

## Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

**13 October 2022**

<b>Subject:</b>	Performance Management Framework – Q1 Monitoring
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Business Strategy and Change, Neil Cox
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Kate Ashley – Strategic Lead: Service Improvement Jane Alexander – Senior Lead: Service Improvement Rebecca Jenkins – Senior Lead: Service Improvement Sarah Sprung – Senior Lead: Service Improvement Narinder Phagura – Business Partner Audit Services

### 1. Recommendations







- 1.1 That the Board note progress on the further development of the Corporate Performance Management Framework, note the Q1 monitoring reports, and note the Strategic Risk Register (SRR).

### 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Council approved a corporate Performance Management Framework (PMF) on 12 April 2022, to address the recommendations of the Governance Value for Money Review by Grant Thornton and as a key element of the Council's Improvement Plan.
- 2.2 Since April, the corporate PMF has been further refined, built into business processes and performance monitoring information has been gathered for Q1 of 2022/23.



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

	The proposed corporate PMF includes measures under all strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan to monitor progress in these key areas. The PMF also includes elements that measure the council's use of its resources to ensure delivery of the strategic objectives.
	
	The SRR details the key strategic risks that need to be managed to ensure that they do not negatively impact on the successful delivery of the Corporate Plan objectives.
	
	
	

### 4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 The updated Improvement Plan was approved by Council in June 2022. In regard to progressing the PMF, commitment was given to the following actions:

- Develop and embed a corporate performance management framework that provides Leadership Team and members collective oversight of progress on the Corporate Plan, key operational level intelligence, organisational health and improvement activity;
- Ensure public consultation results are incorporated into performance management framework, including on budget development;
- Build organisational health metrics into performance management framework, including 'pulse' checks on organisation's wellbeing;



- Embed management of key corporate contracts within the performance management framework to ensure oversight of performance and link to the Corporate Plan;
- Build benchmarking of financial and service performance into performance management framework;
- Develop, implement and monitor progress of Directorate and Service level plans to deliver the Corporate Plan;
- Embed regular budget monitoring reporting to Leadership Team and Cabinet within corporate performance management framework; and
- Explore implementation of a corporate performance management system.

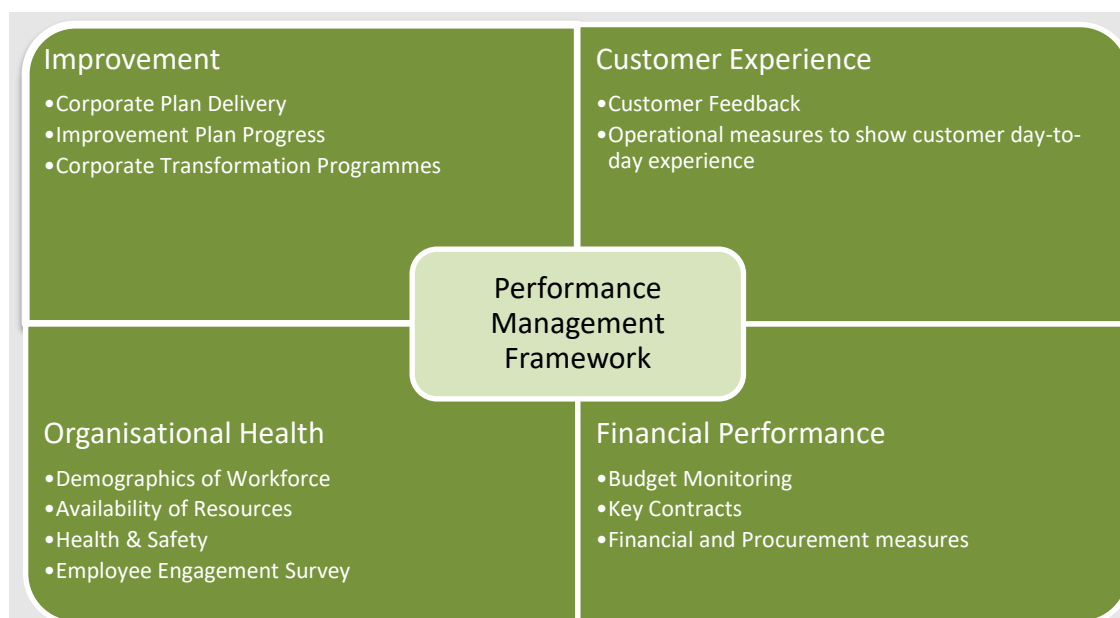
4.2 Good progress has been made against many of the commitments in this list. This report sets out the progress we have made against establishing the Corporate Performance Management Framework and building its monitoring into the Council's business. This report signifies a major step forward in providing consolidated performance and risk reporting for Cabinet. Further reports will be brought to Cabinet on the remaining commitments in due course.

4.3 Progress in relation to the Q1 budget monitoring report, and the Improvement Plan are the subject of further reports on Cabinet's agenda.

## 5 Corporate Performance Management Framework

5.1 There are four key components to the Corporate PMF. Combined, these provide the oversight and intelligence the council needs to determine progress in delivering the Corporate Plan and how the organisation is performing in key areas.





5.2 A suite of performance information was identified and agreed for each element of the PMF and this forms the basis of monitoring progress. The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of progress against each element of the PMF for Q1 of 2022/23. The detailed Q1 reports are included as appendices to this report.

## 6 Financial Performance

### 6.1 Budget Monitoring

6.1.1 The Council's financial position as at the end of June (Q1) is subject to a separate report on this agenda.

6.1.2 In summary, the forecast outturn for the year for the General Fund is an overspend of £2.1m. This is being driven predominantly by inflationary pressures on pay, contracts and supplies and services. The Council budgeted for a 2% pay award but given the current exceptionally high inflation it is anticipated that this will be substantially higher. The Q1 forecast assumes a 5% pay award, which is an increased cost of approximately £6m compared to budget. However, the recent pay offer from the Local Government Employers is a fixed sum for all spinal points which averages 7%. This has not been accepted, but if it is there will be further cost pressures.

6.2 There are also inflationary pressures on non-pay budgets, including utilities costs, exceptionally high social care placement costs and contractual increases.



- 6.3 The additional cost pressures have been mitigated by a review of 2021/22 underspends to identify ongoing savings that can be achieved for 2022/23 as well as a review of vacant posts. There is also some use of earmarked reserves to mitigate pressures, including £2.5m from the Financial Planning reserve which was established as part of the 2022/23 budget process specifically to cover risks associated with increased inflation during the year. Leadership Team are continuing to identify further corrective action that can be taken for the remainder of the year to reduce the forecast overspend.
- 6.3.1 The Housing Revenue Account is currently forecasting an underspend of approximately £800k as although the HRA is also experiencing inflationary pressures, there are a high level of vacancies which are offsetting the increased costs.
- 6.3.2 The other key performance measures for finance relate to the collection of debt, including Council Tax, Business Rates and sundry debts. See Appendix 1 - quarterly finance report. Council Tax collection is slightly behind target, with collection at 28.30% as at Q1 compared to a target of 28.81%. This is a risk area given pressures on household income from cost of living increases. Conversely, Business Rates collection is exceeding target by some margin, due in part to the COVID Additional Relief Fund being administered to qualifying businesses earlier this year.
- 6.4 **Key Contracts - Sandwell Children's Trust**
- 6.4.1 Since April 2018, children's services have been delivered by Sandwell's Children's Trust on behalf of the Council. The contract sum for 2022/23 is £71.7m.
- 6.4.2 Sandwell Children's' Trust delivers the following range of services:
- Children's Social Care
  - Fostering
  - Adoption
  - Targeted Early Help
- 6.4.3 The contract is managed through a well-established governance framework. Grant Thornton, in their Value for Money Governance Review (December 2021) commented that *'There is a robust governance framework in place for the Council and other stakeholders*



*to monitor of the performance of SCT'* and recommended the continuation of these arrangements.

6.4.4 The governance framework involves:

- Monthly Operational Partnership Meetings attended by key SMBC Officers and the Chief Executive of SCT
- Quarterly Strategic Partnership Meetings attended by the Cabinet Member for Children and Education, Director of Children's Services, Chief Executive of Council, Chair of Trust Board, and Chief Executive of SCT
- SCT attendance at Children Services and Education Scrutiny Board twice yearly in relation to performance
- SCT attendance at Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board in February of each year in relation to budget setting.
- Annual Review presented to Cabinet
- Contract Review every 4 years
- Weekly meetings between the Director of Children's Services and Chief Exec (SCT)
- Monthly meetings between the Director of Children's Services, Chief Executive of SCT, Chair of Trust Board and the Cabinet Member for Children and Education.
- Assurance over performance provided through the Department for Education who are an attendee to Operational Partnership Board, Strategic Partnership Board and the Children's Trust Improvement Board.
- Improvement Board chaired by an independent person appointed by the DfE to oversee the implementation of any improvement plan and provide challenge to all partners.

6.4.5 Performance is monitored through a monthly review of 15 KPIs within the contract, and a monthly review of performance within agreed tolerances. These KPIs are currently under review.

6.4.6 The Q1 Performance Report is attached at Appendix 2 and is summarised as follows:

6.4.7 Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers:

- There continue to be significant issues in recruiting and retaining social workers. The Council has agreed a market supplement for all case holding social workers of £2,500 but it is not yet clear if this will be enough to reduce the number of vacancies.





#### 6.4.8 Numbers of Children in Care:

- The total number of children in care, as of June 2022, is 848. This is a slight increase against the March 2022 position when 844 children were in care. The target for March 2023 is 796.
- At the end of March 2022, Sandwell was performing well compared with our statistical neighbours at a rate of 101.7 children in care per 10,000, compared with our statistical neighbour average of 102.6.

#### 6.4.9 Report on the 15 Contract KPIs:

- The current red rated KPIs are:
  - Percentage of Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) in 15 working days
  - Out of the total number of open Single Assessments, the percentage of assessments completed within 45 working days
  - Number of Children in need, including LAC & Children on Child Protection plan who have been unallocated for longer than five working days
- The KPIs that are red as of June 2022 can be directly linked to staffing issues. There are currently a high number of unallocated cases however SCT has a robust process in place to ensure children waiting to be allocated a social worker are safe, with daily meetings to assess risk and visits from duty social workers where required.

#### 6.4.10 Finances:

- The 2022/23 financial performance is being measured against the agreed 2022/23 Contract Sum as approved by Cabinet in February 2022.
- SCT's Q1 monitoring report is showing a deficit of £1.5m against the budget.
- There continue to be financial pressures relating to the cost of placements. SCT has set up a 'resource demand panel' that will be reviewing existing placements, and their cost, and seek to ensure that children are entering care appropriately and to the correct type of placement based on their needs. SCT have commenced the process for 2022/23 to reach a negotiated settlement with West Birmingham and Black Country Clinical Commissioning Group in respect of funding health care needs for several complex young people in residential care.



#### 6.4.11 Contractual Matters

- The review of the Contract (which is due every 4 years) is due to be presented to Cabinet in September 2022.
- An inspection was undertaken by Ofsted, in line with the framework and guidance for inspecting local authority services for children (ILACS), in May 2022, with the report published on 5<sup>th</sup> July. A judgement of 'requires improvement to be good' was achieved. SCT will an action plan considering the findings from Ofsted and the existing improvement plan, this will be shared with the Council. The inspection also commented that *'effective governance arrangements have improved communication and relationships between the Trust and the Council.'*

6.4.12 The focus areas for ongoing improvement activity relating to the contract include a contract Review, and revising the KPI's to reflect that the Trust has now moved to requiring improvement

#### 6.5 Key Contracts - Serco

6.5.1 The Council's contract with Serco was awarded in 2010 and runs until 2035. It has a contract value of £21m per annum.

6.5.2 The contract covers the following services:

- Weekly residual waste kerbside collection for all households in Sandwell (121,000)
- Weekly recycling kerbside collection for all households in Sandwell
- Optional green waste collection service (fortnightly - seasonal)
- Optional food waste collection service (weekly)
- Household Recycling Centre management
- Other recycling offered including batteries
- Street cleansing including fly tip collection, annual cleansing including weed spraying and collection, leaf collection
- Fleet management and renewal - SMBC undertakes the fleet servicing through a contractual arrangement with Serco

6.5.3 The Council has been focusing on improving the overall performance of the Serco Contract and the management of this contract is a component of the Council's Improvement Plan. Key achievements to date have been:

- Agreement of the Contract Monitoring Framework
- Agreement of standardised agendas for contract monitoring meetings





- Implementation of the Waste and Recycling Recovery Plan
- Approval of the Street Cleansing Recovery Plan (which is due for implementation from October)
- Approval of and delivery of Fleet Replacement as per the agreed schedule
- Contract review is underway and on track for September completion

6.5.4 The Q1 performance report attached at Appendix 3 includes detailed information around governance and contract management arrangements, quarterly contract performance, SMBC contract monitoring and penalties issued, HR issues, stakeholder management, improvement focus, and an example of improvement activity that has taken place in relation to gully cleansing.

6.5.5 Key points from the report:

- Governance and contract management arrangements are in place and over this quarter, all contract meetings have taken place.
- regular cross channel communication takes place between the SMBC and Serco teams
- Performance reporting has been significantly improved. Key Performance Indicators have been introduced for areas of concern and annual plans and schedules are being provided for the Council's review
- Analysis of missed assisted bin collections has identified areas for improvement which Serco is now addressing
- Contract deductions are being applied to reflect underachievement against KOTs

6.5.6 The ongoing focus for improvement is across 3 key work streams:

- Street cleansing improvements:
  - Street cleansing draft plan in discussion phase
  - SMBC identifying location in 6 towns for storage of new “street hoover” type machines
  - Serco purchasing initial 3 “street hoovers” at £20,000 each
  - Gully work underway
- Data / reporting / systems
  - Contract management software research undertaken by SMBC
  - Contract management module for Intend procurement system being progressed for integrated contract support



- Whitespace being improved by Serco to support crews uploading images
- Whitespace integration to My Sandwell being reviewed by SMBC to consider upload of annual schedules such as weed spraying and clearance
- Further KPIs being added to monthly reporting
- Monthly scorecard developed for Cabinet Member reporting (and first report made)
- Annual plans contractual compliance

## **7 Organisational Health**

7.1 The majority of organisational health indicators are reported annually and are included at Appendix 4 for completeness.

## **7.2 Composition of the Workforce**

7.2.1 Improving equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) has been a focus for the Council with the Equalities Commission established in 2020 to help drive forward this commitment. The engagement of a new EDI team has now also greatly increased our level of EDI capacity, skills and expertise which serves as a clear demonstration of our commitment to drive the Council's ambitious EDI agenda forward. 11 EDI actions are captured within the Council's Improvement Plan.

7.2.2 Data around the composition of the workforce, as set out in Appendix 4, helps us understand how much the workforce represents Sandwell's composition, and whether groups with protected characteristics are reflected across all tiers of the organisation. A key Improvement Plan EDI actions is to review and update the Workforce Action Plan 2020.

7.2.3 The Council's current focus for improvement around the EDI includes actions to put in place core EDI policies, plans and strategies along with continuing work to embed EDI networks within the Council and deliver on the Equalities Commission Board priorities.

## **7.3 Sickness Absence**

7.3.1 Sickness absence is reported on a quarterly basis to Leadership Team and Directorate Management Teams. A detailed breakdown for Q1 is included at Appendix 5.

7.3.2 In relation to sickness absence performance, Leadership Team agreed a set of actions in July 2022:

- Absence Review Panels to be established for each Directorate



- Directorate-level sickness absence action plans to be compiled
- HR summit to take place in Autumn focusing on a review and detailed analysis of data trends

7.3.3 These actions will be reviewed in Q4 for effectiveness, at which point Leadership Team will review the current target for sickness absence.

#### 7.4 **Employee Engagement Survey**

7.4.1 Between February and April 2022, the Council conducted an Employee Engagement Survey to gain staff feedback on their experiences and perceptions of working for the Council.

7.4.2 61% of the staff responded to the survey, which was in line with the last engagement survey conducted in 2018.

7.4.3 An overall engagement score is calculated based on a series of questions from the survey to determine how well-engaged employees are with the organisation. This is based on research that engaged employees have a huge impact on an organisation's success and tend to be happier both at work and in their own lives. The Engagement score for the 2022 survey was 63%, a 6% drop from 2018 (which occurred through all index questions), and back towards 2017 levels.

7.4.4 Messages from the survey included views from staff that:

- the Council is not harnessing all the strengths of our staff because there is not a culture of inspiring staff to innovate and do things differently
- the visibility and accessibility of Senior Leaders needs to improve
- Council Leaders do not live the Council's values
- customer focus is not improving
- recognition of hard work and dedication needs to improve
- action will not be taken as a result of the survey

7.4.5 Actions to respond to the survey findings have already taken place including:

- placing organisational culture at the heart of our Improvement Plan with detailed staff engagement scheduled to co-produce the desired organisational culture for the Council
- Using a range of internal communication methods to increase the flow of information to and from staff, and increase visibility of Directors



- Directorate Management Teams have received and discussed the survey analysis for their Directorate
- All 2<sup>nd</sup> tier managers (direct-reports to Directors) have received Team survey analysis
- discussions within teams have commenced to aid understanding of the survey results and identifying actions.

7.4.6 Further actions to respond to the findings from the survey are being identified at Corporate level and Directorate level and they will be embedded within the Improvement Plan.

7.4.7 The employee engagement survey will be repeated regularly as a key piece of intelligence and learning.

## 7.5 **Health and Safety**

7.5.1 Overall accountability for health and safety rests with the Chief Executive and the Leadership Team. The current Corporate Health and Safety Policy 2021-2023 sets out the communication and monitoring approach to ensure that health & safety information is considered at the right level.

7.5.2 Quarterly Health and Safety Performance Reports are made to the Leadership Team as part of regular performance conversations. This includes management information around accidents and incidents, proactive tasks undertaken by the Health and Safety Unit (such as audits and TU representative's queries), and an update on training and development.

7.5.3 Each of the nine Directorates receives its own quarterly Health and Safety report which are presented via the appropriate forums (e.g. Directorate JCC / Health and Safety Committee Meeting) for discussion, action and dissemination.

7.5.4 A quarterly Health and Safety Board has recently been established to assist the Chief Executive Officer and Leadership Team in the discharge of their health & safety responsibilities. The purpose of the board is to consider corporate matters affecting the health and safety of council employees, and others affected by the council's activities, through a review of monitoring activities and referrals from employee representatives. The board is chaired by the Director of Business Strategy and Change and involves one member of each Directorate Management Team along with Trade Union representatives, the Head



of Health and Safety. The Chair will report back to Leadership Team after each meeting.

## **8 Improvement – Corporate Plan Delivery**

### **8.1 Progress on Corporate Plan PMF**

8.1.1 Since the approval of the PMF at Council on 12 April 2022, progress has continued in developing the Corporate Plan PMF. There are now 170 measures across the seven strategic outcomes, owned across our nine directorates. Work has taken place with each directorate to further refine measures, to understand the intricacies of the measures and when data can be made available. A summary of the activity that has taken place is set out below:

#### **8.1.2 Achievements April to June 2022**

- Co-ordinators in each directorate appointed
- Meetings have taken place with each directorate to develop indicators and build understanding of reporting cycles and requirements.
- Developed council wide understanding of requirements on performance reporting
- Directorate Co-ordinators Group established
- Development work with Research and Intelligence to progress the option of hosting the PMF through Sandwell Trends using Power BI
- Development and refinement of indicators

8.1.3 Our journey needs to continue to collectively develop a fully functioning performance management culture across the organisation.

8.1.4 The indicators chosen as part of the Corporate Plan PMF include metrics that are available either quarterly, annually, biannually and in some cases termly. This provides a challenge for the first quarterly report as not all the measures are available for this period. With those measures that are available quarterly, reporting for many of them has at least a 3 to 4-week lag following the quarter end. Also, many of the annual or biannual measures are not available until the Autumn. Therefore, the metrics available for this quarter will be partial. As we progress through the monitoring year, data on more measures will become available for reporting.

### **8.2 Progress against the seven strategic outcomes of the Corporate Plan**





8.2.1 To provide assurance in our progress delivering the Corporate Plan each directorate has submitted a return outlining actions that have been taken during Q1 that contribute to Corporate Plan delivery. This intelligence together with those measures that are currently available for the Corporate Plan PMF have been brought together to provide corporate oversight of progress.

8.2.2 Summaries of progress for each of the seven strategic outcomes are set below. Appendix 6 contains a more in-depth overview.

### 8.3 **Best Start in Life for Children and Young People**

8.3.1 The COVID 19 pandemic has had a significant impact on young people nationwide as their education in school was temporarily and intermittently placed on hold. Overall there has been good progress in education and support for young people in Sandwell since the Covid 19 restart. The OFSTED rating of children's services is also an example of this moving out of inadequate for more than a decade to requires improvement to be good. This is further supported by the better than England and Regional average persistent absence score in secondary and special schools.

8.3.2 By working in partnership with partners such as West Midlands Police to tackle youth violence and working with other Black Country LAs on various projects, Sandwell is striving to ensure that every child and young person in Sandwell gets the best start in life.

8.3.3 No actions have been RAG rated red across this strategic outcome.

### 8.4 **People live well and age well**

8.4.1 Overall, under people that live well and age well, there has been progress in terms of putting the building blocks in place to help people to live healthily and independently for longer and many of the key deliverables are on track. For example, the completion of the Health Sandwell Advice and referral service; the draft carers strategy and delivery plan; and the Covid 19 outbreak and contact tracing. There has been some slippage under each theme, but actions are in place to address this.

8.4.2 There are no red RAG rated actions in this strategic outcome.

### 8.5 **Strong Resilient Communities**





- 8.5.1 There has been very positive progress in developing and enhancing our community offer, momentum boosted by the Commonwealth Games but exciting opportunities ahead to grow and develop further. We continue to work collaboratively with key partners in relation to community safety to deliver better outcomes for our residents, updating our policies and taking a more intelligence-led approach to tackling key issues. We have also established improved event governance through the implementation of an online booking system with guidance & decision/ safety thresholds
- 8.5.2 There is one area where a red RAG rating has been applied, this relates to bringing together the governance arrangements and budgets for the voluntary sector grants and aligning this work to corporate objectives. There are also several areas where an amber rating has been applied, generally these relate to areas where we are trying to secure funding, progress constrained by focus on the Commonwealth Games or where we have had to wait to recruit suitable officers to a particular position.
- 8.6 **Quality Homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods**
- 8.6.1 Overall there has been good progress in developing quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods with many corporate plan actions being on track. For example, significant progress has been made in implementing the new operating model for preventing homelessness.
- 8.6.2 There has been some slippage in regard to developing the options paper for the upgrade of Walker Grange and there is one action that has been RAG rated red where there is significant slippage and uncertainty in relation to delivery of the Black Country Plan.
- 8.7 **A Strong Inclusive Economy**
- 8.7.1 We are making good progress in developing an inclusive economy across Sandwell and in maximising funding opportunities and local investment. Whilst we have secured funding for some activity we await the outcome of bids submitted to determine further progress. The steps taken during Q1 will be built upon over the rest of the year and drive further progress in this area.
- 8.7.2 There is one action that has been RAG rated red in this Strategic Outcome this relates to the development of a borough plan that feeds into the Black Country Plan.



## 8.8 **A Connected Accessible Sandwell**

- 8.8.1 Overall there has been good progress on key infrastructure projects such as Birchley Island and Blackheath Interchange which are at various stages of delivery. Securing funding for 37 on-street residential charge points which are due for delivery this year shows the strides Sandwell is making in becoming more connected and accessible.
- 8.8.2 There has been some slippage on projects due to recruitment difficulties, priority work for the Commonwealth Games and also budget pressures related to inflation. If not addressed these slippages can cause further issues/delays for the projects.
- 8.8.3 There is one action that has been RAG rated red, this relates to highway maintenance and is due to budget pressures as a result of inflation.

## 8.9 **One Council, One Team**

- 8.9.1 There has been good progress on access to services with the corporate access strategy; my Sandwell online; colocation with partners and digital inclusion strategy. Also, some progress with organisational development workforce planning toolkit; the wellbeing provision has continued to be developed with the occupational health suite relocated to the council house and a wellbeing specialist post created.
- 8.9.2 There has been progress on making use of resources with a corporate commercial strategy being finalised in October and progress with commissioning the residents' survey but a delay on the residents' panel. With systems and governance, we now have a corporate PMF agreed and have furthered the council organisation structure with a stable leadership.
- 8.9.3 There are three actions that have been RAG rated red within this strategic outcome, these relate to the Council's Storage Area Network and the Corporate Data Strategy and delivery of income generation from chargeable garden waste.

## 8.10 **Progress against the four Fairer Sandwell Principles**





8.10.1 The Fairer Sandwell principles were established in the refreshed corporate plan to ensure we are addressing equality in everything we do. These principles drive how we do things as a council and run through all the activities in the plan. Appendix 7 sets out the same Q1 monitoring information against the four Fairer Sandwell principles and is summarised below.

## 8.11 Local Investment

8.11.1 Much of the council's activity, and particularly regeneration activity, contributes to building local investment. Good progress has been made in drawing funding into Sandwell.

8.11.2 The Town Fund Investment Plans in West Bromwich, Smethwick and Rowley Regis are complete, securing £67.5m towns deal funding. All 16 Towns Fund projects have commenced the delivery stage, with one project (the Digital Den in Carters Green, West Bromwich), due to be completed in August 2022. Key transport infrastructure projects are at various stages of delivery and this will be reported in more detail in Q2

8.11.3 In addition, the council have also submitted four bids totalling circa £88m to the Government Levelling Up Fund. It is anticipated that a decision from Government will be received during the autumn and if successful, Sandwell will receive funds to build a new Leisure Centre for Haden Hill; build a new Youth Hub in West Bromwich Town Centre,



build new homes in Tipton Town Centre, and new homes in the Grove Lane area of Smethwick.

8.11.4 In terms of securing more local spend, funding has been secured for three years for the Anchor Network coordinator. The Anchor Network continues to make good progress on its identified priorities. The review of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules is on track, aiming to make it easier for suppliers to do business with the Council.

8.11.5 Progress has been constrained to deliver the £16m capital programme of improvements to the highway network (amber risk) due to recruitment difficulties and the recent priority for the Commonwealth Games.

8.11.6 Highway infrastructure repairs prioritised in red risk condition is itself a red risk due to forecasted budget pressures associated with inflation and escalating red risk condition therefore overspend will be necessary to meet responsibilities of the Local Highway Authority.

## 8.12 **Doing things with the community**

8.12.1 The Council has committed itself in the corporate plan to engaging with and listening to residents in a more meaningful way because we know that better decisions and better services will result if we do things together with the community. The council has made some progress but recognises this a key area for development and more progress is needed.

8.12.2 In terms of progress in Q1, the council is increasing its engagement with tenants through the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group which is fully operational, and training is being rolled out to tenant volunteers.

8.12.3 The vaccination rollout and contact tracing is complete, showing great success in working with and engaging community and faith groups. There has been increased investment of public health funds into community voluntary and faith sector grants and the Healthy Sandwell advice and referral service is up and running.

8.12.4 A programme of cultural and event activities was developed alongside the Commonwealth Games to maximise community engagement.

## 8.13 **Green in everything we do**



- 8.13.1 The Council is making progress in building green considerations into its business and addressing the enormous task of carbon reduction.
- 8.13.2 Various projects have been initiated to reduce carbon emissions both in the council's estate and wider borough – including solar panels and heat pumps in council buildings, electrification of our fleet vehicles and working with community groups to fund climate related projects.
- 8.13.3 A Climate Change Programme Board has been established of senior officers across the council and climate change considerations are to be included on Cabinet report templates. Also, carbon literacy training is on track and a provider in place to commence after summer period.
- 8.13.4 The review of the council's Social Value policy as part of contract procedure rules is on track, incorporating sustainability considerations into the contract process.
- 8.13.5 To address carbon reduction in the borough, walking and cycling infrastructure is in various stages of delivery throughout the borough and overall progress is on track. West Midlands Metro Extension Phase 1 Wednesbury to Dudley is under construction and Sprint Phase 1 A34 is at Detailed Design Stage. Also, 37 on-street residential charge points are on track to be delivered in 2022 with funding secured.

8.14 **No one is left behind**

- 8.14.1 Many of the council's activities aim to support the most vulnerable or in need in Sandwell's community. Services across the council are addressing inequality in delivering the corporate plan in a variety of ways.
- 8.14.2 Children's Services activity to improve communication and language is on track, working with National Literacy Trust to launch First Words Together across the Black Country, targeting children up to 2 years old and Wellcomm screening of children from 18 months is now included in the speech language and communication pathway. The transition to Barnardo's operating the Children's Centres has also been successful.
- 8.14.3 In regard to care for vulnerable adults, Willow Gardens is fully open operationally and filling current voids and Harvest View, the new Integrated Health and Care site has a planned start of the service from 1 November with phased implementation after that. The Walker Grange





plan to upgrade and develop the dementia offer is currently showing some slippage in developing the options paper.

- 8.14.4 The Domestic Abuse Strategy 21-24 is adopted and the Implementation Plan is being monitored via the Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership. The new Homelessness Strategy has also been adopted with a focus on increasing prevention, early intervention and rapid rehousing. Services have been commissioned in Q1 to deliver resettlement support to asylum seekers and refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine.
- 8.14.5 The total monetary value of benefits awarded, assisted by the Welfare Rights Service, is £3,817,802. These monetary gains are below target level as the service has been instrumental in supporting residents with energy grant payment and enquiries. For this reason, the total number of people assisted this quarter is above target at 3,162.

## **9 Improvement Plan**

- 9.1 The Council's Improvement Plan was agreed in June 2022 and responds to the Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and the findings of three external reviews.
- 9.2 The Improvement Plan focuses on the governance arrangements of the council and areas of improvement across the organisation. The deliverables set out in the 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. 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.
- 9.3 Progress of the Improvement Plan is monitored monthly by Directors and Cabinet Members and is reported to Cabinet Quarterly. The next report to Cabinet will be made alongside this Q1 performance report.
- 9.4 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Scrutiny Committees will be used for maintaining oversight of the actions and implementation of the Improvement Plan. Audit & Risk Assurance Committee received an introduction to the Improvement Plan and the Improvement Plan Risk Register in June 2022 to support the committee's work programming. The Improvement Plan Risk Register and overall progress will be





reported to the Audit & Risk Assurance Committee regularly. The next report will be made on 22 September 2022.

- 9.5 Scrutiny Boards have developed their work programmes. Budget & Corporate Management Scrutiny Board has included several elements of the Improvement Plan on their work programme as well as regular reports on overall progress. The first report to Budget & Corporate Management Scrutiny Board will be made on 14 September 2022.
- 9.6 External assurance will continue to play a part in our improvement journey. Grant Thornton, CIPFA and the LGA have been invited back in Autumn 2022 to monitor our progress in addressing the recommendations in their reviews.

## **10 Corporate Transformation**

- 10.1 An Assistant Director for Transformation has recently commenced their appointment. Their initial focus is on a review of all transformation activity across the Council, and bringing forward proposals for a Corporate Transformation Programme, with the required governance and resources to ensure its delivery.

## **11 Strategic Risk Register**

- 11.1 Effective risk management is a key element of good corporate governance, as noted in the council's [Code of Corporate Governance](#), and is essential to the overall performance of the council in meeting its corporate plan objectives. Good risk management will ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively and that assets and resources are protected against risk in the most efficient way.
- 11.2 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) receive the Council's Strategic Risk Register on a regular basis for review and comment. The SRR noted at appendix 8 of this report is yet to be presented to the ARAC (and is due on 29 September) for the Committee's comment. Therefore, any comments made by the ARAC at its meeting on 29 September will be reported to a future Cabinet meeting.
- 11.3 The role of the ARAC is to provide assurance to the Council that it has a system of governance, risk management and internal control in place and that the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements continue to inform decision making



- 11.4 The Strategic Risk Register as at August 2022 is attached at appendix 8. The Strategic risk register does not include all of the risks faced by the Council. Other risks are captured within directorate, programme and project risk registers in line with the Council's risk management framework.
- 11.5 The review and assessment of each strategic risk, is discussed with the risk owners and discussed with the Leadership Team and Cabinet Members.

## **12 Customer Experience**

- 12.1 The focus on the Council's approach to Customer Access has changed greatly as a result of both budget pressures and the impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic. There has been a targeted shift away from traditional face to face contact and a drive to support people to be able to access more and more Council services on line. A new Operating Model to match this new approach was agreed and implemented commencing Summer 2021.
- 12.2 Customer feedback from a variety of sources including Elected Member feedback, feedback from One Stop Shop customers, complaints, and customer surveys suggests that there remains some way to go for the Council to meet customer expectations.
- 12.3 A number of improvements have been made over the past 12 months to improve customer experience. This includes:
- The wait times, abandonment rate and overall performance at the Corporate Contact Centre has seen a marked improvement. A rolling recruitment campaign supported by HR has been instrumental in improving performance as this has ensured adequate staffing resource has been maintained.
  - The One Stop Shop in Oldbury has re-opened and is providing face to face support for those more vulnerable or digitally excluded customers.
  - The avoidable contact project has been re-started, this project now includes Customer Service Advisors (CSA) as key representatives, and they are highlighting where current issues are causing avoidable contact. Team Leaders and other relevant Officers are then looking at potential solutions. An example of this is related to Repairs calls. Following CSA feedback, a small survey was added to the end of all repairs calls to capture Customer feedback so that



changes to process could be targeted to give more customers confidence to book their repairs on-line.

- Closer working relationships across Council departments have been formed to improve the information provided to front line services
- Performance Reporting: Establishing monthly reporting of corporate Customer Experience performance to provide senior officers and Leadership Team with regular intelligence on how 'front door' services are performing; and Making operational reporting available to officers to support monitoring and improvement in key areas such as the handling of complaints and councillor enquiries
- Development and launch of the MySandwell app to enhance the experience of digital service users
- Steps taken to improve compliance in relation to requests for information (including Freedom of Information (FOI), Environmental Information Requests (EIR) and Subject Access Requests (SARs)):
  - Improved reporting of performance (to the Council's Information Governance Board, to Directors and Service Managers at Directorate Management Teams (DMTs), and to Leadership Team)
  - Case Workers in the Governance Team have been allocated to Directorates to monitor requests and provide support to officers.
  - Training has been provided to officers who deal with FOIs, EIRs and SARs and this is also available via the Information Governance intranet page.
  - Council wide drive to clear the backlog of FOI requests, which was prompted by an enquiry from the Information Commissioners Office.

12.4 The Q1 Customer Experience performance report is attached in appendix 9 and summarised below.

## 12.5 Channel Shift

12.5.1 In terms of channel shift (the ways that customers choose to contact the council), the % contact by face to face has increased from the year end position (from 2.12% to 4.03%) and there has been a reduction in telephone and digital contact. The amount of face to face contact over this quarter represents nearly half of all the face to face contact received last year.

## 12.6 Contact Centre Performance

12.6.1 The Council operates three contact centres. Performance over Q1 was as follows:



- The Adults Social Care Contact Centre has been operating in line with targets set with a slight reduction in performance from the previous quarter in the abandonment rate (from 1.55% to 1.57%) however this remains within the quarterly target of 5% and average wait measure (from 30 seconds to 31 seconds)
- The Revenues and Benefits Contact Centre has experienced reduced performance across all measures this quarter: abandonment rate of 19.2% was above the quarterly target of 15% and average wait time was 14 minutes. This has been due to the re-introduction of Council Tax recovery and the administration of the energy rebate along with staff vacancies. The level of knowledge required means that temporary staff cannot be used to fill these roles. There is on-going continued development our online services so those customers able to use digital channels have more freedom to do so.
- The Corporate Contact Centre, which receives general enquiries, housing and children's safeguarding calls, has experience improved performance since the year end across all measures and has exceeded or is in line with targets. The abandonment rate has improved from 16.96% to 5.96% and the average wait measure has improved from over 6 mins to 2 minutes 30 seconds.

## 12.7 Information Requests

12.7.1 The number of Subject Access Requests (SARs) received is broadly in line with the quarterly average for last year. Compliance against timescales for responding is significantly below the 95% target at 56% for Q1.

12.7.2 The number of FOIs received is higher than the quarterly average for last year. The compliance against the statutory timescales for responding is significantly below 95% target at 62% for Q1. Work has recently concluded to manage a backlog of FOIs within the system which have impacted on our performance to respond within statutory timescales. This will allow officers to focus on keeping on top of incoming requests. Other steps are being taken to bring performance in line with the target as set out in paragraph 11.3. Together with the clearance of the backlog, it is expected that these actions will start to improve performance and ensure that a backlog does not build up again in future.

## 12.8 Customer Feedback



- 12.8.1 There is a higher volume of complaints and stage 1 complaints upheld in Q1 compared to the quarterly average (based on year-end figures). Investigation is taking place to understand the reasons behind this increase.
- 12.8.2 The number of MP enquiries received this quarter is higher than the quarterly average for last year. Positive feedback has been received on the new MP process that was implemented last year and the quality of responses that are now being received.
- 12.8.3 The number of compliments received is higher than the quarterly average for last year.
- 12.8.4 The current areas of focus for improvement are:
- Implementation of a new telephony system leading to improved customer service experience and more holistic reporting
  - Review of the current Operating Model, the support provided to customers in relation to the Revenue & Benefits service provided at the One Stop Shop and Community Hub model
  - Reviewing the functions and team structure within the Customer Feedback Team to allow the team to focus more on 'lessons learnt'
  - Working with teams across the Council to ensure that Customer is at the heart of all we do, and that all back-office staff are as focused on ensuring a positive customer experience as front facing staff. This forms a fundamental part of the organisational culture theme of the Council's Improvement Plan
  - Development of a Customer Access Strategy to set key objectives, a clear direction of travel and ensure that feedback from elected members and residents is being used
  - Recruitment to vacancies in the Revenues and Benefits Contact Centre
  - Making access to Revenues and Benefits online forms easier without the need to set up an account in MySandwell to encourage more Customers to use the online services.
  - Implement recent changes to the Blue Badge Application process in the Adult Social Care Contact Centre, which encourages online applications and online payments in the first instance.
  - Focused reviews of high demand MySandwell services to ensure they are as efficient and customer centred as possible
  - Continued focus on FOI/EIR compliance. This will include a review of common FOI/EIR requests (e.g. information about potholes) with a view to publishing information on a regular basis. This is intended





to reduce the number of requests received and/or make responses quicker and easier to respond to.

### 13 Alternative Options

- 13.1 The Directions issued by the Secretary of State, including the requirement to have a performance management framework in place, are a statutory requirement and the council has a legal obligation to respond appropriately. Failure to do so would likely result in further intervention measures.
- 13.2 The council had various options on what type of performance management framework to establish. Our approach has been developed through understanding the needs of the organisation and drawing on best practice from other local authorities. As we continue our improvement journey, the PMF will evolve to meet our changing requirements.

### 14 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	There are no direct financial implications to this report.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	A corporate performance management framework was identified as a key gap in the council's governance arrangements by Grant Thornton in 2021. The establishment of the corporate performance management framework was a key action in the council's Improvement Plan agreed by Council in January 2022 and updated in June 2022. The PMF will enable officer and political leadership to improve oversight and corporate grip of the council's performance.
<b>Risk:</b>	Should the council not implement a robust performance management framework, then it will not have the corporate oversight and intelligence to inform decision making and effectively manage risks to achieving service delivery and the strategic objectives identified in the Corporate Plan. These risks and the associated mitigations are noted in the SRR.





	The corporate performance management framework is a key mechanism to report progress and performance to the Government appointed Commissioners.
<b>Equality:</b>	Equality measures are included in the PMF, including the Organisational Health workforce indicators and the progress of the Corporate Plan.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The measures to track progress of the Corporate Plan include a series of health and wellbeing indicators. This enables the council's leadership to see at a high level the direction of travel of the borough's health and wellbeing and seek to continue good practice or identify mitigating actions to address issues.
<b>Social Value</b>	Measures in the PMF include looking at percentage of spend in the local area.

## 15 Appendices

1. Finance Q1 Performance Report
2. Sandwell Children's Trust Q1 Performance Report
3. Serco Q1 Performance Report
4. Organisational Health Annual Report 2021-2022
5. Sickness Absence Q1 Report
6. Corporate Plan Q1 Monitoring Report
7. Progress against Fairer Sandwell principles
8. Strategic Risk Register, August 2022
9. Customer Experience Q1 Performance Report

## 16 Background papers

- 16.1 Report to Council 21 April 2022:
- [Performance Management Framework for the Council](#)
  - [Appendix 1-3 – Organisational Health, Customer Experience and Finance & Contract Measures](#)
  - [Appendix 4 – Corporate Plan PMF](#)



