

Responses to Grant Thornton and LGA Follow up Review Reports

| Review Report | KLOE Ref | Strand | Ref | Recommendation | Response | Incorporation within Improvement Plan / Other mechanism (Number shading indicates rows where we are not intending to include changes to IP or monitor through it) | 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. | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>In relation to the 'golden thread' of our strategic planning and performance framework, this is being further developed in 2023-24 through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 <p>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.</p> | <p>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)</p> | <p>Include actions around embedding golden thread in Corporate Oversight and Organisational Culture</p> |
| 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. | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | <p>Incorporation of Corporate Transformation Programme and PMO actions within Corporate Oversight theme</p> | <p>CO.E1 section retitled and milestones updated</p> |
| 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. | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | <p>Not required. All issues raised included within IP and IP monthly and quarterly reporting is continuing.</p> | <p>Not required</p> |
| 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. | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | <p>Phase 2 Governance Review to be incorporated within Organisational Theme. See new workstream OC.G1.0 'Embedding Constitutional Changes'.</p> | <p>Milestones for Phase 2 of the Governance Review to be included within new section and incorporate Corporate Governance Training.</p> |
| 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. | <p>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)</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Monthly reporting from SCT on quality assurance activity includes details of sharing of good practice.</p> <p>Transition arrangements have commenced to start the process of ending DfE intervention</p> | <p>Already incorporated within Partnerships & Relationships Theme and quarterly monitoring of contract in place through PMF (in addition to SCT governance).</p> | <p>Include a milestone around transition from DfE intervention.</p> |
| 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. | <p>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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>Quarterly reporting is also in place on the Early Help Strategy implementation through the Council's PMF (Commentary Ref: B15, KPI ref CP16)</p> | <p>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</p> | <p>Not required</p> |
| 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. | <p>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.</p> <p>The council will continue to work with SCT around workforce issues. There are interdependencies around the KPIs.</p> <p>The established governance arrangements and performance report 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)).</p> | <p>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)).</p> | <p>Not required</p> |
| 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. | <p>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.</p> <p>Q4 Performance Report on the SCT contract will include a general update on Invest to Save Activity.</p> | <p>Action to be added within PMF section of IP that Q4 SCT Contract Report is to include overview of ITS activity. (CO.C1.7)</p> | <p>Capture within PMF section that Q4 SCT Contract Report is to include overview of ITS activity.</p> |

Queries

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| Grant Thornton | KLOE A2-5 | SLT | 15 | <p>The Council will need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure a business case is produced for the new leisure LATIC 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. | <p>Work has commenced to develop the business case for the LATIC, which includes re-visiting the assumptions contained with the initial business case agreed by Cabinet. This is due to conclude in March 2023.</p> <p>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.</p> | LATIC establishment is within IP at PC.E1 | Not required |
| Grant Thornton | KLOE A2-6 | SLT | 16 | <p>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 LATIC arrangements.</p> | <p>Work continues to progress the business case for the LATIC which includes the detailed business planning for the Aquatic Centre.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | 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 | <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | 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 | <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> | 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 | <p>The Council must work with Serco to urgently finalise all associated plans and schedules which remain outstanding</p> | <p>All of the annual plans and scheduled have now been provided to the Council and Waste Partnership Board have accepted these.</p> | Complete | Not required |
| Grant Thornton | KLOE A7-10 | waste | 110 | <p>The Council should confirm with Serco if there will be changes to the waste and recycling or garden waste collection policies.</p> | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | Not required. Quarterly reporting on Serco contract included within PMF and assurance provided through IP. | Not required |
| Grant Thornton | KLOE A7-11 | waste | 111 | <p>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</p> | <p>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.</p> <p>We are working with Serco with external support to review the finance model which will include the fleet costs.</p> <p>The fleet requirements are linked to the consideration of alternative collection models and will continue to be discussed with SERCO.</p> | 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 | <p>The Council should take steps to demonstrate to Serco how the fleet maintenance service provides value for money.</p> | <p>The council will provide Serco with key performance information as required within the contract.</p> | 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 | <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | 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 | <p>The Council must ensure that the central transformation team is appropriately resourced and integrates all transformation and change activity being undertaken across the Council.</p> | <p>Please see response to Key Recommendation 2.</p> | - | - |
| Grant Thornton | KLOE A10-15 | ERP | 115 | <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | 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 | <p>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</p> | <p>See response to K1</p> | - | - |
| Grant Thornton | KLOE B4-17 | Officer and Member relationships | 117 | <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | <p>Milestone to be included around MTFs Cabinet report in February (ref SD.D1.5)</p> <p>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)</p> | <p>Add to Strategic Direction : Milestone MTFs approval in Feb 2023.</p> <p>New action OC.E2.6</p> |

Ask for contract ref from Ben

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| Grant Thornton | KLOE B4-18 | Officer and Member relationships | I18 | 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 | I19 | 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 | I20 | 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 | I21 | 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. | 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 | I22 | 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 | I23 | 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 | I24 | 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

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| 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 in 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. | 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 MIP 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 2023-24 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 concerned | 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> | 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>The need for rapid change remains a challenge for the Council but this is being managed through regular consideration of priorities and resources.</p> <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 |

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| 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. | 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 response to GT I19 above) | 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 is 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 OCA2.3 |
| 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 OCA2.3 with VL and DS |

Confirm Programme Manager Position