

# Report to Cabinet

**13 March 2024**

<b>Subject:</b>	Performance Management Framework – 2023/24 Quarter 3 Monitoring
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Deputy Leader, Cllr Bob Piper
<b>Director:</b>	Chief Executive – Shokat Lal
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Kate Ashley – Strategic Lead: Service Improvement Kayleigh Walker – Senior Lead: Service Improvement Sarah Sprung – Senior Lead: Service Improvement

## 1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Cabinet note progress on the further development of the Corporate Performance Management Framework and approve the 2023/24 Quarter 3 monitoring reports.
- 1.2 That Cabinet approve changes to PIs as set out in Appendix 4.

## 2. Reasons for Recommendations


- 2.1 Council approved a Corporate Performance Management Framework (PMF) on 12 April 2022, to address the recommendations of the Governance Value for Money Review by Grant Thornton and as a key element of the Council's Improvement Plan.
- 2.2 Since then, the corporate PMF has been further refined and built into business processes. In June 2023, Cabinet approved a revised Corporate Plan with a revised set of Corporate Performance Indicators. This report sets out the Council's performance against the Corporate



Performance Indicators for Q3 of 2023/24. **Appendix 1** lists the measures and performance, including a RAG rating against target where applicable. The appendix also includes the direction of travel of performance since last quarter (Q2) and compared to the same period last year. Progress against Business Plan actions that contribute towards delivering the Corporate Plan have also been included as part of this report (attached as **Appendix 2**).

2.4 Performance of key contracts is included in the quarterly performance reports to provide oversight of the performance of these services and assurance that contract management mechanisms continue to be in place and effective.

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

	<p>The corporate PMF includes measures under all strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan to monitor progress in these key areas. The PMF also includes elements that measure the council's use of its resources to ensure delivery of the strategic objectives.</p>
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3.1 An effective performance management framework facilitates increased accountability, learning and improvement. It also provides early warning signals and facilitates decision-making.

3.2 On a quarterly basis, the council gathers and analyses a wide range of data and information to understand how effectively its plans are being implemented and whether the strategic outcomes contained in the Corporate Plan are being achieved.

3.3 The information collected is used to enable the authority to better understand the impact of its work on local people, and where necessary, target actions and resources.



## 4. Quarter 3 Performance – key messages

### Corporate Performance Report

4.1 In Q3, the number of Quarterly PIs given a RAG status has increased from 71 to 76 (out of a total of 121). In total, the percentage of 'red' and 'amber' PIs has decreased, and the number of 'green' PIs has increased, as can be seen below.

- 4.2 Of the 76 indicators given a RAG status this quarter,
- 21 (27.6%) are RAG rated 'red' (compared to 25 (35%) in Q2)
  - 12 (15.8%) are rated 'amber' (compared to 15 (21%) in Q2)
  - 43 (56.6%) are rated 'green' (compared to 31 (44%) in Q2)

40 do not have a RAG rating as a target is not applicable and the PI is for information only. For 5 PIs no data is available this quarter.

Area	Total	Red	Amber	Green	RAG NA	Data not available	Annual
Best Start	39	6 (3)	4 (7)	6 (7)	1 (1)	0 (0)	22 (2 reported in Q3: 1 'green', 1 No RAG)
Live well Age Well	33	0 (1)	1(1)	10 (3)	3 (4)	2 (11)	17
Strong Resilient Communities	24	2 (2)	0 (2)	7 (5)	3 (3)	0 (1)	12
Quality Homes	21	4 (8)	2 (1)	7 (4)	1 (1)	0 (0)	7 (3 reported in Q3: 2 'amber' and 1 'green')
Strong Inclusive Economy	15	1 (2)	0 (0)	2 (1)	5 (3)	1 (3)	6
Connected and Accessible	11	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	10
One Team One Council	57	8 (9)	5 (4)	10 (10)	27 (20)	2 (10)	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>79</b>



## Corporate Plan

4.3 In total in Q3, 243 Business Plan actions were given an update, compared to 211 in Q2. In total, the number of 'red' actions has slightly decreased, the number of 'amber' actions has stayed the same and the number of 'green' actions has increased.

4.4 Of the 243 Business Plan actions given a RAG Status this quarter:

- 4 (1.6%) are rated as 'red' (significant issues) (compared to 8 (3.8%) in Q2)
- 42 (17.3%) are rated as 'amber' (medium issues) (compared to 42 (19.9%) in Q2)
- 197 (81.1%) are rated as 'green' (on track) (compared to 161 (76.3%) in Q2)

There were 12 actions with no update available.

Q3 Headlines								
	Best Start	Live Well & Age Well	Strong Resilient Communities	Quality Homes	Strong Inclusive Economy	Connected & Accessible	One Council One Team	Total
No of Corporate Plan 'we wils'	12	21	20	17	11	8	18	107
No of Directorate Business Plan Actions	23	85	38	23	18	17	51	255
On Track	14 (9)	67 (59)	32 (21)	16 (15)	15 (15)	16 (13)	37 (29)	197(161)
Medium Issues	7 (2)	10 (12)	5 (6)	6 (7)	1(2)	1 (2)	12 (11)	42 (42)
Significant Issues	1(0)	2 (5)	0 (2)	0 (0)	-	-	1 (1)	4 (8)
No Update available	1 (12)	6 (9)	1 (9)	1 (1)	2 (1)	0 (2)	1 (10)	12 (44)
Totals	23	85	38	23	18	17	51	255



## Key themes in Q3

- 4.5 Inflation continues to be a theme across a number of areas in Q3 and is referenced in regard to delivering the agreed Town Deals in collaboration with our partners across Rowley Regis, Smethwick and West Bromwich and the delivery of HRA/residential schemes.
- 4.6 Staff capacity is also a theme referenced in the commentary for 6 performance indicators. However, there are plans in place to address this issue across all areas, with performance expected to improve as a result in Q4, with the exception of the Adults Contact Centre where a transformation partner is being sought to address the issue holistically, looking at the number of customers using the service and the processes that are being followed.

## 5. Our achievements in Q3

- 5.1 Performance for 'FOI Compliance in timescales' was 92% in Q3 against a target of 95%, just below target but the best performance recorded to date over a quarter. Taking December alone, performance was 96%. A great deal of work has taken place to improve performance over recent months – this time last year performance was 78%, so we have seen a big increase. The focus will now be to retain performance at current levels to achieve the target in Q4.
- 5.2 Performance for 'Corporate Contact Centre average call wait time' was 3 minutes 11 seconds in Q3, better than the target of 3 minutes 30 seconds. This is a real improvement in performance compared to this time last year when the average call wait time was 8 minutes 29 seconds.
- 5.3 Forge Mill Farm has improved performance across all income strands and is now performing above target, with the new Education Barn capital project in development.



- 5.4 Grant Thornton’s findings from their second follow-up review in Autumn 2023 concluded that we have made sufficient progress for them to lift the three statutory recommendations. This represents a hugely significant milestone in our improvement journey towards coming out of government intervention.
- 5.5 A successful scrutiny budget session was held in January where cabinet members were held to account on their budget proposals for 2024-25, demonstrating openness and transparency.
- 5.6 We have been allocated £18m for the Grove Lane Masterplan and have secured £20m under the Long-Term Plan for Towns (Smethwick).
- 5.7 Housing provide the most work experience (22 of 129) and apprenticeship (11 of 50) opportunities for young people. This good practice forms part of their workforce strategy
- 5.8 Secondary School attendance in Sandwell is now in line with the national average (91.50% Sandwell and NA), the targeted support model has worked well. The School Attendance Service is working with Sandwell Residential Education Service to pilot focused support for vulnerable cohorts.
- 5.9 Sandwell was successful in it’s launch of the Priority Education Investment Area programme to run across both phases and all schools. This DfE investment is hoped to further drive up the attainment rates across the borough.
- 5.10 Over the last 5 years, Sandwell schools have consistently had a higher percentage of pupils achieving any passes at GCSE equivalent than nationally or regionally. In the 2022/23 academic year Sandwell 97.2% (96.8% in England and 96.9% in the West Midlands).
- 5.11 The development of intermediate care and reablement services for Harvest View, Sandwell’s flagship social care and health facility, has been implemented on the top floor which opened January 2024. Here,



therapists will speak to a patient who needs rehabilitation after they are discharged from hospital about how best to continue their treatment, giving them tailored short-term care to re-learn the skills required to keep them safe and independent at home, or to adapt to be as independent as possible.

- 5.12 The 'Percentage of properties with a Domestic Electrical Installation Condition report (DEICR) under 5-years old (or in legal resolution)', whilst below the target of 100% has improved considerably (95.35%) since last quarter (93.31%) and latest data in Q4 shows that performance has improved further (98%). Historic no-access cases are seeing a positive impact following new processes we have introduced (all of these either now have an appointment or are going through a legal process). Further work is being done on re allocating internal resource to deal with the backlog.
- 5.13 The proportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out is 99.39% in Q3 against a target of 100%. Latest figures (February 2024) show that this has improved (99.55%) due to additional resources and management focus and Q4 figures should again illustrate an improvement.

## 6. Areas for improvement - The Best Start in life for Children and Young People

### Performance Monitoring

- 6.1 At the end of Q3 Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT) are projecting a year end deficit of £3,628k against the Contract Sum, in real terms this is an overspend of £4,370k as there is an expectation for SCT to achieve a surplus of £740k by the end of the year (rated 'red'). These projections are based on nine months of activity and subject to change. Costs are being driven up by the increase of children placed in residential care (49 in March 2023 which has increased to 62 at the end of December 2023). There has also been an increase in the average unit cost of each placement; from £5,225 in 2022/23 to £6,035 2023/24 year to date, an increase of 16.2%. SCT has advertised a block contract for the provision of up to nine residential care beds, across three homes, for Sandwell



children. The tender invitation was issued at the end of September however only one provider submitted a bid, and this was non-compliant. Discussions are taking place with SCT on what other transformation activity could be undertaken in respect of placements.

- 6.2 The '% of Schools 'Good' or 'Outstanding' OFSTED rating - Special and alternative provision' is below target (71% against a target of 86%, rated 'red'). Performance for Primary and Secondary Schools is also just below target ('amber'). However, this data includes academies as well as Local Authority maintained schools.
- 6.3 'Early Help - Referrals to Social Care with no evidence of Multi-Agency Early Help in the prior 12 months' is above target at 84% (rated 'red'). Some of this may be risk aversion by partners making referrals due to the Christmas period. Taking into consideration those referrals that had an assessment completed and were either stepped down to early help or were "no further action", this decreases to 67%, placing the indicator well within tolerance. The Early Help Partnership will discuss at the next strategic group the definition of this indicator, and this may result in a change as to how this indicator is presented from the new financial year.
- 6.4 The number of Children on a Child Protection Plan has increased in December 2023 to 501, now at a rate of 59 per 10,000. This is above Statistical Neighbour Average (48.6 per 10,000) (rated 'red'). The number of children subject to CP plans are being monitored closely by both the operational teams and Safeguarding Unit. Given the increase in numbers, the Director of Partnerships and Practice led a review of the children who had been made subject to a child protection plan. The analysis focused on threshold application and decision making. The review concluded overall that threshold application was appropriate with evidence of timely decision making and it also found that a higher number of large sibling groups were entering onto a Child Protection Plan; 10 families and 48 Children who have started on a Child Protection plan were part of a sibling group of 4+ Children. However, given the increase in child protection numbers, the Director of Operations has arranged a meeting between Operations and the Safeguarding Unit to





consider some of the wider issues which may be impacting on child protection numbers, namely timely step down from CP following intervention, effectiveness of Children in Need (CIN) planning and the impact of the intervention hub.

6.5 Performance for ‘% Care leavers that are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (aged 19-21)’ is above target at 58% (rated 'red'). A Corporate Parenting Board has been set up and has an action plan, which includes how to improve performance for this indicator. The delivery of the Corporate Parenting Action Plan is also rated as ‘amber’ in the Corporate Plan updates. The development of a Corporate Parenting Strategy is an item on the action plan and is being co-produced with young people and partners in readiness for March. In addition, an Emotional well-being pilot started in January. Further actions include the Employment and Skills Team continuing to attend sessions at METSEC where there is a young persons space, to develop relationships with care leavers and to update on support available. Links have also been made with staff at Coventry Council, who have developed bespoke approaches to help young people, including residential trips to develop confidence, and effective use of their Post 16 Advisor in their Virtual School.

6.6 The ‘% of 16s and 17s not in employment, education or training (NEET)’ is above the target of 1.75% (2.3%, rated ‘red’). The increase in % of NEET is a reflection of the national and regional trend as part of a Covid legacy. However, Sandwell’s performance compares well with West Midlands (2.7%) and England (3.1%). European Social Fund provision ended in October last year which provided keyworker posts and provision to remove barriers for young people further from the labour market. We will be using UK Shared Prosperity Funding from April 2024 to commission appropriate provision and fund a key worker post, but there has been a funding gap between November 2023 and March 2024. The team remains proactive and has been successful in working with one training provider to take additional trainees, whilst exploring options with other training providers and looking at how we can work closer together and increase access for Sandwell young people. It is worth



noting that more than half our NEET young people are reporting emotional wellbeing and mental health issues.

## Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 6.7 There are issues with delivery of the School Nursing contract due to staffing levels being below the acceptable threshold. A report has been requested with procurement and the Director of Public Health (DPH) advised. An internal action plan is currently being implemented to address under-performance and identify next steps (rated 'red').
- 6.8 With regards to the implementation of the Early Help Strategy, the pace of change not been as swift as the partnership hoped in relation to partners offering early help. During November – December 2023, the Early Help Partnership reconfigured to form two arms; one strategic and the second operational. The Strategic group will represent all key partners and will be accountable for their services' response to early help and act as champions to ensure change within their service. The Operational group will offer assurance around quality assurance and will help bring about grass roots change within their service (rated 'amber').

## 7. Areas for improvement - People Live Well and Age Well

### Performance Monitoring

- 7.1 'The proportion of section 42 safeguarding enquiries where a risk was identified, and the reported outcome was that this risk was reduced or removed' has improved since Q2. Whilst we are still below target (94% against a target of 95% -rated 'amber'), the figure for October - December is 98% so performance at the end of Q4 overall should improve further (PI measured cumulatively). The actions taken following Q2 to support staff through surgeries, provide feedback from learning from performance validation meetings and also address practitioner knowledge have had a positive impact.



## Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 7.2 The joint Equipment Stores site development and relocation of Community Alarms remains rated 'red'; there are still legal issues with the site barriers of A1 Clutches (A1 clutches share land on site at Dolton Way alongside several other businesses and installed a barrier that they padlock closed each evening and at weekends. Community Alarms require 24/7 access when they relocate and ideally barrier needs to be removed. Staff safety will be a concern if they have to get in and out of vehicles to unlock a padlock barrier each time they want to access/exit the site). The Councils Legal team have repeatedly tried to contact A1 clutches over last few months but are still awaiting a response. The relocation of Community Alarms will be end of February/March 2024. A meeting was held with BT in January and live tests will be agreed with Jontek in February 2024.
- 7.3 There is currently no feasibility study completed against planned design for the communal areas at Walker Grange (site survey and drawings were completed 2022). Plans to take this forward will be formalised once HRA forecasts are remodelled (which will be February onwards, when stock condition data has been collected and some assumptions can be made) (rated 'red').
- 7.4 Implementing a new Day opportunities model across the market is rated as 'amber' and the update from Q2 remains. Until blockages in the system around Direct Payments are resolved we cannot move forward in terms of diversifying the market. A workshop is being arranged to try and resolve some of the issues both from the administration of Direct Payments and the perception in the use and application of Direct Payments by Social Work staff and people who draw upon social care and support. Discussions with the Hospital Brokerage team are taking place to pilot rollout opportunities.

## 8. Areas for improvement - Strong Resilient Communities

### Performance Monitoring

- 8.1 The number of library visits in person is below target (153,150 visits against a target of 163,125, rated 'red'). This can be attributed to a number of factors:



- Issues of library books were down 19% against target (largely due to budget and increases to the cost of books which mean we are unable to buy as many copies as in previous years.)
- A charge to reserve books was introduced in 2023-24.
- Since Covid, we have lost many experienced staff which has also impacted capacity for outreach work to promote libraries and develop partnerships.
- Some libraries were above target and there is a general correlation with the number of activities being held in those libraries.

The service is developing plans to impact visitor numbers moving forwards, particularly individual libraries where visitor numbers have dropped. These plans will be ready by mid-February.

- 8.2 Improved street and environmental cleanliness (Litter, Detritus, Graffiti and Flyposting) is measured 3 times per year through SERCO. For August – November, the % of litter and detritus has increased by 2% since last quarter, although graffiti has reduced by 0.5%, rated 'red').

## 9. Areas for improvement - Quality homes in Thriving Neighbourhoods

### Performance Monitoring

- 9.1 The 'Percentage of homelessness cases successfully prevented (under Homelessness Reduction Act duty)' is below target (51.5% - rated 'red'). This is because of the challenging housing market and the volume of cases that are presenting very late in the process. The housing market is at its most challenging for securing longer term alternative accommodation for our clients. The turnover of council properties has seen a 30% reduction over the last 12 months (meaning there are less properties becoming available) and the accessibility and affordability of private rented properties is at its lowest point in years. This is in part due to affordability issues and also due to the very buoyant market. The service works very hard in securing properties for our clients and has one of the best offers in the country as recognised by the National Resident Landlord Association (NRLA). The increase to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates in April 2024 will help bridge this gap but the market will remain very challenging for a number of years to come. Our Q3 performance on homelessness prevention is below target but we did



see improvements in November and December months which suggests we should see performance improve in Q4.

- 9.2 The 'Number of long-term empty homes brought into use' remains below target (3 against a target of 10 – rated 'red'). This is due to the delay in attracting and recruiting the right person for the Empty Homes Officer role earlier in the year. The new officer has been in post since September 2023 and is making good progress but has required a lead in time to understand Sandwell and the challenges around the agenda. Performance has improved with 2 new properties brought back into use in Q3 compared to 1 in Q2 and none in previous quarters. Whilst this is slower pace than intended when the target was set at the start of the year (again due to recruitment delays), we expect performance to improve exponentially and to recover to projected levels by the end of Q2 of 2024/25.
- 9.3 The percentage of current tenancies with a live valid Home Check in place (in the last 3 years) is below target (21.9% against a target of 30% - rated 'red') but has improved since last quarter (17.60% in Q2). Temporary resources (an additional Coordinator and six Housing Advisors) should come online in Q4 and will be in place for six months, which will enable Housing Services Officers to focus more of their time on Home Checks.
- 9.4 The number of residents assisted by Welfare Rights is below target (RAG rated 'Red'), although the number of residents assisted is higher in Q3 (2,570) compared with Q2 (2,476). This is due to the increase in complex cases which is resulting in officers having to spend more time on each case. The team are still working overtime which has been introduced within the service to support the increasing number of residents and the service has recruited two new members of staff into temporary posts which will increase the support to residents. This did not hinder performance on the monetary gains for the quarter as the service were successful in gaining £5,386,275 for residents, which was above target. Welfare Rights also are the lead agency for preparing and providing representation for Tribunal appeals, of which there are significantly more which take additional time to prepare and represent.



## Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 9.5 With regards to delivering new affordable homes, construction cost inflation and ground conditions continue to impact on HRA/residential schemes. Specific schemes are being reviewed and value engineered, prior to re-tendering (rated 'amber').
- 9.6 Work continues on the refurbishment programmes to High Rise blocks, with all blocks in progress however, due to rebalancing of HRA, the schemes that are yet to be on site (Allen House and Moorlands and St.Giles scheme) have been reprofiled to start in future years – Cabinet paper to be submitted (rated 'amber').

## 10. Areas for improvement - A Strong Inclusive Economy

### Performance Monitoring

- 10.1 'The number of 'Businesses receiving Financial Assistance or Grants' is below target at 17 against a target of 60 (rated 'red'). There was a temporary delay in grant administration due to policy refinement. Despite this, we successfully awarded 15 grants this quarter. There is a robust pipeline of businesses eagerly expressing their interest in applying for grants and now the process is established we anticipate administering the remaining 52 grants and financial assistance in Quarter 4.

### Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 10.2 The development of a Safer Green Spaces strategy has been delayed due to the priority focus being on income generation in the service to meet targets set in the 2023/24 budget (rated 'amber'). This is now scheduled to go to Scrutiny in May and Cabinet in June 2024.

## 11. Areas for improvement - A Connected and Accessible Sandwell

### Corporate Plan Monitoring

- 11.1 The action 'Develop and deliver projects that reduce barriers to the use of public transport and sustainable travel choices including working with



Transport for West Midlands in relation to bus and metro provision and the Rail Alliance' is rated as 'amber' as bus service reductions are still an issue. The WMCA lead on the delivery of the Bus Service Improvement Plan which sets out a roadmap to better services for passengers and communities, urban and rural, fully informed by local needs. This plan is supported by individual local authorities and has targets set for 2024/25 and 2029/30 and is available at <https://www.tfwm.org.uk/media/1xebdeu4/wmca-bsip-05-november-2021.pdf>. The Wednesbury to Dudley metro extension is progressing and is broadly on track.

## 12. Areas for improvement - One Team One Council

### Performance Monitoring

- 12.1 In Q3 an average of 8.8 working days were lost per employee due to sickness compared to 8.28 working days during the same period last year. Stress, depression, mental health related sickness remain as the leading cause of sickness. Working days lost for short term sickness reduced by 16%, whilst long term sickness increased by 20% compared to Q3 last year. 4 of the 9 Directorates achieved a reduction in sickness compared to last year (ASC, Children and Education, Housing, Law and Governance), but performance for all Directorates was above the 6.21 day target.
- 12.2 The number of new formal grievance cases was 7 in Q3 against a target of 4 (rated 'red'). So far this year there have been 20 new formal grievance cases. The year-end total for 2022/23 was 32.
- 12.3 Performance across all customer service 'front door' measures has improved in Q3 compared to Q2, although some continue to perform worse than the target.
- 12.4 The average waiting time in the Adults Contact Centre is 1 minute 14 seconds in Q3, against a target of 30 seconds (rated 'red'). However,



performance has improved since Q2 (1 minute 27 seconds). The service is unable to manage the demand within the current structure/resources available. The Abandonment rate in the Adults Contact Centre was better than target (4% against a target of 6%).

12.5 The Revenues and Benefits Contact Centre Average Wait was 4 minutes 40 seconds in Q3 (rated 'red') against a target of 3 minutes 30 seconds. The abandonment rate was better than target at 5.60%. Both the abandonment rate and average wait time have significantly improved on the last quarter and compared to the same time last year. We have taken on some additional staff who have come out of their 6-week training and this has helped to improve the current performance. Whilst waiting to speak to an advisor, residents are being sent links to the website to encourage self-service and we are also promoting the live chat facility to reduce the number of calls.

12.6 Performance for 'SARs compliance with timescales' is below target at 62.07% (rated 'red'). The compliance rate is being significantly impacted by the volume of requests for Housing Disrepair claims whereby the documents required to make a HDR claim are being requested through the SAR process. Excluding SARs made for HDR claims the compliance rate would be 77%. SARs for HDR claims make up 23% of all SARs received in Q3 (16 out of 70). Processes have been implemented to prevent the need for the documents required for a HDR claim being requested under a SAR. Improvements should be seen in our future quarterly performance.

12.7 With regards to '% of stage 1 complaints responded to in 10 working days (excl. ASC)', Q3 Performance is below target at 73%, although there has been an improvement since Q2 (68%) and Q1 (52.29%). The areas of concern are Children and Education (30%), the Children's Trust (37%) and Housing (63%). The Customer Feedback Team (CFT) continue to assist all directorates to respond promptly to corporate complaints within a 10-day timeframe and there is an increased focus on this across the organisation that is driving improvement. This improvement also focuses on the quality of the response, including





resolving queries at the first point of contact. For Q3 the average time taken to respond to stage 1 complaints (excl. ASC) was 10 days, a reduction from 14 days in Q2.

- 12.8 The average satisfaction rating from members using the Councillor portal is below target at 3.93/5 (rated 'red'- the target is 4.5/5). In Q3 there were 27 Cllr ratings. Of these, 6 were given a 1 or 2 star rating. Of these 6, 2 were given a low rating because of officer management of the case and 4 were given a low rating because of the quality of the final response.
- 12.9 There is an overspend of £1.120m against the gross expenditure budget of £141.160m for the HRA. There is an ongoing review to find ways to mitigate this overspend (rated 'red').

### **Corporate Plan Monitoring**

- 12.10 Collective income targets were not met for Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre, Forge Mill Farm, Lightwoods House and Park (Visitor Services) due to weather and lack of wet weather provisions, and lack of current offer at Sandwell Valley Visitor Centre. This will be addressed through the adoption of the Masterplan for Sandwell Valley which goes to Cabinet on the 13<sup>th</sup> March and setting of targets for 2024/25 (rated 'red').
- 12.11 During Q3 work has commenced on the development of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) Audit Action plan which will support the development of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. There is some slippage in regards to the EDI Strategy, due to staffing resource (rated 'amber').

### **13. Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan**

- 13.1 A series of additional directorate and service level performance dashboards and monitoring plans are being developed as part of a wider Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan. This will also take into account existing internal and external improvement plans to ensure



better governance, service delivery and improve the management of resources across the Housing Directorate. An Officer has now been recruited to lead this work and a team is being put together. Weekly meetings are being held to review performance and progress made. The Housing Improvement and Transformation Plan will form part of the wider Corporate Transformation programme. The Housing Directorate will work with the Corporate Team to identify what information needs to be included in the Corporate Performance Report moving forwards to ensure corporate oversight. An update will be provided in the Q4/annual report.

## 14. Contract Governance

14.1 Reports on contract governance have been provided for Sandwell Children's Trust, Serco, Places Leisure and Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) and assurance of governance arrangements has been provided through these reports. A summary for each one is detailed below.

### **Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT)**

14.2 Since April 2018, children's services have been delivered by Sandwell Children's Trust on behalf of the Council. The Trust delivers the following range of services:

- Children's Social Care
- Fostering
- Targeted Early Help

14.3 SCT annual review report was presented to Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> October in line with their contractual obligations. Approval was gained from Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> October to extend the appointment of the independent non-executive director Stephen Rimmer for up to 3 years and the process of agreeing the contract sum for 2024/25 has commenced in line with the process laid down in the Service Delivery Contract.

14.4 As set out in para 5.1, at the end of Q3 SCT are projecting a year end deficit of £3,628k against the Contract Sum, in real terms this is an overspend of £4,370k as there is an expectation for SCT to achieve a surplus of £740k by the end of the year. These projections are based on 9 months of activity and subject to change.



- 14.5 The total number of children in care, as of December 2023, is 829. This is a slight decrease since last month but still an overall increase of 26 children since the beginning of the financial year, some of this increase is due to an increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in Sandwell.
- 14.6 The rate per 10,000 of children in care in December is 97.7. This is a worse position than December 2022, when the rate per 10,000 was 96.2. However, this is in line with increases regionally and nationally. The number of children on a child protection plan has increased as set out in para 5.4.
- 14.7 Sandwell is outperforming statistical neighbours in respect of the number of children coming into care, with fewer children coming in to care however this is balanced by the fact that fewer children are leaving care compared to statistical neighbours. SCT need to ensure that children are leaving care appropriately and that there is not drift and delay in this occurring.
- 14.8 In July 2023 Cabinet agreed a package of financial incentives to improve the recruitment and retention of social workers, this is collectively known as the Sandwell Deal. The initial impact of the Sandwell Deal is currently being reviewed; those findings will be included in the Q4 report.
- 14.9 Since December 2022 there has been an improvement in the balance of agency to permanent social workers, with agency workers now accounting for under 20% of the total social worker cohort. In addition to there being a better balance, there are also fewer vacancies. Over the last quarter the number of vacancies has fallen by just over 5% to an all-time low.

## Serco

- 14.10 The council's contract with Serco was awarded in 2010 and runs until 2035. It has a contract value in the region of £34m per annum. The contract covers services including waste and recycling collection, household recycling centre management, street cleansing and fleet management and renewal.



- 14.11 The contract has a set of regular meetings in place with standard agendas relating to the contractual requirements from key outcome targets (KOTs) to operational issues. These meetings are supported by regular cross channel communications between the SMB and Serco teams. Leadership Team also receive regular contract reports that provide oversight and issues are raised as appropriate.
- 14.12 The contract contains the requirement for the provision of regular data from the contractor to be provided, there is also an associated requirement for SMBC to provide information to Serco, relating to Council priorities annually and fleet maintenance through a set of KPIs. In addition, there is an integration with the Council's My Sandwell reporting tool.
- 14.13 Serco's performance reporting was significantly delayed at the end of Q2 and Q3. This matter was raised with Serco at senior level and the reporting has subsequently been caught-up. Serco have identified a number of measures that should prevent this circumstance recurring. Work is almost concluded to upload the Serco contract onto the Council's Intend Contract Management platform. It is intended to commence contract management through the Intend platform as soon as practicable. This system will further expedite the submission and approval of performance data.
- 14.14 Overall service performance in Q3 was good. Serco and Council officers jointly updated the annual leaf clearance plan leading to a significant reduction in resident complaints. The rescheduling of Christmas collections worked effectively and the first year of the subscribed garden waste service came to a successful conclusion. Q3 also saw the arrival of the next tranche of new refuse collection vehicles (RCVs). This will allow the replacement of the older vehicles improving service reliability.
- 14.15 The financial settlement for the missed service during the summer's industrial action resolved and will be formally agreed and settled in Q4.

## Places Leisure

- 14.16 The Council has a 25-year contract with Places Leisure to operate West Bromwich Leisure centre. The contract is a Design, Build, Operate and



Maintain contract which ensured value for money by reducing design and build costs as well as ongoing maintenance liabilities

- 14.17 Monthly operational reports are provided to update on performance, – operational and technical. Quarterly contract management meetings are held to ensure the ongoing monitoring of the contract and performance. These cover Operational Performance, Health and Wellbeing outputs and Customer Feedback.
- 14.18 A highlight this quarter is that Places Leisure were finalists for the UK Active Award for Healthy Communities for our Drug and Alcohol Recovery project running in Sandwell in partnership with Sandwell Council and Cranstoun. Although they didn't win, they did however play an overall part in Places Leisure winning both the Organisation of the Year award and the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion award.
- 14.19 In terms of Q3 participation, Places Leisure's performance is returning to pre-pandemic levels. Participation levels are continuing to rise, and memberships are significantly above 2019/20. Only learn-to-swim numbers remain below pre-pandemic levels.
- 14.20 Based upon projected operational, and therefore financial performance, a business plan was agreed for the duration of the contract. The business plan results in an annual management fee payment to the Council of circa £20,000.
- 14.21 There is also a utility benchmarking arrangement included in the contract, whereby PL own the risk on consumption and the Council are liable for the risk on tariff. Pre-pandemic operations resulted in a net gain for the Council – Management Fee minus Utility Benchmarking Payment. This is calculated and paid at the end of each financial year. In 2022/23 the utility benchmark resulted in a payment from the Council to PL of £239k. Modelling for 2023/24 indicates that the utility benchmarking will require a payment from the Council to PL of £202k.

### **Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT)**

- 14.22 With regards to governance and contract management, work continues between Council Officers, Bevan Brittan solicitors and SLT's solicitor to finalise the Deed of Variation (DoV) to the Management and Funding Agreement (MFA). This DoV will extend the termination and subsequent



period of operation to 31 March 2027 and refine the partnership as agreed and signed on 13 July 2023. This position was confirmed by Cabinet on 18 October 2023.

14.23 In Q3, Sandwell Leisure Trust (SLT) managed the following leisure centres in Sandwell:

- Haden Hill Leisure Centre
- Hadley Stadium
- Harry Mitchell Leisure Centre
- Portway Lifestyle Centre
- Sandwell Aquatics Centre
- Tipton Leisure Centre
- Tipton Sports Academy
- Wednesbury Leisure Centre

14.24 With regards to operational performance, the headline figures are below. However, these are not directly comparable because of the swimming pools at Haden Hill Leisure Centre being closed for Q3 and the Langley and Smethwick swimming centres closing and Sandwell Aquatics centre opening over the summer (the offer was different for Q3 in 2022/23). Also, as with effect from Q3, concessionary memberships are no longer included due to their subsidy.

- 525,820 attendances October – December 2023. **15.6%** up on Q3 FY23 (454,691)
- From October 2022 to October 2023, memberships increased by **13%**
- 4,880 enrolled on Learn to Swim – **2.6%** up from Q3 FY23

14.25 In terms of finance, the same as in Q2; the current forecast outturn is £167k over budget; SLT have identified management action to bring this back to budget by the end of the year.

## 15. Strategic Risk Register

15.1 Effective risk management is a key element of good corporate governance, as noted in the council's [Code of Corporate Governance](#), and is essential to the overall performance of the council in meeting its corporate plan objectives. Good risk management will ensure that



resources are used efficiently and effectively, and that assets and resources are protected against risk in the most efficient way.

15.2 The Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) receive the Council’s Strategic Risk Register (SRR) on a regular basis for review and comment. The role of the ARAC is to provide assurance to the Council that it has a system of governance, risk management and internal control in place and that the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements continue to inform decision making.

15.3 The SRR does not include all of the risks faced by the Council. Other risks are captured within directorate, programme and project risk registers in line with the Council’s risk management framework. The latest SRR was presented to ARAC in January 2024 and is attached as **Appendix 3**.

## 16. Implications

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



<b>Equality:</b>	Equality measures are included in the PMF, including the Organisational Health workforce indicators and the progress of the Corporate Plan.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The measures to track progress of the Corporate Plan include a series of health and wellbeing indicators. This enables the council's leadership to see at a high level the direction of travel of the borough's health and wellbeing and seek to continue good practice or identify mitigating actions to address issues.
<b>Social Value</b>	Measures in the PMF include looking at percentage of spend in the local area.
<b>Climate Change</b>	There are measures in the PMF that look at air quality and passenger journeys on public transport and 'we will' statements in the Corporate Plan on renewable energy measures in the build of new homes.
<b>Corporate Parenting</b>	There are measures in the PMF that look at children in care related to education, placements moves, health assessments and NEET figures.

## 17. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – CPR Q3
- Appendix 2 – Corporate Plan Updates
- Appendix 3 – Strategic Risk Register (December 2023)
- Appendix 4 – PIs to be removed or amended

## 18. Background papers

- Performance Management Framework – Q2 Monitoring - The report is available here:  
<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s19395/Performance%20Management%20Framework%20Q2%20Monitoring.pdf>

The appendices to this report are available here:

<https://sandwell.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=143&MId=6658&Ver=4>

Report to Council 21 April 2022:

- Performance Management Framework for the Council

