

# Report to Cabinet

**07 June 2023**

<b>Subject:</b>	Improvement Plan Progress & Phase 3 Refresh
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Leader of the Council Cllr Kerrie Carmichael
<b>Director:</b>	Chief Executive Shokat Lal
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
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## 1. Recommendations

- 1.1. That progress against the Improvement Plan up to 11 May 2023 be received
- 1.2. That Cabinet receive the response to the CIPFA FM Model Re-Assessment Report
- 1.3. That Cabinet receive the Improvement Plan Risk Register
- 1.4. That Cabinet receive changes to the Improvement Plan



- 1.5. That Cabinet receive any recommendations or comments made by Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board and Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in relation to the Improvement Plan progress.
- 1.6. That Cabinet recommend to Council that this report along with the March progress report, the Improvement Plan Annual Report, and an accompanying letter be submitted to the Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities to form the Council's six-monthly update on progress against the Improvement 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 original Grant Thornton Value for Money 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 As part of the council's assurance framework for the Improvement Plan, the LGA, Grant Thornton and CIPFA conducted follow-up reviews in Autumn 2022 to evaluate the council's progress on implementing the specific recommendations from those individual reviews. The responses to the findings from the follow-up visits from Grant Thornton and the LGA were reported to Cabinet in March 2023. The response to the CIPFA FM Model Re-Assessment Report is included within this report.
- 2.3 The Improvement Plan is intended to be a live document updated to take account of progress and relevant changes. Changes to the Improvement Plan are tracked through programme management mechanisms. As a result of the findings from the CIPFA FM follow up review, new and/or updated activity has been required within the Improvement Plan. This has been managed through the established change control process to form a refresh of the Improvement Plan.
- 2.4 Risk management is embedded within the council's programme management of the Improvement Plan. A risk register is in place which underpins the council's strategic risk relating to the Improvement Plan (59a 02/22). Cabinet is asked to receive the Improvement Plan Risk






Register to provide assurance that risks are being managed effectively and to provide contextual information for future decision making.




- 2.5 As part of the governance and assurance arrangements for the Improvement Plan, Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board review progress of the Improvement Plan and utilise the plan for work programming purposes. Both Committees are due to consider progress at their meetings in June and any recommendations or comments will be presented for Cabinet’s consideration.
- 2.6 Under the Statutory Directions, the council is required to report progress against the Improvement Plan to the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities every six months. The first report was submitted in December 2022. It is proposed that this report, the quarterly update received by Cabinet in March (appendix 9) and the Improvement Plan Annual Report (appendix 2) form the basis of the report to the Secretary of State along with a covering letter (appendix 10). Council are responsible for approving the report made to the Secretary of State and Cabinet will make a recommendation to Council.

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

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

	Best start in life for children and young people
	People live well and age well
	Strong resilient communities



	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell

## 4. Context and Key Issues

### 4.1. Background

- 4.1.1. A single Improvement Plan was agreed by Council on 7 June 2022 to address recommendations from a Value for Money Review into the council's governance arrangements, a CIPFA financial management review, an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, and Statutory Directions from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The single Improvement Plan replaced the Governance Review Improvement Plan which was approved in January 2022.
- 4.1.2. To ensure that senior officers and members have oversight of delivery against the Improvement Plan, Council approved that progress will be monitored by Leadership Team monthly and reported to Cabinet quarterly. This will continue until all actions have been completed, or changes have been embedded into business as usual.
- 4.1.3. This report is the fourth update to Cabinet on progress of the Improvement Plan.

### 4.2. Improvement Plan Quarterly Progress

- 4.2.1. Over this quarter, significant progress has continued to be made to deliver the actions within the Improvement Plan. This includes reaching a significant milestone in the Lion Farm Expert Determination process and this action moving to business as usual.



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

4.2.3. Progress against each theme of Improvement Plan is contained within the Improvement Plan Annual Report included at Appendix 2. The Annual Report includes milestones achieved since June 2022, the next areas of focus, and commentary on our progress against measures of success. This provides information around the impact our improvements. A summary of the quarterly achievements along with any progress issues is provided below.

#### 4.2.4. Organisational Culture Theme

4.2.4.1. Achievements this quarter:

- Revision of Corporate Induction
- Effective decision-making training (report writing) complete
- Member- Officer survey launched
- Project plan in place for embedding constitutional changes

4.2.4.2 Organisational Culture Progress Issues:

- **Identify mechanisms for ongoing insight and assurance around the Officer and Member Relationship**
  - A Member-Officer relationship survey was launched in April.
  - The reason for the exception report is that the survey received a lower response rate from Officers and Members than was expected.
  - An initial analysis of the survey findings was considered by Leadership Team in May. Next steps are to identify actions and to discuss findings with Members. Consideration will be given to timescales for repeat survey and reasons for response rate as part of lessons learnt.



- **Approval of next iteration of the Member Development Programme (MDP) that includes actions as a result of Member Personal Development Plan analysis**
  - The MDP is regularly updated and approved by Ethical Standards and Member Development Committee. A delegation has been put in place for the Chair of the Committee to agree next update, which will include the updated Member Induction plan.
  - The reason for the exception report is that there has been slippage in the timescale. This occurred due to revisions needed to the Member Induction arrangements as a result of the number of new Councillors following the election.
  - The induction has now been finalised and a new Member toolkit is being produced to support new Members.

## 4.2.5 Corporate Oversight Theme

### 4.2.6.1 Achievements this quarter

- Workforce development engagement sessions have been completed to inform the financial services workforce plan
- Draft report and recommendations received for the Corporate Debt Recovery business process review.
- Transactional Finance Reviews completed, and recommendations being implemented.

### 4.2.6.2 Corporate Oversight Progress Issues:

- **Corporate Transformation**
  - Transformation activity is taking place across the council including the Oracle Programme, a review of business support arrangements and financial services business process reviews. Resources from across the council have been brought together to consolidate resources.
  - Local Partnerships are supporting a review of Corporate Transformation and PMO arrangements in the council. This is underway and is due to report in June.
  - The reason for exception report is that timescales for the establishment of the of the Corporate Transformation PMO, associated governance, and the implementation of a



programme and project management system have exceeded the original dates within the Improvement Plan. The dates did not reflect the review that is being undertaken by Local Partnerships.

- The dates have been reprofiled through change control for the Corporate Transformation PMO to be established in September 2023 (subject to the recommendations of the Local Partnerships Review), the Programme and Project Management System to be implemented in July 2023, and the Corporate Transformation Board to be operational in June 2023.

- **Develop a Continuous Improvement framework and Lessons Learnt Framework**

- Continuous improvement and lessons learnt activity is underway throughout the council. Examples include continuous improvement around the scrutiny function and lessons learnt around SEND transport and a case study around supporting residents around damp and mould.
- A Continuous Improvement Framework and Lessons Learnt Framework are intended to provide a set of standards, tools techniques and guidance around how continuous improvement and lessons learnt are to be conducted across the council. The intention was for these to be prepared and reported to Leadership Team in June 2023.
- The reason for the exception report is that the June date will not be met due to resource availability, as work on the Levelling Up Partnership has taken priority. The Continuous Improvement and Lessons Learnt Frameworks have been reprofiled for October 2023 through change control.

- **Directorate level restructuring and review of Spans and Layers**

- Recruitment for Assistant Chief Executive is underway.
- The reason for the exception report is that the Directorate-level structure is under discussion, and the spans and layers review is being considered in line with the workforce strategy implementation.
- Actions are currently placed on hold.



- **Workforce development plan implemented for financial services section**
  - Engagement sessions have been completed and the report has been received. The recommendations include a competency framework, which will be aligned to the One Team Framework.
  - The reason for the exception report is that the planned due date of March 2023 has not been met and the workforce development plan is now due to be finalised by July 2023.

## 4.2.7 Strategic Direction Theme

### 4.2.7.1 Achievements this quarter

- Commercial Strategy approved by Cabinet Member
- Early Help 'one year on' event held to capture impact and partnership focus on next steps.
- Direct awarded offer to data analysis consultant for the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- 5 Surveys published on Citizenspace (consultation platform)

### 4.2.7.2 Strategic Direction Progress Issues

- **Regeneration Pipeline: Internal infrastructure established for delivery (strategic delivery partner)**
  - The intention is to procure a strategic delivery partner to support the delivery of the regeneration pipeline. Engagement with one of the framework providers is being carried out and a report is being prepared for July Cabinet.
  - The reason for the exception report is that this is later than the original date of March 2023. This has been reprofiled to July through change control.
- **Customer Journey Strategy**
  - Work is progressing on the Customer Journey Programme with governance arrangements now established and workstreams in place.





- The reason for the exception report is that a small response rate was achieved for a Member-survey around the customer journey.
  - Meetings with Members are being arranged focusing on ward and casework management.
- **HRA Business Plan: Stock condition surveys**
    - The HRA Business Plan was agreed by Cabinet in February.
    - A range of factors need to be taken into account in reviewing and amending the plan in future years including the results of stock condition surveys. Procurement of stock condition surveys has commenced.
    - The reason for the exception report is that only one tender was received through the procurement and an award was not made.
    - The next steps are for the specification to be reviewed and re-tendering to take place.

#### 4.2.8 Decision Making Theme

##### 4.2.8.1 Achievements this quarter

- All major milestones in this theme have been achieved

##### 4.2.8.2 Decision Making Progress Issues

- No issues in this theme

#### 4.2.9 Procurement and Commercial Theme

##### 4.2.9.1 Achievements this quarter

- Lion Farm key milestone in Expert Determination process reached and moved to business as usual for managing at directorate level and reporting to Leadership Team and members at an appropriate point in the future.

##### 4.2.9.2 Procurement and Commercial Progress Issues:

- **Performance Management System: Options Appraisal**
  - A performance management system is being explored to support business intelligence across the council and facilitate reporting within the performance management framework.



- The reason for the exception report is that the original timescales to bring forward an options appraisal have been delayed due to resources.
- Resources and a project plan are now in place. The options appraisal includes consideration of utilisation of current systems/tools, including Verto, Oracle Fusion and Power BI or the procurement of a new Performance Management System.
- The options appraisal is due to be completed by August 2023, with recommendation to Leadership Team to follow.

## 4.2.10 Partnerships and Relationships Theme

### 4.2.10.1 Achievements this quarter

- SCT performance reports considered by Children and Education Scrutiny Board

### 4.2.10.2 Partnerships and Relationships Progress Issues

- **Consultation on VCS Draft Strategy**
  - A VCS Strategy is being prepared for approval in Autumn.
  - The reason for the exception report is that the strategy is being developed over a longer period to enable a more fundamental look at the relationship with the VCS to take place. An annual report is being prepared focusing on investment and impact. A Cabinet session is then planned for June / July, with the strategy due for approval in Autumn 2023.

## 4.3 Statutory Recommendations

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

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



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

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

*Progress update:*

- Continuing to implement strategies to address the service issues highlighted in the Grant Thornton report.
- Sandwell Leisure Trust – progressing the approach agreed by Cabinet in June 2022 to transfer services to a Local Authority Trading Company.
- Sandwell Children’s Trust – Governance arrangements remain in place. Joint work in place with SCT in relation to corporate parenting and early help. Revised contract commenced 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 – key milestone reached in expert determination process and has now moved to business as usual.
- Regeneration Strategy and Pipeline to underpin significant regeneration in Sandwell approved by Cabinet 23 March 2022. First monitoring provided to Cabinet in November.

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

*Progress Update*

- The first phase of the Governance Review has completed with approval granted to the revised Procurement and Contract Procedure Rules, thresholds for decisions, Sale of Land and Buildings Protocol, Scheme of delegations and refresh



- Corporate Governance Training - Programme of training and development commenced in September 2022 on effective decision-making, good governance, and revised contract procedure rules. Next phase of Corporate Governance Development is being planned for roll out during 2023-2024.
- Commercial Strategy approved in April 2023.
- Corporate Asset Management Strategy approved by Cabinet in November 2023.

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

#### *Progress Update*

- Member Development – New Member induction arrangements are in place. Member Development Programme is being 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 Strategy.
- Organisational Culture – Extensive engagement held to inform the One Team Framework (Values and Behaviours) which was approved in March 2023. Launch of values and behaviours taking place.
- Meeting structures to facilitate Cabinet Member and Leadership Team cross-working in place and meeting needs.

## **4.4 Reporting Framework, Governance and Assurance**

4.4.1 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 4 sets out the governance framework.

- 4.4.2 This report forms the fourth quarterly update to Cabinet on the Improvement Plan. Leadership Team have reviewed progress against the plan every month.
- 4.4.3 The Government Directions require reporting on the delivery of the Improvement Plan at six monthly intervals to the Secretary of State from the council and the Commissioners. The last report was made in December 2022. The next report is due June 2023
- 4.4.4 Member-led committees, such as the Governance & Constitution Review Committee, Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Scrutiny Committees, are used for providing a steer and maintaining oversight of the actions and implementation of the Improvement Plan.
- 4.4.5 The Governance & Constitution Review Committee and cross-party Working Group have been integral to the development and review of the governance documents, ahead of decisions taken by Council last year.
- 4.4.6 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee receive quarterly updates on the Improvement Plan and the Improvement Plan Risk Register and they received the external follow up reviews in January 2023. The Committee are due to consider this quarterly progress update in June 2023.
- 4.4.7 Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board has included several elements of the Improvement Plan on their work programme as well as regular reports on overall progress. This has included a 'deep dive' focus on the work under the Organisational Culture theme and engagement with the workforce. The Board will receive this quarterly update in June 2023.



4.4.8 Following consideration of the progress report to Audit & Risk Assurance Committee and Budget & Corporate Scrutiny Management Board, those members will identify areas for further exploration and reporting. Any recommendations or comments from these committees for Cabinet's consideration will be presented to Cabinet

## 4.5 External Reviews

4.5.1 External assurance continues to play a part in our improvement journey to monitor our progress in addressing the recommendations made through external reviews. Grant Thornton, LGA and CIPFA conducted follow up reviews in late 2022. Cabinet received the Grant Thornton and LGA reports in December 2022 and actions to respond were embedded in the Improvement Plan and Business Plans as reported to Cabinet in March 2023.

4.5.2 The CIPFA FM Model Reassessment Report was reported to Cabinet in March 2023 and is included at appendix 5. The CIPFA Financial Management Model Re-assessment Report set out that Sandwell has improved from a progressive two star rating to a three star rating.

4.5.3 Key points raised were that:

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

4.5.4 In their report, CIPFA raised a series of additional improvement points which have been considered. Responses to the recommendations are set out in Appendix 6 and changes required to the Improvement Plan as a result have been managed through the established change control process. The changes are set out in section 4.8 of this report.



## 4.6 Resources

- 4.6.1 In the development of the Improvement Plan, a review of the resources available to deliver the plan was carried out. Resources to deliver the Improvement Plan have been allocated from within existing commitments in the majority of cases. Council approved funding of approximately £1.768m for one-off funding to progress improvement plan actions. A summary of the year end position on all Council reserves is provided within the year end budget monitoring report
- 4.6.2 The fund has enabled recruitment to key positions including corporate transformation capacity, work on organisational culture and resources to support the implementation of finance improvements and the Governance review. Where longer-term staffing capacity has been required, this has been built into base budgets to ensure sustainability.
- 4.6.3 To provide additional capacity across improvement activities, the Improvement Reserve is also being used to fund graduate placements within the National Graduate Development Programme which will commence from September 2023.

## 4.7 Risk Management

- 4.7.1 The Improvement Plan Risk Register underpins the council's strategic risk relating to the council's Improvement Plan (59a 02/22) and is currently rated as an overall Amber risk. The risk register is reported monthly to Leadership Team and quarterly to Cabinet and Audit & Risk Assurance Committee.
- 4.7.2 The current risk register is attached as Appendix 7. The main risks are associated with:
- **Resources** – for delivery of key components of the plan including the performance management framework, asset management system implementation and culture change programme. The financial resources required have been identified and were approved by Council in June.
  - **Communication** – to ensure everyone is aware of their respective roles and responsibilities. Communication is taking place through a range of methods including briefings, live events, and regular messages.
  - **Performance Management Framework** – to ensure that we can effectively monitor progress and evidence improvement.



Each theme includes an outline of how success will be evidenced. Processes for monitoring progress are in place

- **Investment and Financial Resources** – to ensure financial resources are made available resource gaps/ pressures associated with the Improvement Plan have been identified
- **Constitutional Changes-** If key governance changes (agreed during 2022) are not embedded throughout the organisation then opportunities will be missed. First round of training has been delivered along with revised templates and guidance. Phase 2 of the Corporate Governance Review is underway and this will focus on embedding the constitutional changes

4.7.3 Since the last quarterly report to Cabinet, the following risks have reduced:

- IP2 Programme Management Arrangements- Amber to Green

4.7.4 Since the last quarterly report to Cabinet, the following risks have been closed:

- IP7- Organisational culture- moved to Strategic Risk Register.
- IP8- Impact of Covid 19 on the Project Resources- target score achieved.

## 4.8 Changes to the Improvement Plan – Phase 3 Refresh

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

4.8.2 The Improvement Plan report to Council in June 2022 set out that changes (which may include the addition of new workstreams or objectives, or the amendment of timescales for delivery of actions) will be tracked through programme management mechanisms and that Cabinet will retain oversight of changes through regular formal reporting.

4.8.3 As we move through our improvement journey it is important that our key actions to deliver the required improvement become part of our normal business. For this reason, the key actions or ‘we wills’ that sit under the strategic outcomes in the Corporate Plan have been reviewed and, where appropriate, amended to ensure that core elements of the Improvement Plan are captured. Cabinet will consider the revised Corporate Plan in June 2023.





- 4.8.4 The Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool has been updated to include a cross-reference to the relevant actions within the Corporate Plan or business plans, as appropriate. This alignment paves the way for our improvement activity to be monitored within our performance management framework whilst retaining the assurance mechanisms to manage progress and performance.
- 4.8.5 This refresh to the Improvement Plan also includes the responses to the CIPFA FM follow up review. As such, this refresh of the Improvement Plan is referred to as the Phase 3 Improvement Plan.
- 4.8.6 The list of all changes is provided in Appendix 8. Where new actions have been added to the Improvement Plan, these are displayed within the monitoring tool with red font colour. Changes as a result of the CIPFA FM follow up review are also referenced within Appendix 6.
- 4.8.7 The changes made are summarised below.
- 10 sub-actions have been added, this includes 4 actions that re a result of the response to CIPFA follow-up review.
  - 18 changes have been made to action delivery timescales, and milestones (10 of which are of more than 3 months)
  - 3 changes have been made to descriptions of actions
  - 4 actions have been closed as the activity is complete

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The Value for Money Governance Review was undertaken as part of the external auditor's role to provide assurance on the council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. As the report includes statutory recommendations the council has a legal obligation to respond appropriately.



- 5.2 The Directions issued by the Secretary of State 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.
- 5.3 Reviewing progress against the Improvement Plan enables senior officers and members to have oversight of delivery, and take corrective action, as necessary. Alternative methods of monitoring progress could be adopted. The current monitoring method is regularly reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and provides Leadership Team with the oversight they require.
- 5.4 Alternative formats for reporting to the Secretary of State could be adopted, however the proposal to submit a covering letter along with the quarterly reports made to Cabinet makes use of existing reports. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities confirmed that this would be an acceptable format to them.

## 6 Implications

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



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



	council's ability to deliver services that will improve the health and wellbeing of Sandwell.
<b>Social Value</b>	Within the Improvement Plan, the council is committed to developing the Social Value Policy in conjunction with the refresh of the Procurement & Contract Procedure Rules. Through strengthening our asks of contractors through this Social Value Policy and linking them to the Corporate Plan objectives, the council will be able to maximise its social value return.
<b>Climate Change</b>	The underpinning objective of the Improvement Plan is to ensure the council is able to achieve the strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. Green in everything we do is one of the Fairer Sandwell principles running throughout the Corporate Plan. Any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to embed this principle and further the climate change agenda.
<b>Corporate Parenting:</b>	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 include being a good Corporate Parent for the children in our care and supporting young people once they leave care. Therefore, any improvements to the council's governance structures will strengthen the council's ability to be a good Corporate Parent.

## 7. Appendices

1. Improvement Plan Monitoring Tool April 2023
2. Improvement Plan Annual Report 2023
3. Statutory Recommendations Reporting April 2023
4. Improvement Plan Governance Diagram
5. CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Report
6. Response to CIPFA FM Model Re-assessment Review
7. Improvement Plan Risk Register April 2023
8. Changes to the Improvement Plan April 2023
9. Improvement Plan Progress Report to Cabinet, March 2023
10. Draft Letter to Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities



## 8. Background Papers

- [Sandwell Council Improvement Plan](#)
- Approval of Sandwell Council Improvement Plan [Report to Council 7 June 2022](#)
- Reports to the Secretary of State for Levelling up Housing and Communities:
  - [Sandwell Council Report to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, December 2022](#)
  - [Sandwell Council Commissioners: second report to Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, December 2022 \(published March 2023\)](#)
  - [Ministerial response to second letter \(March 2023\)](#)
- Improvement Plan Progress Reports:
  - To Council: [13 December 2022](#)
  - To Cabinet:
    - [March 2023](#)
    - [December 2022](#) including LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report Nov 2022
    - [September 2022](#)
  - To Audit and Risk Assurance Committee
    - [March 2023](#)
    - [January 2023 \(External Review Reports\)](#)
    - [November 2022](#)
    - [September 2022](#)
    - [June 2022](#)
  - To Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board
    - [March 2023](#)
    - [November 2022](#)
    - [September 2022](#)
- External Review Reports
  - [Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review Follow-up Report 2022](#)
  - [Grant Thornton Value for Money Governance Review December 2021 – reissued October 2022](#)
  - [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Progress Review Report 2022](#)
  - [LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Report February 2022](#)



- [CIPFA Financial Management Report January 2022](#)

