

Report to Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board

29 November 2022

Subject:	Improvement Plan Progress
Director:	Managing Director Kim Bromley-Derry
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 3 November.
- 1.2. That any recommendations / comments are reported to Cabinet at their meeting on 7 December for their consideration
- 1.3. 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 second quarterly 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 will 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 November. Any recommendations or comments Audit and Risk Assurance Committee wish to make to Cabinet can be presented for Cabinet's consideration on 7 December 2022.
- 2.4 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 The council's external auditors Grant Thornton conducted a Value for Money Review into the council's governance arrangements over the period August to October 2021 and reported their findings of this review to Full Council in January 2022. In response, Council approved a Governance Improvement Plan in January 2022 to address the recommendations made by Grant Thornton and the proposed reporting mechanisms to ensure progress is managed effectively.

4.1.2 Since the approval of the Governance Improvement Plan findings were received from the CIPFA financial management review, LGA Corporate Peer Challenge along with the Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

4.1.3 A single Improvement Plan was agreed by Council on 7 June 2022 which addresses the recommendations from all the external reviews and the Statutory Directions. The Improvement Plan provides the organisation with a clear direction for sustainable improvement under six



thematic headings. The single Improvement Plan has superseded the Governance Improvement Plan.

4.1.4 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.

4.1.5 This report is the second quarterly update to scrutiny on overall progress of the Improvement Plan.

4.2 Improvement Plan Progress

4.2.1 Over this quarter, significant progress has been made to deliver the actions within the Improvement Plan. This includes the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive and a decision taken by Council in relation to a 4-yearly election cycle. Both of which were key requirements of the Government's Statutory Directions.

4.2.2 A comprehensive monitoring tool is in place to monitor progress of the Improvement Plan. This tool includes both a risk rating for each main action within the Improvement Plan and a progress status rating for all actions. The Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool is included at Appendix 1. 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.

4.2.3 Progress against each theme of Improvement Plan is summarised within Appendix 2. This includes an overall status rating, a description of workstream progress, commentary on progress against milestones and achievements. Along with an outline of key achievements this quarter, the theme ratings and a summary of any issues is provided below.

4.2.4 Organisational Culture Theme

4.2.4.1.1 Achievements:

- Recruitment of a permanent Chief Executive



- Staff engagement carried out to determine the cultural values and behaviours of the council.
- Multiple training sessions delivered to Officers and Members focusing on Corporate Governance training and the Officer and Member relationship. These will continue into next quarter
- Actions to respond to the Employee Engagement Survey embedded in the Improvement Plan and Directorate-level action plans
- Internal communications methods such as Director live events and all staff briefings now more established and being used to share information and reinforce key messages

4.2.4.1.2 Theme Status Rating Green – Progress is being made across all workstreams. Slippage is being experienced in a couple of areas that are classed as medium risk one of which is due to the impact of the by-election.

- 4.2.4.1.3 Organisational Culture Progress Issues - Areas with slippage are:
- **Organisational Development Strategy and Plan** (action being redefined as Workforce Strategy). Action is dependent on the outcomes of the culture listening groups which will conclude in October. Dates reprofiled through change control.
 - **Design and deliver Corporate Governance Training for Members:** Effective decision-making training- (delay due to change of Council date due to by-election). Training will commence following November Council.

4.2.5 Corporate Oversight Theme

4.2.5.1.1 Achievements

- Support provider is place for the Oracle Fusion project and implementation underway
- Monitoring and oversight of the Council's improvement has become more established - second quarterly report prepared and work commenced to embed and sustain key actions into business as usual
- Quarter 1 Performance Management Report delivered, and preparations are well underway for the Q2 report.



- Corporate Transformation Approach agreed

4.2.5.1.2 Theme Status Rating: Green. Progress is being made across all workstreams.

4.2.5.1.3 One action has a red risk rating in this theme. This relates to **Performance Management Framework**. All sub-actions have been completed. The Q1 report was presented to Cabinet, Scrutiny and an all-Member Briefing during this quarter. Preparations are on track for Q2 report to be presented to Cabinet in December.

4.2.6 Strategic Direction Theme

4.2.6.1.1 Achievements

- Approval of the Corporate Parenting Strategy
- preparations for reporting to Cabinet on the Corporate Asset Management Strategy, Equality Policy, Medium Term Financial Plan and the progress of the Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline.
- Customer Journey Programme established and included within the Improvement Plan to reflect this priority focus
- Residents' Survey and consultation on the budget taken place and insight is being used to inform the Medium-Term Financial Plan and business planning.

4.2.6.1.2 Theme Status Rating: Red. Progress is being made, however some delays and specific issues have emerged around the EDI agenda, which along with the forthcoming decision to adopt the LGA equalities framework review are impacting on the ability to deliver on the actions to the original timescales. There has also been slippage in the delivery of the commercial strategy.

4.2.6.1.3 In relation to the EDI Agenda, there are 2 actions with a red risk rating (significant slippage/issues), and 3 with an amber risk rating (medium slippage/issues):

- **Review of council EDI decision making process** – this focused on the EIA Review which has been completed and the updated EIA form and guidance is being uploaded onto the intranet.
- **Approval of EDI strategy** - Slippage is due to the proposal to adopt the LGA Equalities Framework which requires a longer delivery time. This is referenced in the report going to Cabinet



seeking approval of the equalities policy – but also seek approval of using the LGA Equalities Framework. Timescales for this action have been reprofiled through October's change control.

- **Continue to embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) staff networks** – Ongoing work – some networks are functioning better than others.
- **Continue to deliver on Equalities Commission Board priorities.** EDI legacy issues are resurfacing which is impacting on operation of staff networks and delivery on Equalities Commission Board priorities. Report due to Leadership Team in coming weeks. All these actions will be swept up as part of the LGA Equalities Framework.
- **Equality Policy approved-** Scheduled for November 22 (delay due to by election).

4.2.6.1.4 There has been a medium level of slippage in relation to the **Development and Implementation of the Commercial Strategy.** A Leadership Team discussion around the draft strategy took place in early November and will be presented to Cabinet in early 2023. The timescales have been agreed to be reprofiled through October's change control.

4.2.7 Decision Making Theme

4.2.7.1.1 Achievements

- Consultation completed, and decision taken in relation to the 4-yearly election cycle
- Key decisions taken around changes to the constitution with final changes due to be considered by Council in December.
- Scrutiny Review completed and agreement from Council to adopt changes.
- Scrutiny and Audit continuing to focus on their improvement

4.2.7.1.2 Theme Status Rating: Green. All areas progressing with some medium slippage which are predominantly due to delays as a result of the by-election.

4.2.7.1.3 In relation to the **In-depth review and revision to Corporate Governance Documents** and the **Refresh of decision making-arrangements including the role of Scrutiny** there has been



medium slippage caused due to delays associated with the by-election. In November, Council approved the Scheme of Delegations and the Scrutiny Review. Training in effective decision-making will commence from November linked to the Council approvals.

4.2.7.1.4 Slippage has also been experienced relating to the **revised Financial Regulations**. Preparations are being made to report to December Council. As the key changes to financial regulations were approved in July, the risk and impact of the slippage of the outstanding components is very low. Timescales were agreed to be reprofiled through October's change control.

4.2.7.1.5 The revision of the **Council Procedure Rules** has experienced significant slippage due to omission from change control in July which would have altered the delivery timetable. The Council Procedure Rules were approved by Council in November.

4.2.8 Procurement and Commercial Theme

4.2.8.1.1 Achievements

- Delivery of a new framework for SEND Transport that addresses concerns raised around resilience and value for money.
- Continued focus on contract management (Serco, SCT, SLT) and contract performance embedded in the Performance Management Framework for quarterly reporting.
- Approval of the Street Cleansing Recovery Plan
- Decision made around the future delivery of leisure services and a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) is in the process of being established
- Work has continued this quarter around Lion Farm and the matter is being progressed through an Expert Determination process.

4.2.8.1.2 Theme Status Rating: Green. Progress is being made across all workstreams

4.2.8.1.3 The **Lion Farm Options Agreement** is experiencing medium slippage/issues. This is due to the delivery timescales for the



Expert Determination process being decided by a third party. Papers have been submitted to the external party that will conduct the expert determination and the process commenced.

- 4.2.8.1.4 The **Corporate Performance Management System** is green risk rated, but is currently experiencing a significant level of slippage. This has not progressed past soft market testing due to project management capacity. A further demonstration with another provider is taking place in November. The size and scale of system will be considered to scope of project, and project management capacity reviewed.

4.2.9 Partnerships and Relationships Theme

4.2.9.1.1 Achievements

- Delivery of the Early Help and Corporate Parenting Strategies has continued across partners.
- Work has progressed to agree the KPI suite as part of the SCT contract and Cabinet decision was taken not to invoke the contract break clause.
- Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been approved by partners
- Deep-dives are taking place and are informing the priorities of the SHCP Board and Integrated Care Board.
- Attendance and participation with key regional and sub-regional groups (including WMCA, ABCA, and BCLEP) has continued
- Review of VCS Grants is complete and work has commenced to develop the VCS Strategy.

- 4.2.9.1.2 Theme Status Rating: Amber. Progress is being made across workstreams with some slippage in relation to the SCT KPI review, and work around the transition from children's to adult's services.

- 4.2.9.1.3 In relation to the **Sandwell Children's Trust KPI Suite** - this is now due to be complete December 2022 for implementation in April 2023. The dates have been reprofiled due to decision not to invoke contract break clause.

- 4.2.9.1.4 Slippage has occurred in the review of partnership structures relating to the **Transition from children's to adult's services**.



The review and remodelling of the pathway is due to commence in November and timescales agreed to be reprofiled through October's change control

4.3 Statutory Recommendations

4.3.1 The Value for Money Governance Review made 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 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.

4.3.3 **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. 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 update due in November.

4.3.4 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 Governance Review of key documents within the council's Constitution is nearing completion. Approval in July to revised procurement and contract procedure rules, thresholds for decisions and sale of land and buildings protocol. Approval in November to revised scheme of delegations. Refresh of financial regulations will be presented to Council in December.
- Corporate Governance Training - Programme of training and development commenced in September 2022 on effective decision-making, good governance, and revised contract procedure rules
- Commercial Strategy in draft and due to be considered by Cabinet in early 2023.
- Corporate Asset Management Strategy due for Cabinet consideration in November.

4.3.5 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.



- 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 Plan.
- Organisational Culture – Outcomes of the listening exercises to be considered by Leadership Team in November.
- 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 Value for Money Governance Review, Grant Thornton set out specific recommendations relating to scrutiny. Appendix 4 provides an overview of progress against these specific recommendations, and is summarised below:

4.4.2.1 **Key Recommendation 7:** 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

- Member Development Plan designed and being delivered. This has included sessions on Effective Member and Officer relationships delivered by the LGA, an introductory session on scrutiny to newly elected Councillors and two sessions focusing on scrutiny for Scrutiny Board Members.
- Upcoming training around the Corporate Governance Framework
- Learning needs remain under review by Chairs of Scrutiny and supporting Officers.



4.4.2.2 Improvement Recommendation I4: 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

- Forward Plan is shared with respective scrutiny boards at every meeting to assist with work planning.

4.4.2.3 Improvement Recommendation I12: 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 the right questions

- Training delivered and due (as per update to Key Recommendation 7)
- Informal feedback in relation to scrutiny indicates that Members are interrogating reports well and asking appropriate questions
- Mechanisms put in place to strengthen key lines of questioning by regular meetings of scrutiny members and scrutiny chairs in advance of meetings
- External assurance will be provided through follow-up reviews conducted by Grant Thornton and the LGA.

4.4.3 The CIPFA Financial Management Review and LGA Corporate Peer Challenge did not make any direct recommendations around the role and function of scrutiny. However, the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge placed emphasis on progress they observed in the way scrutiny operates and cited examples of effective scrutiny work around Serco, and the impact of the pandemic on children in the Borough.

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 scheduled at Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board – 6 December
Combined Authority	To be scheduled
Procurement Processes followed to achieve goals	SEND Transport Update to Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board to be scheduled. Regular updates provided through scrutiny action tracker
Customer Journey and public engagement	To be scheduled

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 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.

4.6.2 The current risk register is attached as Appendix 5. 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. It includes plans for a comprehensive engagement programme with staff and members to define a collectively owned culture. We will then embed the conditions for this culture to thrive.



- **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.
- **Constitutional Changes** – key corporate governance documents are being reviewed and the first set were approved in July with others to follow in November and December. Once approved, these policies provide an important foundation for improvement.
- **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, and processes for capturing and using evidence of improvement will be developed.
- **Historic Issues** – if there is a continued focus on and resource directed towards historic issues this will hinder improvement. The improvement plan contains actions to bring historic issues to a conclusion and embed lessons learnt.

4.7 Changes to the Improvement Plan

4.7.1 The Improvement Plan is intended to be a live document updated to take account of progress and relevant changes.

4.7.2 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.

4.7.3 The list of all changes is provided in Appendix 6. Where new actions have been added to the Improvement Plan, these are displayed within the monitoring tool with green font colour. One of the changes within the plan has been to add a workstream around the Customer Journey. At their meeting on 22 September, Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board commented on its absence from the Improvement Plan despite this being a focus of the Commissioners.

4.7.4 The changes made are summarised below.

- 3 changes made to descriptions of actions
- 42 changes made to action delivery timescales



- 1 new workstream has been added to reflect the priority of customer journey
- 6 main-actions have been added
- 29 sub-actions have been added
- 28 assurance actions have been added to ensure that an approach / action is becoming embedded in the organisation
- 8 actions were agreed as closed. They are summarised below with the rationale.

Change Ref	Action Title	Rationale for closure
81	Continue to adopt star chamber approach for Cabinet Members and Chief Officers as part of budget setting approach	Star Chambers all completed by 28th September. Approach will be used for future budget setting.
82	Ward and Casework Management	Main action to be incorporated within the new workstream focusing on customer experience
83	Deliver Member Development Programme including Finance Training Programme	This has moved into regular business of the Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee. Immediate requirements have been met for the purposes of the IP. ES&MDC review MDP on a regular basis.
86	Actions to respond to employee survey outcomes to be identified and embedded in improvement plan	Main action to close and new main action (to monitor Employee Engagement Survey Action Plan) will be added to Corporate Oversight- IP workstream.
87	A clear and joint message from Chief Executive and Leader regarding Officer and Elected Member relationship delivered	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 message has been delivered.
119	Developing a model for locality working	Closure of main action to incorporate into 'Customer Journey Programme'
131	Refresh existing arrangements for arms-length companies	Workstream closure – only arms-length company is SCT and covered with contract management arrangements. These are reported through PMF.

4.8 Reporting Framework and Governance



- 4.8.1 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 7 sets out the governance framework.
- 4.8.2 Two quarterly updates on progress of the Governance Improvement Plan were provided to Cabinet in April 2022 and July 2022. The first quarterly update to Cabinet on the single Improvement Plan was considered on 28 September 2022.
- 4.8.3 The report to Council seeking approval of the Improvement Plan stated that existing member-led committees, such as the Governance & Constitution Review Committee, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Scrutiny Committees, will be used for decision making and maintaining oversight of the actions and implementation of the Improvement Plan.
- 4.8.4 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 in July and November and due in December.
- 4.8.5 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee received an introduction to the Improvement Plan and the Improvement Plan Risk Register in June 2022, and have received a quarterly progress report and the risk register in September 2022 and November 2022.
- 4.8.6 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. Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board received a report on overall progress of the Improvement Plan in September 2022, and this report forms the second quarterly update.
- 4.8.7 Any recommendations or comments from Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board will be included in the report to Cabinet in December 2022.



4.8.8 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 next report is due in December 2022. In December, Council will consider a recommendation from Cabinet to approve a letter to the Secretary of State along with details of the Council's progress against the Improvement Plan.

4.9 External Reviews

4.9.1 External assurance continues to play a part in our improvement journey. The council has invited Grant Thornton, LGA and CIPA to monitor our progress in addressing the recommendations in their reviews. Grant Thornton and the LGA conducted their follow-up review activities over September and October 2022 and CIPFA will conduct their review in November 2022.

4.9.2 The external review findings and reports are expected to be received in forthcoming months. In their initial feedback from their return visit, the LGA recognised the significant progress that has been made in a number of key areas to the good governance and management of the council, but 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's formal report will build on this initial feedback and identify any further recommendations for the council to consider.

4.9.3 A further update to the Improvement Plan will take place in early 2023 once the council has had the opportunity to reflect on the findings from Grant Thornton, LGA and CIPFA as a result of their Autumn 2022 follow-up visits, and the outcomes of the culture listening exercise.

5 Implications

Resources:	Resources to deliver the Improvement Plan have been allocated from within existing commitments in the majority of cases. Where one-off funding is required to deliver improvements, this will either be funded from the Improvement and Capacity Fund or from earmarked reserves created from 2021/22 underspend position. Allocation of this funding was approved by Council with the Improvement Plan on 7 June 2022.
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	<p>Where funding is required for longer-term change, this will be incorporated into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.</p> <p>There are no land or building implications associated with the Improvement Plan as a whole.</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 regular reporting development and approval of this Improvement Plan will mean that the council has achieved one of the elements within the Directions within the specified timescales.</p> <p>The delivery of the Improvement Plan and achievement of the desired outcomes will meet the remainder of the Directions.</p> <p>Ultimately, the changes made through the Improvement Plan will enable the council to effectively deliver its strategic priorities and ensure it is delivering value for money for Sandwell.</p> <p>Scrutiny’s consideration of progress of the Improvement Plan and input into specific work areas contained within the plan, contributes to the governance and assurance framework of the Improvement Plan and effective scrutiny.</p>
<p>Risk:</p>	<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</p>



	<p>1999 Act. This could lead to further government intervention, increased costs and damage to reputation.</p> <p>A risk register 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 is 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 the 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 its 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.

6 Appendices

1. Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool October 2022
2. Improvement Plan Theme Progress Summary October 2022



3. Statutory Recommendations Reporting October 2022
4. Scrutiny Recommendations Reporting October 2022
5. Improvement Plan Risk Register October 2022
6. Changes to the Improvement Plan
7. Improvement Plan Governance Diagram

7 Background Papers

Improvement Plan Quarterly Monitoring Reports

- [Cabinet September 2022](#)
- [Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board September 2022](#)
- [Audit and Risk Assurance Committee September 2022](#)

Sandwell Council Governance Improvement Plan

- [Adopted January 2022](#)
- [Quarterly Monitoring April 2022](#)
- [Quarterly Monitoring July 2022](#)

Sandwell Council Improvement Plan [Report to Council 7 June 2022](#)

Appendices:

- [Sandwell Council Improvement Plan](#)
- Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review Report December 2021
- CIPFA Financial Management Review Report January 2022
- LGA Corporate Peer Challenge March 2022
- Sandwell Directions under Section 15(5) and (6) of the Local Government Act 1999, 22 March 2022
- Sandwell Directions - Explanatory Memorandum

