. The new system is due to be in place by the time of the 2022/23 closure of accounts. Additional technical accountant resources have been brought in to support the accounts backlog.

The Finance Team has been restructured with the new structure going live in August 2022. This restructure has been undertaken to provide greater focus on finance business partnering by introducing more finance business partners so that each Director has their own business partner supported by an assistant business partner. Business partners should provide improved focus in supporting departmental and service change and transformation.

There have been some changes in personnel, in particular the financial reporting team and a new post has been created relating to fixed assets. Not all new posts have permanent appointments, for example the new head of technical finance is being filled via an interim, who started in September 2022.

Training for members of the Finance Team was undertaken in February and March 2022, prior to the restructure with a focus on accounts closedown. A skills gap analysis was being undertaken at the time of our review to identify the training needs of members of the restructured Finance Team.

The actions taken so far will take time to complete and successfully embed the necessary changes.

Budget setting and monitoring

The Council's Leadership Team continues to receive a monthly budget morning report. The Cabinet and Scrutiny Board receive budget monitoring reports each quarter.

The star chamber approach introduced during Autumn 2021 for 2022/23 budget setting is being retained for 2023/24 budget setting. Star chambers are to be held for each Directorate with the Director of Resources, the relevant finance business partner, the relevant service director and one of the Commissioners providing challenge on budget pressures and savings proposals.

KLOE B7: Financial reporting (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider the Council's response to recommendations raised in our 2019/20 audit findings report.

Budget setting and monitoring (Cont'd)

Financial benchmarking continues to be used and the Council has engaged LG Futures to provide ongoing support in this area. In addition, Grant Thornton have provided some financial benchmarking from the CFO Insight benchmarking tool.

The Council's Cabinet continues to be engaged with a number of budget planning sessions having taken place by the time of our review, with plans in place to provide a session for the Labour Group.

The Council commissioned Eventure Research to undertake a public consultation exercise on the Council's budget. The results, which were based on a survey completed by 1,070 residents, were reported in September 2022. This was the first such consultation exercise for several years. The consultation has provided the Council with representative views on areas such as: the most valued services, options for closing the budget gap, service provision, the level of Council Tax, and access to services on-line. The results of this exercise are being used as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Council's procedures for the production of its financial statements require significant improvement. We note that there are a number of legacy issues from prior years that continue to have an impact on the timeliness and accuracy of the accounts and are undermining the quality of the financial statements. Whilst we note that actions have been taken over the past twelve months to address these issues, improvements are not likely to start to be seen until the 2021/22 accounts. We consider that this needs to be an area of priority for the Council, including managing the recruitment challenges that have been experienced. Until these matters are resolved there will remain some uncertainty over the Council's financial position.

The other improvements that are in train will take time to embed, reflecting the lack of a corporate asset management system and an appropriately resourced and skilled finance team, which had not received appropriate development and training in prior years.

The Council must successfully implement the new corporate asset management system to timescale, ensure all key finance roles have permanent appointments, and prioritise the recruitment to, and training and development of, the Finance Team so that the role and behaviour changes planned become embedded.



KLOE B8: Engagement with residents and community stakeholders

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider how the Council engages with residents and community stakeholders.

Background

Whilst not a key line of enquiry for our original review we have agreed with the Council's management to consider how the Council engages with residents and community groups to supplement our understanding of the Council's improvement journey.

This has included a sample of two community consultations:

- West Bromwich Masterplan.
- Walker Grange, an extra care facility owned by the Council.

We have also considered wider resident engagement surveys.

KEY FINDINGS

Resident engagement

The Council has introduced an annual residents survey and are considering additional mechanisms to improve resident engagement, such as resident panels and focus groups.

Eventure Research were commissioned by the Council to undertake a resident and wellbeing survey. A survey was conducted with 1,062 respondents throughout the borough, with quotas set on age group, gender, disability, ethnic group and area of the borough. The survey was conducted in July and August 2022. Some of the questions are also asked by the LGA in their national tracker survey, allowing national comparisons. The results included:

- 78% of respondents are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.
- Just over a quarter (27%) of respondents had been in contact with Sandwell Council recently.
- Housing, missed bin collections, reporting anti-social behaviour, and council tax queries are the most common reasons for contacting the Council.
- Satisfaction with the Council is slightly higher than the national average (66% compared to 62%),
- Three in five (60%) think Sandwell Council acts on the concerns of local residents, compared with 52% nationally.
- Three in five (60%) think Sandwell Council keeps residents informed about services and benefits it provides, compared with 57% nationally
- Trust in the Council is higher amongst Sandwell residents than nationally (67% and 58% respectively)

- Council services receiving higher than national satisfaction ratings were waste, street cleaning, road and pavement maintenance, sport and leisure services and services to support children and young people.
- Services where satisfaction is lower than national satisfaction ratings are library services, services to support older people and parks and open spaces.
- Respondents are most concerned about the cost of living increases and inflation, NHS waiting lists and having a family that is healthy.

The Council also commissioned Eventure Research to undertake a public consultation exercise on the Council's budget, which is discussed in the section on KLOE B7. The Council has also undertaken a public consultation on the electoral cycle.

Undertaking this resident engagement survey is a positive step for the Council, and the results will need to be used to inform service and financial planning. The changes being made via the Improvement Plan and the corporate Performance Management Framework the Council needs to ensure that it continues to engage with residents and that this engagement supports greater corporate focus on service quality and customer outcomes.

Community consultation: West Bromwich Masterplan

The 5 February 2020 Cabinet approved the development of the masterplan to provide a vision for the future of the town centre, including the need for public consultation to support the masterplanning process. In November 2020 the Council commissioned Savills as the lead consultant which included a community consultation role. Mott MacDonald were engaged to undertake viability work, and Benoy to lead on the design.

In March 2020 the Council discussed their vision for West Bromwich with the Government's High Street Task Force, which identified the need for more effective community engagement.

A consultation and engagement plan was developed in April 2021, to support the Towns Fund deal for West Bromwich, and this was used for the masterplan consultation.

KLOE B8: Engagement with residents and community stakeholders (Cont'd)

The purpose of this KLOE was to consider how the Council engages with residents and community stakeholders.

Community consultation: West Bromwich Masterplan (Cont'd)

Consultation was then undertaken with various groups and organisations including regional stakeholders such as the LEP, West Midlands Combined Authority, the West Midlands Growth Company, West Midlands Police, West Bromwich Town Members Board, West Bromwich Town Deal Board, Sandwell College and Lyng Primary School.

Workshops were then held with the Council's Cabinet in June 2021 to discuss findings before a four-week public consultation exercise was undertaken with residents, local businesses and landowners during July and August 2021. This included physical events and virtual events, and the use of the website questionnaire.

The consultation responses were fed back to the external consultants in a consultation outcome plan which was also reported to Cabinet on 9 February 2022. The Cabinet approved the West Bromwich Interim Planning Statement and West Bromwich Masterplan at this meeting. Consultation feedback was used to inform changes to the masterplan and these changes were highlighted in the Cabinet report. Some issues raised by the consultation could not be met by the masterplan, such as crime and anti-social behaviour and these responses were shared with the police.

This is an example of a well-structured approach to community consultation. The Council believe that the consultation process has significantly improved and strengthened relationships with local business and community groups.

Community Consultation: Walker Grange

Walker Grange is an extra care supported housing accommodation for people aged 55 years or above who require care and/or support to live independently. The facility, which has capacity for 39 residents, is owned by the Council and was built in the 1980s. It was proving unsuitable to meet the changing care and support needs of some individuals and the Council was considering its closure and the transfer of residents to other extra care accommodation in the borough.

On 1 September 2021 the Council's Cabinet agreed to a consultation exercise in advance of taking decision on the future of the facility. A twelve-week consultation period was approved for consultation with stakeholders including tenants, their families and carers, day care users, staff of the facility and trade unions

The consultation received a lot of interest locally, on social media and from ward councillors and local MPs, in part due to a view that the Council had already taken a decision to close the facility.

From the consultation, a clear message from tenants, their families and staff were that they valued and wanted Walker Grange to continue to provide services to the current cohort of people and potentially develop and promote the service further. During the consultation period it became clear that further investment, rather than purely maintenance, could potentially provide the Council with a resource to provide additional support to vulnerable adults through extra care provision.

The Cabinet considered the consultation outcomes at its meeting on 18 November 2021 alongside three options for the future of Walker Grange:

- Do nothing: continue to provide Extra Care Housing at Walker Grange.
- Look at the closure of Walker Grange & the transfer of Tenants to other suitable Extra Care Housing provision
- look at upgrading Walker Grange building to ensure it is fit for purpose to provide Extra Care Housing.

The Cabinet agreed to the third option of investing in the current facility to ensure that it is fit for purpose. This is an example of where the Council has engaged with and listened to the views of local residents and stakeholders to improve its decision making.

Conclusion

Overall, we found no evidence of any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for ensuring that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks. We have identified one improvement recommendation:

- The Council needs to ensure that it continues to engage with residents and that this engagement supports greater corporate focus on service quality and customer outcomes.

Appendices

Appendix A: The scope of the auditor's work on value for money arrangements

Page 301

Revised approach to value for money work for 2020/21 onwards

- On 1 April 2020, the National Audit Office introduced a new Code of Audit Practice which comes into effect from audit year 2020/21. The Code introduced a revised approach to the audit of value for money.
- There are three main changes arising from the NAO's new approach:
 - A new set of key criteria, covering financial sustainability, governance and improvements in economy, efficiency and effectiveness
 - More extensive reporting, with a requirement on the auditor to produce a commentary on arrangements across all of the key criteria
 - Auditors undertaking sufficient analysis on the local authority's value for money arrangements to arrive at far more sophisticated judgements on performance, as well as key recommendations on any significant weaknesses in arrangements identified during the audit.
- The Code requires auditors to consider whether the body has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. When reporting on these arrangements, the Code requires auditors to structure their commentary on arrangements under the three specified reporting criteria.



Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

Arrangements for improving the way the body delivers its services. This includes arrangements for understanding costs and delivering efficiencies and improving outcomes for service users.



Financial Sustainability

Arrangements for ensuring the body can continue to deliver services. This includes planning resources to ensure adequate finances and maintain sustainable levels of spending over the medium term (3-5 years)



Governance

Arrangements for ensuring that the body makes appropriate decisions in the right way. This includes arrangements for budget setting and management, risk management, and ensuring the body makes decisions based on appropriate information

Potential types of recommendations

A range of different recommendations could be made following the completion of work on the body's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, which are as follows:



Statutory recommendation

Written recommendations to the body under Section 24 (Schedule 7) of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. A recommendation under schedule 7 requires the body to discuss and respond publicly to the report.



Key recommendation

The Code of Audit Practice requires that where auditors identify significant weaknesses in arrangements to secure value for money they should make recommendations setting out the actions that should be taken by the body. We have defined these recommendations as 'key recommendations'.



Improvement recommendation

These recommendations, if implemented should improve the arrangements in place at the body, but are not made as a result of identifying significant weaknesses in the body's arrangements

Appendix B: Improvement recommendations

This appendix summarises our improvement recommendations by KLOE.

Page 302	Improvement recommendations	Page #
	KLOE A1: Sandwell Children's Trust	
1	The Council will need to ensure that the SCT accelerates its progress on this improvement trajectory so that the position does not plateau, including sharing good practice on case work across the various SCT social work teams.	22
2	The Council will need to continue to closely monitor the implementation of the early help strategy to ensure planned objectives and outcomes are realised.	22
3	The Council must continue to work with SCT to mitigate and reduce the level of vacancies and use of agency staff and take steps to ensure the associated KPI does not lead to contract failure.	22
4	The Council should continue to monitor the progress of SCT against these invest to save activities to ensure that SCT is able to generate the savings and efficiencies required for the contract sum to be reduced.	22
	KLOE A2: Sandwell Leisure Trust	
5	<p>The Council will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure a business case is produced for the new leisure LATC so that there is a clear financial case for the commercial viability of the new arms length company. be clear how it effectively discharges its role whilst allowing the company the freedoms and flexibilities to operate and to deliver the planned financial and service benefits. 	24
6	The Council will need to effectively manage the transition of the Aquatics Centre so that it is operational to the planned timescale and that there is a clear business case which sets out how the centre will be managed to become commercially viable and provide financial returns to the Council as part of the leisure LATC arrangements.	24

Appendix B: Improvement recommendations (cont'd)

This appendix summarises our improvement recommendations by KLOE.

Page # 303

#	Improvement recommendations	Page #
	KLOE A3: Providence Place	
7	The Council will need to conclude the finalisation of its asset management strategy and asset management database to better manage its asset portfolio including asset disposals.	25
	KLOE A4: SEND Transport	
8	The Council must ensure that the lessons learned from the SEND Transport procurement are shared across other council services so that this learning becomes embedded across the organisation.	27
	KLOE A A7: Waste Service	
9	The Council must work with Serco to urgently finalise all associated plans and schedules which remain outstanding.	33
10	The Council should confirm with Serco if there will be changes to the waste and recycling or garden waste collection policies.	33
11	The Council should resolve the delays and formally agree replacement timescales for the waste fleet and the financing of replacement costs and supplier lead in times with SERCO. Clarity should be sought over the use of previous capital payments in relation to the Council's accounts.	33
12	The Council should take steps to demonstrate to Serco how the fleet maintenance service provides value for money.	33

Appendix B: Improvement recommendations (cont'd)

This appendix summarises our improvement recommendations by KLOE.

Page #	Improvement recommendations	Page #
304	KLOE A10: Introduction of new ERP System	
13	The Council must ensure that all expected benefits are defined, and that governance arrangements, including assigning accountabilities, are in place to ensure benefits are realised.	38
14	The Council must ensure that the central transformation team is appropriately resourced and integrates all transformation and change activity being undertaken across the Council.	38
15	The Council must ensure that the ERP System implementation programme becomes aligned to other improvement and change initiatives being undertaken or planned by the Council, so that synergies and economies in delivery can be identified and duplication removed.	38
	KLOE B4: Officer and member relationships	
16	The Council should consider creating a “golden thread” throughout the organisation, linking the Corporate Plan and other Plan objectives, through to the objectives set for each individual member of staff, as part of the Council’s annual performance appraisal process.	47
17	The Council’s Leadership Team must agree medium-term financial objectives and principles to provide a framework for financial planning discussions and ensure that there is a whole organization view of the scale of the financial challenges facing the Council in the medium term and how these are going to be addressed.	47
18	The Council should ensure that capacity is in place to resolve KPI data gaps.	47
19	The Council needs to build on the progress being made on member development and conclude the 2022/23 programme including the review of member PDPs and take further steps to finalise arrangements on succession planning for members in SRA roles.	47
20	It remains important for the Council to utilise financial benchmarking tools and data to support the service and financial planning process, in particular to help identify opportunities for efficiencies, savings and service improvements.	47

Appendix B: Improvement recommendations (cont'd)

This appendix summarises our improvement recommendations by KLOE.

Page 305	Improvement recommendations	Page #
	KLOE B5: Standards Committee	
21	The Council must ensure that the new arrangements now in place are used effectively to monitor and take prompt action whenever inappropriate behaviour is identified.	48
	KLOE B6: Audit Committee	
22	A final decision on the Cox report needs to be made by the Leader before this matter can be considered formally closed.	49
	KLOE B7: Financial Reporting	
23	The Council's procedures for the production of its financial statements require significant improvement. We note that there are a number of legacy issues from prior years that are undermining the quality of the financial statements. We consider that this needs to be an area of priority for the Council. Until these matters are resolved there will remain some uncertainty over the Council's financial position	51
24	The Council must successfully implement the new corporate asset management system to timescale, ensure all key finance roles have permanent appointments, and prioritise the training and development of the Finance Team so that the role and behaviour changes planned become embedded.	51
	KLOE B6: Engagement with residents and the community	
25	The Council needs to ensure that it continues to better engage with residents and that this engagement supports greater corporate focus on service quality and customer outcomes.	53



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LGA Corporate Peer Challenge – Progress Review

Sandwell Council

26th and 27th October 2022

Feedback





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2. Summary of the approach	3
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4. Final thoughts and next steps	13

1. Introduction

The council undertook a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) across the four days from 31st January to 3rd February 2022. The council published the related report on 7th June 2022, with this forming part of a wider report to Full Council on the council's Improvement Plan which was produced in response to the statutory direction of the Secretary of State and the findings from the various forms of external challenge that the council has undertaken over the last year or so.

The progress review that the peer team has undertaken now is an integral part of the peer challenge process. It is designed to provide the opportunity for the council to:

- Update peers on the progress made in relation to the recommendations made by the peer team and to receive feedback on this
- Consider the 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 impact and learning from the progress made to date

The LGA would like to thank Sandwell Council 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 the LGA and sector-led support.

2. Summary of the approach

The progress review at Sandwell Council took place across the two days of Wednesday 26th and Thursday 27th October. The following individuals, drawn from the original peer team, were involved:

- Kath O'Dwyer, Chief Executive, St Helens Council
- Councillor Chris Read, Leader, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

- Viv Geary, LGA Associate with a background in governance and a former Monitoring Officer
- Helen Murray, Principal Adviser (West Midlands), LGA
- Chris Bowron, Peer Challenge Manager, Local Government Association

The following written feedback is provided using a framework that reflects a number of the key themes in the council's Improvement Plan.

3. Progress Review - Feedback

Strategic Direction, Corporate Oversight and Partnership and Relationships

Much greater stability can now be seen in the council, both politically and managerially. There were a number of changes at Cabinet level in May this year, following the elections, with these involving a combination of new appointments and people having a change in their portfolio. The recently recruited Director team are now well settled in their roles.

The Leader received glowing endorsements during our discussions with stakeholders both internally and externally. People particularly highlighted her inclusive and supportive approach. She is seen to be a Leader for Sandwell who is engaged in all the right places – internally, locally, sub-regionally and nationally.

People really value the Managing Director's style and what he has brought to the council and to the borough. He will be a tough act to follow but there is excitement at the impending permanent Chief Executive appointment. Whilst this transition will represent change in the short term it will add to the sense of stability in due course.

External partners we spoke to within the sub-region are seeing the council now being much better engaged at that level, with a notable difference made in just a few short months. Sandwell's voice is now being heard more widely and the council and its leadership is felt to be making an effective contribution. The political leadership has also demonstrated a willingness to give a 'contra view' where, on a limited number of occasions, that has been appropriate as it has sought to act in the best interests of

the borough. There is appropriate and consistent council representation in key strategic fora, although Sandwell remains less visible below Leader, Cabinet, Chief Executive and Director level in networks and bodies at more of a working group and networking level.

Cabinet is forming well following the recent changes and in meeting them they demonstrated a strong sense of 'team', appropriately balancing the respecting of individuals' areas of responsibility with ensuring collective understanding, responsibility and decision-making. The managerial Leadership Team has settled following its' completion but now has to become central to a 'One Council, One Team' approach and driving key organisational-wide agendas. These include improving customer service and establishing the desired organisational culture.

The leadership stability that now exists has enabled a clearer approach to internal communications to be established. As a result of this and the communications channels that have been put in place, staff are feeling much better communicated with from the senior leadership level – albeit with a recognition that moving to more two-way communication will be beneficial.

Cabinet and Leadership Team are working increasingly well at both a bilateral and collective level. At the heart of this sits a 'no surprises' principle. Cabinet members outlined to us that they now feel much better appraised of emerging issues and senior officers indicated a greater confidence in drawing elected members' attention to challenging issues.

The officers and elected members that we met are open about the need for continued change and improvement in the way the organisation functions and are committed to delivering it. A single Improvement Plan has been developed responding to the statutory direction of the Secretary of State and the findings from the various forms of external challenge that the council has undertaken over the last year or so. The Plan was approved at the Full Council meeting on 7th June this year and is designed to provide the organisation with a clear direction for its improvement journey and aid the continued delivery of the council's strategic priorities reflected in the Corporate Plan 2021-2025. Governance mechanisms to oversee the delivery of the Improvement Plan are outlined within it. Reporting on progress against the Plan is reassuring Cabinet, whilst officers that we met from a range of levels within the

organisation believe the changes that are being seen will be sustained this time around, contrasting with what has been experienced previously.

A new performance management framework has been established, with this having been approved by Full Council on 12th April this year. It is enabling a much better understanding of how the council is performing. This links to the ‘no surprises’ principle and Cabinet reflected that they are now gaining insights to issues more, and at an earlier stage, compared with before. Quarterly reporting to Cabinet on the four key components within the framework commenced last month. These components are ‘Improvement’ (including delivery of the Corporate Plan), ‘Customer Experience’, ‘Financial Performance’ and ‘Organisational Health’. The quarterly report additionally features the council’s Strategic Risk Register. The framework, and the information and insights it provides, act as a prime example of the way in which an increased evidence-base for decision-making can be seen in the council. It also provides the basis for a ‘golden thread’ that enables the links to be made between the council’s strategic objectives and the plans at directorate and service level. This thread can be articulated at Director, Assistant Director and Service Manager level but not yet below that.

Key achievements across the council in recent months include:

- Children’s Services progressing to ‘Requires Improvement’
- The relationship between the council and the Children’s Trust being seen to have continued to progress and the contract having been extended
- The delivery on time and budget of the Sandwell Aquatic Centre and the contribution of the borough and the council to the success of the 2022 Commonwealth Games – with this positively impacting on reputation and confidence
- The smooth letting of the special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) transport contract, capitalising on learning from before
- Improved management of the council’s waste contract
- Plans developing for a shift to leisure facilities and related services being delivered through a local authority trading company

- The creation of an integrated health and care facility (Harvest View) – within a broader picture of good relationships with health, including positive engagement with NHS ‘place’ arrangements
- Coping with everything that has been thrown at the organisation, including supporting communities and businesses during the pandemic and the growing cost of living crisis; responding to the Ukrainian refugee situation; and managing the implications of the economic challenges for the council’s finances

The council commissioned a residents’ survey this year and there are a number of positive findings that the organisation will hope to see repeated in future years. This includes satisfaction with the council being slightly higher than the national average (66% compared to 62%); trust in the council standing at 67% compared to a national average of 58%; and 60% of respondents indicating they feel the council acts on the concerns of local residents compared to 52% nationally. Satisfaction with waste services; street cleaning; maintenance of both roads and pavements; sport and leisure services; and services and support for children and young people were all higher than the national average although the reverse was true for library services; services and support for older people; and parks and open spaces.

An employee engagement survey has also been undertaken this year, following that from 2018 and with 61% of staff responding to it. The results have been widely shared and are being used to inform discussions and thinking at directorate and team levels and there has been a corporate response to them. The latter includes placing ‘organisational culture’ at the heart of the Improvement Plan and the enhancing of internal communications, as touched on earlier. Both the residents’ survey and the employee survey will be built on through ‘pulse’ surveys – a brief and regular set of questions posed to people – being undertaken going forward.

Cabinet is building a track record of taking difficult decisions. A prime example is that of approving plans for the building of a primary school, 190 homes and a public park on the site of the former Brandhall Golf Course which is currently being scrutinised as part of a Call-In of the Cabinet decision. Another example is the introduction of charging for the collection of green garden waste which is due to be considered by Cabinet in November. What this approach in recent months reflects is Cabinet maintaining a focus on ‘doing the right thing’ as it sees it, even when the going gets

tough. This is in contrast with a view that criticism from ‘the loudest voices’ might have driven some decisions previously.

Cabinet are showing a commitment and willingness to face the further tough decisions that will undoubtedly be required over the coming months and years as the financial challenge facing the council continues. Whilst there is clear recognition amongst all those we spoke to that the financial challenge is only likely to worsen over the next year and beyond, there is currently an absence of a whole organisation view of both the scale of this and how it will be addressed. Establishing a clear shared understanding of the extent of the budget gap (we recognise the fluid situation that exists at present makes establishing certainty difficult) will be important in focusing effort and attention and identifying and implementing a whole-council approach to solutions. In a context of the ‘One Council, One Team’ philosophy acting as a key driver for the organisation, ensuring a corporate and cross-cutting approach to addressing the financial challenge will be important in order to avoid retrenchment on the part of individual areas functions and services and the resulting siloed thinking and action.

As we touched on earlier, people have coped with everything that has been thrown at the organisation in recent times. This has been taking its toll, but the demands on the organisation and its people aren’t going to dissipate. All councils are experiencing increased demand around ‘business as usual’ and having to adapt to deal with change in what ‘business as usual’ represents and how it is delivered. They are also all facing very significant financial challenges. Sandwell is having to cope with all of this but additionally is delivering an extensive Improvement Plan.

The injection of additional capacity in key areas has helped to drive improvement. Examples include governance expertise to inform and support Constitutional revisions; project and programme management specialists; additional communications professionals; and support with the development of the performance management framework. Often in our discussions, people indicated that the injection of additional capacity would be the answer to the challenges within their spheres but there needs to be a much greater sense of realism around this, given the financial picture facing the council. Thus, in order to make things feel as achievable as possible going forward, there needs to be a stocktake of the level of available

resource, the pace and phasing of change that will be required going forward and where any additional capacity that can be secured will deliver the greatest impact.

Governance and Decision-Making

A key strand of the council's Improvement Plan relates to the 'Constitution and Governance Framework'. An inclusive process developing changes to the Constitution, involving cross-party engagement, saw those changes put before Full Council in July this year being agreed very smoothly. This included revisions to the Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules; Financial Regulations; and Council Procedure Rules. Things appear on track for further revisions to be agreed through Full Council in November and December, including elements relating to the Scheme of Delegations; Access to Information Procedure Rules; and the Protocol for Member/Employee Relations. An annual review of the Constitution going forward has been agreed in order to enable on-going refinement and adaptation of the way the council operates.

One of the most noticeable changes in recent months is the much-improved set of relationships between officers and elected members. The training linked to this has been highly valued and has played an important role. The positive way Cabinet and the Leadership Team engage with one other is modelling the way.

There is a note of caution to signal here though, with an emerging risk around the poor organisational responsiveness to the customer, and to casework issues brought forward by elected members, starting to generate tensions on the part of both councillors and officers, thus undermining the good progress that has been made in relationships. This needs to be avoided through on-going and intensive focus on the 'Ward and Casework Management' element of the Improvement Plan and the work around the 'customer journey' that is being embarked upon.

In the same way that training in respect of officer and elected member relationships has been highly valued, the development activity relating to public speaking and chairing skills – delivered through an external facilitator – has also gone down very well with councillors. This forms part of a very positive story in relation to elected

member training and development more generally, including the induction programme put in place following the elections in May and 'all member briefings' on key issues. There is a comprehensive training and development programme now in place, informed by personal development plans for councillors. The programme is ensuring increased knowledge and understanding and is injecting external perspectives. Councillors are supplementing this with increasingly getting 'out and about' to draw in learning, including a recent visit to Leeds to look at customer contact centre arrangements there and linking up as Cabinet members with opposite numbers in neighbouring boroughs.

The council is committed to reviewing the elected member development programme at regular intervals going forward. It will be important to ensure that the pace of delivery is made to feel sustainable, with some councillors the peer team spoke to reflecting an intensity to it in recent months that risks being too demanding in terms of their time.

A revision of the role of, and approach to, Overview and Scrutiny also represents an important element of the council's Improvement Plan. This was embarked upon in the latter part of last year and it is clear from people we spoke to that this key strand of the council's governance arrangements is going from strength to strength. Regular meetings between members of Overview and Scrutiny and the Cabinet, along with discussions with senior officers, enables the exploration of opportunities for Overview and Scrutiny to help to shape strategy and policy at the pre-decision-making level. Recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny are also regularly now being considered by Cabinet and flowing into Leadership Team. The Committee Chairs are reporting regularly to Full Council on the work and impact of their respective Overview and Scrutiny Committee. 'Job roles' and a framework to guide the way Overview and Scrutiny works, at both an individual and Committee level, have also been developed and have been supplemented with a range of training.

The renewed sense of energy and drive that is being seen with Overview and Scrutiny is replicated across other key committees and the Chairs are integral to this. Mature engagement between the Leader, Cabinet, Committee Chairs and officers is providing for good planning and work programming across the different committees. One example is the mapping of their respective remits between Overview and

Scrutiny and Audit Committee in relation to monitoring progress in the delivery of the Improvement Plan.

There is also a sense more widely of a 'maturing politics' within the council. This is reflected in the considered approach taken by the Opposition; the cross-party working that has been taking place on the revisions to the Constitution; and the way in which the Call-In of the Cabinet decision on the Brandhall site was handled by all involved. Standards complaints have dropped significantly, which could be used as a proxy indicator of the improvements that have been seen in relation to elected member behaviour and governance.

Full Council in November will consider whether there is a shift to a four yearly electoral cycle. A report outlining the key considerations, including the public consultation outcome on the matter, will be presented by the Director of Law and Governance to inform the thinking and decision-making of elected members.

'Customer Journey' and 'Organisational Culture'

The work to be delivered in relation to improving the 'customer journey' is being widely talked about in the council. There is a long way to go on this, with organisational responsiveness to customers and casework, raised by elected members on behalf of residents, still being a major issue.

The message has come through loud and clear that addressing the issues that exist is a major priority for the council. Staff that we spoke to are welcoming of this but there is, as yet, a lack of clarity about what this will entail and the way forward. This includes what a 'whole council' programme and approach will look like; what the expectations on services and directorates are and the roles that they are required to play; and who is leading the work and where the related accountability sits.

At a more basic level, there needs to be a quickly established shared understanding regarding what the council's service standards and timescales for responding are currently and/or will be going forward.

It is recognised that it is only in recent weeks that the prioritisation of the improvement of the 'customer journey' has been communicated. It is important now

to cement the commitment that has been given and capitalise upon the enthusiasm that has been generated, by establishing clear leadership of the agenda.

'Organisational culture' forms the first theme in the council's Improvement Plan. Activity is already underway in relation to this, including the identification of 'culture champions' and their involvement in 'listening events' which will link to work on values and behaviours. However, things feel very much at the outset in relation to this key strand of work and clarity is still required in key respects. This includes what the 'organisational culture' change agenda in Sandwell will cover; how it links to the work on the 'customer journey' – given the inter-related nature of these two key strands of work; and the connection with the whole organisation transformation plan that the council has indicated it intends to develop.

Currently it is difficult to see what an 'organisational culture' change programme does or will entail. Driving forward the 'One Council, One Team' philosophy would logically form a key component of it. Another strand might usefully relate to the 'return to the office' arrangements post-pandemic which require further focus and clarification of expectations. People spoke of the way in which corporate guidelines have been provided around the presence of people and teams in the office and some valued the freedom they had been given in finding ways to balance meeting these requirements with the needs and preferences of their staff, whilst others sought greater clarity on expectations and greater equity. It is, however, clear that approaches are evolving and that learning is taking place. This could all usefully be drawn together to inform a further round of corporate guidance to support meeting customer need; maximising the effectiveness of the use of office space; and maintaining and enhancing relationships within and between teams.

Whether workforce planning constitutes part of the organisational culture change programme also needs to be clarified. The original corporate peer challenge report outlined the need for role titles and functions to better describe 'what they say on the tin' and a requirement for consistency in terminology and managerial spans of control and levels of responsibility. There remains a lack of clarity around this. Additionally, recruitment and retention challenges are biting, as they are everywhere, and there are no easy answers, with concerted effort and creativity, possibly encompassing other councils and sectors, being required to develop solutions. There is also an

issue of succession planning to be addressed, linked to the age profile of the workforce.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) represents another key area of work that has been identified as an organisational priority. There is a clear commitment to the EDI agenda, reflected in the investment that has been made in creating a team to drive it, but things are still very much at the outset. The EDI agenda must be made integral to the work around 'organisational culture'.

Essentially, the 'customer journey', EDI and 'organisational culture' are major pieces of inter-related work that are fundamental to future success and require a clear plan and sense of deliverability.

4. Final thoughts and next steps

The LGA would like to thank Sandwell Council for its engagement in both the corporate peer challenge and the progress review. We recognise that the senior managerial and political leadership of the council will want to reflect on the findings and how to utilise them to support the council's improvement journey.

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. Helen Murray (Principal Adviser for the West Midlands) is the main point of contact between the authority and the LGA and her e-mail address is helen.murray@local.gov.uk

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Sandwell MBC

CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment

Final Report

A Report by:

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

December 2022

CIPFA, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, is the professional body for people in public finance. CIPFA shows the way in public finance globally, standing up for sound public financial management and good governance around the world as the leading commentator on managing and accounting for public money.

Further information about CIPFA can be obtained at www.cipfa.org

Any questions arising from this submission should be directed to:

Chris Tidswell FCPFA

CIPFA
77 Mansell Street
London
E1 8AN

Tel: +44 (0)20 7543 5600
Email: chris.tidswell@cipfa.org

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1 Summary

1.1 Purpose of the follow-up review

In late 2021, CIPFA were commissioned to review Sandwell Council's financial management performance, using the CIPFA Five Star FM Model. In that review, on which we reported in January 2022, Sandwell achieved a score 1.81 which equates to progressive 2* rating. CIPFA have now been asked to review progress throughout the year in improving the scoring. This report represents our findings.

1.2 Approach adopted

We have conducted a range of interviews, supplementing last year's. These interviews have included staff and senior members, who in some cases have joined the Council since the last review and importantly, a number that were new in to post at the time of the 2021 review. We have also added to our previous document review by examining new material, including crucial reports that were not available previously. Based on this evidence, we have rescored the Council against the model.

1.3 Findings

The previous January 2022 scoring is below.

Sandwell Council – January 2022 Position				
	Management dimensions			
Financial management styles	Leadership	People	Process	Stakeholders
Delivering Accountability	**	**	**	**
Supporting performance	**	*	*	**
Enabling transformation	**	*	*	*****
Overall	**			

As indicated above the individual questions and statements score was 1.81 the threshold for 2* is 1.99 hence the conclusion of a progressive 2* rating.

Following our re-assessment, the summary scoring matrix is below.

Sandwell – December 2022 Position				
	Management Dimensions			
Financial Management Styles	Leadership	People	Processes	Stakeholders
Delivering Accountability	****	****	***	***
Supporting Performance	***	***	**	***
Enabling Transformation	***	***	**	****
Overall	***			

The review and scoring indicate improved statement and question scores from the previous review and therefore a score of 2.36 which represents a progression to a 3* rating (there is a threshold of 2.25 for achieving the 3* rating). Our detailed findings are now more positively within the 2* range. Indeed, few further improvements should take Sandwell Council towards a strong 3* score.

1.4 Updated findings

In the remainder of this report, we have set out the original findings.

These are divided into the CIPFA model topic headings – leadership, people, process, stakeholders – which are then subdivided into three themes – delivering accountability, supporting performance and enabling transformation. We have then provided the revised scoring and commentary.

2 The follow-up review findings

2.1 Leadership

The section below shows a scoring comparison between the 2021 and 2022 reviews along with a commentary on our findings. scoring for leadership was as follows.

Delivering Accountability		2021	2021	2022	2022
L1	Financial capability is regarded as integral to supporting the delivery of the organisation's objectives. The CFO is an active member of the board, is at the heart of corporate strategy/business decision making and leads a highly visible, influential and supportive finance team.	****	2.75	****	3.25
L2	The organisation has an effective framework of financial accountability that is clearly understood and applied throughout, from the board through executive and non-executive directors to front line service managers.	**	2.00	****	2.75
L3	Within an annual budget setting process the organisation's leadership sets income requirements including tax and allocates resources to different activities in order to achieve its objectives. The organisation monitors the organisation's financial and activity performance in delivering planned outcomes.	***	2.00	***	2.50
Overall				****	

Supporting Performance		2021	2021	2022	2022
L4	The organisation has a developed financial strategy to underpin medium- and longer-term financial health. The organisation integrates its business and financial planning so that it aligns resources to meet current and future outcome focussed business objectives and priorities.	**	2.00	***	2.50
L5	The organisation develops and uses financial/leadership expertise in its strategic decision-making and its performance management based on an appraisal of the financial environment and cost drivers.	**	2.00	***	2.50
Overall				***	

Enabling Transformation		2021	2021	2022	2022
L6	The organisation's leadership integrates financial management into its strategies to meet future business needs. Its financial management approach supports the change agenda and a culture of customer focus, innovation, improvement and development.	**	2.00	***	2.50
Overall				***	

Key areas of Improvement since the last review

Our fieldwork findings accord broadly with this year's LGA's peer review follow-up report. This indicates a positive direction and improvement for Sandwell. The Director of Finance is well respected. Messages about the Council's need to get a grip on its finances and achieve savings are increasingly robust and heard. The MTFs is now much stronger. The positive progress we have encountered is extremely welcome, evident, and represents a step change in under a year. It is to be commended.

We would draw attention to the following areas which indicate key improvements since the last review:

- Finance is seen as a key function and priority from a leadership, financial management and financial governance perspective. The development of the finance improvement programme and its progression since the last review is evidence of the positive commitment and its actions are and will make a difference.
- The impact of finance leadership (from the CFO and team) is improving financial planning (including MTFP), improving financial awareness, better quality engagement with budget holders. This will contribute to developing a culture of ownership and accountability, it is still early days, but the signs are positive.
- The budget setting process has developed since the last review with increased rigour. Training has been delivered on budgeting techniques which will improve the quality of budgets in the future.
- The process for reviewing and developing forecasts has also changed in the last year, again this is still developing, but the changed approach will improve the engagement with budget holders, develop the role of finance as advisors and improve ownership. This is a culture change which takes time, which is recognised.

Key development areas of focus for 2023

There are still areas for improvement which have been identified through the review and these are also recognised by the Council, which provides a good foundation for continued development of financial management and governance. The budget process for example, while clearly much improved, will need further work and refinement. There are a few headline issues which require attention to ensure that the improvements in leadership continue. These include:

- **Leadership depth.** It has been argued that whenever the Director of Finance is absent, messages are less resonantly communicated.
- **Top/down reform.** It is perhaps inevitable given the intervention and the emphasis on governance, leadership and central 'grip' in the reviews to which Sandwell has been subject, that its reforms are somewhat top/down in character. It is apparent that the commitment to or understanding of the reform agenda diminishes the further one gets in the organisation from the leadership.
- **Prioritisation, communication and focus.** The Improvement Plan is a portmanteau of many initiatives. As such it could be considered unwieldy. The further towards the frontline we have ventured, the more likely staff have been to suggest that they do not know what initiatives their primary focus should be. We understand that work is in progress to prioritise the Improvement Plan, which will help.

- **Sustainability.** The sound narrative in the MTFS should be complemented by strong and robust deliverable savings plans. Some interviewees were concerned that the drive for savings might mean that undeliverable plans would be accepted in the budget process, leading to future overspends and calls on balances. In our earlier review work, we noticed some separation of capital, including the use of assets and the understanding of liabilities, from revenue matters. This time, we have been informed of a more positive and proactive approach to capital and asset management. There are also some genuinely innovative uses of physical or digital assets to personalise services and achieve efficiency. Going forward, we would expect to see a clearer relationship between capital and revenue strategies in Sandwell service planning than has been evident previously.

Nevertheless, the signs on leadership are positive and promising and the matters listed above are comparatively straightforward ones to address.

2.2 People

The section below shows a scoring comparison between the 2021 and 2022 reviews along with a commentary on our findings. Scoring for leadership was as follows.

Delivering Accountability		2021	2021	2022	2022
P1	The organisation identifies its financial competency needs and puts arrangements in place to meet them.	*	1.50	***	2.50
P2	The organisation has access to sufficient financial skills to meet its business needs.	****	2.75	****	3.00
Overall				****	

Supporting Performance		2021	2021	2022	2022
P3	The organisation manages its finance function to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.	*	1.00	**	2.00
P4	Finance staff provide business partner support by interpreting and explaining performance as well as advising and supporting on key business decisions.	*	1.50	***	2.50
P5	Managers understand they are responsible for delivering services cost effectively and are held accountable for doing so. Financial literacy is diffused throughout the organisation so that decision takers understand and manage the financial implications of their decisions.	*	1.00	***	2.25
Overall				***	

Enabling Transformation		2021	2021	2022	2022

P6	The organisation develops and sustains its financial management capacity to help shape and support its transformational programme.	*	1.50	***	2.25
Overall				***	

Key areas of Improvement since the last review

The principal improvement in the people position is the finance restructuring and the emphasis on business partnering. With a few exceptions, which we will touch on below, the changes have been broadly welcomed and indicate a positive response to the issue raised in our previous review. They are plainly part of a coherent agenda and programme of financial reform and are linked to the positive leadership position. Again, this is real progress and to be commended.

We would draw attention to the following areas which indicate key improvements since the last review:

- Developing the people aspect of finance across the organisation is a key objective of the improvement plan, this a positive step and a driver for change.
- The restructuring of the finance team with a concentration on alignment of function to service requirements (demonstrated through the business partnering drive) will help strengthen the role of finance and the overall finance environment.
- Recruitment has been underway during 2022 to strengthen the finance team and also reduce the reliance on interim staff. This will continue into 2023, though the market for skilled and qualified accountants is a challenge. The interim staff in place are seen as adding value, transferring learning and adding wider local government experience.
- Training has been delivered and more is planned for both finance and budget holders. This was a weakness in the previous review and now being addressed. In addition continued training and development is seen as an element of the overall improvement plan.

Key development areas of focus for 2023

Our review has highlighted some issues requiring further work so that this progress can be maintained and built upon. They include:

- **Implications of the pace of change.** The restructure, with associated re-alignment of responsibility, staff departures, and the slimming down of the finance function, have been received in varying ways across the Council. At least one senior officer on the business side has spoken of losing a skilled principal accountant who (in their opinion) exhibited the behaviours of a business partner, and their replacement by a new and interim appointment therefore losing some service-related knowledge. Though the same interviewee expressed a broadly positive assessment of the quality of finance staff and the information they provide, the experience has been unsettling in a mission critical area of the business. It will be worth assessing whether pockets of crucial service activity needs targeted support as the restructure progresses.

- **Sustainability.** While the business partnering shift has been welcomed, it has been widely observed that new business partners are frequently interims. How sustainable that will be, what challenges it will mean for consistency, continuity, corporate memory over time, are matters the reform programme should address.
- **Uneven financial management acumen across the wider business.** This has cultural implications, which we will touch on in the next section. As indicated above a programme starting with a budget holder survey has now developed into a programme of training for budget holders. More immediately, non-finance officers who lack good understanding of finance matters are ill-equipped to make the most of new business partnering arrangements. Even supported by strong systems, they will struggle to move towards self-service. Instead, they will continue in some cases to be excessively dependent on the finance function. There has been some initial training, setting out the responsibilities of budget-holders in the context of the business partnering approach. This should be supplemented by a comprehensive development and training programmes across the Council, and we are aware that this is part of the improvement plan.

Nevertheless, these caveats aside, we are happy to report strong intent and good progress on people matters.

2.3 Process

The section below shows a scoring comparison between the 2021 and 2022 reviews along with a commentary on our findings. Scoring for leadership was as follows.

Delivering Accountability		2021	2021	2022	2022
PR1	Budgets are accrual-based and robustly calculated	**	2.00	**	2.00
PR2	The organisation operates financial information systems that enable the consistent production of comprehensive, accrual based, accurate and up to date data that fully meets users' needs.	**	2.00	**	2.00
PR3	The organisation operates and maintains accurate, timely and efficient transactional financial services (e.g., creditor payments, income collection, payroll, and pensions' administration).	*	1.50	***	2.25
PR4	The organisation's treasury management is risk based. It manages its investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions, balancing risk and financial performance.	****	3.00	****	3.00
PR5	The organisation actively manages budgets, with effective budget monitoring arrangements that ensure 'no surprises' and trigger responsive action.	***	2.50	***	2.50
PR6	The organisation maintains processes to ensure that information about key assets and liabilities in its balance sheet is a sound and current platform for management action.	*	1.00	**	2.00
PR7	Management understands and addresses its risk management and internal control governance responsibilities.	***	2.25	***	2.25

PR8	Management is supported by effective assurance arrangements, including internal audit, and audit and risk committee(s).	****	2.75	****	2.75
PR9	The organisation's financial accounting and reporting are accrual based and comply with international standards and meet relevant professional and regulatory standards.	*	1.25	**	2.00
Overall				***	

Supporting Performance		2021	2021	2022	2022
PR10	The organisation's medium-term financial planning process underpins fiscal discipline, is focussed upon the achievement of strategic priorities and delivers a dynamic and effective business plan.	**	2.00	**	2.00
PR11	Forecasting processes and reporting are well developed and supported by accountable operational management. Forecasting is insightful and leads to optimal decision making.	**	2.00	**	2.00
PR12	The organisation systematically pursues opportunities to reduce costs and improve value for money in its operations.	*	1.00	**	2.00
PR13	The organisation systematically pursues opportunities for improved value for money and cost savings through its procurement, commissioning and contract management.	*	1.00	**	2.00
Overall				**	

Enabling Transformation		2021	2021	2022	2022
PR14	The organisation continually re-engineers its financial processes to ensure delivery of agreed outcomes is optimised.	*	0.25	*	2.00
PR15	The organisation's financial management processes support organisational change.	*	0.50	*	2.00
Overall				**	

Key areas of Improvement since the last review

In both the initial review and in this follow-up, the quality of financial information and the nature of financial processes were a major theme. Many officers in service areas were complimentary about the willingness and ability of the finance function to provide usable financial information. The recent exercise of providing comparatively unstructured raw data to the business and anticipating that forecasts could be derived from it does is work in progress and a positive step in both increasing ownership by budget holders and the engagement with business partners. It prompts better quality

discussions with budget holders and will, in time reduce the reliance on finance and increase adoption of the self-serve approach.

Again, however, there are positive developments to note. Our previous report reflected some extremely critical material on procurement and contract management. We note that there is now a vigorous and committed reform agenda here. Moreover, some of the scoring in this section has improved where we have been able to identify clearer evidence of strategic and operational awareness of issues and the intent to action them.

Overall, Sandwell's ability to deliver improved financial process will be a function of an improved culture. Staff at all levels should understand the relationship between the Council's priorities, the delivery of effective services, and prudent financial management.

We would draw attention to the following areas which indicate key improvements since the last review:

- The Council and the finance team have responded to the weaknesses in transactional activities with the commencement of a review of transactional finance, debt recovery and business support. This redesign work has started to have an impact and responds to a risk area highlighted in the previous review.
- The budgetary process has improved during 2022. There is greater challenge, and this has strengthened the overall process. As a consequence, the approach to identifying and including savings within the agreed budget has also improved where challenge seeks not only to confirm suggestions but seeks alternative or additional areas to deliver value for money.
- The Council, as part of budget setting process for 2023/24 has also carried out a review of their Statutory and Discretionary spending which led to discussions with the Cabinet about priorities and corporate plan priority gaps. This shows a maturing relationship between both officers and members and the relationship between funding and demand.
- The Council has undertaken work to improve procurement and its contribution. This has included simplifying the approval process, along with authorisation and approval levels. Process have been reviewed and the procurement training introduced, all of which will have a positive impact on the service contribution, operation and effectiveness.
- A weak area under process was enabling transformation. As indicated above the use of external reviews and advisors to assess and develop processes is a positive step. As part of the improvement programme additional resource was brought in to develop and change the budgeting and forecasting process which will help transform the role and value of finance as well as the quality and reliability of budget.
- The operation of the finance system was an issue reported under the last review. There is still work to be done to improve the system, referred to below as an area for 2023. What is evident though is the change in thinking and re-setting the approach to developing the implementation and operation of the Oracle Fusion system. There has been a move away from the adapt culture to one of adopt which will reduce the impact of customisation (which can be problematic and costly) and hopefully once introduced will deliver the improvement necessary.

Key development areas of focus for 2023

New to this review was the delayed interim external audit for 2020-21. This was critical of Sandwell's governance arrangements. Had it been available to the previous CIPFA review, it is likely that the scoring on the relevant sections of the Five Star model would have been lower. However, we have also taken into consideration the seriousness with which the Authority is engaging with this matter, noted in the peer review follow-up and as such the score reflect the Councils approach. To improve processes further, we would suggest that Sandwell should focus on the following issues:

- **Oracle Fusion:** only part of the answer. The widespread expectation is that the much-delayed Oracle Fusion implementation will improve budgeting, financial information and facilitate financial self-help. It might. But ERP projects are littered with failures. To succeed, the Oracle Fusion initiative will require a comprehensive training and development programme. It should also be accompanied by redoubled efforts to streamline unwieldy processes. It is a misconception that new ERP systems remove defective processes. It is noted above that the Council's approach is now to adopt (using the system as it is designed) as opposed to adapting (which is customising) and will help improve the operation and value of the system. This will help eliminate the need for numerous over engineered processes, especially in transactions.
- **Cross-authority alignment on risk.** Weak or ineffective financial management can create an entirely understandable culture of being risk averse and control culture in central finance. This can however reinforce service dependency on finance, potentially stifling innovation and adoption of self service and ownership. It can also generate cumbersome processes, filled with restrictions and permissions, which create as many problems as they solve. As the reforms continue – for example in procurement – the relationship between the finance function's risk tolerance and the risk appetite needed to achieve reform across the business will need to be examined and balanced.
- **Culture.** We mentioned earlier that additional training would be needed to ensure that budget-holders were equipped to respond to Sandwell's financial management reforms. We believe this training should be extended to service-delivery level. It should be accompanied by robust engagement and two-way communication with all Sandwell staff on reform priorities and the relationship between financial prudence and service delivery. In CIPFA's experience, many of the best innovations in service and efficiency come from staff at the frontline. But equally, a relentless focus on efficiency is only achieved when all staff understand the relationship between financial management and service delivery. It is perhaps unsurprising that the overarching priority for the Council now is 'customer journey'. Some interviewees have spoken of a tendency at the Sandwell frontline to respond to service demands, even from councillors or the community, with the excuse that there is no money. It is important that the initiative mentioned above (about discussion on priorities with the Cabinet) on how things can be done differently to free resources, how joining up between similar service areas might extend the competence individual service units, or what might be achieved through pragmatic timetabling should continue to develop. The Council can benefit from the thinking from its excellent frontline staff. To secure it will require extensive engagement, development and training.

2.4 Stakeholders

The section below shows a scoring comparison between the 2021 and 2022 reviews along with a commentary on our findings. Scoring for leadership was as follows.

Delivering Accountability		2021	2021	2022	2022
S1	The organisation provides external stakeholders with evidence of the integrity of its financial conduct and performance and demonstrates fiscal discipline including compliance with statutory/legal/regulatory obligations.	**	2.00	***	2.25
Overall		**		***	

Supporting Performance		2021	2021	2022	2022
S2	The organisation demonstrates that it achieves value for money in the use of its resources.	***	2.25	***	2.25
Overall		***		***	

Enabling Transformation		2021	2021	2022	2022
S3	The organisation is responsive to its operating environment, seeking and responding to customer and stakeholder service and spending priorities that impact on its financial management.	****	3.00	****	3.00
Overall		****		****	

Key areas of Improvement since the last review

We have ended up with an identical set of scores here. We received some new evidence in our fieldwork this time concerning historical issues in community engagement processes, which might have adversely affected the previous score in S3. However, these were comfortably outweighed by the positive intent we encountered, such as the Council's emphasis on customer journey, as well as new innovations, such as the budget consultation.


Key development areas of focus for 2023

There are a few areas for Sandwell to focus on to improve the service it achieves for stakeholders. They include:

- **Satisfying external reviewers.** The Council's ability to provide information in a timely and satisfactory manner to external auditors is clearly a work in progress and one that will develop as part of the improvement plan.
- **Real-time information.** CIPFA reviewers have often found it a useful thought experiment to ask officers how swiftly they could answer detailed thematic

questions similar to those that are routine for government departments accountable to parliament: for example, 'how much money do we spend per day on measures to help eradicate anti-social behaviour in ward X' etc. Imagining service spend in such thematic and micro terms is a very useful guide to considering the effectiveness of systems, processes and the budgetary culture. While we have no doubt that Sandwell officers could find such information – which would be hugely beneficial to service planning – it would take some effort and as such would be subject to priorities and susceptible to human error. As a consequence, developing both access and presentation of data and information will support challenge, scrutiny and therefore planning and decision.

- **Budget survey.** This is a sensible and positive initiative. To maximise its impact, Sandwell Council should provide a detailed, honest and thoughtful response. Survey findings should be cross-referenced with political priorities and budget assumptions. They should also be compared on the one hand to the perspectives of community groups and activists, who can often exert significant influence on services without always being fully representative, and on the other to actual patterns of complaints and casework, which sometimes give a contrasting picture of residents' day-to-day priorities to that found in a survey.
- **Customer journey.** The achievement of efficiency is linked to transparency about service process. A single complaint about a defective streetlamp, sent to officers, the CEO's office, ward councillors, portfolio holders, MPs, even to the Ombudsman, can create a nightmare of repetitive, nugatory work. If the complainant knows however from searching service information on the Council's website that the lamp is scheduled to be fixed in a week's time, they are likely to withhold their complaints until at least after that point. Sandwell is moving in the right direction on community engagement and transparency. But there are real benefits to be derived from going further.



77 Mansell Street, London E1 8AN
+44 (0)20 7543 5600

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Responses to Grant Thornton and LGA Follow up Review Reports

Review Report	KLOE Ref	Strand	Ref	Recommendation	Response	Incorporation within Improvement Plan / Other mechanism (Amber shading indicates recs where we are not intending to include changes to IP or monitor through IP)	IP Change control
Grant Thornton			K1	The Council must conclude the design of Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan, which will focus on organisational culture, values and behaviours required to deliver change, and introduce a "golden thread" aligning corporate KPIs to individuals performance objectives, so that planned improvements and changes become embedded across the organisation. The Council must also use the improvement building blocks now in place to bring a greater focus on service user responsiveness and outcomes.	Phase 2 of the Improvement Plan is due to be approved by Cabinet in March and the update includes the deliverables for progressing the organisational culture work strand which are a result of extensive engagement with the workforce. This includes the 'One Team Framework' which contains the values and behaviours to foster in the council (due for approval in March 2023) and the workforce strategy. The Phase 2 Improvement Plan is the result of seven months of delivery and contains new milestones reflecting current and future delivery phases, confirming the council's approach to issues, and new priorities (including responses to issues raised through follow up external reviews). There is also an increased focus on assurance activity within the Improvement Plan to ensure that changes made are becoming embedded and are sustainable. In relation to the 'golden thread' of our strategic planning and performance framework, this is being further developed in 2023-24 through: - refreshing our partnership-wide Vision 2030 - finalising Directorate Business Plans for 2023-2026 - conducting a lessons learnt review of the 2023-24 business planning process - piloting an approach to service planning and reflecting on lessons learnt - refreshing the appraisal process to reflect the One Team Framework which help ensure that staff understand their own performance objectives and how this links to the Council's priorities. - commencing work on a service planning and performance handbook which will set out 'how we do things here' - using our internal communications methods to develop understanding across staff A greater focus on outcomes for residents is reflected in the One Team Framework and Workforce Strategy, and will inform the forthcoming work to refresh the appraisal process and communications approach.	Actions to embed the golden thread to be incorporated within Corporate Oversight theme: Strategic Planning Framework (See ref CO.G1), and comms activity (see ref OC.E2.8)	Include actions around embedding golden thread in Corporate Oversight and Organisational Culture
Grant Thornton			K2	The Council needs to ensure that the new corporate PMO remains appropriately resourced, integrates all transformation and change activity being undertaken across the Council, and has access to appropriate data sources to be able to effectively monitor the delivery.	The establishment of a Corporate PMO is being explored with support being provided by Local Partnerships to ensure that we draw on best practice. A scope for this work has been agreed and it will commence imminently. In relation to capacity for corporate transformation, the Corporate Transformation Office has been established and an agreed transformation framework is in place. A reporting tool is currently being implemented to ensure that delivery can be monitored effectively. The reporting tool will provide a consistent approach for administering and reporting on transformation projects, and will support the adoption of the transformation framework. The initial approach is for the transformation programme to focus on a 'vital few' transformation programmes which includes Oracle Fusion and Customer Journey. As the transformation approach, governance, and resourcing becomes more established, the transformation framework will apply to all areas of business change; bringing consistency and effective monitoring of delivery. Initial stages of resourcing the Corporate Transformation Office are taking place with a consolidation of existing resources. The focus is on building skills around project management, change management, business analysis and project administration. A skills audit is underway and this will lead to a consolidated team and, if required, recruitment. This work will include consideration of the resources required for the Corporate PMO following the review.	Incorporation of Corporate Transformation Programme and PMO actions within Corporate Oversight theme	CO.E1 section retitled and milestones updated
Grant Thornton			K3	The Council should progress and finalise outstanding actions relating to our previous recommendations, in particular introducing a commercial strategy and an asset management strategy and conclude the service based actions arising from our previous recommendations including finalising the outstanding Service Delivery Contract with Serco, and the creation of the new leisure services company. The Leadership Team needs to ensure there is appropriate corporate focus on medium term financial planning and financial statement production.	The council continues to keep oversight of the progress against the service issues raised in the 2021 Grant Thornton Review. The Improvement Plan is monitored on a monthly basis by Leadership Team and Quarterly reports are made to Cabinet, Scrutiny and Audit. On the specific issues raised, all of these are monitored through the Improvement Plan. In relation to current progress, the commercial strategy is in the final stages of preparation and is due to be presented to Cabinet in March. The asset management strategy received approval in November and good progress is being made in relation to the contract with Serco and the creation of the new leisure services company. Leadership Team retains a robust corporate focus on medium term financial planning through monthly budget monitoring discussions and on the financial statement production through regular updates from the S151 Officer.	Not required. All issues raised included within IP and IP monthly and quarterly reporting is continuing.	Not required
Grant Thornton			k4	Once all the planned revisions to the Constitution have been agreed, the Council will need to embed these changes and demonstrate sustainable improvements in governance and scrutiny of decision making.	Work has already commenced to embed the revisions to the Constitution in working practice. For example, there is a revised set of guidance and templates in place and these are being used to support the changes made around key decisions. Phase 2 of the council's governance review has commenced and this focuses on embedding changes. The next milestone is to agree the project plans relating to each of the changes within the Constitution. Performance monitoring is being built into the phase 2 work to ensure that changes made are sustainable.	Phase 2 Governance Review to be incorporated within Organisational Theme. See new workstream OC.G1.0 'Embedding Constitutional Changes'.	Milestones for Phase 2 of the Governance Review to be included within new section and incorporate Corporate Governance Training.
Grant Thornton	KLOE A1-1	SCT	I1	The Council will need to ensure that the SCT accelerates its progress on this improvement trajectory so that the position does not plateau, including sharing good practice on case work across the various SCT social work teams.	We continue to have a robust corporate grip around the SCT improvement trajectory through our established governance arrangements and associated reporting (including through the Council's PMF) We have completed an extensive contract review which has been presented to Cabinet and shared with the SoS for Education, and new KPIs will be in place from 1st April 2023. This will continue to provide assurances to the Council around the SCT improvement journey. Monthly reporting from SCT on quality assurance activity includes details of sharing of good practice. Transition arrangements have commenced to start the process of ending DfE intervention	Already incorporated within Partnerships & Relationships Theme and quarterly monitoring of contract in place through PMF (in addition to SCT governance).	Include a milestone around transition from DfE intervention.
Grant Thornton	KLOE A1-2	SCT	I2	The Council will need to continue to closely monitor the implementation of the early help strategy to ensure planned objectives and outcomes are realised.	The Early Help Strategy is monitored through the Children and Families Strategic Partnership which is chaired by the DCS. Regular progress reporting is made to the Children's Safeguarding Partnership along with updates to the Health and Wellbeing Board. A dashboard of KPIs and an Early Help Action Plan have been developed to assist progress monitoring and this will be overseen by a new Early Help Operational Group (reporting to the Children and Families Strategic Partnership). Quarterly reporting is also in place on the Early Help Strategy Implementation through the Council's PMF (Commentary Ref: B15, KPI ref CP16)	Early Help Strategy approval was included within the IP. Ongoing monitoring is taking place through the Corporate Plan component of the PMF (Commentary Ref: B15, KPI ref CP16), and through an assurance action within the IP to ensure that the Early Help Strategy is reviewed at the early help partnership board	Not required
Grant Thornton	KLOE A1-3	SCT	I3	The Council must continue to work with SCT to mitigate and reduce the level of vacancies and use of agency staff and take steps to ensure the associated KPI does not lead to contract failure.	Issues relating to the Children's social care workforce are a national priority across the children's sector and national work is being spearheaded by the DfE. The DfE will be publishing a response to the recommendations arising from the Care Review that was undertaken last year. We expect the response during Feb 2023. The council will continue to work with SCT around workforce issues. There are interdependencies around the KPIs. The established governance arrangements and performance reporting will continue to assist with oversight and assurance around KPIs. This includes quarterly reporting through the Council's PMF (SCT Quarterly Contract report (including all Contract KPIs), Corporate Plan Reporting B13 (commentary), and CP7-CP15(KPIs)).	Quarterly reporting through the Council's PMF is in place through the Contract Reporting and Corporate Plan Monitoring (Ref: SCT Quarterly Contract report (including all Contract KPIs), Corporate Plan Reporting B13 (commentary), and CP7-CP15(KPIs)).	Not required
Grant Thornton	KLOE A1-4	SCT	I4	The Council should continue to monitor the progress of SCT against these invest to save activities to ensure that SCT is able to generate the savings and efficiencies required for the contract sum to be reduced.	Any issues arising in Invest to Save activities are picked up through Operational Partnership Board Meetings and the regular formal meetings between SCT Chief Exec and Director of Resources, S151 Officer and DCS. Q4 Performance Report on the SCT contract will include a general update on Invest to Save Activity.	Action to be added within PMF section of IP that Q4 SCT Contract Report is to include overview of ITS activity. (CO.C1.7)	Capture within PMF section that Q4 SCT Contract Report is to include overview of ITS activity.

Queries

Grant Thornton	KLOE A2-5	SLT	15	The Council will need to: •ensure a business case is produced for the new leisure LATC so that there is a clear financial case for the commercial viability of the new arms length company. •be clear how it effectively discharges its shareholder role whilst allowing the company the freedoms and flexibilities to operate and to deliver the planned financial and service benefits.	Work has commenced to develop the business case for the LATC, which includes re-visiting the assumptions contained with the initial business case agreed by Cabinet. This is due to conclude in March 2023. Work on the shareholder role is in process. A specification for services is being developed along with a clear board structure and a set of agreed reserved matters. This is due to conclude in January and is planned to be reported to Cabinet in March 2023.	LATC establishment is within IP at PC.E1	Not required
Grant Thornton	KLOE A2-6	SLT	16	The Council will need to effectively manage the transition of the Aquatics Centre so that it is operational to the planned timescale and that there is a clear business case which sets out how the centre will be managed to become commercially viable and provide financial returns to the Council as part of the leisure LATC arrangements.	Work continues to progress the business case for the LATC which includes the detailed business planning for the Aquatic Centre. One of the issues being considered through the business case is in relation to the increased cost of utilities. Proposals are being formed to submit to the WMCA for consideration against the CG22 underspend of £70m that has been allocated to the region. There will be a separate mobilisation plan in place to keep things on track from an operational point of view for the planned handover date of June 2023. A Project Board is in place to ensure progress and milestones are reported to the Cabinet Member. Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board is also providing oversight of the Aquatics Centre launch plans.	Milestone of Aquatic Centre handover to be added to Improvement Plan.	Add milestone of Aquatic Centre handover by July 2023. At PC.E1.6
Grant Thornton	KLOE A3-7	PP	17	The Council will need to conclude the finalisation of its asset management strategy and asset management database to better manage its asset portfolio including asset disposals.	The Asset Management Strategy was approved at Cabinet in November 2022. Cabinet approval included a review of 140 surplus assets and any disposals will adhere to the new Land and Buildings protocol. Next steps are for a delivery plan to be put in place, which will be overseen by the Asset Management working group, chaired by the Director- Regeneration and Growth. First meeting scheduled early February 2023. A permanent appointment has been made to the AD position with responsibility for asset management and they are due to start in February 2023. In relation to the Property Asset Management Database, Phase 1 of the Tech Forge project was completed in December 2022 with all data removed from Atrium. Phase 2 of the project will focus on the implementation of modules such as capital accounting, asbestos, fixed asset register etc. A Phase 2 kick off meeting is being held in January to identify workstreams, leads and timescales. Current completion date is 31 March 2023.	Already incorporated within Improvement Plan. Milestones to be updated in procurement and commercial section to cover phase 2 of asset database implementation and strategy implementation	New actions added see PC.F1
Grant Thornton	KLOE A4-8	SEND	18	The Council must ensure that the lessons learned from the SEND Transport procurement are shared across other council services so that this learning becomes embedded across the organisation.	SEND Transport Lessons Learnt Report is prepared and will be reported to Leadership Team by early February. It will be shared thereafter with Senior Managers and other council services to help embed the learning.	SEND lessons learnt is included within IP. Monitoring of the action plan to be included in IP	Action plan monitoring to be included (CO.B3.3)
Grant Thornton	KLOE A7-9	waste	19	The Council must work with Serco to urgently finalise all associated plans and schedules which remain outstanding	All of the annual plans and scheduled have now been provided to the Council and Waste Partnership Board have accepted these.	Complete	Not required
Grant Thornton	KLOE A7-10	waste	110	The Council should confirm with Serco if there will be changes to the waste and recycling or garden waste collection policies.	In November, Cabinet agreed to introduce garden waste collection as a chargeable service. Waste Partnership Board inputted to the principles of the change ahead of Cabinet's decision and Serco has been proactively involved including inputting into the draft contract variation. A working group across the Council and Serco is in place to consider any potential future changes to the waste service and this will continue.	Not required. Quarterly reporting on Serco contract included within PMF and assurance provided through IP.	Not required
Grant Thornton	KLOE A7-11	waste	111	The Council should resolve the delays in replacement timescales for the waste fleet and agree the financing of replacement costs and supplier lead in times with SERCO. Clarity should be sought over the use of previous capital payments	A fleet replacement plan is in place with SERCO which includes the agreement to proceed with 10 vehicles as priority for replacement in early 2023. Clarity over the use of previous capital payments has been progressed through communications between the Serco accounting team, the Council's auditors, and the Council's finance team. We are working with Serco with external support to review the finance model which will include the fleet costs. The fleet requirements are linked to the consideration of alternative collection models and will continue to be discussed with SERCO.	Fleet replacement is captured within Improvement and overall performance of contract and relationship with Serco is reflected in quarterly PMF monitoring (via Quarterly Contract report, and Corporate Plan PMF).	Not required
Grant Thornton	KLOE A7-12	waste	112	The Council should take steps to demonstrate to Serco how the fleet maintenance service provides value for money.	The council will provide Serco with key performance information as required within the contract.	The fleet replacement is captured within Improvement Plan and overall performance of contract and relationship with Serco is reflected in quarterly PMF monitoring (via Quarterly Contract report, and Corporate Plan PMF).	Not required
Grant Thornton	KLOE A7-13	ERP	113	The Council must ensure that all expected benefits are defined, and that governance arrangements, including assigning accountabilities, are in place to ensure benefits are realised.	Following best practice approach Sandwell is at the beginning of a phased programme. We are currently working through the 'Identify' stage where high level benefits have been mapped against strategic benefits and overall vision. The stages to follow are: Define, Plan, Realise, Review and Continuous Improvement. Sandwell's Strategic benefits have been identified and are arranged as 7 categories and 13 sub categories. Robust Governance arrangements are in place to monitor progress, with Benefits reported to programme board. As the programme progresses benefit owners will be identified to ensure ongoing monitoring. This is especially important as many benefits will not be realised until after Go-Live date. There will be a monitoring and maintenance approach as part of handing over from programme team.	Oracle milestones to be included in Improvement Plan including the milestones around benefits realisation	Oracle Milestones added including benefits realisation milestones. Ref CO.A1.8-10.
Grant Thornton	KLOE A10-14	ERP	114	The Council must ensure that the central transformation team is appropriately resourced and integrates all transformation and change activity being undertaken across the Council.	Please see response to Key Recommendation 2.	-	-
Grant Thornton	KLOE A10-15	ERP	115	The Council must ensure that the ERP System implementation programme becomes aligned to other improvement and change initiatives being undertaken or planned by the Council, so that synergies and economies in delivery can be identified and duplication removed.	The Oracle Programme governance is structured with a Programme Board that reports into the Corporate Transformation Board - enabling synergies, efficiency and best practice to be shared across transformation activity. Within the Oracle Programme, the mapping of strategic benefits has taken place and this has enabled Oracle to align with the council's direction of travel and the positive working relationship that the council wants to achieve with its partners. This has also enabled the Oracle project team to take an active role in areas of synergy. For example, the current review of business support activity is benefiting from collaboration with the Oracle Programme Board. The Oracle project team are also engaged with procurement transformation activities and are supporting the service with decisions around system options to help achieve the best outcomes.	Transformation Programme and milestones and ERP Milestones to be updated	Ensure transformation programme has clear reference in IP
Grant Thornton	KLOE B4-16	Officer and Member relationships	116	The Council should consider creating a "golden thread" throughout the organisation, linking the Corporate Plan and other Plan objectives, through to the objectives set for each individual member of staff, as part of the Council's annual performance appraisal process	See response to K1	-	-
Grant Thornton	KLOE B4-17	Officer and Member relationships	117	The Council's Leadership Team must agree medium term financial objectives and principles to provide a framework for financial planning discussions and ensure that there is a whole organization view of the scale of the financial challenges facing the Council in the medium term and how these are going to be addressed.	The Medium Term Financial Strategy was agreed by Cabinet in November and this sets out medium term financial objectives and principles. A further review of the MTFs will be undertaken alongside the final budget report to Cabinet in February, as the current national political and economic climate makes financial planning extremely difficult. To help ensure that there is a whole organisation view of the scale of financial challenges, regular comms activity is planned over forthcoming months which will include information around the financial challenges and plans in place to address them as part of Leadership Team's core messages. This will include Director live events and the Leadership Team Bulletin. Wider Management Team (direct reports to Directors) have also undertaken collaborative sessions which has included sharing business plans to further a shared understanding of priorities and challenges. The Team Talk comms (which is disseminated by managers to staff) includes a monthly update on finance and the January Team Talk included information around the budget gap, financial settlement, and MTFs. The processes followed for agreeing the MTFs and budget, and the internal comms to support the process will be repeated in subsequent years so that they become business as usual.	Milestone to be included around MTFs Cabinet report in February (ref SD.D1.5) Inclusion of specific action in internal comms section of organisational culture theme around scale of financial challenges and how council is addressing them (ref OC.E2.6)	Add to Strategic Direction : Milestone MTFs approval in Feb 2023. New action OC.E2.6

Ask for contract ref from Ben

Grant Thornton	KLOE B4-18	Officer and Member relationships	118	The Council should ensure that capacity is in place to resolve KPI data gaps.	Resources have been identified to increase capacity and form a Corporate Performance team. The Senior Lead Officer is due to start in February 2023 with further recruitment to the team to follow. Immediate priorities for this team will be to take stock of the current PMF and put in place plans to address data gaps, refine the monitoring and reporting approach to ensure the performance insight is guiding decision making, and identify the next steps to embed a performance culture across the organisation.	Performance Management section to include next set of milestones. (OC.C1.6)	Milestone of 'Corporate Performance Team in place' added to PMF section at CO.C1.8
Grant Thornton	KLOE B4-19	Officer and Member relationships	119	The Council needs to build on the progress being made on member development and conclude the 2022/23 programme including the review of member PDPs and take further steps to finalise arrangements on succession planning for members in SRA roles.	The MDP for this municipal year is due to be concluded by end March 2023. PDPs have been reviewed and refreshed for all Members who have taken up the offer of a PDP. The analysis from the PDPs is informing the next iteration of the MDP which is due to be reported to Ethical Standards & Member Development Committee in March 2023. Within the current MDP, clear pathways have been included for succession planning. The Ethical Standards & Member Development Committee have requested that individual succession plans be put in place (e.g. to support individual Members' aspirations to become a Committee Chair) and this will be included within the next iteration of the MDP. The MDP remains under ongoing review as a live document. The working group of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee meets regularly to shape the programme and this will continue. Discussions that are taking place at an informal level with Group Leaders and Whips will also help identify any issues that need to be addressed through the MDP. Following feedback from Members around the intensity of delivery of the MDP in recent months (which has been impacted by the engagement that has taken place around the Officer-Member relationship), the MDP for next Municipal Year will be structured to include: New member induction programme; core, essential knowledge for all councillors; strands of learning and development relevant to specific committees and individual progression pathways. This will enable Members to select from a suite of learning and development that best meets their aspirations. During next Municipal Year (2023-24), a comprehensive update to the MDP will take place, looking at its structure and composition to support the council's continuous improvement and building on the successes of the MDP this year. This will be implemented the following municipal year.	MDP remains under ongoing review and update. Monitored via Directorate Business Plan. Milestone included in IP (OC.D5.0) around next iteration of MDP which will be reported to Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee in March and contains response to PDP analysis.	Addition of OC.D5.0
Grant Thornton	KLOE B4-20	Officer and Member relationships	120	It remains important for the Council to utilise financial benchmarking tools and data to support the service and financial planning process, in particular to help identify opportunities for efficiencies, savings and service improvements.	Elements of the budget planning process are including benchmarking for example the work on fees and charges, supported by LG Futures. We subscribe to LG Futures benchmarking tool which has been used to inform budget conversations and transformation savings plans. Comparisons with other LAs takes place looking at CT levels as part of budget planning process. The intention is to make benchmarking a more embedded approach to budget planning.	Performance Management section to include financial benchmarking tools to support financial planning. (See new action CO.C2.6)	Inclusion of financial benchmarking within performance management section at CO.C2.6
Grant Thornton	KLOE B5-21	Standards Committee	121	The Council must ensure that the new arrangements now in place are used effectively to monitor and take prompt action whenever inappropriate behaviour is identified.	Regular updates are provided to the Standards Committee on any conduct-related matters (e.g. updates on current cases and any behaviours / themes emerging from them). Our number of cases is very low and we benchmark with other LAs. We have gone from having the highest number of cases in the region, to the lowest. The Standards Committee look at broader matters to ensure that they are adding value and helping the council to discharge its duty to maintain high standards of conduct amongst Members. The Committee consider matters including register of interests, gifts and hospitality, receiving regular updates on the work around standards in public life, and tracking national cases for learning and best practice. Regular meetings are in place between the Chair of the Standards Committee and Officers to keep under review other relevant issues affecting Members e.g. DBS checks. Draft decision has been prepared and is due to conclude by end January.	Continuation of support to Standards Committee is within Business as Usual. Metric around number of standards cases is being used by Commissioners as a proxy indicator. Metric to be utilised to aid insight into health of Officer-Member relationship and culture.	Mechanism for insight into health of Officer-Member relationship at OC.C4
Grant Thornton	KLOE B6-22	Audit Committee	122	A final decision on the Cox reports needs to be made by the Leader before this matter can be considered formally closed.	Draft decision has been prepared and is due to conclude by end January.	Action already included in IP	Not required
Grant Thornton	KLOE B7-23	Financial reporting	123	The Council's procedures for the production of its financial statements require significant improvement. We note that there are a number of legacy issues from prior years that are undermining the quality of the financial statements. We consider that this needs to be an area of priority for the Council. Until these matters are resolved there will remain some uncertainty over the Council's financial position	This is an immediate priority for the Council. We have experienced interim staff who are supporting getting the accounts over the line and resolving the legacy issues. New issues have been raised January 2023 in the 2020/21 accounts to do with valuations which are being worked on. Subject to the above, we are aiming for sign off by the end of March 2023.	Action already included in IP	Not required
Grant Thornton	KLOE B7-24	Financial reporting	124	The Council must successfully implement the new corporate asset management system to timescale, ensure all key finance roles have permanent appointments, and prioritise the training and development of the Finance Team so that the role and behaviour changes planned become embedded.	Phase 1 of the Tech Forge (Asset management system) project was completed in December 2022 with all data being removed from Atrium and transferred either to the new system or a protected worksheet for cleansing. Phase 2 of the project will look at the development of modules such as capital accounting, asbestos, fixed asset register etc. A Phase 2 kick off meeting is being held in January to identify workstreams, leads and timescales. Current completion date is 31 March 2023. Permanent appointments have been made a number of key finance business partner roles with new staff joining in Spring 2023. A recruitment partner is supporting us with the recruitment campaign to recruit 3 direct reports to AD. This commenced in Jan 2023 and follows an unsuccessful recruitment in late 2022. Interims are currently in place for these roles and will remain in place until the recruitment concludes. The finance team have already received training around budget planning and upskilling in technical areas including VAT and collection fund accounting. A survey of existing finance staff has taken place to gauge staff perception of their current skills and knowledge areas. This is helping to inform the training requirements. External training will be commissioned and delivered within the next few months. Budget holders have received initial training linked to the budget holder role profile. Further training is required and the current plans are for this second phase to be delivered externally initially, with finance staff involvement and delivery of regular scheduled training internally going forwards.	Actions already included in IP	Milestones updated at PC.F1

Milestone inclusion around March approval of next phase of MDP. Check with Surjit as we had discussed treating this as BAU

Update ahead of IPRM as matter likely concluded

Grant Thornton	KLOE B6-25	Engagement with residents and the community	125	The Council needs to ensure that it continues to better engage with residents and that this engagement supports greater corporate focus on service quality and customer outcomes.	<p>Over 2022-23, work has taken place to conduct a residents' survey and budget consultation. The findings have been used to drive the business planning and budget process for 2023-2026. Additional focus group work has taken place, focusing on key priority areas, for example customer service. In addition, further detailed analysis of the results has been carried out to provide detailed breakdowns by town level and an in-depth analysis of social isolation and loneliness. This insight is being used to inform our priorities and approaches in these areas (including informing a scrutiny review on social isolation and loneliness).</p> <p>A framework for Resident Consultation and Engagement has recently been agreed and this will lead to a regular residents' survey and budget consultation, and provide a platform for ongoing consultation. This work is currently in procurement phase.</p> <p>A Corporate Consultation and Engagement Working Group is in place to oversee and drive this work forward. The group are also developing a set of Corporate Standards around consultation and engagement which is being informed by EDI considerations. This will provide a framework for all consultation and engagement activities across the Council.</p>	Milestones for next phase to be included in IP (SD.E2.6-7)	Milestones added at SD.E2.6-7 : Procurement of Consultant to deliver regular residents' survey, budget consultation and Citizens' Space, and Consultation and Engagement Framework produced
Grant Thornton	KLOE 8	Governance and legal support to DPH		Should the Council find itself in a similar scenario in the future, it would be prudent to obtain external legal advice on the specific circumstances under consideration, before any final decision on an indemnity is made.	In relation to this case, legal advice around the substantive legal point had been obtained previously in relation to a different matter. That legal advice remained valid and was relied upon. As a result of the issues arising in this particular matter, further legal advice was sought (after the decision had been taken) which reaffirmed the original advice which had been acted on. In light of the level of attention that this matter generated, in future, should similar scenarios occur, consideration will be given to taking advice on the specific circumstances. The council will consider all options taking into account the learning from this particular case, the legal advice provided, and the avoidance of incurring unnecessary cost.	Lessons learnt round the substantive legal point understood across LT	Not required
Grant Thornton	KLOE 8	Governance and legal support to DPH		<p>We consider that the Council should make the following changes to its management arrangements. The Council should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure that senior Council officers in public roles who use social media frothier public role are aware oftherisks of using social media and their responsibilities in relation to the Council's social media policy. We recommend that these senior officers liaise with and seek advice from the Council's communications team in relation to their social media activity. •Engage the Council's communications team in a review of the social media policy to consider if any updates are required, for example, to reflect the changed circumstances brought about by increased home working, and whether the social media policy should stipulate that social media accounts being used by officers clearly state that these accounts relate to their Council role. •Ensure that where the Council identifies use of social media that could be contentious or considered by others as inappropriate, that this is reviewed by management and appropriate action is taken. •The decision to attend media interviews should be made jointly by the Chief Executive, Senior Officers, and Communications Team •When establishing and implementing high profile and / or significant project or initiatives, a better record of the decision-making and supporting information and evidence must be kept. •Establish a clear policy for working with local MPs to ensure that they are appropriately informed. •Ensure that all relevant COVID-19 communications from local MPs and DHSC should be promptly forwarded to the DPH should it be evident that the DPH has not received them directly. •Review the Emergency Plan to ensure that changes following the demise of PHE are reflected. 	HR and the Communication Team will work together to review and update social media policy and create guidance/protocol for working with MPs that reflects our commitment to working effectively together and containing good practice.	Action to review social media policy and create MP protocol will need to be added to IP (Organisational Culture: Internal Communications)	Action to be added. See OC.E2.7
Grant Thornton	KLOE 8	Governance and legal support to DPH		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ensure that decisions made to introduce new services, or materially changing existing services, are properly reflected in the minutes of the body responsible for making such decisions •Any future lessons learned reviews undertaken by the Council should be undertaken in a collaborative and transparent way with the key stakeholders concerned. 	<p>For decisions made at Committee Meetings, all decisions are appropriately minuted and recorded. Minutes of decision-making bodies are signed-off by the decision-making body at its next meeting. For decisions made under delegated authority, new templates and guidance are in place including the requirement for decisions to be published. Quality Assurance checks are in place to ensure that the process is being followed and to review the quality of information recorded. During 2023-34 Municipal Year, a review of the adherence to process and the quality of recording for Delegated Decisions will take place.</p> <p>Recent lessons learnt activity includes a lessons learnt review of SEND Transport and the commencement of a review of the Asset Management System Implementation. Work over 2023-24 includes a focus on creating a lessons learnt framework which will set out corporate guidance around conducting lessons learnt, and approaches for sharing and embedding the learning. The framework will include the principle around conducting lessons learnt in a collaborative and transparent way with the key stakeholders concerned.</p>	Lessons learnt framework to be included in IP as part of the work on the continuous improvement framework including the principles of conducting lessons learned reviews in a transparent way with the key stakeholders concerne	Lessons learnt framework added at CO.B3.2
Grant Thornton	KLOE 8	Governance and legal support to DPH		The Council should review its processes and decision making arrangements following a change in government guidance or policy to ensure that local updates are made in a timely manner	<p>The council has appropriate processes in place to ensure that any change in government guidance and policy can be implemented; whether that relate to an Executive function or Council-side function. These arrangements have been refreshed as part of the Constitutional Review to make sure that they remain fit for purpose.</p> <p>The importance that changes are implemented and communicated to people in a timely way is acknowledged. The changes already made to the way that Leadership Team and Cabinet Members are working together, and the broader meetings between Leadership Team and Members help to ensure that the risk of any future delays is mitigated.</p> <p>The need for rapid change remains a challenge for the Council but this is being managed through regular consideration of priorities and resources.</p>	Not required. Governance Review Phase 2 focuses on embedding the recent constitutional changes	Not required
LGA	Corporate Oversight / Strategic Direction	Corporate Oversight / Strategic Direction		There needs to be a stocktake around the level of available resource, pace and capacity going forward	<p>In relation to work within the Improvement Plan, resources are reviewed and considered at monthly Improvement Plan Review Meetings and the risk is monitored through the Improvement Plan risk register. Additional capacity has been brought in to manage capacity gaps in key areas of work. Many of the projects within the Improvement Plan focus on building longer term infrastructure and capacity - for example, the implementation of Verto as a programme and project management tool will embed our corporate approach to programme and project management and enable better reporting and oversight. Governance is being established around Corporate Transformation and the Customer Journey programmes which will enable those priorities to be clearly managed and ensure resources are in place for their delivery. The Council is also progressing the establishment of a Corporate PMO aligned to the Corporate Transformation Team.</p> <p>Work around prioritisation has been taking place with a Wider Leadership Team away day held in December to share developing business plans and Directorate-level priorities. This has been further discussed at Leadership Team in January. Forthcoming business plans for 2023-2025 set out these Directorate priorities which will inform service level and team plans.</p> <p>Resources, pace and capacity will continue to be regularly considered by Leadership Team.</p>	Processes in place within Improvement Plan Review Meeting to review resources, pace and capacity on a monthly basis and this will continue.	Not required
LGA	Corporate Oversight / Strategic Direction	Corporate Oversight / Strategic Direction		Re PMF - the [golden] thread can be articulated at Director, Assistant Director and Service Manager level but not yet below that.	See response to K1	See K1	See K1

LGA	Corporate Oversight / Strategic Direction	Corporate Oversight / Strategic Direction	Establishing a clear shared understanding of the extent of the budget gap will be important and ensuring a corporate and cross-cutting approach to addressing the financial challenge in focusing effort and attention and identifying and implementing a whole-council approach to solutions.	See response to I17 and below. The transformational savings within the current MTFP are cross-directorate projects. Resolving the budget gap for 2023-24 was a collaborative approach across Leadership Team and has included the use of savings targets alongside the identified transformational savings. Working towards a whole-council approach will take time and we will continue to focus on cross-directorate transformational savings. Challenges to adopting this approach relate to the short-term settlements.	Included within internal comms approach and transformational savings programme. Update to milestones.	As at response to I17
LGA	Governance / Decision Making	Governance / Decision Making	There is an emerging risk around the organisational responsiveness to the customer and to casework issues brought forward by Elected Members. This needs to be avoided through on-going and intensive focus on the 'Ward and Casework Management' element of the Improvement Plan and the work around the 'customer journey' that is being embarked upon	The risk around the organisational responsiveness to the customer and to casework issues brought forward by Elected Members is acknowledged. Changes brought about through the customer journey programme will bring overall improvements to the management of, and response to casework issues. Members are actively involved in shaping this work through, for example, scrutiny's focus on the Customer Journey Programme, and Cabinet priority focus sessions taking place around the Customer Experience Strategy. A focus on the specific issues surrounding casework brought forward by Elected Members will be taken with plans being developed for a series of engagement activities with Members, which will lead to workable solutions being identified for the short and medium term. (See response to GT I19 above)	Included as an action within the Customer Journey Programme to ensure continued oversight of progress around ward and casework management specific issues. See CO.F5.4	New actions included at CO.F5.4 and CO.F5.5
LGA	Governance / Decision Making	Governance / Decision Making	The council is committed to reviewing the elected member development programme at regular intervals going forward. It will be important to ensure that the pace of delivery is made to feel sustainable, with some councillors the peer team spoke to reflecting an intensity to it in recent months that risks being too demanding in terms of their time		See I19	See I19
LGA	Cust Journey/ Organisational Culture	Cust Journey/ Organisational Culture	The customer journey, Equalities Diversity and Inclusion, and organisational culture are major pieces of inter-related work that are fundamental to future success. They require a clear plan and sense of deliverability	The Customer Journey Programme is being managed within the transformation programme and has a programme board established with Terms of Reference. Work is currently underway to scope the individual workstreams and this will include shorter-term changes and considerations, along with the longer term aspiration. The workstreams are Customer Experience Strategy, Community Hubs and One Stop Shop, Telephony (including Contact Centres), and Technology. This approach will provide a clear plan for each component of the Customer Journey work. The EDI and Organisational Culture Work are being managed outside of the transformation programme, but links between the areas of work will continue to be fostered. The Organisational Working Group includes key staff involved in progressing the EDI and Transformation agendas. The workforce strategy, and "One Team Framework" which are key deliverables within the organisational culture work, are being developed to align with Customer Journey and EDI aspirations. The EDI Strategy clearly identifies the timeline to complete the work for the EDI strategy covering 18 months. The LGA are providing advice to benchmark the use of EDI consultants, and work has commenced to learn from other authorities. We are working to have the consultant in place by the end of February and work with them to analyse, design and implement the new EDI strategy.	Update to milestones for Customer Journey, EDI, and Organisational Culture	Update milestones in customer journey (CO.F), EDI (SD.B) and organisational culture (OC.A)
LGA	Cust Journey/ Organisational Culture	Cust Journey/ Organisational Culture	At a more basic level, there needs to be a quickly established shared understanding regarding what the council's service standards and timescales for responding are currently and/or will be going forward	Within the Customer Journey Programme, the workstream focusing on Customer Experience Strategy will involve mapping end to end customer processes. This will then lead to a service definition, service standard, an SLA and identification of a feedback loop (to drive continuous improvement). Timescales will be identified as part of the workstream development.	Included within Customer Journey Programme. Update will be needed once workstream plan in place	New actions will be added once workstream plan in place
LGA	Cust Journey/ Organisational Culture	Cust Journey/ Organisational Culture	It is important now to cement the commitment that has been given [re customer journey] and capitalise upon the enthusiasm that has been generated, by establishing clear leadership of the agenda	The Director of Regeneration and Growth is in place as the Senior Responsible Officer for the Customer Journey, following the departure of the Director of Business Strategy and Change. The Programme delivery is being supported by the Corporate Transformation Office. Workstream leads are in place and resources for each workstream are currently being identified.	Update to milestones for Customer Journey Programme	Update milestones and SRO
LGA	Organisational Culture	Organisational Culture	Activity is already underway in relation to [organisational culture] However, things feel very much at the outset in relation to this key strand of work and clarity is still required in key respects. This includes what the 'organisational culture' change agenda in Sandwell will cover; how it links to the work on the 'customer journey' – given the inter-related nature of these two key strands of work; and the connection with the whole organisation transformation plan Driving forward the 'One Council, One Team' philosophy would logically form a key component of it that the council has indicated it intends to develop. Another strand might usefully relate to the 'return to the office' arrangements post-pandemic which require further focus and clarification of expectations. Whether workforce planning constitutes part of the organisational culture change programme also needs to be clarified.	The immediate activity within the organisational culture work programme includes the approval of the 'One Team Framework', which contains the values and behaviours that have resulted from a series of detailed engagement with the workforce, and a Workforce Strategy which will set out the key workforce issues for the council and the priorities and approach to be taken to strengthen the workforce and embed a positive culture. The strategy approval will lead to a medium-term delivery programme. In relation to the 'return to the office' arrangements, this is built into the workforce strategy which will include a priority around our operating practices, including hybrid working. Conversations are underway around the hybrid working model. The organisational culture agenda has a strong inter-relationship with the customer journey and EDI work and the council's current approach is set out in the response to other improvement points above.	Update to milestones for Organisational Culture to include roll out of One Team Framework	New action OC.A2.3
LGA	Organisational Culture	Organisational Culture	The original corporate peer challenge report outlined the need for role titles and functions to better describe 'what they say on the tin' and a requirement for consistency in terminology and managerial spans of control and levels of responsibility. There remains a lack of clarity around this. There is an issue of succession planning to be addressed, linked to the age profile of the workforce	A project has been identified within the Corporate Transformation Programme to focus on the Target Operating Model for the Council. This will include consideration of managerial spans of control and levels of responsibility. Priority is currently being placed around delivery of the Customer Journey programme, and work on the TOM project will commence once resources are available. The initial work will be to determine the objectives and scope of the project. The issue of succession planning is included within the workforce strategy which is due to be approved in May 2023 and is anticipated to be a 3 year delivery programme. The programme will include the creation of a talent framework and more career pathways, however the immediate workforce issues for the council are around recruitment and retention which will be the priority over 2023.	Already captured in 'spans and layers' project within Corporate Transformation Programme	Need to check OC.A2.3 with VL and DS

Confirm Programme Manager Position

Need to check OC.A2.3 with VL and DS

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Improvement Plan Risk Register

January 2023



1. Best start in life for children and young people



2. People live well and age well



3. Strong resilient communities




4. Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods





5. A strong and inclusive economy




6. A connected and accessible Sandwell



Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Oct 22)	Current Risk Score (Jan 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)	Key Sources of Assurance
IP1	<p>Improvement Plan objectives and member / officer engagement in those objectives</p> <p>If programme objectives are not clearly defined to ensure they are within scope, deliverable, understood and agreed then the programme will proceed with no clear direction and may become unmanageable and/or scope creep may take place.</p>	6 (Green)	6 (Green)	3 (Green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement as part of the development of the Improvement Plan - sharing themes and workstreams with staff and members Communications Plan implemented for governance review, CPC and Statutory Notice Communications Approach set out in Draft Improvement Plan Objectives for each Theme within the Improvement Plan identified Set of key messages for stakeholders in place and issued to all Directors Council approval of Improvement Plan All Member briefing held (incl. newly elected Members) Regular informal reporting to Cabinet in place on IP progress Regular Staff communications on progress of Improvement Plan Reporting approach to ARAC and B&CSM agreed, with quarterly report in September 22 Change control approach agreed to ensure updates to plan are appropriate and in line with agreed objectives <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Plan delivered Staff and member engagement through Organisational Culture change programme 	


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IP2	<p>Programme management arrangements</p> <p>If appropriate programme management arrangements are not put in place then there is a risk that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project will not be delivered to scope The required improvements will not be made within the necessary timescales The government may lose confidence in the council's ability to improve and intervention may be extended The borough's residents may lose confidence in the council ability to deliver effective services Inefficient use of limited resources Continued reputational damage 	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement Plan approved by Council 07/06/22 PMO support being provided by existing experienced resources within Service Improvement Processes around progress monitoring and change control established for Governance Improvement Plan Risk register in place and will be reported to Leadership Team monthly and Cabinet quarterly Establishment of PMO Teams Site for collation of programme documents and evidence Exception reporting format confirmed via highlight report standard template Terms of Reference for internal Improvement Plan Review Meeting updated to reflect government intervention, single Improvement Plan and assurance framework <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of dedicated Programme Management Office - dependent upon appointment of dedicated Corporate Performance Management posts 	
IP3	<p>Allocation of sufficient resources to project management and project delivery/ maintaining Business as Usual while delivering the Improvement plan</p> <p>If sufficient resources (capacity and capability) and where</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMO support being provided by existing experienced resources within Service Improvement Resource gaps / pressures associated with actions within the Improvement Plan have been identified 	



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	<p>necessary additional resources are not allocated to the management and delivery of the improvement plan then this may result in officer fatigue, loss of motivation and the programme will fail to deliver all of its objectives.</p>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council on 07/06/22 approved Use of Improvement & Capacity Reserve and 2021/22 underspend allocated to Improvement Plan actions • Resource issues and risks associated with the Improvement Plan to reviewed monthly by Leadership Team and Register maintained • Appointment of interim corporate transformation capacity to establish programme and project management governance arrangements, as well as moving forward key transformational activity • Appointment of additional capacity to support delivery and implementation of key projects taken place in Asset Management, Finance, Service Improvement and Legal Services <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of dedicated Programme Management Office - dependent upon appointment of dedicated Corporate Performance Management posts. • LT work on prioritisation to conclude to ensure that the improvement priorities are clear and resources are available to manage risk of officer fatigue and loss of motivation. 	


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IP4	<p>Project and risk governance assurance arrangements</p> <p>If a robust assurance framework is not put in place to in respect of project assurance, including detailing roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders (eg Cabinet, Scrutiny, ARAC, partners, IB, etc) then the council may be unable to effectively monitor and evidence the improvement required.</p>	6 Green	6 Green	3 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference for Improvement Plan Review Meeting in place • Governance approach included within Council report 07/06/22 • Risk identification has taken place • Agreement for Grant Thornton, LGA and CIPFA to review progress regularly • Improvement Plan Risk Register in place • Terms of Reference for internal Improvement Plan Review Meeting updated to reflect government intervention, single Improvement Plan and assurance framework including role of Scrutiny and Audit Committees. • Roles of Cabinet, Scrutiny and Audit agreed with Chairs • Quarterly reports to Cabinet, Audit and Scrutiny presented in September 2022 and November/December 2022. • Scrutiny consideration of culture theme progress in Dec 22 • Review visits from GT, LGA and CIPFA held Autumn 2022. Reports received from GT and LGA and presented to Cabinet. Review report from CIPFA received Jan 23 and presented to ARAC. Due to be presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny in March. <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly Reports to Scrutiny, Audit and Cabinet (next reports in March 2023) • CIPFA review report received • Scrutiny regular review on Culture Theme progress 	


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						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update to Improvement Plan to reflect findings from GT, LGA, and CIPA follow-up reviews Consideration of external review reports by Scrutiny and Audit Agreement for ongoing external assurance activity 	
IP5	<p>Communication Strategy</p> <p>If a robust communications strategy is not put in place detailing how, when and what information is shared with the various internal and external stakeholders, then not everyone will be aware of their respective roles and responsibilities for delivering the improvement plan and effective service delivery. In addition, the DLUHC may lose confidence in the council's ability to improve resulting in extended/ additional intervention.</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	4 (green)	↔	<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Approach set out in Improvement Plan approved by Council 07/06/22 Key messages document for stakeholders in place Regular PMO/Communications meetings to ensure key messages are embedded within internal and external communications Regular comms with stakeholders taking place as per comms plan including incorporation in all staff briefings <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication with stakeholders to share details of Improvement Plan Recruitment to vacancy within comms structure Communication with stakeholders to share details of transition between KBD and SL. 	

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IP6	<p>Investment and Financial Resources</p> <p>If sufficient/ additional financial resources are not made available, and the IP is expected to be delivered from existing budgets then the IP may not be delivered within the necessary timescales or to scope.</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource gaps / pressures associated with actions within the Improvement Plan identified Council on 07/06/22 approved use of Improvement & Capacity Reserve and 2021/22 underspend allocated to Improvement Plan actions Resource issues and risks associated with the Improvement Plan reviewed monthly by Leadership Team Appointment of interim corporate transformation capacity to establish programme and project management governance arrangements, as well as moving forward key transformational activity Regular monitoring of improvement plan is in place and key milestones are being delivered Appointment of additional capacity to support delivery and implementation of key projects taken place in Asset Management, Finance, Service Improvement and Legal Services <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review resource allocation to deliver the Improvement Plan and determine if there are any gaps Identify additional resources or reprioritise activity following identification of resource gaps 	
IP7	<p>Organisational Culture</p> <p>If the organisational culture does not change including improvement of member and officer relationships and political relationships, then this will impact the delivery of the IP objectives and the timescales within which delivery is achieved and may result in</p>	8 (Amber)	8 (Amber)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific theme in place within Improvement Plan Corporate Governance Theme timescales revised to allow for additional engagement activity around Corporate Governance changes 	

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	extended government intervention.					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular meetings in place between senior members and officers to develop positive working relationships and information sharing LGA training on officer/member relationships delivered in September 2022. External consultant engaged to support development of desired values and behaviours, providing independent facilitation Employee Engagement Survey results disseminated and discussed at DMTs and team meetings - action plans developed and monitored at LT. External Reviews providing assurance that organisational culture change has started to change <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions agreed for organisational culture theme following outcome of staff listening groups 	
IP8	<p>Impact of Covid 19 on the Project Resources</p> <p>If there is a continued impact of Covid 19 on resource availability, then this will impact the programme delivery plan.</p>	6 (Green)	6 (Green)	3 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PMO resourcing in place from within Service Improvement Resource gaps / pressures associated with actions within the Improvement Plan are being identified Regular monitoring of improvement plan is in place and key milestones are being delivered <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single dependencies to be identified within resourcing plan 	

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IP9	<p>Constitutional Changes Closure and new risk IP13 created</p> <p>If key governance documents and procedures (such as the Financial Regulations, Land and Asset Disposal Policy, Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, Scheme of Delegation, Code of Corporate Governance, etc) are not reviewed and updated to reflect the changes required then foundations for change will not be in place and progress will be limited.</p>	9 (Amber)	3 (green)	3 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key corporate Governance Documents are being reviewed and are scheduled for approval in July 2022 and Autumn 2022 Engagement with Constitutional Working Group established as part of changes to governance arrangements Alignment of workstream with organisational culture theme through Officer participation Land and Asset Disposal Policy, Procurement & Contract Procedure Rules and Key Decision Thresholds approved by Council in July 2022 <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued engagement with Members around proposed changes Risk description to be reviewed to cover the successful implementation of changes and re-scored. 	
IP10	<p>Performance Management Framework (PMF) and Data Quality</p> <p>If a robust PMF is not put in place and appropriate quality data captured then the council will be unable to effectively</p>	12 (Red)	8 (Amber)	8 (amber)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance Management Framework approved in April 2022 Evidence of success outlined within each of the Improvement Plan themes focusing on outcomes for each theme 	

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	monitor and evidence improvement, delivery of the Improvement Plan and delivery of the Corporate Plan resulting in a failure to achieve the Council's objectives.					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement Plan Monitoring approach approved by Council and regular monitoring in place Resources approved by Council to address staffing resources required to sustain PMF 2022/23 Quarterly Corporate Performance Report presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny (Q1 Sept/Oct 22, Q2 Dec 22/Jan 23) Residents Survey and Budget Consultation exercise conducted in Summer 2022 to feed into PMF and 2023/24 service and financial planning Process in place for monthly and quarterly monitoring at corporate level Corporate approach to consultation and engagement with residents, including regular residents survey agreed by Leadership Team. Assurance from LGA CPC Follow up Review around development of PMF <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence framework to be produced to support IP Recruitment to dedicated Corporate Performance Management posts Development of customer experience metrics as part of Customer Journey Transformation Programme Performance Management System options appraisal and procurement to provide capability for performance management 	
IP11	<p>Continued focus and resources allocated to historic issues</p> <p>If the council does not focus on the Improvement plan and corporate plan priorities and continues to focus and allocate resources on historic issues,</p>	8 (Amber)	4 (Green)	4 (green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement Plan contains activity to be concluded, and lessons learnt embedding from historic issues Cabinet and Leadership Team approach to historic issues 	

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	then this will impact the timely delivery of both the Improvement Plan and Corporate Plan.					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular monitoring of improvement plan is in place Progress on GT recommendations specifically related to the proper functioning of Scrutiny and Audit Committees. Grant Thornton follow up review of progress against historical issues <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lessons learnt framework to be introduced as part of continuous improvement plan. Lessons learnt to be collated relating to historic issues and shared across organisation Leader to confirm executive's position in relation to a further review in relation to Wragge/Cox 	
IP12	<p>Risk approach and progress monitoring (optimism bias):</p> <p>If the approach taken to risk scoring and/or progress monitoring against the delivery plans is unrealistic (e.g. being overly optimistic around progress and timescales or likelihood and severity of a risk) then there will be a failure to appropriately manage the programme and a loss of confidence in its delivery.</p>	9 (Amber)	6 (Green)	6 (Green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate risk scoring definitions applied Definition in place for progress monitoring Red/Amber/Green progress monitoring for Improvement Plan Roles of Scrutiny and Audit confirmed Reports to Scrutiny and Audit Committees presented in September 2022 PMO reviewed use of RAG ratings for consistency and to ensure that progress monitoring is presenting a realistic view and reflecting risk associated with actions as well as progress against plans (September 2022). GT, LGA, and CIPFA follow up reviews provide assurance <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Reviews to provide assurance 	

Risk Ref	Risk Title and Description	Previous Risk Score (Oct 22)	Current Risk Score (Jan 23)	Target Risk Score	Direction of Travel	Progress to Date (incl. current risk mitigating controls and further actions to be taken to manage risk)	Key Sources of Assurance
IP13	<p>New risk added</p> <p>Constitutional Changes</p> <p>If key governance changes (agreed during 2022) are not embedded throughout the organisation and put into practice, then opportunities will be missed, progress will be limited, and there may be non-compliance with council processes.</p>	New Risk	9 (Red)	6 (Green)		<p>Current and Ongoing Controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alignment of workstream with organisational culture theme through Officer participation • Revised set of guidance and templates in place to support the changes made around key decisions • First round of training delivered to budget holders and procurement card holders in relation to spend thresholds and procurements processes. • New Scrutiny Handbook launched • New EIA guidance issued for decision-making • Sub-delegation schemes developed with Directors <p>Further Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Review Phase 2 to be scoped and workstream plans created to embed the constitutional changes (Corporate Governance Development Programme) • Implement Phase 2 of Mod.Gov • Refresh the Member Development Plan • Develop a programme of learning for Officers around effective-decision making • Review decision-making arrangements (e.g. Forward Plan, report sign-off etc.) 	

Jan-23										Change Control
To be completed by action owner										
Change Number	Theme	Action reference	Action Title	Owner	Date Raised	Type of Change	If date change is required		Change/ Impact of change (incl. any dependencies)/ Reason for change	
							Change date from	Change date to		
147	Corporate Oversight	CO.C1.8	New sub action: Corporate performance team in place	Director - Children & Education	26/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions			new sub action added	
148	Organisational Culture	OC.D2.2	Effective decision-making training	Director-Law & Governance	12/02/2022	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Dec-22	May-23	2 sessions held 22/11 focusing on code of corporate governance. Training around constitutional changes approved in November will be scoped and arranged as part of continuous improvement and delivered as part of Member Development Programme. Impact of training to date is evidenced by feedback on how Council meetings and Committee meetings are running and their improvement in effectiveness.	
149	Decision Making	DM.A1.0	Implement 4-yearly election cycle	Director-Law & Governance	12/02/2022	Closure of Main Action			Closure of main action	
150	Organisational Culture	OC.A1.2	Phase 2 Engagement: Determining Desired Culture	Director-Business Strategy & Change	19/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Dec-22	Mar-23	Workforce Strategy approved – this will be subject to Change Control as sign off Cabinet will be May 2023	
151	Organisational Culture	OC.A1.3	Approval of document setting out the desired organisational culture	Director-Business Strategy & Change	19/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Jan-23	Mar-23	Approval of document setting out the desired organisational culture - This will be subject to Change control to reflect the Cabinet sign off date 15 March 2023	
152	Corporate Oversight	CO.B2.1	Council approval of Improvement Plan Phase 2	Leadership team	19/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Mar-23	Jun-23	Date change to June. An update on current IP will go to Cabinet in March 2023 with responses to external reviews.	
153	Corporate Oversight	CO.D3.3	Review of corporate debt recovery processes completed	Director-Finance	19/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Dec-22	Mar-23	Timescale change	
154	Decision Making	DM.B1.1	Effective Decision Making Training	Director-Law & Governance	19/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Dec-23	end of municipal year	end of municipal year	
155	Procurement & Commercial	PC.C2.3	Implementation	Director-Regeneration & Growth		Change to action description			change title to : Implementation of Phase 2 Asset Management System	
156	Organisational Culture	OC.A2.1	Workforce Strategy approved	Director – Business Strategy and Change	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)		May-23	Scope and drafting has commenced. Many priority workstreams are already in progress. Working towards Cabinet sign off in May.	
157	Organisational Culture	OC.C4.0	New action: Assurance Activity to sustain p	Director - Law & Governance	25/01/2023	Add- New Main Action			new main action	
158	Organisational Culture	OC.C4.1	Identify mechanisms for ongoing insight an	Director - Law & Governance	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions			new action	
159	Corporate Oversight	CO.B2.1	Council approval of Improvement Plan Phase 2	Leadership team	25/01/2023	Change to action description			Wording change to 'approval of Improvement Plan Phase 2' to reflect that Council approval unlikely to be required	
160	Corporate Oversight	CO.B3.1	Develop a Continuous Improvement Plan	Director-Business Strategy & Change	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Mar-23	Jun-23	Date change to June to time with IP Phase 3.	
161	Corporate Oversight	CO.C1.4	Review Corporate KPIs for organisational health to reflect workforce strategy	Director-Business Strategy & Change	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Apr-23	Jun-23	Aligned to Workforce Strategy actions	

162	Corporate Oversight	CO.F5.2	Workstream Plans agreed (timeline, cost and resources) for Strategy & Change	Director- Business Strategy & Change	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	ppc contact centre, Feb-23	Feb-23	and Feb based delivery date
163	Corporate Oversight	CO.F5.3	Programme Board in place and regular meetings	Director- Business Strategy & Change	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Nov-23	Feb-23	Board members to be confirmed, future board dates to be scheduled (commencing Feb 2023) and circulated. PM to be confirmed prior to Feb board
164	Decision Making	DM.C1.0	Refresh decision making-arrangements including	Director- Law & Governance	25/01/2023	Closure of Main Action			All sub actions complete
165	Decision Making	DM.C.2.0	Implementation of Scrutiny Recommendations	Director- Law & Governance	25/01/2023	Closure of Main Action			All sub actions complete
166	Procurement & Commercial	PC.C2.3	Implementation (Implementation of Phase 2)	Director – Regeneration & Growth	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Mar-23	May-23	change of dates
167			Amend Director- Business strategy and Change - change of lead for all actions	Director-Business Strategy & Change	25/01/2023	Change of Delivery Lead(s)			Change of lead required
168	Organisational Culture	OC.A2.2	Other actions as a result of engagement phases	Director – Business Strategy and Change	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)			remove
169	Organisational Culture	OC.A2.3	New action: Roll out of One Team framework	Chief Exec	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions			new sub action added
170	Organisational Culture	OC. B1.0	(close/Move) Design and deliver Corporate Governance Training for Officers	Director – Business Strategy and Change	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)			OC.G1.0- New main action: Governance review Phase 2
171	Organisational Culture	OC.B1.2	Revision of Corporate Induction	Director – Business Strategy and Change	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)			OC.B3.1 -New action: Revision of Corporate Induction
172	Organisational Culture	OC.B1.3	(close/move) Effective decision-making training	Director - Law & Governance	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)			OC.G1.2- New sub action: Effective decision-making training
173	Organisational Culture	OC.B1.5	(close/ move)Delivery of Corporate Governance Training	Director – Business Strategy and Change	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)			OC.G1.3-New sub action: Delivery of Corporate Governance Development Programme
174	Organisational Culture	OC.B1.6	(close/move) Annual Refresher of Corporate Governance Training	Director – Business Strategy and Change	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)			OC.G1.4-New sub action: Annual Refresher of Corporate Governance Training
175	Organisational Culture	OC.B1.7	Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training	Director - Law & Governance	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)			OC.G1.5-New action: Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training
176	Organisational Culture	OC. B3.0	Officer Learning and Development	Director-Business Strategy & Change	25/01/2023	Add- New Main Action			new main action added OC.B3.0
177	Organisational Culture	OC.C1.0	Continue regular weekly meetings between Cabinet Members and Leadership Team	Director - Law & Governance	25/01/2023	Closure of Main Action			All sub actions complete within main action. Assurance activity will be identified and monitored within the IP monitoring tool
178	Organisational Culture	OC.C3.0	Engage LGA to support Officers and Members to develop the relationship going forward including continuation of LGA Cabinet Member mentoring programme	Director - Law & Governance	25/01/2023	Closure of Main Action			LGA mentoring programme is now ongoing
179	Organisational Culture	OC.D2.2	Effective decision-making training	Director - Law & Governance	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)			closure of OC.D2.2 as OC.G1.2- New sub action:Effective decision-making training has been added
180	Organisational Culture	OC.D5.0	Main action: Member development programme	Director - Law & Governance	25/01/2023	Add- New Main Action			new action added
181	Organisational Culture	OC.D5.1	New sub action: Approval of next iteration of MDP that includes actions as a result of Member PDP analysis	Director - Law & Governance	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions			new action added

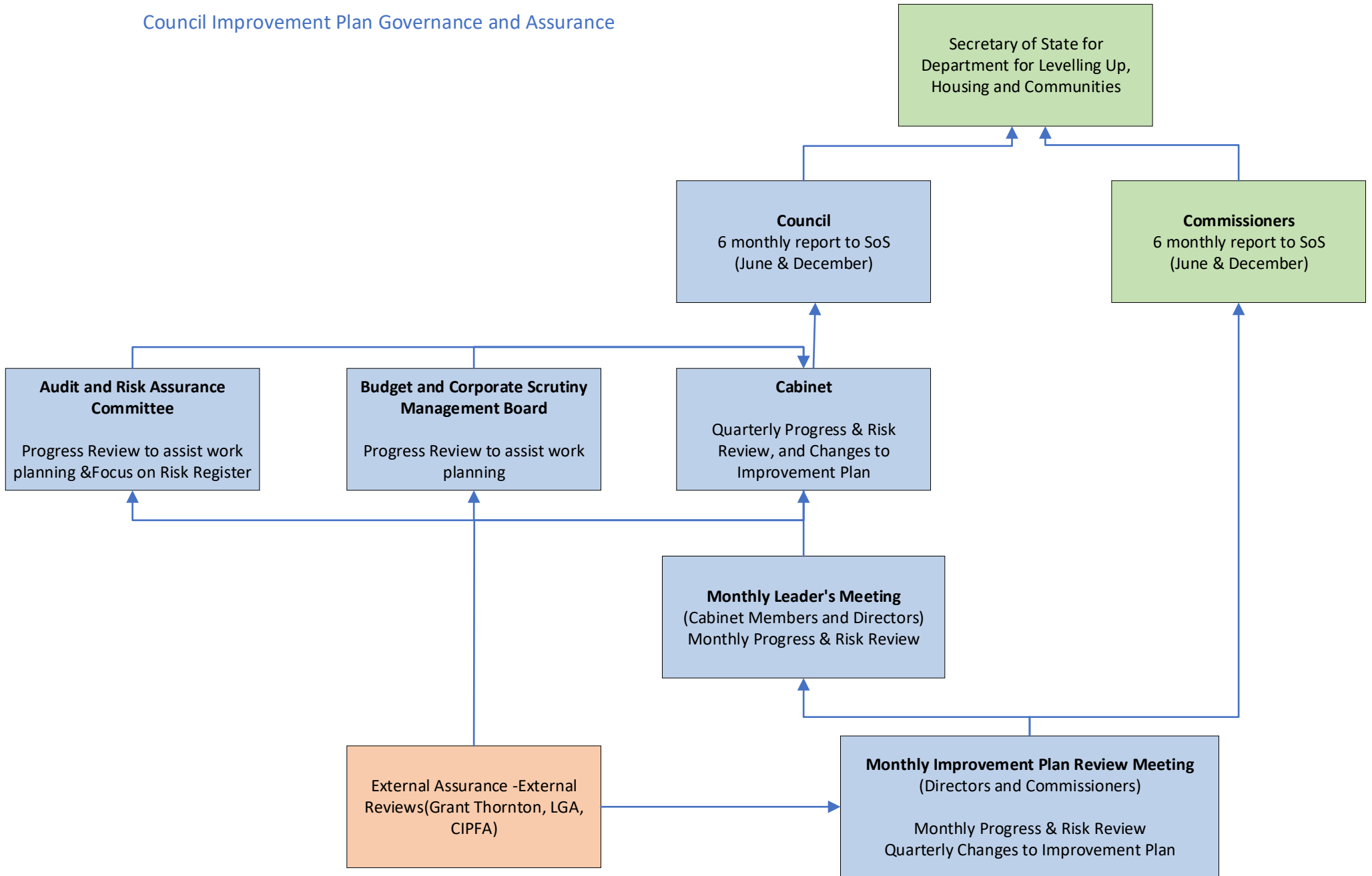
182	Organisational Culture	OC.E2.6	New sub action : Regular comms activity around the scale of financial activities and how the organisation is addressing them.	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				new action added
183	Organisational Culture	OC.E2.7	New sub action: Review social media policy and create guidance/ protocol for working with MPs	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				new action added
184	Organisational Culture	OC.E2.8	New sub action: regular comms activity around the golden thread	Director – Business Strategy and Change (Chief Executive)	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				new action added
185	Organisational Culture	OC.F2.0	Recruitment of Chief Executive	Commissioner	25/01/2023	Closure of Main Action				closure of main action
186	Corporate Oversight	CO.E1.0	Programme and Project Management (change title to 'Corporate Transformation Programme')	Director- Business Strategy & Change (Director- Finance)	26/01/2023	Change to action description				Change main action 'Corporate Transformation pro
187	Corporate Oversight	CO.B3.0	Continuous Improvement Plan	Director- Business Strategy & Change (Chief executive)	25/01/2023	Change to action description				remove plan form title
188	Corporate Oversight	CO.B3.1	Develop a Continuous Improvement Plan framework	Director- Business Strategy & Change (Chief executive)	25/01/2023	Change to action description				change plan to framework
189	Corporate Oversight	CO.B3.2	Develop a lessons learnt framework	Chief executive	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action
190	Corporate Oversight	CO.C1.6	New sub action: Review PMF and put in place plans to address data gaps	Director- Business Strategy & Change (Chief executive)	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action
191	Corporate Oversight	CO.C1.7	Q4 SCT Contract Report to include overview of ITS activity.	Director - Children & Education	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action
192	Corporate Oversight	CO.C2.6	New sub action: Embed financial benchmarking in budget planning	Director- Finance	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action
193	Strategic Decision	SD.D1.5	New sub action: Approval of updated MDFS	Director- Finance	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action
194	Corporate Oversight	CO.E1.0	Programme and Project Management (change title)	Director- Business Strategy & Change (Director- Finance)	25/01/2023	Change to action description				Change main action 'Corporate Transformation programme'
195	Corporate Oversight	CO.E1.4	Programme and Project Management System Implementation	Director- Business Strategy & Change (Director- Finance)	25/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Feb-23	Mar-23		change date for implementation
196	Corporate Oversight	CO.E1.5	New sub action: Corporate Transformation Board operational -ToR finalised -Membership confirmed -Board dates in place	Director- Business Strategy & Change (Director- Finance)	25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action
197	Corporate Oversight	CO.G1.0	New main action: Strategic Planning framework		25/01/2023	Add- New Main Action				add new main action
198	Corporate Oversight	CO.G1.1	New sub action: Refresh of partnership wide vision 2030		25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action

199	Corporate Oversight	CO.G1.2	New sub action: Finalise directorate business plans 2023-2026		25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action
200	Corporate Oversight	CO.G1.3	New sub action: Refresh appraisal process		25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action
201	Corporate Oversight	CO.G1.4	New sub action: Pilot an approach to service planning		25/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action
202	Corporate Oversight	CO.F5.4	New sub action: Ward and Casework Management - Member Engagement held	Director-Regeneration and Growth	26/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action
203	Corporate Oversight	CO.F5.5	New sub action: Ward and Casework Management - Action plan in place	Director-Regeneration and Growth	26/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				add new action
204	Strategic Decision	SD.A5.1	Commercial Strategy Approved	Director- Finance	26/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Jan-23	Mar-23		Strategy approved by LT but still awaiting Cabinet approval - planned for March.
205	Strategic Decision	SD.B1.1	(close/move) Continue to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) staff networks	Director- Law & Governance	26/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)				SD.B1.12"New sub action- Refresh staff network- -Package of Corporate commitment -Identify network chairs -Established United Networks meeting"
206	Strategic Decision	SD.B1.2	(close/move) Establish Women's network and	Director- Law & Governance	26/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)				SD.B1.12"New sub action- Refresh staff network- -Package of Corporate commitment -Identify network chairs -Established United Networks meeting"
207	Strategic Decision	SD.B1.3	(close/move) Continue to deliver on Equalities	Director- Law & Governance	26/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)				SD.B1.13"New sub action-Refresh Equalities Commission Board Rename to EDI commission Renew EDI commission terms of reference"
208	Strategic Decision	SD.B1.7	(close/move) Approval of EDI Workforce plan	Director- Law & Governance	26/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)				close/remove
209	Strategic Decision	SD.B1.10	(close/move) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Director- Law & Governance	26/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)				SD.B1.14New sub action-Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy developed SD.B1.15New sub action-Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy approved
210	Decision Making	DM.B1.0	In-depth review and revision to Corporate Gov	Director- Law & Governance	26/01/2023	Closure of Main Action				sub actions complete or moved to more suitable location
211	Decision Making	DM.B1.1	(close/ move)Effective Decision Making Training	Director- Law & Governance	26/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)				move action to here- OC.G1.2New sub action: Effective decision-making training
212	Decision Making	PC.A3.0	Waste and Recycling Recovery Plan – completion and implementation	Director - Borough Economy	26/01/2023	Closure of Main Action				closure of main action- all sub actions complete
213	Procurement & Commercial	PC.B1.0	Plan in place to ensure new contract commences prior to expiry of current arrangements and appropriate records in place	Director- Finance	26/01/2023	Closure of Main Action				sub actions complete or moved to more suitable location
214	Procurement & Commercial	PC.B1.6	Contract Monitoring Arrangements in Place	Director- Finance	26/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)				PC.B3.4new sub action: Contract Monitoring Arrangements in Place
215	Procurement & Commercial	PC.C2.0	Procurement of new asset management system	Director – Regeneration & Growth	26/01/2023	Closure of Main Action				sub actions complete or moved to more suitable location
216	Procurement & Commercial	PC.C2.3	Implementation	Director – Regeneration & Growth	26/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)				PC.F1.1New sub action: Implementation of Phase 2 Tech Forge
217	Procurement & Commercial	PC.F1.0	New main action: Asset Management	Director – Regeneration & Growth	26/01/2023	Add- New Main Action				new main action
218	Procurement & Commercial	PC.F1.2	New sub action: Corporate Asset Management Strategy delivery plan in place	Director-Regeneration & Growth	26/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions				new sub action

219	Partnership & Relationships	PR.C1.1	Partnership structures in relation to transition from children's to adults in place New action wording: Initiation of Project to review and remodel the pathway between children's and adults' services	Director - Children and Education	26/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Dec-23	May-23	New action wording: Initiation of Project to review and remodel the pathway between children's and adults' services
220	Corporate Oversight	CO.A1.0	Implement Oracle Fusion	Director- Finance	26/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)		Apr-22	change of date- due to old date still showing
221	Corporate Oversight	CO.A1.8	New sub action: Completion of discovery phase	Director- Finance	26/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions		Feb-23	new sub action
222	Corporate Oversight	CO.A1.9	New sub action: completion of the modelling phase	Director- Finance	26/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions		Jun-23	new sub action
223	Corporate Oversight	CO.A1.9	New sub action: Go live	Director- Finance	26/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions		Apr-23	new sub action
224	Corporate Oversight	CO.A1.11	New assurance action: Programme benefits will be defined during the duration of the programme and agreed with the programme board -a process will be agreed for monitoring and reporting the benefits -benefit realisation will take place post go live.	Director- Finance	26/01/2023	Add- New Assurance Action		quarterly	new assurance action added
225	Strategic Decision	SD.E1.0	Public Consultation to be carried out as part of budget process for 2023/24	Director- Finance	26/01/2023	Closure of Main Action			close of main action
226	Strategic Decision	SD.E2.6	New sub action: Procurement of Consultant to deliver regular residents' survey, budget consultation and Citizens' Space	Director - Business Strategy and Change (Chief Exec)	26/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions			new sub action
227	Strategic Decision	SD.E2.7	Consultation and Engagement Framework produced	Director - Business Strategy and Change (Chief Exec)	26/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions			new sub action
228	Procurement & Commercial	PC.E1.6	Add new action: Aquatic Centre Handover	Director - Borough Economy	26/01/2023	Add - New Sub Actions		Jul-23	new sub action
229	Organisational Culture	OC.G1.0	New workstream- Embedding Constitution	Director-Law & Governance	27/01/2023	Add- New Workstream			new workstream
230	Corporate Oversight	CO.G1.0	Strategic Planning framework		27/01/2023	Add- New Workstream			new workstream
231	Procurement & Commercial	PC.F1.0	Asset Management	Director-Regeneration & Growth	27/01/2023	Add- New Workstream			new workstream
232	Organisational Culture	OC.G1.0	New main action: Governance review Phase 2	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
233	Organisational Culture	OC.G1.1	New sub action: Agree project plans relating to each of the changes within the constitution	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
234	Organisational Culture	OC.G1.2	New sub action: Effective decision-making training	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
235	Organisational Culture	OC.G1.3	New sub action: Delivery of Corporate Governance Development Programme	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
236	Organisational Culture	OC.G1.4	New sub action: Annual Refresher of Corporate Governance Training	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
237	Organisational Culture	OC.G1.5	New action: Delivery of Directorships and Trusteeships Training	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action

238	Organisational Culture	OC.H1.0	New action: Assurance Activity to ensure effective contribution of Scrutiny and Audit is sustained	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
239	Organisational Culture	OC.H1.1	Confirm mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance around the effectiveness of Scrutiny and Audit	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
240	Organisational Culture	OC.H1.2	Quarterly survey of Member and Officers participating in Scrutiny and Audit meetings	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
241	Strategic Decision	SD.B1.12	"New sub action- Refresh staff network- -Package of Corporate commitment -Identify network chairs -Established United Networks meeting"	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
242	Strategic Decision	SD.B1.12	"New sub action- Refresh staff network- -Package of Corporate commitment -Identify network chairs -Established United Networks meeting"	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action	23-Feb	23-Jul	replacement action
243	Strategic Decision	SD.B1.13	"New sub action-Refresh Equalities Commission Board Rename to EDI commission Renew EDI commission terms of reference"	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action	23-Feb	23-Apr	replacement action
244	Strategic Decision	SD.B1.14	New sub action-Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy developed	Director - Law & Governance	31/01/2023	Replacement action	23-Feb	24-Jun	replacement action
245	strategic Decision	SD.B1.15	New sub action-Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy approved		31/01/2023	Replacement action	24-Jun	24-Sep	replacement action
246	Organisational Culture	OC.G1.2	New sub action: Effective decision-making training		31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
247	Procurement & Commercial	PC.B3.4	new sub action: Contract Monitoring Arrangements in Place		31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
248	Procurement & Commercial	PC.F1.1	New sub action: Implementation of Phase 2 Tech Forge		31/01/2023	Replacement action			replacement action
249	corporate Oversight	CO.E1.0	Programme and Project Management- change to 'Corporate Transformation'		31/01/2023	Add- New Workstream			Programme and Project Management- change to 'Corporate Transformation'
250	corporate Oversight	CO.D2.3	Workforce development plan implemented for financial services section	Director- Finance	31/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Nov-22	Mar-23	
251	Strategic Decision	SD.A5.2	Business Cases Presented for commercial work	Director- Finance	31/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Jan-23	Feb-23	Strategic Business Cases prepared and awaiting review by D of F and LT.
252	Procurement & Commercial	PC.B1.6	Contract Monitoring Arrangements in Place	Director- Finance	31/01/2023	Change to delivery timescales (actions and milestones)	Jan-23	Feb-23	Resources being identified for contract management support pending the creation of a corporate CM team.

Council Improvement Plan Governance and Assurance



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Report to Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

1 March 2023

Subject:	Q3 Budget Monitoring 2022/23
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Piper – Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources
Director:	Simone Hines - Director of Finance
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Rebecca Maher (Head of Finance) Rebecca_Maher@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board considers the 2022/23 Budget Monitoring Q3 report and identify any recommendations it wishes to make to Cabinet.







2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 At its meeting on 15 February 2023, the Cabinet considered the 2022/23 Budget Monitoring report for Quarter 3 and referred the report to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for consideration and comment.
- 2.2 Any recommendations arising from the consideration of this report will be reported to the Cabinet.

3. How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

The Council's financial status helps to underpin the Council's Corporate Plan and the associated aspirations.



	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell

4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board has been requested to consider the Quarter 3 Budget Monitoring 2022/23 to ensure the Council can conduct its business efficiently, act to provide for the security of the assets under its control, and for ensuring that the use of these resources is legal, properly authorised, provides value for money and achieves best value.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 If the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board does not consider the information presented, the opportunity to make recommendations would be lost.

6 Implications

Resources:	Further details on the financial implications will be presented to the meeting.
Legal and Governance:	The Local Government Act 2003 places a requirement on local authorities to provide Members with regular financial monitoring.



Risk:	This information is contained within the main body of this report.
Equality:	No direct implications arising from the recommendations.
Health and Wellbeing:	The financial prosperity of the Council provides a foundation for health and wellbeing across the remit of the Council.
Social Value	No direct implications arising from the recommendations.

7. Appendices

None

8. Background Papers

Q3 Monitoring Report to Cabinet 7 December 2022



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Report to Cabinet

15 February 2023

Subject:	Q3 Budget Monitoring 2022/23
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Bob Piper, Finance & Resources
Director:	Simone Hines, Director of Finance
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Rebecca Maher – Assistant Director - Finance Rebecca_Maher@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 1.1 Note the financial monitoring position as at 31 December 2022 and refer the report to the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board for consideration and comment.
- 1.2 Approve the transfers between reserves as outlined in Appendix 3.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Section 151 of the 1972 Local Government Act requires the Chief Financial Officer to ensure the proper administration of the council's financial affairs. Budgetary control, which includes the regular monitoring and reporting of budgets is an essential element in discharging this statutory responsibility. The recommended treatment of the year end variances supports the financial sustainability of the council.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

The Council's financial status helps to underpin the Council's Corporate Plan and the associated aspirations.



4 Context and Key Issues

General Fund Outturn

4.1 The overall projected outturn position for the General Fund is an underspend of £1.824m. The overall projected net directorate outturn variance, excluding the HRA, is an overspend of £5.253m following the use of reserves. The variance for each directorate is summarised in the following table and analysed in more detail within Appendix 1.

Area	Appendix	Total Budget £'000	Projected Outturn £'000	Variance from Budget £'000	(Use of) Reserve & RCCO £'000	Corporate Funding of COVID Pressures £'000	Projected Variance Q3 £'000
Corporate Management	1A	(194)	(54)	140	0	0	140
Borough Economy	1B	63,987	68,339	4,352	(3,606)	0	746
Adult Social Care	1C	80,876	84,975	4,099	(3,194)	(905)	0
Regeneration & Growth	1D	9,292	13,471	4,179	(2,846)	0	1,333
Housing	1E	2,350	2,653	303	(275)	0	28
Children's Services	1F	88,656	95,406	6,750	(2,563)	(1,395)	2,792
Business Strategy & Change	1G	12,423	13,127	704	(695)	0	9
Finance	1H	9,729	13,635	3,906	(2,838)	(567)	501
Law & Governance	1I	3,679	4,299	620	(620)	0	0
Vacancy Savings Q3		297		(297)			(297)
Net Service Expenditure (ex PH)		271,095	295,851	24,756	(16,636)	(2,867)	5,253
Public Health	1J	64	2,555	2,491	(2,491)		(0)
Total Net Service Expenditure		271,159	298,406	27,247	(19,127)	(2,867)	5,253
Capital Charge Adjustment		(26,461)	(26,461)	0			0
External Interest Payments		16,374	12,645	(3,729)			(3,729)
Interest/Dividend Receipts		(3,753)	(5,266)	(1,513)			(1,513)
West Midlands Transport Levy		13,117	13,117	0			0
West Midlands Magistrates Court		41	41	0			0
Environment Agency (Flood Defence)		88	88	0			0
Net Service Expenditure before use of balances		270,565	292,570	22,005	(19,127)	(2,867)	11
Contingency		3,442	1,506	(1,936)	0		(1,936)
Changes in Balances		(13,153)	(13,153)	0	0		0
Central Items		(23,809)	(17,989)	5,820	(5,719)		101
Use of Balances/RCCO/Central Items		(33,520)	(29,636)	3,884	(5,719)	0	(1,835)
Collection Fund Deficit		16,972	16,972	0			0
Council Tax		(117,967)	(117,967)	0			0
Business Rates		(136,049)	(136,049)	0			0
Total Net General Fund Expenditure (inc Central Items and use of balances)		1	25,890	25,889	(24,846)	(2,867)	(1,824)
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	1K	(299)	(1,018)	(719)	(300)	0	(1,019)
Individual Schools Budgets (ISB)	1L	0	1,162	1,162	(4,070)	0	(2,908)
Total Net Expenditure		(298)	26,034	26,332	(29,216)	(2,867)	(5,751)

4.2 The previous forecast at Qtr 2 was an overall net overspend of £1.9m. The main reason for the movement between the period is a change in the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision Policy, which sets out how the Council repays debt. Council approved a revised approach in January which generated a saving of £4m for 2022/23.



- 4.3 Directorates have held a number of vacancies during quarter one, two and three and the savings from these have been moved into a corporate budget to be used to offset the overall overspend against the General Fund. A piece of work is ongoing to identify if any of these vacancies can be taken as long-term savings, whilst being mindful of the impact that recruitment difficulties is having in several service areas.
- 4.4 The cost of living crisis is having a significant impact across the council both in terms of inflationary pressures and an increase in the agreed pay award compared to the amount included in the original budget which adds approximately £8.3m to the pay bill for 2022/23.
- 4.5 The exceptionally high level of inflation is also driving increased costs across some of our key contracts and leading to some very high cost placements in Adults and Children’s Social Care. When the budget was set in 2022/23 a Financial Planning Reserve was established specifically to provide a risk cover for rising inflation, and the monitoring position above does assume that this is called on to offset some of the inflationary pressures. Similarly, the Council holds an earmarked reserve for waste services to smooth fluctuations in the waste contract year on year, and this will be used to offset the higher than budgeted inflationary impact on the contract. The other use of reserves shown in the table above is largely planned use for specific projects, such as to fund initiatives in the COVID Recovery Plan and Directorate carry forward requests from 2021/22.
- 4.6 **Corporate Management (1A)**
- 4.7 The projected outturn for Corporate Management is an overspend of £0.140m. The main reason for this is the cost of the external commissioners for which there is currently no budget.

Borough Economy (1B)

- 4.8 The projected outturn variance against budget for Borough Economy (prior to reserve transfers) is an overspend of £4.352m. The main reasons for this overspend are an underachievement of licensing income and significantly high inflationary pressures relating to utilities costs in Highways and the waste contract.
- 4.9 The directorate is planning to use £3.606m of directorate earmarked reserves as outlined in Appendix 4. The revised projected outturn after this use of reserves is an overspend of £0.746m.



Adult Social Care (1C)

- 4.10 The projected variance against budget for Adults Social Care (prior to reserve transfers) is an overspend of £4.099m. The main reasons for this are the increased cost of placements, increased care rates for complex care and supported living packages, and the impact of the additional pay award of 7% across the directorate.
- 4.11 The directorate is planning to make use of £1.471m of the additional Social Care Grant, reserve approved for increase in care rates of £2.6m and other smaller Adult Social Care reserves. This has resulted in a forecast position of breakeven.

Regen & Growth (1D)

- 4.12 The projected variance against budget for Regen and Growth (prior to reserve transfers) is an overspend of £4.179m. The main reasons for this are the impact of the additional pay award and utilities inflation. The directorate also has a number of one-off projects that are planned to be funded from the carry forward reserve which was created at the end of 2021/22. Other pressures include a continuing pressure on markets income and business rates costs for void properties.
- 4.13 The directorate is planning to use £2.846m of the directorate earmarked reserves, predominantly the carry forward from 2021/22 as outlined above. In addition, the directorate will be drawing down £0.091m of the corporate Commonwealth Games reserve. The revised projected outturn following this use of reserves is an overspend of £1.333m.

Housing General Fund (1E)

- 4.14 The projected variance against budget for Housing (prior to reserve transfers) is an overspend of £0.303m. The main reasons for this are the impact of the additional pay award together with a review of floating support and transformation work which will be funded from the carry forward reserve. There are also pressures arising from additional security requirements at Granges and an under-achievement of income for garages.
- 4.15 The directorate is planning to use £0.275m of directorate reserves which results in a revised projected overspend of £0.028m.

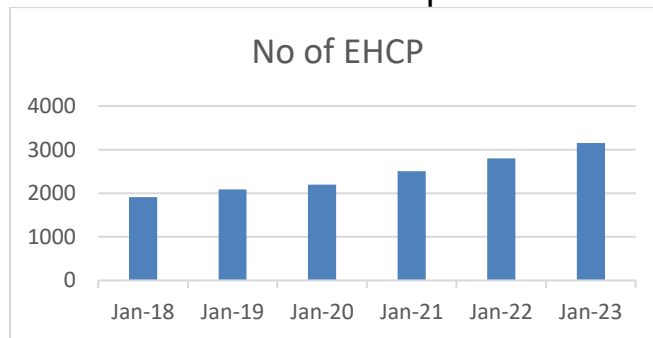
Children's Services (1F)



4.16 The projected variance against budget for Children’s Services is an overspend of £6.750m before applying reserves. The main reasons for this are the significant increase in the projected overspend on SEND transport, the impact of the pay award for the service and Sandwell Children’s Trust, placement pressure in SCT and the cost of exit packages as a result of restructuring within the directorate.

4.17 The forecast increase in the SEND Transport service is due to a significant increase in demand over the years, particularly for complex and out of borough placements which have the highest cost.

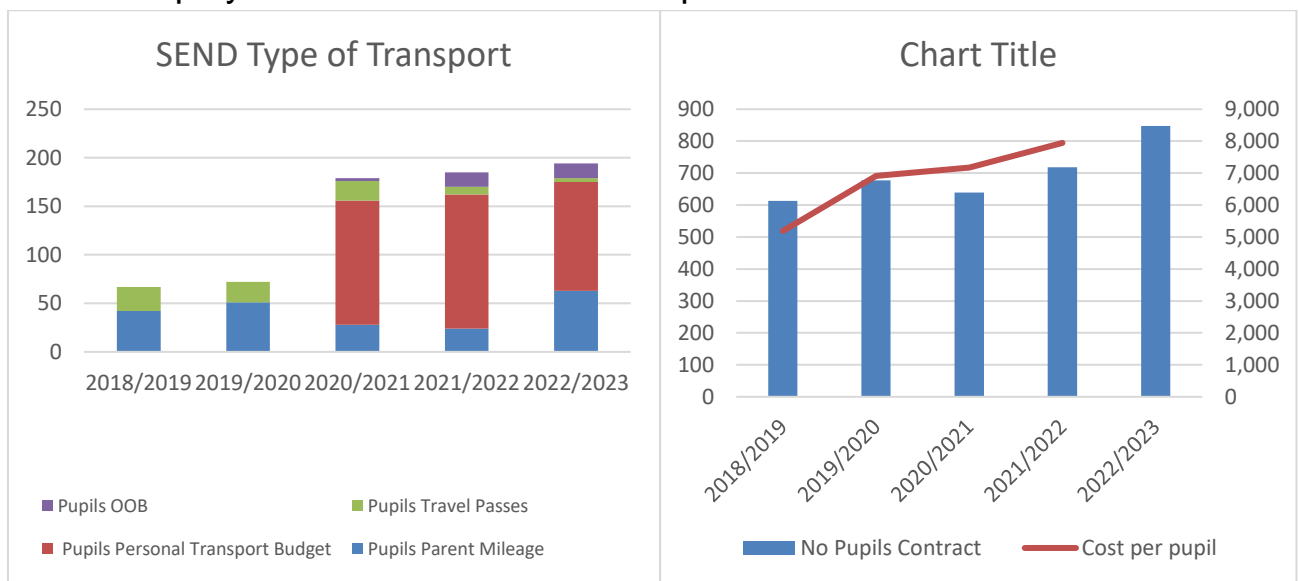
4.18 There has been a 51% increase in the Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) issued over the years as can be seen in adjoining chart. This has correspondingly resulted in increase in request for SEN transport.



4.19 As mentioned above, request for travel assistance has therefore increased significantly. Most importantly however, is the increased nature and complexity of need of these pupils that has led to:

- them being placed in out of Borough (OOB) schools
- reduction in use of multi-occupancy vehicles
- More children are now travelling alone with passenger assistant

The inter-play of these factors can be explained in the two charts below.



- 4.20 The result of this is a significant increase in the cost of travel per pupil as can be seen above.
- 4.21 The recent framework procurement of SEND used pupil transport number as at April 2022 of 716. However, this figure has increased significantly to 848 at the time the contract was implemented in September 2022.
- 4.22 This increased forecast would have been known and reported by period 7 but for the following reasons:
- Introduction of the new transport contract in September 2022 and allowing the providers to settle results in delay to forecast figures and costs.
 - A new system of paying on account was introduced which again delayed the projections as this was embedded.
 - Unavoidable staff absences due to illness further caused capacity issues which resulted in delays to figures being ready before Christmas
- 4.23 The directorate are currently exploring mitigations (immediate and longer term) to mitigate this pressure. This will be presented to Cabinet once it is firmed up.
- 4.24 Sandwell Children's Trust is also experiencing pressures from exceptionally high cost placements as well as recruitment and retention issues and is forecasting a shortfall of £1.947m at its latest financial position against its budgeted surplus of £1.947m resulting in a net NIL position against its contract income. The main reason for the budget shortfall is due to a combination of factors, including an increase in the number of children with complex needs and a substantial increase in the weekly cost of placements compared to the MTFP assumptions.
- 4.25 Following the use of reserves, the projected outturn position for Children's Services is an overspend of £2.792m.

Business Strategy & Change (1G)

- 4.26 The projected variance against budget for BSC (prior to reserve transfers) is an overspend of £0.704m. This will be offset by the use of reserves to fund one-off projects and expenditure of £0.695m. The revised projection following this is an overspend of £0.009m.

Finance (1H)



- 4.27 The projected variance against budget for Finance (prior to reserve transfers) is an overspend of £3.906m. One of the main reasons for this is expenditure relating to the upgrade to Oracle Fusion which is being funded from an earmarked corporate reserve. There are also agency staff working on corporate improvement projects that are being funded from the Corporate Improvement Plan reserve.
- 4.28 Following the use of reserves, the projected outturn for Finance is an overspend of £0.501m, which is largely due to the increased pay award and additional interim posts.

Law & Governance (1I)

- 4.29 The projected variance against budget for L&G (prior to reserve transfers) is an overspend of £0.620m. However, £0.587m expenditure is planned to be drawn down from the directorate's general reserve to cover one-off projects, some linked to the Corporate Improvement Plan. Additionally, there is a revenue contribution to capital expenditure of £0.237m. This results in a projection of breakeven.

Public Health (1J)

- 4.30 Public Health is a ringfenced grant and therefore any over or underspend has to be transferred into a specific Public Health Reserve. The forecast outturn variance is currently an overspend of £2.491m before application of reserves. As stated above, this overspend will be funded from existing PH reserve. Therefore, the end of year forecast, after reserve utilisation, is a nil variance.

Housing Revenue Account (1K)

- 4.31 The projected variance against budget for the HRA (prior to reserve transfers) is an underspend of £0.719m. This is due to a number of vacancies across the services areas funded from the HRA account.

Dedicated Schools Grant (1L)

- 4.32 The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is forecasting to overspend by £1.162m. The surplus DSG reserve at the end of 2021/22 is £4.070m which means the surplus DSG at the end of this year is forecast to be £2.908m. The overspend relates to the Central Schools Block and High Needs Block.

Central Items/RCCO/Use of Balances

- 4.33 The council has several centrally held budgets. The nature of these is such that they are not within a specific directorate's control. The council also makes use of balances towards one-off expenditure and as Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay.



4.34 The net projected outturn variance against these budgets is an overspend of £0.101m and more detail is provided in Appendix 2.

Use of Reserves

4.35 At the end of 2021/22 £154.971m was held in earmarked reserves. Three new reserves have been created, and adjustments made to the accounting treatment for some grants, which increased the opening balance to £166.019m. During the year, it is projected that £59.604m of these balances will be used leaving a remaining balance of £106.415m. A significant proportion of the use of reserves is the Business Rates S31 grant reserve, which is maintained due to timing differences in the accounting treatment for business rates income. Further detail is provided in Appendix 3.

Capital

4.36 Expenditure on the Council's capital programme is forecast to be **£155.317m** during 2022/23. Appendix 6 provides a detailed breakdown of the programme. The main changes that have taken place since the quarter 2 monitoring are as follows: -

- A decrease of £3.671m in the Law & Governance budget in relation to the slippage of resources into 2023/24 in respect of the West Bromwich New Cemetery scheme. This scheme is not due to commence on site until 2023/24.
- An increase of £1.736m in the Business Strategy & Change budget in relation to slippage of resources into 23/24 of £0.800m in respect of the ICT End User Computing scheme, in order to further continue ICT Refresh, offset by the introduction of a £2.536m budget in respect of Oracle Fusion ERP Implementation.
- A decrease of £5.325m in the Borough Economy budget mainly in respect of slippage of resources into 2023/24 on the following schemes, £1.213m in respect of the Birchley Island scheme which is still under consultation, £2.265m in respect of Highways Infrastructure Condition to continue works in 23/24, £0.403m in relation to Lightwoods Park & House and a reduction of £1.000m in the Acquisition of Vehicles budget to reflect the Council's current vehicle replacement programme.
- A decrease of £11.836m in the Regeneration & Growth budget mainly in respect of slippage of resources into future years in relation to Towns Fund schemes £10.096m and the Property Refurbishment budget £1.712m.



- A decrease of £1.897m in the Housing & Assets budget mainly in respect of slippage into future years in relation to Empty Properties £0.677m, The Public conversion to College scheme £0.341m and Vulnerable Home Owners £0.759m.
- An increase of £3.584m in the Children & Education budget mainly to reflect the use of Basic Need, School Condition and Devolved Formula Capital resources to continue various school improvement schemes.
- An increase of £1.125m in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget mainly in respect of increased spend on adaptations £1.380m and Boscobel Avenue £0.250m – to cover (homeloss, moving costs etc.) offset by spend on several Homes England new build schemes £0.500m moving into future years.
- The Oracle Fusion project has been add to the programme following Cabinet approval of the implementation budget in January.

Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 4.37 Section 106 monies are paid by developers towards the cost of providing community and social infrastructure but must be used for specific purposes. The Council currently holds **£3.390m** in Section 106 monies and is forecasting to spend **£0.812m** of this leaving a remaining balance of **£2.578m**.
- 4.38 The Community Infrastructure Levy is a charge that local authorities can set on new development to raise funds to help fund the infrastructure, facilities and services which are needed to support new homes and businesses in the areas. The Council currently holds **£2.911m** in the Capital 80% pot CIL monies and is not forecasting any expenditure against this.

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Council is facing a challenging financial position for 2022/23, largely due to the impact of inflation. The additional forecast cost from the increased pay award and inflation on key services is in the region of £10m.
- 5.2 Leadership Team and the Finance Team have carried out a review of underspends from 2021/22 and vacant posts in order to mitigate the inflationary increases, and the result of these reviews are reflected in the forecast outturn position. Vacancy controls have also been in place since October. The review of the Council's MRP policy has generated a saving of



£4m for the year which has contributed to the overall underspend position reported for Qtr 3.

5.3 There is still a lot of risk in the financial position, largely due to continued inflationary pressures and the increased demand being seen for Adults and Children’s Services.

6 Alternative Options

6.1 There are limited alternatives to the recommendations included in this report. Cabinet could decide not to allow the proposed use of reserves by directorates, but this would increase the projected overspend and result in a further reduction in the council’s general fund balance.

7 Implications

Resources:	Resource implications are contained within the main body of the report.
Legal and Governance:	No direct implications arising from the recommendations.
Risk:	This information is contained within the main body of this report.
Equality:	No direct implications arising from the recommendations.
Health and Wellbeing:	No direct implications arising from the recommendations.
Social Value	No direct implications arising from the recommendations.

8 Appendices

App 1 Outturn Summary for Directorates

App 2 Central Items

App 3 Reserves

App 4 Capital

App 5 CIL and S106 Funding

9 Background Papers

None



Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

March 2023

**Forward Plan list of decisions to be taken by the Executive and
Notice of Decisions to be taken in private session**

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Representations to a decision being taken in Private Session, where indicated must be e-mailed to Democratic_services@sandwell.gov.uk or in writing to Democratic Services, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury, B69 3DP.

The Council defines a Key Decision as:

- (a) an executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which exceeds that included in any approved revenue or capital budget or the limits set out within an approved borrowing or investment strategy and was not the subject of specific grant; or
- (b) an executive decision which is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure, the making of savings or the generation of income amounting to £1m or more;
- (c) an executive decision which is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough

All items listed in the Executive Notice will be listed as a key decision using the above criteria. Business items which are not defined as a Key Decision may be referred to the Cabinet for information and/or decision but will not be listed in the Executive Notice.

Items listed in the notice of Executive Decisions to be taken in Private Session will list the relevant exemption information as related to the Local Government Act 1972 12A as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 set out as follows:-

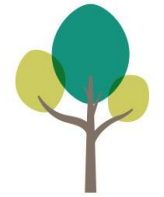
1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information that is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the authority proposes:-
 - to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
 - to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

The Cabinet/Members of the Executive are as follows:- Councillors Ahmed, Carmichael, Hackett, Hartwell, Hughes, Millard, Padda, Piper and Rollins.

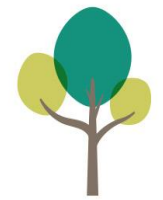
Agenda Item 7

The following items set out key decisions to be taken by the Executive in public session:-

	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
1	<p>Appointment of a non-executive director of Sandwell Children’s Trust</p> <p>Contact Officer: Mandip Chahal</p> <p>Director: Michael Jarrett – Children and Education</p>	<p>Cabinet Children & Education (Cllr Hackett)</p>	15 March 2023	No	Report



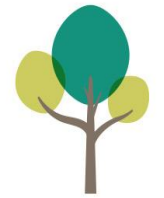
	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
2	<p>Cape Primary School and Uplands Manor Primary School – Making significant changes (prescribed alternations) consultation outcome; reduction in Pupil Admission Number</p> <p>Contact Officer: Rachel Hill and Sharon Woodward</p> <p>Director: Michael Jarrett – Children and Education</p>	<p>Cabinet – Children and Education (Cllr Hackett)</p>	<p>15 March 2023</p>		<p>Report by Director of Children and Education</p>



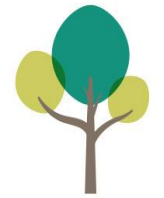
	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
3	<p>Purchase of two Diesel Double Deck buses for Youth Services</p> <p>Contact Officer: Dawn Maleki/James Darby</p> <p>Director: Michael Jarrett, Director of Children and Education</p>	<p>Cabinet Member – Children and Education (Cllr Hackett)</p>	<p>March 2023</p>		<p>Report by Director of Children and Education</p>
4	<p>Community Hubs</p> <p>Contact Officer: Director of Business Strategy</p>	<p>Cabinet - Communities (Cllr Millard)</p>	<p>15 March 2023</p>		



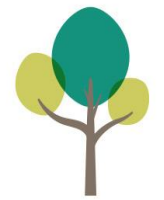
	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
5	<p>Trees Strategy and Policy</p> <p>Contact Officer: Matthew Huggins</p> <p>Director – Borough Economy, Alice Davey</p>	<p>Cabinet - Environment Service (Cllr Ahmed)</p> <p>Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Rollins)</p>	15 March 2023		



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
6	<p>Parking Enforcement Contract Exemption</p> <p>Contact Officer: Fiona McLaughlin, Robin Weare, Mark Bodley</p> <p>Director: Alice Davey, Simone Hines</p>	<p>Cabinet - Environment Service (Cllr Ahmed)</p>	15 March 2023		
7	<p>Parking Charges Policy</p> <p>Contact Officer: Robin Weare</p> <p>Director – Alice Davey, Director of Borough Economy</p>	<p>Cabinet – Environment Services (Cllr Ahmed)</p>	15 March 2023		



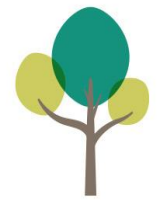
	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
8	<p>Workforce Culture Values and Behaviours</p> <p>Contact Officer: Victoria Lee</p> <p>Director: Neil Cox, Business Strategy and Change</p>	<p>Cabinet - Finance & Resources (Cllr Piper)</p>	<p>15 March 2023</p>	<p>2 February 2022</p>	<p>Report Values and behaviour framework</p>
9	<p>Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24</p> <p>Contact Officer: Simone Hines</p> <p>Director of Finance – Simone Hines</p>	<p>Cabinet - Finance & Resources (Cllr Piper)</p>	<p>15 March 2023</p>		



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
10	Unified Communications – Replacement Contact Centre Telephony Contact Officer: Helen Green Director: Tony McGovern	Cabinet - Finance & Resources (Cllr Piper)	15 March 2023		Cabinet Report
11	Commercial Strategy Contact Officer: Simone Hines Director: Simone Hines, Director of Finance	Cabinet - Finance & Resources (Cllr Piper)	15 March 2023		



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
12	<p>Levelling Up Fund Local Authority Memorandum of Understanding, Grant Determination Letter & Assurance Framework</p> <p>Contact Officer: Gemma Ryan</p> <p>Director: Tony McGovern, Director of Regeneration and Growth</p>	<p>Cabinet – Leisure and Tourism (Cllr Rollins)</p>	15 March 2023		



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
13	<p>Preparation of a Compulsory Purchase Order report to support retail acquisitions in West Bromwich Town Centre</p> <p>Contact Officer: Alexander Oxley</p> <p>Director: Tony McGovern, Director of Regeneration and Growth</p>	<p>Cabinet - Regeneration & Growth (Cllr Hughes)</p>	15 March 2023		



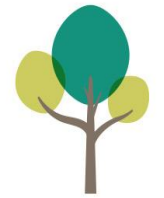
	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
14	<p>Demolition Framework 2023-2027 procurement</p> <p>Contact Officer. Mark Drake</p> <p>Director: Tony McGovern - Regeneration and Growth</p>	<p>Cabinet - Regeneration & Growth (Cllr Hughes)</p>	15 March 2023		



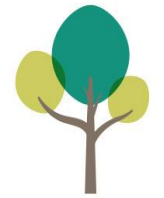
	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
15	<p>The Future Use of Smethwick Swimming Centre</p> <p>Contact Officer: Hayley Insley/ Clinton Felicio</p> <p>Director: Tony McGovern - Regeneration and Growth</p>	<p>Cabinet - Regeneration & Growth (Cllr Hughes)</p>	15 March 2023		



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
16	<p>The Future Use of Langley Swimming Centre</p> <p>Contact Officer: Hayley Insley/ Clinton Felicio</p> <p>Director: Tony McGovern - Regeneration and Growth</p>	<p>Cabinet - Regeneration & Growth (Cllr Hughes)</p>	15 March 2023		



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
17	<p>Friar Park Urban Village Masterplan and Procurement Strategy</p> <p>Contact Officer: Tammy Stokes</p> <p>Director: Tony McGovern - Regeneration and Growth</p>	<p>Cabinet - Regeneration & Growth (Cllr Hughes)</p>	<p>15 March 2023</p>		

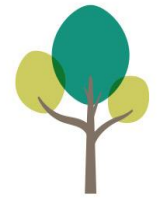


	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
18	<p>Feasibility of establishing a Council owned Housing company</p> <p>Contact Officer: Alan Martin</p> <p>Director: Tony McGovern, Director of Regeneration and Growth</p>	<p>Cabinet - Regeneration & Growth (Cllr Hughes)</p>	15 March 2023		Report



The following items set out key decisions to be taken by the Executive in private session:-

Title/Subject	Cabinet Portfolio Area	Decision Date	Reason for Exemption	List of documents to be considered



Work Programme 2022/23 Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

Meeting Date	Item	Links with Strategic Aims	Notes (Director Lead)
12 January 2023	Q2 Performance Reporting		Sarah Sprung
	Qtr 2 Budget Monitoring 2022/23		Simone Hines/Rebecca Maher
	Cost of living report		Simone/Leadership
2 February 2023	Update on review of Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, including the implication on SEND transport and how social care implications will be incorporated into future contracts (Deferred to March)		Simone Hines/Michael Jarrett

	Values and Behaviour pre-scrutiny before March Cabinet		Debbie Sant, Kim, Victoria Lee
	Resident engagement and panel – how are the views of the vast majority of residents in Sandwell being captured, from the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion perspective, how does the Council consult and engage with residents		Sarah Sprung
01 March 2023	Improvement Plan Update		Kate Ashley/Rebecca Jenkins
	Q3 Budget Report		Rebecca Maher

29 March 2023	Q3 performance reporting		Sarah Sprung
	Update on review of Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, including the implication on SEND transport and how social care implications will be incorporated into future contracts (Deferred to March)		Simone Hines/Michael Jarrett

Items to be scheduled

Arrange 2 x additional meetings of SMB to consider the progress against Corporate Improvement Plan

Review the debt recovery process the Council undertakes including the use of enforcement agencies and their charges – Simone Hines

Income and expenditure for assets the council owns - Tony McGovern/Simone Hines

Joint session with Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board on the implications of charges and payments for adult social care and any ongoing pressure on budgets – Simone Hines/Rashpal Bishop

Quarterly budget reports to incorporate whether savings identified can be achieved – Simone Hines

Regular updates on Scrutiny Review – Surjit Tour/Suky Suthi-Nagra

Budget pressures in by Children's Services.

Financial analysis for the Brandhall site

Upgrading of technology in Committee Rooms to facilitate livestreaming

Scrutiny Review
<p>Customer journey, how people access the building, customer portal, My Cllr Portal – Neil Cox and other Directors as appropriate (afternoon session – presentation, visit to see contact centre) Draft scope for afternoon Wfh separate session – cost to cl or savings, money towards bills vs cost of fuel (scope it out) Neil Cox, Victoria Lee</p>

Reporting dates for Improvement Plan

Monitoring Period	Cabinet
August-October 22	7 December
November 22-January 23	15 March 23 (TBC)
February – April 23	June 23
May-July 23	Sept 23
August – October 23	Dec 23

2023/24 Item

Town Twinning – Surjit Tour